Tracing the Sensible Transcendental: Luce Irigaray and the Question of Female Subjectivity.

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

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August 2012

Abstract

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This thesis traces the development of Luce Irigaray's philosophy of sexuate difference along the lines of her call for a 'sensible transcendental'. Specifically, I aim to arrive at a deeper understanding of the concept in the context of her early engagement with psychoanalytic theory and her critique of 'phallocentrism', as well as her struggle to define a specifically 'female' subjectivity which, I suggest, forges a path beyond the Oedipal psychoanalytic model.

The 'sensible transcendental' – the central category or 'hinge term' of this thesis – stands for a mode of experience which emphasises the corporeal origins and conditions of existence – particularly in relation to the body of the mother – which have been occluded by 'phallocentric' modes of representation (in philosophy, psychoanalysis, and religion). In her later thought, Irigaray will evoke the sensible transcendental as the condition of ethical relations with sexuate 'others', and it is in this context that the term is most commonly understood. However, I argue that a closer inspection of Irigaray's early writing directs us to the psychoanalytic origins of the term, and its crucial role in defining an autonomous 'female' subjectivity. The question that concerns me in this thesis is the nature of the relationship between the sensible transcendental as a mode of experience (of 'becoming') which unites corporeal and conceptual logic, and Irigaray's project of defining a female subjectivity which moves beyond the constraints of phallocentric discourse and the Oedipal model at its core.

In the first three chapters I adopt an analytical approach to Irigaray's early thought, focusing on the psychoanalytical and philosophical origins of the 'sensible transcendental'. I argue that the term must first be understood in the context of the 'psychoanalytic scene'. Irigaray claims that the 'transference' process remains irresolvable between a female analyst and female analysand because no symbolic processes exist that would mediate and 'contain' it; as such, the relationship dissolves into an imaginary *corps-à-corps*. The analytic scenario is, moreover, symptomatic of a wider problem: the often 'strained' relationship between mothers and daughters. Irigaray argues that, because of inadequate symbolisation, the maternal figure has become trapped in the realm of Imaginary phantasy, making it difficult for the mother to 'separate' herself fully from her daughter (and *vice versa*). Thus Irigaray initially evokes a 'sensible transcendental' as a form of mediation or 'dialogic space' that would permit the 'separation' of mother and daughter by creating a 'setting' for sublimation to take place.

I then focus my attention on Irigaray's critique of Kant, arguing that the sensible transcendental must be viewed as a reaction to, and a revision of, the Kantian transcendental subject. Following this, I describe how Irigaray's notion of the sexuate subject is shaped by Heidegger's philosophy and, specifically, a 'Heideggerian' re-reading of Kant, especially on the topics of space and time and the 'transcendental'. Chapter 4 is pivotal in that I reject a 'theological' interpretation of Irigaray's writing on the mystical and the divine, arguing instead for a phenomenological approach to Irigaray's conception of the body as divine 'flesh'. In the final two chapters I adopt a more constructive approach to Irigaray's thought, showing in chapters 5 and 6 how the problem of psychical 'matricide' (the 'killing' or repudiation of the mother) is solved by positing a 'relational' model of subjectivity – what I call a 'fleshy' subjectivity – which begins *in utero*. This model assumes, *contra* Freudian-Lacanian orthodoxy – that there was never a mother-infant 'dyad' in the first place, and thus the requirement for violent separation from the mother (*qua* the Oedipal scenario) is diminished. This model of 'relationality' is constitutive of what I call the 'Irigarayan subject' – a heterogeneous, 'fleshy' subject – which defies phallic hierarchy and traverses the bounds of Oedipality.

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Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my supervisor, Professor Gillian Howie, for her support and generosity with time, knowledge and encouragement. I would also like to thank Dr Simon Hailwood for his helpful advice during the first year of my doctoral studies; and Dr Karl Simms for his useful comments pertaining to the first three chapters of this thesis. I should also thank Professor Margrit Shildrick, for her remarks on Chapter 5, as well as for several absorbing conversations over wine.

I would also like to thank my parents, Tina and Derek, for their unconditional love and unwavering belief; my grandmother, Elizabeth; and my sister, Sarah. Enormous thanks also go to Victoria Browne, Niall Carson, Roland Enmarch, and Lauren Arrington, for their company, good humour and sense of perspective. I should also mention Vivienne Matthies-Boon, Michelle Bastian and Ray Cameron for their advice and friendship.

I am extremely grateful to Dr Alison Stone for sending me copies of two of her books, and for an email correspondence in which she took the time to share some of her views on the issue of 'matricide'. I would also thank Professor Luce Irigaray, for her helpful comments during her 'Masterclass' in 2007.

I would also like to thank my colleagues and managers at John Lewis Liverpool, for their flexibility and understanding. In particular I thank my partner, Clare Greer, for her support, sense of humour and unfaltering good nature.

I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the University of Liverpool.

Abbreviations*

Works by Luce Irigaray

ODS: 'And the One Doesn't Stir Without the Other.' (1981).

SO: *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985a).

TS: *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985b).

EP: *Elemental Passions* (1992).

SG: *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993a).

JTN: *Je, Tu, Nous: Towards a Culture of Difference* (1993b).

ILTY: *I Love To You* (1996).

FA: *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* (1999).

TBT: *Two Be Two* (2000).

TSN: *To Speak is Never Neutral* (2002).

ESD: *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (2004a).

KW: *Key Writings* (2004b).

Other

BT: *Being and Time* by Martin Heidegger (2005).

PP: *Phenomenology of Perception* by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2006).

SS: *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir (1997).

VI: *The Visible and the Invisible* by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968).

*For texts without abbreviations I shall reference their year of publication in English.

Introduction

Mothers, Daughters, Feminists

'I know... that we're taught to undervalue women, and so mothers really do respect their sons more. It's common. You award him a higher place in the world. But... there's more. I don't know –

'If mothers undervalue daughters, daughters can undervalue mothers,' said Paula gently. 'But your theories don't extend to me, do they, Eleanor? You see me only as a mother.' (Briscoe, 1994: 247)

This conversation between Paula, a whimsical and idealist mother of three, and Eleanor, her uptight, daydreaming eldest daughter, takes place in the final chapter of Joanna Briscoe's novel *Mothers and Other Lovers* (1994). The emotional exchange occurs after both characters leave the family home: Paula, after abandoning her husband for another man following an intense, erotic affair; and Eleanor, after consummating her own obsessive relationship with her mother's glamorous best friend, Selma. For Eleanor, Selma is the antithesis of her mother: educated, urban and sophisticated, and is manifested in Eleanor's daydreams as the Madame: the school mistress, at once maternal and disciplinary. Paula, on the other hand, finds her daughter 'difficult' and 'irksome'. She cannot fathom the 'easiness' of the relationship between father and daughter, and is perturbed by it. The relationship between mother and daughter becomes intensified and complicated by layers of misunderstanding and feelings of recrimination and bitterness. Meanwhile, Rolf - Eleanor's adored and idealised younger brother - is considered by Paula to be less demanding in his simple, physical, *need*, compared with Eleanor's unfathomable and insatiable *want*. Unable to fully separate herself

from her daughter, Paula projects her own fears and anxieties onto Eleanor. She remarks, finally, that 'Maybe I saw my own failings in you' (ibid). As Paula 'blames' her daughter for her demise as a desirable sexual being in the eyes of her husband, who is enchanted by his young daughter, so Eleanor seeks a mother-figure in Selma. Mother and daughter become embroiled in their own projections and fantasies and fail to see each other as autonomous sexual beings.

I have chosen to begin by reflecting on this literary example because I believe it illustrates what is still precarious in our cultural imaginary: the often thorny and fraught relationship between mother and daughter. According to Luce Irigaray, until women are treated as full 'subjects' – as *protagonists* rather than *antagonists* in the Father's drama – then this relationship will continue to be strained and women will continue to be swallowed up in the 'function of mothering' (Wenzel, 1981: 58). The problem seems to be one of identity. In *This Sex Which is Not One* (1985b), Irigaray remarks that this is the 'one thing that has been singularly neglected, barely touched on, in the theory of the unconscious: *the relation of woman to the mother and the relation of women themselves*' (TS: 124). Indeed, this relationship has traditionally represented a sort of lacuna in psychoanalytical theory, a blindspot which points to a wider sociocultural phenomenon: mothers' supposed difficulty in separating themselves psychically from their daughters (and *vice-versa*), as captured, for example, by Briscoe's novel. In her very intimate reflection on her own relationship with her mother in the essay 'And One Doesn't Stir Without the Other' (1981), Irigaray laments the potentially pernicious obfuscation of identities between mother and daughter - especially during the pre-Oedipal phase of development - a phenomenon which was for so long neglected by the psychoanalytic institution of which Irigaray was once part.[1] In *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985a), Irigaray argues that western culture has historically been 'matricidal' by positing the primordial separation from the mother as a torturous and violent psychical process (Stone, 2012: 7). For women in particular, there arises a fundamental tension: girls must separate from their mothers in order to assume 'feminine' identities of their own, yet they must also in some sense remain 'identified' with the mother from

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[1] Following the publication of *Speculum of the Other Woman* in 1974, Irigaray was expelled from Lacan's *École Freudienne de Paris* and lost her teaching position at the University of Vincennes. She was ostracized by the Lacanian community.

whom they must enact a violent separation.[2] If, according to Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalytic doctrine, remaining 'merged' with the mother is dangerous and could lead to neurosis or even psychosis, psychoanalytically trained feminists such as Irigaray have claimed that, for girls, the converse is equally fraught, and that the 'phallocentric' account of violent separation from the maternal 'other' is equally unsuited to female psychic development.[3] Indeed, as Irigaray has also argued, the psychoanalytic account reflects, or is 'symptomatic' of, the dubious status of the maternal figure in western culture more generally. Irigaray claims that, trapped in the imaginary realm of masculine phantasy, the mother figure lacks symbolic articulation, rendering the female gender (*genre*) incomplete and bereft of symbolic support.[4] The failure of western culture to adequately distinguish between mother and daughter replays itself in the drama of social relations between *all* women, who will remain 'partial-subjects' so long as the mother is denied status in the symbolic economy. The key to solving this somewhat circular problem, I suggest, lies in a comprehensive revision of the fundamental terms on which we base our understanding of such notions as 'subjectivity', 'identity', 'self' and 'other', in psychoanalytical theory as well in the philosophies which have shaped its central tenets.[5]

Given this diagnosis, this thesis poses three main questions: first, does Irigaray succeed in defining a female subject position which restores the mother to the symbolic economy and 'repairs' the female *genre*? Second, what role does the key term 'sensible transcendental' play in Irigaray's vision, and what are the philosophical motives that inspire it? Finally, what are the consequences of Irigaray's thought for theories of subjectivity more generally, particularly in psychoanalytic and

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[2] I prefer the term 'female' to 'feminine' because 'the feminine is more hostage to hegemonic forces' (Young, 2005: 6). Moreover, to emphasise the 'female' rather than the 'feminine' is also to emphasise the female *body*, which 'bleeds with the potentiality of new selves' (Battersby, 1998: 17; Battersby, 2006: 296). Thus I shall refer to the question of *female* subjectivity, rather than 'feminine' subjectivity. Irigaray is consistently translated as referring to the 'feminine' sex; however , there may be some slippage between *'femelle'* (female), *'féminin'* (feminine) and the 'feminine' *genre* (gender in language).

[3] Cf. Chodorow (1978); Mitchell (1975).

[4] The English translation of *genre* is 'gender'; however *genre* can simply mean 'type' or 'class'. I prefer *genre* in this thesis as it is more in keeping with the notion of a *sui generis* female subjectivity (see footnote 16, below). The term 'gender', on the other hand, gives rise to certain preconceptions which I would like to avoid (for example, the sex/gender distinction and its concomitant complications).

[5] Whilst there is a kind of 'circularity' at work, here, I suggest in Section 6 that this is not a necessarily 'negative' kind of circularity.

feminist theory?   Next, I shall first attempt to define the term 'subjectivity'.   I shall then explain why

these questions revolve around a key problem: that of 'sexuate difference'.[6]

1.   The 'Question' of Subjectivity

The philosophical term 'subject' has typically been understood as the ego or conscious mind:

the rational, unified and transparent locus of experience and knowledge.   From early in the twentieth

century, the enlightenment concept of the 'knowing subject' cast in the image of the 'man of reason'

came under fire from a new wave of theorists (Braidotti, 1989: 89).[7]   From Marx and Althusser

(political theory) to Freud and his critics ('psychoanalytic' thinkers such as Lacan, Deleuze &

Guattari), these 'structuralists' argued that the 'self' is in fact constituted by social structures, or by a

matrix of social structures and human agency (Hollinger, 1994: 47).   This 'decentring' of the subject

(or killing-off altogether) was consolidated in the anti-humanism of Foucault, Derrida, and Barthes:

the attempt to move beyond the unified 'subject' and towards a notion of the 'self' as a mere play of

'differences' ('*differance*').   Likewise, feminists – Irigaray amongst them – challenged the

enlightenment conception of the subject as a rational, universal and disembodied entity, and have

claimed that this 'subject' is neither universal nor neutral but in fact reflects the imperatives and

interests of, typically, white, heterosexual men.   Indeed, as Perpich points out, two sorts of critical

projects have emerged from this realisation.   First, there are those that focus on women's *de facto*

exclusion from the realm of subjectivity by showing how women have been denied subject-status

within a philosophical tradition that defines subjectivity in terms of rationality and autonomy, but

denies women both; and second, there are those which recognise a further *symbolic* exclusion which

cannot be rectified merely by 'including' women in cultural, political and economic practices

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[6] I prefer the quintessentially Irigarayan term 'sexuate' (rather than simply '*sexual*') difference as it captures the sense in which Irigaray begins to moves beyond phallocentrism. Jones (2011) remarks that 'sexuate' 'signals the way that sexual difference is articulated through our different modes of being and becoming [...[bodily, social, linguistic, aesthetic, erotic, and political' (Jones, 2011: 4).

[7]   I concede that the 'enlightenment' is a term for a very broad cultural movement containing myriad philosophical and political theories. Here, it operates as a useful pedagogic device pertaining to the 'age of reason' *per se*.

(Perpich, 2004: 391). This second group has most commonly been aligned with the misleadingly-named 'French feminists', who argue not so much that women are conceptualised as *irrational*, but rather that concepts such as 'rationality' and 'reason' have actually been defined *against* the 'womanly' (ibid.).[8] For example, in *Speculum*, Irigaray argues that 'Any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the "masculine"', implying that the very conditions under which notions of subjectivity have been produced have required the 'negation' of the feminine (SO: 133). This 'occlusion' of sexuate difference helped to elevate masculine notions of experience and modes of self-understanding to the level of universal 'norms', and has marginalised women's experience. This trend, perhaps, reached its zenith in the thought of Lacan, who claimed that women in fact do not 'exist' at all, such has been our systematic and structural exclusion from the subjective – and Symbolic – domains. On this reading, only a symbolic transformation of significant proportions could affect the changes necessary in order to successfully inaugurate women as full subjects.

The question of subjectivity, then, appears to confront feminists with a sort of fundamental paradox: if, as the structuralists imply, the 'subject' is a mere effect or play of social forces and libidinal drives, then why bother with the apparently spurious task of attempting to include women in the domain of 'subjectivity'? In short, why, given the supposed 'death' of the subject, does the issue of women's subjectivity remain important? Rosi Braidotti epitomises the problem:

> 'How can 'we feminists' reconcile the recognition of the problematic nature and the
> process of construction of the subject with the political necessity to posit woman as
> the subject of another history? In other words: how far can 'we feminists' push the
> sexualisation of the crisis of modernity and of the subject of discourse?' (Braidotti,
> 1989: 91)

For Braidotti – following Irigaray, as I discuss in greater detail below – the question of women's subjectivity is inseparable from the issue of *sexuate difference*, or more specifically, the *occlusion* of sexuate difference from western notions of subjectivity. I understand 'sexuate

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[8] This was more-or-less the starting point for the 'consciousness-raising' beginnings of second-wave feminism.

difference' narrowly as the recognition of female specificity, particularly *embodied* specificity. I concede that this could easily lead to accusations of essentialism – that feminist 'anathema', as Naomi Schor calls it – and I shall attempt to defend Irigaray and myself against these claims further on in this Introduction (Schor, 1994: 59).

Returning to Braidotti, in order to make sexuate difference 'operative' she claims that we need to interrogate the conditions under which subjectivity is produced, beginning by recognising 'the primacy of the bodily roots of subjectivity, rejecting both the traditional vision of the subject as universal, neutral, or gender-free and the binary logic that sustains it' (Braidotti, 1989: 90). Irigaray's call to *parler femme* could be interpreted as a call to reject 'phallocentric' modes of discourse which define the 'feminine' as the negative 'other' of the masculine, and instead embrace the fluidity and excess of the feminine evoked by the image of the 'two lips', for instance.[9] Indeed, this focus on the material, corporeal roots of subjectivity could be viewed as part of a wider trend in feminist philosophy which seeks to assert the specificity of lived experience and refuses to 'disembody' sexual difference. Thus the issue of subjectivity is, for feminists of 'sexual difference' at least, part and parcel of the project of revaluing the processes and power structures that collectively fall under the fictional unity of the grammatical 'I' (Braidotti, 2002: 22).

In the following section I shall sketch my understanding of Irigaray's project as it relates to the questions of subjectivity and sexuate difference and the psychoanalytical issues underpinning them. This will help to better understand the reasons for the trajectory of Irigaray's overall 'project' and, in Section 3, enable me to state the reasons for focussing on her earlier, more 'psychoanalytical' thought.

2. Irigaray's Psychoanalytical Project

Luce Irigaray is, as Margaret Whitford remarked, a 'feminist philosopher', with the emphasis on both terms (Whitford, 1991: 3; Jones, 2011: 8). But what should we make of Irigaray the

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[9] Cf. 'When Our Lips Speak Together' in *This Sex which is Not One* (1985b); also *Elemental Passions* (1992 & passim.).

psychoanalyst? Irigaray's relationship with psychoanalysis has been extensively documented from the time of *Speculum*'s publication, with a mixed critical reception, and with varying degrees of eccentricity.[10] For some early critics, Irigaray's interpretation of Lacan was simply inaccurate; for others, her call to *parler femme* was tantamount to asking women to speak in tongues. Not helped especially by her grouping with Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, some early critics failed to see beyond the idiosyncrasy of her mimetic, 'hysterical' style and, consequently, the ingenious nuances of her argument became overshadowed.[11] Mercifully, Anglo-American philosophers warmed to Irigaray once her complex relationship with the western philosophical tradition had been deciphered and accusations of out-and-out biological determinism had been assuaged. Thanks to Whitford (1991), Chanter (1995), Deutscher (2002), and Stone (2006) amongst others, a comprehensive range of texts now exist which explore Irigaray's relationship with the intersecting fields of philosophy, psychoanalysis and feminism.[12] More recently, Irigaray's engagement with psychoanalysis has received renewed interest (Gray, 2008; Jacobs, 2009; Stone, 2012). However, to the best of my knowledge, and with the exception of Gray (2008) and Stone (2012), none of these existing works explore the matter of subjectivity from the point of view of psychoanalytical accounts of psychosexual development, specifically from the perspective of women's individuation.[13] Whilst Irigaray's use of psychoanalysis has been extensively mined for what it can tell us about her later commitment to a dualistic ontology – her commitment to the 'two' of sexuate difference - Irigaray's

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[10] Some of these early responses (pre-publication in English) were from Mitchell & Rose (1982), in which Irigaray was compared with psychoanalyst Michèle Montrelay (according to Rose & Mitchell, Irigaray aligns 'femininity' with 'a primordial cathexis of language as the extension of the undifferentiated maternal body' (Mitchell & Rose, 1982: 55 fn 21)). Jane Gallop's (1982) is probably the most 'eccentric' interpretation; for example, her witty 'romp' with Sade (see Chapter 2 of this thesis on Kant and Sade); Ragland-Sullivan's (1986) is probably the most 'disapproving' in its staunch defence of Lacan.
[11] Irigaray was 'introduced' to an Anglophone audience by such publications as the 1981 *Signs* Special Edition on Irigaray, Kristeva, and Cixous (Volume 7: 1). Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics* (2002), originally published in 1985, included a chapter on 'French Feminist Theory'. Although publications such as these made Irigaray's thought accessible, it is regrettable that her original contribution was overshadowed by being heaped together with the other two thinkers (and the same applies to them as well). Moi, for instance, entirely misrepresented Irigaray's call to *parler femme* (see the section entitled 'Womanspeak: a tale told by an idiot?' Moi, 2002: 142 – 145). It is unfortunate that such readings shaped perceptions towards Irigaray's thought until the time of Whitford's seminal *Philosophy in the Feminine* (1991).
[12] Cf. The collection *Engaging With Irigaray* (Burke et al, 1994); and Cimitile and Miller (2007).
[13] I understand 'individuation' loosely as the process of becoming a (gendered) subject. Somewhat ironically, Whitford claims that Irigaray initially came under attack from Lacanians for providing no more than an 'alternative account of female psychosexual development', and failed to recognise Irigaray's attempted 'dismantling' of western metaphysics (Whitford, 1989: 109). Yet I suggest that an account of female psychosexual development is precisely what has been left *underdeveloped* in Irigaray.

relevance to the school of thought known as 'psychoanalysis' has been somewhat overlooked. This is, perhaps, for a couple of reasons which I shall briefly outline.

First, several commentators have pointed out that there is a 'shift' in Irigaray's thought around the time of *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (2004a), a shift which marks a move away from an adherence to a broadly Freudian-Lacanian framework in which sexed identities are never 'stably achieved', towards an 'ontology' of sexuate difference in which sexed identities are *dual* and 'naturally' determined (Stone, 2006: 13).[14] So what does this apparent 'shift' tell us about the overall trajectory of Irigaray's project? In her interview with Hirsch & Olson (1995c), Irigaray remarks that her work could be understood as having three phases: first, a critique of the 'auto-mono-centrism' of the western subject'; second, the question of how to define a second, 'feminine' subject; and finally, the question of how to define a 'relationship' between two sexually 'different' subjects (Hirsch & Olson, 1996: 97). Her texts up to and including *Ethics* (2004a) have been interpreted as characteristic of phases one and two (as well as parts of *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993a) and *To Speak is Never Neutral* (2000), a collection of essays drawn from her early involvement in linguistics). I would add here that phase two is *not* the attempt to define 'woman', as Irigaray has been criticised of attempting; rather, she seeks to 'define those mediations that could permit the existence of a female subjectivity' (ibid.). In short, Irigaray attempts to define the *conditions* that make subjectivity possible. Moreover, *Ethics* (along with *The Forgetting of Air* (1999), her text on Heidegger) is pivotal in that she breaks with the early phenomenological project of describing experience and instead develops an ontology in which fluid processes are real and are constitutive of sexuate 'being' (Olkowski, 2000: 75; Schor, 1994: 12; Stone, 2006: 11-12). Although *Ethics* displays elements of all three overlapping phases, the text remains pivotal insofar as it begins to develop this ontology of 'difference' according to which being is naturally 'two': something which Alison Stone interprets as a turn to an idiosyncratic form of 'realist essentialism' (Stone, 2006: 20) (see below). Although her later work does retain something from psychoanalytic theory – namely, Irigaray's insistence on revaluing the relationship with the

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[14] Cf. Stone (2006), and Jones (2011) for a discussion relating to the supposed 'turn' in Irigaray's thought (specifically Cimitile & Miller, 2007: 2). This 'turn' may also be understood as a shift from 'mimesis' to representation proper.

mother as well as her model of sexuation – she appears to distance herself from the Lacanian framework which underpinned her earlier thought in particular.

Thus the recent disinterest in the relationship between Irigaray and psychoanalysis might be blamed on the perceived shift away from a psychoanalytical framework in Irigaray's later thought, coupled with a sense, maybe, that there is not much left to say. Indeed, another reason for the lack of recent interest in the psychoanalytical aspects of Irigaray's project may relate to the relationship between Irigaray and psychoanalysis itself. It is helpful here to describe what could be regarded as Irigaray's project in her most complex and easily misread text, *Speculum*. According to Irigaray's account, the 'female' in western philosophy and psychoanalysis has traditionally been understood as the negative 'other' of the male, as a deficiency, atrophy, lack, or absence. Stone (2006) boils Irigaray's thesis on 'femininity' down to three interwoven aspects: first, the 'female' is always devalued in relation to the 'male'. Consequently, this relationship is always hierarchical, even when it isn't explicit. For example, the relationship is sustained through a series 'hierarchical contrasts': dualisms such as mind/body, culture/nature, self/other, and so on, for which the privileged, 'positive' term is associated with the masculine (Stone, 2006: 27).[15] Second, the female is always defined *in relation* to the male, not as an independently intelligible term (ibid.). Irigaray's lengthy interrogation of Freud, for instance, focuses on his insistence on basing his account of female psychic development on the male version, one that assumes that the little girl is merely a 'disadvantaged little man' (SO: 26-27). Third, western discourse's failure to treat the female as an independently intelligible term is tantamount to a refusal (foreclosure in Lacanian terms) of female identity. Thus the western Symbolic (defined in Chapter 1) is 'hom(m)osexual' or 'monosexuate': sexuate difference has never existed on a symbolic level (SO: 143; Stone, 2006: 27). Crucially – as I touched upon above and shall explore in greater detail below – this also means that the mother-daughter relationship remains 'unsymbolised':

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[15] Cf. Lloyd's *The Man of Reason* (1993). Lloyd traces the 'maleness' of reason and the hierarchical 'gendering' of philosophical dualisms from the 'enlightenment' onwards.

'Irigaray means that there is an absence of linguistic, social, cultural, iconic, theoretical, mystical, religious, or any other representations of that relationship.' (Whitford, 1989: 108)

Whilst there are clearly abundant representations *of* women available, none of these symbolise the relationship between mother and daughter, a relationship that is, for Irigaray, so essential to sexuate female identity - or as Irigaray will dub it - the *female genre*. The 'dereliction' (defined in Section 4, below) of female identity means that crucial psychic functions such as sublimation remain difficult for women (as they lack mediation: see Whitford, 1989: 112). This matter shall be explored in greater detail in Chapter 1.

According to the tenets of Lacanian psychoanalysis, then, to be a 'woman' is to adopt a sort of non-identity. The masquerade of femininity is itself an attempt to 'veil' the lack that ultimately hides behind the signifier. The 'feminine' is the excess of the system that produces it, its residue or waste product. Irigaray's strategy in *Speculum* (1985a) and *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985b) is to exploit this phenomenon to her advantage, revealing the ways in which the 'feminine' has been constructed in relation to the 'masculine' as a hierarchical difference (as the 'other' of the Same). Reflecting on her project in *Speculum*, Irigaray defends the urgency of the project of 'reopening' the figures of philosophical discourse –

'[I]dea, substance, subject, transcendental subjectivity, absolute knowledge – in order to pry out of them what they have borrowed that is feminine, from the feminine, to make them "render up" and give back what they owe the feminine.' (TS: 74)

Irigaray's strategy in *Speculum* (and also parts of *This Sex* and *Ethics*) is to engage in a sort of 'subversive mimicry' or interpretative reading (*relecture interprétante*) that teases out the latent tensions and blindspots within the text (Jones, 2011: 18). By playing on the notion of the 'feminine' as it has been tacitly constructed in relation to the 'masculine', Irigaray subtly draws out a *sui generis* notion of the female which is hidden deep within the text's contradictions and ambiguities. So is

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Irigaray's use of psychoanalysis merely pragmatic? Whilst I concede that her later work is *less* concerned with de-constructing the psychoanalytic framework in order to expose its phallocentric bias, and *more* concerned with defining a *sui generis* notion of 'sexuate becoming', we must also acknowledge that her later thought remains *broadly* psychoanalytical, particularly her account of sexuation, although it is less concerned with describing 'psychosexual' individuation *per se*.[16] In short, I would suggest that the recent disinterest in Irigaray's relationship with psychoanalysis has been precipitated by her quasi-pragmatic approach to it. Irigaray often uses psychoanalysis against itself; she plays Freud off against Lacan, and Lacan off against Freud; in *Speculum* and *This Sex* she uses Lacan either as an interlocutor or as an 'ever-present absence' who looms silently in the margins of the text (Jones, 2011: 147). In *Speculum*, she engages in a 'symptomatic' reading of western discourse and uses Lacan to read Freud and others symptomatically. The question of what elements Irigaray actually retains from psychoanalytic theory is tricky, and I attempt to lay bare the 'psychoanalytic' foundations of her thought in Chapter 1. Moreover, as her thought progresses, Irigaray appears to take for granted certain psychoanalytic concepts which make them seem unquestionable, and this makes aspects of her later thought problematic.[17] I have chosen to focus on her 'earlier' phases for several further reasons which I shall begin to outline in the following sections, beginning with the matter of essentialism.

3. Essential Problems

I have chosen to focus on Irigaray's early thought – what she defines as the 'second phase' of her work – first of all for reasons relating to the purported 'turn' in her thought towards a dualistic

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[16] I am grateful to Alison Stone (2006 & passim.) for the use of the term *sui generis* (literally, of its/her/his own kind). In my view, it best captures Irigaray's attempts to define a unique and autonomous female subjectivity which defies hierarchical dualism.

[17] Cf. Mader (2004), who offers some criticisms of Irigaray's theory of sexuate rights based upon Irigaray's account of sexuation and the mother-daughter relationship. She argues, for example, that Irigaray's insistence on defining sexual difference as a difference in relation to the maternal origin amounts to treating the little girl as '*a little mother born of another mother*' (Mader, 2004: 374). Whilst I find Mader's recommendation that the father-daughter relation should be 'symbolised' as a further corrective, I suggest that she neglects to take into account the insistence of a dualistic ontology in Irigaray's later thought (for instance, see Stone, 2008: 154). As Stone explains, Mader's criticism can be assuaged if we regard sexual difference as 'relational' in terms of the psychic centrality of the mother to the child, and the infant's sensitivity to the bodily 'rhythms' that enable the infant to differentiate between mother and father (ibid.; Stone, 2012: 81 - 83).

ontology of sexuate difference, a turn which, according to Stone (2006), involves a move from a 'political' form of essentialism to a 'realist' form. Here, I shall contextualise my own project by situating it in relation to criticisms of Irigaray's later thought, specifically where she has been accused of falling foul of 'essentialism' and of prioritising sexual difference over and above other 'differences' such as race and class. I shall argue that whilst I agree with Stone's contention that Irigaray's later thought is more philosophically 'coherent', I also agree that it remains politically conservative. I shall suggest, moreover, that the transformatory potential of Irigaray's thought lies in her earlier, more 'psychoanalytical' project and its inherent quest to engineer the conditions for a *sui generis* – and therefore post-Oedipal – notion of female subjectivity (Stone, 2006: 21).

In philosophy, 'essentialism' is the view that an object or thing has an immutable set of attributes or properties that are immune to change, and that this set of essential properties makes the object or thing what it is (Stone, 2006: 6; 22). In the specific context of feminism, essentialism denotes the belief that 'woman' may be defined by a specific number of inborn attributes that also define her across cultures and throughout history, and in the absence of which she would cease to be categorised as a 'woman' (and the same would be true of 'man') (Schor, 1994: 59). Thus as Stone remarks, essentialism also entails a form of 'universalism', implying that there are some properties that are shared by *all* women (Stone, 2006: 23). Instead of prising apart the poles of biological sex and socially constructed gender, the 'essentialist' 'maps the feminine onto femaleness' and the masculine onto maleness (Schor, 1994: 60). But whilst some second-wave feminists embraced the female *body* as the rock of feminism, early critics of essentialism were more cautious of making generalisations about women which ran the risk of tacitly projecting forms of 'feminine' experience as the norm, 'thereby duplicating the patterns of exclusion and oppression which feminism should contest' (Stone, 2006: 23).[18] Indeed, critics also questioned the assumption that women shared any common or unitary experiences *at all*, a problem which inevitably led to a linguistic crisis; namely, how do we define 'woman' without 'essentialising' her (Schor, 1994: 66; Moi, 2002: 139)? Moreover, if 'woman' cannot be defined in terms of any commonality between women, how, to echo

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[18] A notable example of this form of essentialism is Mary Daly (1928 – 2010). Daly was deeply critical of transsexualism, arguing that no number of surgeons and hormone therapists could produce 'women'.

the words of Judith Butler, can we begin to reconstruct this female 'subject' who fails to represent the array of embodied beings culturally positioned as women? (Butler, 1990: 325)[19]

Much of the controversy surrounding Irigaray's early 'mimetic' approach in *Speculum* and *This Sex* centred on her 'symbolic' use of the female anatomy, particularly her evocation of the 'two lips' in 'When Our Lips Speak Together' (1985b). By referring openly to the female body, and appearing to claim that 'woman' is constituted by her anatomy, critics accused Irigaray of advocating a form of biological determinism.[20] She was accused of suggesting that, by virtue of their anatomy, women had access to a certain type of speaking style (*parler femme*) and a distinct mode of autoeroticism (Stone, 2006: 24). Rachel Jones summarises the perceived problem with talking about 'woman' in terms of her body:

'The essentialist charge [...] reflects an underlying representation of the body as fixed and determined matter, so that any appeal to the specifically female body is in turn seen as 'fixing' and 'determining' women's existence.' (Jones, 2011: 177)

Defenders of Irigaray claimed, however, that her critics had missed the point about Irigaray's use of psychoanalytic theory and her dismantling of western metaphysics more generally. Naomi Schor's important essay 'This Essentialism is Not One' (1994), for instance, highlighted the existence not of a single 'essentialism', but of multiple 'essentialisms' operating from within the complex and overlapping theoretical frameworks of feminist theory. In her article, Schor identifies Irigaray first with the linguistic critique of Lacan *et al*, for whom there can be no mention of the 'body' that has not already been enculturated (Schor, 1994: 61). On this view, essentialism is a mere effect of the (Symbolic-) Imaginary. Irigaray's powerfully seductive evocations of the 'feminine' that resonate with the presence and plenitude of the pre-discursive, pre-Oedipal Real are merely attempts to give some sort of structure to an otherwise unformed 'feminine' excess (ibid.). However, this should not

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[19] Cf. Moi (2005). Moi returns to one of the defining questions of Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1997), 'What is a Woman?'
[20] This is somewhat ironic, as biological (anatomical) determinism of the kind postulated by Freud, for example, was exactly what Irigaray was railing against in *Speculum*.

be seen merely as an attempt at 'miming' essentialist logic in order to eke out a kind of *sui generis* femininity. Schor also aligns Irigaray with the feminist Derrideans, for whom essentialism is complicitous with western metaphysics (Schor, 1994: 61).[21] On this account, the binary oppositions man/woman, mind/body, and so on, are products of a phallogocentric order which assumes that meanings and identities are stable and ever-present, whilst 'Beyond the prison house of the binary, multiple differences play indifferently across degendered bodies' (ibid.).

It has been suggested, then, that both of these approaches entail a 'strategic' form of essentialism which is designed to achieve specific political goals. Gayatri Spivak, for example, argued that women should adopt an 'operational' or 'strategic' form of essentialism – a 'false ontology' – in order to advance a feminist political program.[22] Placing Irigaray in this 'strategic' camp, Margaret Whitford argued that Irigaray assumes the 'essentialist language of metaphysics' *deliberately* in order to reveal the not the essential *feminine*, but rather the female *imaginary*, 'a place in the symbolic structures' (Whitford, 1991: 72). This 'strategic' move is intended to 'verbalize the unconscious phantasy and begin the process of lifting the repression', in order to lead to social change (ibid.). Moreover, Irigaray's early technique of 'making space' for the female/feminine via the subversive strategies of mimicry and mimesis – the question of sexuate difference – has been interpreted by Penelope Deutscher as constituting a set of 'open brackets': a sort of open question (Deutscher, 2002: 29, 123). But are these interpretations ultimately unsatisfying as a defence of Irigaray against accusations of essentialism?

Irigaray has herself remained ambivalent on the issue of essentialism. On being asked in an interview about whether she considered her early work to adhere to a form of 'political' or 'strategic' essentialism, she replied that, perhaps, essentialism 'was realised in order to reach the possibility of being two' (Howie & Irgiaray, 2008: 79). Whilst her confusion at being confronted with such questions is partly linguistic ('essence' means something quite different in French), it partly also stems from the relative *irrelevance* of the issue once we understand that her 'early' phase was

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[21] Cf. Cixous & Clément's essay 'Sorties' in *The Newly Born Woman* (2001), which is typical of the influence of Derrida on the post-Lacanian 'French feminists'.
[22] Although Spivak later 'changed her mind'. See Butler, 1990: 325. The term 'strategic essentialism' was coined by Spivak.

intended to engage in a political subversion of western philosophical thought.[23] The 'feminine' subject which emerges from the sustained attacks in *Speculum* and *This Sex* was not intended to capture the essence of 'woman' or the female body *realistically*, but rather to reaffirm traditional notions of the 'female'/'feminine' in such a way that subverted and transformed them. However, Alison Stone (2006) points to a fundamental problem with this formulation of political or strategic essentialism. This problem seems to relate to the way in which the body – and indeed matter and 'nature' more generally – is positioned within postmodern or poststructuralist thought as a whole. Stone argues that Irigaray's early political or strategic position –

'[A]ims to revalue female identity and, also, nature, matter, and embodiment – with which the female is traditionally aligned – yet it attempts to revalue these only as culturally conceived and symbolised, presupposing, all along, the validity of the conceptual hierarchy which privileges (symbolically male) culture over (symbolically female) nature.' (Stone, 2006: 6)

Stone's premise is that the 'turn' in Irigaray's thought can be interpreted as her abandoning this early strategic position because it aims to revalue female identity and the female body *only as imagined and symbolised,* thus reinforcing the conceptual hierarchy of culture (language, the Symbolic) over nature (matter, the body) that it was intended to overturn in the first place. Whilst for some critics - Rachel Jones, for instance - Irigaray's conception of bodily morphology (the idea of the body as 'active matter') is enough to displace the essentialist charge; for Stone, Irigaray's early thought remains 'internally unstable' due to its prioritising of symbolic and imaginary forms over nature and the corporeal (Jones, 2011: 10; Stone, 2006: 33). She claims that whilst according to some prevalent 'materialist' views, the Symbolic is conceptually indistinguishable from the material; cultural mediations continue to shape how our bodies are inhabited and 'so shape how these bodies

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[23] In French, *essences* can mean anything from 'species' to 'petrol', hence the problem in transliteration and Irigaray's irritation at being asked the question of whether she is, indeed, an 'essentialist'.

develop and act' (Stone, 2006: 35).[24] Consequently, bodies have no determinate character 'prior to this representational shaping' and political essentialism therefore inadvertently 'reinstates a cluster of established conceptual hierarchies' (ibid.). However, I shall argue in this Introduction that there is a way to reconcile a political (or even 'naïve') form of essentialism with a post-phenomenological conception of the body as 'flesh': active matter at the threshold of nature and culture.

According to Stone (2006), then, Irigaray's later thought (*An Ethics of Sexual Difference* and after) purports to surmount the instability of the strategic position by revaluing and enhancing the 'natural' qualities of real, sexuate bodies (Stone, 2006: 33). In *Ethics*, Irigaray begins to sketch an alternative 'ontology' according to which bodies inherently seek alliance with culture (Stone, 2006: 40). This is interpreted by Stone as a transition from a political or strategic position to a 'realist' position: Irigaray implies that bodies have real, naturally different 'qualities' which can be known independently of their 'representational shaping' by culture. However, there are several issues that arise from this apparent move. First, Stone claims, it doesn't necessarily follow that, even if bodies did in fact exhibit naturally determinate characters, that they would necessarily be sexually dimorphic. But this makes more sense once we consider Irigaray's contention that males have a 'natural', bodily-rooted 'difficulty' in accommodating female bodies (Stone, 2006: 42). (In Chapter 2, for instance, I discuss the inability of the Kantian subject to account for the pregnant body.) Irigaray appears to extrapolate from her interpretation of western patriarchal culture 'knowledge of natural differences between males and females which underpins its partiality and exclusions' (Stone, 2006: 43). But how do we 'know' that this is a 'natural' proclivity, and not merely a cultural construct? Is this an extrapolation too far? Indeed, as Stone contests, how can cultural formations be modified if men are biologically inclined to suppress female subjectivity? (Stone, 2006: 46.)

At first glance, Irigaray's notion of naturally determinate bodies seems politically conservative at best, and at worst smacks of biological determinism. Before considering Stone's (2006) defence of Irigaray, however, I would like to outline a further, related problem with Irigaray's later thought – that of heterosexism – which, in my view, contributes to its overall 'conservatism'.

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[24] For example, Grosz (1994), Battersby (1998), and Braidotti (2002).

Irigaray's emphasis on 'duality' and dimorphism and the relationship between the two or 'couple' of sexuate difference has generated accusations of heterosexism. As Jones (2011) remarks, thinkers that are generally sympathetic to Irigaray's project of rethinking the conditions for producing a specifically female subjectivity have been 'uneasy' with her emphasis on 'being-two' in her later thought, as this could be viewed as reinforcing the normative heterosexism of the patriarchal culture she critiques (Jones, 2011: 8). To a reader who is unversed in the intricacies of Irigaray's more recent theoretical transformations, statements such as these might seem particularly alarming:

'Pleasure between the same sex does not result in that immediate ecstasy between the other and myself. It may be more or less intense, quantitatively and qualitatively different, it does not produce in us that ecstasy which is our child, prior to any child [sic.].' (Irigaray, 1995d: 180)

'The man and the woman can thus form a human couple. In the couple sexuality finds its actualization, its realisation, an *in-itself* and *for-itself* corresponding to the poles needed for the perfect incarnation of every man and woman's humanity. This task is realised separately and together.' (ILTY: 147)

Critics who maintain that Irigaray's recent offerings conceal an insipid sort of homophobia might be forgiven when we consider her additional claim that heterosexual relations are supposedly 'ethically superior' to homosexual relations because they are more complex and challenging (Stone, 2006: 48). Indeed, Irigaray also argues that natural sexual difference entails a 'natural' attraction between the sexes, an attraction which she suggests would be instrumental in forming a culture of sexuate difference based on the model of the 'two' (ILTY: 146). In Irigaray's defence, however, her ostensibly normatively conservative claims make more sense when considered in light of her dualistic ontology or 'naturally' different bodies, as well as her critique of the role of the 'feminine' in western discourse. Deutscher explains:

'Sexual difference in this sense is not an ideal for monolithic, radically distinct sexual identities occupied by women and men. It is an ideal for a culture in which sexed subjects would be primarily oriented toward the other, as opposed to drawing on the other only to provide succor for their own identity.' (Deutscher, 2002: 77)

Whilst Irigaray's early critique exposes masculine subjectivity as reliant upon the 'feminine' as a 'prop' or support (discussed in Chapter 4), leaving the feminine bereft and derelict, Irigaray's later thought reorients itself towards the relationship between to 'naturally' different *genres* which, on her account, would form the basis of an ethical culture. Moreover, Irigaray claims that the relationship between the sexes is potentially generative, not merely in a reductively *reproductive* sense, but rather in the sense that it has the power to 'generate' in all sorts of different ways both biologically and culturally. But as Jones remarks, 'such relations can, and should, be acknowledged and valued without having to be mapped onto the form of the male/female couple' (Jones, 2011: 196; Cheah & Grosz, 1998: 27-8). However, I am sceptical about how far we can defend Irigaray on this issue without conceding at some stage that Irigaray's overriding concern is in fact the *heterosexual* couple, in every sense of the word, not simply 'platonic' male-female relations; a concern which at times amounts to a rather irksome idealisation.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, I agree with Stone's (2006) contention that Irigaray's later thought *is* philosophically coherent. Accusations of essentialism are circumvented once we acknowledge Irigaray's 'turn' to a dualistic ontology of active and naturally occurring bodies.[25] Inspired by the late thought of Heidegger – particularly his account of *physis* adapted from Aristotle – Irigaray sets out an ontology comprised not of 'essences' as such, but of natural 'rhythms' which regulate growth and change (Stone, 2006: 90). These rhythms, which circulate around two poles of 'expansion' and 'contraction', pervade the natural world and are also constitutive of sexual difference.[26] According to Stone's interpretation, Irigaray defends this somewhat mystical ontology on the grounds of its continuity with perception and lived experience (Stone, 2006: 93). On this

[25] In this respect we might say that Irgigaray is an 'ontological' essentialist rather than a biological one, as she posits two kinds of 'being'.
[26] In *I Love to You* (1996), Irigaray remarks that 'nature is at least two: male and female' (ILTY: 35).

account, Irigaray contends that the cosmos is comprised of fluid substances such as air and water which circulate the two natural poles. *Physis* describes this natural process of 'coming into being', a process which is also constitutive of *sexuate* being.[27] So for the later Irigaray, bodies don't have fixed 'essences' *per se*, but rather are 'fluid' and in constant flux; sexuate difference being the 'fullest manifestation of the 'rhythms' which exist within nature as *physis* (Stone, 2006: 104).

Thus whilst Irigaray maintains that she is not an 'essentialist' – in Stone's words, she is an essentialist who denies her own essentialism – she does insist there are natural differences between the sexes vis-à-vis their constitution in terms of natural rhythms (Stone, 2006: 45). In a way, Irigaray has moved away from the notion of 'morphology' – the 'forms' that bodies assume in culture insofar as they are mediated by symbolic-imaginary structures – towards an idiosyncratic form of realist essentialism, according to which bodies can be 'known' in their natural, material corporeality. In her book, Alison Stone (2006) attempts to surmount the problems with Irigaray's account by appealing to a Butlerian notion of bodily multiplicity. In doing so, she intends to counter strands of Irigaray's later thought that threaten to perpetuate 'constricting, dualistic gender norms' (Stone, 2006: 16). It is beyond the remit of this thesis to expand on Stone's argument in a significant way here.[28] Rather, I have shown that Irigaray's later thought remains dogged by issues relating to the sexual dimorphism implicit in her account. And whilst I agree with Stone's description of the problems with the poststructuralist understanding of bodies (and the 'strategic' position entailed by such an approach), I do not regard this as a major problem in the case of Irigaray's early thought; indeed, her case is somewhat different. Christine Battersby, for instance, remarks that 'for Irigaray [...] matter is not just socially and culturally constructed' (Battersby, 1998: 126); in other words, there must be a sense in which for Irigaray the materiality of the body actively participates in its own construction, otherwise this view would be 'profoundly at odds' with her critique of the form/matter distinction (Jones, 2011:

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[27] Heidegger's term *Ereignis*, discussed in Chapter 3, describes the process of 'being brought into one's own' (Jones, 2011: 181). See Section 5, below.
[28] Stone's book received a response in the form of a 'critical exchange' with Penelope Deutscher and Mary Beth Mader in *Differences* (Volume 19: 3, 2008). Deutscher's and Mader's main criticisms seem to revolve around Stone's method of extending Irigaray's (and Butler's) thought 'into areas with which [their] thought is contiguous despite itself' (Stone, 2008: 153). My main use of Stone's text at this juncture however is to highlight the complications with Irigaray's later 'ontology' and to defend and justify my own decision to focus on her early thought.

175). Indeed, it would be at odds with her vision of a 'sensible transcendental' (see below). As Jones (2011) argues, if we are to develop adequate representations of the female body, there must be a sense in which matter is capable of generating form (Jones, 2011: 176).[29] I suggest that it is possible to reconcile Irigaray's later dualistic ontology of 'naturally occurring' bodies with the broadly Lacanian framework of her earlier thought by acknowledging that the body is the site of a fundamental tension between its natural 'constitution' and its cultural and representational shaping. Insofar as this problem can be surmounted, I have appealed in Chapter 5 to Irigaray's elaboration of Merleau-Ponty's notion of the 'flesh'- active matter at the horizon of nature and culture – and to the idea of female subjectivity as a 'fleshy' subjectivity, as ways in which to overturn the conceptual distinctions between self and other, culture and nature, and so on.[30]

In the following section I shall continue to defend my decision to focus on Irigaray's early work by describing the aspects of it which I believe have the potential to be most transformatory, particularly from the perspective of psychoanalysis. This is not to say that issues do not remain which circulate around the purported 'strategic' position entailed by Irigaray's early thought.[31] However, shall show in this thesis that by interpreting Irigaray's early thought at the intersection between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, we might formulate an account of psychosexual difference – a specifically 'female' subjectivity – which avoids the problems entailed by political or strategic essentialism, yet remains politically transformative. A key element in this endeavour is the mother-daughter relationship that I discussed at the beginning of this Introduction, and to which I now turn.

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[29] There is certainly a tension in Jones' argument however: without admitting that bodies *really do* exhibit naturally different qualities/potentialities as Stone suggests, I don't see how she can truly overcome the dualism of form/matter. For example, in suggesting that bodies may 'write themselves' (and this is essential to Irigaray's early project *qua écriture feminine*), Jones upholds the conceptual privilege given to form (and the Symbolic *per se*).

[30] The term 'fleshy subjectivity' is from Battersby (1998), and captures the ways in which the female self is more tied to the 'flesh' than the male. Battersby exploits this fact as the basis for generating an autonomous female subjectivity (Battersby, 1998: 9).

[31] And the converse is true: there remain issues with the 'realist essentialism' of her later thought. Cf. Stone, 2006: 44 - 51; Stone, 2008: 156 - 157.

4. Maternal Origins

It is the *sui generis* notion of the 'feminine' emerging from the sustained critique in Irigaray's early thought which interests me in this thesis, particularly in terms of how we can use it to develop a post- or anti- Oedipal account of embodied female subjectivity. I define post-Oedipal, here, as incorporating an account of female psychosexual development which is not based on the masculine model, and therefore also does not centre upon norms of male anatomy and bodily morphology (the masculine body image or *imago*). Thus, we may define the 'female' as an intelligible term independently of the 'male'. I have elected to focus on the question of female subjectivity in Irigaray's 'early' phases; that is, from *Speculum* (1985a) up to around the time of *Je, Tu, Nous* (1993b). That is to say I have on occasion made use of her more recent writing where it has seemed appropriate. For example, much of Chapter 5 is concerned with Irigaray's notion of a 'placental economy' from her essay 'On the Maternal Order' in *Je, Tu, Nous*. In general, however, I have not made use of her later, more explicitly 'political' texts. This is in part because I am more concerned with the issue of subjectivity as it relates to psychoanalytical models – especially to the Oedipal account of psychosexual development (in Freud and Lacan) – but also because of what I considered to be fundamental problems with her later thought that I described above.

One of the biggest guiding factors in Irigaray's early, more 'psychoanalytical' thought is, as I touched upon above, her thesis that the mother-daughter relationship remains unsymbolised. As such, female subjectivity remains impossible until this relationship has been re-imagined and reconceptualised symbolically. There are, furthermore, other important themes related to this issue: the theme of matricide (mother-killing) in the Oedipal account of psychosexual development (this pertains to the occlusion of maternal subjectivity in general), and the related topic of 'symbolic castration', without which sublimation (necessary for women to participate fully in culture) is considered to be impossible. Indeed, I occasionally refer to these issues (including the problem of the transference, discussed in Chapter 1, Section 3) under the rubric of 'primary narcissism', meaning the period of the infant's focus upon the 'self' which leads to the development of the ego in primordial

form (for which the ideal-ego, or Lacan's *imago*, plays a central role). The impact of the matricidal schema (which is inseparable from symbolic castration which functions to repress maternal 'desire') means that, in effect, primary narcissism is *unresolved* in women, and becomes manifest in secondary narcissistic formations such as the 'masquerade' of women in patriarchy. Throughout her *oeuvre*, Irigaray consistently stresses the need to recover the generative power of the maternal body in order for women to be recognised as sexed (sexuate) subjects in their own right.

When interpreted in light of her early psychoanalytical project, it is apparent that the question of sexuate difference is intimately tied to the occlusion of maternal desire rendered necessary by the Oedipal account. Whilst the mother's body continues to remain a liminal, out of reach, concept – aligned with the Lacanian Real – women's subjectivity will continue to suffer. Paradoxically, the tendency in western culture (including metaphysics) has been to reduce women to their maternal function whilst at the same time to deny this function any real symbolic value. The consequences of this 'foreclosure' of maternal desire has been that the mother-daughter relationship has become the *dark continent* of the 'dark continent'– the least understood and most inadequately symbolised familial relationship, most notably in psychoanalysis (SO 19; 139; 141). Irigaray urges that, in the continuing absence of this symbolisation, women will remain in a state of *déréliction*. The connotations of this term are, as Whitford explains, much stronger in French than in English: *déréliction* evokes abandonment, without hope of salvation; abjection, even (Whitford, 1989: 109). Indeed, without mediation in the Symbolic – or, in other words, whilst this relationship remains unsymbolised – the operations of sublimation also remain difficult for women. As I go on to describe in Chapter 1, this also means that women are unable to be as culturally, socially and politically productive as men, nor are they able to attain status as full 'subjects'. For Irigaray, then, the mother-daughter relationship constitutes an 'extremely explosive kernel in our societies' should it be afforded symbolic expression (ibid.). In the second 'phase' of her thought, this endeavour represents one of Irigaray's primary concerns.

According to Irigaray, the unsymbolised mother-daughter relation has further ramifications for women. Rivalry between women, for instance, is considered to be a by-product of the lack of symbolisation of this relationship and its significance, as is women's tendency to become agents of

their own oppression in the absence of a female Symbolic (this tendency is perpetuated by certain cultural rites, symbolic exchanges (such as marriage), the role women play in the economy, and so on). Irigaray argues that without some sort of mediation women will continue to 'substitute' their mothers, a phenomenon which is unconsciously suffused with hate. Indeed, Stone (2012) contends that in order for maternal subjectivity (and therefore female subjectivity more generally) to be possible, the mother must be able to assume a subject position *distinct* from that of the daughter (Stone, 2012: 5). For Stone, the position of the mother ought to be distinct from that of the daughter because the mother *replays* her own maternal past in the act of mothering. We might argue that the rivalrous nature of the relationship between Eleanor and her mother in Briscoe's novel is symptomatic of our culture's inability to symbolise the mother-daughter relationship, and, consequently, Paula is unable to assume a subject position distinct from that of her daughter. This cycle will be perpetuated unless mothers are able to relate to their own mothers without attempting to substitute them, hence transferring their past experience as daughters onto their own daughters. To attempt to 'substitute' the mother, in this sense, is tantamount to a sort of matricide; the mother is incorporated as a phantasy figure (confused with the individual's desires and imaginary phantasies) instead of being *introjected* as an autonomous maternal subject.[32]

The notion that women are denied full subject status because of their psychical inability to separate fully from their mothers is something Irigaray highlights as symptomatic of (and also integral to) patriarchy's operation. If to be a 'subject' involves a sort of psychical matricide, then women will always be unable to identify themselves in psychical relation to their own mothers (because there exists no symbolic 'law' to mediate the relationship), and will instead remain fused or merged with them. Stone (2012) traces the development of the notion of 'selfhood' back to classical antiquity and argues that the term has evolved in opposition to the maternal body (Stone, 2012: 11). She claims that our cultural imaginary has produced a web of associations and images relating to the maternal figure in which 'the mother is a bodily figure whom one must leave behind, and hence she is

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[32] *Introjection* describes the process of taking in attitudes and ideas from others unconsciously, whereas 'incorporation' marks the failure of introjection; the failure to assimilate the '(m)other', for instance. See Chapter 5 for further discussion on the role of the body image in this process, and Chapter 6 for the mother's role.

assumed to be the background to the selfhood of others but not herself a self or (in modernity) a subject' (ibid.). Stone cites Hitchcock's *Psycho* an as an example of our cultural anxiety surrounding the idea of remaining 'merged' with the dangerous, engulfing maternal presence.[33] The psychosis undergone by the protagonist in Hitchcock's film is in psychoanalytical terms the end product of the psychical failure to separate from the mother. However, it is usually *women* who bear closer proximity to a psychotic psychical structure rather than men (if they fail to comply with the Father's Law) because the Oedipal scenario requires that they must simultaneously identify with *and* repudiate the mother.[34] But if boys need to separate from their mothers in order to assume a masculine identity (note that Norman Bates is feminised and *effeminate*, the classic 'mummy's boy'), the development pattern enshrined in the psychoanalytical thought of Freud and Lacan only really makes sense for males. Stone remarks that 'the elevation of the paternal figure into the sole bearer of civilization thwarts, rather than fulfils, girls' need for self-differentiation' (Stone, 2012: 26). But why have men managed to impose their psychic needs through culture whilst women have been left bereft? Whilst the processes of sublimation appear to favour men, women are forced into an impossible choice between matricide and psychosis. Stone remarks that 'if mothers have any distinct mental structures or relational positions as mothers, then psychoanalysis appears constitutionally incapable of recognising or theorising them' (Stone, 2012: 31).

The aim of this thesis is not to try and theorise what exactly these distinctly maternal mental structures or relational positions are (Stone attempts this in her book) but rather to draw on Irigaray's thought in order to open up a discursive space for developing a non-matricidal account of female psychic development (ibid.). As I have argued, this means that we must interrogate the conditions under which subjectivity is created and shaped, especially where those conditions are 'matricidal'. For instance, Irigaray's thought suggests that this 'matricidal' clinical picture also applies to metaphysics: 'in metaphysics, too, women are not individuated: there is only the place of the mother, or the maternal function' (Whitford, 1989: 112). If subjectivity itself is in some sense 'matricidal',

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[33] Cf. Žižek (2007 & passim.).
[34] Cf. Brennan, 1989: 5.

then we must either reject the notion of the subject entirely – *qua* Deleuze, etc. – or reconceptualise the very meaning of subjectivity and all that is entailed by it.

The topic of matricide is thus an important theme in Irigaray's thought as a whole and in this thesis in particular, and I return to it explicitly in Chapters 1, 2 and 6. I shall go on to argue that an 'Irigarayan' subjectivity must be implicitly anti-matricidal – recovering the generative power of the maternal body – and therefore also by definition be 'post-Oedipal'. As I stated above, I use post-Oedipal in a loose sense as incorporating an account of female psychosexual development which is not based on the masculine model. Next, I turn to Irigaray's rather enigmatic notion of a 'sensible transcendental', and describe what I perceive as its function in her thought, and how it may help us to define an authentic female subjectivity.

5. The 'Sensible Transcendental' and Irigaray's post-Kantianism

Irigaray's 'sensible transcendental' – what I regard as the central category or 'hinge term' of this thesis – stands for a mode of experience which stresses the primacy of the body and its relation to the senses, especially that of *touch*.[35] A *sensible* transcendental emphasises the corporeal origins and conditions of existence – particularly in relation to the *body of the mother* - which have been occluded by 'phallocentric' modes of representation (in philosophy, psychoanalysis, and religion), and therefore (re)locates carnality and divinity together so that the 'divine' comes to represent the consummation or fulfilment of the 'flesh'. In her later thought, Irigaray will evoke the sensible transcendental as the *condition* or *ground* of ethical relations with sexuate 'others', and it is in this context that the term is most commonly understood. However, I argue that a closer inspection of Irigaray's early writing directs us to the psychoanalytic origins of the term, and its crucial role in defining an explicitly 'female' subjectivity.

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[35] I use 'hinge term' in the sense that much of Irigaray's thought hinges, or is pivotal on, what should be understood by a 'sensible transcendental'. Derrida, in *Of Grammatology* (1997), claims that *différance* is the 'hinge' between metaphysical oppositions such as speech and writing.

In Chapter 1 I describe how Irigaray initially refers to a 'sensible transcendental' in the context of the psychoanalytic 'scene'. In her essay 'The Limit of the Transference' (1995b), she evokes a 'sensible transcendental' first as an analytic cure, something to assist the cessation of the transference between female analyst and female analysand. The wider context of this evocation is the mother-daughter relationship. The transference is irresolvable, she argues, whilst no symbolic 'object' exists in order to mediate the relationship; no Symbolic Law or Law of the Mother. As such, analyst and analysand project onto one another unconscious, unresolved desires and phantasies relating to their own mothers. In short, analyst and analysand are incapable of relating to one another as autonomous subjects with their own psychical relations, each risking the engulfment and destruction of the other. In chapters 2 – 4 I investigate the connections between Irigaray's 'sensible transcendental', her dismantling of western metaphysics, and the *sui generis* notion of female subjectivity which I see as arising from this critical project. I shall now describe Irigaray's various uses of the term, and explain why I see her thought as being intrinsically post-Kantian.

In Chapter 2 I explore the idea that the sensible transcendental emerges from a critical dialogue with Kant and Lacan. Irigaray resituates the Kantian understanding of the conditions for knowledge as neither universal nor necessary, but rather as *historical* and *material*: she stresses the significance of sexuate difference as well as our indebtedness to the maternal body. As Jones (2011) argues, Irigaray aims to transform the fundamental terms of Kant's project, seeking out a position beyond his (Jones, 2011: 117). In this sense, we might argue that Irigaray's project is post-Kantian. Jones is, to the best of my knowledge, the first recent critic to recognise the Kantian element of Irigaray's project, and to acknowledge Irigaray's engagement with Kant as something more significant than a mere attempt at 'dismantling' his metaphysical framework. Although commentators including Battersby (1998) (although her work on the Kantian sublime is important) and Colebrook (1999) have made important contributions to our understanding of Irigaray's relationship with Kant, Jones goes further and explicitly links Irigaray's use of a sensible transcendental with her critique of Kant. Jones comments, that (and I quote at length) -

'A 'sensible transcendental' would not be one that privileged the sensible over the transcendental. Rather, it would involve rethinking the conditions of experience in ways that no longer depend on opposing concepts and intuitions, subject and object, form and matter. Such a frame would make it possible to recognise the ways in which the sexuate, material aspects of our being give pattern and meaning to the world by actively shaping and taking shape within our bodily encounters – our contiguous relations with others. The finitude of human beings that Kant so significantly recognises would thereby be resituated and thought not so much in terms of the limits of the faculties, as rooted in the originary relation to the mother as well as the ways in which sexuate difference conditions and limits human being (as two). [sic]' (Jones, 2011: 126)

Jones continues that Irigaray's project might be described as 'transcendental' because Irigaray seeks to determine the conditions for the possibility of subjective experience, but that this subject is explicitly *gendered*: she seeks to define 'the conditions which would allow a woman to relate to herself *as* female without being defined as the 'other' of a male subject' (Jones, 2011: 117). According to Jones, Irigaray 'breaks open' the Kantian project in searching for a female 'other' which is not merely the reversal – or mirror image/specular 'other' – of the male subject (ibid.). On Jones' reading, the Kantian divide between spatio-temporal and conceptual forms on one hand, and sensible matter on the other, is what underpins the specular economy of the Same.[36] Furthermore, the schism between the sensible and the supersensible (or transcendental) is symptomatic of a more general split between form and matter which can be traced back to Aristotle. The 'Paradox A Priori' – the paradox of symmetry discussed by Kant in the *Prolegomena* (2001) – for Irigaray highlights the way in which the world of the Kantian subject is fundamentally divided between the conceptual and the sensible (Jones, 2011: 125). Kant's example of incongruous counterparts reveals a split between intuitions

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[36] The hylomprphic model was theorised by Aristotle: substances were analysed and categorised in terms of (active) form and (passive) matter (according to Irigaray, Aristotle characterised the former as masculine and the latter as feminine: see 'How to Conceive (of) a Girl' in *Speculum* (1985a) (SO: 160 – 167). The form/matter distinction is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

and conceptual forms; but as Jones argues, what is most important about this example is not that it presents us with a material excess or 'remainder' we should seek to reclaim (although this *sui generis* notion of the 'feminine' is also important), but that it reveals the way in which the world of the Kantian subject is fundamentally *divided* (ibid.) Irigaray demonstrates how the subject of 'specularization' is severed from its material materiality yet is paradoxically dependent on it for its existence.

I therefore argue that the 'sensible transcendental' should be understood primarily in the context of Irigaray's desire to mend this pernicious schism between the material and the supersensible, as well as to remind us of our dependency on the maternal body – the body of the (m)other – and the material conditions of existence more generally. Moreover, as the 'intertext' in 'Paradox A Priori' with Kant and Lacan suggests (in Chapter 2), Irigaray also implies that the Kantian and psychoanalytic projects have come to 'mirror' one another. She claims that both discourses operate in order to diminish the importance of – or exclude entirely – the corporeal and material conditions of human life and the debt to the mother especially. The burden of embodiment is then projected onto 'woman' – the 'unanalysed remainder' – who paradoxically provides the 'succour' for man's existence in a phallic Symbolic order. The Kantian and psychoanalytic frameworks are therefore both 'matricidal': they both involve a violent (conceptual) separation from the mother, at the expense of the mother and female subjectivity in general.

Given the importance of Irigaray's observation of the ways in which the Kantian and psychoanalytic projects mirror or run parallel to one another, I go on to exploit the idea of sensible transcendental as a vehicle for exploring the ways in which Irigaray attempts to counter the Oedipal core of the metaphysical/psychoanalytical frameworks by overcoming the split between form and matter, subject and object, self and other, and so on. By consistently reimagining the relationship between these 'opposites' or dualisms, Irigaray begins to transform the fundamental conditions out of which subjectivities evolve. In Chapter 3, for example, I 'rethink' the sensible transcendental in the context of Irigaray's interpretation of Heidegger's term '*Ereignis*': a difficult and opaque concept which I interpret as meaning 'to become what one is', not by taking up an already existing identity or appropriating an other's, but by being brought into one's own (Jones, 2011: 181). By subtly

redefining Heidegger's *Ereignis* vis-à-vis its association with her own notion of a sensible transcendental, Irigaray uses her dalliance with Heidegger in order to begin to transform the fundamental terms of the Kantian (and psychoanalytical) project by restoring the sexuate body – and with it its dependence on 'air' and the body of the mother – to metaphysical thought. Chapter 4 continues along these lines but resumes the topic of Irigaray's complex relationship with Lacan, focusing initially on his flirtation with the mystics in *Seminar XX*. Here, I argue that the sensible transcendental becomes a form of 'vertical transcendence' (evoking the generative power of the maternal) which spiritualises the body, repairing the schism between the divine and the human such that it begins to lay the foundations for a form of radical corporeality: what I later call a 'fleshy subjectivity'.

Chapters 5 and 6 then begin to move away from the sensible transcendental and, in a more explicitly 'constructive' mode, I deal more directly with the question of how to define an explicitly *female* subjectivity. Chapter 5 focuses on the intersection between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, specifically the importance of the body image (or *imago*) and its role in the formation of subjectivity.[37] Next, I shall describe how this roughly 'post-phenomenological' method is relevant to my approach to Irigaray's thought in thesis.

6. Post-Phenomenology and Methodology

I see my thought in this thesis developing as part of a wave of post-phenomenological feminist thinkers, including Battersby (1998; 2006), who seek to curtail the metaphysical pessimism of much poststructuralist feminist thought by emphasising the importance of the corporeal and intersubjective elements of experience (Howie & Shildrick, 2010: 118). Here, I shall define what I conceive as being 'post-phenomenological' about my project, and why I believe this approach to be

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[37]I understand the *imago* as the infant's image in the mirror (specifically at what Lacan theorises as the 'mirror stage'). It is an 'idealised' image, and a *gestalt* (greater than the sum of its parts). The *imago* will form the nucleus of the *ideal-ego* (see Chapter 1).

essential not just to an understanding of Irigaray's thought, but to my own approach to her thought as it pertains to the question of female subjectivity.

In her article on the question of whether phenomenology can account for gender, Joanna Oksala writes that the phenomenological reduction could be understood as 'the interminable effort to break our familiar acceptance of the world and to see as strange and paradoxical what we normally take for granted' (Oksala, 2006: 239). This 'type' of phenomenological reduction would not, however, necessitate an *epoché* in the traditional sense – a suspension of judgements relating to the external world – but would rather 'attempt to accomplish a partial bracketing in order to reveal something about the ontological schemas underlying our ways of thinking, perceiving and acting' (Oksala, 2006: 240). Oksala defines 'post-phenomenological' as a 'modification' of the phenomenological method which is 'better able to deal with the constitutive importance of the social and cultural world' (Oksala, 2006: 237). A post-phenomenological method does not only concede that it is impossible to leave all of our ontological commitments behind, she argues, but also gives up the first-person perspective as the starting point of phenomenological analysis. A post-phenomenological approach thus assumes that 'the categories of transcendence, objectivity and reality are intersubjectively constituted' (Oksala, 2006: 234). In abandoning this first-person perspective, Oksala regards this new method as striving to expose the *contingent nature* of our constitutive ontological schemas. And whilst we might acknowledge that these schemas are nevertheless intertwined with our forms of reflection, she says, what we regard as 'normal' is revealed as contingent and therefore changeable. The post-phenomenological method thus exposes ontological schemas as tied to cultural normativity, and, necessarily, to ideas relating to normative gender and sexuality. However, Oksala concedes that because a post-phenomenological method begins with knowledge and experience that is foreign to us – from beyond the bounds of our 'homeworld' – this does not mean that the question of gender should therefore be relegated to the realm of empirical study (Oksala, 2006: 241). Instead, the question of gender becomes part and parcel of the task of breaking out of the 'natural' attitude which assumes that our ontological understanding of the world is 'invisible' to us (*qua* Descartes, Husserl, etc.), and becomes the starting point of post-phenomenological enquiry (ibid.).

Thus on Oksala's definition of post-phenomenology, the feminist phenomenologist is vindicated from the difficult challenge of having to justify the significance or impact of gender within a framework which actively demands the exclusion of such criteria. Rather, gender experiences are understood as constituted by embodiment as well as by normative cultural practices and symbolic structures. This approach is important because it not only rejects the notion of transcendental subjectivity and with it its 'blindness' towards its own material constitution, but also opens up a new space for thinking about subjectivities which are shaped by difference (particularly sexuate difference). We might question, however, what indeed remains 'phenomenological' about this approach. Oksala argues that, in accepting the claim that subjectivity has an *a priori* structure in the intersubjective life of the 'homeworld', we run the risk of circularity. She asks, 'How can transcendental intersubjectivity – now understood as comprising language and historicity – be constituted in experience if it is what ultimately makes individual constitution possible?' (Oksala, 2006: 237) Oksala responds by recommending that we accept the hermeneutic circle where our analysis of gender is concerned, 'and try to see that our method continuously turns back on itself' (ibid.). Empirical descriptions of experience – particularly embodied experience – can only reveal something about normative ontological schemas that are constitutive of these experiences when they are submitted to critical philosophical analysis, and this analysis must ultimately be carried out by an experiencing *I* (Oksala, 2006: 238).

A *post*-phenomenological approach comes close, therefore, to the sort of 'immanent critique' typical of anti-foundationalist 'post-modern' thought of the kind described here:

'It is characteristic of postmodern thought, in matters of mind and human affairs, that there is no absolute beginning or presuppositionless starting point. All enquiry proceeds by way of an understanding of life as the pretext to every systematic pursuit of knowledge. In perhaps its most challenging, anti-foundationalist formulation, postmodern thought maintains that our knowledge of the world, including ourselves, is not first of all conceptually constructed but lived through in personal experience.'

(Tolman, 1996: 368)

On this reading, phenomenology as a method is inseparable from its historical and cultural determinations. An immanent critique, is, moreover, one which seeks to 'provide a critical examination of the vocabulary of the movement to which it belongs' (Butler, 1999: vii). Although Butler speaks here in relation to feminism, I think this notion applies in general terms not only to my own approach to Irigaray's thought in this thesis, but also to Irigaray's approach to the psychoanalytical and philosophical models which she critiques and thus transforms in the process. I would characterise Irigaray's approach as broadly 'post-phenomenological', for instance, because of her insistence on moving away from the Kantian schema which relies on distinctions between what can be 'known' and what is beyond our experience and thus unknowable, as well as her emphasis on the intersubjective *per se* (for example, the dependence of the foetus on the mother described in Chapter 5; and the mother-daughter relation in Chapter 6). Like Paul Ricoeur, for Irigaray the body and the material world are the anchors of subjectivity; the Symbolic order (language; cultural institutions) is a second-order articulation which mediates our intersubjective relations, yet the one cannot be transformed without the other.[38] However, Irigaray's 'hermeneutics of suspicion' occasionally leads her to perceive the structures of gender repression everywhere, even when a close reading of the offending text would only barely support this contention.[39] For example, Irigaray reads the phenomenology of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty as privileging 'self' over 'other' and consciousness (*For-Itself*) over embodiment (*In-Itself*), and, as such, appears to regard them as part of the Kantian paradigm which seems to sanction sameness and deny alterity (Deutscher, 2002: 161).[40] Whilst on Oksala's reading this type of phenomenology leaves scant room for gender to be articulated – and I discuss this problem explicitly Chapter 5 – I am cautious that Irigaray tends to interpret certain thinkers 'monodiscursively', as if they form part of a homogenous genealogy of conceptions of subjectivity which neither contain conflicting arguments nor strains that might actually prove useful

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[38] I am reminded here of Irigaray's phrase 'And the one doesn't stir without the other', from the text with the same title.
[39] In the sense of a radical critique. Cf. Paul Ricoeur's notion of 'hermeneutics' as the rules that preside over an exegesis. Hans-Georg Gadamer remarked that 'Is not *every* form of hermeneutics a form of overcoming an awareness of suspicion?' (Gadamer, 1984: 73).
[40] For example, Irigaray overlooks Sartre's 3rd extasis: that of 'Being for Others' (Sartre, 2003: 243 – 434).

for her purpose.[41] I argue that we must remain sensitive to this over-zealous aspect of Irigaray's later thought (in particular), and to make a point of scrutinising primary texts. I have carried this out in Chapters 2 and 3 with the aim of arriving at a mature reflection of Irigaray's interpretation of Kant and Heidegger specifically. The interpretative 'layering' complicit in such a method means that, like Oksala, I have had to accept the hermeneutic circle and my own 'immanent' approach to Irigaray's corpus.

Returning briefly to the problem of essentialism, a post-phenomenological approach integrates an understanding of bodies as culturally constructed: our experiences 'always have linguistic, sociocultural and historical conditions of possibility' (Oksala, 2006: 234). At least true in terms of Irigaray's early thought, psychoanalysis remains indispensable for Irigaray because it 'holds open the possibility that these processes and structures could be transformed to allow for a feminine subject' (Jones, 2011: 172). Jones' phrase 'holds open' is crucial, here. I have exploited this theoretical aperture by switching from an analytical/deconstructive approach in the initial four chapters to a more imaginative, 'constructive' approach in the final two.[42] Indeed, the final two chapters of this thesis have been inspired by Christine Battersby's recent post-phenomenological thought, particularly her work relating to natality and embodied female experience; as well as Alison Stone's work on matricide and maternal subjectivity. Like Stone, I read Irigaray's thought as leading to places which Irigaray stops short of exploring (Stone, 2008: 153). Moreover, it is at this intersection – between feminism, philosophy (including phenomenology) and psychoanalytic theory – that I hope to emancipate Irigaray's thought from accusations of essentialism and conservatism and to return it to its transformatory roots with renewed vigour.

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[41] On Irigaray's tendency to read western discourse 'monolithically', see Battersby, 1998; Deutscher, 2002; Jones, 2011.
[42] I use 'deconstruction' in the literal sense of 'to take apart' in order that we may better understand it.

7. Chapter Summary

Chapter 1: Psychoanalysis and Sexuate Difference

Chapter 1 begins by laying bare the psychoanalytic foundations of Irigaray's early thought in order to ascertain the conceptual function of the sensible transcendental in relation to her *pragmatic* use of psychoanalytic theory (discussed above). I arrange the chapter around five psychoanalytic topics: Lacan's 'mirror stage'; the phallus; the Lacanian theory of sexual difference; symbolic castration; and the transference.

Three related themes emerge in this initial chapter which will form the basis of my critical armoury: first, the idea of the 'primary imaginary'. In her early essay 'Linguistic and Specular Communication' (2002), Irigaray distinguishes between the primary imaginary, characterised by the pre-Oedipal relationship with the (m)other, and the secondary imaginary (Lacan's Imaginary register), characterised by the relationship with the mirror image (*imago*). Irigaray claims that the primary imaginary is 'overwritten' by the secondary imaginary after the 'mirror' and Oedipal phases, at which point the mother's desire is annulled by the Law of the Father. This unexplored and undeveloped notion will, I contend, re-emerge in her later writing on the intrauterine encounter, though it is not acknowledged by Irigaray in such terms. I go on to explore the connection between the primary imaginary and the problem of matricide in the final chapter.

Second is the notion of 'specularization', which I define as the process by means of which the subject enters a linguistic exchange: the splitting (*spaltung*) of the subject inaugurated at the mirror stage. However, Irigaray (notably in *Speculum* (1985a)) often refers to specularization as an *effect* of the 'splitting', as well as the process which institutes it. Specularization is, moreover, treated by Irigaray as a *symptom* of the masculine Symbolic/Imaginary, producing effects in philosophy by causing a schism between the sensible and the supersensible, as well as by treating the empirical world/woman as a 'mirror' onto which the subject projects his desires, fears and anxieties. As such, she claims that nature/woman serves as the unacknowledged 'ground' for man's metaphysical 'speculations'.

Third is the concept of the 'sensible transcendental' itself. I describe how the term is first deployed by Irigaray in response to women's supposed difficulty in achieving sublimation (in Freud and Lacan), and is first conceived (in 'The Limit of the Transference' (1995b)) as an analytic 'tool' which compensates for the absence of a specifically *female* imaginary register, comprising a 'container' or 'skin' which mediates between mother and daughter and preserves the identity of each (in order to prevent 'merging with the mother', and hence *matricide*). Here, I argue that the sensible transcendental forms the nucleus of Irigaray's vision of a 'female' subjectivity which operates outside or beyond the Oedipal model, but remains undeveloped in such terms. I therefore suggest turning to her critique of philosophy in order to better understand the term as it pertains to the notion of subjectivity in particular.

Chapter 2: Kant

Chapter 2 is the first of two chapters dedicated to what I regard as Irigaray's most significant engagements in terms of understanding the philosophical import of the sensible transcendental: her readings of Kant and Heidegger. As I stated above, I view these as her most important philosophical conversations because I view Lacan as essentially 'reworking' Kant's metaphysical structure into his own account of subjectivity. To fully understand the importance of the sensible transcendental, I suggest that we need to view the term as mediating between the competing paradigms of psychoanalysis and philosophy, 'jamming the theoretical machinery' of both. Chapter 2 is therefore a close reading of, primarily, Irigaray's critique of Kant in *Speculum*, and seeks to expose the philosophical motives underlying Irigaray's use of the terms 'sensible' and 'transcendental' specifically. To this end, I dissect four main themes in relation to Kant's metaphysics and his construction of the 'transcendental subject', and present a philosophical assessment of Irigaray's response to each in the context of her psychoanalytical project: space and time; the 'Copernican Turn'; the schematism; and the 'transcendental'.

I argue that two sub-themes influence her 'conversation' with Kant and come to dominate the tone of the piece in *Speculum*. First is the 'intertext' with Lacan, and, significantly, the Marquis de Sade. Irigaray contends that we witness the effects of 'specularization' first-hand in Kant's metaphysics, in which the principle 'noli tangere matrem' − 'do not touch the mother' (Lacan's interpretation of the categorical imperative at work in Sade) comes to operate as Universal Law. She claims that Kant's transcendental philosophy conceals a matricide which is the source of the schism between the 'sensible' and the 'transcendental'. As a consequence, the masculine subject constructs his 'house of experience' at the expense of the sensible and the 'feminine', which is 'walled-up' within its construction. The second 'sub-theme' is Irigaray's contention that Kant's transcendental schema operates in order to negate the sensible world; she urges that the power of nature is reduced to the 'power of the subject' (Adorno).

I end the chapter by arguing that although Irigaray's argument follows the contours of Lacanian theory, her philosophical claims are legitimate. However, it is impossible to gauge the implications of Irigaray's argument without taking her psychoanalytic motivations into account. Analysed against the backdrop of Kantian metaphysics, Irigaray suggests that (Kantian) passive sensibility is *not* conducive to the perception of the 'other' of sexuate difference. She claims that only a transcendental sensibility − or the attainment of a sensible transcendental − will effect the changes in the Symbolic required in order to create a 'space' for the feminine. In light of this, I argue that Irigaray's project of constructing a 'female' subjectivity must mitigate against the erasure of the maternal-feminine in philosophy, but also challenge what might be regarded as the 'subjectivism' at work in Kant. Irigaray envisions a form of 'transcendental' sensibility, driven by a more imaginative role for 'perception', as the ground or condition of the possibility of 'otherness' (as opposed to the repetition of the Same). As I show in Chapter 3, Irigaray enlists Heidegger as an ally in this enterprise.

Chapter 3: Heidegger

Following on from Chapter 2, I arrange my discussion in Chapter 3 around four central issues relating to Irigaray's engagement with, and appropriation of, Heidegger: her project of 'thinking difference'; space and time; time-space and *Ereignis*; and the key terms 'transcendence' and 'transcendental'. I demonstrate how Irigaray re-reads Kant through Heidegger on the topics of space, time and the transcendental, and reformulates the notion of 'space-time' as what Heidegger calls the 'gift of Being', which Irigaray then redefines as *elle donne* – 'she gives' – in response to Heidegger's use of *es gibt* – 'it gives' – evoking the debt to the mother. Irigaray's appeal to a 'sensible transcendental', I argue, fits with Heidegger's use of the term *Ereignis*: as the 'event' of appropriation. This slippery and enigmatic term might be best captured as something 'coming into view', or 'concern' (from the German 'er-eignen'): 'Er-eignen (to concern) means, originally, to distinguish or discern which one's eyes see, and in seeing calling to oneself, ap-propriate' (Heidegger, 1969: 42). Approached in such terms, I argue that the sensible transcendental is a foundational term which allows for the perception of sexuate difference by freeing the imagination (Imaginary) from the constraints of the understanding (Symbolic), thus allowing for 'differences' to be apprehended in their material corporeality.

Chapter 3 seeks to confirm Irigaray as a philosopher of 'immanence'. I argue that she 'collapses' the transcendental into the sensible, but reinstates the 'transcendental' as the transcendence of self-consciousness (Heidegger's own definition of 'transcendental'), so that subjectivity becomes a form of 'becoming'. In the final section of the chapter I show how, through a reading of her poetico-philosophical work *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* (1999), Irigaray 'replaces' Heidegger's term *Ereignis* – the event of appropriation - with the idea of a 'sensible transcendental': a 'divine principle' which operates, paradoxically, at a corporeal as well as at a transcendental level, as a kind of transcendence-through-immanence. I suggest that the sensible

transcendental opens subjectivity out to a 'feminine divine' by harnessing a mode of perception (*Ereignis*: event, clearing) which integrates corporeal and conceptual logic by evoking the immanent 'beyond' at work in sensible experience (and harks back to the pre-Symbolic relationship with the mother). In psychoanalytic terms, this 'feminine divine' is precisely what lies *outside* of the phallocentric Oedipal framework – that which is touched upon in religious and mystical experience – but which is, paradoxically, 'ineffable'. In Chapter 4, I take this problem as my point of departure.

Chapter 4: 'Sensible Transcendental' as God

In Chapter 4 I turn my attention to Irigaray's attempts to define a 'feminine' subjectivity in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (2004a) and *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993a). This chapter has three main aims: first, I analyse Irigaray's putative 'turn' to religion against the backdrop of her psychoanalytic commitment to restoring the 'maternal', following on from Chapter 1, and argue that we must analyse her call for a sensible transcendental as a critical response to the pernicious effects of specularization (also defined in Chapter 1). The first half of the chapter addresses Lacan's controversial statement in *Seminar XX* that 'the 'woman' does not exist'. By placing part of 'woman' outside of what can be apprehended in phallic logic, Lacan aligns 'woman' with the Other/God (therefore as the support or 'prop' of the masculine, man's specular 'other'). The first section of this chapter is therefore dedicated to showing how Irigaray explores the possibility of a female subjectivity which speaks from the 'other side' of phallocentric discourse, where there is no schism or separation between the sensible and the supersensible (the place of *jouissance*, plenitude, or excess: the Real). I examine Irigaray's early appeal to mystical discourse as a response to Lacan's disparaging of St Teresa of Avila in his *Seminar XX*, and show how the divinisation and eroticisation of female bodies plays a central role in opening up the possibility of a female subjectivity, albeit in 'limited form' (Hollywood, 2002: 194).

My second aim is to demonstrate how Irigaray's commitment to creating an identificatory structure for women which remains open to forms of transcendence or 'becoming divine' - which I

shall suggest amounts to the same thing – involves retaining *elements* of the 'religious' or 'mystical'. I disagree, however, that we need to retain a theological frame of reference. And although I aim to situate the sensible transcendental in the context of her work on religion, where it is most commonly discussed, I read Irigaray's contention that women require a 'God' in the psychoanalytic sense that they lack an 'ideal-ego' (i.e. in the context of Chapter 1); in short, we are redirected once again to the issue of primary narcissism, and the ideal-ego which is instituted prior to repression (i.e. prior to the Oedipal scenario).

My final aim is to analyse Irigaray's claim that 'the only diabolical thing about women is their lack of a God' (SG: 64). I locate Irigaray's 'God' between the 'mystical' and the 'narcissistic' because, as Irigaray argues in 'Divine Women', whereas 'man is able to exist because God helps him to define his gender' (SG: 61), women's subjectivity is bereft because she lacks 'a divine made in her image' (SG: 63); or in other words, women lack the fundamentally narcissistic structure (specularization) which might allow them to function in the Symbolic as 'full subjects' capable of sublimation. However, having argued that man replaces his debt to the (m)other by projecting his desires (for perfection) onto an idealised and 'wholly Other' God, Irigaray is keen not to repeat or reinscribe a model which involves a split or schism between 'man' and 'God' (with woman as the 'god face': man's alter-ego). Irigaray's solution is to appeal to female deities as 'symbolic archetypes'. She argues that women must create their own 'gods' – their own 'ego-ideals' – if they are to accede to a subjectivity of their own. I contend, however, that Irigaray's task of constructing a 'divine' in woman's own image involves a tacit acceptance of Feuerbachian projection theory, with its concomitant problems. Ultimately, I shall reject this aspect of Irigaray's project, and suggest that the solution lies in the notion of a sensible transcendental as a form of 'vertical transcendence' which 'spiritualises' the body. Here, I regard the 'sensible transcendental' as restoring Simone de Beauvoir's notion of the 'body-as-situation' as the locus of subjectivity, and eliminates the requirement for 'ego-ideals' by engaging with a form of 'radical embodiment' (what I go on to call a fleshy subjectivity).[43] Moreover, I suggest in the next chapter that the idea of a sensible

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[43] Beauvoir (1997) says that 'The body is not a thing, it is a situation' [...] 'it is the instrument of our grasp upon the world and our sketch of our projects' (SS: 65 – 66).

transcendental as a kind of 'fleshy subjectivity' provides a framework for understanding the complex relationship between corporeality and identity, and equips us with the tools for breaking out of the Oedipal model.

Chapter 5: Beyond the 'Sensible Transcendental': Irigaray's 'Fleshy Phenomenology'

This chapter focuses on the role of the body in Irigaray, specifically at the intersection of phenomenology and psychoanalysis. Having already established the sensible transcendental as a core concept which hinges on a form of *radical corporeality* (which I now call 'fleshy subjectivity'), I turn my attention to the role of the body image or 'schema' in the development of the ego (specifically the ego's nucleus, the 'ideal-ego'). In Chapter 4, I rejected conscious projection as a means for women to somehow 'invent' or imagine an 'ego-ideal' (in the form of symbolic archetypes), and suggested this was problematic. Given that, at the mirror stage, the body acts as a psychically invested projection which gives rise to morphology, I argue that it is now necessary to interrogate the role that the sexuate body (*soma*) - its image or 'schema' - plays in the formation of the ego (*psyche*), as this is a decisive step in the course of individuation

This chapter therefore tackles the problem of female subjectivity from two angles: first, from the perspective of phenomenology and embodiment; and second, from that of psychoanalysis and, specifically, the importance of a theory of primary narcissism (ideal-ego) as emerging from an identification with the image of an 'other'. Given that the primitive ego is a bodily ego (in Freud and Lacan), I first examine the ways in which the body – or rather the body 'image' or 'schema' - has been shaped by the morphology of *male* bodies. I address the role of the 'body schema' in Merleau-Ponty, and discuss responses by Irigaray and Butler (1989). I then turn once more to the function of the body image – the *imago* – in psychoanalytic theory, and show how it has been used by feminists (for example, Grosz (1994) and Gatens (1996)) to support the claim that this 'body' is 'Oedipalized'.

I turn my attention in the second half of the chapter to the question of whether a shift in the way we conceive of our cultural imaginary could change the way that we understand and relate to bodies. A body image which emerges as a result of a non-oppositional logic would not be determined by 'lack' or fullness, but by fluidity and the overlapping of indistinct boundaries. I examine two of Irigaray's most incisive challenges to the Oedipal paradigm's depiction of subjectivity as the end product of a series of severance or cuts from the maternal other: first, her notion of the 'placental economy' between mother and infant *in utero*; and second, her critique of Merleau-Ponty's concept of the 'flesh' in *Visible and the Invisible* (1969). I argue that phenomenological accounts of pregnant embodiment and the intrauterine encounter provide a paradigm of relations between self and other (infant and mother) which transform the way we think about the mother-infant relation before, during and after the Oedipal stage. By reconceptualising subjectivity in terms of the fluid, multiple and heterogeneous nature of female body 'experience', we begin to forge a path beyond the Lacanian framework, and begin to develop a non-phallic model of a fleshy female 'self'.

Chapter 6: Myths, Matricide and Maternal Subjectivity

In the final chapter I revisit the theme of 'matricide' in Irigaray, and argue for the importance of constructing a non-matricidal account of female subjectivity: an account which does not prescribe a primordial rejection or 'abjection' of the maternal body. I consider this important for two reasons: in order to acknowledge that our relation to our mothers – and not merely our *fathers* - plays a crucial role in the formation of the 'self'; and in order for a non-conflictual mother-daughter relation to be rendered possible. I show that, whilst separation from the maternal body is essential if women are to accede to subjectivity, this does not necessitate psychic 'matricide' in the strong sense: to deny the mother expression within the Symbolic economy (Jacobs, 2004: 19). I argue that what I term Irigaray's 'primary imaginary' register - the infant's encounter with the maternal body - coheres with what Alison Stone (2012) calls 'potential space': a mediating maternal 'third term' which sustains psychic links with the maternal body and prevents the infant from 'merging' with the mother. By

repairing the links with the maternal origin, but at the same time allowing for separation, this model also makes female genealogy possible. However, Irigaray does not elaborate her theory in such terms. This chapter therefore brings together Irigaray's writing on matricide – principally in her essay 'Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother' (1993a) – with her attempts to evoke a 'feminine imaginary' – a maternal bodily imaginary - in her earlier texts, and argues that we might use her underdeveloped notion of a 'primary imaginary' as an anti-matricidal *maternal bodily imaginary* which persists in post-natal mother-infant relations.

In the final part of the chapter I turn to the recent thought of artist and analyst Bracha Ettinger, and show how her notion of the 'matrixial borderspace' – a 'feminine' psychic register which emerges *in utero* and persists after Oedipalization in both sexes – develops from strands of Irigaray's thought.[44] Ettinger purports to circumvent psychic matricide by positing the matrixial as a feminine sexual difference prior to Oedipalization. The matrixial is, first and foremost, a subjectivizing stratum of co-emergence between mother and infant. Although it recedes in favour of the phallic paradigm, the matrixial paradigm helps to counter matricide by preserving psychic links with the (imaginary) archaic mother-figure. However, I argue that Ettinger retains a quasi-matricidal schema for men, who are still required to enact a violent separation from the mother. Thus I recommend Irigaray's primary imaginary as a more illuminating way to approach the question of the maternal contribution to subjectivity.

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[44] I understand 'Oedipalization' as the process of in individuation which requires the subject to accede to the Law of the Father at the expense of the mother (who is denied Symbolic expression).

Chapter 1: Psychoanalysis and Sexuate Difference

The symbolic order is an imaginary order which becomes law. (Irigaray, 1988: 161)

Chapter Outline

This chapter has two principal objectives: first, I aim to situate Irigaray's notion of the 'sensible transcendental' in the context of her early engagement with psychoanalysis. I suggest that the foundations of Irigaray's thought remain firmly *psychoanalytical*, and whilst the 'sensible transcendental' might at first glance seem a notion far removed from the Lacanian roots of her thought, I shall suggest that the revolutionary potential of the concept hinges on Irigaray's traversal of several of its central tenets. My second aim is therefore to explicate the form that Irigaray's engagement with psychoanalysis takes, primarily in relation to four critical notions: the 'imaginary', 'specularization', the phallus, and morphology. I suggest that these four factors form the bedrock of Irigaray's critique of western metaphysics, including psychoanalysis itself.[45]

Via a discussion of Lacan's concept of the mirror stage, I argue in the Section 1 that Irigaray's notion of the 'imaginary' - far from being a misreading or misrepresentation of Lacan's own concept of the Imaginary order - originates in her early work in linguistics. In her essay 'Linguistic and Specular Communication' (2002), Irigaray identifies two sequential 'imaginaries', 'primary' and 'secondary'. The primary imaginary is characterised by the primordial, pre-Oedipal relationship with the mother, before the imposition of the 'third term' (Name-of-the-Father, or Symbolic phallus). The secondary imaginary (Imaginary) is unveiled at what Lacan theorises as the 'mirror stage', and is responsible for the creation of the ego, which forms the nucleus of the subject-proper. Irigaray calls the process by means of which the subject enters a linguistic exchange 'specularization': the splitting of the subject inaugurated at the mirror stage (TSN: 18).

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[45]When referring to a specifically Lacanian understanding of these terms I shall place them in upper case: for example, the ternary concepts 'Imaginary', 'Symbolic', and 'Real'. When I refer to an expanded, 'Irigarayan' usage, I shall use lower case.

Specularization is essentially a primordial *misrecognition* (of the *Gestalt* of the image for the 'self') and entails a subsequent 'alienation'.[46] Lacan's Imaginary order is thus marked by a primordial misidentification which structures all subsequent relationships. According to Irigaray, the mirror of specularization replaces the (m)other, and becomes man's narcissistic 'support' in the Symbolic order. As I argued in the Introduction, this fundamental observation will shape her critique in texts such as *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985a).[47]

In Section 2 I turn to the question of how Irigaray manipulates and extends Lacan's concept of the Imaginary. For Irigaray, *contra* Lacan, the imaginary is not merely a register or order of the psyche, but includes a social dimension which functions to underwrite (and structure) the Symbolic order itself. In short, the imaginary is also a socio-historical phenomenon – a *cultural imaginary* - which underpins patriarchy. Irigaray suggests that the 'phallic Law' or Law-of-the-Father has become enshrined in the Symbolic order but is *imaginary* in nature (thus we may also call it a 'symbolic-imaginary order', as the two are intertwined). Moreover, the Symbolic functions according to the same laws or modality as masculine sexuality, something which Irigaray calls 'morphology'. In order to understand the relation between the Imaginary, the Symbolic and morphology in Irigaray, I turn to the role of the phallus.

The lynchpin of Lacanian psychoanalysis (following Freud) is the phallus and its role in the Oedipus complex and its related notion of symbolic castration. In Section 2 I shall first of all set out Lacan's account of the Oedipus complex, in which the phallus plays a central role. I shall then briefly discuss Lacan's notion of 'sexuation', specifically in his *Seminar XX*, in which he claims that 'woman does not exist'. Irigaray claims that by sacrificing the primordial relationship with the mother, and submitting to the Law-of-the-Father, man is unable to relate to woman except as a phantasy object, which Lacan calls the *objet a*: the remainder (or *reminder*) of the original relationship with the

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[46] A *gestalt* should be understood as an organised whole which is more than the sum of its parts (in this case, the infant's image in the mirror).

[47] '(m)other' indicates the infant's first relationship with an 'other', where this 'other' is the Real mother.

mother, that which predates the mirror of specularization, and that which the mirror is unable to reflect (the mirror's 'blind spot').[48]

I then turn to the question of symbolic castration. Given that, according to Irigaray, the Symbolic order operates according to the morphology of the masculine (which we might also read as 'patriarchy operates according to phallic Law'), Irigaray suggests that symbolic castration – which is linked to the notion of *sublimation* - is a consequence of man's rivalry with his mother, and his desire to appropriate his origin. Because women lack the penis, and therefore also the phallus, symbolic castration – and therefore sublimation *per se* – is more difficult to achieve, which is supposedly the reason for women's 'lesser' contribution to civilization.[49] As women are required by psychoanalysis to adopt the masculine model, women are unable to 'symbolise' their own relationships with their mothers. Thus in the final section I discuss Irigaray's essay 'The Limit of the Transference' (1995b) in which she argues that the 'sensible transcendental' must first be considered in the context of the psychoanalytic scene as a 'feminine transcendental' which permits the end of the transference. In this sense it might also be understood as an analytic concept which compensates for the absence of a specifically *feminine*, as opposed to a phallic or masculine, 'symbolic-imaginary' register. Irigaray argues that the only model afforded women by psychoanalysis centres on that of the antagonistic and rivalrous relationship with the mother theorised by Freud and Lacan. In order to circumvent the trap of 'merging' back into the mother, women therefore require a 'transitional object' to mediate their relationship, a 'third term' which allows for a space or interval between them.[50]

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[48] I understand 'phantasy' as an unconscious phenomenon (as opposed to 'fantasy' in the conventional sense).
[49] Cf. Freud (1989).
[50] Plato's concept of the 'chora' (*Khora*) is understood as a 'space' or 'interval' (cf. Plato, 2009). In chapter 6 I recommend that we approach the notion of a primary imaginary in Irigaray as similar to Kristeva's concept of the Semiotic *chora*: the space 'between' the Semiotic and Symbolic registers.

1. The Mirror Stage and the Imaginary

'The specular image seems to be the threshold of the visible world.' (Lacan, 2006: 77)

In this section I wish to return to the origins of Irigaray's use of specular imagery in the psychoanalytic thought of Lacan, in order to show how Irigaray manipulates Lacan's formulation of the mirror stage and its related concept of the 'Imaginary'.[51]   I use the term 'manipulates' because Irigaray neither 'misreads' Lacan, as Ragland-Sullivan suggests, nor does she explicitly *oppose* him. Rather, I suggest that she reads western philosophy (including the psychoanalysis of Freud) through a *feminist* as well as a *Lacanian* lens, in order to support her argument that, in patriarchy, women have functioned as the 'mirror of man'. Ragland-Sullivan complains that '[Irigaray's] understanding of the mirror stage seems limited to its literal, visual aspect, which she reduces to the genetic or the biological' (Ragland-Sullivan, 1986: 275). Ragland-Sullivan contends that Irigaray fails to recognise the metaphorical, gender-neutral significance of Lacan's mirror stage, attributing it instead to the development of male subjectivity within patriarchy. She adds that, for Irigaray, Lacan's mirror 'becomes the most recent version of a philosophical topos whose *raison d'être* is to valorise sameness and visibility' (Ragland-Sullivan, 1986: 274). In arguing that Irigaray conflates Lacan with western discourse in general, Ragland-Sullivan claims that Irigaray misses the point when it comes to the role the mirror stage plays in the development of subjectivity. According to Lacan – of whom Ragland-Sullivan provides us with a typically orthodox reading - the subject takes on his or her nuclear form at the mirror stage; an 'I' is formed which eventually precipitates the relationship with the 'other'; consciousness becomes *self*-conscious.[52]   The question we should ask is this: at what point does gender intrude upon this supposedly neutral schema, such that the image – Lacan's Imaginary register – comes to reflect the imperatives of the masculine, and the morphology of the male body in particular? I shall argue in this section that Irigaray takes Lacan's mirror stage as

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[51] I understand 'specular' as pertaining to the properties of a mirror; pertaining to a speculum, for example. Cf. Moi (2002) for a discussion on the significance of specular imagery in Irigaray.

[52] I would also place Lemaire (1977) and Bowie (1991) in this 'orthodox' category. For instance, both maintain that the phallus is a neutral signifier of desire, in no way connected to the anatomical penis.

affirming two features of patriarchy: first, its reliance upon woman as the narcissistic support of man; and second, its sacrifice of the maternal origin. I shall begin by setting out Lacan's account of the mirror stage which concerns Irigaray in her early thought, and from which her notion of 'specularization' emerges.

Lacan's Mirror Stage: The Image and the 'I'

Lacan's account of the mirror stage was developed between 1936 and 1949, before being published in the *Écrits* (2002; 2006) as 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function'.[53] In short, the 'mirror stage' describes the time at which the infant's experience of its own body is one of disunity and lack of coordination. The mirror provides a more unified and coordinated image than that which the infant experiences, and, consequently, Lacan argues that the specular image (*imago*) is 'jubilantly assumed' as 'I', and invested with libido (Lacan, 2006: 76). The specular image precipitates the 'I' in 'primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other' (ibid.). This primordial 'I' – the 'I' in ideal form, or ideal-ego for Freud – situates 'the agency known as the ego' (ibid.).[54] The specular image forms the nucleus of the subject; it is the first building block of the subject proper. Furthermore, Lacan suggests that the infant looking in the mirror will internalise and assimilate images 'reflected back from the parental Other' (Fink, 1995: 36). These 'ideal' images crystallise and sediment to create the 'ego'. The ego is 'the self *seen* by "oneself"' (as in a mirror reflection), 'viewed as if by another person, or seen from the outside by someone else' (Fink, 1999: 83). However, this 'I' is a 'mirage' and a *gestalt*, something exterior to and more 'complete' than the infant, but one which nonetheless prefigures his/her 'alienating destination' in language (ibid.).

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[53] Cf. 'Beyond the "Reality Principle"' (1936), 'Remarks on Psychical Causality' (1946), and 'Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis' (1948) in *Écrits* (Lacan, 2006).
[54] The difference between the ideal-ego and ego-ideal is discussed by Freud in 'On the Introduction of Narcissism' (2006).

So according to Lacan, the mirror stage alerts us to the function of the *imago* – the specular image – in the construction of the ego, but also to the fact that the path to human subjectivity is marked by alienation and rivalry:

'This moment at which the mirror stage comes to an end inaugurates, through identification with the imago of one's semblable and the drama of primordial jealousy [...], the dialectic that will henceforth link the *I* to socially elaborated situations.' (Lacan, 2006: 79)

The mirror stage 'drama' is antecedent to the dialectic between self and Other (the Symbolic Other) constituted by the introduction of the 'third term' – the imposition of the paternal metaphor – and the Oedipal and castration complexes, after which the specular 'I' becomes the social 'I'. For Lacan, human subjectivity involves a (non-)decision between alienation in language and *death*; between *lack* and nothingness (what Lacan calls the 'vel' of alienation).[55] The 'I' developed at the mirror stage will eventually be forced 'under the signifier'; the Symbolic register – that of language and symbols – will attempt to overwrite the Imaginary, in which the ego is situated (we should note that, at the mirror stage, there is not yet an 'unconscious'). The ego is defined by a 'primary narcissism', fixation and attachment; it is the seat of 'false images' (Fink, 1995: 37). The *imago* is, essentially, a misrecognition or misidentification; the mirror image is a 'reversal' of reality. The price paid by the ego is a fundamental alienation which will continue to haunt the subject.

According to Lacan, then, the mirror stage represents the first phase in the journey towards the accession of subjectivity, during which the ego is established as the agency of the 'self'. Yet the ego is marked by a primordial *misidentification*. This misidentification – the vacillation between the 'real' and the mirror image – frames all subsequent relationships (particularly with the parental Other). Crucially, the mirror stage also sets in motion the Oedipal phase. As I shall discuss in the

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[55] Cf. 'The Field of the Other' in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 1994). The use of the Latin *vel* (either/or) evokes a *forced choice*, as in Hegel's master/slave dialectic, for instance ('it's you or me').

following section, 'specularization' is the name that Irigaray gives to this linguistic, but also *social*, process.

The Mirror Replaces the (M)other: Irigaray and 'Specularization'[56]

Irigaray engages with Lacan's account of the mirror stage in her early essay 'Linguistic and Specular Communication' in the collection *To Speak is Never Neutral* (2002). In this section I shall argue that we might locate the origin of her reformulation of the Imaginary in this early engagement with Lacan. I suggest that Irigaray's 'primary imaginary' comes to denote the primeval imaginary characterised by the relationship with the mother (the maternal body), before the imposition of the 'third term' (Symbolic father or phallus). Irigaray then identifies a 'secondary imaginary' – Lacan's Imaginary – as the seat of 'specularization'. Specularization comes to describe the splitting of the subject at the mirror stage, but specifically the replacement of the (m)other with the mirror image.

Irigaray distinguishes between two 'imaginaries', a 'primary' imaginary (identification with the maternal other), and a 'secondary' imaginary (Lacan's Imaginary). The primary imaginary is characterised by 'the reciprocal integration of the body and language' prior to the 'piercing' of the subject and its splitting into 'conscious' and 'unconscious' elements after the mirror stage (TSN: 9). The *phantasm* - which she defines as 'the primordial formation of the subject resulting from the reciprocal integration of its body and an individual discourse' - is the 'original specification of the imaginary', the pre-linguistic, pre-Oedipal state in which there is not yet a distinction between (m)other and infant, only a hypothetical unity or dyad (TSN: 261 fn 3).[57] In this primitive dyad, the subject has not yet been established in his singularity; he is yet unstructured by the signifier, by

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[56] '(m)other' indicates the primordial identification with the first 'other', the Real mother (as above); '(m)Other' (where the 'O' is in upper case) indicates the infant's identification with the *object* of the mother's desire – the Imaginary phallus – when the infant's desire then becomes the desire of the (m)Other.

[57] For example, pre-verbal structures revealed in primitive phantasies uncovered by psychoanalytic treatment of children and psychotics. Cf. Benvenuto & Kennedy, 1988: 81.

language.[58]   However, language leaves indelible traces 'in him'. The positioning of the Oedipal structure results from the constitution of a circuit of exchange between mother/infant and a 'third term', the father:

'The effect of the third term on the relation of the <subject> to the other, of the <subject> to language, is decisive. At the introduction of the third party into the primitive relation between the child and the mother, <I> and <you> are established as disjunction, separation.' (TSN: 10)

Although not yet established in his singularity, the 'subject' enters into a circuit of exchange which anticipates the breaking down of the mother/infant unit. This requires a little unpacking. For Lacan, the introduction of the 'father' (or some other member of the household fulfilling a similar function: to annul the mother-infant 'unity') leads to the triangulation of the mother/infant relation. The 'third term' – later represented by the phallus (as I discuss below) – is the Name-of-the-Father, the paternal function whose role it is to substitute the (m)Other's desire.[59] The paternal function 'bars and transforms the real, undifferentiated mother-child unity', and creates the essential 'gap' between mother and infant (Fink, 1995: 56). Through the instantiation of a *name*, the (m)Other's desire is neutralised and contained. But the 'name' is not yet a fully-fledged signifier, only a *primordial* signifier, a rigid designator. In order to become a fully-fledged signifier, a further separation ('splitting' or *Spaltung*) is necessary. Bruce Fink explains:

'The substitution implied by the paternal metaphor is only made possible by language, and thus it is only insofar as a "second" signifier, S², is instated (the Father's name, at the outset, and then more generally the signifier of the Other's

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[58] Irigaray uses the masculine pronoun deliberately, here, as per her contention that the Freudian-Lacanian account is characteristically masculine.

[59] The French – *désir de la mère* – is deliberately ambiguous between the mother's own desire, and the desire *for* the mother that typifies Freud's version of the Oedipus complex.

desire) that the mother's desire is retroactively symbolized or transformed into a "first" signifier (S¹).' (Fink, 1995: 57)[60]

By transforming it into signifiers, the necessary space is constituted that allows the infant to mediate, contain and manage the (m)Other's desire. In other words, it is only through language that the subject comes into being as such, as a *desiring* subject. Prior to this, the subject is only a potentiality, a mere 'place holder' or 'empty set'; a <zero> in the signifying chain. In order for the subject to be constituted as a 'he' (which Irigaray designates as <he1>), he must, through exclusion from the dialogue between the mother and father, be constituted as a first object of communication by being *named*; the subject is first established in his singularity – as a 'one' - by language.[61] However, the process is not yet complete. The mirror stage inaugurates the splitting of the subject into *conscious* and *unconscious* elements:

'Specularization is principally the perceptual experience of linguistic communication in its structure - <I>, <you>, <he0> - and its primordial object he1/he0. The unveiling of a second imaginary, it reveals the signifier constitutive of <he1>. It represents the engendering of <he1>, the paradoxical springing forth of the unit from the 'zero'. Hence the jubilation, but also the retreat, before this double aspect of identification.' (TSN: 15)

According to Irigaray, as the secondary imaginary (Lacan's Imaginary) is unveiled at the mirror stage, the primary imaginary is forced 'under the signifier' and becomes the unconscious (Freud's id). She remarks that 'the fallen primordial <one> - in a word, the unconscious – remains' as the 'guardian' of specularization (ibid.). The infant's (mis)identification with the specular image signals unification, but also represents a disjunction, a further separation or 'splitting'. (Lacan formulates the subject's final expulsion from the (m)Other as the primordial phantasy, that against

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[60] Cf. 'On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis' (Lacan, 2006).
[61] Irigaray writes that brackets indicate that the concept has not been 'actualised in discourse' (TSN: 259 fn. 4).

which the subject sustains his illusion of wholeness). The infant turns towards the mother, who has 'become an other' (ibid.). No longer merged as the 'one', the infant and mother become juxtaposed, added together as '1' + '1': 'The *Gestalt* of the image, like the discreteness of the signifier, institutes discontinuity. They have the same splitting function' (ibid.). The subject is first split from the mother, then from himself. In Lacanian terms, if the Symbolic functions to transform the Real into what is socially acceptable (sublimation), it also functions to 'cut the subject off'; the signifier is the 'carrier of death', of the possibility of finitude (ibid.). Irigaray remarks that 'the discriminating formalization of the second, diurnal imaginary, which is tied up with death, is opposed to the primary nocturnal imaginary, the guardian of life' (ibid.). The primary - now *unconscious* – imaginary, characterised by the primordial relationship with the (m)other, is overwritten in the moment of specularization. The secondary imaginary, Lacan's *Imaginary*, takes over, and becomes the seat of the agency known as the ego (the '*moi*').

According to Irigaray, the mirror is required because it 'offers an escape' from the social enslavement of the signifier (TSN: 16). Alienation is inscribed in the synchronic functioning of the structure of linguistic exchange, yet the mirror functions in order to sustain the illusion of man's mastery over language and identity (ibid.). Man will relinquish dependence on the mother, but only at the expense of another kind of 'madness':

> 'As seductive as it is, specular identification is nonetheless spatial alienation. In an
> initial moment, the mirror takes the place of the other, the first place of identification,
> all the more fearsome for being mute, immediate mediation, non-dialectizable. Thus
> specular identification is, for man, the unveiling of his freedom, but also the
> possibility of his madness. The most fascinating and the surest alienation.' (TSN:
> 16)

The mirror replaces the mother as compensation for the infant's awareness of lack, of the absence of the gratification of its needs. The infant displaces its dependence on the mother onto the mirror image (*imago*). Elizabeth Grosz remarks that Lacan 'hovers between seeing the mirror stage

as a purely internal, biologically regulated process; and as a linguistically structured, socially regulated relation' (Grosz, 2002: 32). This is clear from Lacan's examples in the 1949 paper on the mirror stage, in which he discusses his behavioural observations of insects and chimpanzees.[62] These studies inform Lacan's account of the infant's ego development discussed above, an account which Grosz calls 'paradoxically *naturally social*' (Grosz, 2002: 33). Although Lacan's account describes the coming into being of the subject through language and the Symbolic register, the primary function of the mirror stage is to institute the *visual image* as the nexus of the ego, by means of an ostensibly 'natural' process of narcissistic (and aggressive) identification. For Lacan, the *gestalt* of the image harks back to, or is reminiscent of, the (primary) imaginary dyadic completeness of the infant/mother relation and compensates for the sense of fragmentation and anatomical incompleteness that the infant feels in relation to its body. However, this 'misrecognition' occurs at a time in which the infant first begins to orient itself in space, as well as it when it begins to distinguish itself from the surrounding world. According to Irigaray, the *gestalt* is a form of spatial alienation because the 'other' (as opposed to the 'big' Other, the Symbolic Other) is essentially an 'other' image. The 'other' is the reflection of the ego, revealed in the visual likeness of other subjects as well as in the image of the body in the mirror (*imago*). In his later thought, Lacan theorises the *objet a* as the remainder of the mirror stage intrusion of the Symbolic into the Real; the *objet a* is precisely what the mirror *cannot* reflect, the object which stands for what is lost by the subject in the moment of specularization. The *objet a* is inscribed in the Imaginary, and is the cause of desire (as opposed to the phallus which is the *symbol* of desire, which I discuss below). The mirror stage inaugurates a conflict or antagonism with the reflected image of the world, of an 'other' from whom the subject is alienated, eventually leading to a vacillation between the jubilant recognition of 'self' and a paranoiac knowledge of *schize*, of being split (Benvenuto & Kennedy, 1988: 58).[63] In the section 'Lacan and Sexual Difference' below, I describe how woman becomes for man the *objet a*, the fantasy object that *reflects* but cannot be reflected.

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[62] Cf. 'The Freudian Thing' in *Écrits* (Lacan, 2006).
[63] Lacan also discusses this topic in 'Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis' in *Écrits* (Lacan, 2002: 11 – 30).

In this section I have described how, in this early essay, Irigaray suggests that the mirror stage (specularization) inaugurates man's 'alienation' in two senses: first, from the primordial (imaginary) state in which there is no differentiation, lack or absence, but only presence, only for the mother/infant dyad to be interrupted by a third term, leading to the alienating passage into language; and second, from the primary identification with the (m)other, which the specular image eventually replaces. Lacan's Imaginary register – which Irigaray distinguishes from the primary imaginary characterised by the primordial relationship with the (m)other – is defined instead by the relationship with the mirror image, and the coincidental positioning of the Oedipal structure which enters the infant into a linguistic exchange, creating the subject proper. No longer an 'empty set' or <zero>, the infant is constituted as 'he' by the instantiation of the proper name – the Name-of-the-Father – which annuls the mother's desire. However for Irigaray, 'specularization' becomes a term which not only indicates the splitting or disjunction of the subject into the 'subject of the enunciation' and the 'subject of the utterance', it also describes the auto-representing desire of the masculine subject who, from within his imaginary field of the ego, supposedly sustains his own narcissistic illusion of pure self-reflection, at the expense of the mother (TSN: 13):

'Are we to assume that a mirror has already been inserted, and speculates every perception and conception of the world, *with the exception of itself,* whose reflection would only be a factor of time? [...] Does the subject derive his power from the appropriation of the non-place of the mirror? And speculation? And as speculation constitutes itself as such in this way, it cannot be analysed, but falls into oblivion, re-emerging to play its part only when some new effect of symmetry is needed in the system. By some recourse to the imaginary, perhaps, that is both other and the same?' (SO: 205 – 206)

The titular 'speculum' is a pun which refers to man's imaginary self-representation, for which woman functions as a 'faithful, polished mirror'; his specular alter-ego: it is woman, in fact, who is both 'other and the same'. For a speculum is a kind of mirror, but also as a device which

enables penetration and inspection of the 'feminine' (where the 'feminine' is extrapolated to the material world in general, as I show in Chapter 2).

In the next section I argue that, for Irigaray, specularization is a symptom of the Symbolic order, where the Symbolic order is to be understood as a manifestation of the 'phallic Law' (patriarchy). Furthermore, she suggests that the phallic Law emerges from man's imaginary rivalry with his mother (his psychical requirement to separate from his mother), something which has become enshrined in the psychoanalytical account of the Oedipal drama. Thus in order to make it clear *why exactly* Irigaray interprets Lacan's Imaginary as a masculine, phallic imaginary, and why she believes that woman functions in patriarchy as the narcissistic support of man, we must turn to Lacan's concept of the phallus and its role in his version of Freud's Oedipus complex.

2. The Phallus and the Law of the Father

I have so far argued that Irigaray's own formulation of the 'imaginary' originates in her early essay 'Linguistic and Specular Communication', and is linked to her idea of 'specularization'. Importantly - and unlike Lacan's concept of the Imaginary register which is limited to its role in a tripartite psychical organisation along with the Symbolic and the Real - Irigaray extends Lacan's concept to include a specific socio-historical and symbolic structure: patriarchy (Law-of-the-Father).[64] For Irigaray, the imaginary is not just an aspect of the psyche which is *overwritten* by the symbolic, as Lacan claims: rather, the imaginary is a *cultural* imaginary which actually functions to *underwrite* the symbolic. Irigaray implies that what has historically been interpreted as a natural order – patriarchy - is actually an imaginary set of beliefs and ideas which have sedimented in reality to form the paternal (phallic) Law. Irigaray argues that 'The symbolic, which you impose as a universal innocent of any empirical or historical contingency, is *your* imaginary transformed into an order, into

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[64] Benvenuto and Kennedy (1988) describe the three orders as 'different planes of existence which, though interconnected, are independent realities, each order being concerned with different functions' (Benvenuto & Kennedy, 1988: 81).

the social' (Irigaray, 1995a: 94).[65] One of Irigaray's central concerns regarding the psychoanalytical

institution is its claim to universality and objectivity. Irigaray claims that the phallic operations of the

Symbolic order have an imaginary structure which has been historically constituted:

> 'The empire of the phallus – the Phallus – is necessitated by the establishment of a
>
> society based on patriarchal *power* in which the natural-maternal power to give birth
>
> comes to be seen as the phallic attribute of god-men, and establishes a new order that
>
> has to *appear* natural.' (Irigaray, 2004: 96)

She argues that Lacan's Symbolic order – which includes a patriarchal *social* structure – only

appears natural, or indeed 'inevitable' or 'universal'. Irigaray is using Lacan here as a means of

exposing the underlying phallocentric structure of psychoanalysis itself, whilst at the same time using

psychoanalysis to say something about the operations of patriarchy. Moreover, Irigaray remarks that

'The symbolic order is an imaginary order which becomes law' (Irigaray, 1988: 161).[66] She argues

throughout her early thought that the symbolic function of the phallus, the Oedipal and castration

complexes, and the fear of the desire of the (m)Other, all stem from an originary transposition of

masculine *morphology* – the metaphorical symbolization of the anatomical imperatives of the male

body - into a 'symbolic order'. In short, the notion of morphology is crucial to our understanding of

the relationship between the Symbolic and Imaginary in Irigaray's interpretation of Lacan, and it is to

this matter that I now turn.

In what follows I shall first examine the function of the phallus in Lacan's account of the

Oedipus complex, elements of which I have already touched upon above. This leads to a discussion

of Lacan's account of sexual difference.[67] I shall then argue that the Symbolic or Imaginary phallus

inheres in the 'real' penis, and that Irigaray's notion of morphology is useful in describing the

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[65] This view was, at the time, controversial, and one of the reasons that Irigaray was forced out of Lacan's *École Freudienne* following the publication of *Speculum* (1985a). Cf. 'The Poverty of Psychoanalysis' (Irigaray, 1995a).
[66] This topic is resumed in Chapter 6 p 215.
[67] I shall use the term 'sexual difference' when referring to a broadly Freudian-Lacanian understanding, and 'sexuate difference' when referring to an Irigarayan understanding (see Introduction).

imaginary operations of masculine sexuality as they serve to underpin patriarchy, particularly insofar as they entail the 'sacrifice' of the mother. Following this, I discuss the notion of symbolic castration and its relationship with what Irigaray calls the Law of the Same, or the absence of a female-specific relationship with the maternal origin.

The Function of the Phallus

The function and signification of the phallus changes during the course of Lacan's thought. Its initial role, however, is in the Oedipus complex. I have already described, via a discussion of Irigaray's early essay above, one of Lacan's versions of the Oedipus complex: the intervention of the Name-of-the-Father in the mother/infant dyad, and the subsequent repression of the (m)Other's desire by the paternal Law. On this account, the phallus functions as the 'signifier of signifiers' (or *transcendental* signifier) by means of which the subject is introduced into a linguistic order and is able to occupy a speaking position as an 'I', as well as by means of which the subject comes to relinquish his relationship with the Real (the maternal body). The phallus is also instrumental in the formation of the unconscious, which becomes a repository for the repressed desire for/of the (m)Other (Grosz, 2005: 126). However, there are several other features of Lacan's original positioning of the Oedipal relation between mother, father, and infant which require development. I shall attempt this in what follows, drawing out the significant aspects of Lacan's account as they evolve.

The setting for the inauguration of the Oedipus complex relates to the infant's first recognition of the absence of the gratification of its needs, or its awareness of *lack*. In a similar fashion to the start of the mirror stage, the infant becomes aware that the mother is not always present when he needs her, which leads to frustration. The infant also becomes aware that he is not the sole object of her attention; indeed, he is not the sole object of her *desire*:

'Demand in itself bears on something other than the satisfaction it calls for. It is demand for a presence or an absence. This is what the primordial relationship with

the mother manifests, replete as it is with that Other who must be situated *shy of* the needs that Other can fulfil. Demand already constitutes the Other as having the "privilege" of satisfying needs, that is, the power to deprive them of what alone can satisfy them.' (Lacan, 2002: 276)

The Other – the locus of speech according to Lacan – is also the locus of *desire* instituted by the loss of the first *object* of desire, the Real mother. Thus when Lacan talks of the *le désir de l'Autre* – the desire of the Other – he is being deliberately ambiguous between the Other's desire and the desire *for* the Other. As Benvenuto & Kennedy remark, 'this basic structure of desire would follow from the law of the signifier, in that it signifies something only in relation to another signifier' (Benvenuto & Kennedy, 1988: 130). The infant, in this early setting, will try to be the object of desire for the mother, whilst also harbouring desire *for* her. Objects that attract the mother's attention away from the infant take on a new importance, and one signifier in particular comes to represent these objects: Lacan calls it the 'signifier of desire', or the 'signifier of the Other's desire' (the signifier of the *lack* in the structural Symbolic), the *phallus*: 'the phallus is the privileged signifier of this mark in which the role of the Logos is wedded to the advent of desire' (Lacan, 2002: 277). The infant realises that not only is the mother unable to satisfy all of his needs on demand, but also that *she* desires *something else*. The infant will then attempt to become what he perceives the mother is lacking (and therefore what she *desires*) by identifying with the phallus: 'if the mother's desire *is* for the phallus, the child wants to be the phallus in order to satisfy her desire' (Lacan, 2002: 279).[68] Moreover, the infant is caught in an imaginary 'lure' with the mother, in which he plays at being the (Imaginary) phallus *for* her, the supposed object of her desire.[69] The mother *lacks* the phallus; she is a 'not-having' (*manque à avoir*) (as opposed to the Symbolic father who is a 'presumed-to-have'). However, the infant's desire to be the phallus is also the (m)Other's desire, in which he risks becoming 'eaten up' (Fink, 1995: 56). In order to escape the 'lure' of the (m)Other – in other words,

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[68] We should note at this point that the phallus is an empty signifier; it has no 'signified'. It is metonymically given meaning by being aligned with other signifiers, for example, in fetishism (woman's body, the veiled phallus, etc.)

[69] The Imaginary phallus is the supposed object of desire with which the infant seeks to identify. The Symbolic phallus is the signifier of the desire of the Other.

in order to transform the real, undifferentiated unity into more socially acceptable terms - the relationship between the mother and infant requires triangulation: the introduction of the 'third term' - the Symbolic phallus - in the form of the Name-of-the-Father:

'It is in the *name of the father* that we must recognise the basis of the symbolic function which, since the dawn of historic time, has identified [t]his person with the figure of the law.' [sic] (Lacan, 2002: 66)

The Symbolic father - the paternal function or the Name-of-the-Father – intervenes in the relationship between the mother and infant, thereby annulling the (m)Other's desire and reinstating the phallus as the distributor of the Law which says 'No!' to the infant's desire for his mother, as well as prohibiting the mother's desire to 'reintegrate' her product (and in this sense it functions as '*le 'non'! de le père*', as well as '*le nom' de le père*').[70] The phallus, on this account, functions as the signifier of the Law insofar as that law prohibits incest, and, as Lacan explains, 'reveals itself clearly enough as identical to a language order' (Lacan, 2002: 66). The father's intervention – as I described in my discussion of Irigaray above - leads to the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, and the reinstatement of the phallus as the object of the mother's desire, which the father is 'supposed' to possess.

On Lacan's account of the Oedipus complex, the paternal metaphor seems to act intrinsically on account of the primacy given to the phallus in culture. The real father is the one *presumed* to have the phallus, and thereby it is the father who represents the Law. Lacan remarks that –

'[O]ne can indicate the structures that govern the relations between the sexes simply by referring to the phallus' function.

These relations revolve around a being and a having which, since they refer to a signifier, the phallus, have contradictory effects: they give the subject reality in this

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[70]Cf. Lacan, *Seminaire V: Les Formations de L'inconscient* (unpublished in English). Lacan's pun exploits the similarity in French of the words 'non' and 'nom': hence it gestures towards the 'no!' of the father, as well as the 'name' of the father.

signifier, on the one hand, but render unreal the relations to be signified, on the other.' (Lacan, 2002: 279)

Thus the phallus also structures the relationship between the sexes (and there is no direct relationship 'between' them, as Lacan will go on to argue in his *Seminar XX*) insofar as it is the signifier of desire, of lack. After the Oedipus complex, the infant must accept that his mother is 'castrated', in that she *lacks* the phallus. She carries the Law-of-the-Father – the unconscious desire for the phallus - within her, and this Law is invoked every time she punishes the infant (Grosz, 2005: 71). The mother lacks the phallus insofar as she must invoke this Law; it is 'on loan' to her from the Symbolic father (ibid.). So the mother is placed in relation to the phallic signifier in the position of *being* rather than *having*:

'Paradoxical as this formulation may seem, I am saying that it is in order to be the phallus – that is, the signifier of the Other's desire – that a woman rejects an essential part of femininity, namely, all its attributes, in the masquerade.' (Lacan, 2002: 279)

To *be* the phallus in this context means to be a signifier, which is why women are assumed to have the propensity to masquerade, to play the role of the seductress. The woman merely signifies the phallus (for-man) - the desire of the Other - as opposed to the man, who 'has' the phallus, or at least is 'supposed' to.[71] (This theme shall be explored in greater detail below, and then again in Chapter 4.)

Returning to Irigaray, we should note that the structure governing the relation between the sexes which revolves around the 'being' or 'having' the phallus also seems to govern, as we glimpsed briefly above, the flow of objects of exchange in society. Irigaray remarks in *This Sex Which is not One* (1985b) that -

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[71] Also see Lemaire, 1977: 83 for a discussion on the woman's position in relation to the phallus.

'What makes such an order possible, what assures its foundation, is thus the exchange of women. The circulation of women among men is what establishes the operations of society, at least of patriarchal society.' (TS: 184)

Irigaray continues that women, under patriarchy, are constituted as '"objects" that emblematize the materialization of relations among men' (TS: 185). Similarly, Teresa Brennan argues that Lacan's identification of women as (phallic) objects of men's fundamental phantasy is consistent with what she calls the 'foundational fantasy' in which certain subjects (men) think they can control the Symbolic order and its political realm because they can control certain objects (women; commodities) within it (Kay, 2005: 96).[72] Thus the 'being' and 'having' of the phallus appears to be sexually predetermined, although Lacan and orthodox Lacanians would oppose this claim, arguing instead that 'man' and 'woman' are merely signifiers denoting a position in relation to language, and bear little relation to anatomical 'reality'. But if sexual 'difference' doesn't inhere in biological or anatomical differences between the sexes, then what *is* 'sexual difference' according to Lacan?

Lacan & Sexual Difference: 'Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel'[73]

In his *Seminar XX*, Lacan argues that 'woman' does not exist because 'phallic sexuality assigns her to a position of fantasy' (Lacan, 1982: 137). The sexual relation is 'impossible', he argues, because the 'woman' does not 'exist' (ibid). Hence 'Oneness' in the sexual relation is both an impossibility and a fantasy. Slavoj Žižek uses the example of a TV ad to explain this rather tricky notion. In a 'familiar fairy tale encounter', a girl who is a walking by a stream finds a frog and kisses it, after which it magically turns into a handsome young man (Žižek, 2007: 56). However:

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[72] Cf. Brennan on the 'foundational fantasy'(Brennan, 1993: 79 – 101).
[73] 'There is no such thing as a sexual relationship'. Lacan remarks in 'On Jouissance' that 'what is known as sexual jouissance is marked and dominated by the impossibility of establishing as such, anywhere in the enunciable, the sole One of the relation "sexual relationship"' (Lacan, 1999: 7).

'The young man casts a hungry glance at the girl, draws her towards him, kisses her and she turns into a bottle of beer that the man holds triumphantly in his hand. For the woman, the point is that her love and affection (signalled by the kiss) turn a frog into a beautiful man, a full phallic presence; for the man, it is to reduce the woman to a partial object, the cause of his desire. On account of this asymmetry, there is no sexual relationship: we have either a woman with a frog or a man with a bottle of beer.' (Ibid.)[74]

Of course, this does not mean that there can be no *actual* 'sexual' relationship, which would be absurd. What Lacan means is that, as signifiers, 'man' and 'woman' bear no direct relationship to one another; their relationship is purely asymmetrical. Man and woman are not 'yin and yang', two halves of an ideal 'one'. Rather, men and women are defined with respect to language. Men, in Lacan's schema, are 'wholly alienated' within language (Fink, 1995: 106); they are subject to symbolic castration, inasmuch as they fully adhere to the 'No!' of the Symbolic father. Men are, furthermore, completely 'hemmed-in' by the phallic function. However, things are somewhat different for women. To put it briefly – as I shall return to this topic at several other points in this thesis – Lacan writes 'the woman' with the 'the' scored through because 'not all' of woman falls under the phallic function (and in this sense woman is *pas toute*: 'not-all'). Woman is not wholly bound or hemmed-in in the same way as man. Moreover, woman cannot be said to 'exist' as such because there doesn't exist a signifier capable of 'signifying' her, and so she can only be written under erasure (Fink, 1995: 115). And, further, this would not be the case had the underlying idea not been that the phallus is somehow the signifier of the essence of *man*, of his 'morphology' (ibid.). Woman cannot be defined on these terms; she is always to some extend *beyond* the phallic function, she is not always subject to - or delimited by - the master signifier of the phallus.

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[74] I thank my secondary supervisor, Dr Karl Simms, for comparing this with the Cadbury's Flake adverts (the woman in the ad - the object of the viewer's desire - actually desires the Flake, the phallic 'object'. The situation is thus marked by a fundamental 'asymmetry').

Before moving on to discuss the relationship between the phallus and man's 'morphology', below, I would like to say one more thing about Lacan's *Seminar XX*. I argued above that, for Irigaray, woman acts as the 'mirror' or narcissistic support of man, a phenomenon which is initially enacted at the mirror stage and entails the sacrifice of the mother. In his *Seminar XX*, Lacan further argues that the woman enjoys a mystical relation with *jouissance*, or 'supplementary jouissance' as he calls it.[75] As the *objet a* or cause-of-desire, woman is assigned the role of fantasy object (in Žižekian terms, she is the *femme fatale* or the Lady of the courtly romance). However, woman is man's 'symptom' as well as his fantasy. Sarah Kay summarises this rather complex predicament:

'For 'woman' to be man's symptom, rather than his fantasy, is thus for her to be both his message to the Other and his imaginary relation to enjoyment. This means that man can communicate his symbolic existence, and relate to the real of his being, only through woman, whereas the converse is not true: woman exists independently of man.' (Kay, 2005: 80)

For Irigaray, however, Lacan's account is also replete with phallocentric assumptions and betrays the extent to which psychoanalysis is saturated with patriarchal ideas about women's sexuality. In 'Cosi Fan Tutti' (1985b) she remarks –

'A woman. A body-matter marked by their signifiers, a prop for their souls-fantasies. The place where their encoding as speaking subjects is inscribed and where the "objects" of their desire are projected. The schism and the gap between these two, transferred onto her body, bring her to pleasure – in spite of everything – but do not keep her from being, or believing herself to be, "frigid".' (TS: 96)

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[75] 'Jouissance' is usually defined as 'enjoyment', but has a sexual connotation. Cf. Lacan's Seminar XIV: *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 1992).

Irigaray's central argument against Lacan at this juncture concerns his rendering of sexuality under the rubric of language and symbolisation, something which cannot account for woman's sexuality precisely because it is phallic, or *phallocentric*. Hence women, on Lacan's account, are 'ignorant' of the cause of their own pleasure because what falls outside the Symbolic order – the phallic Law – cannot be 'known' as such. As Žižek asserts – and although he resists aligning women with 'feminine' and men with 'masculine' (he retains this aspect of Lacan's account of sexuation) – 'masculine' modality reflects *male sexuality*: 'Within the domain of sexual pleasures proper, masculine economy tends to be 'teleological', centred on phallic orgasm *qua* pleasure *par excellence*, whereas feminine economy involves a dispersed network of particular pleasures that are not organised around some teleological central principle' (Žižek, 2005: 160). So woman's sexuality is governed by a different 'modality', something which Irigaray herself is keen to express in various passages of *Speculum* and *This Sex Which is not One* (via the image of the 'two lips', for instance, to which I return in the concluding section). It may seem that there is exists, for woman, a way out of the confines of phallic Law vis-à-vis her paradoxical status as both a 'lack' and support for man's symbolic existence, and I shall return to this theme in Chapter 4 of this thesis. Next, I shall examine Irigaray's use of the idea of 'morphology'.

Patriarchy: A Phallic Order

There has been considerable debate amongst feminists, Lacanian analysts and others, surrounding the issue of whether the phallus is actually representative of the real penis.[76] For Lacan, the phallus is the neutral signifier of the desire of the Other, the symbol of lack in the structural Symbolic. However, I suggest in this section that the phallus is *necessarily* linked to the real penis. I shall then attempt to clarify Irigaray's own position, before discussing her thought on the relationship between the phallus and the notion of morphology.

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[76] For example, Bowie claims that the phallus is only 'trivially masculine' (Bowie, 1991:128).

Some feminists, notably Ragland-Sullivan (1986), have argued that the phallus is a completely neutral signifier of desire, in no way linked to the anatomical penis:

'The phallic signifier does not denote any sexual gender of superiority [...] The phallus is, instead, the signifier or creator of the lack that establishes substitutive Desire as a permanent ontological state and makes adult "wanting" a shadow pantomime of the primordial drama of Desire between mother and infant.' (Ragland-Sullivan, 1986: 271)

Bruce Fink reiterates Ragland-Sullivan's position, arguing that in western culture in general, the phallus is the neutral signifier of desire. This claim, he says, is supported by clinical analysis, but also constitutes a 'generalisation, not a necessary, universal rule', and 'there is no theoretical reason why it could not be something else' (Fink, 1995: 102). However, Lacan remarks that the 'signifier of signifiers' is 'the most salient of what can be grasped in sexual intercourse as real' (Lacan, 2004: 277).[77] Indeed, it seems no coincidence that 'that which the Ancients embodied therein the Nous and the Logos' is coincidentally also the symbol of masculine power and virility (Lacan, 2004: 280). In principle, there is no reason why (biological) women should not have a masculine structure (i.e. position in relation to phallic signifier), and vice-versa (Fink, 1995: 108). As I shall discuss below, Lacan argues that there is no theoretical reason why women should not 'have' the phallus. But as Elizabeth Grosz argues, the phallus and penis can only be aligned, metonymically, if there are those who lack it (Grosz, 2002: 122). Those who *lack* the phallus are most likely to be, due to the positioning of parties in the Oedipal scenario, mothers, and by extension, women; and those who *have* the phallus are most likely to be fathers, and therefore men. Moreover for Lacan, it is required of the mother that she lacks the phallus, otherwise she would be a phallic mother: a dangerous, destructive force. Under patriarchy, it is most likely that that person who possesses the phallus also possesses the penis, and therefore there exists a seemingly unbreakable tie between sexual difference and phallic dominance, even though this is theoretically not necessarily the case (Brennan, 1989: 4).

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[77] Again, Lacan's pun is on the word 'grasped'; i.e., to 'understand' or to 'hold' or 'grip'.

Lacan's account hinges on Freud's own theory of the Oedipal and castration complexes, in which the little boy only renounces his desire for the mother when he realises that she is castrated, that is, she does not have a penis. In *Speculum*, Irigaray reads Freud through Lacan on this issue. She refers to the (Freudian) penis as the 'privileged representative of the phallus' (SO: 78):

'[The little boy] will have to arm his penis with laws and ideals... reassure it by identification with the all-powerful, law-giving father, supply it with a severe super-ego, before it risks going out again toward, into, a woman's body. Whence the prohibition, the latency period, culture, morality, religion.' (SO: 86)

On Freud's account, it is the bearer of the penis who has 'more' to lose, that is, the little boy fears he might lose his penis should he refuse to renounce his mother; he risks becoming 'like' her (lack is projected onto her body). His penis, therefore, is invested in – 'armed' – in order to compensate for this primordial 'sacrifice' of the mother. In Freudian terms, the reality principle acts in order to keep the pleasure principle in check, channelling the boy's desire for his mother into socially accepted and useful terms. (As I shall discuss in the final part of this chapter, the processes of sublimation described by Irigaray above – as well as differentiation *per se* – is supposedly more difficult for girls and women than for boys and men.) For Lacan, the dissolution of the Oedipus complex relies on the acceptance of 'Symbolic' castration, or the 'loss of origin'. This means that the subject must renounce something in order to enter the Symbolic order; he must renounce the pleasure derived from the mother's body.[78] The rem(a)inder of the subject's separation from the mother prefigures the primordial phantasy, that by which the subject sustains his illusion of wholeness.[79] Lacan calls the fantasy object the *objet a*, or the *cause of desire*, as I described above in my discussion of *Seminar XX*. Moreover the *jouissance* (enjoyment of the mother's body) which is sacrificed then shifts to the Other, the locus of speech. Primordial bodily 'pleasures' (drives) are manifest instead in language, which is Lacan's reformulation of Freud's notion of 'sublimation'.

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[78] For Freud, the little boy must accept the fact of the mother's castration. Similarly for Lacan, this 'sacrifice' (of the mother's body) is supposedly greater for boys than it is for girls

[79] A trace of the original union remains, and in this sense it functions as a 'reminder'. See Fink, 1995: 59.

Thus there is a link between sublimation and castration, in that castration forces the subject to accept the loss of jouissance and its circulation in the Other. As Fink remarks, 'our advent as speaking beings creates a loss, and that loss is at the centre of civilization and culture' (Fink, 1995: 100). The phallus comes to signify not only displaced or lost jouissance, but becomes the condition of exchange within the Symbolic, and governs the flow of objects – including women - amongst men.[80]

In *Speculum*, Irigaray argues that, for Freud (as well as for Lacan), if the little girl is to develop 'normally' then this development must obey the same laws – indeed, it must obey the same phallic Law – as the little boy. In this sense, the phallic Law is also the Law of the Same (sex). Irigaray remarks that 'woman's only relation to origin is one dictated by man's', and that -

'[The phallus] would not be the privileged signifier of the penis or even of power and sexual pleasure were it not to be interpreted as *an appropriation of the relation to origin and of the desire for and as origin*. The tropism, as well as the rivalry, is in fact between the man and (his) mother. And woman is well and truly castrated from the viewpoint of this economy.' (SO: 33. Emphasis in original.)

Symbolic castration prescribes the sacrifice of the maternal origin; the body of the mother is rejected in favour of the Law-of-the-Father. The rivalry between man and his mother is in fact man's attempt to appropriate the maternal origin, to claim ownership of it. Irigaray continues that the little girl is required to 'abandon her relation to the origin and her primal fantasy so that henceforth she can be inscribed into those of men which will become the "origin" of her desire.' (SO: 33). The phallic Law is thus the Law of the Same which requires that women accept symbolic castration in the same way as men; they must also become their mother's rivals. But according to Irigaray, this assumes that women have the *same* relation to the maternal origin as men. Irigaray questions the assumed rivalry with the mother entailed by both Freud and Lacan's accounts. She asks, how is woman to

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[80] In this sense it is a 'homosexual' economy. Irigaray calls the dominant ideology (patriarchy) 'hom(m)osexual': meaning the love of the Same sex (male) (SO: 142).

symbolise her own relationship with her mother, in a way that does not entail rejection or rivalry? I shall return to this in the final section.

As I stated in the Introduction, the topic of matricide is revisited by Irigaray throughout her *oeuvre*, and I shall re-examine this topic specifically in chapters 2 and 6. The sacrifice of the mother is an event which Irigaray highlights as the founding 'moment' of Symbolic/phallocentric order. In 'Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother' (1993b), Irigaray argues that western cultural tradition (including philosophy, see Chapter 2 onwards) continues to repeat certain 'acts' that initially became embedded in early myths and tales. Using the example of Clytemnestra's murder in the *Oresteia*, Irigaray asserts that -

'[T]he murder of the mother is rewarded by letting the son go scot-free, by burying the madness of women – and burying women in madness – and by introducing the image of the virgin goddess, born of the Father, obedient to his laws at the expense of the mother.' (SG: 13).

Whilst Apollo redeems Orestes from madness, and is freed to found what can only be described as a patriarchal order, Electra is abandoned, and will remain mad. The desire of the mother is censured, repressed and eventually extinguished altogether, because 'this is what the law of the father, of all fathers, moves to prohibit' (SG: 11). Hence the relation to the mother – all mothers – she says, is a 'mad desire', 'the dark continent par excellence' (SG: 10). Furthermore, Irigaray remarks, 'the mythology that underlies patriarchy has not changed' (SG: 12). The body of the mother - and the womb that nurtures and gives life - is replaced by the 'matrix' of (his) language, just as the desire of the mother is obliterated by the political ambitions of the men in the *Oresteia*. Refusing to accept this new Law of the Father will result, of course, in hysteria, the most feminine of afflictions.[81]

So for Irigaray, the Symbolic phallus then replaces – or is built on an originary subordination of – the womb and, specifically, the placenta:

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[81] Post-Freud, the Electra complex describes the girl's psychosexual rivalry with her mother for the possession of her father (in Jung, for example).

'The phallus becomes the organiser of the world through the man-father at the very place where the umbilical cord, that primal link to the mother, once gave birth to man and woman. All that had taken place in an originary womb, the first nourishing earth, first waters, first sheaths, first membranes in which the *whole* child was held, as well as the *whole* mother, through the mediation of her blood.' (SG: 14)

For Irigaray, the phallus is not just an arbitrary, neutral signifier of desire (or lack); it is the *imaginary symbolisation of the Real penis*, the visual representation of sexual difference. Patriarchy is a phallic order governed by the phallus as the transcendental signifier precisely because the imaginary and symbolic orders are themselves historically constituted, and reflect the morphology of men, their desires and fears. The sacrifice of the mother is an event, according to Irigaray, which in psychoanalytical terms reflects the rivalry between man and his mother, his desire to appropriate the maternal origin. The fact that Lacan renders woman as effectively 'non-existent' epitomises Irigaray's claim that women have no imaginary nor symbolic of their own, no way of relating to or symbolising their own relationship to the maternal origin. As I discuss below, this has far-reaching ramifications which become profoundly manifest in the psychoanalytic scene.

3. Women, the Transference, and the 'Sensible Transcendental'

Irigaray contests that women's relationship to the maternal origin remains unsymbolised. Furthermore, the phallic term prohibits women 'access' to their own bodies, their sexuality, their mothers, each other. The psychic processes described by Lacan inscribe the phallic Law into the psyche of the individual subject who is 'sexed' in relation to the phallic function. Refusal to accept symbolic castration - the Law of the Same - results in psychosis, the 'refusal' of the split. However, as I argued in the Introduction, Irigaray is not recommending that women turn their backs on the

process of obtaining subjectivity, in favour of some pre-linguistic, pre-Oedipal state; quite the

opposite is true. Irigaray argues that women should aspire for a subjectivity which resists, or

transcends, that prescribed by the phallic Law of the Same. It is according to this Law that 'woman'

is assigned either the position of the fantasy object or as the 'femme fatale', the 'dual role of the

impossible and the forbidden' (TS: 96). Indeed, women's failure to adopt a full subject position

makes them susceptible to becoming objects of exchange, rivals amongst other women in a

phallocentric culture. This begs the question, what sort of reconceptualisation of subjectivity is

Irigaray recommending that would resist the constraints imposed by the Lacanian account? The

notion of the 'sensible transcendental', I suggest, provides such an avenue of possibility.

Irigaray first refers to a 'sensible transcendental' in her essay 'The Limit of the Transference'

(1995b). She argues that, in the analytic scene, the transference is irresolvable between two women

because women have 'no language or symbolic of their own' to account for it; psychoanalysis merely

reduces women to their maternal function, transforming them into rivalrous daughters (Whitford,

1995: 105). Before discussing Irigaray's account, I would like to look briefly at the function of the

transference in psychoanalysis.

The transference, according to Freud, is the unconscious redirection of desire, feelings and

emotions from one person to another - in this case from the analysand onto the analyst - and may

entail the repetition of childhood relationships. The transference is a crucial part of the analytic

process, and assists in the recovery of repressed (unconscious) emotions. However, the transference

occasionally takes on an erotic form, depending on the sex and age of the analysand:

> 'Transference can appear as a passionate demand for love or in more moderate
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> forms; in place of a wish to be loved, a wish can emerge between a girl and an old
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> man to be received as a favourite daughter; the libidinal desire can be toned down
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> into a proposal for an inseparable, but ideally non-sensual, friendship. Some women
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> succeed in sublimating the transference and in moulding it until it achieves a kind of
>
> viability.' (Freud, 1974: 494)

In the case of two men, Freud suggests that the analysand's attachment to his analyst may be similar to that of a woman analysand. However, the sublimation required to end the transference is more easily attained with respect to two men because 'the sublimated forms of transference are more frequent between one man and another and straightforward sexual demands are rarer' (ibid.). Sublimation – the diversion of libidinal drives into 'socially higher' aims (Freud, 1974: 47) – is supposedly easier for men, as I discussed above, given that they have 'more' to lose than women. Thus the relationship between the male analyst and his (usually younger) female patient becomes immensely complicated, as it may become overlaid with erotic tension.[82] Those women who succeed in sublimating their desire for their analyst are assured recovery. Indeed, it probably wouldn't have occurred to Freud to consider the case of two women. According to Irigaray, there is no limit to the transference between two women because sublimation is not possible; there is 'no transactional or transitional object' between them (Irigaray, 1995b: 107), no real possibility of mediation. Hence there is only 'a distanceless proximity between women – between mother and daughter? – distanceless because no symbolic process allows us to account for it' (ibid). With nothing to mediate the relationship – with no symbolic object of exchange - the two women risk destroying one another: 'A chiasmus takes place in the immediate, with no mirror' (Irigaray, 1995b: 108). Given that specularization – indeed, the process differentiation *per se* – is premised on man's rivalry with his (m)other, women are left in a dubious position with respect to their own mothers, as I mentioned above. The 'deadly immediacy' between women must be mediated, their desires must be sublimated, in order for them to relate to one another as *women*, instead of remaining 'merged' with the mother (Irigaray, 1995b: 74). The danger that Irigaray alerts the woman analyst to is the analysand's difficulty in articulating her desire, of construing it as an object of exchange, rather than something which 'eats up' the other. The task of the analyst, moreover, is to create boundaries between analyst and analysand that separate 'woman' from 'mother' (ibid). But how is this to be achieved?

Irigaray describes the 'sensible transcendental' as 'a female transcendental against which each woman can measure herself rather than progressing only by taking the place of the mother, the

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[82] Freud discusses this matter at length in his paper 'Observations on Love in Transference' (Freud, 2006: 341 – 353).

other woman or the man' (Irigaray, 1995b: 112). The creation of a 'transcendental' for woman would allow the necessary space (a 'heterogeneous' space-time: see Chapter 3) to be created between two women, a 'skin' or 'container' within which the analysand can breathe. But this also requires the creation of a symbolic object, something which allows desire to be mediated, but which resists sacrifice: 'The creation or elaboration of the object becomes an architectonic of the body, of a life and death that does not kill the other' (Irigaray, 1995b: 113). Only this achievement might signal the end of the transference.

Irigaray posits the realisation of sexuate *difference* as intimately associated with the achievement of a 'sensible transcendental': 'sexual difference [...] contrives a space or site of liberty between two bodies, two flesh, which protects the partners by giving them boundaries' (Irigaray, 1995b: 115). That is, sexuate difference needs to be re-thought in a way that transcends Lacan's account of sexuation; an account which is not just based on the masculine, phallic model. The second stage of Irigaray's project (described in the Introduction) therefore concerns women, their morphology, and the possibility of imagining relationships between women which counter the psychoanalytical tendency to reduce them to their maternal function.

Conclusions

This chapter has described Irigaray's use of several key psychoanalytic concepts, concepts which she appropriates, manipulates and extends for her own ends (it is for this reason that I regard Irigaray's use of psychoanalytical theory as 'pragmatic'). I have deployed Irigaray's term 'specularization' as a way of understanding the mechanism by means of which the subject is formed vis-à-vis his requirement to separate from the maternal origin. Moreover, notably in *Speculum*, specularization denotes the masculine subject's paradoxical dependence upon the repressed and appropriated maternal origin: 'woman', according to Lacan, does not exist except as a linguistic signifier denoting absence or lack. In Irigarayan terms, woman becomes the reflective surface (the 'mirror') onto whom man will project his desires and phantasies. The Imaginary order – Lacan's register of the image – is also the register of masculine phantasy which bears the 'imprint' of male

anatomy (the phallus and castration anxiety). As such, the Symbolic order (the linguistic register which structures the Imaginary) is also a phallic order; it bears the marks of masculine morphology (by prioritising solidity, sameness, erection, penetration, and so on). Irigaray mobilises the image of the 'two lips', for example, as a counter-symbol to the phallus, an image of self-touching which points to something beyond phallic primacy. The image of the two lips is a figure both for 'femininity' as well as for the kind of overflow 'produced' by the feminine: the 'more than one' (one + one + one) or what Sjöholm calls the 'productive excess of sexual difference' (Sjöholm, 2000: 102). Christine Battersby notes that Irigaray's lips motif offers a 'metaphor for the different model of identity that is required in order to think the different identity of women' (Battersby, 1998: 115). Indeed, this task comprises part of the second 'phase' of Irigaray's thought that I described in the Introduction. This 'productive excess' is the basis for thinking what I have called (thanks to Stone) a *sui generis* notion of female subjectivity. However, harnessing this 'productive excess' will not be sufficient to challenge the construction of the subject in and of itself. Only a 'sensible transcendental', Irigaray suggests, will engender the conditions required in order for a female subjectivity to become possible. In the next two chapters I shift my focus to Irigaray's engagement with philosophy, and trace the sensible transcendental's philosophical roots as they evolve from Irigaray's critical dialogue with Kant.

Chapter 2: Kant

There lurks at the foundation of this subject an illusion which is difficult to avoid. **(Kant, 1993: 210)**

Chapter Outline

The previous chapter set out some of the principal features of Irigaray's use of psychoanalysis. I concluded by discussing her call for a 'sensible transcendental' in the context of the psychoanalytic scene, as an analytic tool which would allow for a 'space-time' or interval between two women, thereby aiding the end of the transference process. In short, the 'sensible transcendental' begins life as a 'third term' between two bodies, a 'space of liberty' which precludes the danger of 'merging back into the mother'. Irigaray attempts to move beyond the conservative trappings of Lacan's account by rethinking the imaginary relationship to the maternal origin in such a way that resists returning to the mother entirely, which would amount to a rejection or foreclosure of the symbolic register altogether, resulting in psychosis (I shall further develop this notion in Chapter 6). The role of the 'sensible transcendental' is precisely to mediate the dialectical process between self and (m)other by fundamentally transforming the material conditions of subjectivity. In this chapter, I would like to begin to situate the concept as it is used by Irigaray in her deconstruction of western metaphysical thought, starting with Kant, whose philosophical thought Lacan arguably 'reworks'.

Although Irigaray does not mention the term 'sensible transcendental' in her discussion of Kant in *Speculum*, I suggest that it is from her critical engagement with Kant that the term emerges. As I stated in the Introduction, one of Irigaray's central concerns is the occlusion of the sensible, the bodily, and the feminine from discourse, something which she identifies as symptomatic of the repression of the mother's desire, and *man's own desire* to appropriate the maternal origin for himself. Kant's 'transcendental' – his ground of experience – is interpreted by Irigaray on exactly these terms. Margaret Whitford claims that 'Irigaray concludes that Kant's philosophy operates as a particularly ruthless refusal to recognise its debt to the sensible'; and that 'the Kantian philosopher

who allocates the imaginary to the intelligible is a philosopher who has repressed the relationship to the mother' (Whitford, 1991: 157; 158). Irigaray alerts us to the possibility that metaphysics is a *symptom* of the repressed relationship with the mother, but also that this relationship forms the tentative ground or condition of its possibility.[83] The 'sensible transcendental', as I demonstrate at the end of the chapter, is intended to reinstate the sensible or the empirical component of perception by evoking the 'otherness' of, particularly, embodied differences (bodily multiplicity vis-à-vis morphology).

I arrange this chapter as follows. I shall unpack Irigaray's argument as it relates to the central tenets of Kant's metaphysics as set out in the *Prolegomena* (2001) and the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1993): his conception of space and time, the schematism, the transcendental, and the notion of the empirical self. I shall then argue that Irigaray's vision surrounding the 'sensible transcendental' is essentially *Kantian* (or a Lacanian reading of Kant); a search for a ground of being (experience) that acknowledges the debt both to the sensible and to the mother. First, however, I would like to begin by reflecting on the 'intertextuality' of Irigaray's reading of Kant, an intertext which has the Marquis de Sade as well as Lacan as figures in the background.[84]

1. Intertextuality: How 'Perverted' is Kant?[85]

Irigaray's chapter on Kant in *Speculum* is a textual analysis that echoes Lacan's own dialogue on Kant in 'Kant with Sade' (2006). A brief analysis of Lacan's text in this section should aid our understanding of the journey Irigaray makes through Kant's metaphysics, ethics and aesthetics in her essay 'Paradox A Priori' (1985a). There are a couple of 'clues' in 'Paradox A Priori' that lead us in the direction of Lacan's original text. The second clue is near the end of the chapter, when Irigaray remarks that - 'And in the suffering made necessary by his pleasure, shall we

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[83] Understood very broadly in the Aristotelian sense as concerned with attempts to define 'being' (first causes, etc.). Irigaray conflates metaphysics with philosophy in general.
[84] 'Intertextuality' is the shaping of the text's meaning by other texts.
[85] In comparing Kant with Sade, Lacan implicitly diagnoses Kant with a form of perversion (Sadism).

place Kant next to Sade?' (SO: 212). The first, perhaps less obvious clue (because it occurs earlier in the text), consists in this paragraph:[86]

> 'The principle "noli tangere matrem" locates its economy of reason and desire in the *categorical imperative*. Fear and awe of an all-powerful nature forbid man to touch his/the mother and reward his courage in resisting her attractions by granting him the right to judge himself independent, while at the same time encouraging him to prepare himself to continue resisting dangers in the future by developing (his) culture. Culture, also, is based upon this *abyss* that reason represents for the imaginary.' (SO: 210)

This appears to be a deliberate response to (or indeed an echoing of) the final words of Lacan's essay 'Kant with Sade', which was - it is noted at the beginning - intended as a preface for an edition of Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom*:

> '[I]t appears that nothing has been gained by replacing Diotima here with Dolmancé, a person whom the usual orifice seems to frighten more than is fitting, and who – did Sade see this? – concludes the whole business with a sort of *Noli tangere matrem*. Raped and sewn shut – the mother remains prohibited. My verdict is confirmed regarding Sade's submission to the Law.' (Lacan, 2006: 667)

Lacan's interpretation of Sade's pornographic 'diatribe' against French society in 'Kant avec Sade' sees Lacan first side *with* Sade, but then consign him to the same category of 'humourless piety' as Kant. Lacan outlines his intentions as follows:

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[86] Whitford (1991) notes Kant's Categorical Imperative could be interpreted as 'noli tangere matrem', but doesn't appear to identify the link with Lacan. Similarly, Gallop (1982) discusses Irigaray's position on Lacan & Sade, but makes little reference to Kant.

'*Philosophy in the Bedroom* came eight years after the *Critique of Practical Reason*. If, after showing that the former is consistent with the latter, I can demonstrate that the former completes the latter, I shall be able to claim that it yields the truth of the *Critique*.' (Lacan, 2006: 646)

According to Lacan, Sade's text 'completes' Kant's second Critique in the sense that both authors *fail*: Kant by failing to avoid slipping back into 'traditional ethics' by introducing the imaginary dimension 'through the back door', and enveloping the moral law in his sympathy for our fellow man; and Sade by making the Real an object of the will, thus forcing the subject to 'assume the perverse position where he sees himself as the instrument of the Will of the Other' (Žižek, 1998: 45). By introducing the notion of jouissance into ethics, Sade exposes Kant's deontology– an ethics premised on 'duty' - as perverse 'in the strictest sense': 'the subject attributes to the Other (to duty or to the Law), the surplus enjoyment that he finds in his actions [...] In this case, the subject hides behind the law' (Žižek, 1998: 490). The maxim that Lacan exposes in Sade's text is, moreover, a 'rule for jouissance', albeit one that initiates Sade's downfall in the eyes of Lacan, or so we are encouraged to believe (Lacan, 2006: 648). Sade is submitted, in the end, to his own Law: the Sadist does not deny the Other's existence as such, but rather discharges the *pain* of existence into the Other, thereby turning himself into an 'eternal object' (Lacan, 2006: 656). But this 'right' to jouissance is, however, no more or less perverse or disturbing than any other maxim articulated by/through Kant's Categorical Imperative. So in response to Irigaray's remark above, we may as well place Kant next to Sade, at least where our reading of Lacan is concerned.

Lacan's idea of a 'Sadian trap' seems to flavour Irigaray's whole chapter on Kant in *Speculum*.[87] The maxim that she accuses Kant of 'hiding behind' is 'do not touch the mother': this is a nod towards Lacan: a reiteration of the imperative contained within the structure of the Oedipal stage, the '*No!*' of the Symbolic father. As Lacan remarks in response to Sade, 'he comes up with nothing better than the promise that nature, woman as she is, will magically give us ever more'

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[87] See Žižek, 1998: 49.

(Lacan, 2006: 667). The reward for Kant's courage in 'not touching', it could be suggested, is the indefatigable nature/body of the mother that continues to permit pleasure and pain in equal measure.

If anyone gets off lightly in the tussle between Lacan, Sade and Kant in Irigaray's text, it is arguably Sade. Jane Gallop even goes as far as to say that 'Irigaray can see Sade but not Lacan as an ally'; although Irigaray's concerns as regards Sade's phallocratic tendencies are largely self-evident (Gallop, 1982: 86).[88] The role that Lacan plays in Irigaray's text is that of 'master' (or 'lawgiver'): he, alongside Kant and Sade, are guilty of appropriating women's 'nature', although Sade is lauded by Lacan (and Irigaray) for bringing to light the 'anal-sadistic' which clouds the subject (Gallop, 1982: 85). But *Lacan's* pleasure, it seems, is in consigning both Kant and Sade to the same status as pious bores: Kant 'hasn't the slightest sense of comedy', he remarks of Kant's 'apologue of the gallows' (Lacan, 2006: 661). Lacan is never without a sense of irony, but it is clear that there is more going on here than initially meets the eye.[89] But whatever Lacan's intentions towards Sade actually are - could it be to instate *himself* as the authority on desire *par excellence*? – I would suggest here that Irigaray places Lacan next to Kant *and* Sade in a rather peculiar triumvirate, and one that reverberates throughout the piece.

The Sadian overtones in 'Paradox A Priori' make for an interesting take on Irigaray's metaphor of the 'house of experience': does Kant, in his *jouissance*, build his house, his philosophical 'system', out of an unconscious fear of touching the mother? (Kant, 2001: 54) According to Irigaray, the transcendental subject appropriates the maternal origin for himself, which he transforms into the *a priori*, the ground of experience. In the next section I turn to Kant's own thought, beginning with his account of space and time. I shall describe how this relates to the Irigarayan notion of specularization that I discussed in the previous chapter.

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[88] See, for example, 'French Women, Stop Trying' in *This Sex Which is not One* (1985b). The title is a repartee to the fictional pamphlet that Sade uses in *Philosophy in the Bedroom*.
[89] Gallop (1982) says that Lacan implies a rejection of Sade, but eventually comes out in his support.

2. Space, Time and the 'Space-Time of Specularization'

In her paper on Irigaray and Kant, Joanna Hodge remarks that 'for Irigaray, Kant's transcendental aesthetic, set out at the beginning of the first *Critique*, becomes a re-enactment, before the event, of Lacan's law, name or interdiction of the father, through which male authority and succession is guaranteed' (Hodge, 2003: 197). Thus for Hodge, Irigaray needs to revise Kant's transcendental aesthetic in order to mitigate against the damaging effects of Kant's system, effects which have blocked the question of sexuate difference being articulated (ibid.). Irigaray writes in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (2004a) that 'in order for [sexual] difference to be thought and lived, we have to reconsider the whole problematic of space and time' (ESD: 8. Emphasis in original). In the previous chapter I defined 'specularization' as denoting a specific relationship between the masculine subject, his mother and the masculine Imaginary. In 'Paradox A Priori', Irigaray hypothesises specularization as a symptom of the topography of the masculine subject, of his 'space-time'. But how do space and time function, according to Kant?

In 'The Transcendental Aesthetic' chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant first of all distinguishes 'empirical' intuitions – those which are given to us by means of the senses – from 'pure' intuitions: 'I call representations *pure*, in the transcendental meaning of the word, wherein nothing is met with that belongs to sensation' (Kant, 1993: 48).[90] These 'pure' intuitions are *a priori* in that they provide a frame in which the senses or sensory experience is placed. The empiricists – and Descartes - are wrong, Kant argues, as they fail to see that intellectual structure is contained within experience; or that this intellectual structure has an *a priori* component.[91] These 'pure'

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[90] The term 'aesthetic' has its roots in the Greek 'aisthētikos' meaning 'perception', but the term was often used in German to refer to the critique of taste. A footnote in this particular version of *The Critique of Pure Reason* states that the term was taken up by Kant as referring to "the science of laws of sensibility" (Kant, 1993: 49). Kant wanted to discover the *a priori* laws behind the empirical sources that evoked judgements of 'taste', for example, hence the 'transcendental aesthetic'.

[91] According to Descartes, external objects 'are the unobservable but inferred causes of our perceptions' (Wilkerson, 1976: 182). Kant calls this account of the relationship between the mind and external objects

intuitions, uncontaminated by the senses, are *space* and *time*. Both space and time are necessary representations that are the foundation of our intuitions:

> 'Time is the formal condition *a priori* of all appearances whatsoever. Space, as the pure form of external intuition, is limited as a condition *a priori* to external appearances alone.' (Kant, 1993: 56)

Without time, experience of any kind would not be possible. If time is an internal condition of objective experience (the 'inner sense'), then space is its external counterpart (the 'outer sense'). Together, they give *form* to the manifold of sense data (the field of un-synthesised presentations). Time and space provide the frame through which perception proceeds. They are the 'pure' modes of *a priori* knowledge, discoverable by isolating sensibility and 'separating from it all that is annexed to it by the concepts of the understanding, so that nothing be left but empirical intuition' (Kant, 1993: 49). Time and space are the two pure forms of sensible intuition, 'principles of knowledge *a priori*' (ibid.).

Kant expands upon his theory in his *Prolegomena*, in which he describes space and time as 'the intuitions which pure mathematics lay at the foundation of all its cognitions and judgements which appear at once apodeictic and necessary' (Kant, 2001: 25). It is here that he describes the 'paradox' from which Irigaray takes her epigraph for her chapter in *Speculum*, 'Paradox A Priori'. The purpose of Kant's example is to illustrate the claim that space and time are particulars, not 'classes of relations *between* particulars' (Körner, 1972: 34. Emphasis added). Kant was bold in his support of the Newtonian idea - against Leibniz - that 'true' time flows 'without relation to anything'; and that space, without relation to anything external, is 'always similar and immovable' (Körner, 1972: 33). Hence the purpose of the example in the *Prolegomena* is to highlight the difference between 'incongruent counterparts' (Körner, 1972: 34):

'transcendental realism', as it opposes his own doctrine of 'transcendental idealism', by which the mind has 'immediate sense experience of external objects' (Ward, 2006: 82).

'What can be more similar in every respect and in every part more alike to my hand and to my ear than their images in mirror? And yet I cannot put such a hand as is seen in the mirror in the place of its original, for if this is a right hand, that in the mirror is a left one, and the image or reflection of the right ear is a left one, which never can serve as a substitute for the other. There are in this case no internal differences which our understanding could determine by thinking alone' (Kant, 2001: 27).

The fact that 'the glove of one hand cannot be used for the other' also serves to support the later claim (also in the *Critique*) that 'these objects are not representations of things as they are in themselves [...] but sensuous intuitions', whose possibility is dependent upon the sensibility, for which space is the form of the external intuition (Kant, 2001: 27 – 28).

If the purpose of the passage in the *Prolegomena* was to show that the existence of incongruent counterparts proves the *particularity* of space and time, then the task of the *Critique* was to prove their *a priori* character. This revised conception of space and time constituted a revolutionary move in the sense that Kant turned on its head the relationship between *movement* and *time*. Formerly, time was thought to relate to the movement it measured. As I mentioned above, this represented the first step in the direction of a 'Copernican revolution': or, as Deleuze says, 'the first great Kantian reversal':

'Time is no longer defined by succession because succession concerns only things and movements which are in time. If time itself were succession, it would need to succeed in another time, and on to infinity [...]. Permanence, succession and simultaneity are modes and relationships of time. Thus, just as time can no longer be defined by succession, space cannot be defined by co-existence' (Deleuze, 1984: viii).

Time no longer relates to the movement it measures; rather, movement is related to the time which conditions it (Deleuze, 1984: vii). Hence, both space *and* time must find new 'determinations', which was Kant's aim in the first *Critique* (ibid.). For Irigaray, the consequence of this move represents the first building block in the construction of the subject's 'house of experience', to use Kant's own words (Kant, 2001: 54). I shall deal more broadly with Irigaray's concerns as regards the 'Copernican revolution' in the next section; this will involve considering to what kind of interpretation of Kant's thought Irigaray subscribes, as well as considering more generally the effects of the Copernican turn on philosophical thought. What the titular 'Paradox' refers to, however, is a tension at the heart of Kant's revolutionary 'reversal' of the use of space and time. Whereas traditional metaphysics suggested that space and time were cognised via the object, Kant turns this idea on its head and asserts that form is formed through – and therefore *is* - space and time. The example from the *Prolegomena* above relating to incongruent counterparts, which for Kant illustrates his point that space and time are forms of our intuitions, and not concepts themselves, highlights for Irigaray the implausibility of the Kantian notion that the form *intuits* its concept:

> '[I]f, conceptually, my right hand and my left hand, or my hand and its image in a mirror, are rigorously the same, or the same thing, this would not be true for the intuitive character of space in which the *paradox of symmetry* was taken into account. Thus already a mirror turns out to support the apprehension of objects.'
> (SO: 205. Emphasis in original.)

Thus the *'space-time of specularization* is implicit in the intuition of space' (SO: 205. Emphasis in original). Here, Irigaray draws upon the metaphor of the mirror in order to parody Kant's own example of incongruent counterparts form the *Prolegomena*: 'a mirror has already been inserted', she claims (ibid.). The 'mirror' represents the Lacanian Imaginary – as I discussed in Chapter 1 – the register that appeals to the infant's inflated and distorted idea of itself: 'male narcissism extrapolated to the transcendental' (Whitford, 1991: 151). If this mirror is already present in Kant, then his thought becomes a projection of his ego; the external world is a *reflection* of the

transcendental subject. Margaret Whitford describes Irigaray's theory of the 'structure of specularization' as a process by which 'the male projects his own ego onto the word, which then becomes a mirror which enables him to see his own reflection wherever he looks' (Whitford, 1991: 36). The 'paradox of symmetry' (demonstrated by the mirror episode) – the 'recourse to the imaginary which is both other and the same' – is in what in Irigaray's view exposes Kant's implicit phallocentrism and his concealment of the (m)other (SO: 206).

Hodge argues that Irigaray's questions to Kant in response to the determinations of space and time in the first *Critique* are threefold: first, Irigaray questions 'their formal quality', the fact that the *form* of sense is given separately, and *prior*, to human corporeality and material sensuousness; second, she questions the supposed 'separability' of space and time; and third, she questions the *relation* of this separability, arguing that we must rethink space and time as an intertwining of the formal and the material; in other words, as *space-time* (Hodge, 2003: 205). In Chapter 3, I will suggest that Irigaray proposes to rethink Kant's doctrine of space and time by reading him through Heidegger.

Although it is important to question the extent to which Irigaray's reading relies on the psychoanalytical theory which underpins it, it is equally important to address the philosophical ambitions that may have become obscured, perhaps, and forced into the background by her interpretative style. In the following section I shall attempt to locate Irigaray's reading of Kant in terms of two conflicting interpretations of Kantian thought, which I have termed 'Traditional' and 'Revolutionary'. It is essential that we approach Irigaray's analysis of Kant as a *philosophical* response - and not merely as a psychoanalytical interpretation of his texts – if we are to fully understand the philosophical concepts that are brought into question as a result of Irigaray's call for a sensible transcendental.

3. The Copernican Turn: 'Traditional' versus 'Revolutionary' Kant

The idea of a 'Copernican turn' or 'Copernican revolution' is crucial to our reading of Irigaray. In her chapter 'Any Theory of the Subject' (1985a), she remarks that '[T]he Copernican revolution has yet to have its final effects in the male imaginary. And by centring man outside himself, it has occasioned above all man's ex-stasis within the transcendental (subject)' (SO: 133). Irigaray's concern relates to the supposed 'extrapolation' of masculine subjectivity to the transcendental realm, to the detriment of the sensible (and particularly the feminine). For Irigaray, this is a consequence of Kant's rendering of the material world as 'unknowable' *in itself*. Lurking behind Irigaray's analysis, however, is a specific interpretation of the 'Copernican revolution', one that holds Kant's project to be fundamentally mistaken about the material world. In this section, I shall first of all examine how exactly Kant's project in the *Critique* could be said to constitute a 'Copernican revolution'. Secondly, I shall set out two conflicting interpretations of Kant's thought: the 'Traditional' view, and the 'Revolutionary' view. I argue that Irigaray is typical of the Traditional interpretation, and that this is the conception of Kant's thought that underpins her own project.

In the B preface of the first *Critique*, Kant uses the Copernican analogy to illustrate his intention to demonstrate that *a priori* knowledge is in some sense due to the features of the 'knower' (Bird, 2006: 30).[92] Copernicus' 'experiment' was to 'assume that the spectator revolved, while the stars remained at rest'; and Kant urges that 'we make the same experiment with regard to objects' (Kant, 1993: 15). Objects must 'conform' to the knower if the scientific model of intellectual revolution is to be applied to metaphysics (Bird, 2006: 30). Thus if experience presupposes *a priori* laws of the understanding to which the object conforms, Kant contends that:

'[O]ur faculty of knowledge is unable to transcend the limits of possible experience; and yet this is precisely the most essential object of this science. The estimate of our

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[92] The 'Copernican revolution' is the name given to the paradigm shift away from the Ptolemaic vision of the earth as the centre of the universe, to the heliocentric model.

rational knowledge *a priori* at which we arrive is that it has only to do with appearances, and that things in themselves, while real in themselves are nothing to us.' (Kant, 1993: 16)

(I would point out here that whilst Kant denies that we can know anything about the thing in itself, he does not deny that it exists *in reality*. This is a point of contention that comprises a large part of the debate as regards the consequences of the Copernican turn which I shall discuss below.)

Kant resumes his discussion of appearances and things in themselves at the end of the chapter on the 'Transcendental Aesthetic'. He remarks that 'all our intuition is nothing but the representation of appearances;' and that 'the things we intuit are not in themselves the same as our representations of them in intuition' (Kant, 1993: 61). He then concludes that –

'[A]ppearances, cannot exist in themselves, but only in us. What may be the nature of objects considered as things in themselves and without reference to the receptivity of our sensibility is quite unknown [...] We know nothing more than our own mode of perceiving them. (Ibid.)'

In other words, what I intuit about the object is not necessarily how the object is in 'reality' – it is a *representation* only. What I receive through sensuous intuition are mere appearances. Remove the subject, and time and space are lost. For neither are 'in themselves *things*', and cannot be said to 'exist' outside of the mind (Kant, 1993: 356). Kant spends a large part of the *Critique* working towards his famous conclusion that 'the objects of experience then are not things in themselves, but are given only in experience, and have no existence apart from and independently of experience' (ibid.). Such is Kant's doctrine of 'transcendental idealism'.[93] The 'thing in itself' – how the object

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[93] Some commentators (See Allison, 1983: 25-28; Wilkerson, 1976: 180-190) talk of three 'interpretations' of Kant's idealism: 'positive', 'negative' and 'formal'. It is beyond the limits of this project to engage in a full discussion of Irigaray's position with regards to this particular debate, but it is in my view that Irigaray supports, broadly speaking, the 'positive interpretation'. In Wilkerson's words, this view prescribes that 'Kant is a 'noumenalist' in the sense that he distinguishes between two sets of objects, non-spatial and non-temporal noumena and spatio-temporal phenomena; and that he is a 'phenomenalist' in the sense that he reduces objects

exists outside of our sensory experience – is quite unknown to us. The appearances of the object, which we intuit in space and time – both of which are 'determinations of the sensibility' – means that they 'are not things in themselves, but are mere representations, which, if not given in us – in perception, are non-existent' (Kant, 1993: 357).

As intuitions are already subtended by space and time – which are not things 'in themselves'- then it follows that we can only have knowledge of 'appearances' of the object, but not of the object itself. It is at this point that I must mention something about the two conflicting interpretations of Kant that I mentioned above: the 'Revolutionary' (or 'Non-Traditionalist') interpretation on the one hand, and the 'Traditionalist', on the other. The Revolutionary interpretation maintains that Kant succeeded in his attempt to 'revolutionise' metaphysics, in order that we may successfully identify and explain *a priori* elements in perception. The Revolutionary view therefore also involves justifying the compatibility between Kant's empirical realism and transcendental idealism (cf. Kant, 1993: 195 - 7). The Traditionalist interpretation, however, is taken to be a form of old-fashioned (Berkeleyan) Idealism. In short, the Traditionalist interpretation is sceptical about the existence of external objects, and is a 'psychological' doctrine in the sense that what the mind *constructs* out of the manifold of sense data (sensations) is not actually part of the empirical world by means of which it constructs (because what we intuit are appearances only): the 'construction' must be separate.[94] Moreover, we have no guarantee that other people construct things in the same way; we rely on what Leibniz called a divine, pre-established harmony. This view does, however, create some dire consequences for Kant. For if the Traditionalist interpretation is correct, Kant has merely compounded some of the old metaphysical problems that he intended to solve. Arguably, the Traditionalist view makes the external world crudely unknowable. The view that prescribed the mind's uncertainty faced with a world of its own nature is considered to have held prominence well into the nineteenth century. Furthermore, I would suggest that this is the interpretation that underscores Irigaray's reading. Consider this paragraph from first few lines of 'Paradox A Priori', for example:

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of experience or phenomena to collections of perceptions' (Wilkerson, 1976: 184). It is with this 'two world' interpretation in mind that I approach Irigaray's critique.

[94] PF Strawson's *Bounds of Sense* (1966) is typical of this approach.

'[T]he ground will now rest upon a transcendental ceiling that is propped up by the forms and rules of representation and is thus unshakable. To build this construction, man was, of course, obliged to draw on reserves still in the realm of nature; a detour through the outer world was of course indispensable; the "I" had to relate to "things" before it could be conscious of itself. But this initial period of cooperative creation is forgotten in an arrogant claim to sovereign discretion over everything.' (SO: 204)

Irigaray contends that one of the consequences of the Copernican turn is an overemphasis on the mind of the subject as the locus of events in the known universe. The subject becomes 'housed' in his own mind; it becomes his *construction* and, as she argues in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (2004a), also his prison. Irigaray's interpretation of Kant could therefore be described as broadly adhering to the Traditionalist interpretation. Arguably, this could lead her into dangerous philosophical waters. However, we might put this down to her strategic use of psychoanalysis. Consider her chiding of Kant for his (mis)use of space and time, for example:

'However grounded in the senses the intuition may be, it is nonetheless framed a priori by space and time. Space and time [...] are to be viewed as forms of the outer sense or of the internal sense that organise and thereby subsume a diversity that is ridiculous in its confusion of feeling, whether it comes from an outside world peopled with objects [...], or from an inner world under the control of changes that can henceforth be analysed in function of time.' (SO: 205)

Irigaray's contention is that the maternal-feminine acts as an *a priori* condition of the space-time of the masculine subject, a sort of *a priori-a priori* (to exist at all we first had to have *been born*). When she begs the question 'but which time?', however, what Irigaray alludes to is the conceptualisation of the transcendental subject in terms of the reflection of the *masculine* subject, and *his* 'space-time' (ibid; Whitford, 1991: 155). Woman – the feminine – will be useful only insofar as

she represents the *a priori* that ensures the subject's diachronic unity: the necessary 'other' or permanent matter that grounds the self. This rendering of subjectivity is consolidated by Kant's vision of the schematism, to which I now turn.

4. 'A schematism arises'...[95]

I have so far established that the type of 'interpretation' to which Irigaray's reading adheres is, broadly speaking, that of the notion of the 'mind making universe' characteristic of the Traditionalists. In psychoanalytical terms, this model conforms to the idea of the 'space-time of specularization' or the 'specular economy of the same' that is constructed as a result of the subject's relationship with the Imaginary (the world becomes his 'mirror'). In this section I shall demonstrate how Irigaray interprets the Kantian schematism as a form of Sadian instrumentalism which reduces the material world to a 'mere means'. However, this is not that is something specific to Irigaray's particular reading. Adorno and Horkheimer, for instance, urge that the schematism represents 'the seduction of nature in its entirety', and that, in Kant, 'all the power of nature was reduced to mere indiscriminate resistance to the abstract power of the subject' (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997: 89; 90). I shall now set out Kant's account of the schematism alongside Irigaray's own reading.

As I noted above, Margaret Whitford interprets Irigaray's view of Kant's philosophy as 'a particularly ruthless refusal to recognise its debt to the sensible, by seizing the imaginary (which is bodily in form) and reallocating it to the intelligible, the understanding' (Whitford, 1991: 157). She also contends that Kant's 'is a system which houses men as they were once housed in the womb' (Whitford, 1991: 158). Whitford quotes from this passage in 'Paradox A Priori':

'This is the first instance from the passage from sensation to understanding whereby

– not unmysteriously – a schematism arises that will never do justice to the sensible

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[95] '[A] schematism arises that will never do justice to the sensible world' (SO: 204).

world. For the most sophisticated faculty of the senses, the imaginary, will remain slave of the understanding. Anything conceded to nature [...] will be found useful only insofar as it ensures more rigorous dominion over her. Thus, the function of the transcendental schema will be to negate an intrinsic quality of the sensible world, and this irremediably. [...] Diversity of feeling is set aside in order to build up the concept of the object, and the immediacy of *the relationship to the mother is sacrificed.*' (SO: 204. Emphasis in original.)

Irigaray seems to imply here that Kant's system – his 'architectonic' – is constructed or premised on a rather Sadist style of instrumentalism: the transcendental schema, she insists, acts in order to exploit and 'negate' the sensible world, not, as Kant would contend, to make *sense* of it. What is also immediately clear from this passage is that Irigaray conflates the 'imagination' with the Lacanian 'imaginary'.[96] The Kantian imagination, as we shall see, performs a similar function to that of the Lacanian Imaginary. But in what way could it be said that Kant 'seizes' the imaginary/imagination, and reallocates it to the understanding?

The function of the Kantian schematism is, broadly speaking, to establish a connecting 'link' between the manifold data of intuition (sensations) and the categories (the 'functions of judgement, so far as the manifold in a given intuition is determined in relation to them', in order to create an *a priori* skeleton for experience (Kant, 1993: 106). This connecting link will determine which category or categories are applied (Copleston, 2003: 256). For example, 'before we can apply the concept of 'dog' to Pluto we must, [Kant] believes, be capable of producing in our imagination a schematic representation of a dog. Similarly, before we can apply the concept 'geometrical circle' to a certain round saucer we must be capable of producing a schematic representation of a circle in our imagination' (Körner, 1972: 70). The problem for Kant is that there must be some homogeneity between the manifold of sense data and the categories if the former are to be subsumed under the latter, even though the pure concepts of the understanding are said to be 'quite heterogeneous' when

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[96] See Whitford, 1991: 54 – 57 for a discussion of Irigaray's use of 'imaginary' and 'imagination'. I also resume this topic in Chapter 6, Section 2.

compared to empirical intuitions (Kant, 1993: 106). The question becomes this: how is this *subsumption* possible if the pure concepts can never be discovered in any intuition? Kant solves this problem by employing the imagination as a mediating faculty between the sensibility and the understanding. The imagination becomes the 'bearer, as it were, of *schemata* [...]. A schema is, in general, a rule or procedure for the production of images which schematise or delimit, so to speak, a category so as to permit its application to appearances' (Copleston, 2003: 256-7). According to Deleuze, 'the schema of the imagination is the condition under which the legislative understanding makes judgements with its concepts, judgements which will serve as principles for all knowledge of the manifold' (Deleuze, 1983: 18). In short, the schema answers the question of *how* the understanding is applied to the phenomena which are subject to it (ibid.).

Kant describes the schematism of our understanding of appearances and their form as 'an art, hidden in the depths of the human soul, whose true modes of action we shall only with difficulty discover and unveil' (Kant, 1993: 144). But the schematism – as Deleuze points out – is by no means the 'deepest' act of the imagination, or its most spontaneous 'art', as we go on to learn in the third *Critique* (Deleuze, 1983: 18). It is rather that 'the schematism is an original act of the imagination: only the imagination schematises. But it schematises only when the understanding presides, or has the legislative power. It schematises only in the speculative interest' (ibid.). It is precisely this latter point that concerns Irigaray. For the imagination *must* act in accordance with the understanding; or as she puts it –

'The intuition of the transcendental aims, under some vague and undetermined generality, to unify all the various sensations that take place or have taken place. In this way the multiplicity of unlabeled sensations is blacked out, reduced to a single entity that can be used to legislate – in the cruelty of the understanding – the bond to the empirical matrix, or, in other words, to *hysteria*.' ([sic] SO: 204. Emphasis in original.)

The *legislative* role of the understanding is interpreted by Irigaray as another manifestation of the maxim *noli tangere matrem*. Its role is to block out what is not eligible for *subsumption*. Irigaray's reference to the 'empirical matrix' is a subtle reference to the womb; hence the reference also to *hysteria*.[97] The imagination, conceived as something like the 'primary imaginary' that Irigaray mentions in her essay 'Linguistic and Specular Communication' (discussed in Chapter 1), is annulled by the 'secondary imaginary' of specularization, and replaced by the Symbolic phallus.

Kant's decision to introduce his account of the schematism with mechanical imagery opens him up to some philosophical objections.[98] He suggests in his introduction to the topic that 'we have two pieces of machinery of different shapes which need to be joined if the system is to function properly in providing knowledge' (Bird, 2006: 398). The two bits of 'machinery' to which he refers are the understanding and the sensibility. For Irigaray, however, this passage is revealing:

'Now it is quite clear that there must be some third thing, which on the one hand is homogenous with the category, and with the appearance on the other, and so makes the application of the former and the latter possible. This mediating representation must be pure (without any empirical content), and yet must on the one hand be *intellectual*, on the other sensible. Such a representation is the *transcendental schema*.' (Kant, 1993: 143. Emphasis in original.)

For Kant, this 'third thing' is the transcendental unity of apperception, or the 'transcendental object = X, the thought of some object 'in general'': the 'X that corresponds to [our] representations (i.e. the object) [...]. We may therefore say that we come to know the object precisely by creating synthetic unity in the manifold of intuition' (Kant, 1993: 125). However, the intuition is incapable of being produced in the absence of 'a rule governed function of synthesis', hence the requirement for an objective unity of empirical consciousness (ibid.). Moreover, Kant remarks that 'the synthesis of our representations rests upon the imagination; their synthetical unity (which is requisite judgement),

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[97] 'Matrix' comes from the Latin 'mater' for mother. It can also mean 'womb' (see Chapter 6).
[98] See Bird, 2006: 398.

upon the unity of apperception' (Kant, 1993: 152). So this 'package deal' that constitutes the Kantian *cogito* is a two-fold agreement between the unity of concepts (language) and the unity of the 'self', or empirical consciousness. I shall deal with this matter more broadly in the next section.

Returning to the problem of the 'third thing', Irigaray asserts that the 'role' played by the (transcendental) object is (re)discovered by questioning –

'[T]he *third term*, which is very much the creature of the second and required to purge itself of the first term that had once nourished its affection, on the assumption, no doubt, that it remains homogenous with the first term by its very temporality. With this restriction: that the temporality is in fact not the same but that of a transcendental *property/propriety* that alleviates the horror of the inchoate and unpossessable as well as the disgust for misshapen refuse that will be excreted under the form of matter.' (SO: 204-205. Emphasis in original.)

Now Kant remarks in the 'Analytic of Principles' that 'as time is only the form of intuition, consequently of objects as appearances, that which in objects corresponds to sensation is the transcendental matter of all objects as things in themselves (thinghood, reality)' (Kant, 1993: 145). If the function of the schematism is to relate concepts to sense perception, which is a connection through time between the category (*a priori* concept of the understanding) and the phenomenal appearance, then the schemata are required because the categories are completely heterogeneous with sense intuition; that is, they are fundamentally incompatible. This mysterious 'third thing' that for Kant represents the missing piece of machinery that enables his system to work – the crowning glory of his architectonic – coincides for Irigaray with the 'third term' of Lacanian psychoanalysis: the Imaginary phallus. This notion can be traced satisfyingly, once more, back to Lacan's 'Kant with Sade':

'Thus we see appear the third term that, according to Kant, is lacking in moral experience - namely, the object that Kant, in order to guarantee it to the will in the

implementation of the Law, is constrained to relegate to the unthinkability of the thing in itself.' (Lacan, 2006: 651)

Lacan goes on to remark that it is precisely this 'object' that we find in Sadian experience: it is revealed, he says, as the *Dasein* of the tormenting agent (ibid.). This 'object' – Imaginary phallus or, indeed, its corollary, the *objet a* – functions as guarantor of knowledge in general; it prevents it from being haphazard or arbitrary, just as the *objet a* functions in Lacan as phantasy object: that which provides an anchor for being outside the field of speech. The Sadian subject is so alienated in ordinary life that his whole being becomes organised around this fantasy 'object', although he is, however, still 'strangely separated from it' (ibid.).

Returning to the quotation from Irigaray, above, it is clear that she grafts onto Kant's system Lacan's own formulation of the Oedipus complex. To recall the first 'stage' of this process, the infant first of all realises that it is not the sole object of its mother's desire, and will attempt to satisfy this desire by becoming the *object* of her desire. Hence the relationship between the mother and infant becomes a triangular relationship between mother, infant and a *third term*, that which Lacan dubs the 'Imaginary phallus', as I described in the previous chapter. In Lacan's words, 'If the mother's desire *is* for the phallus, the child wants to be the phallus in order to satisfy her desire' (Lacan, 2004: 278). Returning to Kant, Irigaray implies that the transcendental object corresponds to the Imaginary phallus (or *objet a*) that represents what is *lost* on entering the symbolic (language). For Kant, the transcendental object is always only the thought of something 'in general'; it is nonetheless out of reach or 'barred'. And because this object is determined in time, its transcendental character means that it is necessarily *also* heterogeneous to sense intuition. Hence the 'disgust' at the inchoate and the 'refuse' produced by the Kantian system, an architectonic designed, according to Irigaray, to filter out that which is unsuitable for subsumption under the categories.

5. The 'Transcendental': Object; Apperception; Subject

In the previous section I described how Irigaray interprets Kant's schematism as a system designed to legislate against the imagination and the empirical, as well as an architectonic that ruthlessly separates the time-bound (empirical) from the time-less (transcendental) and effects a fundamental 'splitting' of the subject between concept and intuition, form and matter. With the relationship to the world and the other relegated to the former camp, the 'paradox' identified above reveals the 'self-subverting nature' of the Kantian system; as Hodge remarks, 'knowledge of these temporally unconditioned structures is restricted to those who are also temporally unconditioned' (Hodge, 1994: 204). There is then 'no knowledge for human beings of transcendental conditions of possibility' (ibid.). But is the disassociation of the transcendental from the empirical as radical as some would suggest?[99] And is Kant's use of the transcendental so tainted by a Kafkaesque 'not for us', as Hodge suggests (ibid.)? In this section I shall examine Kant's own us of the term, particularly in relation to the transcendental unity of apperception. I shall argue that on Irigaray's account the transcendental is extrapolated to the masculine, whilst the feminine/empirical is subsumed 'underneath' the transcendental; the passive 'inert' matter that acts as the self's necessary 'other' (Battersby, 1998: 70). In this sense, the 'transcendental' might be considered as the philosophical partner-in-crime of specularization.

Kant explains in the Preface to the first *Critique* what he means by the term 'transcendental':

> 'I apply the term transcendental to all knowledge which is not so much occupied
> with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects [...] A system of such
> concepts would be called *Transcendental Philosophy*'. (Kant, 1993: 43)

The 'transcendental', then, does not bear an antonymous relation to the empirical but is rather the *condition of it* (inasmuch as it acts as a prerequisite *of* experience). The *a priori* intuitions of time

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[99] Whitford (1991), for instance, maintains that this 'rift' between the transcendental and the empirical or sensible reflects the hierarchical gendering of these terms. See her discussion of the transcendental subject: Whitford, 1991: 149 – 156.

and space, etc., *ground* our experience of the empirical world, without which our 'experience' would amount to nothing more than a jumble of incomprehensible sense data. This 'discovery' of an *a priori* – on Claire Colebrook's (1999) interpretation of Irigaray – closes the gap between the transcendental subject and the (maternal) origin (or empirical/sensible world): 'By not acknowledging the gap, break, loss or distance from the sensible, the subject is always able to include and comprehend the origin as its own: "between empirical and transcendental *a suspense will still remain inviolate*, will escape prospection, then, now, and in the future"' (Colebrook,1999: 144).[100] Colebrook goes on to note that it is this very *closure* of the gap between the transcendental and the sensible that constitutes 'metaphysics' itself.[101] Metaphysics 'is the thought of a symmetry between the ideal and its material other [...] Kantian closure is, then, a form of subjectivism in which sensible being is reconciled, included within, or comprehended by, the 'supersensible' (meaning, the concept, ideality)' (Colebrook, 1999: 145). Sexuate difference is precluded in this act of 'closure'; hence the empirical world appears as a reflection of the transcendental subject; it acts as his *mirror*.

So it is clear that this particular interpretation of Kant - elaborated by Irigaray and celebrated by Colebrook and others – rests to an extent on the Traditionalist interpretation that examined above; that is, the assumption that Kant is an out-and-out idealist. For example:

'It is crucial that we never know the transcendental object as such lest we recognize it and reject the almost matrical effectiveness it has in veiling our perception of all phenomena and structuring their reappearance. The object cannot be known, therefore, for the simple reason that it allows that conceptual *window* to be put in place in which nothing is seen *per se* but whose frame enables all the rest to be intuited.' (SO: 204. Emphasis in original.)

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[100] Colebrook quotes from Irigaray, here (SO: 145. Italics Irigaray's).
[101] It is for this reason that Hodge argues that Kant rather than Husserl would be a more appropriate target of Derrida's critique of the 'metaphysics of presence', something which Colebrook alludes to here (Hodge, 2003: 205).

Irigaray seems to align Kant's transcendental object with the notion of the 'veil of perception': the idea that the material world is in reality something other than how it 'appears' to the perceiver. So how does this link in with Kant's idea of apperception? First, if we attempt to abstract from the object (of our representations) all that which has reference to the *a priori* conditions of knowledge, we arrive at the idea of an unknown 'something': the 'unknown X' that was mentioned above (Copleston, 2003: 268). As Copleston suggests, 'the idea of the X correlative to a cow is no different from the X correlative to a dog' (ibid.). Hence we arrive at the 'pure concept' of a transcendental object which 'is precisely what is capable of providing all our empirical concepts with a relation to an object, i.e. with objective reality' (Kant, 1993: 107). Now Kant remarks in the same paragraph that the relation between the manifold and the object is 'nothing but the unity of consciousness' (ibid.), and that 'appearances must be subject in experience to the conditions of the necessary unity of apperception' (Kant, 1993: 127 – 128). In other words, there must be a unity of thought which constitutes the concept of an object; this unity is a foundation which has a certain necessity, that is, a rule according to which an intuition can always be determined.

There can be no 'unity' of thought, however, without the idea of a necessary unity of identity; or, the *I think* that accompanies all of our representations (Kant, 1993: 99). Kant says that 'My existence is already given by the act of consciousness; but the mode in which I must determine my existence, is thereby not given' (Kant, 1993: 113 fn). Hence I must *intuit* myself, in time, in order to have knowledge of myself. Körner explains the 'paradox' that Kant himself recognises as revealed by 'our exposition of the internal sense' (Kant, 1993: 110):

'In introspection I am at times aware of myself and perceive myself after the fashion of an object, that is to say under the form of time, though not of space, and under the unity of pure apperception. The experience of objects which must take place under the forms of perception and the understanding is not any experience of things in themselves. My empirical self must therefore be distinguished from my self in itself which is unknowable.' (Körner, 1972: 67.)

The 'self in itself' to which Körner refers is the 'transcendental' self or 'pure' self that we have awareness of, but cannot know *in itself*. Unlike the empirical self, the transcendental self is not transparent. Its role, however, is to 'provide a ground for the fleeting impressions of the phenomenal world' (Battersby, 1998: 63).

The 'paradox' of which Kant was quite aware seems to generate an apparent slippage between the psychological 'inner' and 'outer' of the empirical self (Battersby, 1998: 70). Indeed, there are times at which, in the *Critique*, the transcendental object undergoes a metamorphosis into the transcendental 'subject' (Caygill, 1995: 401). For if the transcendental object is a function of the requirement that appearances must have an object which is non-empirical, then it also offers 'the unity in the thought of a manifold in general', regardless of how it is intuited (Kant, 1993: 128; 210). This 'unity', moreover, is made *property* of the transcendental 'subject': the *I think* which is 'the vehicle of all concepts in general' (Kant, 1993: 259). Again, there is a slippage from object to subject, and vice-versa. I shall return to this matter below.

So is Kant guilty of veiling our perception of phenomena, in the way that Irigaray seems to suggest? The answer to this question depends largely on whether we believe that Kant has successfully refuted idealism. His conception of the transcendental unity of apperception – and its ramifications as regards the empirical ego – would imply that Kant has certainly refuted problematic Cartesian idealism. As Copleston remarks, '[Descartes] assumes that we possess consciousness of ourselves independently of and prior to experience of external things, and then asks how the ego, certain of its own existence, can know that there are external things. Against this position Kant argues that internal experience is possible only through external experience' (Copleston, 2003: 273). It is beyond the scope (and aim) of this chapter attempt to prove or disprove Kant's refutation of idealism, but I think Copleston sums up the point in hand when he continues that 'this treatment of idealism may leave a good deal to be desired; but at least it throws into relief Kant's insistence on the empirical reality of the world of experience as a whole' (Copleston, 2003: 274). So Irigaray is certainly using her received conception of Kant's thought – i.e. the Traditionalist interpretation that conceives of the 'mind making nature' – as poetic license. Even so, and on Kant's own terms, what cannot be denied is the paradox at the heart of the Kantian *cogito*: that there is a split between the

sensible and the supersensible at the heart of Being itself. A paradox, indeed, that renders the self an object, or a *reflection* – as Irigaray might put it – of the real self.

Christine Battersby (1998) points to further problems with Kant's account of the self. Battersby argues that the split between 'inner sense' (which is temporal and bound to my experience of my 'self') and 'outer sense' (which we use to represent objects as 'outside us'; all outer sense is mediated by the inner sense) means that 'Kant's own body slips between inside and outside' (Battersby, 1998: 70). Kant needs a body in order to be a self, but this body is neither 'self' (because it is 'outside'; knowledge of it is mediated by the inner sense) nor 'not-self' (because the 'self' dependent upon something 'other' than itself) (ibid.). Furthermore, Battersby urges that inner bodily space falls outside Kant's framework for spatiality and temporality (Battersby, 1998: 71). This means that he is unable to think 'otherness' within the self; for example, the position of the foetus in the mother's womb (ibid.). The paradoxical dependence of the Kantian transcendental self on its passive, inert 'other', together with the fact that Kant would be unable to 'intelligibly explicate' the position of the foetus in the mother's womb according to his account of spatiality as 'outer sense', will in Chapter 5 form the basis of a model of 'selfhood' or subjectivity that does not begin by thinking the self as radically separate from its material 'other' (the body; relations with others, etc.).

4. 'The House of Experience'[102]

'Concepts of the understanding seem to have a deeper meaning and content than can be exhausted by their merely empirical use, and so the understanding *inadvertently adds for itself to the house of experience a much more extensive wing* which it fills with nothing but beings of thought, without ever observing that it has transgressed with its otherwise legitimate concepts the bounds of their use' (Kant, 2001: 54. Emphasis added).

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[102] From Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Kant, 2001: 54)

'[The understanding] proceeds first to newly thought out forces in nature – in short, to a world for whose construction the materials cannot be wanting, because fertile fiction furnishes them abundantly, and though not confirmed is yet never refuted by experience' (Kant, 2001: 55).

These two quotations, taken from the *Prolegomena*, complement Irigaray's metaphor of the Kantian 'house of experience'. Kant's architectonic, she insists, is built 'room by room [...] Firm foundation, clear title, cellar, stairs, dining room, den, study', and so on, with each part 'subordinated to the whole' (SO: 212). An intricately designed system of interconnecting parts (or stairs and corridors), the Kantian system conceals a *mystery* – or *hystery*, Irigaray puns – that 'walls up' the 'feminine' within its construction.[103] The emergence of this particular metaphor in Irigaray's thought is important for two reasons. Firstly, it helps to illustrate her claim that the masculine philosophical subject constructs an imaginary 'house' which protects him from the dangerous empirical world (and the body of the mother), as well as providing him with the (transcendental) elevation necessary to carry out his metaphysical inquiries. Hence the 'action', Irigaray remarks, 'is always inside his house, his mind' (SO: 213). Secondly, the metaphor paves the way for the 'Heideggerian turn', as I shall call it, in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, when the concept of *dwelling* becomes crucial to our understanding of the impenetrable 'house of language' that the subject erects on the reliably solid 'earth'.[104] For Heidegger, the attempt to master language drives man's essential being into alienation; just as for Irigaray the possibility of language requires a primordial rejection of the mother in favour of the Symbolic phallus. In this sense, she says, language 'imprisons [the subject] in a bodiless body, in a fleshless other' (ESD: 113). Similarly, Kant's philosophy is an attempt to 'overcome the sensible in/by schematism and categories', and for which (SO: 212) –

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[103] See the 'epigraph' to this chapter (Kant, 1993: 210). Irigaray exploits this 'illusion' as a blind spot in Kant's architectonic.

[104] I have chosen not to pursue the topic of 'dwelling' in the chapter on Heidegger as I believe that, for the purposes of my argument overall, other themes take precedent. Cf. Rawes (2007) for an extended discussion on the topics of dwelling, space and place in Irigaray.

'Women are only useful in part, as openings-mirages that reflect this a priori proposition needed for the mind's/his *foundation*: i.e., the *seduction of the whole of nature*. Woman will constitute the imaginary sub-basement that shores up the mine, will act as man's guiding thread in his various relationships with the many faces of the sensible world.' (SO: 212. Emphasis in original.)

Once more we see the Sadian intertext of Irigaray's reading; Kant does not have to conquer nature so much as *seduce* her. Nature's/woman's instrumental value lies in her status as silent foundation of the *a priori*, a sort of *a priori-a priori*. Indeed, this is a theme that Irigaray resumes in *Ethics*:

'This sameness is the maternal-feminine which has been assimilated before any perception of difference. The red blood, the lymph, for every body, every discourse, every creation, every making of a world'. (ESD: 84)

The philosophical subject is unable to 'perceive' sexuate difference precisely because it has already been assimilated as a *condition* of his own subjectivity. Hence the feminine always only appears as a mirage, a reflection, or whatever else lacking in a solid 'foundation' because it cannot be thought outside of the constraints of space and time, which, Irigaray contends, is a symptom of masculine 'specularization'.

The final paragraph of 'Paradox A Priori' asks the question 'Shall we place Kant next to Sade?'; a question which, I suggested above, flavours the entire piece. Ostensibly directed at Lacan, Irigaray urges that, 'given one quarter turn of the screw more', we could indeed place Kant next to Masoch (SO: 212). Whether Masochistic or Sadistic – obliterated to become an object or *as* an object – Irigaray remarks that 'such a notion can still arouse interest in a system that is so set in the ice of formalism; both together, or simply one nor the other' (ibid.).   But why must Sade compliment, but also *complement*, Kant so perversely? Irigaray says –

'The lawgiver is the cruel instrument implementing the rule, of course, but he is also forced into a painful respect for Nature (some of whose laws escape him), into suspending his feelings in the sight of beauty, and even into resenting that the pain of separation still stings.' (Ibid.)

Kant falls into the 'Sadian trap' when he submits to his own Law, and 'hides' behind his own maxim: *noli tangere matrem.* He therefore moves everything inside the house he has made (ibid.), and will view the 'in(de)finite space of the universe' from the comfort of his 'study' (SO: 213). This remark is a subtle jibe at Kant's response to the first antinomy (Kant, 1993: 317) For the universe may either be limited or unlimited in space; the grounds for both arguments, Kant insists, are 'equally valid and necessary' (Kant, 1993: 361).[105] But for Irigaray, this concern is another symptom of specularization, in which the world appears as a reflection of Kant's own uncertain subjectivity.

Conclusions: the Possibility of a 'sensible transcendental'?

This chapter set out to argue that Irigaray's conception of a 'sensible transcendental' is meant as a response to Kant's metaphysics. At this point it is useful to note the similarity between Irigaray's concept and Gilles Deleuze's notion of 'transcendental empiricism' or 'transcendental sensibility', an idea apparently intended as an inversion of Kant's use of 'transcendental'; a term which, I have explained, refers to the *conditions* of experience, and therefore by definition excludes experience itself. Tamsin Lorraine remarks on the similarity between Deleuze and Irigaray in respect of these themes:

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[105] Howie & Shildrick describe the antinomies of the *female* subject position: see Howie & Shildrick, 2011: 118 – 124. Battersby (1998) exploits these 'contradictions' in order to construct a subject position which takes the female body as 'norm'. See Chapter 6.

'A sensibility that is transcendental is not a sensibility that accesses a realm removed from experience. Nor is it a sensibility we can construct as that which must be the case for the empirical sensibility we have to take the form it does. This sensibility is experienced when faculties are brought to their limit and the heterogeneity of faculties is revealed. That is, precisely when something in our experience eludes our familiar categories of perception and conception and so pushes us to create new ones that we are shocked into what Deleuze calls "genuine thinking".' (Lorraine, 1999: 132.)

It is these creative processes (and interaction) of the imagination and sensibility that produce 'new' categories of perception and recognition (for Deleuze, of otherness and difference). Chapters 4-6 of this thesis will deal with Irigaray's reconstruction of the female subject based around her conception of a 'sensible transcendental'. This chapter has contended that, for Irigaray, the schism between the so-called transcendental 'conditions' of experience and experience itself has meant that empirical sensibility is subsumed under the categories and that which is 'ineligible' is blocked out (the 'feminine'). The sensible transcendental, examined against the backdrop of Kantian metaphysics from which it emerges, is intended to repair this rift by making the conditions of experience *material*. As for Deleuze, for Irigaray there will be no realm 'removed' from experience; rather, it is the unformed, inchoate 'excess' which 'shocks' us into new modes of thought and perception. This form of 'immanentism', as it might be called, shall be explored in greater detail in chapters 3 and 4.

The second question that I set out to answer was in what significant respects Irigaray's reading of Kant hinges on her psychoanalytical method of interpretation. In the course of this chapter I have highlighted the fact that the 'intertext', as I have called it, involving Lacan and Sade, affects the tone of the piece considerably. Moreover, Irigaray also seems to base her critique on a received idea about Kant's thought, namely the Traditionalist interpretation of the Copernican turn, and its concomitant problems. Kant is charged with an extreme form of subjectivism characteristic of the Cartesian tradition, a view that is seemingly endemic in this particular rendition of Kant's critical philosophy. However, I remarked that Irigaray uses her psychoanalytic 'technique' as poetic license

in order to expose Kant supposed 'fear' of the maternal body. The schematism in this sense could be understood as a mereological construct which operates, like machinery, in order to negate the sensible. Rosi Braidotti contends that, for Irigaray –

'The burden of embodiment is projected on to the maternal feminine and immediately erased. This erasure constitutes the subject and founds phallocentrism, understood as the empire of the One and the objectification of the Other.' (Braidotti, 2005: 58.)

This so-called 'burden of embodiment' is revealed in the problematic of Kantian closure, as Colebrook mentioned in Section 4. Indeed, several of Irigaray's objections to Kant's metaphysics are philosophically legitimate. For example, the 'paradox' of symmetry that she identifies in the *Prolegomena* (from which she takes her epigraph); and the 'split' at the heart of the Kantian *cogito*. Her objections relating to the 'space-time of specularization' that she takes up and elaborates in *Ethics* are owed in large part to her critique of Kant in *Speculum* (I shall elaborate on this in the following chapter). And significantly, her treatment of the transcendental object as that which *veils* phenomena (like the veiled phallus) is something that she reiterates in her essay 'Each Transcendent to the Other' in *To Be Two* (2000):

'The transcendental object is that towards which the subject aims but he will never possess. It corresponds to a frame, an intention, an obstacle which allows him to progress: from empiria to a thought which is not empirical, at least immediately. This transcendental object, because it is unattainable, returns the subject to passive sensibility: the subject is involved by the transcendental object, but he cannot involve it.' (TBT: 89.)

It is precisely this 'passive sensibility' that prevents and precludes 'horizontal' (as Irigaray will later call them) relationships with an embodied, sexuate other.[106] The transcendental object that so 'involves' the philosophical subject is as unattainable as it is unknowable. It is also for this reason that a form of active or 'transcendental' sensibility - driven by a more imaginative role for perception that I mentioned above - is desirable for Irigaray. Whitford, for example, remarks that 'in the perspective of the sensible transcendental, feminism is no longer a repetition of the same, but the possibility of the other' (Whitford, 1991: 143). Feminism is the possibility of the other because, in Kantian discourse, the feminine is allocated to the sensible in the form of the repressed relationship with the mother/womb. This is articulated through the metaphor of the 'house of experience'. Instead of housing men as they were 'housed' in the womb, a sensible transcendental entails a horizon of possibility that permits relationships between sexuate individuals by reconstructing the social and psychic conditions out of which subjectivities are generated.

And so Irigaray's project in her first 'phase' – described in the Introduction - is to break through the 'ice of formalism' that constitutes the Kantian architectonic, before constructing her own theory of female subjectivity and embodied perception. In Chapter 3 I shall show how Irigaray's 'sensible transcendental' is influenced and shaped by her interpretation of Heidegger, particularly on the topics of space-time and the transcendental.

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[106] To be contrasted with 'vertical' relations, for example, that of the mother-daughter relation. See the concluding section to Chapter 4, p 175.

Chapter 3: Heidegger

To forget being is to forget the air... (ESD: 108)[107]

Chapter Outline

In Chapter 2 I argued that the sensible transcendental emerges from Irigaray's critique of Kant and should prove useful as a vehicle for exploring the ways in which she attempts to move *beyond* Kantian subjectivism and the 'divide' at the heart of the Kantian subject. The purpose of this chapter is now to trace Irigaray's use of the term as it develops from her interpretation and appropriation of Heidegger. I am also interested in how Irigaray's appropriation of Heidegger might also encompass Heidegger's own interpretation and appropriation of Kant. It is for this reason that I return to the topics of *space and time*. In his later thought, Heidegger makes significant changes to his conceptions of space and time which help to radically alter his notion of the subject as 'Dasein'. In Sections 1 and 2, I will show how Irigaray's notion of space-time – which is central to what she calls her 'project of reinterpretation' (phases 2 & 3 of her project described in the Introduction) - emerges from Heidegger's own notion of time-space in his later thought. Central to this task is to demonstrate how Heidegger moves from a Kantian conception of time in *Being and Time* (2005), to a less 'metaphysical' sense of time, principally in his lecture 'Time and Being' (2002). In this lecture, 'time-space' emerges as pre-spatial and originary, that which renders possible space, time and *subjectivity* as such. In Section 3, I will bring the theme of space-time into a discussion with Heidegger's term *Ereignis* (the event of appropriation) in a reading of Irigaray's poetico-philosophical work *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* (1999). The 'sensible transcendental', I will suggest, fits with Heidegger's use of the term *Ereignis*: both are the ultimate *a priori* out of which all beings emerge and become present. A 'sensible transcendental' does not therefore merely lie ahead as a

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[107] The 'air', Irigaray explains, is first 'given' in the mother's blood stream (ESD: 108).

'future possibility', as Deutscher and others imply; rather, I will argue, it is the *forgotten ground of sexuate Being*: what could be called a *sui generis* notion of sexuate subjectivity.[108]

In the final section, I turn to *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (2004a) in order to expand upon the discussion of the terms 'transcendence' and 'transcendental' from Chapter 2. Irigaray says that the idea of a 'sexuate subject' is incomplete without an 'infinite intuition' of the 'other'; a 'transcendental' which harnesses the subject in his or her becoming (FA: 103).[109] I argue in Section 4 that we may also interpret Irigaray's use of 'transcendental' as consistent with that of Heidegger: as naming all that belongs to transcendence; as that which bears its *intrinsic possibility* (Heidegger, 1998: 109). Thus I argue that subjectivity is, for Irigaray as well as Heidegger, a form of transcendence of 'things' in the direction of the 'world'; a form of 'becoming'. This anticipates the sense in which the 'sensible transcendental' is most often assimilated: as 'the dimension of the divine *par excellence*', something which Irigaray later refers to as 'vertical transcendence' (ESD: 97). (I will explore the theme of 'vertical transcendence' in greater detail in Chapter 4.) My task in the first section is to show more generally how Irigaray's project in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* runs parallel to Heidegger's in *Being and Time* (2005) and beyond.

1. The Task of 'Thinking Difference'

In this section I shall show how Irigaray's project in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* mirrors Heidegger's project in *Being and Time*, as well as in his later thought after what is known as *die Kehre* ('The Turning').[110] I shall compare the manner in which Heidegger and Irigaray articulate their respective projects. This will help us to extract two key themes which I believe Irigaray adapts from

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[108] Cf. Deutscher, 2002: 97. Although Whitford's (1991) interpretation of the sensible transcendental is probably the most sophisticated - as I explained in the Introduction - she remains somewhat ambivalent on the question of whether it can be achieved in the present circumstances, or indeed whether it represents 'a divine whose advent is still ahead of us' (Whitford, 1991: 47).

[109] Irigaray remarks that 'to have an intuition of the other that is not projective, one must be capable of an infinite intuition – whether this is understood as that of a God or a divine principle [...]' (FA: 103). See Section 5.

[110] Like Irigaray, Heidegger maintained that his work remained consistent after what is known as 'the turn' in his thought in the 1930s. Broadly speaking, in his later thought Heidegger reformulated the question of the meaning of Being as the question of the *openness*, or 'truth', of Being.

Heidegger, and then transforms for her own purpose: first; sexuate difference as ontological difference (Being) *par excellence*; and second; the notion that modern technology perpetuates the 'love of the Same', through a process of 'enframing' the body: Heidegger's *Gestell*.[111]

There are philosophical as well as stylistic similarities between Irigaray and Heidegger, and this claim has by now been well documented.[112] Tina Chanter (1995), for example, points out the similarity between the way that Irigaray articulates the 'question' of sexuate difference, and the way that Heidegger poses the 'question' of the meaning of Being (Chanter, 1995: 127). One might argue that the fact that Irigaray poses the problem of sexual difference as a 'question' makes it fundamentally 'Heideggerian' in character. According to Heidegger, the question of Being (the *ontological*) has been obscured by the question of the meaning of *beings* (the *ontic*: subject, object, and so on), in metaphysical discourse since Plato. In the Introduction to *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes the motives driving his project:

'On the basis of the Greeks' initial contributions towards an Interpretation of Being, a dogma has been developed which not only declares the question about the meaning of Being to be superfluous, but sanctions its complete neglect.' (BT: 21)

For Heidegger, Being has been regarded as 'the most universal and the emptiest of concepts', as well as the most 'indefinable' (ibid.). This paradox has infected philosophical thought since Plato and Aristotle; it is, as he remarks, 'rooted in ancient ontology itself' (BT: 22). The question of the meaning of Being was once the stimulus for the research of the two great ancient thinkers, only to 'subside from then on' (BT: 21). What was once the central pursuit of philosophy has been obfuscated; subsumed by metaphysical debate about the nature of 'things'. Hence:

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[111] The term *Gestell* was used by Heidegger to describe what lies 'behind' or 'beneath' modern technology (see below). Irigaray extends Heidegger's use in talking of the mechanised, abstract 'body' (although she does not make this comparison directly).

[112] Cf. Chanter (1995); Mortensen (1994); Hodge (1995); Holland & Huntington (2001).

'The question of the meaning of Being must be *formulated*. If it is a fundamental question, or indeed *the* fundamental question, it must be made transparent, and in an appropriate way. We must explain briefly what belongs to any question whatsoever, so that from this standpoint the question of Being can be made visible as a *very special* one with its own distinctive character.' (BT: 24. Emphasis in original)

Heidegger's task in the Introduction to *Being and Time* is to set out precisely *how* this question is to be put forward. Similarly, Irigaray poses the 'question' of sexual (sexuate) difference at the beginning of *Ethics*:

'Sexual difference is one of the major philosophical issues, if not the issue, of our age. According to Heidegger, each age has one issue to think through, and one only. Sexual difference is probably the issue in our time which could be our "salvation" if we thought it through.' (ESD: 7)

If Heidegger contends that it is the *question* of the meaning of Being that has been concealed, then Irigaray appears to making a similar point about the question of sexuate difference. For it is not just sexuate difference which remains concealed within metaphysical discourse – *logos* - but the *question* of sexuate difference itself. And whilst this persists, so too will the 'love of the Same':

'Love of the Same is love of the ontic that will make matter for the transcendent other. The ontic-ontological split would merely be an effect of *forgetting*: the result of a jump between the body or the flesh of that which is and that which wishes to be.' (ESD: 83. Emphasis in original)

Here, Irigaray appears to agree with Heidegger's thesis that metaphysics is premised on a split between the ontic and the ontological, favouring the former term over the latter. Ontology

becomes an inquiry into the nature of 'things', as opposed to an inquiry into the nature and meaning of Being. However, Irigaray's thought diverges from Heidegger's at this point. The 'forgetting' that she describes is the forgetfulness of the debt to the maternal-feminine (I discuss this in Section 3 below); love of the ontic becomes the substitute for the love of the transcendent (sexuate) other. In *Speculum*, she names this 'split' as an '*Exquisite/ex-schizoid crisis of ontico-ontological difference*' – 'the split (schize) founding and structuring the difference between experience and transcendental (especially phallic) eminence' (SO: 145) – which appears to be another way of articulating the 'Platonic schema of the dichotomy between the "sensuous" and the "supra-sensuous"' (Hodge, 1994: 204).

Thus we may consider Irigaray's early project - the first phase described in the Introduction – to be similar in several respects to Heidegger's 'preparatory analysis' in *Being and Time*, especially in regard to her phenomenological analysis of female morphology and the imaginary body in chapters such as '*La Mystérique*' and 'Volume-Fluidity' (Chanter, 1994: 127). Irigaray's project of interpretative reading is intended to 'uncover' a fledgling conception of sexuate subjectivity which has been obscured and 'forgotten' as a consequence of the conceptual logic of western metaphysics and its occlusion of the maternal-feminine. Irigaray's second phase – her project of reinterpretation – attempts to reformulate this subject in the face of the 'divided' Kantian subject. Thus I pose the following question: how does Heidegger's concept of the human subject help to shape that of Irigaray; or in other words, how does it help to shape, philosophically, her vision of a sexuate (female) subject? A brief discussion of Heidegger's conception of Dasein, ('being-there'), or human-being, should lend some insight into Irigaray's task of 'thinking difference' in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*.

'*Dasein*': Being-there

For Heidegger, the notion of Dasein is a way of overcoming the assumptions of 'traditional' ontologies, as exemplified in their 'most extreme form' by Descartes (BT: 122). Heidegger says that for Descartes, 'the Interpretation of the world begins, in the first instance, with some entity-within-

the-world, so that the phenomenon of the world no longer comes into view' (ibid). The phenomenon of the world, moreover, has been 'passed over', and 'entities-within-the-world have intervened as an ontological theme' (BT: 133). Heidegger's objections to Descartes' thought are two-fold: first, it takes for granted that the primary mode of philosophical questions is epistemological; i.e. 'it assumes that the most basic relation between the "I" and the world is one of knowledge' (Chanter, 1994: 134). Second, and perhaps more importantly for Irigaray, Heidegger opposes Descartes' (and, as we shall see, Kant's) claim that what we can know are not the things themselves, but our ideas of things. This move was, in Heidegger's eyes, a fateful wrong turn which only an appeal to Dasein can begin to remedy.

In his 'Letter on Humanism' (2004a), for example, Heidegger explains why he considers the term 'rational animal' to be one of the most pernicious legacies of metaphysics:

'Metaphysics thinks of man on the basis of *animalitas* and does not think in the direction of his *humanitas*.

Metaphysics closes itself to the simple essential fact that man essentially occurs only in his essence, where he is claimed by Being.' (Heidegger, 2004a: 227)

To think of the human being in terms of a 'rational animal', or even as having an immortal soul, is to fail to understand that the essence of the human being – Dasein – is its inherence in the ecstatic structure of Being, or in other words, the way it comports itself towards Being and the world:

'Dasein is an entity which, in its very Being, comports itself understandingly towards that Being. In saying this, we are calling attention to the formal conception of existence. Dasein exists. Furthermore, Dasein is an entity which in each case I myself am. [...]

But these are both ways in which Dasein's Being takes on a definite character, and they must be seen and understood *a priori* as grounded upon that state of Being which we have called "*Being-in-the-world*".' (BT: 78)

According to Heidegger, all human beings are Dasein: 'being-there' (from the German *da* – there, and *Sein* – being); no other term, be it 'rational animal' or 'subject', is appropriate for describing the way in which human beings are actively engaged in the world. The human being is the being for whom its Being is a cause for concern. Contra Descartes, who posited the 'subject' as standing in stark contrast to the world (and in this sense Descartes' thought is *subjectivist*), Dasein is thoroughly entrenched *in* and bound *with* the world. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger embarks on an 'analytic' of Dasein in order to better our understanding of Dasein's relationship with both Being and the world.[113]

In short, Heidegger understands the ground or Being of the subject in terms of its *situatedness*, and the way that comports itself towards the world. I suggested above that Irigaray embarks on a phenomenological analysis of female morphology in certain chapters of *Speculum* (1985a) and *This Sex which is not One* (1985b) in order to better our understanding of the ground or Being of the *female* subject in a way that has hitherto been unexplored (I turn to this explicitly in Chapters 4 and 5). The issue of embodiment is, for Irigaray, paramount to her project of 'reinterpretation', and is closely connected to her discussion of technology in *Ethics*. So, I ask, what is it about Heidegger's views on technology that so appeal to Irigaray, and how has Heidegger's idea of 'enframing' helped to shape Irigaray's views on embodiment and corporeality?

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[113] After *die Kehre*, the Being of Dasein is 'disclosed' rather than analysed. This marks a move away from Cartesian-Kantian notions of 'transparent' subjectivity.

Joanna Hodge argues that the main idea that Irigaray borrows from Heidegger is 'his analysis of an originary concatenation of forces, out of which an order of things, a concept of truth, and an account of what there is arises' (Hodge, 1994: 195). Hodge notes that the 'end' that Heidegger predicts in 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking' (2004d) becomes for Irigaray the hoped-for return of the mother and the rebirth of women (discussed in Section 3). The time of greatest danger, as announced by Heidegger in connection with his readings of the poet Hölderlin, becomes the present time, in which women must confront the challenges of sexual oppression and technological domination (ibid.). Hodge regards *Ethics* as affirming Heidegger's notion that there is something new in the structures of twentieth century thought which thematise a *turning point*: the 'deepening danger marked by the spread of technology, and the hoped-for healing in a return of being' (Hodge, 1994: 196). Heidegger's later thought is preoccupied by his concerns regarding the uses of modern technology. According to Heidegger, technology represents a *fall* or a *turn away* from Being (Rockmore, 1995: 103). And like Heidegger, Irigaray bemoans the imposition of technological modes of thinking:

'Man has built a world that is largely uninhabitable. A world in his image? An uninhabitable functional body? Like the technical world and all its sciences. Or like the scientific world and all its techniques.' (ESD: 121)

Instead of being conceived of and treated as a mode of *revealing*, as Heidegger suggests in 'The Question Concerning Technology', technology has become regarded as 'mere means' (Heidegger, 2004b: 318). The parallel between Heidegger's thought and that of Irigaray are easily discernible at this juncture. Irigaray argues that technological modes of thinking, which have their roots in metaphysics since Descartes and Kant, have caused man to regard the world according to the rules of what Heidegger calls 'utter availability and sheer manipulability' (Heidegger, 2004: 309). The world then becomes an 'uninhabitable functional body' in which sexuality and sexuate

difference are absent. Hence, 'The body today is cut into parts like a mechanical body [...] it forgets or shuns the *flesh*' (ESD: 120. Emphasis in original). In 'The Question Concerning Technology', Heidegger urges that the essence of modern technology is *Gestell* or 'enframing': 'Enframing means the way of revealing that holds sway in the essence of modern technology and that is itself nothing technological' (Heidegger, 2004b: 325). It is precisely 'nothing technological' because the true essence of technology is 'a way of revealing'; again, technology is *'no mere means'* (Heidegger, 2004b: 318. Emphasis added). Yet modern technology reduces humans and other beings to stockpiles in its service; technology aims at 'exclusive mastery': 'In enframing, everything is set up in the constant replaceability of the same through the same' (Heidegger, 2004b: 309).

Similarly, Irigaray urges that it is the 'love of Sameness' – of the 'default' sex, the masculine – which has imbued technology with its destructive instrumentalism:

'Love of Sameness is transformed, transmuted into an architecture of world or worlds, into a system of symbolic or mercantile exchanges. It becomes a fabrication and creation of tools and products. Instead of germination, birth, and growth in accordance with natural economy, man substitutes the instrument and the product.' (ESD: 85)

Irigaray and Heidegger appear to concur on their respective diagnoses of the modern era, yet where Heidegger blames a failure to 'think Being', Irigaray pinpoints a failure to 'think' sexuate difference. Hodge remarks that -

'Irigaray rewrites Heidegger's ontological difference as sexual difference; the forgetting of being and of the earth becomes the forgetting of women and the death of the mother; and in place of Heidegger's technical term *Dasein* Irigaray's texts cumulatively establish the necessity of thinking the apparently paradoxical "sensible transcendental".' (Hodge, 1994: 196)

Where Hodge implies that Irigaray 'replaces' Heidegger's term Dasein with the 'sensible transcendental', she fails to expand upon *how* exactly Irigaray's texts 'cumulatively establish' the necessity of thinking whatever a 'sensible transcendental' might mean. She does, however, suggest that the 'contrast' set up by Heidegger between Kant's distinction between the empirical and the transcendental (which I touched upon in the last chapter), and his own distinction between the ontic and the ontological, makes way for Irigaray's insistence on a 'sensible transcendental' (Hodge, 1994: 203). We might therefore locate Irigaray's term amidst the interconnected themes at work in both Heidegger and Kant. In order to make sense of why Hodge believes that Irigaray replaces Dasein with her idea of a sensible transcendental, I now suggest that we look to Heidegger's own 'replacement' of Dasein with *das Ereignis*: the event of appropriation. This will also help us to better understand Irigaray's 'reversal' of Heidegger's conception of time-space.

In the first section of this chapter I have argued that Irigaray appropriates from Heidegger's thought several key themes, notably the 'forgetting' of the meaning of Being and his thoughts in relation to technology. She rewrites these as the forgetting of sexuate difference and the imposition of technological modes of thinking which perpetuate the 'love of the Same'. 'Enframing' is – for Irigaray – enframing of the body, such that sexuality becomes mechanised, functional and abstract, like the technological world that it mirrors. But where *Gestell* is for Heidegger the consequence of Dasein's 'fall' or 'turn away' from Being, Irigaray's 'love of the Same' is a consequence of western metaphysics' erasure of the maternal-feminine. And as I have shown, the way that Irigaray articulates her project in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* mirrors the way that Heidegger argues the urgency of the task of thinking Being in *Being and Time* and beyond. However, I want to argue that there is more at stake here than a mere appropriation or 'replacement' of Heidegger's key themes. In the next section I will show how Irigaray's thinking in relation to space and time (space-time) emerges from her reading of Heidegger, but specifically out of a Heideggerian reading of Kant. Her thesis on space and time is, I suggest, fundamentally linked to her vision of a 'sensible transcendental' as the starting point from which to articulate an 'ethics' of sexuate difference. Central to Irigaray's project – where we understand her project as the attempt to 'think sexuate difference' or to develop an 'ethics'

of sexuate difference - is to 'reinterpret' space and time as these terms relate to the embodied (and therefore *sexuate*) human subject.

2. Space and Time (Revisited)

In the first chapter of *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Irigaray writes that if a revolution in thought and ethics is to take place we must re-examine 'the whole problematic of *space* and *time*' (ESD: 8). According to ancient mythology, she says, it is the gods who first create space; time, on the other hand, is more or less in the 'service' of space. Philosophy then eventually 'confirms the genealogy of the task of the gods or God. Time becomes the interiority of the subject itself, and space, its exteriority' (ESD: 9). In Chapter 2, I described how this notion was consolidated by Kant in the first *Critique*, causing a fundamental 'split' between the inside and outside of the subject (between concepts and intuitions). In *Ethics*, Irigaray remarks that time has been appropriated by the *masculine*, whilst the *feminine* is experienced as 'space, or the abyss' (ESD: 9).[114] If we are to progress *beyond* this Kantian conception of space and time – and to leave behind its historical 'gendering' - she urges that there must be 'an evolution or a transformation of forms, of the relations of *matter* and *form* and of the interval *between*: the trilogy of the constitution of place' (ibid.). Rachel Jones (2011) notes that one of Irigaray's main concerns is to escape the Platonic dualism – re-inscribed the thought of Kant - that opposes (transcendental) form and (sensible matter), and privileges the former term over the latter (Jones, 2011: 95). The overcoming of 'hylomorphism' – the theory developed by Aristotle that understands substances as compounds of (active, masculine) form and (passive, feminine) matter – represents a major feminist challenge. Jones comments that hylomorphism has remained dominant as a way of describing how entities (including human subjects) come into being (Jones, 2011: 26). According to this model, these entities are the result of the imposition of form on 'otherwise unformed and disorganised matter' (ibid.). Whilst the thought of Kant falls broadly into the 'hylomorphic' category, Jones notes that recent thinkers such as Heidegger

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[114] Kant, for example, remarked that sexual difference was a 'chasm' in his thought: See Battersby, 1998: 71.

and Deleuze have abandoned the hylomorphic model in favour of other explanatory concepts such as life or creation, and have attempted to re-align matter with active processes of generation and emergence (ibid.). Indeed, if we understand Irigaray's turn to a form of 'realist essentialism' as part of this general movement, then *Ethics* is pivotal in establishing the sensible transcendental as a central term or category which establishes an 'immanent ground' for 'becoming'. I have mentioned that Heidegger's thought guides Irigaray's in several senses, particularly in the ways in which it moves beyond Kantian transcendental subjectivity. It is for this reason that I seek to show how Irigaray's use of 'space-time' is relevant to both her appropriation of Heidegger and her notion of a sensible transcendental.

In the following section I shall outline the connection between Irigaray's conception of space and time and Heidegger's. In order to demonstrate how Irigaray's understanding of spatiality and temporality is guided by Heidegger's, I shall first of all turn to Heidegger's discussion of temporality in *Being and Time*, and then to what could be considered as his 'appropriation' (and transformation) of Kant in his *Phenomenological Interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason* (1997).[115] I then trace the origin of Irigaray's notion of space-time, which, I shall argue, emerges in response to Heidegger's idea of time-space in his later works. This will also help to elucidate the sense in which Irigaray uses the term 'transcendental' - as I go on to discuss in Section 4 - and its connection to space-time and the sexuate subject.

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[115] Blattner (2007) refers to Heidegger's 'appropriation' of Kant in his paper of the same title, discussed below.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger sets out his doctrine of temporality by developing an analogy of Dasein's spatiality:

'Temporality is the meaning of the Being of Care. Dasein's constitution and its ways to be are possible ontologically only on the basis of temporality, regardless of whether this entity occurs 'in time' or not. Hence Dasein's specific spatiality must be grounded in temporality. On the other hand, the demonstration that this spatiality is existentially possible only through temporality, can aim either at deducing space from time or at dissolving it into pure time. If Dasein's spatiality is 'embraced' by temporality in the sense of being existentially founded upon it, then this connection between them [...] is also different from the priority of time over space in Kant.' (BT: 418.)

Heidegger suggests here that space is 'embraced' by time. He preserves the sense of the priority of time over space - it is somehow still more 'primordial' – yet his vision differs from Kant's in the sense that Kant 'assumes that our experience of objects consists of present-at-hand representations of them'; what is present-at-hand 'in space' run their course 'in time' as psychical occurrences (Mulhall, 2005: 177; BT: 419). In other words, Kant failed to obtain a truly ontological level of analysis because he establishes 'ontically' that what is psychically present-at-hand runs its course 'in time' (ibid.). The end result of his inquiry might have been sound, but the details of its working out, according to Heidegger, were not. Nonetheless, Heidegger maintains at this stage the priority of temporality over spatiality, remarking that '*only on the basis of its ecstatico-horizonal temporality is it possible for Dasein to break into space*' (BT: 421. Emphasis in original). Dasein's spatial existence is essentially a matter of placing itself in 'relations of proximity' to objects in the world that concern us in our day-to-day usage *of* those objects. These activities presuppose the notion

of the 'world' as such, which is founded upon the three 'horizonal ecstases of temporality': past, present and future.[116]

William Blattner's essay 'Laying the Ground for Metaphysics: Heidegger's Appropriation of Kant' (2007) should help to further elucidate Heidegger's position in relation to Kant's doctrine of space and time in *Being and Time* (that is, prior to *die Kehre*). Blattner urges that Heidegger's ontological strategy in *Being and Time* is 'fundamentally Kantian: to explore the meaning of being by developing an account of our understanding of being' (Blattner, 2007: 150). Heidegger characterises Kant's intention in the first *Critique* as an attempt to 'lay a ground for metaphysics' (ibid.). Heidegger adopts Kant's 'Copernican methodology' in *Being and Time*, remarking that 'the positive outcome of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* lies in what it has contributed towards the working out of what belongs to any Nature whatsoever, not in a 'theory' of knowledge' (BT: 31). For Heidegger, ontological inquiry is 'more primordial' than ontic inquiry; the ontological foundations of empirical science are not scientific, but rather *a priori* and philosophical (Blattner, 2007: 151). How do we justify this immodest assumption for grounding the task of ontology? On Blattner's account, we must view Heidegger as waging a war against neo-Kantianism (Blattner, 2007: 152). Heidegger wants to ground his ontological inquiry into an understanding of Being by proving that the best tools for the inquiry are not scientific and empirical, but philosophical and *a priori*. He remarks in *Being and Time* that Kant 'altogether neglected the problem of Being; [...] he failed to provide an ontology with Dasein as its theme or (to put it in Kantian language) to give a preliminary ontological analytic of the subjectivity of the subject' (BT: 45). This, according to Heidegger, is one of the reasons that Kant failed to achieve an insight into the problematic of temporality (ibid.). Hence it is only via recourse to the topic of temporality that we might understand Heidegger's appropriation of Kant.

As Blattner suggests, Heidegger adopts Kant's Copernican methodology as well as his doctrine that Being must be articulated in terms of time (Blattner, 2007: 152). Moreover, temporality is for Heidegger as well as for Kant a fundamental characteristic of anything that can become an object of knowledge. However, the connection runs deeper: for Kant, what it is for such an object to *be* an object is articulated *in terms of time* - that is, what it is to be a *substance*. Substantiality is

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[116] Cf. BT: 415-418.

defined in terms of time for Kant: a substance is something that persists through change (Blattner, 2007: 152. Emphasis in original). But, Blattner asks, why should we be so certain that we know *a priori* that everything that *is* exists in time? (Blattner, 2007: 153).

To summarise Blattner's argument: Heidegger denies that space and time are formal intuitions – i.e. are 'concretely present to the mind, yet defined by their formal structures' – because although they function as a *ground* on which things 'show themselves' and appear as 'present-at-hand', they are not 'formal objects'; in other words, they are not fundamentally formal principles for organising the data of experience (Blattner, 2007: 159; 161).[117] For Heidegger, space and time only make sense if they are pre-conceptual, or are in some sense prior to the application of concepts. Space and time, as *forms* of intuition, enable objective representation but are not themselves objective. In order to understand this more fully, as in the previous chapter we must turn to the idea of *apperception*.

Heidegger's argument for the non-objective character of the *a priori* representation of time runs through what Blattner describes as one of his most controversial theses on Kant, that 'Kant implicitly embraces a preconceptual form of imaginative unity, one that lies at the foundation of all cognition' in which 'synthesis' is a function of the *pure productive imagination* (Blattner, 2007: 164. Emphasis added). On Blattner's interpretation of Heidegger in the *Phenomenological Interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason* (1997), 'the pure productive imagination is a faculty or capacity of the human mind more basic than either our passive receptivity to sensory data [intuitions] or our reflective ability to recognise conceptually articulable unity in that data [understanding]' (Blattner, 2007: 165). Heidegger's idea of an 'antecedent zone', the zone of my self-consciousness, in which representations are compared and processed, is something like Kant's transcendental apperception. Heidegger argues that this 'zone' of availability is the *pure form of time*:

'I see a pine tree *and* a willow tree *and* a lime tree. I do not see them successively by

losing sight of the one seen before. Rather this many must be given to me *in one* so

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[117] See the passage in CPR in which Kant distinguishes formal intuitions from the *forms of intuition* (Kant, 1993: 114 fn).

that I have a dimension within which I can move while comparing. What encounters [me] must in a certain way belong *to me*, must lie before me in a surveyable zone [*Umkreis*]. The unity of this zone, which, so to speak, antecedently holds the manifold together in advance, is what is ultimately meant by "grasping in one".' (Heidegger, 1997: 187. Emphasis in original.)

According to Blattner, this thesis is extremely problematic. For Kant, transcendental apperception is the highest principle of the understanding of concepts and *not* a form of time. Heidegger appears to have 'fused together' the idea of time as a form of intuition with Kant's notion of apperception as the most general form of understanding (Blattner, 2007: 167). Indeed, it seems that Heidegger has used his exegetical license to extract from certain passages of the first *Critique* the notion that there is a 'common root' beneath the two stems if human knowledge (understanding and intuition), and that time is the 'true nature' of apperception.[118]

So in Blattner's view, Heidegger is a temporal idealist; he implies in both *Being and Time* and the *Phenomenological Interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason* that time is dependent upon the human subject Dasein. In this sense Heidegger is vulnerable to the charge of subjectivism. But whilst Malpas (2008) and Blattner (2007) agree on the claim that Heidegger turned away from the 'subjectivism' of *Being and Time* in his later works – particularly where his doctrine of temporality is concerned – they disagree on the issue of from where Heidegger's 'failure' arises in *Being and Time*. Malpas blames his 'inadequate articulation of the spatial and topological concepts that are necessarily at issue in the work, concepts that are tied to the original problem of situatedness, and out of his adoption of a particular methodological commitment that tries to combine both mutual and hierarchical modes of dependence, and so brings with it a problematic conception of what it is to unify and ground' (Malpas, 2008: 159). Apparently aware of these tensions, in his later essay 'Time and Being', Heidegger concedes that 'the attempt in Being and Time [...] to derive human spatiality from temporality is untenable' (TB: 23). Consequently, Heidegger attempts to rethink human being's relation to spatiality in essays such as 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (2004c). However, it is in the

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[118] Kant occasionally implies that the 'pure productive imagination' is the 'third source'.

former essay in which he connects the notion of time-space with that of *Ereignis*: the event of appropriation – a term which, in his later works, he prefers to those of 'Being' and 'Dasein'. Heidegger begins to move away from the sense of time as the antecedent zone of self-consciousness or as the subject's interiority (or as apperception), towards a more *ontological*, less 'Kantian' understanding of time. It is in terms of Heidegger's later understanding of time-space, I suggest, that we might begin to better understand Irigaray's own doctrine of space-time, to which I now turn.

3. Time-Space and *Ereignis* in 'Time and Being'

In *Ethics*, Irigaray asks what is has meant for philosophers to ground certain phenomena on others in precisely the way that Heidegger appears to ground subjective experience on 'pure time', something which is perhaps as 'illusory' as Kant's idea of the imagination as the phantom piece of schematic machinery (Chanter, 1994: 150).[119] Irigaray claims that, in metaphysics, the notion of spatiality has been neglected and has become *subsumed* under the notion of temporality, and that this fact once more betrays the historical 'gendering' of these terms. Spatiality and embodiment – as the 'outside' of the subject – have been severed from the transcendental 'conditions' of the subject's existence; 'pure time', immeasurable, infinite. In *Speculum*, Irigaray argues for the opening up of a 'heterogeneous space – a space-time' in which 'social and psychic relations between individuals are developed out of their psychic and spatial relations' (SO: 360; Rawes, 2007: 83). Rawes calls this a 'haptic' space-time – one constructed out of 'touch' – in contrast to the transcendental space-time implicit in Kantian metaphysics, for instance (ibid). Central to Irigaray's 'haptic' notion of space-time is, moreover, the notion of 'place'. Irigaray claims that the maternal-feminine has become 'the *place separated from "its" own place*, deprived of its place' (ESD: 12. Emphasis in original). 'She' – the feminine - ceaselessly becomes the place of the other, leaving no place for herself (ibid.). The feminine acts as an envelope or container for the masculine, and as a consequence there is left no 'place' for the feminine, only a 'blindspot' or abyss. Irigaray interprets Heidegger's doctrine of

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[119] We are reminded, once more, of Kant's remark that at the foundation of the subject is an 'illusion'.

temporality in *Being and Time* as re-enacting the tendency to make of woman a receptacle, container, or envelope; 'she' is delineated as a 'thing' (this is an echo of Lacan's term *das Ding*).[120] This, she says, constitutes one of the aporias of Aristotelianism and of the philosophical systems derived from it; it is another by-product of hylomorphic thinking (ESD: 11). Although woman must preserve her relation to spatiality if she is to make the most of her morphology – as I shall discuss in the following chapter – if the feminine is to be first of all considered as something 'other' than the 'ultimate first dwelling place', then this would presuppose a change in the whole 'economy' of space-time (ESD: 12). To 'reinterpret' space and time as heterogeneous – to rethink these terms how they relate to our embodied, situated selves – is paramount to Irigaray's vision. I shall begin this section by showing how Heidegger begins to move away from a broadly 'Kantian' understanding of time and rethinks it instead as 'time-space'. This will help us to better understand Irigaray's 'reversal' of Heidegger's term.

Heidegger begins 'Time and Being' (2002) by re-questioning our understanding of the terms 'Being' and 'time'. He asks, 'what prompts us to name time and Being together?' (Heidegger, 2002: 2.) From the beginning of western culture, Being has been understood as 'presencing' [...] where presencing 'speaks of the present' (ibid.). He remarks, 'Being is not a thing, thus nothing temporal, and yet it is determined by time as presence', where 'presencing' is thereby understood as unconcealment, 'the *giving* that *gives* presencing' (Heidegger, 2002: 3; 5. Emphasis added):

'We do not say: Being is, time is, but rather: there is Being and there is time. For the
moment we have only changed the idiom with this expression. Instead of saying "it
is," we say "there is," "It gives".' (Ibid.)[121]

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[120] *Das Ding an Sich* is the thing 'in itself' in Kant (or noumenon). Lacan extends Kant's use in the notion of the 'thing' which forms the basis of his concept of the *objet petit a* in his later work (the 'thing' circled by the drive; the cause of desire). However, the 'thing' is not an Imaginary object, but is rooted in the register of the Real.

[121] As in the French 'Il y a', for example. In the original French version of *The Forgetting of Air* (1999), Irigaray deliberately transposes the German 'es gibt' from the French equivalent 'Il y a' to 'elle donne', meaning 'she gives', evoking the debt to the mother/nature.

'There is' is the English translation of the German 'es gibt' -'It gives' – where for Heidegger 'It gives' Being and 'It gives' time. According to Heidegger, 'es gibt' is a locution which should be understood as 'It gives, there is Being': 'It ultimately gives by granting Being, the Being of beings' (Smith, 2007: 213). But this concept can no longer be thought in relation to Dasein; that is, concrete historical beings. Instead, it should be thought as pure 'Thereness' that occurs in pure openness: 'to think Being explicitly requires us to relinquish Being as the ground of beings in favour of the giving which prevails concealed in unconcealment, that is, in favour of the 'It gives'' (Smith, 2007: 213; Heidegger, 2002: 6). We must relinquish Being as the *ground of beings*: if Heidegger is turning towards a less 'metaphysical' understanding of Being in 'Time and Being', then we might read this as an attempt to capture a less static, more *dynamic* sense of what has hitherto been understood as 'Being'. Eventually, Being recedes in favour of a new term, *Ereignis*: the event of appropriation.

Joanna Hodge understands *Ereignis* as 'the double movement of presencing and withdrawal, the event [...] which is also a taking away' (Hodge, 1994: 200). *Ereignis* is intended to capture the 'self-refuting attempt to name simultaneously both what is present and what *makes* it present' (Hodge, 1994: 201. Emphasis added). On Hodge's interpretation of Heidegger, modern philosophy's attempt to name an 'unnameable unobservable process' renders much of our philosophical thinking untenable (ibid.). *Ereignis* is supposed to define the sense in which beings are revealed *and* concealed in the moment of revelation, the moment of 'presencing'.

Thus 'presence' is, for Heidegger, *emergence*; the 'constant abiding that approaches man' (Heidegger, 2002: 12). Being means: presencing, letting-be-present, presence (Heidegger, 2002: 10).[122] 'Being shows itself in the It gives and its giving as sending' (ibid.). Man, he says, is the constant receiver of the gift of Being given by the 'It gives presence', 'the unifying unity of past, present and future':

'Time-space is now the name for the openness which opens up in the mutual self-extending of futural approach, past and present. This openness exclusively and

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[122] 'Presencing' thus describes the movement between coming to presence (things), and presence (the realm of), and the 'movement between'.

primarily provides the space in which space as we usually know it can unfold. The self-extending, the opening up, of future, past and present is itself prespatial; only thus can it make room, that is, provide space.' (Heidegger, 2002: 14)

What Heidegger calls 'true time' is the prespatial region which first 'gives' any possible 'where'. 'It' is 'true time': the destiny in which It gives Being lies in the extending of time. (Heidegger, 2002: 17). In other words, the 'giving' is both the gift of Being as well as the gift of time. I mentioned above that Heidegger is attempting to move away from the idea of Being as static process. The term *Ereignis* – the event of appropriation – refers instead to a 'happening', a relentless 'extending' or 'giving':[123]

'Appropriation is not the encompassing general concept under which Being and time could be subsumed (...) for as we think Being itself and follow what is its own, Being proves to be destiny's gift of presence, the gift granted by the giving of time. The gift of presence is the property of appropriating. Being vanishes in Appropriation' (Heidegger, 2002: 21).

Being 'vanishes' in appropriation, it is 'obliviated' (forgotten).[124] As I shall discuss below, Irigaray suggests that there is a 'double oblivion' at the heart of Being, an oblivion which entails the forgetting of the sexuate nature of Being (as well as the rendering of *physis* as *technē*) (FA: 92).[125] For Heidegger, appropriation is what determines the human being's peculiar situation; *Ereignis* articulates the fundamental relation between human being and Being. Time-space, on this account, is the 'interplay' of time's three-dimensions, it is the 'giving that determines all' (Heidegger, 2002: 15).

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[123] This term is sometimes translated as 'Propriation', 'event', or 'enowing'.
[124] 'Obliviated' is intended to capture the sense in which Being is not merely 'forgotten', but simultaneously 'buried' in the annals of philosophical thought (Irigaray argues the same about sexuate difference). One is reminded here of the Freudian notion of repudiation (or 'foreclosure' in Lacan), a defense mechanism which precedes psychosis.
[125] The Greek term *physis* translates as 'nature'; technē roughly as 'mechanical craft' (the connotations of the latter term are negative in Heidegger: see his notion of *Gestell*, above (in 'The Question Concerning Technology' (2004b)). Aristotle, for instance, viewed technē as representative of the imperfection of the human imitation of nature.

Time-space is nothing like our usual conception of (linear) time. Indeed, it is one of Heidegger's most difficult concepts to pin down. As Wood remarks,

> 'One way of understanding [time-space] would be to say that what we call space and time have their 'origin' in time-space, and that while for Kant, for example, space and time are forms of intuition located in a subject, for Heidegger, space-time [sic] is intimately connected to the essential sway of truth, which itself makes possible anything we might call a subject' (Wood, 2002: 180.)

The 'that makes possible' is crucial here: for Heidegger, time-space is that which makes (any) subjectivity possible. However, what remains conspicuous by its absence in Heidegger is, for Irigaray, sexuate difference, and the 'intersubjectivity' which arguably defines us as social *human* beings. In her later thought (what I have defined as her third phase), a heterogeneous space-time, or 'sexed' spatio-temporality, becomes achievable by means of the inherent corporeal and psychic differences that exist between individuals. Irigaray's 'reversal' of Heidegger's term 'time-space' is intended to shift the emphasis away from an abstract notion of infinite 'space-times' onto the actual material conditions that make entry into 'presence' possible (for example, the maternal body; the breath). Irigaray's revision of Heidegger's term *Ereignis* as a sensible transcendental completes her journey through and beyond his thought by establishing the sexed character of Being. The following section is a reading of Irigaray's work *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* (1999). I regard Irigaray's book as both an *homage* to Heidegger as well as a critique of his later thought, and his supposed reluctance to engage with the topic of the 'sexedness' of Being.

4. Oblivion of Air?

Irigaray's text on Heidegger is a work of mourning. Written in 1976 shortly after his death, it has been variously described as 'not an easy book', as well as an 'airy, if not clouded undertaking' (Krell, 1992: 306; Mortensen, 2002: 87). Reflecting on the book's motto, Krell suggests that –

'Irigaray's roses are wild, not arranged for geometric gardens, but burgeoning in a thicket. They flower in brief paragraphs, well-nigh aphoristic, spotted with question-marks. Each paragraph entertains what Irigaray thematizes at the end of her book, namely a *risk*.' (Krell, 1992: 306)[126]

This struck me as not only a metaphor for this particular text, but for Irigaray's work as a whole. *The Forgetting of Air* is particularly difficult in this respect. But as well as being a work of mourning, the book is also a lover's quarrel: a challenge to a thinker that helped to shape Irigaray's thought so intimately (Fielding, 2003: 23). In an interview with Judith Still, Irigaray remarks –

'Could I confess that I deeply regret that I did not have the opportunity to converse with Heidegger? Certainly I do that through his texts, but I would prefer to converse with the man himself. Perhaps I am mistaken here, but it is the case. And when I learnt about the death of the philosopher, it was difficult to accept that I will never talk with him.' (Irigaray, 2008: 26)

That Irigaray found Heidegger's death 'difficult to accept' is apparent throughout *The Forgetting of Air*, a fact which charges the text with a sense of frustration as well as urgency. The book's central claim, moreover, is that in preferring the ground below his feet (the solid 'crust' of the earth), Heidegger forgets the *air*, and remains trapped within the metaphysical thinking that he claims

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[126] 'The rose is without "why"; it flowers because it flowers.' Angelus Silesius (1624 – 1677), a German Catholic mystic.

to overcome (FA: 2). In the same interview with Still, Irigaray urges that 'the oblivion of air results from the non-elaboration of the originary link with the mother', and she blames this for the intersubjectivity that is lacking in Heidegger's thought more generally (Irigaray, 2008: 27). According to Irigaray, Heidegger has forgotten the elemental foundation of his own thinking and his own Being (Mortensen, 2002: 88). The 'gift' that he interprets as the gift of Being – *es gibt* – Irigaray construes as 'the first gift of life': the oxygen that the mother provides the foetus through her bloodstream (Irigaray, 2008: 27). The air, for Irigaray, is a way of acceding to the other, especially the other that is sexually different (Irigaray, 2008: 26). The air is what is common between subjects; it is a starting point from which it is possible to elaborate a transcendental that is *sensible* (ibid.). As Krell remarks, 'air is where the invisible stirs', out of which all life emerges, comes into presence, and then dies (Krell, 1992: 309). In the following section, I shall begin to connect the manner in which Irigaray views Heidegger's thought as a forgetting or oblivion of air, with the idea of spatiality as being a 'primordial' constituent of the subject. This will help to elucidate the sense in which Irigaray uses the term 'space-time' in *The Forgetting of Air*, as well as in *Ethics*.

In the first chapter of *The Forgetting of Air*, Irigaray's meditation on Heidegger opens with a 'musing' on two of his later essays, 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking' and 'The Turning', in which Heidegger questions what Parmenides calls the circle of *eukulos alētheia*; the clearing (Mortensesn, 2003: 87).[127] Heidegger wonders whether what he terms *Lichtung* (clearing) in *Being and Time* ought not to be articulated as 'clearing and presence' (*Lichtung und Anwesenheit*). The task of thinking would then be to ask: 'from whence and how is there a clearing?' (Mortensen, 2003: 87) And, what is there to be heard in the saying 'there-is' (*es gibt*)? Irigaray formulates Heidegger's questioning as her own question: 'The clearing of the opening, "of what" can this be?' (FA: 3) What *material conditions* make entry into presence possible (Armour, 2003: 34). The 'of what?', Irigaray notes, seems not to have been put to Heidegger. 'Of what' thought is made is itself left 'unthought' (ibid.). How is there thought at all? For Heidegger, following Parmenides, thinking and Being are the Selfsame (the One). But if thinking and Being are the Same, this would mean, for

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[127] Mortensen (1994) is particularly helpful with respect to Greek terms.

Irigaray, that Being is reduced to the One, and there would only exists one *logos* in which sexuate difference is subsumed (Fielding, 2003: 6). So 'of what' *is* this 'is' (*es gibt*)?

> '"Of what" [is] this *is* such that it remains invisible though it be the fundamental condition of the visible, such that it be unable to be posed though it be the condition for all posing, such that it not be produced, yet be the condition for all production, such that it have no origin but be the originary itself' (FA: 4).

'Of what' *is* this 'is'? Of *air*: 'diaphanous, translucent (FA: 4); the 'groundless ground' (FA: 5); the '*a priori* condition of all his *a prioris*' (FA: 12). Air is what permits man's habitation as a mortal, it is the arch-mediation of the *logos* (ibid.). The 'risk' – perhaps this is what Krell touches upon above – is that to recall that air is the forgotten ground of metaphysics amounts to ruining it through and through (FA: 5). What else is 'risked', in this move?

Metaphysics is only possible given the oblivion of air. But, crucially, this also entails an originary forgetting of the *mother*, of the maternal origin. Being, surely, is first *given* (FA: 82). Irigaray's 'gift', unlike Heidegger's, is 'non-apparent: without demonstration' (ibid.). Being is first of all *fluid*; it passes from one to the other, from the other to one, before the gift as such is constituted (ibid.). Here Irigaray appears to allude to the pre-natal relation, where 'there is only one body, between-two-bodies, body that passes from one to the other' (ibid.). However, the assimilation of her Being (the mother) to him (Heidegger?) is forgotten. Hence there is a 'double oblivion':

> 'She, nature, thus remains in oblivion. In a double oblivion: oblivion of she who has already given him life and has become his living body, and oblivion of she who gives life back to him by helping him with the destiny of his Being.' (FA: 92)

Metaphysics presupposes the 'oblivion of the sexed character of Being' (ibid.). The 'double oblivion' is both the forgetting of 'the physical constitution of beings', the fact of one's own biological birth, as well as the rendering of *physis* (nature) as *technē* (FA: 86). She – nature/woman –

is the 'still-living tissue connected the production of his language' (FA: 92), the 'still-material/matrical support' for the dwelling place of his Being (FA: 92). Heidegger's *Gestell*, for Irigaray, is the living body of man (FA: 91; FA: 87). She says, 'Technē is now the archē of the whole: the framing of the world is technē, and it forgets the origin that is nature[128]' (FA: 86). Man has forgotten his origin in nature, the 'she' who gives without question.

Thus, 'the gift gives itself': it gives *itself* (FA: 93 & passim). Language becomes that which gives, 'though no object of giving is constituted' (FA: 93). For Irigaray, the dative structure of this locution represents the 'circle of Being' (ibid.): she who gives herself, first, become[s] that which gives itself, become[s] this there on the basis of which there is giving' (ibid.). Irigaray rethinks 'es gibt' as 'elle donne', 'she gives'. 'The gift' is thus –

'[T]he infinity of a sensible *hypokeimenon*, without boundary of distinctive trait, with no "proper" being, no singular body, no physical *physis*. A passage that abolishes the break between the physical and metaphysical by constituting a "ground," earth, and mother other than she or they - still physical or alive – who can assimilate: eat, drink, dwell, call, name, and, thus – perhaps – make vanish. The gift gives itself without breaking into the reserve store, if she who has never come back will become, at present, a sensible transcendental always already and nevermore there' (FA: 94).

'She' who will never return becomes instead the sensible *hypokeimenon* – the 'underlying thing' – which acts as the bridge between the physical and metaphysical. 'She' is already there, already before us, yet she remains invisible, unheard.[129] 'She' is the material substratum which underpins the architectonics of man's tongue (Krell, 1992: 310). Here, the 'sensible transcendental', 'always already and nevermore there', is reminiscent of Heidegger's description of *Ereignis*, the

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[128] Archē: first principle of the world.
[129] For Spinoza: substance; Kant: noumenon (*das Ding an sich*); Locke: material substratum. In 'Time and Being', Heidegger defines the *hypokeimenon* as 'that about which a sentence is made [...] that which already lies before us, that which is present in some way' (Heidegger, 2002: 18).

event of appropriation. If the 'It' of the 'It gives' is *Ereignis* for Heidegger - 'the unique and ultimate

a priori from whence things might emerge' – then for Irigaray, conversely, the sexuate body is

precisely what stirs *in Ereignis*: 'bestirring itself as the incursion of an irreducible otherness into

presence and propriation [sic.]' (Mortensen, 1994: 26; Krell, 1992: 308). Heidegger has forgotten the

material elements of existence, thinking of 'It' instead as 'presencing' or 'upsurgence' (Krell, 1992:

309).

Without forgetting, Irigaray says, Being would not be (FA: 94). Being is something like

Nietzsche's eternal return of the same: it is a forgetting, repeated again and again. Forgotten 'at least

twice', 'she' 'remains the nocturnal ground and lethal slumber on which base he erects himself'; 'she'

becomes the ground, instead of *air* (FA: 97).[130] In order for this ground to be established, Irigaray

urges, man takes from his first 'dwelling' 'his mode of inhabiting space as the place of an ever

infinite unfolding' (FA: 97). This is woman's exile from the universal: with no place, or space,

woman will only 'show' herself as an object or tool offering itself to man's intuition (FA: 96, 97).

Turning to the issue of space-time, Irigaray comments that –

'It is with respect to the original privilege granted to time that the question of the

foundation should be posed to Heidegger – this he has said. Isn't time already an

incorporation of space whose tissue, thus appropriated, will constitute subjectivity?'

(FA: 95)

Heidegger remarks in 'Time and Being' (see above) that time-space is prespatial, providing

the 'openness' into which all things appear. But, for Irigaray, it is the sexed body that stirs *in*

Ereignis: subjectivity is already the appropriation of space, the material substratum (*phuein*).[131]

Spatial matter has already been given to man, out of which he constructs temporality and spatiality.

But space is 'given first by her'; 'space [takes] place in a gift of life, blood, warmth, air, and

boundless, uninterrupted intra-touching' (FA: 96). Man's power, she says, comes from the

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[130] Cf. *Speculum* (1985a). Irigaray remarks that 'she' is the 'newly pressed down/repressed earth, upon which
he stands erect' (SO: 140).
[131] *Phuein* means 'to make grow'.

transformation of space into time (she alludes, here, to Kant amongst others): Dasein *anticipates* (FA: 102). Moreover, 'she' provides the material for the ek-stasis of time, whilst not existing herself as a subject (FA: 103).[132] The consequence of this is damning:

'Within the horizon of *Da-sein*, the copula as reversion and reinscription of one in the other indefinitely – and while preserving the specificity of each – is impossible. *Da-sein* draws its project from what would be its source, but for this to be so it univocally appropriates the other.' (FA: 103)

This is 'copula without copulation': the Parmenidean sphere of Being that allows for only the One in which the 'other' is reinscribed. 'She', *physis*, nature, the maternal-feminine, is appropriated in this gesture. Irigaray argues instead for a 'prodigiously generative couple and copula' (Krell, 1992: 306). This is a risk: if Being splits into Two that are radically different, what happens to Being? The genitive is double, Krell notes: 'Recoiling in oblivion, oblivion *of* the air' (Krell, 1992: 311).[133] Being, for Irigaray, is always *already* Two. To remember this fact represents a risk, an unbeaten path.

In *The Forgetting of Air*, the 'sensible transcendental' appears as something akin to Heidegger's term *Ereignis*. It is useful to note here that '*Ereignis*' has been variously understood as something 'coming into view' (from the German *er*- 're' in English, and *Auge* – 'eye'), as 'upsurgence' or 'enowing'. As the event of appropriation/propriation, *Ereignis* is the gift of presence, 'the gift granted by the giving of time', for which time-space is the prespatial region or the 'opening' that allows for any possible 'where' (Heidegger, 2002: 21). However for Irigaray, the 'It' of the 'It gives' is 'she': *physis*, the material substratum that provides matter (*hylē*) and support for

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[132] Cf. *Speculum* (1985a), 'Any theory of the "Subject"' (SO: 133 – 146).
[133] The double genitive is a phrase in which possession is indicated by the preposition *of* followed by a noun. Krell's example is meant to highlight the double 'oblivion' of sexuate difference.

man's dwelling.[134] If for Heidegger Being vanishes in appropriation, for Irigaray there is a double

oblivion: of she who first provided air, and 'she' (*physis*) that continues to provide air.

In this vision, the 'sensible transcendental' is the 'sensible *hypokeimenon*' out of which all

things arise. It is Irigaray's own *Ereignis*: the realm between and *beyond* the physical and

metaphysical, or even what permits them as such. As Mortensen comments regarding Heidegger's

term, '*Ereignis* holds together possible meanings of Being, encompassing in it all of identity,

comprised of differences' (Mortensen, 1994: 26). *Ereignis* is foundational, just as, for Irigaray, the

'sensible transcendental' is foundational in order for sexuate difference to be perceived and

cultivated. It makes way for a heterogenous space-time, Irigaray's formulation – her *reversal* – of

Heidegger's term 'time-space'. The sexed body, as 'the site of both the granting and the oblivion of

air', is implicated in the 'It gives': the 'gift' that is first given by the mother (Krell, 1992: 308).

Space-time (place) is thereby already marked by the sexed body, by the originary relationship with

the mother.

However, in arguing for a 'prodigiously generative couple and copula', as Krell puts it - or in

other words, in arguing for the 'Two' as opposed to the Parmenidean 'One' – Irigaray risks splitting

Being in half. She asks, 'If Being resolves into two that are radically different, how can the unified

whole be constructed?' (FA: 127) Her answer is simple: out of air.[135]

5.   The 'Sensible Transcendental' in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*

In the previous section I described how Irigaray *reverses* Heidegger's notion of time-space as

(as a heterogeneous space-time) by evoking a sensible transcendental: a mode of *embodied* perception

which evokes the immanent 'beyond' at work in sensible experience. Next, I return to *An Ethics of*

Sexual Difference, and Irigaray's use of the term 'transcendental'. In light of what I have argued so

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[134] In *Speculum* (1985a), Irigaray accuses Aristotle of subconsciously aligning his notion of 'prime matter' – *proto hylē* – with the feminine (SO: 160 – 167).
[135] By 'air', Irigaray means as an 'elemental' constituent of our habitation on earth (as in the Pre-Socratic philosophers, for instance). See Canters & Jantzen, 2005: 28 – 32. In her later thought, Irigaray turns to Empedocles' logic of 'interactive forces' for inspiration. Along with *The Forgetting of Air* (1999), the other three elements are represented by *Speculum* (1985a), fire; *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* (1991), water; and *Elemental Passions* (1992), earth.

far, I shall consider the ways in which her use of the term might relate to Heidegger's, as well as what might be construed by a specifically *sensible* transcendental.

As I have suggested, Irigaray's views on spatiality and space-time also sit in close proximity to her thought on the 'sensible transcendental' that she formulates in *Ethics*. Creating a place (envelope, container, etc.) for the feminine is crucial to her 'project of reinterpretation'.[136] Equally important, however, is to have an experience of what she describes in *The Forgetting of Air* as an 'infinite intuition':

'To have an intuition of the other that is not to be projective, one must be capable of an infinite intuition – whether this is understood as that of a god or divine principle that attends the birth of the other without bowing to its desires, or as the intuition of a subject who, at each time present, remains incomplete and open to a becoming of the other – and of itself in relation to all others – that is neither merely passive nor merely active.' (FA: 103)

If a 'finite intuition' is on the basis of which man interprets *space*, then, Irigaray says, 'he can neither receive nor exhaust [its] infinite totality' (FA: 96). Man makes himself the *origin* - as in Kant's Copernican revolution, for example - and that which is in 'excess' of this system will make 'matter' for the transcendental: 'a system of relations for the functioning of intuition, concepts, knowledge, and thought' (ibid.). To have an 'infinite intuition' is therefore to intuit that which is in excess of the very system that it grounds. But whereas man assimilates the feminine to *his* transcendental – she makes matter *for* it – Irigaray urges that, to have an intuition of the other, woman must have her own 'transcendental', whether this is a god or a divine principle.[137] According to Irigaray, this kind of transcendence – in the sense of 'going beyond' – is essential in order for sexuate difference to be perceived and cultivated. But if we are to 'intuit' the other that is sexually different

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[136] In *Ethics*, Irigaray argues that, historically, the feminine acts as an envelope/container/receptacle for the masculine; and that the feminine must be allowed its own 'container' (place). See Irigaray's reading of Aristotle's *Physics* IV in 'Place, Interval' (ESD: 31 – 48).

[137] See, for example, 'Divine Women' in *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993a).

(without assimilating them), we must first be capable of the 'infinite intuition' that she describes above. How so? There are clearly two different terms at work here: 'transcendence', as that which goes beyond; and 'transcendental', as that which either grounds or exceeds experience (or both). Where might we place the 'sensible transcendental', within this schema? A brief turn to Heidegger's use of these terms should provide some insight.

Importantly, Heidegger's discussion of the concept of transcendence once again reveals his appropriation of Kant (Malpas, 2008: 165).[138] In his essay 'The Essence of Ground' (1998), he compares his interpretation of the notion of transcendence with the Kantian term 'transcendental'. In the essay, Heidegger directly connects 'transcendence' with the notion of subjectivity: he says, 'transcendence designates the essence of the subject, that it is the fundamental structure of subjectivity' (Heidegger, 1998: 108). In *Being and Time*, Heidegger urged that 'Being is *transcendens* pure and simple' (BT: 62). Moreover, transcendence means 'surpassing', the going-beyond (Heidegger, 1998: 107 & passim). Transcendence defines the fundamental constitution of Dasein, one that occurs prior to all comportment: 'Dasein transcends towards Being-in-the-world. Beings get surpassed [by Dasein] and can subsequently become objects' (Malpas, 2008: 166). Furthermore, that 'towards which' the subject transcends is not an *object*, but the 'world'. Thus:

'We name *world* that *toward which* Dasein as such transcends, and shall now determine transcendence as *being-in-the-world*. World co-constitutes the unitary structure of transcendence; as belonging to this structure, the concept of world may be called *transcendental*. This term names all that belongs essentially to transcendence and bears its intrinsic possibility thanks to such transcendence.' (Heidegger, 1998: 109. Emphasis in original.)

Subjectivity is essentially transcendence, and transcendence is being-in-the-world. According to Malpas (2008), we can distinguish between two 'types' of 'transcendence' in Heidegger: 1) the way in which being-there (Dasein) transcends beings in the direction of the world; and 2) that which

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[138] Malpas (2008 & passim) is particularly helpful in clarifying Heidegger's use of these terms.

goes *beyond* the world as such. This second sense could be understood as an attempt to ground Being or the world in something that is 'transcendent' of these phenomena: for example, the supersensible (God, the Ideas, etc.). We might also understand Heidegger as continuing Kant's radical interpretation of the term 'transcendental' as designating a mode of 'grounding' in which the ground is not itself 'transcendent' of that which it grounds, although it acts as the condition of *possibility* for that which it grounds (Malpas, 2008: 167). The transcendental is, for Heidegger, that which names the 'proper structure' of transcendence, and names all that makes such transcendence possible (in the sense that subjectivity – Dasein – *is* transcendence; disclosedness).[139] Thus, we might infer that the transcendental is that which renders possible transcendence, Dasein, as such. I have suggested that this register appears in Heidegger initially as apperception in the *pure form of time*, and then as *Ereignis*; as appropriation. I would suggest that Irigaray offers the 'sensible transcendental' as that which grounds Being, but specifically *sexuate* Being; she invokes the materiality of the body, as well as the 'divine principle'. This passage from *Ethics* is worth quoting at length:

'Beyond the circularity of discourse, of the nothing that is in and of being. When the copula no longer veils the abyssal burial of the other in a gift of language which is neuter only in that it forgets the difference from which it draws its strength and energy. With a neuter, abstract *there is* giving way to or making space for a "we are" or "we become," "we live here" together.

This creation would be our opportunity, from the humblest detail of everyday life to the "grandest," by means of the opening of a *sensible transcendental* that comes into being through us, of which *we would be* the mediators and bridges. Not only in mourning for the dead God of Nietzsche, not waiting passively for the god to come, but by conjuring him up among us, within us, as resurrection and transfiguration of blood, of flesh, through a language and an ethics that is ours.' (ESD: 109. Emphasis in original.)

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[139] Cf. BT: 69 (Section 44).

Irigaray hopes for a time when the copula is no longer 'without copulation' so to speak; when language no longer disguises the fact that it 'feeds from material elements': air, the flesh, and so forth (ESD: 108). When the dative structure of the locution 'It gives'/ 'there is' gives way to the 'we are' is when the (sexuate) other is unveiled and released. This is not a passive engagement: the 'sensible transcendental' is conjured, it is a form of *parousia*.[140] Here, Irigaray responds to Heidegger's invocation of Hölderlin: 'only a god can save us now' (ESD: 109).[141] In this vision, we are all 'gods': that is, we are capable of invoking the 'divine principle'. Heidegger, for example, urges above that the world itself is 'transcendental', and is possible thanks to the 'surpassing' of Dasein; in other words, the world as we know it comes into being thanks to Dasein's transcendence. Similarly for Irigaray, the revolution that she predicts comes into being via a 'sensible transcendental' for which the sexuate human subject is the *bridge*. The 'sensible transcendental' marks a double movement: between the sexed body, and the 'divine'. I shall resume my discussion of this topic in the next chapter.

Conclusions

In Chapter 2 I showed how Irigaray's vision of a sensible transcendental might act as a response to her reading of Kant, his 'extreme' form of subjectivism, and his unconscious fear of touching the mother. In this chapter I have argued that, in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Irigaray's thought undergoes a 'Heideggerian turn', for which the notion of a 'sensible transcendental' becomes pivotal in establishing a ground or foundation for an ethics of sexuate difference. If Heidegger realised that the key to understanding Dasein is to understand Dasein's relationship with *time* - and if in his later works this is elaborated in his understanding of time-space and dwelling - then Irigaray maps on to Heidegger's thought her own concerns about our forgetfulness of the debt to the mother

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[140] Cf. ESD: 124-126. 'Parousia': from the Greek '*para*' beside and '*ousia*' presence. Literally, the second coming (the return of the gods).

[141] See Heidegger's famous 1966 'Der Spiegel' interview, for example, in which he discusses his influence by the Romantic poets, particularly Hölderlin.

(the recurrence of this unconscious theme and its signification as an *originary event*), and the imposition of 'technological' modes of thinking that perpetuate the 'love of the Same'. Simply put, Irigaray grafts on to Heidegger's model her own concerns about gender: she makes Dasein (being-there) *sexuate*. Furthermore, my reading of Irigaray's 'sensible transcendental' in connection with Heidegger provides a substantive interpretation of the term which deviates from the usual interpretation. I shall briefly explain what I mean here.

Helen Armour remarks that certain commentators – Helen Deutscher and Margaret Whitford, for instance – often interpret the 'sensible transcendental' as an ideal 'yet-to-be-imagined' that women can project for the sake of their own becoming; or in other words, as 'an empty abstraction', necessarily so because it lies ahead as a future possibility (Armour, 2003: 32).[142] In this chapter I have attempted to show that the 'sensible transcendental' occupies a more immanent, material plane when conceived as something similar to Heidegger's term *Ereignis*, or as the 'forgotten' ground of sexuate Being; it is, as Amy Hollywood suggests, a form of 'transcendence within and through immanence' (Hollywood, 2002: 199). Moreover, a 'sensible transcendental' is not limited to *female* transcendence or becoming. Rather, conceived as something like *air*, a *sensible* transcendental would be the possibility of all 'transcendentals'; it defines a basis on which to develop a relationship with the sexuate other, a relationship which then itself becomes 'transcendental' because it breaks down the metaphysical structures that perpetuate the culture of Sameness. These 'horizontal' relations – as Irigaray will go on to name them – are mediated via 'vertical' relations with the divine or with 'sexuate genre'.[143]

During the course of my discussion I have not mentioned psychoanalysis. If Chapter 1 established Irigaray's project with regards to the question of female subjectivity as broadly psychoanalytical in nature, Chapter 2 then attempted to show how Irigaray responds to this question by challenging the traditional notion of the 'subject' that emerged from within Kant's systematic philosophy. This chapter has attempted to show how Irigaray's vision of sexuate subjectivity has

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[142] Cf. Whitford (1991); Deutscher (2002).
[143] *Genre* translates from the French as either 'genre' or 'gender'; the translation from the French is often ambiguous.

been guided and shaped by that of Heidegger. Returning to psychoanalytic theory, the next chapter

considers the sensible transcendental in the context of Irigaray's so-called 'theological turn'.

Chapter 4: 'Sensible Transcendental' as God

The ecstasy:

The love of you

Inscribed in my breath

Heaves up my shoulders

So that I can nest in my arms,

Embrace with wings,

Envelop in bliss,

The one who is with me,

Human

And divine. **(Irigaray, 2004c: 130)**[144]

Chapter Outline

The purpose of this chapter is to now consider the ways in which Irigaray begins to tackle the problem of constructing a specifically *female* subjectivity, something which coincides with her 'turn' to religion around the time of *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993a).[145] I aim to situate the sensible transcendental in the context of her work on religion, where it is most commonly discussed, and I argue that it provides a useful framework for developing a notion of female subjectivity that begins to move *beyond* Lacan *without* Irigaray's appeal to what I suggest might be loosely understood as quasi-Feuerbachian projection theory in *Sexes and Genealogies*. However, I shall also recommend an 'atheistic' reading of Irigaray in this context, in the sense that I do not interpret Irigaray as adhering to traditional theological notions of 'God' or 'divinity'. For example, I read her contention that women require a 'God' in the psychoanalytic sense that that women lack a fully developed 'ego-ideal' (specularization), and although I agree with Grace Jantzen's (1998) emphasis on the importance of

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[144] This poem is from May 5ᵗʰ, 1998 (from Irigaray's *Everyday Prayers*, 2004c). Irigaray asked me to read this particular poem at her conference in 2007. She thought it best captured the idea of a 'sensible transcendental.'
[145] See, for instance, Cimiltile & Miller's (2007) collection *Returning to Irigaray*, which explores the idea of a 'turn' as a *return* to themes that have been present in Irigaray's thought all along.

transforming the religious imaginary, I disagree that Irigaray leaves room for 'God' in a traditional

sense. I therefore aim to offer a consistent way of understanding the sensible transcendental *without*

the need for a theological frame of reference. Moreover, I intend to capitalise on the sensible

transcendental as a form of radical corporeality (of the kind proposed by Simone de Beauvoir) which

eliminates the requirement for the sorts of 'ego-ideals' that Irigaray proposes in *Sexes and*

Genealogies (1993a) by postulating the sensible transcendental as a form of 'radical embodiment'

which begins to move beyond the Oedipal model.[146] I argued in the Introduction that, around the time

of *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (2004a), Irigaray begins to move away from a broadly Freudian-

Lacanian psychoanalytic framework towards an ontology of sexuate difference (see Introduction:

Section 2). In *Sexes and Genealogies*, Irigaray completes the move from a *critical* to an explicitly

constructive phase, eventually favouring the notion of sexuate difference over and above the idea of

multiplicity which typified her early mimetic approach.[147] Her proposal that we look to feminine

divinities as archetypes or 'ego-ideals' is intended to provide female subjectivity with an imaginary

foundation (a foundation in the Imaginary). However, I argue that 'conscious projection' of this kind

runs the risk of re-inscribing traditional patriarchal notions of femininity, and is therefore undesirable.

I recommend instead the notion of a sensible transcendental as a form of transcendence-through-

immanence.

The first section of this chapter is dedicated to showing how Irigaray explores the possibility

of a female subjectivity which speaks from the 'other side' of phallocentric discourse, where there is

no schism or separation between the sensible and the supersensible (the place of *jouissance*, plenitude,

or excess: the Real). I examine Irigaray's early appeal to mystical discourse as a response to Lacan's

disparaging of St Teresa of Avila in his *Seminar XX*. I show how the divinisation and eroticisation of

the female body plays a central role in opening up the possibility of a female subjectivity, albeit in

'limited form' (Hollywood, 2002: 194). In this sense the 'divine' might be articulated *as* a sensible

transcendental. First conceived in *Speculum* and *This Sex* in the form of her evocation of a 'feminine

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[146] Beauvoir's notion of the 'body-as-situation' arguably begins to lay the groundwork for a mode of
embodiment that moves beyond dualisms such as subject/object, nature/culture and so on. Merleau-Ponty's
concept of the body is discussed in Chapter 5. I return to Beauvoir specifically in the Conclusion.
[147] Irigaray argues that 'multiplicity' is in keeping with a 'philosophical monologic' or the repetition of the
Same (Cheah & Grosz, 1998: 3).

transcendental', a sensible transcendental is described as a female imaginary register which arises from the multiplicity and contiguity of female bodily morphology. As I discussed in the first Chapter, Irigaray's use of morphology emphasises the slippage between bodies and language, and the isomorphism between, in phallocentrism, of masculine anatomy and patriarchal discourse, particularly philosophy (Joy, 2002: 14). The 'two lips' metaphor, for example, is taken as a motif of Irigaray's early attempts to articulate women's sexual ontology and, indeed, of her participation in what has become known as *écriture féminine*. Moreover, Irigaray's concern with the 'religious' (and/or spiritual/mystical) has framed her thought from the very beginning: her experimental and discursive chapters in *Speculum*, such as 'La Mysterique', considered below, and passages of her book on Nietzsche spring to mind. Thus I suggest that there is less a *turn* to religion in Irigaray's thought, but rather an attempt to construct, for women, a viable identificatory structure which retains elements of the 'religious'. I argue that a sensible transcendental, as a form of transcendence-in-immanence, aims to reincorporate the bodily element of subjectivity by 'divinising' female embodiment. Irigaray's engagement with mystical discourse will be approached in Section 1.

In the second part of this chapter I consider Irigaray's claim that 'the only diabolical thing about women is their lack of a God' (SG: 64).[148] I locate Irigaray's God between the 'mystical' and the 'narcissistic' because, as Irigaray argues in 'Divine Women', whereas 'man is able to exist because God helps him to define his gender', women's subjectivity is bereft because she lacks 'a divine made in her image' (SG: 61; 63); or in other words, women lack the fundamentally narcissistic structure (specularization) which might allow them to function in the symbolic as 'full subjects' capable of sublimation.[149] However, having argued that man replaces his debt to the mother by projecting his desires (for perfection) onto an idealised and 'wholly Other' God – an undertaking which also sustains the male phantasy of parthenogenesis – Irigaray is keen *not* to repeat or reinscribe a model which involves a split or schism between 'man' and 'God' (with woman as the 'god face' or prop).[150] As Morny Joy remarks, the 'fundamental discursive structuring of Western subjectivity operates on a paternal/patriarchal model [...] incapable of representing the feminine as anything other

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[148] This is also the title of a useful article by Penelope Deutscher (Deutscher, 1994: 88 – 111).
[149] Discussed in Chapter 1, Section 2.
[150] I understand 'parthenogenesis' as reproduction without fertilization, i.e. in this case, without the mother.

than the negative counterpart of the masculine' (Joy, 2002: 9). So long as woman functions as man's negative alter-ego, she will remain bereft of her own subjectivity, trapped in passive immanence. It is therefore via a 'mytho-poetic' appeal to female deities (as archetypes), that Irigaray hopes to reconfigure women's subjectivity to include the 'divine'.[151]

The second phase of Irigaray's project might therefore be understood as an attempt to define women's *genre* (gender).[152] Implicit in this project is also the need to repair women's 'vertical relationship' with their mothers. Woman's 'becoming', Irigaray remarks, has become 'paralysed' because 'she is fixed in the role of mother through whom the *son* of God is made flesh' (SG: 62). Irigaray argues that women must create their own 'gods'- their own 'ego-ideals' if they are to construct a subjectivity of their own.[153] However, I contend that the task of constructing a 'divine' in woman's own image involves a tacit acceptance of Feuerbachian projection theory, with its concomitant problems. Ultimately, I shall reject this aspect of Irigaray's project, and suggest that the solution lies instead in women's genealogy: the mother-daughter relation. I return to this topic in Chapter 6.

In the concluding section I consider Penelope Deutscher's interpretation of the 'divine' as a reconfiguration of feminine identity (Deutscher, 1994: 101). I shall expand on Deutscher's argument that Irigaray retains only a partial, non-theological notion of 'transcendence'.[154] 'Vertical' transcendence is no longer 'transcendent' in the sense that it exceeds the possibilities of experience, but rather refers to *sexuate genre*. No longer to be understood as the *negation* of immanence, but rather as a 'sensible transcendental', vertical transcendence constitutes a 'divine horizon' or 'divine

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[151] I understand 'archetypes' in this chapter in the Jungian sense, i.e. as archaic images deriving from the collective unconscious. In Irigarayan terms, I interpret 'collective unconscious' as the 'cultural imaginary' or symbolic-imaginary order (see Chapter 1).

[152] Cf. Joy, 2006: 21.

[153] The distinction between 'ego-ideal' and 'ideal-ego' is tricky, and Freud often uses the terms interchangeably. In 'On the Introduction of Narcissism' (2006) he describes the 'ideal-ego' as the recipient of self-love during infancy: 'the formation of an ideal constitutes the necessary condition on the part of the ego for repression to take place' (Freud, 2006: 380) (similarly, for Lacan the ideal-ego is a narcissistic formation linked to the mirror stage). The 'ego-ideal', on the other hand, refers to the ego's quest to regain the narcissistic perfection of infancy under a new form. I understand Irigaray's suggestion in this second sense; i.e. the 'ego-ideal' as the image of oneself that one wants to become, the image of perfection that one wants to emulate.

[154] In theology, transcendence denotes the aspects of God's power that are separate from (that transcend) the physical universe. Immanence, on the other hand, denotes the divine manifestation in the material world.

principle'.[155] Deutscher argues that the 'human-divine' vertical dimension would not, on Irigaray's account, be one of 'transcendence' *per se* because no 'schism' is retained between women and a feminine divine: women's identificatory horizon for becoming (a 'divine' in her image) (ibid.). However, I will suggest that this concurs with, and therefore returns us to, the idea of a sensible transcendental, in which women's morphology and self-affection play a central role.

I shall end the chapter by arguing that Irigaray's claim that women are in a state of 'dereliction' requires that the symbolic role of the mother must be restored, and that return to psychoanalytic theory is necessary at this juncture. In 'Divine Women', for example, Irigaray argues for a notion of 'divinity' that would help to restore what she considers as the repressed genealogy of mothers and daughters. I shall resume these themes in the final two chapters of this thesis. Next, I shall compare Irigaray's views on mysticism to Simone de Beauvoir's, and suggest that there are important similarities between the two which help to draw out the reasons for Irigaray's call for a 'divine' in the feminine. I shall then consider the role that mysticism plays Irigaray's early experimental writing, paying particular attention to the manner in which it opens up the possibility of female subjectivity by exploiting the tensions within Lacan's theory of the woman as *pas toute* (not-all).

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[155]Anderson suggests that 'Irigaray's sensible transcendental is both a horizon and a mediating threshold for the divine' (Anderson, 2009: 40). Vertical transcendence might be understood to denote the relationship to another 'world', or the negation of immanence; horizontal transcendence signifies an 'experience of an incomplete present invigorated by the ceaseless movement of consciousness projecting towards an incomplete future' (Howie & Jobling, 2009: 2). Irigaray, as I shall suggest, understands the former as a condition of the latter, but where the sensible body is also understood as the transcendental ground (that is, it is understood in the Heideggerian sense. See Chapter 3).

1. Mysticism and Transcendence

Beauvoir and Irigaray on Mysticism

'La Mystérique: this is how one might refer to what, within a still theological onto-logical perspective is called mystic language or discourse.' (SO: 191)

'There are many women trying to achieve individual salvation by solitary effort. They are attempting to justify their existence in the midst of their immanence – that is, to realise transcendence in immanence. It is this ultimate effort – sometimes ridiculous, often pathetic – of imprisoned woman to transform her prison into a heaven of glory, her servitude into sovereign liberty, that we shall observe in the narcissist, the woman in love, and the mystic.' (SS: 639)

Irigaray's neologism, 'La Mystérique' - the title of one of *Speculum*'s central passages – is intended to connect three distinctly 'feminine' phenomena: mysticism, hysteria and mystery. By placing 'woman' on the side of the irrational and hysterical subject of mystical discourse, the 'place where consciousness is no longer master', Irigaray opens up the possibility of a female subjectivity which is at once a part of, but also transgresses, the phallocentric model described by Lacan in *Seminar XX* (SO: 191). In doing so, Irigaray also implicitly links the very *possibility* of female subjectivity with that of feminine 'transcendence', especially insofar as it pertains to a 'divinity' rooted in immanence. For Simone de Beauvoir, on the contrary, to seek transcendence through 'solitary effort' at best represents a misguided attempt at liberation and, at worst, bad faith.[156] However, I want to argue later in this chapter that the sensible transcendental operates to restore the body-as-situation as the locus of subjectivity. And whilst the issues of narcissism and transcendence lead Beauvoir and Irigaray in different philosophical directions, I shall suggest that Beauvoir's notion

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[156] Bad faith is articulated by Beauvoir in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1976) as a 'flight' from freedom.

of the body-in-situation nonetheless provides an insightful way of looking at the sensible transcendental.

In her discussion of narcissism – the 'fundamental attitude of all women' – Beauvoir suggests that it is *social conditions*, not merely a natural predilection, that drive women to seek solace in their mirror images (SS: 641). She remarks that woman, 'not being able to fulfil herself through projects and objectives, is forced to find her reality in the immanence of her person' (ibid). In short, woman seeks 'substitutes for action', and consequently turns her attentions inwards by focusing on her body as an object (SS: 647). Furthermore, it is in the eyes of others - especially man - that she aims to find satisfaction. Love thus becomes her 'supreme vocation' (SS: 679); she seeks God (defined by Beauvoir as the impossible synthesis of the In-Itself and the For-Itself) in man, although this enterprise is always and necessarily doomed to failure (SS: 644).[157] If the woman is disappointed, she claims, she might instead seek fulfilment in God himself. Remarking on the convergence of themes in mystical discourse – notably narcissism, hysteria and eroticism – Beauvoir comments:

'It is not that mystical love always has a sexual character, but that the sexuality of the woman in love is tinged with mysticism. 'My God, my adored one, my lord and master' – the same words fall from the lips of the saint on her knees and the loving woman on her bed; the one offers her flesh to the thunderbolt of Christ [...]; the other, also, offers and awaits: thunderbolt, dart, arrow, are incarnated in the male sex organ. In both women there is the same dream, the childhood dream, the dream of love: to attain supreme existence through losing oneself in the other.' (SS: 659)

The 'supreme dream' of annihilation that Beauvoir describes resonates with the experiences of both the hysteric and the mystic. In 'La Mystérique', Irigaray will juxtapose her discussion of the two:

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[157] Amy Hollywood discusses the interconnected themes of mysticism, transcendence and sexual difference extensively in her chapter on Beauvoir (see Hollywood, 2002: 120 – 146).

'She is condemned by confessors of inexperienced voyeurs who are horrified to see or hear her fall stricken to the ground, toss and turn, shriek, grunt, groan convulsively, stiffen, and then fall into a strange sleep. They are scandalized or anxious at the idea of her striking herself so terribly, thrusting sharp points into her stomach, burning her body to put out the fire of lust, searing her whole frame, using these extreme actions both to calm and to arouse her sleeping passions.' (SO: 198)

Both Beauvoir and Irigaray allude to St Teresa of Avila, the mystic who wrote of her ecstatic experience of being penetrated by the spear of an angel. As I shall discuss below, Lacan uses St Teresa – or rather Bernini's sculpture - as 'proof' that women 'know' nothing of their own 'jouissance'.[158] For Beauvoir, however – and unlike St Teresa's 'minor sisters', whose masochistic and self-annihilating proclivities make them slaves to their own bodies and keep them in immanence and passivity – St Teresa is unique because she seeks *transcendence*. Coming close, perhaps, to Irigaray's own description, Beauvoir praises St Teresa for her intensity of faith and control over her senses: 'St Teresa in a single process seeks to be united with God and lives out this union in her body' (SS: 683). But this is not a passive, receptive experience of the divine; we should not, Beauvoir warns, reduce Teresa to the rank of a hysteric, who has lost the liberty to control her body (SS: 682). The difference that Beauvoir perceives in St Teresa is that she is in control. She transgresses the perimeters of what can be achieved by contemplation alone, combining the psychosexual with the mystical to powerful effect.

Thus St Teresa, for Irigaray as well as Beauvoir, is not a hysteric, but resonates with what Irigaray calls 'La Mystérique'. From Bernini to Lacan, what St Teresa represents is precisely that of the *un*representable nature of feminine jouissance - an enjoyment 'beyond the phallus' - on the 'God' side (Lacan, 1982: 147). If Beauvoir warns of the dangers of adhering to the traditional archetypes of femininity – the narcissist, the woman in love, and the mystic – St Teresa confounds these types by not settling for contemplation alone. The subjectivity that St Teresa reveals is active and burgeoning. But

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[158] Bernini's *L'Estasi di Santa Teresa* is displayed in one of the chapels of the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome. It is on this sculpture (rather than on the mystic's writings) that Lacan bases his discussion of Teresa of Avila in *Encore*.

by pursuing the sort of subjectivity typical of the mystics, does Irigaray fall foul of the 'dream of annihilation' that Beauvoir highlights as being pernicious as well as in bad faith? As Hollywood (1994) and Anderson (2009) both suggest, this sort of subjectivity is rather limited in its scope to transform women's lives. I shall test these assertions later in this chapter. Next, however, I shall set Irigaray's use of mysticism against the backdrop of Lacanian psychoanalysis which inspires it. As I shall show, transcendence is figured by Irigaray as already implicitly tied to the notion of jouissance as well as to the 'big Other' or 'God'. In *Speculum* and *This Sex*, Irigaray evokes forms of transcendence-in-immanence or radical embodiment – a 'sensible transcendental' – in order to counter Lacan's assertion that 'woman does not exist'.

Lacan and Mysticism in Seminar XX

Returning to Freud's question of 'Was will das Weib?', and to the 'mystery' of femininity, Lacan defines courtly love as 'the absence of the sexual relation' (Lacan, 1982: 141. See Chapter 1: Section 2).[159] As I described in Chapter 1, Lacan claims that courtly love – romantic love - represents a fantasy of 'Oneness' that the woman has classically come to support. 'Oneness' is a fantasy precisely because separating man and woman is the Other, a sort of obstacle or 'bar' preventing the sexual relation; hence Lacan's joke that this Other 'seemed remarkably like the good old God of all times' (Lacan, 1982: 140). According to Lacan, the Other (the 'big Other') is the place of radical alterity as well as that of the Law. The Other designates the set of linguistic elements that constitute the signifying chain (the Symbolic). This chain in turn constitutes the field of the unconscious. Unbeknown to the subject, who is unaware of the extent to which his speech is located in the Other scene of the signifying chain (i.e. outside of himself), the subject is split between what he *says* and what is *said*. Moreover, the Other acts as a sort of interlocutor, a pole of address for the speaking

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[159] Freud's notorious question appears in his correspondence with Marie Bonaparte: 'The great question that has never been answered, and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is "What does a woman want?"'.

subject. In this sense the Other is the Symbolic place required by the speech of the subject, but where the subject both *is* and *is not*, insofar as he is constituted by lack in the Other.[160] Lacan remarks:

'[Man] has only been able to make this entrance [to the symbolic order] by passing through the radical defile of speech [. . .], but which, in its complete form, is reproduced each time the subject addresses the Other as absolute, that is, as the Other who can annul himself, just as he can act accordingly with the Other, that is, by making himself into an object by which to deceive the Other.' (Lacan, 2002: 40)

The Other represents externality in its broadest sense (insofar that the subject is constituted by externality); the Other is summoned every time the subject speaks, in a 'dialectic of intersubjectivity' (ibid).[161] Most importantly for our purposes here, however, the Other occupies the place of *jouissance*. Once the subject has been constituted in speech, the Other will never exhaust the 'real' of jouissance; the signifier that would put this jouissance into words will always be lacking.[162] Hence Lacan marks the place of the Other S (A).[163] The barred Other represents the truth as that which can never be spoken.

Now, Lacan says, 'we are played by jouissance', in a game of desire and lack (Lacan, 1982: 142). The man, in his ostensible desire for woman, actually takes on the *cause* of his desire, the cause that Lacan designates as the *objet a*, 'the act of love' (Lacan, 1982: 143). For the woman, however, matters are quite different:

'*The* woman can only be written with *The* crossed through. There is no such thing as *The* woman, where the definite article stands for the universal. There is no such thing

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[160] This is the function of the Castration Complex (see Chapter 1, Section 2). Accepting symbolic castration is tantamount to accepting the 'lack' underlying existence; that is, the illusion of identity (of 'wholeness').
[161] Cf. 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* function' (Lacan, 2002: 75), also discussed in Chapter 1, p 52 – 61.
[162] The remainder of which is the *object a*, the cause of desire.
[163] In Lacan's original text the 'A' ('autre') is crossed through or 'barred'.

as *The* woman since of her essence – having already risked the term, why think twice about it? – of her essence, she is not all.' (Lacan, 1982: 144)

As I touched upon in Chapter 1, the phallic function places woman in the category of the not-all; that of the not-*whole*, the reminder of the lack that haunts the subject. Moreover, the ~~woman~~ becomes a site of 'supplementary' jouissance (Lacan, 1982: 144):

'There is a *jouissance* since we are dealing with *jouissance*, a *jouissance* of the body which is, if the expression be allowed *beyond the phallus*. [. . .] A *jouissance* beyond the phallus. . .' (Lacan, 1982: 145)

The lack that is established after the castration complex for the ~~woman~~ takes on a libidinal value, that is, it is given a new value *as* lack: the production of jouissance through *absence*. Moreover, this jouissance is 'proper' to woman, the *pas toute* of the Symbolic order, although she is completely 'ignorant' of the matter, Lacan suggests, unless it is 'happening' to her. And even then women 'know' nothing of it, *about* it. They merely 'experience' it. However, the mystic is privileged because she senses that 'there must be a jouissance which goes beyond' (Lacan, 1982: 147):

'[Y]ou only have to go and look at Bernini's statue in Rome to understand immediately that she is coming, there is no doubt about it. And what is her *jouissance*, her *coming* from? It is clear that the essential testimony of the mystics is that they are experiencing it but know nothing about it.' (Lacan, 1982: 147)

Lacan refers here to Bernini's sculpture, 'The Ecstasy of St Teresa'. He continues, 'I believe in the jouissance of the woman in so far as it is something more' (ibid). But, he warns, we must be careful not to reduce the 'mystical to questions of fucking' (ibid). The jouissance of the woman has a '*something more*', something that threatens to destabilise the phallic order, perhaps? Something

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more, in the sense that it is in *excess* of that very order? Furthermore, Lacan says, woman – the being of *significance* – has 'no place other than the place of the Other' (ibid). The function of castration is inscribed in her: she is the foremost reminder of lack, of absence, of alienation.

To briefly summarise, Lacan argues that the woman does not exist because 'phallic sexuality assigns her to a position of fantasy', hence his exploration of courtly love in the central chapters of *Seminar XX* (Lacan, 1982: 137). The sexual 'relation' is impossible since the woman does not exist; moreover, the phallic function designates the woman the Other insofar as she bars the sexual relation and limits the achievement of jouissance (as a reminder of lack, or as the *pas toute*).[164] Hence 'Oneness' is both an impossibility and a phantasy, as I stated above. Moreover, the ~~woman~~ (St Teresa, for instance) enjoys a mystical relation with jouissance – supplementary jouissance as Lacan calls it (because it comes from an inversion of the libidinal effects of lack) – yet is 'ignorant' of its cause. In the next section I turn to Irigaray's critique of Lacan in *This Sex which is Not One* (1985b). If the place of woman is also the place of God – the prop that supports the phantasy of Oneness – then what happens to the masculine subject when this 'prop' discards her vow of silence, and begins to speak?

Jouissance, the Other, and God

In this section I shall discuss Irigaray's main complaint against Lacan in *This Sex*: that Lacan has created a mystified idea of woman as site of truth at the centre of his theory by questioning woman's relation to jouissance. However, I suggest that it is this 'site' of jouissance that ironically provides a place in which a female subjectivity might begin to emerge (as *sui generis* or self-generating). With respect to this last point, this site is also the site of the Other, or God.

Irigaray's critique of *Seminar XX* in *This Sex* begins as follows:

'Psychoanalytic discourse on female sexuality is the discourse of truth. A discourse that tells the truth about the logic of truth: namely, that *the feminine*

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[164] See Chapter 1 p 67.

occurs only within models and laws devised by male subjects. Which implies that

there are not really two sexes, but only one. [. . .] This model, a phallic one, shares

the values promulgated by patriarchal society and culture, values inscribed in the

philosophical corpus: property, production, order, form, unity, visibility . . .and

erection.' (TS: 86. Emphasis in original.)

Here, Irigaray seems to be agreeing with Lacan's claim that the 'logic of truth' is essentially a

masculine, phallic logic that defines the woman as the negative of the definition of man. As Lacan

would have it, the ~~woman~~ is a phantasy that supports the fallacy ('phallacy') of 'Oneness'.

Furthermore, Irigaray emphasises the failure of psychoanalysis to account for, or to even discuss, the

significance of socio-historical factors in the emergence of its own discursive models.[165] Hence her

remark that psychoanalysis is a peculiarly 'Western tradition', one that is 'unwittingly' guilty of

repeating and reproducing the same 'kinds' of discourse that prohibits the feminine: the death drive

that appears to underlie masculine discourse, but with the exception that psychoanalysis 'brings the

truth of this tradition to light' (ibid).[166]

Irigaray continues that 'The sexes are now defined only as they are determined in and through

language. Whose laws, it must not be forgotten, have been prescribed by male subjects for centuries'

(TS: 87). For Lacan, there can be no return to a pre-discursive reality. Men and women are

constituted *in and through language*, Irigaray says, and the sexes are divided as such.[167] Irigaray's

conceit lies in the 'now' in the sentence, drawing us to the changing nature of Lacan's theory of the

'woman' (indeed, Lacan only came to this conclusion late in his career).[168] Furthermore, the

contention that sexual difference lies somehow solely in the structure of language is, according to

Irigaray, mystifying in itself. She says: 'anatomy is no longer able to serve, to however limited, as

proof-alibi for the real difference between the sexes', a difference which places 'woman' beyond,

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[165] Cf. 'The Poverty of Psychoanalysis' (1995a), in which Irigaray criticises the psychoanalytic institution for not admitting to its cultural and historical determinations.

[166] By repeating the patterns by which one hopes to achieve *jouissance*, leading to hopeless repetitions (Irigaray accuses psychoanalysis of concealing its own 'death drive').

[167] Which is why, according to Lacan, there can be no 'sexual relation' (see Chapter 1).

[168] Lacan's '3rd phase' (in the seminar on the *sinthôme* (1975-6), for instance), arguably saw him build the foundations of a post-phallic 'femininity': see Ettinger, 2006a.

resistant to, or in excess *of*, the phallic function (ibid.). Thus 'women don't know what they are saying', as they are *excluded* by the nature of words, by the structure of language. How are women to be 'defined', Irigaray asks, since that they are 'resistant' to discourse, being not-all (TS: 88)?

'Female sexualization is thus the effect of a logical requirement, of the existence of a language that is transcendent with respect to bodies, which would necessitate, in order – nevertheless – to become incarnate, "so to speak," taking women one by one. Take that to mean woman does not exist, but that language exists. That woman does not exist owing to the fact that language – a language – rules as master, and that she threatens – as a sort of "pre-discursive reality"? – to disrupt its order.' (TS: 89)

It is because woman does not exist – as the not-all – that man seeks her out as 'lack, as fault or flaw' (ibid). She is the cause of man's desire, yet there is always something 'in her which escapes discourse' and threatens to disrupt it (ibid.). That this 'language' is transcendent to bodies is crucial, especially in relation to the ~~woman~~, because 'if the sexualised being of these "not-all" women is not a function of the body (at least not their own bodies), they will nevertheless have to serve as the object *a*, the bodily remainder' (TS: 90). Here, Irigaray notes the odd discrepancy between the 'sexual' overtones in Lacan's conceptualisation of the *object a* and jouissance, and the dismissive tone he takes when talking about female orgasm: '"about this pleasure, woman knows nothing"'. Hence Irigaray's retort: 'woman has to remain a body without organs'; indeed, without erogenous zones.[169] According to Lacan, female jouissance is just something that *happens* to women, 'they experience it yet know nothing of it' (op. cit). Irigaray's contention here is that Lacan's ears were very much closed to his (female) analysts' attempts at 'progressing' on the subject of female sexuality. Was this because he feared the discovery of a 'new' logic, one that 'challenges mastery'? (TS: 90) And to prevent any such discovery, he awards the 'right to experience pleasure to a statute'! The

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[169] I take this to be a slightly acerbic nod towards Deleuze & Guattari's notion of the 'body without organs' ('BwO') in *Anti-Oedipus* [1972] and *A Thousand Plateaus* [1980]. The BwO refers to the body's virtual dimension, which in *Anti-Oedipus* is the 'empty' body through which any form of desire can be produced. Although she never refers to Deleuze directly, Irigaray disproves of the body's 'de-gendering' in this manner (although it might be argued that Deleuzian ideas of flows and 'becomings' are present in the later Irigaray).

ridiculousness of such a gesture - in its scopophilic and puerile reduction of knowledge of woman's sexual pleasure to statements such as 'you'll understand immediately that she is coming' - is only outdone by the fact that this is a *statue* in question, sculpted by a man (Lacan, 1982: 147). Stony silence, it seems, is preferable in the logic of Lacan's desire, especially in relation to female orgasm.

According to Jacqueline Rose, woman's 'confusion' with God is the result of a conflation of the *objet a* and the image of woman as Other (Rose, 2005: 74). Since woman is elevated to the place of the Other (in that she is designates lack and that relations to her are barred), she is 'confused' somewhat with God, because the 'place of the Other is also the place of God' (ibid.). This is the 'ultimate form of mystification' (ibid):

'The *object a*, cause of desire and support of male fantasy, gets transposed onto the image of woman as Other who then acts as its guarantee. The absolute 'Otherness' of the woman, therefore, serves to secure for the man his own self-knowledge and truth.' (Ibid.)

Thus the 'God face' is supported by jouissance – female pleasure – and secures for Lacan *his* knowledge. Women preserve this phantasy, yet they are prevented from speaking out about it, as they just aren't worth listening to. As Irigaray remarks, 'women don't have a soul: they serve as guarantee for man's' (TS: 97). And so woman's 'pleasure' – her jouissance – is the 'residue of the dialectic to which she is constantly subjected'; the consequence of her vacillation between forbidden object and impossible phantasy - the product of her absolute 'Otherness', as Beauvoir might put it (Rose, 2005: 76). Not only this, however, but woman's pleasure is – like St Teresa's statute – condemned to silence: '"saying" nothing, thus not enjoying it' (ibid). It is as if, in the act of 'discovering' woman's jouissance, Lacan has 'slipped his hands over' it (Stockton, 1994: 47). Worse still, does Lacan himself 'make woman wear the face of God for men' (ibid)?

Lacan's ploy in *Seminar XX* is clever: by adopting the role of the mystic he gains access to woman's jouissance, to her 'godly mask'. Moreover, by claiming to 'know' about this pleasure which is apparently such a 'mystery' to women, Lacan silences 'woman', 'forcing' her into the role

that 'props up' the subject by denying her knowledge of her own sexual pleasure.[170] Not only does the ~~woman~~ support the phantasy of Oneness, she takes the 'schism and gap' that splits the masculine subject - the Other/God – and bridges it. This 'gap' is transferred onto 'her' body, she 'becomes' for the subject what he *lacks*.[171] As Stockton observes, this is Lacan's 'lack-turned-opacity', the rendering of woman as something unknowable under the phallic term (Stockton, 1994: 49).

Grace Jantzen argues that Lacan's silencing of 'woman' is not evidence for women's lack of 'language' or subjectivity, but rather evidence for yet another powerful man's refusal to listen:

'First [Lacan] silences women as subjects by stipulating the Phallus as universal

signifier, then he complains that they have nothing to say. But rather than being

evidence of women's lack, it is evidence of male usurpation.' (Jantzen, 1998: 53)

Lacan *refuses to listen*. Like the 'unspeakability' of the mystics' God, the ~~woman~~ is reduced to mere 'affect': emotion lacking reason, lacking signifying power (Hollywood, 2002: 196).

To summarise: we know that for Lacan, the 'feminine' is defined by lack and negation, and therefore cannot be said to 'exist' as such. Hence he writes 'woman' scored-through. Irigaray's parody of Lacan in *This Sex* centres upon Lacan's insistence on certain criteria by which an individual is prescribed entry into the Symbolic: the phallus (see Chapter 1). But as Irigaray argues in 'When Our Lips Speak Together' (1985b), women do not *need* the phallus, they have essence or being by virtue of their own anatomy, remarking that 'We are not lacks, voids awaiting sustenance, plenitude, fulfilment by the other. By our lips we are women' (Gray, 2008: 101; TS: 209 – 210). Feminine sexuality, like mysticism, is ineffable to Lacan precisely because the phallus is an inadequate and impoverished symbol for describing it (Gray, 2008: 101). In 'La Mystérique', Irigaray uses the feminised, mystical 'unconscious' as the site on which a feminine 'divine' – or indeed a feminine

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[170] Cf. Jantzen, 1998: 53.
[171] Whilst Beauvoir argues that women look to men, or else to God, for their 'completion', Irigaray implies that this is because men have unconsciously incorporated (as opposed to *introjected*: see Chapter 6) part of women's subjectivity as the support (or 'prop' as I occasionally refer to it in this chapter) of their own. Women's narcissism – their obsession with their mirror images – could be read on these terms as a symptom of their 'unsupported' identity. Thus Beauvoir could be said to address the correct problem but not the correct cause, which requires recourse to psychoanalysis.

subjectivity – might be apprehended (Hollywood, 2002: 189 – 90). Indeed, it is the wounded, feminised Christ, as well as St Teresa's penetrated body, which become eroticised emblems of a signification beyond the phallus. Irigaray takes advantage of the slippage between the Real and the pre-Symbolic feminine Imaginary and the place of horror that it represents for men: *das ding*, death, the Real. This place - the sensible transcendental, the divine 'reality' – is the place in which a female subjectivity blossoms. However, in the following section I shall consider the potential pitfalls of this vision.

The sensible transcendental: a fool's game?

Rosi Braidotti defines Irigaray's notion of the 'divine' as 'materializing the *a priori* conditions needed to achieve changes in our symbolic as well as material conditions.' (Braidotti, 2002: 59). On this reading, the 'divine' describes the *a priori* (structural) conditions required in order to effect change in the current system. As a form of the 'divine', the sensible transcendental 'situates the female embodied subject in a space between transcendence and immanence', a place that Irigaray refers to as 'the sensible transcendental *par excellence*' (ibid; ESD: 97). Taking female embodiment – or rather, a particular *kind* of embodied relation which I shall expand upon in Chapter 5 - as our point of departure, I have argued that the female body comes to signify a sensible transcendental or 'divine horizon' in itself, and becomes the source and site of transcendence.[172] However, Pamela Sue Anderson (2009) is sceptical of Irigaray's return to what Beauvoir warned in *The Second Sex* was a misguided attempt to achieve transcendence through immanence; in other words, to embrace passivity and sensuality over and above rationality and liberation through positive action. I shall examine Anderson's argument here, and suggest that although she makes some useful criticisms, she fails to take into account to the impact that psychoanalytic theory has had on Irigaray's thought in this

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[172] Chapter 5 begins to articulate the sense in which the body (as 'situation', in Beauvoir's language) becomes the site through which a sensible transcendental is achieved.

context. I shall end by suggesting that the 'sensible transcendental' actually reinstates the body-as-situation as the core of subjectivity, and hence is not far removed from Beauvoir's claims in *The Second Sex*.

For Anderson, Irigaray articulates women's attempts to achieve transcendence through three types of 'love relation': divine 'reality', the divine subject, and the divine body. According to Anderson, Irigaray's vision of a 'divine reality' is most profoundly articulated in 'Sorcerer Love' in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (2004a). Diotima 'seeks divine reality in the go-between'; and it is by means of whom -

'Irigaray opens up a space between a sensible reality and its transcendental ground

for a becoming, a space that would avoid any opposition between transcendence

and immanence. A sensible transcendental is a horizon: like a beatific vision of

beauty in love, or like a god whose advent is always ahead of each man and of each

woman.' (Anderson, 2009: 39)

A 'sensible transcendental' - as a mediating threshold for the divine - aims to create the structural conditions required in order to engender 'loving' relations between sexuate subjects. For Anderson, however - echoing Beauvoir - the potential danger of a sensible transcendental relates to its excessive emphasis or focus on bodily immanence. Anderson asks:

'Are women still dragged down by their association with female immanence? Each

of the forms of transcendence-in-immanence – of beatification, deification, and

self-affection – locates sexual difference within a sexually specific female

incarnation. The pressing issue persists, whether locating a woman's difference in

sexuate belonging avoids the subordination of women individually and

collectively. If not, Irigaray's sensible transcendental could trap woman in the

solitude of her own servitude.' (Anderson, 2009: 41).

Anderson's point is pertinent: how does Irigaray intend to counter those problems relating to female passivity that Beauvoir originally identified, and that threaten to destabilise her vision of a sensible transcendental? Simply put, how is Irigaray's notion of a sensible transcendental any different, or better, than the mystics' 'pathetic' or 'ridiculous' attempts at achieving transcendence-in-immanence (SS: 639)? In Irigaray's defence, Beauvoir is suspicious of the religious, unless it presents a way to project one's liberty authentically through positive action (SS: 687). Beauvoir (with Sartre) also rejects psychoanalysis on the grounds that consciousness is transparent, rendering the notion of an unconscious 'censor' inconsistent; as well as on the basis that it stifles female sexuality by casting it as passive and predetermined.[173] But if Anderson's criticisms can be fairly easily swept aside given the impact of Lacanian (also Derridean) theory on Irigaray's thought; and given that the question of constructing a viable female subjectivity inheres precisely in challenging the psychosexual processes that create identities - the religious impact on the Symbolic being arguably the 'supreme instance of phallogocentrism' – the question still remains: where do we go from here (Joy, 2002: 9)? Is a sensible transcendental enough to transform actual women's lives? As Anderson remarks,

'A woman who is situated in love could follow Irigaray in projecting her self as autonomous; she could find a horizon in her own becoming in a sensible transcendental; and yet she could lack any reciprocal relations. She, then, has nothing except the image of her own apotheosis.' (Anderson, 2009: 42)

This could pose a real threat to the efficacy of Irigaray's project. But this is a problem that Irigaray appears to have in mind at the time of writing 'Divine Women' and other essays in *Sexes and Genealogies*. The question of how to create and sustain a woman-to-woman sociality amidst a homosocial culture (patriarchy) is one of the central questions of the mid-phase of Irigaray's thought. Indeed, I would further suggest that reciprocal relations between self and other is precisely what is

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[173] Again, this is close to Irigaray's view, but Beauvoir dismisses the psychoanalytic theory which ironically may have proven useful in explaining *why* it is that women have become bogged down in passive immanence. See my point in the Introduction about pragmatism and immanent critique.

prescribed in/through the achievement of a sensible transcendental (I shall go on to discuss this in greater detail in Chapter 5). But even with Anderson's criticisms in mind, I maintain that the success of the sensible transcendental as a motif lies in part in the fact that it is not stringently defined; it remains transitory and dynamic. Ellen Armour, for instance, recognises the sensible transcendental as a 'religious motif', yet one which resists the kind of emphasis that Irigaray places on projection and belief in the likes of 'Divine Women', as I shall discuss below (Armour, 2003: 31). For Armour, Irigaray's reading of Heidegger plays on the religious and mystical overtones of his thought, uncovering a metaphorical 'woman' (Lacan's *pas toute*) as the material/maternal ground (Armour, 2003: 32). The sensible transcendental in this sense is not intended merely as an excursion into passive contemplation, but is rather to reconnect with what has been elided in the act of representation – its 'underside' - and to re-instate it as the forgotten 'ground'.[174] As Armour continues, '[the sensible transcendental's] paradoxical status signals an intervention into our cultural grammar, which conceives the sensible as *what is transcended* rather than what *transcends*' (Armour, 2003: 31. Emphasis added). To conceive of the sensible body – particularly the eroticised, female body - as that which has the power to transcend, makes a move towards the overturning of reason (and its traditional epistemological definition) in favour of more 'embodied ways of knowing' (Joy, 2002: 15). Anderson goes on to argue for a modified notion of transcendence which incorporates Beauvoir's idea of the historical body-as-situation. She remarks that 'the damaging traditional imagery of transcendence and the female body can be transformed both in and through human history and society' (Anderson, 2009: 45). This is in keeping with what I proposed as a post-phenomenological methodology in the Introduction to this thesis. In the next chapter I shall return to this topic, and suggest some ways that the notion of a sensible transcendental may be given credence in phenomenological terms as a motif which helps to reinstate the body as the core of subjectivity.

In the following section I shall consider Irigaray's turn to a more 'constructive' mode in *Sexes and Genealogies*, describing some of the problems that are borne as a consequence of this new approach.

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[174] Or 'backside' as Irigaray puns in 'The Setting in Psychoanalysis' (2002).

2. Beyond the 'sensible transcendental': God, Projection and the Divine

By the time of *Sexes and Genealogies*, Irigaray becomes dissatisfied with the model of transcendence-through-immanence because it does little to challenge the 'patriarchal hierarchy' of the church (Joy, 2002: 29). In other words, this model did not go *far enough* to challenge the image of God as a transcendent, omnipotent and characteristically *male* figure. She remarks that man 'has sought a unique *male* God. God has been created out of man's gender'; God helps man to 'orient his finiteness by reference to infinity' (SG: 61). Moreover, Irigaray abandons her early appeal to morphology and multiplicity enacted in/as *écriture feminine*, for instance, because 'in her view the multiple is the one in its self-willed dispersal into unwilled atomistic singularities, many others of the same' (Cheah & Grosz, 1998: 3). As I discussed in the Introduction, Irigaray's first theoretical move (her 'first phase') was to attempt to extricate the 'other' from the 'same'; to emancipate the 'feminine' from the shackles of phallocentric discourse (Cheah & Grosz, 1998: 4). However, the problem for Irigaray remains that women have not yet been able to claim an authentic and fully autonomous subjectivity, as they have always been defined in relation to the masculine, as man's negative alter-ego. Eager to move away from the notion of the 'feminine' as a mode of resistance only (her strategy of mimesis is typical of this approach), Irigaray's project in *Sexes and Genealogies* is to re-imagine or re-conceptualise 'God' in a feminine mode; a 'feminine divine' which might serve as a foundation for a concrete female subjectivity or *genre*. In the next section I ask the following questions: first, why does 'God' continue to be necessary to Irigaray's project? Second, how is Irigaray's approach in 'Divine Women' (1993a) any different to Feuerbach's theory of projection, with which she engages? And third, in what sense is Irigaray's an atheistic or theistic revision of Feuerbach?

Penelope Deutscher argues that Irigaray makes three substantive claims in relation to her development of a 'feminine divine': first, that there is an intrinsic relationship between sexed identity structures and the role of symbolic gods as archetypes; second, that there is no equivalent 'ego-ideal'

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for women; and third, that the absence of a similar identificatory 'anchoring' in the form of a 'divine' or ego-ideal/symbolic archetype has resulted in the atrophied state of women's identity (Deutscher, 1994: 89, 90). A culture of 'sexuate difference', on the other hand - which would entail the re-imagining of a feminine 'divine' - would reconnect women with themselves and each other (ibid.). However, I shall reject this aspect of Irigaray's project on the basis that it offers an untenable and dissatisfying theory of projection, one which ultimately leads to a conservative and hetero-normative notion of female identity. I shall now turn to the notion of projection in order to map out the differences between the traditional psychoanalytical notion and that typical of Irigaray.

Mirroring and Projection

In her turn to an explicitly *constructive* rather than *critical* mode, Irigaray is prepared to re-examine the use of projection from a more pragmatic angle (Joy, 2006: 20). She argues, chiefly in *Speculum*, that masculine identity is produced by virtue of two kinds of 'prop': that of woman as man's negative alter-ego, and that of God as his ego-ideal. In both instances, God/woman acts a guarantor of masculine identity, but also his 'blind spot'. Famously, in 'Divine Women', Irigaray remarks that 'as long as woman lacks a divine made in her own image she cannot establish her subjectivity or achieve a goal of her own' (SG: 63). Indeed, she also claims, in an apparently Feuerbachian reading, that 'to posit a gender, a God is necessary: *guaranteeing the infinite*' (SG: 61).[175] In short, she appears to assert that an equivalent ego-ideal or 'prop' is necessary for women; this would be true for any identity claim which retains a broadly post-structuralist framework. I shall discuss the Feuerbachian element of Irigaray's argument in 'Divine Women' shortly. In what

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[175] See translator's footnote: SG: 61. Whilst Irigaray does not refer to Feuerbach directly, her talk of 'essences' (e.g. of 'man') suggests that Feuerbach is the allusion here.

follows, however, I would like to (re)turn briefly to the matter of the mirror, and the issue of projective identification implicit in Lacan's account of the mirror stage.[176]

The mirror, as motif and metaphor, plays an important role throughout Irigaray's early thought and in *Speculum* in particular. From Lacan's Mirror Stage to Kant's musings in the *Prolegomena*, Irigaray parodies, in each case, the masculine subject's indebtedness to 'woman', the eternally reflective surface onto which man projects his phantasies but also his flaws. In 'La Mystérique', the metaphor of burning mirror represents the soul, emptying itself of all content in order to become the perfect reflecting surface for the divine:

'I have become your image in this nothingness that I am, and your gaze upon mine in your absence of being. This silvering at the back of the mirror might, at least, retain *the being* – which we have been perhaps and which perhaps we will be again – though our mirage has failed at present or has been covered over by alien speculations. A living mirror, thus, I am (to) your resemblance as you are to mine.' (SO: 197)

Here, Irigaray plays on the metaphorical language of the mystics, a language which 'at once effaces and reaffirms the identity of the mystic' (Joy, 2002: 28). As Morny Joy observes, this logic is coextensive with 'that at work in Irigaray's notion that women under patriarchy affirm male identity by serving as mirrors that affirm self-sameness' (ibid.). The logic of the Same eschews the feminine yet is paradoxically dependent upon it for its own identity: its reflection in the mirror. However, masculine self-sufficiency is emphatically undermined in this process; the penis 'cannot escape its dependent status shrouded in natality' (ibid; Gray, 2008: 90).

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[176] Psychoanalytical theory incorporates several different versions of projection theory, an all-encompassing discussion of which is beyond the remit of this thesis. I shall limit my discussion in this chapter first to the version of projective identification implicit in Lacan's mirror stage, and then to that typical of Feuerbach. Of course, this discussion on occasion overlaps with themes from Freud and other theorists, including Jung and Klein, although it may not be entirely extant (because the same is true of Irigaray and the Lacanian theory Irigaray appropriates). For instance, projection is operative in the processes of identity formation, but also as a defence mechanism (in psychosis).

The links between Irigaray's theory of subjectivity and quasi-theological project in 'Divine Women' become clear if we take a closer look at not only Feuerbach, but the theory of projection that conjoins the idea of 'God' with that of subjectivity. In order to understand Irigaray's turn to Feuerbach in 'Divine Women', it is necessary to return briefly to the function of the mirror in psychoanalytic theories of individuation, specifically in Lacan and Jung.[177]

According to Frances Gray's (2008) interpretation of Lacan's incorporation of projection theory in his account of the mirror stage, the function of the mirror is to provide a mediating bridge between the inner (world) and the outer (environment). The mirror helps to *establish*, but then *dissolves*, the subject's identity with the *imago*. In its capacity for meta-positioning, the mirror 'serves as the fulcrum around which different realities are enacted' (Gray, 2008: 80). 'Projection', moreover, is used to describe the dialectical engagement between the subject and the *imago*. At the mirror stage, for instance, the parental voice is a factor which aids the cessation (dissolution) of the process, as it distracts the infant from becoming 'lost' in its own reflection, as in the myth of Narcissus for example.[178] As I first described in Chapter 1, the infant's identification with its *imago* is dissolved, but the image is nonetheless instituted as the nexus of the ego; in other words, it is *introjected*.[179] Thus in this context, 'projection' describes the process wherein the subject simultaneously identifies with the *imago*, as well as his/her unconscious becoming aware that it is in fact illusory. This, according to Lacan – and as I described in Chapter 1 – is a fundamental step on the way to attaining subjectivity.

Judith Butler's interpretation of the function of projection in Lacan's mirror stage is useful:

'Insofar as the ego is formed from the psyche through projecting the body, and the

ego *is* that projection, the condition if reflexive (mis)knowing, it is invariably a

bodily ego. This projection of the body, which Lacan narrates as the mirror stage,

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[177] The term 'individuation' appears in the writing of Deleuze, Bergson, and Jung, amongst others, and refers to the processes by which undifferentiated parts become unified wholes. I understand the term here as it is used specifically analytic psychology; i.e. in order to denote the coming to being, over time, of the integrated, mature psyche. Cf. Gray, 2008.
[178] Cf. Gray, 2008 : 74 – 81, for a discussion on the connection between narcissism, projection and individuation.
[179] See Introduction for definition of the difference between 'introjection' and 'incorporation'.

rewrites Freud's theory of narcissism through the dynamics of projection and misrecognition. In the course of rewriting, Lacan establishes the morphology of the body as a psychically invested projection, an idealization or "fiction" of the body as a totality and locus of control. Moreover, he suggests that this narcissistic and idealizing projection that establishes morphology constitutes the condition for the generation of objects and the cognition of other bodies.' (Butler, 1993: 73)

For Lacan as well as Jung, images subtend the process of individuation, for which projection is an essential process (although it must cease if individuation is to occur, if subjectivity is to be attained) (Gray, 2008: 81). But as Butler correctly argues, the projection – the *imago* – is invested with masculine ideals and anxieties relating to embodiment, ideals and anxieties which are in turn unconsciously deployed in the Symbolic. Two main features of projection might be highlighted at this point: first, projection is an *unconscious mechanism*: the point is to retrieve the infant from the imaginary identification with the *imago*. Second, as the eternally reflective surface - the 'prop' for masculine narcissism - Irigaray suggests that women's development has somehow faltered at the mirror stage, which is why sublimation is difficult (and women's ego is 'atrophied'). Because sublimation is premised on the post-Oedipal requirement for man to resolve his rivalry with his (m)other, and no satisfactory equivalent exists for women, they remained 'merged with the mother' (op. cit. Whitford, 1995: 74)[180]. Irigaray seems to suggest (and Beauvoir, above, agrees) that women have become 'lost' in their own reflections, trapped in the pre-Symbolic imaginary; and that projection, as a process, remains incomplete.

Quoting Feuerbach, Irigaray comments in 'Divine Women' that "God is the mirror of man"; 'Woman has no mirror wherewith to become woman' (SG: 67). As I remarked above, from *Sexes and Genealogies* onwards, Irigaray's project becomes more explicitly constructive rather than merely critical. By contending that without their own 'God' women will never be able to claim a fully autonomous subjectivity, Irigaray appears to be trying to solve the problem of women's atrophied

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[180] Sublimation is a necessary step in the formation of the ego as well as for being culturally productive: see Chapter 1, Section 2.

identity by appealing to the most culturally evolved form of projection: religion. As a projection *par excellence*, God represents man's highest ideals of perfection as well as his fears. Thus it might seem a little tangential that Irigaray now appears to be recommending for women what she identifies as historically detrimental to women's subjectivity. In Irigaray's defence, I shall now turn briefly to Grace Jantzen.

Jantzen (1998) claims that Irigaray's use of projection differs from Feuerbach in three major senses: first, it entails no 'schism' or separation between the human and the divine; second, it is therefore not *alienating*; and third, it is a conscious and deliberate act, rather than an unconscious mechanism. Jantzen also suggests that Irigaray's use of projection, unlike Feuerbach's (and, indeed, Freud's), is not necessarily atheist.[181] Jantzen also notes that Irigaray reads Feuerbach 'selectively': '[Irigaray] does not emphasise projection as a theory of the origins of religion, but uses it instead to explore the contemporary possibilities of religion for the formation of human subjectivity and as a divine horizon for human becoming' (Jantzen, 1998: 88). Thus according to Jantzen, Irigaray's is *not* a theory of projection in the true sense.

Jantzen also argues that instead of automatically implying atheism, projection might be interpreted in a more 'positive' way:

'If human characteristics are projected on to the divine, if humans seek to *become* divine, the important question will be not so much one of truth as one of *adequacy*. Are the characteristics thus projected really the ones that will best facilitate human becoming? Do they constitute a worthy divine horizon? Or are they partial, distorting, or inimical to the flourishing of some groups of people?' (Jantzen, 1998: 89)

According to Irigaray, the attributes projected onto the divine have thus far only fostered male becoming, and have stifled women's. The classical concept of God, for Jantzen, is 'partial and

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[181]Cf. Freud's *Totem and Taboo* [1913] and *Moses and Monotheism* [1937]. Freud applies Feuerbach's insights relating to projection to historical models.

skewed' and bound up with masculine ideals of perfection (Jantzen, 1998: 90). Thus Irigaray argues for a conscious and deliberate use of projection that would 'enable the subjectivity of women' by reflecting/projecting 'womanly ideals' (Jantzen, 1998: 89; Gray, 2008: 102). In the following quotation from 'Divine Women', if we substitute 'mirror' for 'God' we get an idea of Irigaray's 'positive' use of projection:

'Though necessary at times a separating tool, the mirror – and the gaze when it acts

as a mirror – ought to remain a means and not an end that enforces my obedience.

The mirror should support, not undermine my incarnation.' (SG: 65)

Similarly, the divine should support women's becoming, not undermine it by forcing undesirable qualities onto the feminine. Penelope Deutscher (1994) suggests that, after 'Divine Women', Irigaray becomes increasingly concerned with the way that 'masculine/feminine oppositions are sustained by transcendent figures through a paradoxical identificatory structure' (Deutscher, 1994: 96). In other words, masculine/feminine oppositions are interwoven with 'impossible' masculine ideals which serve to sustain these oppositions. The relationship between man and his ideal 'other'/God is undermined by the fact that it is paradoxically supported by man's negative alter-ego: woman (as described in section 1, above). 'God' as a symbolic archetype represents the projection of a mythical transcendent realm which serves to legitimate the artificial hierarchies or dualisms which become consolidated in phallocentrism: masculine/feminine, reason/emotion, etc (Deutscher, 1994: 96). In short, the fate of the feminine is, in part, a consequence of the schism between man and his divine 'other'. Thus projection is envisioned by Irigaray a conscious mechanism by means of which women might attain truly 'autonomous' (*sui generis*) subjectivity - and I take this to mean that it is defined *in and of itself*, not in relation to a 'superior' masculine 'other'. Moreover, and unlike the psychoanalytic (and Marxist) accounts of projection described above, there would exist no 'schism' or separation between a subject and her 'divine' projection. The relationship would be 'continuous' with woman's identity. Irigaray urges that God must not remain in inaccessible transcendence; rather, women must become divine *in and through the body*: becoming divine would be an *incarnate*

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process. Indeed, Morny Joy suggests that 'The figure of the divine that Irigaray seeks to express will be an incarnate one'; and that 'God' must be integral to process of human becoming (Joy, 2006: 20). This echoes Feuerbach's own sentiment regarding the notion of the incarnation:

'The Incarnation is nothing else than the practical, material manifestation of the human nature of God. God did not become man for his own sake; the need, the want of man – a want that still exists in the religious sentiment – was the cause of the incarnation.' (Feuerbach, 2004: 53)

The 'want' of woman should be the cause of women's own incarnation as 'divine' beings. But this should be a calculated and deliberate move. Indeed for Jantzen, Irigaray's positive use of projection theory comprises part of what she envisions as an 'imaginative [re]development of a symbolic natality' (Jantzen, 1998: 98).

Re-imagining the divine as feminine, or in a feminine guise, is regarded as largely unproblematic by Jantzen (I go on to look at how we might positively use Jantzen's idea of a cultural imaginary, as well as 'natality', in the next chapter). However – and although Jantzen waxes lyrical about the potential positive connotations of such a re-invention of the symbolic order - it is unclear how she, or indeed Irigaray, intends this to work in practical terms. Gray summarises Irigaray's project:

'Irigaray's quest for a feminine divine is simultaneously the coming to be of a feminine-feminine, which displaces 'woman' as a persona-identity inside the masculine symbolic-imaginary, and a quest for women's individuation. Only with the creation of a feminine-feminine can an authentic individuated subject position become available to women.' (Ibid.)

The question becomes this: if the feminine has always been constructed in opposition to the masculine, as its inferior or 'negative mirror' how are we to 're-imagine' a divine feminine or

'feminine-feminine' as Gray sees it, without 1) appealing to masculine ideals of femininity, 2) projecting masculine ideals *onto* the feminine (Deutscher, 1994: 91)? As Gray continues, 'womanly ideals should be operative in both the production and activity of a feminine-feminine symbolic/imaginary' (Gray, 2008: 102). Indeed, and as Hollywood (2002) suggests, 'If Irigaray's argument for the destruction of hierarchy and the creation of new divinities seems paradoxical, or at least circular, it is because she insists that before they can be destroyed "It is necessary that the God or gods exist"' (Hollywood, 2002: 213), which leaves us with the paradoxical task of simultaneously constructing and deconstructing a feminine divine (ibid).[182]

We might also question the efficacy of projection as a strategic mechanism for positing a feminine divine. Given that projection supposedly works so long as its dynamics are hidden (in religion, but also in projection theory described above) - in other words, when it is *unconscious* - Irigaray's deployment of Feuerbach seems relatively tenuous. What Irigaray appears to be recommending is not a theory of projection *per se*, but a re-imagined divine incarnation in feminine form. Joy remarks that '[Irigaray] appears at times to be seeking a way to express how the divine can be realised in the world, without mediations' (Joy, 2006: 25). But the problem remains of just *how* this is to be achieved in practical terms. In 'Divine Women', for example, Irigaray remarks that becoming 'divine' does not just require a 'return to the cosmic' perspective, although this does play a part (SG: 60). In her attempt to define woman's 'essence', Irigaray claims that it is necessary to reconnect with the 'elemental' and corporeal aspects of existence in order to define a 'new modality of the divine' (SG: 61; Joy, 2006: 25).

There are two further problems that I would like to outline briefly here. First, it is, once again, unclear what sort of 're-imagining' is intended to effect the changes required in the current symbolic-imaginary order. The dangers of Irigaray's recommendation surely reside in the sort of thing Michèle le Doeuff suggests here:

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[182] The problem with Irigaray's suggestion appears to come down to the two different processes of introjection (taking-in) and projection (putting-out), and the relation between the two. She appears to call for a simultaneous putting out (or positive projection vis-à-vis ego-ideals) and taking-in (introjection), which is theoretically problematic.

'Everywhere [in Irigaray] you find references to nature and the mother, right down to the slogan "rediscover respect for the mother and for nature." In fact, in her writing we find the three K's of Nazism, cooking with Hestia (*Küche*), children (*Kinder*) with the right to motherhood, and the church (*Kirche*) with leaden references to edifying (female) deities. The text is thus not very different from what the worst of men, and conservative women with them, have wanted for women.' (Le Doeuff, 2003: 65)[183]

Le Doeuff is a particularly scathing critic, and this is an extreme interpretation of Irigaray's thought in this context. But le Doeuff is correct to point out the dangers of casting back to a supposedly more nurturing and innocent past. In other words, Irigaray presents us with a utopian ideal of womanhood in a supposedly pre-patriarchal era of abundance and plenitude. Indeed, her assertion that woman should be able to find herself in the 'images of herself already deposited in history' will set many feminists' alarm bells ringing (SG: 10). Irigaray's vision is arguably susceptible to conservative and hetero-normative ideas of women's identity and sexuality.

The second problem concerns the notion of belief. Hollywood (2002) and Joy (2006) agree that the 'ambiguous' status of belief in Irigaray's thought and its tenuous relationship with religion make it difficult to see how a new modality of the divine is to be achieved. Hollywood comments that 'Irigaray does not articulate clearly the mechanism by which religious ideals emerge and by which they might be appropriated as one's own' (Hollywood, 2002: 229). However, I would suggest that the problem of belief (and faith) is actually slightly irrelevant. For if projection is conscious, then this seems to amount to little more than deliberately 'imagining' with whom one would like to identify, which begs the question of what exactly is to be gained by this move considering the supposed preponderance of phallic representations of women. In short, I have contended that Irigaray's solution is inadequate and fails to satisfactorily deal with the complex and interconnected mechanisms at work in the formation of identity, including (unconscious) projection. I shall return to this matter in

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[183] le Doeuff is referring to *Je, Tu, Nous* (1993b) specifically, here, but I think her point stands in relation to Irigaray's later thought as a whole. See Introduction.

the next chapter. In the concluding section, I return to the notion of transcendence, and show how it might be used positively in order to reconstruct women's subjectivity in relation to genealogy.

Conclusions: Women's *Genre*

In the previous chapter I contended that, similar to Heidegger's term *Ereignis*, the sensible transcendental points to an infinite 'unfolding' or sexuate becoming: a sort of 'divine horizon' which could help women's 'fulfilment' *as* women (SG: 66).[184] In her later work, Irigaray develops two concepts of transcendence which she names 'horizontal' and 'vertical', where 'vertical transcendence' is in some sense a condition or prerequisite of 'horizontal transcendence':

> 'According to this metaphor, relations between men and women occur in the "horizontal" dimension. The transcendence between men and women along this axis occurs due to the mediation by the vertical axis. The vertical axis, typically understood as human-divine, has been re-defined as that dimension of female genealogy, of mother-to-daughter and daughter-to-mother relations, female ideals and role-models, female becoming, and of the female genre.' (Deutscher, 1994: 104)

If Deutscher is correct, the 'divine horizon' – that which I have dubbed the sensible transcendental – is later redefined as the axis of relations *between women*: that of the female *genre*. Indeed, the 'divine' is subject to 'plural redefinitions' in the course of Irigaray's writing on religion. Irigaray not only challenges our conception of what 'identity' means, but also what 'divinity' means, and the complex relation between the two (ibid.). Deutscher continues that 'Some [of Irigaray's]

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[184] See footnote on this page (SG: 66). The French term '*S'épanouir*' means to 'accomplish one's form', which is in keeping with Heidegger's term *Ereignis* as 'being brought into one's own' (Jones, 2011: 181).

comments leave the impression that the concept of women "lacking their own divinity" simply amounts to the familiar claim that women "lack identity" in the sense that they serve as the "negative mirror"' (Deutscher, 1994: 98). Moreover, the notion that women need a divinity need not imply that they need a 'God' in the traditional sense; as Deutscher remarks, the 'divine' is far from having supernatural connotations' (ibid.). Deutscher goes on to conclude that, instead of acting as a ground or precondition of feminine identity, the feminine divine actually becomes coextensive *with* the need for a feminine 'identity' (Deutscher, 1994: 99). Furthermore, 'vertical transcendence' – defined as a relation appropriate to 'each gender' – mediates the relationship between sexuate subjects. Conceived as a 'divine' relation, vertical transcendence designates self-affection as well as love of the other (KW: 14):

'[T]he divine does not necessarily signify for women that an entity called God exists. The relation of the woman with God seems both subtler and more incarnated, less reduced to an object, even sent beyond our world. Women's God does not appear as a hypostasis of another world we have to believe in. That is to say, a God appropriate to the feminine may not paralyse the fluidity of the breath or of the grace through a fixed identity and fixed commandments, on pain of depriving the woman of the relation with her soul.' (KW: 170)

Indeed, a 'divinity from which we are not severed' is what is originally evoked as a sensible transcendental. But the question remains regarding reciprocal relations between women, and how, and on what/which terms exactly, we attempt to define women's *genre*. If women are 'mediated by divinity', this seems to say little more than that they are mediated in relation to their own selves (if we adhere to the definition above) (Deutscher, 1994: 103). But if women are truly in a state of 'dereliction', as Irigaray suggests, then it would appear that the problem of women's subjectivity cannot be solved without returning to the matter of genealogy – that is, to the relation with the mother - to which I turn in the final chapter of this thesis.

In the second part of this chapter I have described how Irigaray's 'turn' to religion sees her attempt to find a solution to the question of female subjectivity by postulating an 'ego-ideal' in the form of a 'feminine' divine. I have argued that this is an undesirable solution, and suggest instead that we look to phenomenological and psychoanalytical accounts in order to construct a viable model of female subjectivity. Moreover, in the first part of this chapter I argued that Simone de Beauvoir's notion of the body as a 'situation' helps us to think the sensible transcendental as a kind of 'radical embodiment'. Indeed, this interpretation of the sensible transcendental makes sense in terms of what I have already claimed about the influence of Heidegger on Irigaray. In the next chapter I resume discussion of several themes from this chapter – including the role of the image (*imago*) in the process of individuation – and use this concept to develop a theory of 'fleshy female subjectivity'.

Chapter 5:

Beyond the Sensible Transcendental:

Irigaray's 'Fleshy Phenomenology'

The placental habitation and the adherence of the placenta to the mother's womb represent a different economy and a different liberation. (TSN: 239)

Chapter Outline

Having in the previous chapter established the sensible transcendental as a core concept which hinges on a form of *radical embodiment* (which I now call 'fleshy subjectivity'), this chapter advances the notion of a sensible transcendental a mode of 'somatic consciousness' which inheres in the 'fleshiness' of, especially (but not exclusively) female body experience.[185] I argue that the sensible transcendental, as a kind of 'fleshy subjectivity', rehabilitates the 'Oedipalized' body image to incorporate the heterogeneous, ambiguous and fluid self-other relationship typical of the intrauterine encounter between mother and infant. I recommend Irigaray's use of the prenatal relation as an incisive challenge to the Oedipal model which reduces women to their maternal function, and regards pregnancy as a 'regressive fusion' (Lorraine, 1999: 80). I go on to argue that, in its capacity to mediate the relation between mother and infant, the placenta preserves the identity of each party and grants the mother an identity *in her own right*. By reconceptualising and re-symbolising the prenatal relation, Irigaray begins to move beyond Oedipal framework by using the placenta in order to 'anchor' female subjectivity by giving it symbolic support.

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[185] In his book, Shusterman (2008) prefers the term 'soma' over the more familiar term 'body' and its traditional connotation with passive flesh. Soma, on the other hand, signifies the unity of the sentient, perceiving body-mind. I have elected to use the term 'flesh' along the same lines; this is in keeping with Merleau-Ponty as well as Irigaray, and later Battersby (1998).

In this chapter I shift my focus to the role of the body image (*imago*), specifically in the development of the ego (the *ideal-ego* as opposed to the *ego-ideal*). In the last chapter, I rejected conscious projection as a means for women to somehow 'invent' or imagine an 'ego-ideal' (in the form of symbolic archetypes), and suggested this was problematic. I claimed that Irigaray's attempts to define a sexuate *genre* for women by using a quasi-Feuerbachian theory of projection failed to deal satisfactorily with the issue of primary narcissism (and the melancholia which is symptomatic of woman's repressed relationship with her (m)other, outlined in Chapter 1).[186] However, given that, at the mirror stage, the body acts as a psychically invested projection which gives rise to morphology, I argue that it is now necessary to interrogate the role that the sexuate body (flesh) and its 'image' play in the formation of the ego (psyche), as this is a decisive step in the course of individuation. As I have argued, women's subjectivity is precarious precisely because our perceptions of ourselves depends on the kinds of images we use to fill the lack in our fractured identities, yet – according to the Freudian-Lacanian model – the girl child already imag(in)es herself as castrated, like the mother whom she rejects. Consequently, women's 'subjectivity' becomes reduced to the masquerade of femininity; as man's specular 'other', she is attached to the subjectivity of one whose relation to the origin is not her own. However, I suggest here that a change in the way that we conceive of and understand embodied experience (and specifically women's embodied experience) – and thus the body *schema* emerging from the first identifications with a body *image* (*imago*) – will help to move beyond the Oedipal depiction of women's bodies as 'lacking' and incomplete.

Thus I argue that the 'body image' – the subject's narcissistically invested 'map' of his/her body parts and organs – needs to be recast in light of *female* bodily experience, including pregnancy and its potentiality, if we are to rethink the body's relation to subjectivity in a non-phallic, non-Oedipal way (Grosz, 1994: 83). I go on to suggest that Irigaray's vision of the intrauterine encounter – which has the notion of a 'placental economy' as its core concept (discussed in Section 4, below) – leads us to a transformed account of perception which emphasises the importance of the invisible,

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[186] Understood as the infantile state of self-preservation which precedes the development of the ideal-ego. Pathological 'secondary' narcissistic manifestations (discussed below) occur when the libido withdraws from external objects; this is understood to be as a result of an under-developed ego. The problem of the transference can therefore also be approached as a problem of primary narcissism (I occasionally refer to this as the 'problem' in this chapter, the connection being ego development).

'fleshy', and unconscious elements which precede and give rise to subjectivity. Irigaray's 'fleshy' subjectivity, as I call it, not only repositions and reconfigures the body as a site of positive difference, multiplicity and empowerment (and not just a passive site on which various social forces are enacted), it also posits the birthing, female body as a non-phallic paradigm of relations between self and (m)other. Developed in her discussion of the 'placental economy' with biologist Hélène Rouch (1993b), and also in her reading of Merleau-Ponty's 'The Intertwining – the Chiasm' (1968) in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (2004a), Irigaray's vision of the intrauterine encounter provides a model which stands counter to the psychoanalytic model of subjectivity as the product of a series of severances or cuts. Instead, a fleshy subjectivity is one which prefigures the female body as a generative site of difference(s); a trope for the intertwining of the visible, tangible and audible facets of fleshy embodiment.

I also go on to argue that the notion of a 'fleshy subjectivity' provides a tenable solution to the problem of women's ego development by reinstating the mother as a symbolic figure: this implies that the mother *necessarily* contributes to the development of (female but also male) subjectivity as a fully-autonomous 'fleshy subject' in her own right. I consider the model of fleshy subjectivity as reconstituting the symbolic bond with the maternal 'other'. By retrieving the mother from the phallic Imaginary – in which she appears as either a punishing, undifferentiated presence or as the reminder of lack and absence – and resituating her as a symbolic entity, we might begin to rebuild the foundations of a specifically female subjectivity.[187] Braidotti, for example, remarks on Irigaray's insistence upon a primary 'homosexual' bond which would help form the foundations of a 'virtual feminine' identificatory register (Braidotti, 2002: 59):

'The other woman – the other of the Other – is the site of recognition of one's effort

at becoming in the sense of pursuing a process of transformation, of deeply rooted

change, of in-depth metamorphoses. This primary narcissism must not be confused

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[187] Female, but that which also helps to shape male subjectivity (and vice versa). I shall elaborate how maternal subjectivity shapes the psyche in the final chapter.

with secondary narcissistic manifestations, of which women have been richly endowed under patriarchy.' (Braidotti, 2002: 60)

In the previous chapter I discussed Beauvoir's account of mysticism where it pertained to women's attempts to seek solace in their mirror images. Destined ultimately to result in failure and self-annihilation, this proclivity complies with what Braidotti calls a 'secondary' narcissistic manifestation: the masquerade of 'the ~~woman~~' in patriarchy. However, arguably, Beauvoir failed to acknowledge women's inability to symbolise their relationship with their mothers. As I described in the Introduction, Irigaray claims that 'daughter and mother are rivals', and this rivalry become the standard for all relationships between women who have been reduced to partial-subjects/objects of exchange amongst men in patriarchy (SO: 80; Gatens, 1996: 41). In section 4, I argue that reconsidering the symbolic importance of this relationship first in terms of the intrauterine encounter helps us to move beyond the classical depiction of an un-theorisable mother-infant symbiosis (particularly in Lacan and Kristeva). I shall suggest that Irigaray leaves open the question of how this pre-Oedipal relationship can be theorised, as well as the ways in which the pre-natal, intrauterine encounter produces indelible psychic traces which continue exist even after the Oedipal stage. Importantly, this paves the way for a theory of a primary psychic 'bond' between mother and infant. I shall resume this topic in the final chapter.

This chapter therefore tackles the problem of female subjectivity from two angles: first, from the perspective of phenomenology and embodiment; and second, from that of psychoanalysis and, specifically, the importance of the role of the body 'image' in the formation of the ego. I argue that phenomenological accounts of pregnant embodiment and the intrauterine encounter provide a paradigm of relations between self and other (infant and mother) which transform the way we think about the mother-infant relation before, during, and after the Oedipal stage. By reconceptualising female subjectivity in terms of the fluid, multiple and heterogeneous nature of female body experience, we begin to forge a path beyond the Lacanian framework, and begin to develop a non-phallic model of a fleshy female 'self'. However, given that — according to Freud at least - the primitive ego is a bodily ego, we must first examine the ways in which the body — or rather the body

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'image' and 'schema' - have been shaped by the phallic Symbolic and the morphology of *male* bodies (Gatens, 1996: 40).

1.   Beauvoir and the Body

Simone de Beauvoir, in in *The Second Sex*, remarks that 'Woman, like man, *is* her body, but her body is something other than herself' (SS: 61). For Beauvoir, menstruation, pregnancy and menopause are afflictions which contribute to the sense of 'profound alienation' that women feel towards their bodies (SS: 62). Nevertheless, she claims (like Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty), that the body is 'our instrument of our grasp on the world', a 'situation' or perspective on the world which imposes 'limiting factors' (SS: 65-66). The way we experience or 'live' our bodies is shaped by the interaction between our bodies and their surroundings: the body is a 'historical sedimentation of our way of living in the world, and of the world's way of living with us' (Moi, 2005: 68). The body is, furthermore, marked by a fundamental ambiguity; it is subject to natural laws as well as to the human production of meaning, although it is 'reducible' to neither (Moi, 2005: 69). Beauvoir consistently argues, moreover, that biological 'facts' are *not* sufficient to condemn women to a life of servitude to their bodies:

'We must view the facts of biology in the light of an ontological, economic, social, and psychological context. The enslavement of the female species and the limitations of her various powers are extremely important facts; the body of woman is one of the essential elements in her situation in the world. But that body is not enough to define her as woman.' (SS: 69)

Nor, she continues, is the body enough to give an answer to the question of why woman is 'Other' (ibid.). In other words, Beauvoir rejects biological determinist theories of sexual difference which locate women's reproductive 'burden' as the source of their subordination. Rather, it is via conscious choices and activity that woman is encouraged to make her body 'her own'.

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My aim here is not to embark on an analysis relating to the role of the body as a site of enculturation – as this has been comprehensively delivered by the likes of Judith Butler, for instance – but to instead highlight Beauvoir's account in *The Second Sex* as an eminent diagnosis of the problem of the female body image underlying phenomenological theories of embodiment, especially where these claim to be gender 'neutral'.[188] Here, I define 'body image' (as opposed to 'body schema') loosely as 'a system of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs pertaining to one's own body' (Gallagher, 2006: 24).[189] A body schema, by contrast, is a 'system of sensory-motor capacities that function without awareness or necessity of perceptual monitoring' (ibid.). Gallagher (2006) notes that there has been, historically, considerable confusion between the two terms, although the two systems do overlap and interact (ibid.).[190] Gallagher also claims that Merleau-Ponty links the emergence of the body *schema* with the early development of the body *image*.[191] At first, the body image develops when the child takes a conscious awareness of its own body (Gallagher, 2006: 68). Then, at a later stage (Lacan's mirror stage), 'the mirror or specular image, which can involve a conscious objectification of the body, provides a way of further developing the body image' (ibid.). We should also recall that, for Lacan, the body image doesn't merely allow for a more cohesive body schema (it establishes bodily boundaries), but is the site of narcissistic investment and forms the nucleus of the ego (as the ideal-ego) (EC: 76). The body image is therefore a crucial component of our subjective makeup.

In the following section, I use Merleau-Ponty's account of the sexual 'schema' in in *Phenomenology of Perception* (2006) as an example of the way that the *male* body *image* has come to suffuse phenomenological accounts of the body schema. I shall argue, moreover, that the body image that subtends Merleau-Ponty's account in the *Phenomenology* is masculine and phallic - an 'Oedipalized' body (elaborated in Section 2) – and that this necessarily entails the abstraction and decontextualisation of the female body. On this interpretation, Beauvoir contends that woman's body is 'not her own' precisely because woman's body image is shaped in contradistinction to man's. I

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[188] Cf. Butler's *Bodies that Matter* (1993).

[189] These do not have to be *conscious* beliefs or attitudes.

[190] For example, Merleau-Ponty's term *schema corporel* was initially translated in English as 'body image' (Gallagher, 2006: 20).

[191] This makes sense as both Lacan (following Freud) and Merleau-Ponty are believed to have incorporated the ideas of developmental psychologist Henri Wallon. On this reading, the ideal-ego would emerge around this same time as the body schema; the two are interdependent.

later contend that this 'dysmorphia' relating to bodies renders the act of perceiving as one-sided and phallic, and that recourse to the notion of the body image is necessary in order to begin to construct an alternative account which concurs with the lived experiences and morphology of women's bodies.

2.   Merleau-Ponty and the 'Sexual Schema'

In the chapter 'The Body in its Sexual Being', Merleau-Ponty draws from the case of Schneider, a patient with 'motor and intellectual deficiencies' who also suffers from impotence (PP: 179). He remarks that Schneider 'no longer seeks sexual intercourse of his own accord', and that 'obscene pictures, conversations on sexual topics, the sight of a body do not arouse desire in him. [He] hardly ever kisses, and the kiss for him has no value as sexual stimulation' (PP: 179). For Schneider, it seems that perception has lost its 'erotic structure' (PP: 181). Merleau-Ponty compares Schneider to what he considers to be a 'normal subject', for whom –

'A body is not perceived merely as an object; this objective perception has within it a more intimate perception: the visible body is subtended by a sexual schema, which is strictly individual, emphasising the erogenous areas, outlining a sexual physiognomy, and eliciting the gestures of the masculine body which is itself integrated into this emotional totality.' (PP: 180)

Merleau-Ponty's account in *Phenomenology of Perception* is revolutionary in the way that it approaches the issue of sexuality. It portrays sexual being as less a 'drive' – as in psychoanalysis – but rather as a mode of existence; as coextensive *with* existence. Judith Butler remarks that 'Merleau-Ponty offers certain significant arguments against naturalistic accounts of sexuality' (Butler, 1989: 86). By envisaging the body as a 'historical idea' upon which possibilities are continually realised, the sexed body is reconfigured as both a feature and effect of intentionality, as a kind of perceptual and experiential nexus (ibid.). According to Grosz, sexuality for Merleau-Ponty 'is not a reflex arc but an "intentional arc" that moves and is moved by the body as acting perceiver' (Grosz, 1994: 109).

Indeed, he claims that sexuality 'has internal links with the whole active and cognitive being' (PP: 182). The significance of Freud, for Merleau-Ponty, was not his claim that sexuality has a (unconscious) substructure, but the idea that sexuality itself possesses 'relations and attitudes which had previously been held to reside in consciousness' (PP: 184). Consequently, the body can no longer be viewed as merely a 'static or univocal fact of existence, but, rather, as a *modality* of existence' (Butler, 1989: 86. Emphasis added).

However - returning to the quotation taken from *Phenomenology*, above - it is striking how, throughout the chapter in which it appears, Merleau-Ponty omits any discussion of female sexuality or female embodiment, except in the context of women's bodies as objects of arousal (they are *assumed* to be arousing). Moreover - and as Butler contends - there is also a tacit assumption of normative heterosexual relations: 'not only does Merleau-Ponty assume that relations are heterosexual, but that masculine sexuality is characterised by a disembodied gaze that subsequently defines its object as *mere body*' (ibid. Emphasis added). As it transpires, the 'normal subject' to whom Merleau-Ponty refers is conceived not only as male, but also as heterosexual. The female body is, predictably, conspicuous by its absence:

'Central to Merleau-Ponty's assessment of Schneider's sexuality as abnormal is the presumption that the decontextualized female body, the body alluded to in conversation, the anonymous body that passes by in the street, exudes a natural attraction. This is a body rendered irreal, the focus of a solipsistic fantasy and projection; indeed, this is a body that does not live, but a frozen image which does not resist or interrupt the course of masculine desire through an unexpected assertion of life. How does this eroticisation of the decontextualized body become reconciled with Merleau-Ponty's insistence that "what we try to possess is not just a body, but a body brought to life by consciousness"?' (Butler, 1989: 93)

The question posed by Butler is also addressed by Irigaray in *Two Be Two* (2000). Irigaray argues that sexuality, for Merleau-Ponty, is a matter of possession, or of *attempting* to possess, the

body of the other. Sexual being is characterised as phallic and scopophilic: the desiring, masculine subject takes pleasure from gazing at, seducing and possessing the desirable, feminine object.[192] By treating sexuality as an 'ambiguity' or 'indeterminacy' as opposed to what she calls a 'relationship-to', Irigaray claims that Merleau-Ponty's 'pessimistic phenomenology' remains trapped within the solipsistic, subject/object framework from which it purports to escape (KW: 16). And by abstracting and decontextualizing the female body, the supposedly neutral subject of Merleau-Ponty's account is exposed as masculine and Oedipalized. Grosz remarks -

'Merleau-Ponty leaves out — indeed he is unable to address — the question of sexual difference, the question of what kind of human body he is discussing, what kind of perceptual functions and what kind of sexual desire result from the sexual morphology and particularity of the subject' (Grosz, 1994: 110).

For Irigaray, the sexual morphology of the body schema *itself* liberates from the oppressive subject/object dichotomy (as a 'sensible transcendental'). The sexuate body represents an 'objectivity' which mediates the mind/body polarization (KW: 16; Grosz, 1994: 85). Furthermore, this body schema is intimately tied to (socio-cultural) *gender;* that is, it is understood as an axis of relations for each sex. But by failing to acknowledge bodies that are sexually differentiated, Merleau-Ponty's subject becomes a strangely disembodied voyeur trapped in a solipsistic fantasy (Butler, 1989: 93).

Although far removed from the depiction of the body as a 'container' into which various things are 'put', Merleau-Ponty's account of the body in the *Phenomenology* remains overshadowed, perhaps, by the Cartesian notion of the subject as disconnected from the world, its objects, and other embodied subjects (Battersby, 1998: 42). And most importantly for our purposes here, it also lacks the insight which might be gleaned from considering what it is like to experience the world in a sexually differentiated body. Indeed, if, as Merleau-Ponty says, the body is the condition of our experience of the world, then to live in a body that is sexed differently is to experience the world

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[192] Irigaray says that 'the elementary economy of sensation' partitions subjectivity between two poles; sensations are divided according to a 'dichotomous logic' which reduces the feminine to a passive object (KW: 18). In short, there is no real 'intersubjectivity' (ibid.).

differently.[193] Christine Battersby, for instance, rails against what she calls the 'logic of containment' typical of the masculine imaginary (Battersby, 1998: 48). According to Battersby, this logic jars with the way that women – and presumably some men (those with disabilities, for instance) – experience their bodies: 'I do not envisage my body-space as a container in which the self is inside: protected from the other by boundaries which protect against and resist external forces, whilst also holding back internal forces from expansion' (Battersby, 1998: 48). For women to adopt this container body-ideal is necessarily to 'pathologise' themselves, to force upon themselves a body-image that doesn't 'fit', leading to a kind of body dysmorphia.[194] Grosz summarises women's predicament:

'Insofar as women's body images are clearly different from men's and are modelled on lack and castration, are the amputees relations to the phantom limb similar to the woman's mourning for what has been lost (the freedom, self-determination, and autonomy accorded to the male body)? Until female genitals and women's bodies are inscribed and lived (by the subject and by others) as a positivity, there will always remain paradoxes and upsetting implications for any notion of femininity.'[195] (Grosz, 1994: 73 – 74)

Margaret Whitford claims that women's body image, that of a different morphology to men (see Chapter 1), has been 'forced into a conceptualisation and socialisation to which it does not correspond', resulting in the particular 'difficulties' detailed by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (Whitford, 1991: 154). According to Whitford, this will continue to be the case so long as the masculine 'imaginary' predominates; so long as it continues to associate women with 'fleshy', inert matter or as 'receptacles' for the male seed. The solution to this problem, I suggest, lies in the conceptualisation and topography of the body itself. I now turn to psychoanalytic theory in order to ascertain *how* the

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[193] Cf. Grosz's (1994) comprehensive dissection of Merleau-Ponty's 'corporeal phenomenology': 86 – 110.
[194] Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) has been linked with eating disorders such as Anorexia; the sufferers of which are mainly (but not exclusively) women.
[195] Grosz (1994: 70 – 73) uses the example of Schneider's 'phantom limb' to illustrate the significance of psychically & narcissistically invested body parts (PP: 112 – 170).

body image has become shaped by masculine 'morphology'; or in other words, to try and determine how exactly it has become 'Oedipalized'.

3.   The 'Oedipalized' Body Image

Irigaray claims that psychoanalysis - whilst able to offer a critique of the notion of the body as a neutral surface for social inscriptions, and provide a theory of how bodies are constituted as a part of *a network of bodies* – has been guilty of reducing the female body to the *maternal body*: first a home for the penis, and then for a baby (Gatens, 1996: 41).[196] This reflects a more-or-less universal socio-cultural propensity to regard women's bodies as empty vessels or 'receptacles' only finding purpose and fulfilment in pregnancy and child-rearing, preferably of *male* children. Being a woman involves a privileged relationship to 'bodily morphology', yet psychoanalytic theory in particular has failed to acknowledge the impact of men's morphology, first in terms of its own *phallic* account, and second, in terms of the pernicious effects of a phallocentric culture on *women's* body image (Battersby, 1998: 19). This section investigates the nature of the relationship between what I call the 'Oedipalized' body image and the ego, and the perceptual structures which arise from, and are determined by, this relationship. This involves examining the reasons why this image or schema becomes 'Oedipalized' in the first place (following on from Chapter 1). These are complex questions which will eventually require a short diversion, once more, into Lacan.

In *Volatile Bodies* (1994), Elizabeth Grosz documents the complex relationship between the body image, body schema and ego. She notes that the body image features strongly in psychoanalytic conceptions of subjectivity as a 'third term' intervening between and requiring the operations of both mind and body (Grosz, 1994: 62). Freud and Lacan, she says, utilize the idea as linking the functions of 'various psychical systems to the subject's access to bodily motility and conscious behaviour' (ibid.). In her chapter 'Body Images', Grosz maps the biological and neurophysiological processes that give rise to the psychological mechanisms documented by Freud and Lacan, but which are themselves 'dependent on psychical processes of transcription and signification' for their effective

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[196] Gatens paraphrases Freud, here. Cf. Irigaray's critique of Freud in Speculum (SO: 73 – 74).

functioning (ibid.). In other words, the concepts of body image and schema provide explanatory frameworks for psychoanalytical insights relating to the interactions of 'psyche' and 'soma' (mind and body). I agree with Grosz that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological account in *Phenomenology of Perception* augments psychoanalytic insights and confirms the status of the body as a 'problematic and uncontainable term' (ibid.). However, I would further suggest that psychoanalysis actually compensates for the inability of the phenomenological perspective to account for the intrusion of gender into the bodily schema. For instance – as I noted above - psychoanalysis provides an explanatory framework for women's feelings of 'alienation' from their own bodies, something with which the phenomenological perspective struggles.[197] Indeed, Gatens suggests that –

'One of the most neglected insights of psychoanalysis is that the perceptual system is not simply the province of consciousness but may be 'censored'/structured by the unconscious system. In other words, 'seeing' is itself an active and constructive process rather than a passive experience. The importance of this idea, in this context, is that it cannot be a passive visual experience which accounts for the perception of the male body image as 'complete' or phallic, any more than it can account for the female body image as 'incomplete' or castrated.' (Gatens, 1996: 34)

In psychoanalytic theory, 'seeing' is itself an active process which is subtended by the unconscious system, implying that the Imaginary register *impinges upon* and *shapes* acts of perceiving. To once more recall Lacan, the perceptual process is shaped and determined by the intervention of a 'third term', disrupting the infant's fascination with his/her psychically invested *imago* (body image). It is only after the intrusion of the third term – the Symbolic father – that the male child's captured gaze is broken and he 'sees' female castration (the mother's 'lack'). As Gatens continues, the 'difference' symbolised by the father is *phallic* difference: it is exhausted by either phallic absence or phallic presence; the 'other' is either the 'same' or 'lacking' (castrated) (Gatens, 1996: 34). All difference outside of this representational system is repressed and 'banished from

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[197] I discussed the problems relating to the phenomenological 'reduction' in this respect in the Introduction.

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sight' (ibid.). For Gatens, this act of 'seeing' is not passive; it is always already invested with ideas about having and not having, presence and absence, and so on. The post-Oedipal body image or *imago*, from this vantage point, is irrevocably *phallic*; that is, it is defined according to the logic of mother = 'minus' (feminine; passive), father = 'plus' (masculine; active).

Thus according to Lacan, women embody the 'lack'. In 'The Poverty of Psychoanalysis' (1995a), Irigaray complains that psychoanalysis 'inscribes nothingness into the deepest unconscious of sexed bodies'; the 'nothingness' which is constitutive of the subject is then inscribed onto the body of the woman (TSN: 212). However, the scopic drive demands that woman covers her 'wound' - in the 'dance of the veils', for instance - in order to make herself desirable to man.[198] The post-Oedipal or 'Oedipalized' female body is one that takes on a particular body image - a feminine or 'feminised' image - reflecting that of the negative, passive side of the dualisms which were initially conflicts within the primitive 'self' (Gatens, 1996: 41). The problem for women is that the originary identification with the *imago* is anticipated by *lack*; or more precisely, that the female infant identifies with the mother who is, in fact, 'castrated'.[199] In *Speculum*, Irigaray contends that as a consequence, 'the little girl's ego suffers, helplessly, a defeat, a wound, whose effects are to be made out in the broad outlines of melancholia' (SO: 68 – 69). The mother - at this stage still the object of the female infant's desire - is devalued as soon as she is designated as 'castrated'. The relationship becomes complicated by conflict and ambivalence that remain 'unconscious', but are nevertheless 'remembered' in the form of 'somatic affections'.[200] This is because the assumption that the mother is castrated doesn't come from 'nowhere', but from the Symbolic Other (represented by the 'father'; in which the Law regulates desire).[201] The broken gaze of the child, who is previously 'taken in' by her own image, is relocated to the parental other, images from whom are internalised and then sediment to form the ego proper (after the Oedipal phase). The problem for the little girl is that she tries to incorporate the 'lost object' - the castrated (m)other - into her ego (SO: 69 -70). This is compounded

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[198] The reference here is to Salomé and her dance of the seven veils, which was intended to inflame the incestuous desire of Herod (in the Biblical tale as well as in Oscar Wilde's adaptation).

[199] SO: 68. Cf. TS: 46. This process is inverted in the case of a female child.

[200] One is reminded, here, of the contortions and convulsions of the 'hysterical' patients of Freud's predecessor Jean-Martin Charcot (1825 – 1893).

[201] In other words, it is not a 'naturalistic' account.

by the fact that, in order to avoid the masochistic overture of melancholia in the form of hysteria, the girl must also *reject* the mother. Thus the perceptual structures arising from this process entail, on a fundamental level, a kind of 'matricide': a topic which I shall resume in the final chapter.

To summarise, Lacan posits the *imago* as the first object of primary narcissism, and goes on to link the problem of sexual difference to the Oedipus complex, thus 'ignoring the major effects that the sexually inscribed body and body image must have for the narcissistic/pre-Oedipal subject' (Grosz, 1994: 74).[202] For women, the phallic structure dictates that those images and associations (particularly relating to the mother) that do not fit with its schema are repressed, hence the apparently 'dysmorphic' relationship between woman and her body image (Battersby, 1998: 88). Moreover, it is significant that, by linking sexual difference to the effects of the Oedipus complex, Lacan circumvents any potential traces left by the polymorphous, pre-Oedipal body, for its pleasures and capacities must be subjected to 'Oedipality' in order for culture to become possible (via sublimation) (Gatens, 1996: 43). The pre-Oedipal body is literally 'overwritten' by language in the throes of specularization.[203] But the main problem with the Lacanian account in this respect is that the 'feminine' (post-Oedipal) *imago* is either marked as lacking and castrated or as *phallic*, and, I shall suggest in what follows, necessarily jars with the way that women experience their bodies.[204]

If the ego (or ideal-ego) is first 'bodily' in nature, it is necessary to target the body image (*imago*) as the locus of phallic determinations of gender. If we assume, as Kristeva does (following Freud), that the infant internalises parental imagos *before* the mirror stage, then the entire process has potentially different implications should we regard the body image as 'malleable' in the sense that there may be a way of conceptualising bodies that doesn't merely construe them as active and 'full' or passive and lacking. In other words, we might re-think bodies as non-Oedipal and 'polymorphous'.[205]

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[202] In this respect Lacan also follows psychologist Ferdinand Schilder (1886 – 1940), whose lasting contribution to the field was his conception of the body image. Schilder was also a student of Freud.

[203] The question then becomes to what extent what we perceive from here onwards is already structured by unconscious desires, fears and phantasies emanating from these first pre-Oedipal 'identifications'; and what sort of role that our body 'doubles' ('ideal-egos'), invested with these associations, have to play in subsequent acts of perceiving. I shall leave this as an open question.

[204] Cf. Judith Butler's (1993) account of the lesbian 'phallus' (contra Freud and Lacan) (Butler, 1993: 57 – 92).

[205] Like Grosz (1994) and Braidotti (2002), following Deleuze, for example. Whilst I encourage what might be gleaned from reflecting on the potentialities of the pre-Oedipal, polymorphously-perverse body, I would nonetheless discourage a turn to the type of Body Without Organs (or indeed the ostensibly absurd 'organs

I remarked in the Introduction that, in order to progress beyond the orthodox Lacanian model, we must concede that Lacan's is a *descriptive* and not a *prescriptive* model. Psychoanalysis helps us to expose the unconscious (Imaginary) phantasies which underscore Merleau-Ponty's account, for instance, yet we need not take at face value its own story of how symbolic/imaginary structures come to irrevocably determine our relationships with our bodies. Christine Battersby (who typifies my own approach, here) echoes Irigaray when she asks: what happens (to psychoanalysis; to phenomenology) when we take the female subject - and therefore the female *body* - as norm? (Battersby, 1998: 23) As I shall show in the following section, this question anticipates a decisive shift in the way we conceive of our 'cultural imaginary', and thus begins to look beyond phallocentrism for an alternative model of subjectivity.

4.   Natality & Necrophilia

In the previous section I suggested that we look beyond the Oedipal model in order to uncover new ways of reconceptualising the female body image, as this is a fundamental component of our subjective makeup. In this section I shall argue that Grace Jantzen's (1998) notion of 'natality' has interesting ramifications for the constitution of the subject: how might traditional notions of subjectivity be transformed by recognising the body-that-births as fundamental to life and flourishing? I shall argue that Jantzen's contribution represents an important intervention into our phallocentric and 'necrophilic' cultural imaginary which has hitherto been preoccupied with lack, death and mortality; and, further, that it provides a useful backdrop to Irigaray's own writing on the mother-infant relation that I shall approach later in this chapter.

In Chapter 3 I described how in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* Irigaray diagnoses western civilisation as suffering from an 'illness' emanating from the ascendancy of the death drives (I noted the similarity to Heidegger's notion of *Gestell*). Women, in this 'economy of death', are marked as the guardians of man's 'unwanted' functions (the irrational, animalistic, etc.) (Whitford, 1991:97).

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without bodies; cf. Žižek, 2004) as it contributes to the breakdown of sexual difference even before it has been properly conceived of and acknowledged.

Inspired by Irigaray, Grace Jantzen's notion of the 'deathly habitus' - the socially acquired behaviours and dispositions which are conditioned by the necrophilic 'moral imaginary' – complements and extends Irigaray's idea of an 'economy of death' (Jantzen, 2001: 229).[206] In Chapter 1, I established the Imaginary as the register of masculine specularization which is superimposed 'over' the primary imaginary (characterised by the primordial relationship with the (m)other) at the mirror stage. The deathly habitus, according to Jantzen, is symptomatic of the foreclosure of the maternal-feminine in western tradition, and is intimately associated with masculine (phallic) morphology.[207] It is the deathly habitus, moreover, which has helped to shape our attitudes towards bodies: women's bodies have not been afforded the same value as men's because women themselves have been aligned with death, horror and abjection.[208] Indeed, *birth* and natality have been afforded little recognition either in philosophy or in culture at large. In psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity in particular, the emphasis has been on a movement *away* from birth; the subject must establish boundaries, and these boundaries are anticipated by a series of cuts and separations from the mother. Jantzen's recent thought has questioned this overemphasis on death, violence and separation, and instead shifted the focus onto 'natality'. An *ethics* of natality, for Jantzen as well as Battersby (1998), stresses birth, rebirth and the affirmation of life over death; love over violence.[209] So how might we define an 'ethics of natality', and how might it help to modify our conception of embodied subjectivity?

The term 'natality' was coined by Hannah Arendt (1998) in response to Heidegger's overemphasis on death and mortality. As a fundamental feature of 'the human condition', it was used by Arendt to describe 'the way in which each birth throws the human subject into the world as the chance for a fundamentally new beginning' (Lupton, 2006: 10). More recently, Jantzen revived the term in order to denote a mode of rebirth and human flourishing distinct from the dominant,

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[206] I understand 'habitus' loosely as the set of socially learned behaviours and dispositions. Pierre Bourdieu proposed the term as a way of understanding the socialised norms and tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking. Cf. Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice* (1990).
[207] Jantzen, like Irigaray, implies that the foreclosure of the maternal-feminine amounts to a sort of cultural 'psychosis'.
[208] Cf. Kristeva, 'Powers of Horror' (2002).
[209] The term is also used in contradistinction to 'mortality' by Italian philosopher Adriana Cavarero (2000). In her own thought, Cavarero takes up Arendt's conceptual distinction between politics (natality) and philosophy (mortality) (Cavarero, 2000: 28).

destructive social imaginary which, on her account, values violence and death (patriarchy). Jantzen writes that —

'I believe that by a one-sided focus on death and violence and a neglect of birth as a philosophical and psychoanalytic category, that creativity, love, potentiality and capacity for growth and flourishing that are characteristic of new life are ignored rather than encouraged. Yet it is precisely these that foster the development of loving subjects.' (Jantzen, 2002: 160)

Jantzen argues that gendered violence and destruction are endemic in the western moral imaginary. She claims that death has become the 'guiding motif' in the construction of rationality, a rationality which is often characterised as transcendent of the body and the delusions of the passions (Jantzen, 2001: 227). Jantzen dubs this imaginary 'necrophilic': death is echoed 'everywhere' in western culture, reaching its zenith in the works of Heidegger in the form of *Dasein*: the authentic being-towards-death (Graham, 2009: 5). Moreover, Jantzen suggests that death and gender are intertwined at the deepest levels of our social imaginary. Fear of the 'dark continent' of female desire is evident throughout ancient Greek philosophy and early monastic writings as well as in recent psychoanalytic theory and philosophy. She writes that 'the genealogy of death in the west is a gendered genealogy, one that has had disastrous consequences for women' (Jantzen, 2001: 228). The question for Jantzen thus becomes one of how to rehabilitate the 'deathly habitus'. This question entails taking into consideration what exactly has been repressed in our moral imaginary, and which (*whose*) desires and fears underlie this repression (ibid.). Like Irigaray, Jantzen gestures towards a primordial fear of the mother:

'[A]re the death-dealing structures of modernity and its master discourses attempts to silence the mother, and all the other (m)others that might bring this fear to mind: the earth, its beauty, its peoples, its unpredictable life?' (Jantzen, 2001: 230)

Jantzen recommends the development of 'therapeutic possibilities' and their bringing to bear on the transformative practice of moral philosophy as a remedy to the pernicious effects of the deathly habitus. And like Irigaray, Jantzen uses psychoanalytic theory as a tool for exposing the western imaginary's obsessions, phantasies and phobias, although she doesn't explicitly consider how her theory of natality might impact upon and transform psychoanalytic theory itself.

In the next section I return to Irigaray, and argue that her notion of a 'placental economy' helps us to rethink the 'self' as permeated by, and shaped by the encounter with, 'otherness'. By envisioning the placenta as symbolic of the constantly-mediated relationship between mother and infant, I show how the placenta acts as the motif of an unacknowledged paradigm of relations which reflects women's corporeality and morphology.

5. Pregnant Embodiment & the 'Placental Economy'

The 'placental economy' is the topic of Irigaray's interview with biologist Hélène Rouch.[210] At first glance, the interview may seem like a minor contribution to one of Irigaray's most accessible and explicitly political texts. On closer inspection, however, the notion of a 'placental economy' represents an incisive challenge to traditional accounts of the 'subject' as a emerging from an oppositional and adversarial relationship with an 'other' (in Hegel, Sartre, and Lacan, for example). Irigaray's primary target is Lacan, who depicts the subject as that which is "cut' from the Other' (Battersby, 1998: 178). Battersby comments that 'according to Irigaray, the western tradition has left unsymbolised a self that exists as self not by repulsion/expulsion of the not-self, but via interpenetration of self with otherness' (Battersby, 1998: 48). I shall briefly reflect upon the Lacanian account which underscores Irigaray's project before examining Irigaray and Rouch's discussion of a 'placental economy' in *Je Tu Nous* (1993b).

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[210] Cf. Schor (1994) for a discussion of the role of the placenta in Irigaray.

As I described in chapters 1 & 4, 'authentic' female subjectivity is 'impossible' in Lacanian terms given that women have no identificatory support within the phallic Symbolic (Whitford, 1991: 38). As a consequence, relations between women tend to lapse into competition and rivalry. According to Irigaray, the Oedipal model of individuation is essentially a *male* model which replaces the mother with the mirror of specularization; the 'self' is cut or expelled from the (m)other.[211] 'Feminine' identity is extrapolated from an antagonistic account of the development of male subjectivity, one that is premised on the erasure of maternal desire.[212] As Battersby points out, what remains unsymbolised is the mother-daughter relation in which the boundary of self and not-self does not operate antagonistically in terms of a 'logic of containment', but rather in terms of 'flow' (Battersby, 1998: 49). In Lacanian terms, the daughter remains mired in melancholia because of her close bond with the maternal imaginary. The process of differentiation is supposedly more difficult for the girl because she must give up her mother, someone of her own sex, in favour of the Law-giving father with whom she at first does not identify. Again, what the Lacanian account throws into sharp relief is the fact that the model it prescribes is *not suited to women*. What Irigaray demonstrates in *Speculum*, and what Battersby also highlights, is that 'psychoanalysis is [...] a repetition of the philosophical moves of Kant and Hegel, in which the self is only established via opposition to, and spatial symmetry with, a not-self' (ibid.). As I argued above, psychoanalysis is itself part of a cultural imaginary which takes the masculine perspective - and implicitly the male body *image* - as norm. Thus for Irigaray it is paramount that we explore alternative models that counter this tendency to conceptualise subjectivity in terms of boundaries between self and other, inside and outside, and so on. The idea of a 'placental economy', to which I now turn, threatens to overturn the conceptualisation of the 'self' under these terms.

Pregnant embodiment has been a topic of interest to feminist philosophers for some time, particularly in terms of its capacity to challenge traditional phenomenological accounts of body comportment and motility. Iris Marion Young writes that -

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[211] Irigaray's term 'specularization' describes the 'splitting' of the subject into conscious and unconscious elements at the mirror stage (defined in Chapter 1).

[212] Because 'masculine' and 'feminine' are merely signifiers which denote a speaking position in relation to the transcendental signifier of the phallus (cf. Lacan, 2006: 575 - 584).

'Pregnancy challenges the integration of my body experience by rendering fluid the boundary between what is within, myself, and what is outside, separate. I experience my insides as the space of another, yet my own body.' (Young, 2005: 49)

Pregnancy is an example of where 'self' and 'other' overlap and become indistinct, and where 'inside' and 'outside' are no longer delineated. Young draws on Kristeva's notion of 'split subjectivity' to reveal 'a body subjectivity that is decentred' (ibid.). In pregnancy, the self and the 'not-self' co-exist in the 'same' bodily space, yet this coexistence is only permitted by the mediating function of the placenta. As well as carrying food, oxygen and waste products to and from the foetus, the placenta also *regulates* exchanges between the foetus and the mother, modifying the maternal metabolism and transforming, storing and redistributing maternal substances for both the mother's and foetus' benefit (JTU: 39). And crucially – in order that the mother's body does not reject the foetus, which is half-foreign to her – there has to be 'recognition, by the maternal organism, of foreign antigens' (JTU: 41). These 'tolerance mechanisms' are unique to pregnancy, and should be distinguished from transplants and tumors. The placental relationship is thus one of 'peaceful coexistence', a continuous 'negotiation' between mother and foetus (JTU: 40).

In her discussion with Rouch, Irigaray urges that the placental relation is 'an opening which stems from female corporeal identity' (JTU: 38). Contra Freudian/Lacanian determinism – which posits the mother-infant relation as a 'fusion' which must be broken by a third term – the placental relation offers a rival model to that of the psychoanalytical example, as well as the Kantian account (discussed in the Introduction and also Chapter 2) which Lacan arguably 'reworks'.[213] Irigaray suggests that the placental relation is not only already a relation defined by differentiation and reciprocity, but also one in which the boundaries between 'self' and 'other' are called into question. Moreover, far from being an 'organic fusion', the placental relation is actually a complex economy: an

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[213] Battersby describes, at length, the problems with Kant's doctrine of the self in the first *Critique*. (Battersby, 1998: 61 – 81).

organised system of regulated exchanges. For Irigaray, the placental relation not only plays a vital role in pregnancy, but demonstrates how the 'other' emerges as dependent on, yet separate *from*, the self. However, she urges that our cultural imaginary has neglected the implications of this 'agreement' between mother and foetus, instead positing the post-natal relation as an extension of the 'organic fusion' during pregnancy (JTU: 42). The question posed by Irigaray is this: Is there not *already* a differentiation in place *before* it is given meaning through language? (JTU: 42).

Gail Schwab (1994) was one of the first to highlight Irigaray's discussion of the placental relation in the context of a call for 'a radical rethinking in non-oedipal, non-phallic terms of the body's relation to subjectivity' (Schwab, 1994: 362). The title of Rouch's original article was, interestingly, 'Le placenta comme tiers' ('The Placenta as Third Term'), and although as Schwab points out 'The One' was never a One, nor was it a Two (a dyad), we cannot say that it is truly a 'Three' either, since the placenta is genetically part of the foetus (Schwab, 1994: 363). She continues –

'The Three, the sacred number of the Oedipus complex, is also an imaginary configuration, highly elaborated symbolically (and how!) in a multiplicity of contexts (in how many!), but an insufficient representation of the type of mediation taking place between the mother's body, the foetus, and the placenta.' (Ibid.)

Schwab also points to the difference between Kristeva - who never lets go of the ternary Oedipal model - and Irigaray, who 'strives to get beyond the number three' (ibid.). Furthermore, the placental relation 'proves' that the mother/infant relation is always already *mediated*; there never has been 'direct access' to the mother's body.

Rouch also argues that the cutting of the umbilical cord and weaning mark the first points of entry into the Symbolic (Schwab, 1994: 364). Elisabeth Bronfen goes a step further and suggests that it is the naval that symbolises the lost unity with the maternal body; 'the naval signifies a scar that marks the separation of the newborn from the mother's womb' (Bronfen, 2000: 110). The act of birth, symbolised by the cutting of the umbilical cord, marks the first cut, 'both real and symbolic' (ibid.). However, Griselda Pollock argues that Irigaray's use of the placenta is merely a 'female-feminine'

replacement for the phallus, and thus remains within the 'presence/absence' framework (Pollock, 2006: 37). Similarly, she claims that Bronfen's is an attempt to replace the phallus with an 'undifferentiated mark/wound' and thus falls foul of the same crime. However, I would suggest that Pollock, like Battersby, has underestimated the importance of this nuanced moment in Irigaray's oeuvre. On my reading, Irigaray is not trying to *replace* the phallus with the placenta, but is attempting to show how subjectivities are formed *in utero*, and how this formation is much more complex than what has been previously appreciated. Indeed, the role of the placenta stresses a primordial mediation and negotiation; and to borrow a term from Bracha Ettinger, implicates a 'severality' of mutually evolving identities (I shall return to this in the final chapter).

To briefly summarise: the placenta, on Irigaray and Rouch's account, symbolises the slippage and fluidity of relations between the 'one' and the (m)other, the self and the other. But although identities in the placental relation may become blurred, they are not fully 'merged' either. The placental relation symbolises a primordial negotiation or mediation between the mother and subject-to-be which has been inadequately symbolised in psychoanalytical theory or in culture in general. By highlighting the placental relation, Irigaray provides an escape route from the paradigm of phallocentric blindness towards natality and the maternal.[214] She is not, however, suggesting that we return to some pre-Oedipal, pre-linguistic 'moment'; nor is she suggesting that all women do or should experience pregnancy in the same way; rather, she demonstrates how female corporeality provides a counter-model to conventional accounts of the body schema. As Battersby remarks, we need to think a 'self' that is permeated with otherness, but where the 'other' is also respected in her/his difference and separation *from* the 'self' (Battersby, 1998: 49). The idea of a placental economy is apt for symbolising this relation of mutual recognition and mediation. Oddly, Battersby skims over Irigaray's thesis, noting that the placental relation is part of Irigaray's project of rethinking the 'porous boundary' between bodies (Battersby, 1998: 99). I would suggest that Battersby has understated the importance of Irigaray's thought at this juncture.[215]

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[214] See for example Kristeva's (1986) development of the proto-linguistic 'Semiotic' in 'Revolution in Poetic Language' (2002a). I resume this theme specifically in Chapter 6.
[215] Although I agree with Battersby that the 'later' Irigaray tends to idealise 'woman' and push the possibility of *féminin* art and metaphysics towards a future yet-to-come, it is not necessary to accept this aspect of Irigaray's

In the next section I shall demonstrate how Battersby's engagement with female artists takes up and extends Irigaray's own writing on the 'flesh' in 'The Invisible of the Flesh' (2004a). Irigaray's critique of Merleau-Ponty's 'ontology of the flesh' focuses upon his notion of the chiasm as symbolising the 'reversibility' of not only the touched and the tangible, but also the visible and the invisible. Irigaray claims that by omitting the pre-natal relation from his discussion, he remains 'in symbiosis' with the world and fails to reach the stage of a subject-object relation (Irigaray, 2008: 111). In response, Irigaray's modified conception of the flesh (as grounded by the 'invisible'), evokes the duality of subjectivities (mother and foetus) in the intrauterine encounter (Irigaray, 2008: 111). This discussion leads on to the concluding section, in which I turn to the recent thought of Christine Battersby (1998; 2006) who, I suggest, helps us to think of these subjectivities as 'fleshy' subjectivities.

5. The 'Flesh' and the 'Fluid': the Intrauterine Encounter

In 'Flesh Questions' (2006), Battersby comments that Mexican artist Frida Kahlo 'insistently draws attention to the double aspect of flesh as both immanent (thing-like, fragile or damaged) and that through which life flows and her own creativity comes' (Battersby, 2006: 301). According to Battersby, representing women as 'fleshy' reproducers as well as cultural producers is difficult business: How are we to represent motherhood without 'representing the maternal as a utopian space outside the realm of the social'? (Battersby, 2006: 301). For Battersby, artists Kahlo and Chadwick help us to rethink the 'flesh' as the horizon between - or intertwining of - nature and culture:

project (Battersby, 1998:99). I also disagree with Elizabeth Grosz's similar position in *Time Travels* (2005), when she argues that phallocentrism makes it currently impossible to 'think' sexual difference. Accordingly, for Grosz feminism is the project of 'bringing into being that which did not exist' (Grosz, 2005: 129). I see it more as a matter of re-symbolising what has been repressed and obscured in the cultural imagination.
Cf. Victoria Browne's 'History for the Future: Feminism and the Untimely' in *Women: a Cultural Review* (2011: Volume 22: 2/3).

'Chadwick's imagery suggest[s] not access to a 'real' that is unmediated by culture, but a 'real' that emerges from the way that alternative traditions of birthing are put into conjunction. [...] [A] new 'real' emerges via dislocation: of surfaces; of traditions; of genres and artistic techniques; of the religious and the profane; of the *female* predicament of being (as birth-giver and artist) simultaneously as monster and *monstrance*.' (Battersby, 2006: 307)[216]

Battersby suggests that Chadwick is a successful example of what Irigaray's early thought calls for: 'the object of a female subjectivity experiencing and identifying itself' (Battersby, 2006: 307).[217] Before considering Irigaray's notion of a 'prenatal sojourn', I would first like to consider what is meant by 'flesh'.

The 'flesh' has long been a site of conflicting sentiments. Battersby notes that the term has continued to evolve in twentieth century phenomenology, but in two contrasting senses (Battersby, 2006: 297). In Sartre, for example, the flesh is 'mere flesh', the 'objectified' body that is implicated in 'the dynamics of the hostile gaze' (Battersby, 2006: 298). He remarks that 'the Other's body is originally a body in situation; flesh on the contrary, appears as the *pure contingency of presence*', although it is never possible to perceive someone as such (Sartre, 2003: 411. Emphasis in original). For Merleau-Ponty, however, the 'flesh' corresponds to the *lived* body: the flesh is imbricated in a network of pre-existing relations with 'others':

> "For Merleau-Ponty [...], each consciousness is entwined with other consciousnesses and with the world, and the meaning that 'flesh' provides comes from a site of intertwining between the 'inside' and 'outside' of human subjectivity." (Battersby, 2006: 299)

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[216] Battersby (2006) discusses Helen Chadwick's piece *One Flesh*, in which a placenta hangs uncannily over the heads of a mother and infant, in a peculiar 'biological trinity' (Battersby, 2006: 304). One is reminded of Irigaray's discussion of the placenta as *objet a* in 'The Limit of the Transference' (1995b).
[217] Irigaray famously asks 'what if the object started to speak?' (SO: 135).

Although subject to criticism by Young (2005), Grosz (1994) as well as Irigaray, Merleau-Ponty's 'ontology of the flesh' conceived in *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968) has proven to be a valuable source of inspiration for feminist philosophers. Once again, Merleau-Ponty is criticised for failing to take into account sexual difference, for failing to recognise the existence of bodies that are sexually differentiated.[218] Indeed, pregnancy and birth are omitted from his study of the production of visibility and the metaphysics of the 'flesh'. As Irigaray argues in response, it is the 'prenatal sojourn' – the 'intertwining' of fleshes in the intrauterine – which acts as the forgotten ground or condition of visibility. Next, I shall describe Merleau-Ponty's argument in the chapter 'The Intertwining – the Chiasm' (1968). I shall then outline Irigaray's critique, before returning to the notion of 'fleshy identities' in the concluding section.

Central to Merleau-Ponty's investigation is the connection between perception, visibility and tangibility. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, he had already called upon the idea of the 'double sensation' to illustrate the reflexivity of the *touched* and the *touching* (ESD: 106). He remarks that, when my right hand touches my left, the touch is formed in the midst of the world and as it were 'in the things' (VI: 134). For every 'visible' is cut out in the tangible. There is an encroachment, not only between the touched and the touching, but between the visible and the tangible. According to Merleau-Ponty, the visible and tangible belong to the 'same world':

'There is double and crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and of the tangible in the visible; the two maps are complete, and yet they do not merge into one. The two parts are total parts and yet are not superposable.' ([Sic] VI: 138)

The 'visible', he claims, is a quality 'pregnant with a texture [...] a grain or a corpuscle borne by a wave of being'; yet this 'being' is more than a 'being-perceived' (VI: 135). We are separated by the thickness of 'flesh' between 'seer' and 'thing' that is constitutive of its visibility. This, Merleau-Ponty says, is their means of intercommunication. The body unites us with 'things' through its

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[218] Merleau-Ponty also discusses the 'sexual schema' of body comportment in *Phenomenology of Perception* (2006: 178 – 201). Cf. Grosz (1994); Butler (1989); and Young (2005) for critique.

ontogenesis, its 'two laps' of the 'sensible mass' it represents and the 'mass of the sensible' onto which it opens (VI: 136).[219] The body in this sense is not merely an object of thought, but rather a 'flesh' that suffers when wounded (VI: 137). The body is both visible and tangible, belonging to the 'universal flesh' of the world. There is, moreover, a reciprocal intertwining of the visible body and the 'seeing' body, where the 'seeing' body subtends the visible body (VI: 138). But the body is 'neither thing seen only nor seer only' (ibid.). Merleau-Ponty urges that we must reject the age-old assumptions that put the body in the world and the 'seer' in the body, for there is a reciprocal insertion or intertwining of 'seeing' body and visible body, where the visible body is part of the 'flesh' of the world (ibid.). The flesh is not merely 'matter' (as in Sartre, for example), nor the visible, nor the sum of facts 'material' or spiritual'; rather,

'To designate [the flesh] we should need the old term "element," in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a *general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of Being.' (VI: 139)

In other words, it is in the 'elemental being of the flesh that the secret of sensibility is to be sought' (VI: iv). The chiasm - the intertwining of the substance of the flesh (the two hands touching) - is *the inaugural event of visibility* (VI: 139). The reversibility of touching and touched, of the seer and the visible; the circularity of the two hands touching; this is the 'fission or dehiscence of the flesh' (VI: 146), being's 'reversibility', its capacity to 'fold in on itself' (something he describes, somewhat contentiously, as 'invagination').[220] The 'flesh' is the most elementary level of being, where the visible is a kind of 'palpitation' of being.

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[219] The translators (Carolyn Burke & Gillian C Gill) remark that, in Alfonso Lingis' English translation of Merleau-Ponty, 'laps' is substituted for 'lips', an error in transliteration which seems to mime the 'invisibility of the feminine' (ESD: 139 fn).

[220] 'Invagination' describes the turning-inside or folding-back of something to form a pouch (in botany, for example).

Irigaray takes issue with several of Merleau-Ponty's claims. First, she argues that his account of the 'flesh' actually *retains* the polarity 'seer-visible' that he intended to overcome, thus preserving the privileged status of the visible over the tangible (ESD: 129):

'Enveloping things with his look, the seer would *give birth* to them, and yet the mystery of his *own* birth would subsist in them.' (Ibid.)

The tangible remains hidden under the visible, yet according to Irigaray, the tangible is what subsists *in* the visible. Her second, related complaint is that the 'flesh' is nothing if not reliant upon the 'fluid', which is perhaps another way of saying that the 'visible' is nothing without the 'tangible'. Merleau-Ponty's failure to establish a 'continuum' between 'passive' and 'active' in the model of the two hands touching (which arguably lapses in to *either* active *or* passive) is due to his failure to remember the 'first event':

'[H]e cannot manage it. Especially without memory of that first event where he is enveloped-touched by a *tangible invisible* of which his eyes are already formed, but which he will never see: with no seer, neither visible nor visibility in that place.' (ESD: 129)

That 'place' to which Irigaray refers is the 'prenatal sojourn' in which the seer's own existence subsists, the fluid that grounds the visible, in which 'seeing and seen are not yet distinguished' (ESD: 131). The 'fluid' is what is 'most archaic in me':

'Through which I (male or female) received life and was enveloped in my prenatal sojourn, by which I have been surrounded, clothed, nourished, in another body.' (ESD: 130)

The fluid is the 'invisible sojourn of the visible' (ESD: 131). Irigaray makes use of metaphors of fluidity in several of her other texts, using it to symbolise the contiguity and the boundlessness of the feminine, and the 'formlessness' of female jouissance.[221] Here, however, the fluid represents the time spent in the intrauterine, in the amniotic sac; the 'nocturnal state' that 'precludes but preconditions vision', but which remains unacknowledged (Grosz, 1994: 104). Moreover, the 'flesh', which Merleau-Ponty designates as that which 'sustains' and 'nourishes' the relationships between 'things' (VI: 132), would *itself* be nourished and sustained by the fluid in the amniotic sac and the placental tissue which 'enveloped subject and things prior to birth' (ESD: 133). Irigaray complains that 'Merleau-Ponty makes flesh go over to the realm of things and as if to *their* place of emergence, *their* prenatal ground, their nourishing soil' (ibid. Emphasis added). But it is the darkness and invisibility of the maternal sojourn that gives rise to the visible, that which renders possible the very reversibility that the flesh offers, and that which makes possible the fluctuation of 'subject' and 'things' and their passage from one to another 'side' (ESD: 133).

Irigaray states that Merleau-Ponty's analysis is marked by a 'labyrinthine solipsism', and that this is no more evident than in his description of the 'double sensation' (ibid.). For he must turn to the tactile in order to explain his thesis of reversibility (as the tactile and the visual function according to different 'laws', their 'maps' are incongruous), yet he is eluded by the relationship with the (m)other that is both the origin of being as well as the creation of the sensible body: 'I am touched and enveloped by the felt even before seeing it' (ESD: 138). The tangible and the visible do *not* belong to the same world, they are incongruous. Irigaray says, 'I cannot situate the visible and the tangible in a chiasmus. Perhaps the visible needs the tangible but this need is not reciprocal?' (ESD: 135). For the tangible is received *prior* to dichotomies of active and passive, visible and invisible (ESD: 137).

Not only does he retain the polarity seer-visible, however; according to Irigaray, Merleau-Ponty's account is overlaid with sexual metaphors derived from relations between the sexes (Grosz, 1994: 106). His remark about the reversibility of the flesh being a kind of 'invagination' is typical of this tendency; he writes that being is '*pregnant* with a texture'. Moreover, his obsession with the visible could itself be interpreted as a longing for the prenatal sojourn in which there is no 'separation'

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[221] Cf. Irigaray's *This Sex Which is Not One* (1985b); as well as *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* (1991).

between the subject and the world, just as the seer and the visible are, for Merleau-Ponty, indivisible and reversible. But if the visible is the domain of plenitude, it is also the domain in which the lack is to be located (ibid.). Incompatible with that of the tangible – the domain of infinite flexibility and contiguity – the visible designates the female genitals as lacking or atrophied. As in the Oedipal story, Merleau-Ponty's fascination with the visible betrays the insidious phallocentrism that underscores his thought. Elizabeth Grosz remarks -

'What remains invisible within phallocentrism is both the prenatal condition of corporeal existence, the child's inability to see the mother as source of origin of its existence, and the existence of the other sex, a sex different from and incommensurate with the subject.' (Ibid.)

This 'blindness' remains concealed in Merleau-Ponty's description of the chiasm. And crucially, Irigaray urges that although he challenges the dichotomy of subject-object, he 'fails to challenge the construction of subjectivity enough to account for an engagement between self and other' (Kozel, 1996: 124).[222] In a recent interview with Helen Fielding, Irigaray remarks that -

'Merleau-Ponty [...] tries to remain in symbiosis with the world, a world which will substitute itself for a placenta. Indeed it is possible that the relation Merleau-Ponty wants to establish with the world is more symbiotic than that which really exists between the placenta and the foetus [...] [H]e attempts to organise an infinite going and coming back between the world that he is and the world from which he emerges without ever agreeing with cutting the umbilical cord, or leaving a primitive symbiotic empathy.' (Irigaray, 2008: 111)

The prenatal relation, had he acknowledged it, offers the reversibility – the continuity between 'inside' and 'outside' - that he seeks in the domain of the visible. Sexual difference, however, cannot

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[222] I owe several of these insights to analyses by Susan Kozel (1996) and Elizabeth Grosz (1994).

be assimilated into this account of reversibility. Phallocentrism does not allow for the perception of sexual difference. And as Grosz continues, it is not simply a case of opening one's eyes and having a good look - difference itself cannot be grasped via an appeal to the visible, as it is precisely the *invisible* in which the maternal-feminine is positioned, and in which the categories of 'self' and 'other' are challenged (Grosz, 1994: 106).

Conclusions

Before returning to the question of female subjectivity as it relates to the issue of primary narcissism – as outlined in the introduction to this chapter – I should like to refer briefly to the recent work of Christine Battersby. Battersby's work in on the topic of female subjectivity is important, I suggest, because it advances many of what I consider to be the most revolutionary features of Irigaray's early thought, particularly in relation to the importance of rethinking the role *of*, and the subject's relationship *to*, the body-that-births. Indeed, I adapt the idea of a 'fleshy subjectivity' from Battersby's *The Phenomenal Woman* (1998), and although I consider Battersby's reading of Irigaray to be a little *narrow*, her appeal to a mode of 'natality', as well as her call for the importance of re-thinking the female subject-position as 'lived' and 'fleshy', are nevertheless important.[223] I shall outline the main points of her argument here, and show how she promotes Irigaray's vision.

In *The Phenomenal Woman* (1998), Battersby argues for a subject position which explicitly takes the sexuate *female* body as norm. In doing so, Battersby – like Irigaray - challenges the enlightenment conceptualisation of the subject as an abstract, autonomous and tacitly *male* entity, as well as the psychoanalytical consignment of the body to the register of the Real (and therefore to that of the unknowable). Whereas psychoanalysis renders 'woman' as an ineffable concept or trope - that which is paradoxically lacking as well as in *excess* of the phallic Symbolic – Battersby claims that by

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[223] 'Narrow' because Battersby accuses Irigaray of engaging in a 'monolithic' reading of western thought (Battersby, 1998: 101; 2006: 291). Whilst I would tend to agree in certain respects (see Introduction), I believe that this leads Battersby to overlook some of the more salient and revolutionary aspects of Irigaray's thought (cf. Green, 2011: 145).

recognising natality we might allow for an embodied, *female* subject. Battersby defines her own concept of natality as 'the *conceptual* link between the paradigm 'woman' and the body that births' (Battersby, 1998: 7. Emphasis in original). Unlike the Oedipal account of subjectivity as emerging from a process of cleavages and cuts, Battersby claims that natality allows for a pole of identity which emerges from 'a play of relationships and force-fields which together constitute the horizons of a (shared) space-time' (ibid.). Natality emphasises fluidity and 'mobile relationships', *becoming* as opposed to *being*. Stemming from her contention that in order to define a reconceptualised 'female' subject-position we must take natality and the body-that-births 'seriously', Battersby outlines a further four 'defining features' or 'characteristics' which I shall briefly describe.

The second and third features relate to the ontological dependence of the foetus on the mother, first in socio-cultural terms as those power-dependencies and inequalities linked to a normalised 'female' subject-position; and second, as the literal dependence of the foetus on the mother in the processes of pregnancy and birth. As Battersby remarks, for the 'normalised' female there are no sharp divisions between 'self' and 'other'; rather, the 'other' emerges from the 'self' (Battersby, 1998: 8). Indeed, Battersby also claims that this 'self' does not emerge out of the exclusion or abjection of the 'other' (or *mother*), but rather from 'intersecting force-fields' (ibid.). Whilst I would avoid this kind of terminology, I agree with Battersby's insistence on reconceptualising the processes of pregnancy and birth from the perspective of natality; that is, from a perspective that regards the emergence of the 'other' from the 'self' (or vice-versa) as one which entails a relationship of fluidity, mutual 'recognition' and mediation, by the placenta for example. This relationship, furthermore, is one of perpetual negotiation; it is one of *becoming*.

The fourth feature mentioned by Battersby concerns her claim that 'female identities are fleshy identities' (Battersby, 1998: 9). Battersby notes that women have been long associated with the body – the 'flesh' – in western culture, a body 'designed' for biologically *reproductive* work as opposed to culturally *productive* work (Battersby, 1998: 10). A female subject-position, according to Battersby, is therefore a 'fleshy subjectivity' characterised by 'fleshy continuity', in contrast to the supposedly autonomous and abstract 'mind' of traditional philosophy which merely 'inhabits' the body (ibid.). I would further suggest here that, as I go on to mention below, female 'flesh' straddles

both nature and culture, and gives rise to a 'real' which is constantly in production (via what Battersby calls 'dislocation')[224]. This also relates to her final feature - women's 'monstrosity' – which, she claims, allows us to think identity 'otherwise' (Battersby, 1998: 11). By 'monstrosity' (or 'phenomenality') Battersby refers to the 'fleshy continuity' which is excess of the phallic system precisely because that system is inadequate to represent it: women are 'monstrous' because women's (non-) subject position has historically sat unhappily between an abstract idea of the 'self' and a supposedly passive and thing-like embodiment (we are again reminded of Beauvoir's account in *The Second Sex*). However, Battersby remarks that "woman' is not simply all that has to be excluded in order for the (masculinized) self to establish its (fragile) autonomy and identity' (ibid.). Of course, this is exactly what Lacan himself had in mind when he dubbed the ~~woman~~ 'not-all'. But the point, for Battersby as well as Irigaray, is that defining what woman 'is' becomes a problem within the constraints of the phallocentric Symbolic. Inspired by Irigaray, Battersby is keen to develop a 'metaphysics of immanence' incorporating 'morphological transformations' of the kind discussed so far in this chapter (Battersby, 1998: 11). One of the main aims of this endeavour is to further develop Irigaray's idea of the 'other of the Other', which, she notes, cannot exist in either Lacanian or Derridean terms (ibid.).[225]

Battersby's project in *The Phenomenal Woman* thus complements many of the central tenets of Irigaray's project that I have developed in this chapter (and will continue to develop in the rest of this thesis). Irigaray's notion of a 'placental economy' appears to unite Battersby's 'five features' into one powerful metaphor, and goes some way to help define what 'the other of the Other' might look like outside of the phallic structure. In short, it also helps to define what a female subjectivity – as a 'fleshy subjectivity' – might look like.

I have, in this chapter, moved from a critical analysis of the function of the body image in phenomenology and in psychoanalytic theory, and argued that a comprehensive change is required in order to map a female subjectivity which reflects and incorporates the morphology of women's bodies. I then recommended Irigaray's appeal to the body-that-births – her emblem of a placental economy, as

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[224] To be contrasted with the Lacanian Real, for example, which is 'inaccessible'.
[225] The expression 'other of the Other' – which I interpret as a *sui generis* notion of 'woman' – is discussed by Irigaray in the chapter entitled 'Love of Same, Love of Other' in *Ethics* (ESD: 83 – 98).

well as in her re-vision of Merleau-Ponty's conception of the 'flesh' (the prenatal sojourn) - as going some way to make the body image women's 'own' (in Beauvoir's words). In the second half of the chapter I argued that Irigaray's critique of Merleau-Ponty helps us to relocate the body that births in terms of its phenomenological capacity to undo the binary logic which continues to underpin western notions of embodiment. The prenatal relation symbolises the intertwining of the self and the other, the intertwining of 'fleshes' that characterises the female body-as-situation. But what the prenatal relation also draws our attention to is the notion that the lived body – the 'flesh' - is already caught up in a tapestry of overlapping and intertwining significations, for which 'outside' and 'inside', 'visible' and 'tangible', are often fluid and changing. Irigaray not only shows how the birthing, female body has been occluded from philosophical thought, but also how theorising a self *capable* of birthing can transform our preconceptions relating to subjectivity, and create new conceptual and ontological possibilities

Battersby claims that 'Irigaray finds only one Oedipalized – and masculinized – model of the self in the history of the west' (Battersby, 1998: 56). Whilst I disagree that this is entirely the case, I agree with Battersby that it is not enough to attempt to re-imagine the mother-daughter relation (and in doing so to attempt to deal with the issue of primary narcissism) without some kind of rejuvenated or modified conception of subjectivity to underpin it.[226] In the last chapter I argued that Irigaray's attempts to define a sexuate *genre* for women based upon a quasi-Feuerbachian model of projection led to undesirable consequences. In this chapter, I have recommended using the notion of 'fleshy subjectivity' as the correlative of a 'sensible transcendental': that which confounds the binary logic of phallocentrism; the paradoxical transcendence-in-immanence of the body-as-situation. I have contended that what is required, moreover, is a conceptual shift in the way that we think about the self, subjectivity, and identity, and how the ego is shaped in relation to the body of the mother (and not merely to the Law of the father), most notably in the intrauterine encounter.

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[226] See for instance my article "A Fleshy Metaphysics': Irigaray and Battersby on female Subjectivity' (Green, 2011) in which I argue that Battersby tends to read Irigaray 'monolithically'. Instead of identifying strands of Irigaray's thought that have the potential to advance beyond its own limitations, Battersby rejects or ignores some of the more nuanced aspects of Irigaray's writing in favour of that of a selection of male philosophers.

However, although I have, in this chapter, interrogated the conceptual links between the body image, the imaginary and subjectivity, I have yet to fully develop the idea of 'fleshy subjectivity' in relation to psychoanalytic theory and the question of primary narcissism (ego-development). Indeed, I have argued in several places that it is not enough to merely 're-imagine' the mother-daughter relationship. Does the sensible transcendental – as a 'fleshy subjectivity' – return the mother to the symbolic economy? I have suggested that it goes some way to doing so. However, although I have focused on the mother-infant relationship *in utero*, I have not yet demonstrated how exactly I see the sensible transcendental working as an 'axis of relations between women'. This chapter has worked from *outside* of the Oedipal schema, using its weaknesses to develop a viable alternatives to the phallic body image and relationship with the maternal other. In order to define a *sexuate genre* for women - or in other words, in order to define a genealogy for/of women – I now suggest that it is essential to re-examine the *matricidal schema* at the heart of the Oedipal structure; in other words, we must also work from *within* the Oedipal structure. Without countering the matricidal schema, there can be no theory of women's primary narcissism, and ultimately no way of conceptualising women's genealogy. It is to these matters that I turn in the final chapter.

Chapter 6:

Myths, Matricide and Maternal Subjectivity

The Oedipus complex states the law of the non-return of the daughter to the mother, except in the doing-like of motherhood. It cuts her off from her beginnings, her conception, her genesis, her birth, her childhood. (Irigaray, 1995b: 105)

Chapter Outline

This chapter revisits the theme of 'matricide' – the killing of the mother – and argues for the importance of constructing a non-matricidal account of female subjectivity: an account which does not prescribe a primordial rejection or 'abjection' of the maternal body.[227] I consider this important for two reasons: in order to acknowledge that our relation to our mothers – and not merely our *fathers* – plays a crucial role in the formation of the 'self'; and in order for a non-conflictual mother-daughter relation to be rendered possible.[228] I shall show that, whilst separation from the maternal body is essential if women are to accede to subjectivity (see Introduction), this does not necessitate psychic 'matricide' in the strong sense; that is, to deny the mother expression within the Symbolic economy (Jacobs, 2004: 19). I argue that what I have called Irigaray's 'primary imaginary' – the register arising from the infant's encounter with the maternal body *in utero* – coheres with what Alison Stone (2012) calls 'potential space': a mediating maternal 'third term' which sustains psychic links with the maternal body and prevents the infant from 'merging' with the mother. By repairing the links with the maternal origin, but at the same time allowing for separation, this model also makes female genealogy possible. However, Irigaray does not elaborate her theory in terms of an account of female psychical development (nor in terms of a non-matricidal account of individuation for both sexes); indeed, Irigaray remains concerned with reconceptualising bodily organs such as the placenta and the womb.

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[227] For Kristeva (2002b), the 'abject' is that which one must reject in order to construct an identity (i.e. that which produced *us*: the mother). The abject is violently 'cast out' or 'repelled'.

[228] This is also necessary in order for there to be a distinctly *maternal* subjectivity (distinct, that is, from female subjectivity *per se*), that does not merely regard the mother as an 'inert background' against which subjectivity develops (Stone, 2012: 6). See Stone, 2012: 5 – 6.

This chapter therefore brings together Irigaray's writing on matricide – principally in her essay 'Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother' (1993a) – with her attempts to evoke a 'feminine imaginary' – a female or maternal bodily imaginary – in her earlier texts, and argues that we use her insufficiently developed notion of a primary imaginary as an anti-matricidal *maternal bodily imaginary* which continues in post-natal mother-child relations.[229]

I begin in Sections 1 and 2 of this chapter by examining the role of myth in Irigaray, focusing on her account of the matricide committed in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. I argue that whilst Irigaray uses myth in order to expose underlying psychic structures which have become embedded in our cultural imaginary, her solution of appealing to the mythic feminine in order to 'repair' the female *genre* is unsatisfactory and fails to counter the matricidal structure which she highlights as central to the Oedipal schema. Looking for a solution to this problem, I then turn in Section 3 to Amber Jacobs' (2007) claim that, underlying the manifest account of matricide in the *Oresteia*, is another, latent matricide – that of Athena's mother, Metis – which, she argues, has been left unchecked. For Jacobs, our failure to recognise this hidden act of mother-killing has meant that the law prohibiting matricide has also remained unchecked, and, consequently, so too has the male phantasy of parthenogenesis.[230] Like Irigaray, Jacobs reads Greek myth as a constellation of male phantasies that has become consolidated in a phallic Symbolic-Imaginary order.[231] Jacobs' solution, furthermore, is to 'mourn the mother', to *introject* rather than to *incorporate* her, and, in doing so, allow her desire to be expressed symbolically.[232] This would also permit the Law of the Mother (the law against matricide) to be expressed in what she calls a 'heterogeneous Symbolic'. However, I argue that it is unclear how Jacobs intends her model (the Law of the Mother) to operate alongside (or replace) the phallic model (the Law of the Father), and therefore suggest we adopt a more imaginative approach to Irigaray's own work on the intra-uterine relation as a further corrective to the problem of matricide.

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[229] I shall refer to this imaginary register as 'female' as opposed to 'feminine' in order to mark it out differently from the psychoanalytical understandings of 'masculine' and 'feminine' as merely speaking positions in relation to the transcendental signifier (phallus).

[230] Defined in Chapter 4, p 148 (footnote 150).

[231] Once more, I shall use upper case for the terms 'Symbolic', 'Imaginary', and 'Real' when referring specifically to a Lacanian understanding, and lower case when in an expanded, 'Irigarayan' sense.

[232] *Introjection* describes the process of taking in attitudes and ideas from others unconsciously, whereas *incorporation* marks the failure of introjection; in this case this refers to the failure to 'assimilate' the mother resulting in her repudiation (as per the Oedipal scenario). Also defined in the Introduction, p 29 (footnote 32).

In Section 4 I argue that Irigaray's notion of a 'primary imaginary' – a term that she coins in her early essay 'Linguistic and Specular Communication' (2002) – is a maternal bodily imaginary which coheres loosely with what Kristeva calls the Semiotic *chora* (and is linked to non-phallic *jouissance*). Unlike Kristeva, however – for whom there can be no theorisation of the prenatal relation – I suggest that Irigaray's primary imaginary register begins *in utero* as the 'prenatal sojourn' discussed in Chapter 5. I contend that Irigaray's project of translating the maternal bodily relation between mother and infant is also part of her wider project of attempting to define a feminine sexuate difference 'beyond the phallus'. Because Irigaray does not explicitly apply this notion to an account of psychosexual development, in Section 4 I suggest that we appeal to Alison Stone's (2012) concept of 'potential space' – an expanded psycho-corporeal space between mother and infant – which, I argue, provides an illuminating way for us to approach the primary imaginary as a mediating 'third term' *within* the maternal dyad. This schema helps to circumvent the requirement for psychic matricide by positing an already 'triangulated' mother-infant relationship which begins *in utero*.[233]

In the final part of this chapter I draw on the recent thought of artist and analyst Bracha Ettinger (2006a; 2006b), and show how her notion of the 'matrixial borderspace' – a 'feminine' psychic register which emerges *in utero* and persists after Oedipalization – develops from strands of Irigaray's thought. Ettinger purports to circumvent psychic matricide by positing the matrixial as a feminine sexual difference *prior* to Oedipalization. The matrixial is, first and foremost, a subjectivizing stratum of co-emergence between mother and infant. Although it 'recedes' in favour of the phallic paradigm, the matrixial paradigm helps to counter matricide by preserving psychic links with the (imaginary) archaic mother-figure. However, there are two main problems with Ettinger's account. First, Ettinger retains a quasi-matricidal schema for men, who are still required to enact a violent separation from the mother (*qua* Kristeva). Second, although Ettinger claims that the matrixial paradigm stands in a non-hierarchal relation to that of the phallic, it nonetheless 'recedes' in favour of it, and I therefore fail to see how it purports to be transformatory in political terms. Thus I argue that

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[233] Similarly, Bracha Ettinger's 'matrixial register' (discussed in Section 5, below) begins *in utero*; in this respect we might mark out both Irigaray and Ettinger as moving beyond orthodox Lacanian territory which aligns the pre-natal with the pre-discursive Real.

we might instead develop strands of Irigaray's thought into a more robust account of non-matricidal female subjectivity which moves beyond the 'Oedipal'.

1. Myths, Matricide and the Symbolic-Imaginary

Myths, for Irigaray, are clues to history; for helping us to understand how our history has been shaped by our collective unconscious or 'cultural imaginary'. In this sense, Irigaray's interest in myth is inextricably linked to her own dynamic use of the concept of the 'imaginary'. In her principal essay on the topic of matricide, 'Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother' (1993a), Irigaray remarks that 'our imaginary still works according to the schema set in place by Greek mythology and tragedy' (Irigaray, 1993a: 11). As an 'imaginary schema', mythology represents 'a culture's self-image' (Whitford, 1995: 11). Here, Irigaray's use of the term 'imaginary' extends beyond Lacan's notion of the 'Imaginary' order as a projective dimension composed of the unconscious phantasies of a single subject. According to Lacan, the Symbolic is the register of language and symbols which structure the material world through a process of mediation: the Symbolic is an order projected onto the world which allows us to think about it, but also one which allows the existing socio-symbolic order to be reproduced. In short, the Symbolic is a process of psychic and social structuring of Imaginary content (Jacobs, 2007: 17). According to Irigaray, this 'content' is composed of the imaginary phantasies of men, their desires and fears. She argues that this 'victorious imaginary' is the male imaginary which is 'systematically supported, represented and confirmed by social institutions through the operating structuring principle of the dominant symbolic order' (Jacobs, 2007: 18). As I discussed in Chapter 1, the existing Symbolic order – what we call 'patriarchy' – could therefore be understood as an effect or symptom of masculine phantasy.

In her attack on Lacan's *École Freudienne*, Irigaray contends that 'The symbolic, which you impose as a universal innocent of any empirical or historical contingency, is your imaginary transformed into an order, into the social' (Irigaray, 1995a: 94).[234] Here, Irigaray highlights the

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[234] Irigaray's acerbic attack on the institution of psychoanalysis in 'The Poverty of Psychoanalysis' (1995a) followed the suicide of one of her former female colleagues – named only as *Juliette L* – at Lacan's 'Freudian

mutually reinforcing nature of the Imaginary and Symbolic orders: the Imaginary is an effect of the Symbolic, yet the Symbolic structures the Imaginary (Whitford, 1991: 91). Moreover, according to Irigaray, myths deal with a 'landscape' which installs itself in the imagination and then eventually becomes Law (Irigaray, 1988: 160). So if the Symbolic-Imaginary structure we know as 'patriarchy' – understood as the rule of the fathers; of their Symbolic Law - has its origins in men's primeval desires and phantasies, then what role do myths play?

Irigaray claims that 'the mythology that underlies patriarchy has not changed' (Irigaray, 1993a: 12). What underlies and secures the functioning of the existing symbolic-imaginary order is, for Irigaray, a myth of origins or foundation myth which is interpreted as the Law of the Father, a Law which allows 'for filiation, symbolic loss and genealogy' (Jacobs, 2004: 19). The Oedipal myth - as a masculine 'primal phantasy' - structures, and in turn is structured by, the phallic Symbolic-Imaginary order which is responsible for installing the Oedipal structure as a mechanism for actioning a series of severances or 'cuts' which separate the infant from the mother and propels the subject-to-be into the linguistic dimension. However, as Irigaray's early though reveals, what is left unstructured by this structuring process is the maternal-feminine which has been excluded or occluded by the phallocentric order (patriarchy). Women are yet to become full 'subjects' within the structural Symbolic because the economy of the Same (the phallic Symbolic-Imaginary) forces them into a position of abjection and melancholia; in Irigaray's words, women are in a state of 'dereliction' because the little girl's separation from her mother cannot be worked through by mourning' (SO: 67).[235] The phallic Symbolic prevents any such mourning from taking place. In short, the Oedipal schema entails a form of psychic matricide: the mother's body is rejected in favour of the father's Law. Interpreted in this way, patriarchy emerged as a consequence of – and is reliant on the perpetuation of - a form of symbolic matricide, deliberately denying the mother symbolic expression within its parameters.

Alison Stone (2012) describes how Irigaray interprets the Greek myth of Orestes as forming the basis of this underlying Symbolic-Imaginary structure. Stone, like Irigaray, understands the

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School' (from which Irigaray had also been expelled following the publication of *Speculum*). She had failed the notoriously difficult 'rite de passage' (see Whitford's introduction to Section II of *The Irigaray Reader* (1995)).
[235] Hence women's susceptibility to 'melancholia', the mourning for a 'lost' object (cf. Freud (2008); Stone, 2012: 6).

Oresteia as a myth which has subsequently shaped the character of western ideas of selfhood (Stone, 2012: 48). She remarks that 'the *Oresteia* crystallizes the overall character of ancient Greek culture, for Irigaray', a culture which has been absorbed and incorporated into a Symbolic order (including Christianity) (ibid.). The foundations of this order are, furthermore, men's wishful phantasies: in this case the desire to 'kill' the mother in order to be freed from the constraints of the maternal body. Stone notes how, in ancient Greece, to become a 'self' (a citizen in the polis) necessitated such an act of psychic violence. She continues:

'The *Oresteia* thus raises ancient Greek consciousness, as a matricidal shape of consciousness, to a new level of self-consciousness about its own matricidal character [...] At a pre-reflective, pre-conceptual level boys can detect and appreciate the pattern of oppositions between male self and female body that threads through the cultural artefacts around them [...] thus there emerges a tight interlocking of psyche and culture (or imaginary and symbolic) – so tight that eventually it becomes difficult for boys and men to organize their psyches without matricide' (Stone, 2012: 49).

According to Stone, Irigaray takes the view that culture can be adapted so that we might 'redirect our fantasies and reorganise our psyches' so that civilization need not be matricidal (Stone, 2012: 50). On these terms, Irigaray's engagement with mythology is a strategy which seeks to lay bare these matricidal phantasies in such a way that would serve to disrupt the Symbolic order, jamming its mechanisms and causing it to rupture from within. But is this strategy enough to disentangle the tight 'interlocking' of psyche and culture that Stone highlights? We might ask: Is Irigaray's rewriting of the mythic enough to counter the detrimental effects of matricide on female subjectivity, and its concomitant 'decimation' of the female *genre*? Before examining these questions in greater detail, I would like to take a further look at Irigaray's use of myth, particularly where it pertains to the mother-daughter relationship and the notion of the mythic-feminine.

As imaginary 'landscapes' which become Law, for Irigaray, myths are primal phantasies which reveal the underlying structure of the dominant socio-symbolic system, a structure which has historically been shaped by men's psychical requirement to separate from the mother (Irigaray, 1988: 159). In the first chapter I described how, for Irigaray, Clytemnestra's murder in the *Oresteia* helps to illustrate what Freud interpreted in *Moses and Monotheism* as the victory of patriarchy over matriarchy:

'One thing is plain, not in our everyday events but in our whole social scene: our society and our culture operate on the basis of an original matricide. When Freud [...] describes and theorizes about the murder of the father as the founding act for the primal horde, he is forgetting an even more ancient murder, that of the woman-mother, which was necessary to the foundation of a specific order in the city.' (SG: 11)

Here, Irigaray alludes to the symbolic act of mother-killing which eventually becomes a trope for the erasure of the maternal contribution to 'selfhood'. At this 'turning point' in the history of western culture, 'the question of filiation swings'; 'sons stop being sons of mothers and become sons of fathers' (Cixous and Clément, 2001: 103). The act of matricide (literal but also psychical) inaugurates the installation of a social order based on the elevation of paternal filiation to the status of Law. What Irigaray detects at work in the Oresteian myth in particular is the struggle between a pre-historical matriarchy and a burgeoning patriarchy (Whitford, 1991: 338).[236] This somewhat Nietzschean-Heideggerian notion of an 'originary event' is treated by Irigaray in the Jungian sense as

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[236] In the works of anthropologist Bachofen (1815 – 1887), for example, who theorised a prehistoric matriarchy. Bachofen's views are, however, controversial, and we should be wary of the extent to which Irigaray has absorbed Bachofen's views into her own writings (in 'Divine Women' (1993a), for example). Joy (2006) condemns Irigaray's 'uncritical adoption of such a discredited authority' given her trenchant condemnation of patriarchal texts (Joy, 2006: 27). Cf. Battersby (2006).

a sort of collective myth, functioning on a psychic level, as integral to the Oedipus complex, and on a socio-cultural level, as the 'mythology' underlying patriarchy (SG: 12). According to Irigaray, the killing of the mother is a condition, as well as a symptom, of patriarchy's operation, an act which underpins and perpetuates phallic binarism. She cites the paradigm of Oedipal matricide as the source of women's banishment from western culture, as well as for the concomitant barring of genealogical relations between women: hence, she says, they are in a state of 'dereliction'. The intervention of the father's Law between mother and daughter 'forbids any *corps-a-corps*' with the mother' (SG: 14). In the *Oresteia*, Electra's punishment is not only hysteria, but also to be banished from a society which chooses to save the son at the expense of the daughter. The judgement exercised upon Electra is a motif of patriarchy's ban on women's participation, their hidden sacrifice or extradition, as well as their silencing and abandonment in madness (SG: 78). This motif is echoed in the myth of Kore-Persephone, as the collusion of the gods in Hades' abduction and rape of the daughter; and again in Antigone, as the ultimate silencing and abjection of the feminine (which is interpreted as desire *par excellence* by Lacan).[237]

The idea of the 'mythic feminine', I suggest, should be understood on Irigaray's terms as a construct of the masculine Symbolic-Imaginary and its attempt to render the 'feminine' intelligible by bringing it under the phallic signifier. As I have described, in the Lacanian schema the 'woman' does not exist because phallic sexuality assigns her to a position of phantasy. This is particularly resonant in the case of the mother.[238] Irigaray contends that a woman-to-woman culture is occluded because the daughter can only relate to the mother in one of two ways: as a phallic mother - as an omnipotent, destructive force - or as a deficient and lacking persona, away from whom she must turn. In both cases, the mother remains associated with the 'dangerous', engulfing and overpowering maternal body, something which has historically been regarded as being diametrically opposed to the 'civilizing' Law of the Father.

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[237] In Lacan's (1992) interpretation of Spophocles'*Antigone*. As there exists an extensive collection of feminist analyses of Antigone (and of Irigaray's various interpretations of Antigone), I have chosen not to elaborate on the topic in this thesis (see, for instance, *Feminist Interpretations of GWF Hegel* (Ed. P Mills. Pennsylvania University Press, 1996).

[238] Stone considers the idealisation of motherhood (for instance, in Christianity) to be the 'flipside' of matricide (Stone, 2012: 52).

Thus if the mother is to be brought out of silence and granted symbolic expression, Irigaray claims that the relationship between mothers and daughters must be rehabilitated. In Chapter 4, I argued that what Irigaray proposes as an imaginative reclamation of the mother-daughter relationship which harks back to the period before the installation of patriarchal Law, is problematic. Irigaray argues that we must preserve the 'natural kinds of fruitfulness' of the mythic goddesses; she claims that we need to 'keep hold of them and establish a social system that reflects their values' (SG: 81). But given that mythic feminine characters are supposed to be projections of the masculine Imaginary, it is unclear what is to be gained by this move. In what Irigaray perceives as this 'second phase' of her thought – the 'attempt to define those mediations that could permit the existence of a feminine subjectivity' – the 're-imagining' of mythic-feminine figures such as Athena, Antigone and so-on, is similarly intended to provide women with an identificatory support in the form of a 'horizon of transcendence' (discussed in Chapter 4, for instance. Irigaray, 1995c: 95). The recasting of mythic feminine figures is therefore essential to Irigaray's project of destabilising patriarchal cultural forms and developing the notion of a 'feminine imaginary'. Like Carl Jung, Irigaray acknowledges the importance of the role of myth in the process of individuation.[239] Moreover, if it is possible to move 'beyond' the phallus, then these re-readings of mythic feminine characters represent an important leg of the journey towards obtaining an autonomous female subjectivity, a subjectivity which does not entail a primordial rivalry or antagonism with the mother, and instead restores her to the symbolic economy. However, as I stated above, I do not believe that this strategy is enough to counter the 'psychic matricide' entailed by the Oedipal schema, and without which subjectivity is considered to be impossible. For instance, Deutscher asks:

'Does Irigaray really think she has the power to create new myths? And does she place excessive confidence in the capacity of new myths and images to be socially transformative? (Deutscher, 2002: 58)

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[239] In 'Divine Women' (1993a), for instance. Frances Gray (2008) provides an extensive analysis of the similarity of Irigaray to Jung's approach to myth.

We might ask whether Irigaray places excessive confidence in the power of myths to be *psychically* transformative. Indeed, it is unclear exactly *how* Irigaray intends to counter or surpass the ostensibly far-reaching effects of matricide and the occlusion of the maternal in western tradition solely by propagating new 'myths', particularly when we consider the extent to which matricide has helped to shape western notions of selfhood and subjectivity (see Introduction). In this sense, one of the most disappointing aspects of Irigaray's thought is its failure to work 'beyond Oedipus at a structural level' (Pollock, 2006: 89). I agree with Griselda Pollock when she argues that, until very recently, no specific theorisation of femininity has been offered that would make a difference to the Oedipalized psychoanalytical model (Pollock, 2006: 90). Moreover, I believe that Irigaray's mistake is to attempt to remedy matricide by trying to rehabilitate the relationship between mothers and daughters *before* tackling the issue of maternal subjectivity. For it is precisely the banishment of maternal desire to the realm of Imaginary phantasy which precludes the mother from acceding to a distinctly 'maternal' subjectivity of her own, instead suspending her inside the infant's phantasized space-time. Indeed, it is also this 'obfuscation' of identities that renders it difficult for women to differentiate themselves from their own mothers. In short, we need to be clear about the maternal contribution to subjectivity *first* if we are to repair what Irigaray calls the female *genre*.

In section 2, below, I begin to argue that it *is* in fact possible to extract strands of Irigaray's early writing on the female 'imaginary' and weave them into an Irigarayan account of a post-Oedipal female subjectivity which circumvents psychical matricide and thus works 'beyond the phallus'. In what follows, however, I would like to first reflect on Amber Jacobs' attempt return the mother to the symbolic economy by re-engaging with the mythic significance of matricide. Although Jacobs' attempt is commendable, I contend that it falls short of explain how the Law of the Mother would operate alongside the existing phallic system.

2. Matricidal Generation and the Law of the Mother

According to Amber Jacobs (2007), Irigaray cannot symbolise the mother-daughter relationship in the absence of a 'cultural law'; that is, a law which differentiates mother from daughter (Jacobs, 2007: 135). To attempt to do this, as she does with the mythic feminine figures of Demeter-Kore, Clytemnestra and Iphigenia, etc., is to re-enact the merging-together of the mother and daughter. Jacobs remarks:

'It is not enough to go back to myth and to describe and promote the apparently once-harmonious mother-daughter relation before the patriarchal order effected its violent obliteration. In my argument, myth is not being used for the purpose of looking back to an imaginary and utopian "before" but instead is being used as a way of creating a future that does not yet exist.' (Jacobs, 2007: 137)

The 'founding feminine mythology' upon which Irigaray intends to construct her feminine symbolic remains, according to Jacobs, a projection of the masculine imaginary and works in its service (Jacobs, 2007: 138). What Jacobs proposes instead is a structural theory of matricide which restores the mother to the symbolic economy:

'Theorizing matricide [...] is linked to the contention that the mother must be able to be theorized as a sexed subject whose relation to filiation and generational transmission is given expression inside the symbolic economy.' (Jacobs, 2004: 9)

To this end, Jacobs Returns to the *Oresteian* matricide and focuses on the 'latent' content of the myth, which, she contends, reveals a second, concealed matricide: that of Athena's mother, Metis (Jacobs, 2004: 24). In Aeschylus' play, the goddess Athena is responsible for establishing the first 'court' which decides on the fate of Orestes, the matricidal son. Athena absolves Orestes of his crime because, in her words, 'No mother gave me birth [...] in all my heart I am my father's child'

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(Aeschylus, 1977: 264; cited in Jacobs, 2004: 24.). According to Hesiod's account, Athena's mother, Metis, was pursued by Zeus, although she did not reciprocate his feelings (Hesiod; Ibid.). Metis was raped by Zeus and subsequently fell pregnant with his child. Zeus then swallowed Metis, after which Athena sprang from his head, 'fully armed and with a shout' (ibid.). Metis was 'never heard of or referred to again' (Jacobs, 2004: 24).

The incorporation (literal but also *psychical*) of Metis renders her unspeakable, un-mournable, and, perhaps most crucially, un-symbolisable. According to Jacobs' reading, the incorporation of Metis tells of 'a prohibitive law belonging to the mother that patriarchal culture refuses to obey [...]. Recognition and obedience to the mother's law would mean giving up the omnipotent parthenogenetic fantasy that underpins the father's symbolic sovereignty' (Jacobs, 2004: 32). Stone comments that –

'The *Oresteia* hides its premise because, Jacobs argues, acknowledging that Zeus's crime has taken place would entail acknowledging the law that Zeus broke in committing this crime. Jacobs reconstructs the nature of that law from the nature of the crime: since the crime is (the enacted phantasy of) parthenogenesis, the law must be against parthenogenesis; since the crime is against the mother, that law must be transmitted by the mother. This law is the maternal law of which Jacobs spoke earlier: the law that adult women can give birth but men cannot. This law prohibits both girls (who must accept that they cannot give birth yet) and boys/men from indulging their parthenogenetic phantasies.' (Stone, 2011: 3)

The Law of the Mother is the law which prohibits parthenogensis, but has been concealed. Men's matricidal phantasies therefore appear 'normal' and 'rational'. Thus for Jacobs, the foreclosure of these matricidal desires means that the male phantasy of self-creation has remained unchecked (ibid.). It is only when Metis' law has been *introjected*, rather than *incorporated*, will we begin to be able to analyse different ways of 'mourning, remembering, knowing and representing' (Jacobs, 2004: 32). Moreover, to theorise matricide is to work towards an understanding of the role of the mother in

the context of the cultural laws that determine socio-symbolic organisation, something which would be essential in a post-patriarchal society (Jacobs, 2004: 19).

Jacobs' reading is important because it builds on several important motifs in Irigaray's *oeuvre*, notably her view of matricide as a primal phantasy or foundation myth which underlies and helps to perpetuate Oedipal subjectivity. For Jacobs, only when the Law of the Mother is recognised, and the mother *mourned*, will a woman-to-woman genealogy will be permitted. However, I am not convinced that Jacobs' solution goes far enough to counter the phallic binarism borne of psychical matricide and the Oedipal structure; nor does it adequately deal with the ostensibly 'untheorisable' nature of female sexual specificity, and the ways in which it appears to 'prop-up' masculine subjectivity inside the phallic Symbolic (although these features would presumably be symptomatic of the occlusion of the mother's Law). And although Jacobs' model appears to make room for a 'feminine register' in the masculine Symbolic-Imaginary in what she calls a 'heterogeneous Symbolic', she fails to expand upon how exactly she sees this system operating. For example, Stone questions the manner in which Jacob sees the maternal function as operating *alongside* the phallic function, given that the latter is premised on the reduction of the woman to an inferior version of the man (Stone, 2011: 6). Indeed, Stone also contests that Jacobs' account would require that each subject situate themselves in relation to the mother (as a future mother or a non-mother) to become a subject, even though this Law apparently applies to sons and father as much to daughters (ibid.). In short, Stone argues that Jacobs' account *inverts* the structural sexism of Lacan's, 'giving us matriarchy instead of patriarchy' (ibid.). As a universal Law, Jacobs' theory risks repeating the implicit sexism of Lacan's account, yet it remains largely unclear how it would operate as one structuring principle amongst several (ibid). Moreover, it is also seems somewhat simplistic to suggest that by simply acknowledging or mourning the death of the mother we would solve the problem of her symbolic death: I ask, why is it necessary to continue to 'kill' the mother at all?

I argue in the following section that we require a theory of subjectivity which acknowledges the mother's contribution to the psychical evolution of subjects of *both* sexes that doesn't merely involve her 'matricide'. This theory, whilst allowing for separation *from* the mother, preserves this relationship by acknowledging the primordial links with the mother's body which give rise to

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subjectivity in its very basic form *in utero*, in the ways that I began to develop in Chapter 5. I shall argue, furthermore, that the solution to the problem of describing the maternal contribution to subjectivity lies in the way that Irigaray attempts to evoke the *jouissance* of female sexual specificity in her early texts; for instance, I have argued that her vision of a 'sensible transcendental' first arises from the fluidity, contiguity and plenitude of what she conceives as female self-affection: in the motif of the 'two lips', for example (mentioned at the end of Chapter 2). And whilst these attempts have been met with criticism – as they are attempts to speak what in Lacanian terms is necessarily 'unspeakable' (Irigaray's attempts to speak 'woman' – *parler femme*) – they perhaps provide the key for moving beyond the psychical 'matricide' implicit in the phallic model. For example, in Chapter 5 I argued that Irigaray's vision of the intrauterine encounter begins to work *beyond* the Oedipal paradigm: temporally, it deals with the psychoanalytically controversial period before birth; conceptually, it recommends a model of self/(m)other relations which throws the Freudian-Lacanian depiction of a mother-infant 'symbiosis' into sharp relief. In the next section, I shall bring Irigaray's notion of the pre-natal encounter into dialogue with the idea of a 'primary imaginary' discussed in Chapter 1. I shall suggest that this primordial register in some way 'persists' after 'Oedipalization' (for instance, in the 'feminine' imaginary register that she alludes to in texts such as *Speculum* and *This Sex*), but that Irigaray's thought falls short of being able to capture or define the ways in which it does so, and instead remains trapped in the dimension of physical organs (e.g. the womb/placenta: see Pollock (2006a), below).

3. Irigaray's 'Primary Imaginary' and Kristeva's Semiotic *Chora*

I shall now argue that Irigaray's early thought reveals a neglected female 'imaginary': a specifically female bodily imaginary comprised of the rhythms, sensations and affects which centre around the mother's body. Given Irigaray's dynamic use of Lacan's formulation of the Symbolic, I shall contend that it is in fact possible to appeal to a characteristically 'female' register which in some sense exists alongside or within the masculine Symbolic-Imaginary, but is inadequately symbolised (because there is no cultural law to determine it). I shall argue that this register has the capacity to

influence and shape the subjectivities of both women and men, and that this register is not merely a 'future possibility' - nor does it merely point to a 'possible restructuring of the [masculine] imaginary' - but rather that it already works to shape subjectivity (Whitford, 1991: 89). I disagree somewhat with Margaret Whitford's suggestion:

'I would not agree with those who equate the imaginary in Irigaray's work with the archaic, maternal, pre-Oedipal space. From a structural point of view, the pre-Oedipal is produced by the symbolic, as well as informing it.' (Ibid.)

Whilst I concede that there are apparently several senses in which Irigaray appears to use, or gesture towards a use of, the 'imaginary' I believe that Whitford is too hasty in ruling out this particular interpretation.[240] For instance, in Chapter 1 I argued that in *To Speak is Never Neutral* (2002) Irigaray highlights the emergence of, a pre-Oedipal 'primary imaginary' register which is eventually 'overwritten' by the secondary 'Imaginary' at the mirror stage (it is the register of the specular image, hence of 'specularization'). This primal 'nocturnal imaginary' is described by Irigaray as the 'guardian of life', the register of 'plethora images, sensations and spasms of infantile experience' (TSN: 15; Schwab, 1994: 353). But although this register is 'produced', in a sense, by the Symbolic, and hence by language, is there not also a sense in which it in some way contributes to linguistic, and therefore also psychosexual, development? This, I suggest, is where Julia Kristeva's notion of the Semiotic *chora* proves useful.

Next, I shall compare what I have termed Irigaray's 'primary imaginary' with Kristeva's notion of the Semiotic *chora*, before arguing that Irigaray's mimetic evocation of the 'feminine imaginary' in the likes of *Speculum* shares many of the characteristics of what I regard as the 'primary imaginary': the register which evolves out of the infant's first identifications with the maternal body.

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[240] For an extended discussion on Irigaray's uses of the term 'imaginary' see Whitford, 1991: 89 – 91.

For Kristeva, the *chora* – a term adapted from Plato's *Timaeus* – refers to the earliest stages of the infant's psychosexual development, and points to the chaotic mix of sensations and perceptions that the infant experiences at a time when it has yet to distinguish its 'self' from the maternal body.[241] Kristeva remarks:

'[T]he *chora* precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm. [...] Though deprived of unity, identity, or deity, the *chora* is nevertheless subject to a regulating process, which is different from that of symbolic law but nevertheless effectuates discontinuities by temporarily articulating them and then starting over, again and again.' (Kristeva, 2002: 36)

This 'regulating process', as I got on to discuss below, is conducted by the maternal body. The *chora*, moreover, provides the raw matter for the Semiotic: the emotional field tied to the instincts and drives which is also associated with linguistic prosody: the rhythms, tones, and fluctuations of speech. Kristeva continues that the Semiotic *precedes* meaning and signification, and is 'mobile, amorphous, but already regulated' (Kristeva, 2002: 44). Here, she describes its counterpart, the Symbolic:

'[L]anguage, constituted as symbolic through narcissistic, specular, imaginary investment, protects the body from the attack of drives by making it a place – the place of the signifier – in which the body can signify itself through positions; and [...], therefore, language, in the service of the death drive, is a pocket of narcissism toward which this drive might be directed'. (Ibid.)

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[241] The 'chora' (or *Khora*) in Plato is a receptacle, space or interval-between in which forms materialise (Plato, 2009 & passim). There are clearly maternal overtones to this: the receptacle has 'no distinctive qualities', but is that which *gives* form. It is useful to note the similar here with Heidegger's notion of *Ereignis* (both are subject to critique by Irigaray, the former in *Speculum* (1985a)).

For Kristeva – following Lacan – the Symbolic is the register of the signifier, of radical alterity, hence of the Other. But the Symbolic is also the 'death drive' which transcends the pleasure principle by means of repetition.[242] Language, moreover, is comprised both of Imaginary and Symbolic elements; as I have explained, the Symbolic structures the Imaginary. The Semiotic, by contrast, is associated with the maternal body; the origin of the movements and rhythms of speech. If the Symbolic element of signification (language) is associated with grammar and structure (syntax), then the Semiotic element is the bodily drive as it is discharged in signification. Associated with the maternal body, the Semiotic *chora* already embodies what Alison Stone calls 'a primordial self-organizing intelligence within matter' (Stone, 2012: 75). The maternal body regulates the drives in such a way that eventually become embedded in the laws that regulate language.

Thus when Irigaray refers to the 'secondary imaginary' (the Imaginary) as being 'tied up with death', she is subscribing to the Lacanian notion that the Symbolic – the dimension of the signifier – is also that of the death drive (or, simply the 'drive') (TSN: 15). Moreover, if the Semiotic *chora* is associated with the maternal body - and represents what Gail Schwab calls the 'first step toward language's liberation from the power of the phallus' - I would like to begin to advance the notion of a 'primary imaginary' as representing the maternal contribution to subjectivity developing as a result of this primordial encounter between infant and mother; the origins of what Lacan calls 'another jouissance' beyond the phallus (Schwab, 1994: 353). But why not reject Irigaray in favour of Kristeva's more developed theory?

As I have described, Kristeva demonstrates how the Symbolic emerges as the consequence of an *anticipatory structure*: the Semiotic (ibid.). However, Schwab argues that although Kristeva newly establishes the importance of the pre-Oedipal relation to the mother, the 'Mother's Body remains alienated from/in the Father's Tongue [...] The Kristevan mother is the "phallic" mother' (Schwab, 1994: 357). Indeed, for Kristeva, the only way for mothers and daughters to re-establish the contact

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[242] Cf. Lacan (1992).

lost after the Oedipal stage is for the daughter to experience 'motherhood' for herself (Schwab, 1994: 358).[243] I agree with Schwab when she states:

'Kristeva staunchly maintains traditional psychoanalytic readings and interpretations of female sexuality as the "mirror image" of male sexuality, whose founding concepts are, precisely, "castration" and the Oedipus complex. Whilst it is true that she "nuances" Freud with Ernest Jones, and with Lacan, there is no effort on her part to get beyond the mirror image, or to elaborate a sexual identity based on female parameters.' (Schwab, 1994: 359)

Schwab continues that Kristeva has described such a search for a female sexual identity as metaphysical and essentialistic, and that, instead of trying to understand fully what feminist philosophers such as Irigaray are trying to do, she 'simply dismisses them' (ibid.). Schwab concludes that it is Irigaray, rather than Kristeva, that possesses the tools for opening up the discursive space necessary to 'think' the 'feminine' (Schwab, 1994: 362).

In the previous chapter I discussed at length Irigaray's depiction of a placental economy, and argued that the placenta helps to symbolise the mediation of the relationship between self and (m)other *in utero*. Indeed, the placenta is one of the most important symbols that Irigaray harnesses in order to re-imagine the female body's (especially the maternal body's) relation to subjectivity. I now suggest that, unlike Kristeva's notion of the Semiotic *chora*, Irigaray's primary imaginary register actually *begins* with/in the womb. But how might Irigaray's vision of an intrauterine encounter be used to expand upon the notion of a primary imaginary (as akin to Kristeva's Semiotic *chora*) – and her use of a female imaginary more generally – as her attempt to evoke a feminine sexuate 'difference' beyond the phallus? Both of these features, I suggest in the following section, may be viewed as part of how project of 'translating' the maternal body's contribution to subjectivity.

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[243] See Kristeva's 'Stabat Mater', for instance (2002c: 329 - 330).

4. 'Translating' the Maternal Body

For Irigaray, the 'feminine' is not reducible to the 'one' that dominates the phallic economy and attempts to assign the 'feminine' meaning through the 'auto-representations' of male sexuality (SO: 233). The terms that Irigaray uses to evoke the 'feminine' in her early, mimetic writing are similar to those we might associate with the 'primary imaginary': the psychic register arising from the infant's pre-Oedipal encounter with the maternal body. For instance, she frequently refers to fluidity, contiguity, excess, multiplicity, the blurring of boundaries, and so on. In the last chapter I suggested that the most important of these terms is that of fluidity, which conjures the flux and flow of the intrauterine encounter itself.[244] Naomi Schor remarks that water, like air, is 'highly valorised in [Irigaray's] elemental philosophy', and is linked with the 'feminine' at the level of the body (Schor, 1994: 68). On Schor's reading of Irigaray, the 'matricide' which founds patriarchal culture institutes a primordial forgetting of not just 'air' (as in Heidegger), but of the fluids that nurtured both man and woman in the amniotic sac. Of course, this is a metaphor for the elision of the maternal-feminine *per se* -

'... the flow of some shameful liquid. Horrible to see: bloody *Fluid* has to remain the secret remainder, of the one. Blood, but also milk, sperm, lymph, saliva, spit, tears, humors, gas, waves, airs, fire... light.' (SO: 237)

And -

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[244] As I touched upon in the Introduction, Stone describes Irigaray's later thought as a 'fluid' ontology of sexually determinate bodies (Stone, 2006: 98 – 99). Thus 'fluidity' should be viewed as a consistent component feature of Irigaray's thought as a whole.

'The marine element is thus both the amniotic waters... and it is also, it seems to me, something which figures quite well feminine *jouissance*.' (Irigaray in Schor, 1994: 68)[245]

Female sexual 'excess' might be conceived along similar lines as the notion of the 'fluid', and both work beyond the phallus at least on some level, although this is not specifically elaborated by Irigaray. Later in her thought – notably in her piece 'On the Maternal Order' (1993b) - Irigaray draws from the notion of fluidity in order to rethink the time spent in the womb as a time in which female corporeality helps to shape identity. By disobeying the traditional prohibition on the prenatal psychic encounter, this represents a clear move beyond orthodox Lacanian territory. In the section on 'The Flesh and the Fluid' in Chapter 5, I discussed Irigaray's contention that the 'invisible' fluidity and sensible immediacy of the prenatal encounter with the mother holds the key for unlocking a female sexuate difference beyond the phallus. Next, I return to Irigaray's depiction of the womb, and argue that although her account of a placental economy draws our attention to the space of differentiation which exists between mother and child *in utero*, Irigaray does not explicitly apply this insight to an account of psychosexual development.

The Womb, the Umbilicus and Mediation

Irigaray frequently refers to the womb as a phantasized 'place' in phallocentric discourse (SG: 116).[246] At best, the womb is regarded as a biological reproductive organ, standing-in for the female sexual organs because 'no valid representations of female sexuality exist' (SG: 16). Irigaray blames our failure to establish a sexual identity for women for the fact that the phallus has become an instrument of power and control, instead of representing the masculine 'version' of the umbilical cord (SG: 17):

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[245] This quotation appears to have been omitted from the English translation of 'Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother' (*Sexes and Genealogies*, 1993a). This is Schor's translation from the original French (*Le corps-à-corps avec la mere*. Montreal: Editions de la Pleine Lune, 1981).
[246] For example, Irigaray's lengthy discussion of Plato's cave (*Hystera*/womb) in *Speculum* (SO: 243 - 364). Cf. Rachel Jones' extensive discussion of Irigaray's dialogue with Plato (Jones, 2011: 38 – 93).

'If phallic erection respected the life of the mother – of the mother in every wom[a]n and of the woman in every mother – it would repeat the living bond to the mother. At the very place where there had once been the cord, then the breast, would in due time appear, for the man, the penis which reconnects, gives life, feeds and recenters the bodies [sic.].' (Ibid.)

As I discussed in the previous chapter, Irigaray argues that it is vital that we uncover ways of representing the placenta/umbilicus if we are to avoid forever retreating into the 'original matrix' of the mother's womb and therefore 'forever nestling into the body of another woman' (SG: 14). Indeed, motherhood is perceived as a 'desubjectivised social role' precisely because 'the role of the mother is dictated by a social order premised on a division of labour between the producing masculine and the reproducing feminine' (SG: 18; Lorraine, 1999: 83). Lorraine continues:

'In refusing to obliterate the mother's desire in deference to the law of the father, we give her the right to pleasure, sexual experience, passion, and speech. In translating the bond to the mother's body, we discover a language that can accompany bodily experience rather than erase it'. (Ibid.)

Whilst I'm not sure exactly what form this 'refusal' would take (presumably culturally, ethically, aesthetically), Lorraine harnesses Irigaray's notion of a sensible transcendental as equipping us with the corporeal logic required in order for us to 'translate' the primordial relation with the maternal body, as well as to enable us to reflect on the 'radical break' between the 'inside' and 'outside' which characterises the trauma of birth as it is retroactively phantasized (ibid.). For Lorraine, it is vital that the mother is not 'reduced' to the intrauterine space of the womb as this is symptomatic of our tendency to imagine that this space is readily available to us 'through contact with feminine substitutes for the mother' (Lorraine, 1999: 85). Thus, the placenta/umbilicus is an indispensable tool for helping us to imagine a primordial relationship which is not necessarily

founded on 'traumatizing expulsion or exclusion' (JTU: 42). In short, the placental/umbilicus helps to mediate the relationship between the female subject and the maternal body, preserving the identity of each party.

So for Irigaray, the project of 'translating' the primordial relation with the maternal body – which is linked to what I have defined as the 'primary imaginary' register – is central to her broader project of establishing the mother-woman as an autonomous sexuate subject. Her call to find an 'image' to represent the placenta relates to her contention that the intrauterine experience must be re-imagined and re-thought as 'an originary paradigm and model for our relationships to the world and to human others'; or as Irigaray herself puts it, 'the primal place in which we become body' (Lorraine, 1990: 80; SG: 16). This is a theme which also runs through her experimental and poetic work *Elemental Passions* (1992), a work which may also be interpreted as a 'response' to Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the 'chiasm' and the 'flesh' in *The Visible and the Invisible*.[247] As I touched upon in the previous chapter, Irigaray evokes the intrauterine encounter with the maternal body (and thus with female sexual specificity) as 'preceding' Merleau-Ponty's notion of the chiasm. Irigaray implies that the invisible 'sojourn' in the mother's womb represents an encounter with female sexual specificity that is constitutive of sexuate difference prior to birth.

In this section I have argued that Irigaray's project of 'translating' the primordial relation with the maternal body – which encompasses what I have defined as the 'primary imaginary' register – is central to her broader project of speaking 'as woman'. I also claimed that her evocation of a 'feminine imaginary' in texts such as *Speculum* in several senses resembles her description of the intrauterine relationship, and that this may point to some sort of 'subjectivizing' dimension which operates outside of the phallic dimension and is linked to the early encounter with the maternal body. Further, her appeal to the image of the placenta – which functions as a more mature metaphor for the putative 'negotiated' intrauterine relationship – is also part of her task of thinking female subjectivity 'outside' of the phallic paradigm. However, I remarked above (as well as in Chapter 5) that Irigaray is criticised for remaining in the dimension of physical organs, and fails to elaborate the significance of the placental model on a *psychic* level. In order support my claim that the primary imaginary is

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[247] Cf. Sjöholm (2000).

itself a subjectivizing register which operates on a psycho-corporeal level, in the following section I shall appeal to Alison Stone's (2012) notion of 'potential space': a psychic dimension evolving out of the infant's relationship with the maternal body which 'mediates' the relationship between mother and infant. This notion enables us to make the move away from metaphorical representations of physical organs to an account of their significance in terms of the maternal contribution to the psychic evolution of the subject.

5. 'Potential Space'

Alison Stone's (2012) notion of 'potential space' helps us to think the primary imaginary as a 'sensible transcendental' or maternal 'third term' which mediates the relationship between mother and infant and preserves the identity of each, thus eliminating the need for psychic matricide in the 'strong' sense described above. Stone draws on the thought of Kristeva, Winnicott, and Jessica Benjamin as well as Irigaray in order to rethink the relationship between mother and infant as 'relational' as opposed to dyadic or symbiotic.[248]

Stone initially appeals to Kristeva's notion of 'maternal space': the imaginary (i.e. as it is imagined by the infant) maternal body which threatens the infant with engulfment and the prospect of annihilation, and which therefore must be violently 'abjected', spat out or ejected in order to ensure a place in the Other (the Symbolic). Hence for Kristeva, matricide involves a 'deep psychic violence'; the infant must dis-identify with or *repudiate* (in Freud's terminology) the maternal body if it is to successfully delineate boundaries between self and mother (Stone, 2012: 62). Stone, however, believes that Kristeva's work is useful because she 'qualifies and transforms the idea of a *paternal third term*, and re-appraises early maternal relations, in ways that point in anti-matricidal directions' (ibid. Emphasis added.) Indeed, Stone contends that 'anti-matricidal strands of thought' are woven into Kristeva's concepts of the *chora* and the Semiotic (ibid.). In a similar vein, I suggest that anti-matricidal strands are also woven into Irigaray's notion of the placental economy and 'primary

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[248] For example, Kristeva (1986; 2002a); Winnicott (2005); Benjamin (1998). This not exhaustive, however.

imaginary', but, similar to Kristeva, these strands require picking out and weaving into a more robust framework.

Stone, then, draws from Kristeva's idea of a 'latent form of triangulation that already exists with the mother-child relation' (ibid.). Although Kristeva understands this notion in terms of an imaginary father (the paternal third term which breaks up the mother-infant dyad), Stone highlights the positive, civilizing and relational quality of the maternal 'space' itself, something which is overshadowed, perhaps, by the requirement to 'break out' of the purportedly hostile and threatening maternal bodily environment. Stone calls this space a 'maternal third term'; an archaic, relational space which already 'exists' between mother and infant (Stone, 2012: 62). An evolved form of Winnicotts' original idea, Stone's notion of potential space thus embraces the relational and imaginative conditions which allow subjectivity to flourish (Stone, 2012: 63).[249] She remarks, moreover, that 'it is in the initial context of symbolic play with our mothers that we develop abilities to recreate and re-deploy meanings creatively and critically' (ibid.).[250]

Maternal/potential space therefore constitutes the relational space which already exists between mother and infant prior to the operations of psychical matricide and the Oedipal scenario. Indeed, Stone calls attention to the 'ambiguities' surrounding the issue of matricide in Kristeva, for whom matricide cannot be 'total' 'because the early maternal strata of the subject always return, as the Semiotic dimension of its speaking and social relations' (Stone, 2012: 64). We always remain entangled with the 'archaic mother'; the mother that the infant encounters in its earliest stages of life, who orchestrates the 'affective, energetic, and bodily environment that the infant inhabits' (Stone, 2012: 65). As I discussed above, Kristeva calls this environment the *chora*.[251] The maternal body is

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[249] Stone adapts Winnicott's (2005) original concepts of 'transitional space' and 'potential space' which were first developed in his 1951 essay 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena'. Stone remarks, 'Potential or transitional space mediates between mother and child who are becoming differentiated' (Stone, 2012: 69).
[250] Stone's assumption is that mother-child relations would exhibit this 'civilizing character' whether or not women were the primary caregivers empirically.
[251] Kristeva remarks that 'this maternal body[...] becomes the ordering principle of the semiotic *chora*' (Kristeva, 1986: 27 – 28).

therefore already the 'bond between two' (ibid.): a 'two' who are not yet differentiated, nor are they fully merged together either. (As I go on to describe below, this comes close to Ettinger's thesis.[252])

Stone describes the *chora* as a 'space in which significance begins to emerge through material, energetic movements and flows', and it is in this respect that the *chora civilizes*, propelling the subject-to-be towards differentiation and separation (Stone, 2012: 66). But why does Kristeva use the term 'matricide' when she means separation? (Stone, 2012: 66) By referring to psychical *matricide* as opposed to just 'separation', Stone reads Kristeva as emphasising the maternal contribution to subjectivity; in other words, matricide is as important (if not more important) to establishing the boundaries of selfhood as parricide.[253] In this sense, Kristeva's is a *hyperbolic* matricide. Unlike Irigaray, who nods to a phantasized act of mother-killing which has become embedded in the western imaginary, Kristeva's conception, when it is dressed down and put in a positive light, emphasises the civilizing function of the maternal bodily 'space'. However, we do not have to accept Kristeva's contention that this space is also one of abjection and 'horror'.[254]

Further modifying Kristeva's account of maternal space, Stone appeals to Jessica Benjamin's (1998) notion of an 'intersubjective space of thirdness', something she in turn adapts from Winnicott's original idea of 'potential space' (Benjamin, 1998: xv). Whereas Kristeva recognises the mother-child relation as 'triangular' because it is mediated in relation to the imaginary father (the paternal third term), Stone contends that we might regard the mother-child relation as *itself* triangular by locating the third term *within* this relation (Stone, 2012: 68). Benjamin, for instance, remarks on the significance of the early, 'two body' experience of mother and child - a relation of 'intersubjectivity' which gives rise to representation:

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[252] That is, the matrixial encounter between the 'I' of the mother and the non-I of the infant/subject-to-be (see Ettinger, 2006a).

[253] The killing of the father was initially hypothesised by Freud in Chapter 4 of *Totem and Taboo* (1938). He claimed that the primitive totemic system 'resulted from the conditions underlying the Oedipus complex'; the sons' ambivalence towards the murdered father - who they simultaneously abhorred and adored - and the guilt arising from this ambivalence, then serves as the precondition of psychoanalytic thought (Freud, 1938: 204; 219). Cf. Stone, 2012: 37 – 61.

[254] We should also note that, for Kristeva, matricide is never fully achieved, as the maternal body relation is 'remembered' in the form of the Semiotic element of speech (the *chora*, moreover, marks the link between these two registers. See Kristeva, 1986).

'Specifically, representation is mediated through the evolution of the transitional space, which includes not only the fantasy experience of "alone-with-other" but also dialogic interaction. [...] Language is heir to this transitional space [...] inasmuch as we see it less in its Lacanian sense as subjecting the individual to the symbolic structure, and more relationally as forming the medium of the subject's acting on and interacting with the world.' (Benjamin, 1998: 28)

Benjamin continues that this (psychic) 'space of fluctuating convergence and divergence' between mother and child becomes a mediating 'third term' *within* the maternal (but also *analytic*) dyad (ibid.). This 'space' forms the basis from which to understand the position of the other. Moreover, separation is not merely imposed by an outside other, but by 'a maternal subjectivity that is able to represent affect and hence process the pain of separation between mother and child' (ibid.). Loss, separation and aggression are still fundamental to the process of differentiation and identification, but, according to Benjamin, these emotions are facilitated by the transitional space which allows loss to be transformed by representation. Thus we have separation, but without 'matricide' in the strong sense (i.e. of denying the mother symbolic expression by foreclosing her desire).

Potential space is therefore 'not merely metaphorical, but suggests a mode of relationality that is embodied' (Stone, 2012: 70). Stone remarks of Benjamin: 'In her recasting of Winnicott, potential space enables the child not to expel the mother from his or her self but rather to recognize the mother as an independent self' (Stone, 2012: 70). The supposed 'dyad' of mother-infant is exposed as a *triad*, with the maternal body acting as the psychical 'link' between mother and child. For Kristeva, this 'primary thirdness' represented by the maternal space allows for a 'spacing' between the maternal subject and the infant/subject-to-be. However, Stone and Benjamin differ from Kristeva in that this 'third' is *maternal* rather than *paternal*.

Stone goes on to further adapt the notion of potential space by reapplying the term to Kristeva's concept of *chora* (Stone, 2012: 72). Potential space, for Stone, is the 'evolved form of *chora*', and this, she says, makes extant its maternal character (Stone, 2012: 73). However, potential

space remains distinct from the mother herself, and in fact *enables* this distinction to take place. Previously, mother and *chora* were connected together: 'one of the relata was largely conflated with the space of relation' (ibid.). In Stone's vision, *chora* expands into the ambiguous space between two. Potential space is therefore not merely metaphorical, but a real space of psychic mediation regulated by the maternal body. Indeed, this is reminiscent of Rouch's assertion in 'On the Maternal Order' (1993b) that 'it seems to me that the differentiation between the mother's self and the other of the child, and vice versa, is in place well before it is given meaning in and by language' (JTU: 42). As I described above, Benjamin highlights the fact that this 'differentiation' is in fact the origin of the subject's linguistic development.

In this section I have outlined Alison Stone's notion of potential space – an evolution of concepts from Kristeva, Winnicott, and Benjamin – and have suggested that Stone's notion helps us to theorise the primary imaginary register as a psychic space of mediation between mother and infant. As Stone remarks, 'Far from enabling matricide, potential space enables a form of self and capacities for creative subjectivity that are decidedly anti-matricidal' (Stone, 2012: 71). I contend that Irigaray's primary imaginary, as a sort of 'sensible transcendental', equips us with the corporeal logic required to translate the primordial relation with the maternal body, permitting us to acknowledge the maternal contribution to subjectivity as itself a *civilizing* process *before* the intrusion of the paternal third term.

In the final section I shall reflect on the work of artist and analyst Bracha Ettinger, who provides another way to theorise a model of relationality (or 'severality') emerging from the prenatal period *vis-à-vis* her notion of the 'matrixial' register.

5. Ettinger's 'Matrixial Borderspace'

Bracha Ettinger (2006a; 2006b) offers a radical reworking of Lacan (but also Kristeva and Irigaray) in her notion of the 'matrixial borderspace'.[255] Influenced by Freud's notion of 'womb fantasies' in his work 'The Uncanny' (2003), as well as by the later work of Lacan, what Ettinger calls the 'matrixial borderspace' refers to a subjectivizing dimension connected to the intrauterine space of the womb (from 'matrix', the Latin term for womb). She remarks:

'I wish to create a hiatus in the 'original register' by spinning the usual connotation of the uterus itself – considered as a basic, passive space, an imaginary 'only interior' locus – toward that of a dynamic borderspace of active/passive co-emergence with-in and with-out the uncognized other. The matrix is not a symbol for an invisible, unintelligible, originary, passive receptacle onto which traces are engraved by the originary and primary processes; rather, it is a concept for a transforming borderspace of encounter of the co-emerging I and the neither fused nor rejected uncognized non-I. This concept has implications both on the visible ontogenetic level and on the level of a broadened Symbolic, which includes subsymbolic processes of interconnectivity'. (Ettinger, 2006a: 64. Emphasis in original.)

Ettinger transforms the original Latin meaning of 'matrix' - as the place or substance in which something else originates – by appealing to its more modern connotation as an interface or network of intersecting elements. It is with the idea of a matrixial *borderspace* (between life and death, Eros and Thanatos) that Ettinger introduces a dimension of human subjectivity defined by 'encounter' (Ettinger, 2006: 96). Unlike the Oedipal paradigm which defines subjectivity as the accumulation of a series of cleavages, cuts and separations, the matrixial paradigm stands *beside* the Oedipal (not counter or opposed to it) and suggests that we might trace elements of another subjective dimension,

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[255] Ettinger's thought develops that of the 'late' Lacan, in particular his remarks on the *sinthôme* (1975 – 1976). She comments that this seminar marks 'the beginning of a third theoretical phase concerning the woman/the feminine: the potentialities of a *beyond-the-phallus* feminine dimension' (Ettinger, 2006a: 57).

in which subjectivity is generated through encounter, 'severality', and sharing from the inception with an unknown, impartial (m)Other: the archaic mother (Pollock, 2006b: 96). For Ettinger, the matrixial helps to theorise a dimension of co-emergence from the pre-natal encounter with the archaic woman-mother, and therefore comes close to Irigaray's depiction of the intrauterine encounter in 'On the Maternal Order' (1993b). Unlike Irigaray, however, Ettinger demarcates the matrixial as an explicitly *psychic* register.

Griselda Pollock argues that Irigaray remains uncomfortably on the unresolvable borderline between physiological understanding of actual bodily organs and the psycho-subjective which defines the anatomical as well as perceptual realities (Pollock, 2009: 6 – 7). I remarked in the previous chapter that Pollock criticizes Irigaray for not being daring enough with her use of the intrauterine model and for not moving beyond 'physical organs'. However, according to Pollock, Ettinger uses pre-natal/pre-maternal 'encounter' (the prenatal sojourn in Irigaray) as a basis for recognising and developing a dimension of subjectivity, fantasy and thought that isn't 'all about organs' (ibid.). Ettinger dares to think the potential significance of the pre-natal becoming-human as a profound 'limit' in psychoanalytical theory which few have dared to breach; although, as I demonstrated earlier in this chapter, Irigaray's thought gestures in this direction but remains undeveloped. Pollock continues moreover that Ettinger 'does not get locked into the binary of masculine/feminine because her matrixial theory is not grounded in physical organs' (ibid.).

The 'matrixial feminine', then, is a form of sexual specificity which is 'non-gendered', not shaped by the Oedipal paradigm, nor is it ruled by phallic signifier and therefore by the logic of presence and absence. The matrixial is a *structure* or logic of subjectivity which from the beginning is 'several'. According to Ettinger, the 'severality' of the first encounter between mother and infant generates a 'corporeal psychic connection':

'The first corporeal psychic connection between I and non-I occurs inside the maternal womb where every I is in linkage with the female invisible corporeality and is borderlinking to the m/Other's psychic environment. From then on, the self-difference and the sexual difference of any human being embodied as female (Girl) is

defined with and in reference to another woman (the m/Other) first, and at a later stage also to several other women who can hold the site – time-and-space – of the Woman-beneath-the-m/Other, who remains forever enveloped inside the figure of the archaic m/Other that dwelt in resonance with the I within the primary relational field of encounter.' (Ettinger, 2006b: 70)

Here, the matrixial encounter between the 'I' of the mother and the 'non-I' of the subject-to-be generates a series of psychic 'links' which the maternal body which occur prior to, and persist after, Oedipalization. [256] This corporeal psychic space, Ettinger suggests, has a special significance for those of us who are embodied as female. She contends that feminine sexual difference is marked by what she calls 'matrixial co-emergence'; the difference of a female child from another female – a woman m/Other figure – and not from men, boys or the father (ibid.). This 'feminine-matrixial woman-to-woman difference comes before the formation of separate subjects, whole objects, and personal identity' (ibid.). Here, Ettinger does not understand the 'feminine' as one side of an oppositional or complimentary masculine/feminine dichotomy, but rather as 'a *different potentiality* before and beyond' phallic dualism (Ettinger, 2006b: 68. Emphasis added). She defines the matrixial as 'a trans-subjective sphere based upon the phantasmatic and traumatic links between each future subject and its future mother, between the not-yet-born baby and its becoming-mother' (ibid.).

Ettinger's notion of a matrixial register adapts elements from both Irigaray and Kristeva. Whilst her vision of the intrauterine encounter appears to be inspired by Irigaray, in several senses the matrixial register appears to stand as an evolved form of Kristeva's Semiotic *chora*:

‘Forget wombs, insides and organs. Think instead of traces, vibrations and resonances, registered sonic and tactile intimations of otherness, sharing space but never fusing, encountering but never dissolving their boundaries, jointly eventing without ever knowing fully the other's event.' (Pollock, 2009: 14)

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[256] Ettinger uses non-I as opposed to 'not-I' as the foetus cannot be said not to be entirely part of the 'I' at this stage. In this sense Ettinger's is similar to Kristeva's notion of the subject-in-process (the idea that the evolution of the subject parallels the evolution of language).

The matrixial encompasses a sub-Symbolic network of what Ettinger calls 'borderlinks' and interactions which are capable of generating dimensions of phantasy and meaning that supplement the phallic organisation of meaning (Pollock, 2006b: 86). The idea of another kind of structural organisation is for Ettinger what allows the female artist to create *without* becoming complicit in the elimination or sacrifice of the archaic woman-(m)Other; in other words, without committing matricide.

Whilst Ettinger retains the Oedipal paradigm, and locates the matrixial register as operating 'alongside' it (it does, however, 'recede' in favour of the Oedipal), Ettinger nonetheless provides a useful framework for understanding how a 'heterogeneous' or 'expanded' Symbolic would work. Let us return briefly to the topic of matricide.

According to Ettinger, the 'archaic woman'(m)Other' (or Metis, for example) has been incorporated into myths of the 'birth' of the hero (Ettinger, 2006a: 173). It is only on the basis of the annihilation of a 'third possibility' - that of the mother as Muse or source of inspiration (as opposed to copulating animal or nourishing animal) - that the genius-hero complex (the parthenogenetic phantasy of the self-begetter) is held together (ibid.). Like Jacobs, Ettinger suggests that it is only on the basis of the concealment of the mother's murder that the phallic system is allowed to operate:

'The birth-giving mother is not killed and then symbolically resurrected, like the father. She is not even rejected as an abject. For the hero to be born of himself, the archaic becoming-mother must melt into obscurity and senselessness as a Thing of no human significance.' (Ettinger, 2006a: 175)

The elimination of the woman-mother is a sacrifice which, according to Ettinger, is necessary for 'male sexuality to become productive'; in other words, a myth which sustains the phantasy of parthenogenesis (Ettinger, 2006a: 175). Relegated to the status of Thing (something which is beyond all sense-making), the woman comes to represent the abjected feminine (Antigone), the woman-Other-monster who, lying at the foundations of society, 'is also the unacknowledged substrate, the

signifying plane against whose repression the phallically constituted Subject is established' (Pollock, 2006b: 80). However, for Ettinger, if matricide is necessary for the genius male artist, then it is vital that the woman artist does not repeat this elimination. She enlists the notion of the matrixial as another sort of structural organisation which preserves the mother's symbolic identity by creating and sustaining psychic links: what she calls 'borderlinks'. For those of us born female, we remain 'borderlinked' to the sexual-maternal-feminine 'at the level of unremembered memory and imaginative projection that may be foreclosed under phallocentrism' (Pollock, 2009: 15). Instead of the desire for a child being interpreted as the desire for a penis, it may be interpreted as the desire for a re-encounter with the kind of 'otherness in proximity that is the gift of our mothers to us as woman-subjects'.[257] Thus the matrixial is constitutive of female genealogy in its most archaic psycho-corporeal form.

Conclusions

In the preceding sections I explored two accounts – that of Alison Stone (2012) and Bracha Ettinger (2006a; 2006b) – which purport to counterpose matricide by rethinking the maternal contribution to subjectivity. In Section 4 I appealed to Alison Stone's notion of 'potential space', and – as an 'evolved' form of Kristeva's notion of the Semiotic *chora* – likened this concept to what I have called Irigaray's primary imaginary register. Irigaray's primary imaginary circumvents the need for a paternal 'third term' because the relationship between mother and infant is *already triangulated*. This register, as one of relationality, persists post-natally in the mother-child bond. In Section 5 I then examined Ettinger's concept of the 'matrixial borderspace'. On the surface, Ettinger appears have solved ongoing issues revolving around the elision of the maternal contribution to subjectivity by postulating the matrixial: a characteristically 'female' psycho-corporeal register. But whilst I find Ettinger's theory attractive – particularly because of the ways in which it reworks the late Lacan – Ettinger's account does retain a quasi-matricidal schema, at least for men, who are still required to enact a violent separation from the mother, as per the Oedipal scenario. Indeed, for Ettinger,

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[257] Cf. Ettinger's (2006b) reading of Freud's (2001) infamous Dora case.

'productive' male sexuality remains intrinsically *phallic*. And whilst Ettinger's account solves issues pertaining to matricide where women's psychical development is concerned (the matrixial persists as a dimension of female subjectivity), the matrixial register nonetheless 'recedes' in favour of the phallic and therefore remains, in some sense, 'subservient' to it. In short, Ettinger is too orthodox in her retention of the basic tenets of Lacanian theory and it is dubious whether, given this retention, her account has the power to challenge the dominant psychoanalytical attitude towards sexuation that Irigaray highlights as symptomatic of the socio-historical oppression of women under patriarchy. However, my main use of Ettinger was to rather to show how Irigaray's primary imaginary register may be broadened or extended along similar lines: as a characteristically *female* register which is formed *in utero* and constitutes the primary bond between mother and daughter.

In the last chapter, I did not elaborate on how exactly I saw the model of 'fleshy subjectivity' as helping to solve the problem of female subjectivity from the perspective of female genealogy, what Irigaray calls the 'female *genre*': the female continuum which links us to the origins of life (Muraro,1994: 322). This chapter has argued that we must circumvent the need for psychical matricide if we are to permit the mother expression within the symbolic economy. The requirement for matricide is diminished if we assume that there isn't, in fact, a mother-infant 'dyad' in the first place. This chapter has highlighted the weaknesses of Irigaray's solution to the problem of psychical matricide; indeed, Irigaray's is an insufficiently developed solution and remains preoccupied with bodily organs such as the placenta. I have suggested some ways to integrate several of Irigaray's key concerns within a more advanced account of anti-matricidal psychosexual development by appealing to two contrasting accounts – that of Stone and Ettinger – in light of which they can be developed into a more robust account of female subjectivity.

The conclusion to this thesis will reflect critically on the past six chapters, and in light of my analyses of the sensible transcendental, illustrate what I regard as the 'Irigarayan female subject.'

Conclusions

This thesis, 'Tracing the 'Sensible Transcendental': Luce Irigaray and the Question of Female Subjectivity', begins to develop a post-Oedipal account of psychosexual development, and has ultimately aimed to construct a meaningful psychoanalytical concept of *embodied female subjectivity*: what I now call the 'Irigarayan subject'. I have used the core concept of a 'sensible transcendental' as a key for unlocking what Irigaray calls non-phallic 'sexuate difference', a difference which may be perceived only by means of a 'transcendental sensibility': an 'intermediary milieu' or dialogic space of co-emergence (with a sexuate (m)other) which forms the basis of a *sui generis* female subject position. Irigaray's vision, I suggest, may be woven into an anti-matricidal (and therefore post-Oedipal) account of psychosexual development (for both women and men) which has significant consequences for the traditional 'subjects' of philosophy and psychoanalysis.

This concluding section is split into three parts. In the first, I shall reflect on the preceding six chapters and describe how each contributes to facets of what I have called the 'Irigarayan subject'. I then turn to the question of a 'therapeutic cure', and argue that an Irigarayan subjectivity helps to mitigate the potentially damaging ('matricidal') effects of countertransference (between a female analyst and female analysand). This leads me in Section 3 to consider the overall nature of my project, and whether it could be described as 'anti-Oedipal' or 'post-Oedipal'. This is an important distinction: how and to what extent does 'Irigarayan' subject *refuse* the limits of Oedipality? I suggest that the Irigarayan subject is not merely a rejection of Oedipal structure, but a progression beyond its parameters. Finally, I summarise by considering whether or not I have answered 'question' of female subjectivity posed at the start of this thesis.

1. The 'Irigarayan Subject'

Overview of the Irigarayan Subject

The Irigarayan subject already *is*. She is not a utopian ideal, nor a future 'possibility', but a liminal concept which becomes permissible should we assume, as Irigaray does, that Freudian-Lacanian phallocentrism is not monolithic; rather, its structures are already weak due to the sexual specificity of its imaginary foundations. However, this is not to say all of its insights are incorrect or incompatible with that of Irigaray. This thesis has worked *with* psychoanalysis, and with Irigaray's opacity and ambivalence towards it, and has aimed towards the production of a *pragmatic* concept of embodied female subjectivity which begins to advance beyond the limitations of Irigaray's own vision. In what follows, I shall reflect on the multifarious character of this subject and show how her facets have been shaped via critical encounters with Kant and Heidegger, with theology and phenomenology, and of course, with psychoanalysis.

The Irigarayan subject might be more accurately described as a *post*-Irigarayan subject. The last two chapters in particular have presented a nuanced reading of Irigaray's early thought, and have attempted to construct a tenable female subject position by incorporating key 'Irigarayan' concepts relating to the maternal and the 'fleshy' into a non-matricidal psychosexual structure. As I remarked, this means that I have led Irigaray's thought to places to which it gestures, but which Irigaray never fully explores. Moreover, I am conscious that the tenability of this fleshy 'Irigarayan' subject hinges on *how exactly* I perceive Irigaray as engaging in a dialogue with psychoanalytic theory as well as philosophy: Irigaray's critical methodology, as I contended in the Introduction, is a dialectical engagement which transforms *both* psychoanalysis and philosophy. A key player in this transformative process and critical methodology is the key term 'sensible transcendental', and its role in 'unlocking' sexuate difference. Furthermore, I have suggested in this thesis that a sensible transcendental is the axis on which sexuate difference turns, and the lens through which we may gain a better understanding of Irigaray's psychoanalytical project as well as her use of philosophical

models. Next, I shall show how each of my six chapters has contributed to the development of what I have called the Irigarayan subject.

How is the Irigarayan Subject 'Post-Kantian'?

In Chapter 2 I showed how the 'sensible transcendental' emerges from Irigaray's critical engagement with Kant, as a response to his purported 'subjectivism'. But what exactly does Irigaray salvage from Kant? And how does this begin to shape her psychoanalytical project and her own fledgling conception of subjectivity?

First, we may describe the Irigarayan subject as *post-Kantian*, insofar as we may also describe Lacan as re-working the unconscious into a quasi-Kantian schema. In recent years there has been a revival of interest in Hegel, and an attempt to work a 'Hegelian' philosophy of history into Lacan.[258] I agree with Christine Battersby, however, when she argues that Lacan is primarily entrenched in a *Kantian* understanding of the formation of the self, and that Lacan essentially psychologises 'the ahistorical moment whereby the Kantian transcendental subject establishes itself via a process of displacing the transcendental object' (Battersby, 1998: 86). This is an important observation. In her critical dialogue with Kant (as well as the intertext with Lacan and Sade) Irigaray accuses Kant – and subtlety also Lacan – of projecting the 'burden' of embodiment onto the maternal-feminine and then effectively 'erasing' it from the bounds of the knowable: the maternal-feminine becomes the ineffable: '*das Ding*' (-*an sich* in Kant) or the 'Thing' (or the *objet* a: the cause of desire in Lacan). I have argued that the Irigarayan term 'specularization', for instance, is intended to capture the ways in which the founding moment of the 'transcendental subject' is also the founding moment of phallocentrism: the repression of maternal desire in Lacan – the 'No!' of the Father – parallels the *foreclosure* of embodied experience in Kant (the schematism which affords a lesser role for the imagination and to the sensible): what Claire Colebrook refers to as Kantian 'closure'.[259]   But if

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[258] For example, Brennan (1993); and to some extent Judith Butler's *Subjects of Desire* (1987).
[259] i.e. epistemological closure (we cannot know the object 'in itself').

Irigaray's beef with Kant and with Lacan is fairly clear – Sade is called upon to play devil's advocate – what exactly does she *preserve* from Kant?

This is where the idea of a sensible transcendental proves illuminating. I suggested in Chapter 2 that it is useful to think of the term along similar lines to Deleuze's 'transcendental sensibility' or 'transcendental empiricism'; that is, as a mode of embodied perception which comes to bear 'when something in our experience eludes our familiar categories of perception and conception and so pushes us to create new ones' (Lorraine, 1999: 132). Instead of positing the transcendental as a realm removed from experience, a *sensible* transcendental locates the grounds of experience in experience *itself*, and endows it with the power to generate new ways of perceiving, imagining, and conceptualising. In this sense, Irigaray's thought is consistent with a form of immanence (but not 'pure' immanence like Deleuze; for example, Irigaray locates forms of 'transcendence' in relations with sexuate others and in the genealogical mother-daughter relation). Furthermore, this move anticipates Irigaray's reformulation of space and time as an *intertwining* of the formal and the material: she contends, again like Deleuze, that space and time are inseparable from material sensuousness, and ought instead to be rethought as *space-time*.

I suggest, therefore, that the Irigarayan subject initially emerges from a critique of the Kantian understanding of the self. Irigaray interprets the 'formalism' of the Kantian system as a 'matricidal' structure, something which becomes a major theme in her work as a whole. For example, in Chapter 2 I described how Irigaray compares the Lacanian doctrine of violent separation from the mother to the displacement of the transcendental 'object' at work in Kant. She contends, moreover, that the 'icy formalism' of the Kantian schema must be melted by its intertwining with the material, its indebtedness to the empirical world and the body of the (m)other. It is by means of a sensible transcendental that the Irigarayan subject is rendered completely 'open' to its sexuate other.

In Chapter 3 I argued that Irigaray does not only re-read Kant through a Heideggerian lens, but uses Heidegger to shape the contours of the Irigarayan subject. I demonstrated how Irigaray re-reads Kant through Heidegger on the topics of space, time and the transcendental, and reformulates the notion of 'space-time' as what Heidegger calls the 'gift of Being', which Irigaray then redefines as *elle donne* – 'she gives' – evoking the debt to the mother. By re-reading Kant through Heidegger on the topics of space and time, Irigaray reformulates the notion of space-time as irrevocably intertwined and intimately associated with the gift of Being (*elle donne*). I argued that, in *The Forgetting of Air* (1999), Irigaray replaces Heidegger's term *Ereignis* with the idea of a 'sensible transcendental': a divine principle which operates, paradoxically, at a corporeal as well as transcendental level (which I argued was also a form of *transcendence-through-immanence*). It is by means of her dalliance with Heidegger that Irigaray restores the sexuate body, and with it our dependency on the mother's body and birthing (hence her metaphor of the 'air'), to metaphysical thinking about subjectivity.

As the least 'psychoanalytical' chapter of this thesis, it is important to highlight the impact of Irigaray's appropriation of Heidegger on what I understand as her psychoanalytical project. If, as Irigaray (1995b) claims, an end to (or 'dissolution' of) the transference between a female analyst and female analysand is dependent upon repairing the schism between 'transcendental' conditions and 'sensible' experience, then Irigaray uses Heidegger to this end, particularly by rethinking the issue of time-space and its relationship with the maternal body. Here, I shall return to the problem of the transference that I set up at the end of Chapter 1, and show how Irigaray's reformulation of 'space-time' has been shaped in relation to Heidegger. I shall also demonstrate how Irigaray's revision of space-time helps us to rethink the 'analytic third term' as a maternal 'third term' which aids the cessation of the transference.

Although in psychoanalytical theory the transference is chiefly a psychic, temporal process, the past may also be reproduced in pre-verbal, affective and therefore also *bodily* forms; crucially, this

means that they can also be *archaic*, emanating from the primordial relation with the maternal body.[260] The task of the analyst, moreover, is to create the necessary 'boundaries' between analyst and analysand; boundaries that separate 'woman' from 'mother' and mitigate against a potentially dangerous 'replaying' of the maternal past, as well as to assuage the re-enactment of psychical matricide. In short, the role of the analyst is to 'contain' negative emotions that arise as a consequence of remembered past experiences and become redirected towards her/him. In this context, Irigaray defines the sensible transcendental as a 'female transcendental against which each woman can measure herself rather than progressing only by taking the place of the mother, the other woman or the man' (Irigaray, 1995: 112). According to Irigaray, only a sensible transcendental would provide the necessary 'space-time' in order to prevent the analyst and analysand from 'eating up the other'. Her appropriation of Heidegger, as I demonstrated in Chapter 3, is intended to rethink the embodied subject's relation to space-time.

In *The Forgetting of Air* (1999) and *Ethics* (2004a), Irigaray reformulates Heidegger's notion of time-space as heterogeneous *space-time*: this transformed conception is *heterogeneous* (rather than *homogenous* in the case of Descartes and Kant) because it reflects the sexed etymology of topos; in other words, *sexuate spatio-temporality* (because the space-time of the subject in inseparable from her/his sexuate 'being'). This is an important corrective to the 'unthought' element in Heidegger; that is, the debt to the 'air' and the maternal body. However, Irigaray retains the 'three dimensional' aspect of Heidegger's doctrine of temporality in 'Time and Being' (2002): Heidegger remarks that 'The self-extending, the opening up, of future, past and present is itself prespatial; only thus can it make room, that is, provide space.' (Heidegger, 2002: 14) This is a helpful way to approach the question of an 'analytic third' or dialogic space of intersubjectivity between analyst and analysand; something which is essential if a successful analytic 'cure' is to be achieved. Reflecting on the psychoanalytic idea that past, present and future comprise an 'organic unity' of lived time, Stone (2012) comments (with reference to the transference) that –

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[260] Cf. Stone's notion of the maternal past (Stone, 2012: 141 – 147).

'[T]he past organizes each individual's openness to the future, but the future as it unfolds reciprocally shapes and re-shapes each individual's past. The present acquires a living, vivid character as past and future intersect.' (Stone, 2012: 144)

Stone's description of 'lived' time is a useful way of approaching Irigaray's revised conception of space-time. Irigaray essentially *remoulds* Heidegger's conception of time-space's three dimensionality (past, present, future) by resituating it in terms of the subject's relation with the 'affective' maternal body. On my reading, space-time is heterogeneous precisely because each one of us stands in our own specific relation to our mothers; and our present relations with, and attitudes towards, others have been (and continue to be) shaped by this primordial relation. Thus whilst the transference is a fundamental feature of analytic practice, it also comes to bear on our relations with (sexuate) others in everyday life. In short, this example helps us to better understand in practical terms why Irigaray's revision of Kant and Heidegger is essential to her conception of sexuate subjectivity. I shall continue in this vein in Section 3, below, by considering how positing an 'Irigarayan' subject we might achieve a successful analytic cure.

The Irigarayan Subject and Spirituality: God, Body, and the Divine

If Heidegger is highly influential in terms of Irigaray's revision of space-time, the 'later' Heidegger is also especially influential in terms of Irigaray's evocation of *parousia* – a return of the God or gods – in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (2004a).[261] Whilst it is beyond the remit of this thesis to expand upon the influence of Hölderlin in this context, it is nonetheless important that I address the mystical overtones of Irigaray's thought with reference to her understanding of theological notions of transcendence, 'God', the 'divine', and so on, as they have also been sculpted in relation to her psychoanalytical project and the question of female subjectivity. In Chapter 4 I showed how Irigaray's encounter with the 'mystical' begins with *Speculum* (1985a). However, I claimed that, by

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[261] *Parousia* – the return of the 'gods' or the second coming – goes hand-in-hand with the achievement of a sensible transcendental. See ESD: 16; 94; 126.

the time of *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993a), Irigaray has moved away from the notion of 'God' as beyond all sense-making (in this sense God is aligned with ~~the woman~~ as the Other), to the idea of God as a form of ego-ideal or symbolic archetype which, for Irigaray, becomes an indispensable component of female subjectivity (and individuation). It seems to me that there are three main conceptions of 'God' at work, here. First, the quasi-Heideggerian notion of a sensible transcendental as a 'bridge' between sexuate subjects; second, the 'divinisation' of the female body via 'self-affection' as a form of transcendence through-the-body (evoked by the image of the 'two lips touching', for example); and third, that of 'God' as an ego-ideal. I have argued that none of these conceptions are 'theological' in a conventional sense. Irigaray bases her vision of horizontal transcendence – that between sexuate subjects – on this second understanding of 'God'; in other words, she bases her idea of the divine (the sensible transcendental) on what I have called a form of radical embodiment or 'fleshy' subjectivity. Importantly, I rejected the third conception of 'God' as an ego-ideal for two reasons. First, if, as Irigaray claims, phallocentrism is only able to symbolise the 'feminine' in relation to the 'masculine' – as its 'other' or prop – then her appeal to female deities as 'ego-ideals' merely re-inscribes the problem that she set out to solve (that is, if the problem relates to a lack of adequate representation or symbolisation, then this problem cannot be solved by appealing to ideal 'types': this is a circular argument).

The second reason concerns the relationship between ego-ideals and projection in analytic psychology. I claimed that Irigaray's use of symbolic archetypes as ego-ideals required a form of conscious projection. This is problematic firstly because projection usually only operates so long as its dynamics are hidden; and secondly because projection is primarily a *defence mechanism*. I would argue here that what Irigaray identifies as a problem relating to the infant's failure to *introject* the maternal other (rather than *incorporate* her, as I discussed in Chapter 6), this problem *cannot* be solved by means of projection, which is a wholly inadequate solution for the two reasons that I have just mentioned.

Thus whilst it is true that the Irigarayan subject occasionally renders herself susceptible to accusations of 'religiosity' – consider, for example, Michele le Doeuff's remark that Irigaray's thought remains 'submerged in the fonts of Saint Sulpice', and Pamela Sue Anderson's concerns

relating to apotheosis – I suggest that Irigaray actually retains very little from 'traditional' theology and philosophy of religion, and instead owes much more to her poststructuralist origins (le Doeuff, 2003: 65). For example, I understand the 'mystical' or the 'divine' in Irigaray as an encounter with the 'unsaid' of discourse; an encounter which seeks to open the subject out to what has been closed off by both Kantian subjectivism and Lacanian phallocentrism: the maternal-feminine. The divine – as a sensible transcendental – is intended to 'reopen' the figures of discourse in order that we may create a *new opening* for the 'feminine', and thus a place in which a *sui generis* female subjectivity can emerge.

Beyond the Sensible Transcendental: the Irigarayan Subject and 'Fleshiness'

In Chapter 5 I began by arguing that the 'Oedipalized' body image (defined by 'activity' versus 'passivity'; fullness versus emptiness, and so on) needs to be modified in order to reflect the morphology and imperatives of, especially, the female body-that-births (defined by *natality*). *Contra* Irigaray's own call for the deployment of symbolic archetypes as 'ego-ideals' in *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993a), I suggested that we instead require a revised account of the development, and function, of the *ideal-ego* (or *imago*) in the formation of sexuate subjectivity. I therefore considered the role of the body image in light of Lacan's mirror stage (itself a form of projection theory), arguing that a revised conception of the body needed to go hand-in-hand with a revised conception of female subjectivity as a 'fleshy'.

By reading Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the 'flesh' as structured by an 'unthought' (the prenatal sojourn), I then demonstrated how Irigaray expands Merleau-Ponty's notion by revealing how the characteristics that he attributes to the 'flesh' – that of reversibility, for example – do not apply to the intrauterine relation between mother and foetus (Stone, 2008: 151).[262] By showing that this 'unthought' nonetheless *precedes* Merleau-Ponty's doctrine of the flesh, I claimed that Irigaray's expanded concept transcends hierarchical 'dualisms' such as self/other, seer/visible, and so on, and helps us to think a model of relationality which is fluid and heterogeneous. Irigaray remarks that the

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[262] Cf. Stone, 2008.

placental relation is that of a 'different economy', and I take this to mean that it forges a path *beyond* the phallocentric account of individuation which defines the self in relation to the 'other' (TSN: 239).

The materiality and 'fleshiness' of the prenatal encounter is evoked repeatedly by Irigaray during the course of her dialogue with Merleau-Ponty, implying that sexuate difference, as 'ontological difference' (a difference in 'being'), precedes Merleau-Ponty's conception of the 'chiasm'. Indeed, for Irigaray, sexuate difference 'is articulated in a kind of 'crisis'; a 'chiasmic crossing of the empirical and the transcendental, material and ideal that leaves none of these terms intact' (Frynsk, 1996: 162). I have argued that Irigaray's sensible transcendental is implicit in her understanding of the 'blurred boundaries' and 'severality' of the intrauterine encounter with the maternal body (ibid.). Irigaray contends that the invisible 'sojourn' in the mother's womb represents an encounter with female *sexual specificity* that is constitutive of sexuate difference prior to birth. In Chapter 6, I then developed this insight into a model of relationality which I suggested formed the basis of a 'primary imaginary' register between mother and infant.

Let me now return briefly to Beauvoir's notion of the 'body as situation' that I touched upon at the end of Chapter 4. I have argued that we might approach the sensible transcendental as constitutive of a form of 'radical embodiment' or transcendence-through-immanence. Given Beauvoir's views on pregnancy and motherhood in *The Second Sex* (as well as her apparent horror at the destructive mother *imago*), it may seem jarring to compare what I have called the Irigarayan subject's 'fleshiness' with Beauvoir's understanding of the body.[263] However, Beauvoir's call to understand the body as a 'situation' represents a useful resource in light of the problems that I set out in the Introduction vis-à-vis the problem of essentialism. As Moi contends, 'Beauvoir's belief in social and individual transformation is the logical outcome of the double claim that the body *is* a situation and that it is always *in* a situation, not of the belief that women will always be oppressed by their reproductive capabilities' (Moi, 2005: 67). For Beauvoir, the female body should be approached not just *as* a situation, but as a situation which is always itself *situated*. If women are oppressed by their reproductive 'burden', this will not always be the case, because the body is determined as a

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[263] See, for example, Toril Moi's commentary on Beauvoir's 'phallic mother' in *Simone de Beauvoir: the Making of an Intellectual Woman*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

'situation' *equally* in terms of the material conditions which impinge upon it, as by the 'transcendence' (freedom) which characterises the human being's fundamental 'nature'. Thus the human body is, for Beauvoir, pervaded by a fundamental ambiguity: it is subject both to natural laws as well as to the human production of meaning.

Moi continues, and I agree, that for Beauvoir, 'it makes no sense to think of human beings as consisting of two superimposed layers, one which we choose to call 'natural' and another that we consider 'cultural' or 'spiritual' (Moi, 2005: 72). In what I understand as a post-phenomenological gesture, for Beauvoir, the body is the locus of subjectivity, a 'backdrop' from which perception proceeds and lived experience begins, as well as a historical 'sedimentation' of our interaction with the world. In short, Beauvoir's account of the body provides us with a useful template for our concept of a 'fleshy' subjectivity. Fleshy subjectivities are 'lived', embodied subjectivities; they are neither determined by 'natural' or biological laws nor by cultural laws and practices: simply put, fleshy subjectivities are more than the sum of their parts.

This model of 'fleshy' subjectivity – where there are no clear boundaries between 'self' and 'other' – might be more accurately described as a 'fluid' subjectivity (fluidity is a trope for the 'feminine' in Irigaray). But like Christine Battersby (1998; 2006), I prefer the term 'fleshy' because it evokes myriad associations of the 'female/feminine', including 'reclaimed' notions such as 'monstrosity' and 'animality'. For Battersby, a fleshy subjectivity (defined in relation to natality and the body-that-births) emerges from a 'play' of relationships and force-fields which constitute the horizon of a heterogeneous (sexuate; shared) space-time. However, I would now like to consolidate my understanding of the Irigarayan subject as 'fleshy' in light of recent criticisms made by Battersby on what she perceives as Irigaray's tendency to treat 'feminine' subjectivity as 'fundamentally always the same' (Battersby, 2006: 291). Battersby continues:

'[Irigaray treats] western culture (especially western philosophy) as that which alienates woman from an underlying authentic subjectivity that is linked to the infant's relation with her mother, and hence to birth. For Irigaray, modes of interaction that are fundamentally relational – and that are linked to natality – have

been repressed or forgotten by masculinist culture that thinks motherhood from the perspective of the boy child.' (Ibid.)[264]

Battersby's concerns are twofold. First, she claims that Irigaray posits an 'authentic' female subjectivity which has hitherto been repressed. Second, she claims that these 'relational' modes of interaction (with the mother) are somehow linked with what Irigaray later theorises as 'feminine' speech and language patterns.[265] Battersby contends that, by positing two separate 'Symbolic spheres' in this way, Irigaray downplays the past achievements of women writers and artists as well as those who purport to be in creative 'dialogue' with members of the other sex (ibid.). Whilst I agree with Battersby on this latter point, I disagree that there is any necessary link between the mode of maternal 'relationality' that Irigaray highlights as having been 'repressed' or foreclosed by phallocentric culture, and the mystical 'irreducible worlds' that Irigaray posits in some of her later writing. I suggest that a relational model (such as the one I began to theorise in Chapter 6) is capable of generating sexuate identities *without* dividing the world (and language) into separate symbolic spheres that reflect the sexes' contrasting modes of 'being'.

In answer to Battersby's first concern – her claim that Irigaray posits an 'authentic' female subjectivity (and thus 'homogenises' it) – it is once more important to take into consideration the 'ontology' of naturally occurring bodies that characterises Irigaray's later thought (see Introduction). On this account, there is indeed an authentic mode of being 'female' and an authentic mode of being 'male'; these 'modes' revolve around the poles of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' that pervade all of nature. As I claimed in the Introduction, although I think this interpretation is philosophically coherent, it remains politically undesirable, partly in the way that Battersby has just described. However, I also claimed in the Introduction that I saw Irigaray's early project as the attempt to interrogate and recreate the conditions out of which subjectivities might emerge, rather than the attempt to define the female subject *per se*. The model of maternal relationality I see as emerging

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[264] Battersby appears to be referring here to Irigaray's essay 'Belief Itself' in *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993a), in which Irigaray discusses Freud's depiction of little Ersnt's *fort-da* game (in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [1920]). Irigaray claims that the little girl does not enter language in the same way as the little boy (that is, through an attempt to 'master' the mother/object. SG: 98 – 99).
[265] For example, in Part II of *Key Writings* (2004).

from the prenatal encounter and the primary imaginary register gives rise not to an 'authentic' female subjectivity, as Battersby calls it, but rather one in which the maternal figure is acknowledged as shaping the sexed identities of male and female children in a substantive way. As regards the relationship between mother and *daughter*, I shall return to this in Section 3.

2. The Irigarayan Subject and the 'Therapeutic Cure'

'The psychoanalytic setting has no secrets other than the ones that psychoanalysis and its readers, including those on the outside, have neglected to interpret – that is, the theoretical impact it might have.' (TSN: 193)

'Without a setting of for sublimation through and between women, does the analytic scene not become impossible?' (TSN: 238)

In this penultimate section I shall reconsider the mother-daughter relationship in light of the relationship between analyst and analysand that I began to reflect upon in Section 1, above. This will help me to answer the 'question' of female subjectivity as I posed it in the Introduction to this thesis. I shall first analyse the 'impact' – to echo Irigaray's words above – of placing what I have called the Irigarayan subject in a psychoanalytic 'setting'. I shall then argue that positing an 'Irigarayan' subjectivity helps to resolve the transference and assist a successful analytic 'cure'.

According to Lacan (Chapter 1 outlined a more or less Freudian understanding), the way that the subject responds to analysis will depend upon the kind of role that the analyst assumes. Lacanian analyst Bruce Fink explains:

'Analysis aims at progressively dissipating the analysand's imaginary relations with his or her friends, colleagues, brothers, and sisters (relations which tend to preoccupy analysands in the early stages of analysis) through the work of association – known as

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'working through' or, as Lacan often puts it, 'the work of transference' – in order to bring into focus the analysand's symbolic relations.' (Fink, 1997: 34)

These 'symbolic relations' are precisely those ideals that have been inculcated in individuals by their parents, teachers, religious institutions, governments, and so on. Symbolic relations are the Law: patriarchal Law. The aim of analysis, for Lacan, is to 'pierce through the imaginary dimension which veils the symbolic and confront the analysand's relation to the Other head on' (Fink, 1997: 35). As I explained in the Introduction, this leads to potentially dangerous territory for women in analysis. In 'The Limit of the Transference' (1995b), Irigaray highlights the lack of Symbolic processes to account for the 'proximity without distance' between mother (analyst) and daughter (analysand). Irigaray thus implies that a Lacanian understanding of the work of transference is inadequate for explaining the problems that arise as a result of this dangerous 'proximity'; or rather, the Lacanian approach cannot provide a solution to the problem because it is constitutively unable to grant the mother figure – or indeed the relations between mothers and daughters or women at large - Symbolic expression. Consequently, the two women are faced with a form of imaginary *corps-à-corps* in which each party threatens to destroy the other. Thus, if the transference is to be resolved and a successful 'cure' to be brought about, I claimed that we require comprehensive revision of what it means to be a 'subject'. In chapters 2 – 4 I then turned to Irigaray's notion of a sensible transcendental in order to better understand the relationship between Irigaray's psychoanalytical project – that is, her quest to define the conditions that would make a *sui generis* female subjectivity possible – and her appropriation of philosophy. But how might the sensible transcendental, as a mode of 'radical embodiment' or 'fleshy subjectivity', come to bear on the analytic scene?

In her essay 'Flesh Colours' in *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993a), Irigaray remarks that a successful analysis is one that restores the balance and harmony of the perceptual economy; in other words, a successful cure hinges on the achievement of a sensible transcendental (a 'unification' of conceptual and corporeal logic) (SG: 156). She claims that the 'transference [...] is the result of a perceptual disequilibrium,' and that 'if we disregard this perceptual imbalance we risk uprooting the patient from his or her body and history' (SG: 154 – 155). The goal of the analyst is to make 'fluid'

past events that have become 'crystallised' in the patient's present, and put them back into perspective so that 'creativity can again work freely' (SG: 156). Only this will facilitate harmony between 'current perceptions' and those of 'the past, present, and future history of the subject' (ibid.). In Alison Stone's (2012) view, the analysand is meant to call upon the 'maternal body relations of her past, so that she strives to integrate these relations into a narrative and render them meaningful' (Stone, 2012: 147). Although Stone refers here to a distinctly maternal subject-position, I think this nonetheless provides a helpful way of thinking about how the 'artificial' relationship between analyst and analysand (that of the transference) might be solved. Irigaray remarks that a successful analysis is one in which the analysand is able to call upon the maternal past – its rhythms, tones, and colours – in order to 're-paint' the present and thereby prevent psychic energy being sustained in the transference (SG: 155).[266]

Irigaray claims, moreover, that in analysis between two women, a 'pathway has yet to be invented' which would afford them a transitional 'object' (TSN: 237). She continues:

'[A] scene must be invented that moves beyond orality and the subsequent stages, but that carefully – and not in the same way that the child psychoanalyst would –establish a space for the intra-uterine, and access to respiration, and to the gaze opening up onto what is not yet an object: sensitive, sensual touching, a still contemplative opening of the eyes, prior to any capture, or precise objectival definition' (TSN: 239).

This 'scene', I suggest, would represent the 'dialogic space of co-emergence' emerging from the primary imaginary register that I proposed in Chapter 6. I recommended that we use the notion of the primary imaginary as an evolved form of Kristeva's Semiotic *chora* which begins pre-natally and then persists in the form of relational space of co-emergence between mother and infant. Functioning in a similar way to Stone's (2012) idea of 'potential space', this model assumes an already 'triangulated' mother-infant relation which originates in the maternal bodily imaginary. In the

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[266] Irigaray uses painting as a metaphor for this method of bringing past experiences to bear on the present. Interestingly, Bracha Ettinger also uses painting as a way to engage with memory and trauma.

analytic scene, this relation is re-manifested not merely in the form of a verbal dialogue between analyst and analysand, but in other non-verbal 'transactional' objects such as gestures, tone, and expression. This imaginary register is, moreover, non-visual and therefore not subject to the rules of the ocular economy: it harnesses the bodily 'memory' of the intrauterine experience: breathing, touching and listening.[267] As Benjamin remarks, the dialogue between analyst and analysand is 'heir' to the transitional space of the first (primary) imaginary and replays itself during the course of analysis (Benjamin, 1998: 28).

Fleshy subjectivities, as I have defined them in this thesis, are able to recreate in the present a 'dialogic' space with the maternal other and to use this space to contain the (m)other's desire: something which is essential to the resolution of the transference and thus to a successful analytic cure. From the perspective of the mother-daughter relationship, we might regard this relationship as integral to our understanding of the dynamics between analyst and analysand. The transference is only resolvable if we assume a model of relationality between mother and daughter that is implicitly 'fleshy', and therefore non-matricidal.

In this section I have demonstrated that the transference is in fact resolvable, and an analytic 'cure' achievable, if we appeal to the 'relational' model implicit in my understanding of a 'fleshy' Irigarayan subjectivity. Next, I shall describe the ways in which I see the Irigarayan subject as moving 'beyond' Oedipality.

3. Final Summary: 'Post-Oedipality' and the Question of Female Subjectivity

In the Introduction I defined my understanding of 'post-Oedipal' as incorporating an account of female subjectivity which is not based on the masculine, phallic model. Oddly, this represents a departure from the Lacanian understanding of post-Oedipal. A subjectivity that is *post*-Oedipal in the Lacanian sense emerges when desire is no longer contained within the Oedipus complex by means of the threat of castration. This 'desire' (which has very little to do with material sexuality; or is more or

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[267] For example, Ettinger (2006b) theorises the *link a* as opposed to the *objet a* – a 'feminine' specific cause of desire that does not operate from within the ocular economy (in Marguerite Duras' novel *The Ravishing of Lol V Stein*, for example).

less divorced from it) is wholly concerned with the consummation of its own pleasure (which *ought never* be consummated: the drive always circles 'around' the *objet a*). What is radical about Irigaray is her attempt to shift the emphasis away from the Symbolic (the discourse of the Other), onto embodied, material, sexuate subjects. In this sense, Irigaray's thought represents a move away from the orthodox Freudian-Lacanian understanding of how subjects become sexed and moves towards more 'phenomenological' territory. A post-Oedipal subjectivity in an Irigarayan sense, as I have shown in this concluding chapter, is intrinsically embodied and 'fleshy'; the sexuate body, as opposed to the Symbolic order, is the core and anchor of 'being'. Moreover, an Irigarayan subjectivity is not formed through a matricidal process of 'expelling' or abjecting the mother, but through a mode of relationality in the form of a 'bridge' – a sensible transcendental – between infant and mother; between subject and 'other'. This is a distinctly *female* mode of relationality – insofar as it emerges in relation to the maternal body – but it is not a mode of relationality that is limited to those of us who are embodied *as* female. Whilst this mode is certainly constitutive of what I have sometimes called a *sui generis* or 'authentic' female subjectivity, it is certainly not limited to shaping female identities. The key transformatory aspect of this vision is the fact that it liberates *both* sexes from the shackles of the phallocentric model and opens subjectivity out to new ways of 'being' and 'becoming'.

This thesis has outlined the various ways in which Irigaray's thought intersects with, critiques, and appropriates that of Kant and Heidegger, Lacan and Merleau-Ponty, and numerous others in the fields of psychoanalysis, philosophy, and phenomenology. By tracing the 'sensible transcendental', I have developed a vision of the 'Irigarayan subject': a heterogeneous, fleshy subject which initially emerges from the 'margins of discourse' via Irigaray's strategy of mimesis. I have shown how this subject might be consolidated by reading beyond the limitations of Irigaray's thought. In the Introduction I remarked that I intended to return to Irigaray's transformatory roots with renewed vigour. I hope to have shown how the question of female subjectivity might be answered if we treat Irigaray's corpus not as a monolithic 'whole', but as a complex set of ideas which may be explored and developed on their own terms.

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