Masculinities, male bodies and sexual difference: a sketch for an impossible "becoming-man"

By

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Reworked and translated parts of the thesis have been published elsewhere:

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Abstract

In this thesis, I sketch a possible answer to the question of what it means to think about men and masculinities through the philosophy of sexual difference as developed by Luce Irigaray, while employing Gilles Deleuze's concept of "critique" and arguing, at the same time, for a concept of "becoming-man" as an expression of this answer. First, while examining the nature of the role of male bodies underlying the theorizing of men and masculinities in the field of the Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities, I argue for a turn to sexual difference theory as an answer to the "gap" between the representational thinking about male bodies and their participation in thought and subjective production. Secondly, sharing Irigaray's critique of Western thought, in both its philosophical and psychoanalytical instantiations, I examine alternative morphological locations for rethinking the male imaginary in relation to male embodiments, on the one hand, and in relation to the maternal and the feminine, on the other hand. Thirdly, I suggest that a phenomenologically-influenced approach towards male bodies might be productive, especially when thought through Irigaray's sexual difference as a *relational and experiential ontology* understood in phenomenological terms. Finally, while showing that Irigaray and Deleuze share a similar critique of Western philosophical thought and of the masculine historical subject, I propose a rethinking of the concept of "becoming-man" as an assemblage meeting between Irigaray's sexual difference and Deleuze and Guattari's nomadologic project and as a possibility of thinking change in men's masculine subjective constitution in relation to both women and men. As far as the ethical implications of such rethinking are concerned, the thesis urges for the cultivation of *a masculine culture of stepping back* so as to make possible the construction of new spaces that would allow for the becoming of at least two subjects based on the respect for their differences.

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I dedicate this thesis to Carmen, who, with her choice, offered me life and guided me in ways so that I could live differently. I see this thesis as an effort to account somehow for our life together, with different paths though, learning to meet again and again and to nurture our relationship much beyond a mother-son bond. Thank you for your generosity!

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Introduction

> I cannot explain exactly why I have emerged in this way, and my efforts at narrative reconstruction are always undergoing revision. There is that in me and of me for which I can give no account. But does this mean that I am not, in the moral sense, accountable for who I am and for what I do? If I find that, despite my best efforts, *a certain opacity* persists and I cannot make myself fully accountable to you, is this ethical failure? Or is it a failure that gives rise to another ethical disposition in the place of a full and satisfying notion of narrative accountability? Is there in this affirmation of partial transparency a possibility for acknowledging a relationality that binds me more deeply to language and to you than I previously knew? And is the relationality that conditions and blinds this "self" not, precisely, an indispensable resource for ethics?
>
> Judith Butler - *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005, p. 40; italics mine).

This thesis is motivated, among other things, by an ethical inquiry: how to account for oneself in such ways so that this very "questioning" can turn into an affirmative doing, while writing as a (male) body, being in language and various life situations? How could I *think* and *do* differently so as to imagine and live social changes in this "present," while being faithful to my embodied self in feminist terms?

In the context of discussing Theodor Adorno's conception of ethical violence and the importance of his formulation for the current debates about moral nihilism, in *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), Judith Butler suggests that there are necessary theoretical changes to be done, given the "shifting historical character of moral inquiry itself" and that the questions shaping the moral inquiry are produced by the historical conditions one is part of (Butler, 2005, p. 6). The acknowledgement of the historical situatedness of the moral questioning becomes in itself a crucial element of a larger interrogation of subjective development in "our" times and, in this very sense, Butler is trying to show that "a theory of subject formation that acknowledges the limits of self-knowledge can serve a conception of

ethics and, indeed, responsibility" (Butler, 2005, p. 20). In the process of my own narrative of living a personal political investment in being a male body in a world woven in power relations against various groups of different "women" and "men" and so many "others," I am confronted with an apparent constraining opacity regarding the possibilities of accounting for my ethical questioning, given my more than less personal privileged positioning. For this reason, a theoretical account of this very conditioning concomitantly with that of my hopefully possible affirmative thinking/doing has to accompany the ethical questioning, which unfolds both in and as the writing process itself, an uncomfortable process that also has the potential to express me as a sexuate subject.[1]

My ethical inquiry leads me on the pathways opened up by several theoretical perspectives, which, in this process, function not as points of origin but rather as milieus that welcome at their crossroads certain possibilities for male bodies in relation to language and the world. In this light, the aim of this project is to schematize another way of thinking the categories of "men" and "masculinities" and to explore the implications of this re-conceptualization within an explicit feminist philosophical stance, as to critically engage with the ways male bodies are both lived and theorized in relation to masculinities. Therefore, my thesis proposes a reading and a rethinking of the relationship between male bodies and masculinities by developing a conceptual framework that can account for the ethical dimensions of men's and women's lives, drawing on the importance of male bodies and their lived experiences and material-symbolic practices within the masculine subjective constitution and on their potential subversive agency against the patriarchal ordering of the relationships between women and men. I argue that a *re-imagining* of the male embodied lived experiences in sexually differentiated terms, that is, in relation to one's own specific body, on the one hand, and others' bodies, on the other hand, can effect a reconfiguring of the

[1] I use the term "sexuate" with a specific meaning in the context of Luce Irigaray's work, which I will clarify later in the thesis.

masculine subject formation in non-violent terms towards other men and women's bodies and lives, according to the lines drawn in the philosophy of sexual difference developed by Luce Irigaray.

At the same time, a reworking of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notion of "becoming-man" through the philosophy of sexual difference is meant to support my thinking of what it might mean to be faithful to one's embodied sexuate nature in the processes of cultural becomings and articulations as a masculine subjectivity in relation to one's male corporeality, and to other women's and men's bodies different than "mine". A main thread of my work is, therefore, given by the question of the *nature of the materiality of male bodies*, its relation to the world and its agential status for productive social transformations. I follow this question in my explorations of the *ontology of sexual difference* as I read it in Luce Irigaray's works, of the *experiential and relational ontology* of a feminist phenomenology of sexual difference I hope to contribute along the lines of Luce Irigaray's work, and of the projects Gilles Deleuze and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari articulated in relation to bodies, thought and language.

In the course of this thesis, I engage preponderantly with Luce Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference, which I see as a viable and promising view for answering problems I identify in the first chapter, in relation to a specific conceptualization of male bodies and masculinities. Her perspective formulates a fruitful connection between the embodied individual experiences of the world and the larger social and symbolic power structures, with an emphasis on the agential role of the sexuate bodies. At the same time, I appeal to the works of Gilles Deleuze and that of Deleuze and Guattari's, as they share a similar critique of philosophical thought and of its inherent masculinism, while offering viable alternatives for imagining different ways of escaping the grips of patriarchal thinking.

In a narratological reading, I offer both a story and a plot in my thesis. While the story is the one concerning the production of the masculine embodied subjectivity, albeit a different one, the plot presents the story in three stages, all revolving around a specific understanding of the notion of "critique," which I borrow from the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze. First, I have in view this conception of critique while analyzing the predominant perspective on the relationship between male bodies and masculinities within the Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities. In the second chapter, I demonstrate that Irigaray, too, shares Deleuze's understanding of critique in her engagement with the Western canonical philosophical thought. Finally, I use this critique in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's already famous view on "becoming-woman" and gender power relations, with the aim of arguing for the possibility of imagining a "becoming-man" along the lines of sexual difference philosophy.

In the **first chapter** I take a preliminary step. While looking for a theoretical account to engage with when thinking about men and their bodies and the possibilities for new political pro-feminist agendas, I develop the argument that, in the recently institutionalized area of the Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities, male bodies are theorized predominantly within a social constructivist and/or radically discursive constructionist viewpoint. I identify a certain conceptual "gap" between male bodies and masculinities that is left unscrutinized. I show that the current dominating theoretical frameworks used in understanding "men" and "masculinities" and their relationship to "male bodies" cannot account for this gap and for the question of the transformative ethical potential. Secondly, I raise the question of the almost total absence of a theoretical engagement with sexual difference perspective in the scholarly works falling under the studies on men and masculinities, despite the nominal acknowledgement of the importance of male bodies' presence in these works (and also as referents in the academic field itself) and despite the

explicit focus on male bodies discernible in sexual difference theories. The chapter prepares the ground for answering the question of my thesis: what it means to think about male bodies, men and masculinities and the implications of such thinking through the philosophy of sexual difference?

In the **second chapter** of my thesis, I discuss Luce Irigaray's understanding of sexual difference in both her earlier and later works by focusing mainly on her critique of the psychoanalytical notions of (male) Imaginary and Symbolic and their relationship to male bodies, in order to thematize masculinities and male bodies in different ways. Basically, I aim at developing a conceptual scheme through which to look at male bodies as male embodiments with special attention to various morphological and bodily locations as possible imaginary and symbolic alternatives to the phallic representations of male bodies.

The **third chapter** is structured around the issue of the relationship between male bodies, on the one hand, and the language and symbolic articulations and their possible critical reimaginings, on the other hand. Another aim of the thesis, then, given the framework of sexual difference philosophy, is to think the conditions of possibility for a different understanding of the materiality of bodies and language and their constitutive relationship that could allow imagining a restructuring of the masculine subject position in its male bodily expressions and practices. In short, how can I think/imagine another male imaginary and masculine symbolic, i.e. another form for male bodies and masculine subject of ethically relating to female bodies and the feminine subjectivity yet to come? To achieve a change in men's language, in their position of enunciation, discourses, symbolic, a different consideration of language/discourse production is needed, one that is rather a carnal expression, continuity and connection in the relation with the world, in the meeting with the others and primarily in the encounters with the sexually differentiated others, an expression which can allow for changes. This new conception of language-materiality, which I recognize

in Luce Irigaray's works, will answer to the problems I identify in the first chapter concerning the ways male bodies are theorized in relation to men and masculinities. I also argue that Irigaray's work can be read in phenomenological terms, that is, along the lines of an *experiential ontology of sexual difference* (as an alternative to the readings of her work as either strategic or realist essentialist).

In the **fourth chapter,** I focus on the issue of what it means *to think differently*, to think in the expressions of a different thought as such which both answers to its historical conditioning and can effect new paths, new histories. With their critique of representation dominating the Western philosophical thought and by liberating the *difference in itself* and the concept of difference from that of identity, Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy de-centers the (masculine) Subject, while bringing in a plethora of "becomings." Many feminist critiques, which I align with, have been directed toward this concept, one of its particular exemplars being the famous "becoming-woman." Sexual difference, seen as another significatory/discursive system among others by Deleuze and Guattari, seems to be neglected, for a grater project, rightfully labeled by feminists as yet another masculinist story. I believe, however, that some conceptual locations in their philosophy can be used and reworked through the philosophy of sexual difference. With this aim in mind, I focus on their critical stance of moving away from the centrality/primacy of language and on their development of a minoritarian understanding of language in terms of "stuttering." I also look at their concept of *correlation* and the critique of *metaphor* as representation, aspects also approached by Luce Irigaray in her critique of the male language, as starting points for imagining a different masculine "langage" as a tool of destabilizing the masculine subject position. I also argue that, in Deleuze and Guattari's view on "becomings," sexual difference is actually already presupposed, but eventually dismissed, in the very existence of the temporary "becoming-woman" (towards "becoming-imperceptible"). Consequently, I show that their impossible

"becoming-man" could be reworked nevertheless as an explicit ontological reaffirmation of sexual difference, with some implicit caveats, given the historical position of the masculine subject. By exploring their understanding of *intensive thinking* and *philosophy as concept creation*, as a way of answering to problems/paradoxes in our worldly encounters, I aim at reworking the concept of "becoming-man" within the philosophy of sexual difference. I see "becoming-man" as a figuration of what it might mean to be faithful to one's embodied sexuate nature in the processes of cultural becomings and articulations of a masculine subjectivity in relation to one's own male corporeality, on the one hand, and in relation to other women's and men's different bodies, on the other hand.

In the **final section**, I outline some of the ethical implications of this re-understanding of male bodies and of masculine subjectivity in terms of *incommensurability* with female bodies and feminine subjectivity and their relation to language and symbolic transformations. I reiterate several of Irigaray's "ethical gestures" as starting points for "becoming-man." Bearing in mind Irigaray's assertion that "I am sexed implies I am not every-thing" (Irigaray, 1996, p. 51), I offer a preliminary argument for the need of a masculine culture of stepping back so that women's lives, spaces and cultures could flourish in their own (non-pre) defining terms.

Chapter 1. Masculinities, male bodies and sexual (in)difference

> The point of critique is not justification but a different way of feeling: another sensibility.
>
> Gilles Deleuze - *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (2006, p. 94)

In this chapter I develop a line of argumentation concerning the way male bodies are theorized in studies about men and masculinities. Through a brief outline of the development of its main theoretical frameworks and concepts (such as "masculinity," "hegemonic masculinity," and "embodiment of masculinity"), I examine the nature of the role of male bodies on which the theorizing of men and masculinities is based in some of the most representative works in the area. I also focus on the relationship between these studies and feminist theory, arguing that the dominant perspective of male bodies in relation to masculinity/masculinities is inherited from the feminist debates on the conceptual relationship between bodies and language/discourses. I argue that, as a result, male bodies are theorized predominantly within a radical discursive constructionist viewpoint, given both the primacy of gender and queer paradigms with a discernible omission of feminist sexual difference perspectives. Furthermore, I raise several concerns in relation to the knowledge production process and the status of the academic subfield under discussion. I conclude the chapter by showing that a certain "gap" within the conceptual relationship between male bodies and masculinities is left unscrutinized. Consequently, I propose a turn toward the sexual difference philosophy of Luce Irigaray, a perspective both presupposed and unacknowledged in the scholarly engagements with men's bodies in the studies on men and masculinities.

1.1 "Masculinities without men" and male bodies in theory[2]

The "body," both as a referent and an analytical category in its acknowledged specificity (marked according to various axes of differentiation), is one of the key sites of various feminist theoretical and political struggles. Conceptualized either as an impediment or "site" of oppression, or as a source for the revaluation of "women" and "the feminine," "bodies" used to be theorized, in both deconstructive and constructive manner, based on the claim that the patriarchal gender orders draw on dualistic devices, such as the mind/body and the masculine/feminine hierarchical binary oppositions (Lloyd, 1984; Jaggar and Bordo, 1989). Feminist theories considered these divides as being in a way connected, meaning that within patriarchal order(s) masculinity/men and mind have been associated and hierarchically valued as compared to femininity/women and the body.[3] As a result, in the case of men, one of the theoretical and practical strategies deployed to disrupt this binary oppositional logic was to "reconnect" masculinities with men's bodies (in order also to "get back in touch with their feelings") and look at how new ways of understanding male bodies could offer exit points from the grip of constrained meanings of "men" and "masculinity/masculinities" and its violent enactments toward women's bodies. In this sense, during the last decades, a new academic subfield, that of *men and masculinities,* shaped predominantly by (male) profeminist scholars (coming mostly from the UK, North American, Australian and Scandinavian academic contexts), has developed a significant corpus of scholarship on masculinities and male bodies contributing, alongside feminist efforts, to a different

[2] "Masculinities without men" is Judith Halberstam's title of the introduction to *Female Masculinity* (1998).

[3] This historical structural association became known as the "weak thesis" of the disembodiment of Western thought. In contrast, according to the "strong thesis", both "the feminine" and "the body" were negated in the constitution of thought as such (Colebrook, 2000b, p. 28). I will discuss Colebrook's exploration of these two theses at length in the second chapter.

understanding of men's positions in the constant re-structuring of multiple networks of power relations.[4]

As the subfield of men and masculinities became the "hot politics" in academia (Ashe, 2007), the position of the "male bodies" in relation to feminist goals raised an inevitable question. Given the centrality of women's bodies in both feminist thought and activism, one would expect a similar move in exploring the male body when critically theorizing men and masculinities. Implicitly, writing about men's bodies should be seen as political as writing about women's bodies is for the feminist scholarship. Roussel and Downs (2007, p. 184) claim that, given that the issues concerning the body and emotions were relegated by rationalism to an inferior status in men's public and personal existence, then the subjective position of a male theorist leads to a corresponding strategy of taking as an "object" that very sphere of experience that remains unconsidered, namely the "natural" body and its related feelings and emotions. Calvin Thomas (2002, p. 62) also pointed out the relationship between "male bodies" and "writing" and its inherent political stakes:

> My argument—which isn't necessarily "the best" but simply the one I find most compelling—has been, and will continue here to be, that one possibly productive way to analyze male power and hegemony, and to reconfigure male identification and desire, involves a specific sort of attention to the "matter" of the male body and to the materialization of that body in writing- in writing as what Cixous calls "the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me". ("Sorties," 583)

Therefore, a conceptual delineation between men as objects of knowledge production and men as subjects of doing research might not be so clear-cut when it comes to theorizing

[4] Starting with the work of Kimmel (1994), Connell (1995), Goldstein (1994) and Bordo (1999), there has been a large scholarly interest in male bodies. The literature relates predominantly to the following themes: media (Craig, 1992; Goldstein, 1994), sport (Dworkin & Messner, 1999), disability (Gerschick 2000) violence (Hearn, 1998; Messerschmidt, 2000), health and illness (Sabo and Gordon, 1995; Watson 2000), globalization (Connell 1998; Connell, 2005), age (Drummond, 2003; Drummond, 2005) and sexuality (Connell, 1990). For more information on other scholars, sources and latest developments in the field see also Kimmel, Hearn and Connell (2005), Flood, Gardiner, Pease and Pringle (2007) and Jodi O'Brien (2009).

male bodies and the implicit political investment in relation to feminist aims.[5] The issue of "men in feminism"/"men doing pro-feminism" and its challenges, is not a recent one and it has been already addressed by many of the scholars focusing on the issues of men and masculinities.[6] For that reason, the acknowledgement of the issue of the experiential exclusivity in feminism and the rejection of the re-instantiation of any type of "introspective politics of 'me tooism'" (Ashe, 2007, p. 54) also became central to the discussion.[7]

Moreover, the issue of men in feminism was paralleled in feminist theory by the problem of the relationship between the notions of masculinity and men, that is, in the terms of gender and sex. In outlining the theoretical engagements with men and masculinity as an object of study in feminist theory, Robyn Wiegman demonstrates that feminism's critical interrogation of gender and the disassembling of the normative cultural discourse that binds masculinity to men rendered masculinity "as pertinent to if not constitutive of female subjectivity" (2002, p. 33). Wiegman argues that the theoretical distinctions between sex, gender and sexuality developed by Judith Butler (1990) and Judith Halberstam (1998) have had an important impact on masculinities studies. Queer theory's poststructuralist critique of identity's coherence and gender theory's critique of sex/gender relation (seeing sex as gender's effect) made possible the research on "masculinity without men" and "transformed the content, scope, and political project of masculinity as a domain of critical inquiry" (Wiegman, 2002, p. 51). For Wiegman, then, an aim is not to develop alternative masculinities for men but rather a larger interrogation of masculinity as a production of gender distinct from male bodies. This objective is still pursued even today in the studies of

[5] I thank Professor Jeff Hearn for raising a discussion on this distinction in our personal e-mail exchanges.

[6] Among them, notable names are: Jardine and Smith (1987), Kimmel (1987, 1998), Kimmel and Mosmiller (1992), Digby (1998), Brod (2002), Messner (2000), Gardiner (2002), Murphy (2004), Flood (2004), Ashe (2007) and Tarrant (2008, 2009). For a detailed analysis of the ways in which the concept of men's identities is formulated within profeminist politics and the effects of deconstructions and reconstructions of identity within profeminism, as well as the major theoretical perspectives in the field, Fidelma Ashe's *The new politics of masculinity: men, power, and resistance* (2007) is an important contribution.

[7] See, for example, Michael Flood's discussion of various important challenges posed by men's presence as students in feminist classrooms in his article "Men as Students and Teachers of Feminist Scholarship" (2011).

men and masculinities. For example, in the "Introduction to the special issue - Masculinities in Women's Studies: Locations and Dislocations" (2011), the editors John C. Landreau and Michael J. Murphy explain that their goal is to change the "angle of approach" and not focus on men in Women's Studies or on men doing feminism, but rather to challenge the conceptual relationship between men and masculinities so as to conceive of masculinity "as a range of social practices and relationships—theoretically independent of male embodiment." In short:

> [T]he essays that follow are both the continuation of a longstanding, important conversation about men and masculinity, and about men in Women's Studies, but also the beginning of a new conversation that dislocates masculinity as the property of men in order to make it available to a variety of embodied practices not all of which are easily comprehensible by a binary gender system. (Landreau and Murphy, 2011, p. 133)

Thus, it is not the male body's presence in feminist spaces as an issue in itself, but rather how these bodies enact or not certain expressions of being a "man" or "masculine," or how these structures, configurations and practices, i.e. "being a man" or "being masculine," are embodied or not. These processes seem more relevant to the authors than the nature of the elements building the relationship (i.e., between male body and masculinity). This standpoint is implicitly also based on a specific conceptualizing of male bodies in relation to language, sex, gender and sexuality, which I will address later in this chapter. However, it suffices to say here that by cutting off masculinity from male bodies in terms of property, even if just theoretically, male bodies might become somewhat redundant in the question of the meaning of masculinity. The conundrum of men's presence in feminism might be paradoxical, if discussing men still implies talking about male bodies, as seems to be the case in the quotation above when referring to men. In short, a concern is that the focus on "masculinity" (no matter how strongly "disconnected" might be conceptually from male bodies) still has to answer to the question of male bodies and their materiality when it comes to men. The

urgency of the question is not accidental then, given that, after decades, there is nevertheless an ongoing discussion on the issue of men in feminism, in women's studies/gender studies or in women's organizations. As a consequence, the question of the materiality of male bodies in relation to men is an important one. How are we to understand the relationship between male bodies and masculinities in the case of men?

I will address this question by focusing primarily on the work of scholars associated with the studies on men and masculinities, while excluding those commonly considered by pro-feminist groups as being anti-feminist. My analysis involves a critical reading of specific texts that are representative for the subfield and addresses openly the issue of male bodies as far as the theoretical assumptions about bodies, sex, gender, sexuality and language are concerned. The conceptualization of men's bodies is, of course, inextricably linked to the larger theoretical discussions on men and masculinities developed over decades by pro-feminist, feminist and queer theorists, as well.[8] Focusing on how male bodies are theorized in these works as compared to the feminist theorization of bodies, materiality of the body and embodiment will provide insight into the key theoretical apparatuses employed in the field of studies on men and masculinities in general, given the essential role male bodies seem to play even for the status of this academic subfield. Therefore, the target of critical scrutiny is both a *specific* understanding of male bodies, which I identify in many of the works produced within this academic area, and, on the basis of that, the subfield itself to a certain extent, as it constructs and presents itself.

The theorizing of masculinities and male bodies and of their material-discursive interplay, part of a larger structuring of new models for political practices by men, was marked by the development of this academic subfield and of its main theoretical apparatuses

[8] The distinction between pro-feminism and feminism refers mostly to the issue of the experiential nature of the feminist voices, meaning that pro-feminism is often used in relation to those men who are supporting feminism or gender equality goals while acknowledging the particular and incommensurable experience of oppression and inequality as lived by women, who are thus reserving the concept of feminism for themselves.

in relation to both feminism and feminist theories and in distinction to anti-feminist groups that were generally "oriented towards stalling and overturning the effects of feminism on contemporary cultures" (Ashe, 2007, p. 3).

In *Cultures of Masculinity* (2006), Tim Edwards offers a synopsis of what he calls the three "waves" of the studies of men and masculinities. Starting with the 1970's, sex-role theory and, by the mid-80's, also the Jungian brand of psychology and object-relation theory dominated the scholarship in the area focusing mostly on the personal and psychological changes of men without, however, any reference to larger institutional structures or economic and political gender inequalities (Pease, 2007, p. 555).[9] Hearn and Kimmel (2006, p. 131) also argue that with "the influence of women's liberation, gay liberation, and even men's liberation, the male sex role was subject to sharp criticism—as ethnocentric, lacking in a power perspective, and positivistic (Eichler, 1980; Kimmel, 1987; Brittan, 1989)". While during the second wave, Marxist and materialist approaches replaced previous frameworks by emphasizing the concepts of power and hegemony, the third wave was "clearly influenced by the advent of poststructural theory, particularly as it relates to gender in terms of questions of normativity, performativity, and sexuality" (Edwards, 2006, p. 3). In relation to the third wave, Edwards argues that what is considered as common to both the culturalist, literary or media analyses and the more empirically oriented studies on men and masculinities, is the primacy of the social and cultural construction of masculinity.

Meant to express "the immense degree of indebtedness that studies of masculinities owe to feminist theory" (Edwards, 2006, p. 2), the three-phase model proposed by Edwards was seen as presupposing some kind of symmetry between the fields (feminism's three

[9] Hearn and Kimmel (2006) argue that various social constructionist perspectives highlighting complexities of men's social power have emerged in the 80's, developing critiques of both gender relations and of the dominance of heterosexuality, heterosexism and homophobia. According to them, the contemporary examinations of the construction of masculinities are informed by two themes addressed in these discussions: the power of men over women (heterosocial power relations), and the power of some men over other men (homosocial power relations).

waves), that seemed intended in the very notion of "men's studies" as counterpart to "women's studies".[10] Consequently, profeminist male scholars recommended the label of "Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities" or "Critical Studies on Men" (Hearn, 2004) in order to clarify its status as either a derivative field of women's studies or gender studies, or a separate field but which critically engages with men and masculinities and rejects any anti-feminist positions, that often, intentionally or not, characterized the early and middle stages of men's studies (Hearn and Pringle, 2006).[11] This was indeed necessary, since a number of conservative men's groups with anti-feminist implication had emerged from the men's movement in the US and UK contexts, such as the men's liberation, men's rights and father's rights, the spiritual and the Christian groups (Flood, 2007, p. 420). The same was the case of the mythopoetic movement from the 80's and 90's with its ideological and therapeutic basis in the Jungian theory of archetypes and with its leaders such as Robert Bly, James Hillman and Michael Meade (Schwalbe, 2007, pp. 450-453). However, beginning in the 1960's, other men's groups aligned themselves to feminist movements and supported women's fight for gender justice (Kimmel and Mosmiller, 1992; Messner, 1997), an affiliation which nevertheless raised questions and generated reservations on both sides related to issues such

[10] Chris Beasley (2009) talks about a so-called *Gender/Sexuality* field, where the concepts of gender and sexuality are employed in its three major subfields: Feminist, Masculinity (sexed categories), and Sexuality Studies (sexual categories). Using a notion of continuum within the Gender/Sexuality field, ranging from Modernist to Postmodern thinking, first discussed in an earlier book *Gender and Sexuality* (2005), Beasley argues that the three subfields draw upon similar theoretical directions such as: Modernist Humanism, (Singular) Difference – i.e. gender or sexuality as the single focus, (Multiple) Difference – typically gender and race, sexuality and race; Social constructionism and Postmodernism. As compared to feminist and sexuality studies that also embraced poststructuralist agendas, masculinity studies would share largely a Modernist alignment, which is dominated by social constructionism (2009, p. 176). Though Beasley admits that Feminist and Masculinity analyses intersect but are not parallel equivalents (2009, p. 179), and given the comparison' s reduction to one of theoretical trends, there still remains a presupposition of a symmetry among the subfields that is not explicitly questioned.

[11] In his article, "From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men" (2004), Jeff Hearn makes a clear-cut distinction between "Men's Studies" (many times with antifeminist implications) and "Critical Studies on Men" (mostly with analyses on men from feminist, queer and postcolonial critical perspectives; and where the notion of power is central to the "criticalness" of the field). For Hearn, the reference to "critical „concerns the issue of power and gendered power, that is men's power. In an earlier article "Theorizing Men and Men's Theorizing: Men's Discursive Practices in Theorizing Men" (1998b, p. 801), Hearn indicates other aspects that speak of "criticalness" within CSM: "a critical relation to topic, encompassing a self-reflexivity of the author, an awareness of the social location of both the author and the topic, and the consideration of the social bases of knowledge; a commitment to the political emancipation of both women and men; and where appropriate, empirical scrutiny not just assertion and speculation".

the use of profeminism to obtain research funding or the sidelining of women's perspectives, or that feminism might be overly critical of men and masculinity or it might suppress the emergence of distinctive profeminist perspectives (Ashe, 2007). These profeminist groups focused in their writings on the relationship between men's identities and gender power (Seidler, 1992; Stoltenberg, 2000), turning also their attention towards a more nuanced critique of men's identities in terms of masculine subjectivities as central to the domination and subordination of women, gay, working class and black men (Hearn and Collision, 1994; Connell, 1995; Messner, 1997; Kimmel, 1998). In parallel, profeminist men created national organizations, groups and circles facilitating different political agendas and practices for reducing male violence against women and for men's consciousness raising purposes (Goldrik-Jones, 2002; Hearn and Pringle, 2006). Academically, these groups promoted and developed studies on men, later called "critical studies on men and masculinities," supported by various publications and journals and by writers, such as Connell, Hearn, Kaufman, Kimmel, Seidler and Stoltenberg (Ashe, 2007, p. 19).[12] The scholarly interest in men and masculinities expanded in various areas of research such as health, sports, military, globalization, capitalism, media, education, etc., but also geographically to Mexico, Brazil, Australia, Japan and Africa (Hearn and Kimmel, 2006, pp. 136-137).

As far as the connection with feminist theory is concerned, Whitehead, Talahite and Moodley (2013) argue that while feminist theory produced important advances in the dialogues with post-colonial theory, queer theory and intersectionality, Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities (CSMM) remained however predominantly second wave feminist in origin and association. As compared to this, Whitehead, Talahite and Moodley argue that a

[12] Various journals in the field appeared in the last decade: *The Journal of Men's Studies*, *Men and Masculinities*, *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, *Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies*. Other journals are more focused: *Fathering: A Journal of Theory and Research about Men as Parents*, *International Journal of Men's Health*, *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality*, *Journal of African American Males in Education*, *Journal of Men's Health and Gender*, *Thymos: Journal of Boyhood Studies*, *Culture, Society and Masculinities*, *Journal of Black Masculinity*.

Sociology of Men and Masculinity (SMM) came to be positioned within the third wave feminism, drawing on theorists such as Foucault, Deleuze, Butler and using their models, ideas, and concepts to explore men and masculinities in a particular context, e.g. crime, violence, management, organizations, nationhood, race, sexuality.[13] Although heavily influenced by second wave social constructionist theories, the writers located in the discipline of SMM are more poststructuralist in origin and perspective. The distinction between CSMM and SMM seems to be an effect of the theoretical expansion over the last decades of concepts such as gender, sexuality, masculinity, identity, subjectivity and power, and of the divisions their specific conceptualization generated among the scholars.

Whitehead (2002) argues that two opposing sociological traditions explored the concepts of power and resistance with regard to men and masculinities. The juridical-discursive model, whereby power is hierarchical and oppressive, is to be found mostly in the constructionist and critical structuralist perspectives in both the feminist and pro-feminist first-wave and in the second-wave, informing concepts such as patriarchy, gender order and hegemonic masculinity, which are missing however a coherent account of a "subject." A second model, based on Foucaultian understanding of disciplinary power, found mostly in third-wave feminism, conceptualizes power as circulatory and "immanent to both the social condition and the production of individual subjectivity" (Whitehead, 2002, p. 111). For Whitehead, the second model is much more productive as it can be applied to men in order to see them in terms of a masculine subject which is both "subject to discursive power regimes

[13] According to Whitehead, Talahite and Moodley the writers that locate within the genre of the Sociology of Men and Masculinity are Stephen M. Whitehead, Deborah Kerfoot, David Knights, David Collinson, Travis Kong, Louise Archer, Bob Lingard, Bob Pease, Tony Jefferson, David Gutterman, Rachel Jewkes, bell hooks, Gary Dowsett, David Tacey, Lahoucine Ouzgane, Bryant Alexander, Hazel Carby, Peter Middleton, Kaja Silverman, Richard Collier, Victor Seidler, Lynne Segal, Susan Speer. I thank Stephen M. Whitehead for raising the distinction between Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities and the Sociology of Men and Masculinities in our personal e-mail exchanges. However, this delineation is not so evident, as various theorists are to be found on both sides. Furthermore, the names of the "camps" do not translate into a difference in the background fields, meaning that sociology is not the area only of those located in the Sociology of Men and Masculinities. Actually, the majority of the writers have their theoretical resources in sociology, cultural studies and humanities approaches.

and as, simultaneously, a contributor to and active player in the social enaction of gender, and, thus, in instances of domination" (2002, p. 110).

Men's bodies came into explicit focus in the studies of masculinities when feminist theories, particularly those informed by poststructuralism, questioned the mechanisms of the naturalization of women's bodies with the important theoretical outcome of seeing the body as discursive and gender as the very apparatus of production whereby sex is established (Kathy Davis, 1997; Roussel and Downs, 2007). This was related, of course, to the larger development of feminist theory and its own struggles with the concepts of "sex," "gender," "discourse," and "representation." In her article, "From Radical Representations to Corporeal Becomings: The Feminist Philosophy of Lloyd, Grosz, and Gatens," Claire Colebrook (2000a, p. 76) captures the presuppositions in the conceptualization of the body identifiable within the feminist waves:

> While first wave feminism demanded equality, and second wave feminism demanded difference, the body emerged in the third wave as a means of deconstructing this sameness/difference opposition. The appeal to equality assumes that gender differences are imposed on otherwise equal beings, and thereby precludes the possibility the different types of bodies might demand different forms of political recognition. In the second wave assertion of difference and specificity the body is still seen as that which precedes social construction. But for feminists of the second wave, different bodies demand different forms of articulation. In the third wave, both these arguments are attacked for having an unproblematic appeal to the pre-representational body. Women are neither the same nor essentially different; to decide such an argument one would have to appeal to a body from which social representation derives or upon which representation is imposed. But if we were to argue that the very notion of pre-representational body is effected through representation, we would have to move beyond discussions of women's essential sameness or difference. Broadly speaking, the first mode of this critique is linguistic in approach, and demonstrates that any appeal to a body is always already discursive. The "body", therefore, is an intensely political site, not a pre-representational ground, but an effect of representation that passes itself off as grounding.

Colebrook identifies two types of answers to the way sex/gender distinction looks at the body from the materiality/representation divide. According to her, the first is located in the work of Judith Butler (1990, 1993, 1997) where "matter is only thinkable *as matter*, and hence as already discursive, effected as discourse's other" (2000a, p. 78; italics in original).

The second possible way to go beyond the sameness/difference debate was to recognize that "while the body may only be *referred to* through discourse and representation, it possesses a force and being that marks the very character of representation" (2000a, p. 77; italics in original). This second position is to be found mostly in the ontological projects developed by Elizabeth Grosz, Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd.[14] Colebrook argues that, as compared to the three Australian philosophers who are guided in their journeys by the question of "what are the specific ways in which the real becomes meaningful?" (2000a, p. 89), in Butler's work, relying on a Hegelian logic of constitutive power of positing and seeing discourse as a system of signification (conflated with a broad sense of language), "the body is not an effect of discourse but its status as non-discursive is an effect of positing" (2000a, p. 79).[15] Given that Butler's account also seems to conflate the ontological and epistemic dimensions in relation to the body, by equating "the *being* of a thing with the mode in which that thing is known" (2000a, p. 78), the body is always already signified, given as referent and, therefore, "not a privileged lever for the disruption of representational closure, for representation's own logic (as re-presentation) demands that any 'presence' is never given immediately but only *as present*" (2000a, p. 80; italics in original). In other words, the positing of the materiality of body as "outside" of language (pre-existing or on a distinct ontological plane than that of language), is done always already through language, and subsumed, therefore, to a discursive constitution of the real. The materiality of the body is conceptualized through the material forms of signification (linguistic marks of differentiation) that are seen as material after the constitution of such materiality. Accordingly, "sex" is posited after the attribution of gender, that is, the so-called pre-discursive ground of "sex" is an effect of the discursive representation of gender (Colebrook, 2002a, p. 82).

[14] I will refer more to this position later at the end of this chapter, when discussing Moira Gatens' critique of sex/gender distinction (1996).

[15] The "constitutive power of positing" is captured in Butler's one of the most famous quotations: "To posit a materiality outside of language is still to posit that materiality, and that materiality so posited will retain that positing as its constitutive condition" (1993, pp. 67-68).

As I will elaborate more in this chapter, it is precisely this latter conception of the body that ultimately earned its supremacy in current scholarly engagements with male bodies in the studies on men and masculinities. Given the predominance of the *gender* paradigm (and more recently also *queer*) in studies of men and masculinities, while drawing predominantly, though also critically, on Butler's notion of "performativity" and Connell's concept of "hegemonic masculinity/masculinities" (1983, 1987, 1995, 2005), the radical constructionist perspective of masculine subjectivities contagiously became the prevalent way of theorizing male bodies. At the same time, the use of this perspective was accompanied by the disregarding of the sexual difference paradigm, almost reproducing the same type of marginalization of the latter theory that is discernible even within feminist academia (Braidotti, 1997). The lack of questioning the primacy of discursive constructionism in analyzing the links between male bodies, men and masculinities is therefore quite challenging, given that the social constructivism of the body, in general, has suffered various critiques for its supposed relativism, skepticism, linguistic reductionism, and the abolition of discovery or surprise (Weinberg, 2012, p. 151).[16] Moreover, some (male) scholars involved in research on male bodies and masculinities assimilated a poststructuralist understanding of gender while overlooking feminist debates around the materiality of the body as source of power, a question that, obviously, revolves around the relationship between language/discourse and materiality/body.[17] Understandable as the reluctance towards essentialism or towards a return to a so-called pre-discursive materiality of the body may be

[16] In his section "Social Constructivism and the Body" (2012, pp. 151-153) from the *Routledge Handbook of Body Studies*, Darin Weinberg refutes each of these accusations against the social constructivism of the body.

[17] The research on how bodily experiences have an effect on the subjective dimension revealed that the discussion is not safe from whether there can be pre-discursive experiences or diverse discursive forces always already shape experiences. Joan W. Scott's analysis from "The Evidence of Experience" (1991, pp. 773-797) and "Experience" (1992, pp. 22-40) and Linda Alcoff's account in "Merleau-Ponty and Feminist Theory on Experience"(2000a, pp. 251-271) and, again, in "Phenomenology, Post-structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the concept of Experience*"* (2000b, pp. 39-56) is an illustration of such a debate. Silvia Stoller also engages with this debate in relation to the connections between poststructuralism and phenomenology in her "Phenomenology and the Poststructural Critique of Experience" (2009, pp. 707-737). I will return to this debate later in this chapter in the context of my discussion about "the embodiment of masculinity".

(problem that dominated much feminist literature in the mid 80's and through the 90's), it might be the case that the mind (discourse, culture)/body (materiality, nature) dichotomy remains quite secured by the very positing of male bodies as the location of power forces and as subjected to different systems of signification, with the consequent minimizing of their agential role in masculine subject formations.[18] Accordingly, the adoption of the view according to which there is nothing determining/agential in male materiality in relation to the shaping of masculinity and its historical variability is probably meant to leave open the possibility of political change in the development of masculine subjectivity (that is, of men) at the expense of conceiving of men's bodies as malleable, flexible, somehow passive, under the discursive forces of socio-historical contingencies. To put it in Butler's terms, the explicit turn to male bodies proved to be again a return to the male "sign" and "signifiers," that is, the referent purported to be evoked by the concept of "body." The "what is" remains, as I will show in the course of this chapter, somewhat deferred and even void of content, precisely on the basis of its lack of differentiation.

In this light, despite the remarkable shift whereby "men's bodies *as bodies* have gone from near invisibility to hypervisibility" in terms of representations of male bodies (Gill, Henwood and McLean, 2005, p. 39; italics in original), there are still only a few studies concerned with male embodiment and almost no explicit and systematic reflections on how both men's perceptions of their bodies and diverse bodily lived experiences partake in the formation of their masculine subjectivity and individual lives.[19] The explicit Foucaultian

[18] For more about the debate on essentialism in feminist theory see, for example, the work of Diana Fuss (1989), Elizabeth Grosz (1989), Naomi Schor (1989), Moira Gatens (1991), Margaret Whitford (1991), Tina Chanter (1995) and Alison Stone (2006).

[19] I am not talking here about male embodiments as possible foundation for the constitution of masculine subjectivities, but rather as starting points from a different theoretical position. It's more about primacy rather than foundationalism. When talking here about "male embodiment" and its lack in theorizing, I have in mind a particular understanding of the notion of "embodiment" which is mostly inherited from the phenomenological philosophical tradition and a specific understanding of "maleness," which comes mainly from the sexual difference paradigm as it was developed by Luce Irigaray. I will address this issue more in the third chapter when arguing for the ontological status of sexually differentiated bodies.

anti-phenomenological framework, which seems to obscure a sexual difference feminist perspective, recalls once more the so-called "transatlantic disconnection" (Braidotti, 2002) between the gender and sexual difference paradigms. Male bodies remain apparently entrusted only to discursive realms.[20] This "neo-disembodiment," so to speak, visualizes male bodies *qua* representations or objects to be mere concepts. Male bodies, ironically in a perpetual struggle as "analytical categories" and as "real" referents, are thus rarely regarded as sources or agents of subjective and identity formations, being theoretically conceived of either as socially constructed or made intelligible through discursive accounts.[21] This may seem counterintuitive, given the multitude of feminist studies on female embodiment.[22] It should not be surprising, however, since the dominant visibility of certain hegemonic male bodies and their representations (as white, heterosexual, middle aged, able, Christian men, in sports, business, military, music and film industries, etc.) goes hand in hand with the long modernist tradition of the body's subordination and with its already established function within the capitalist processes of re-production and consumption of bodies as representations (Lowe, 1995; Mort, 1996; Dewing and Foster, 2007; Featherstone, 2007; Seidler, 2007; Turner, 2008). The body's subordination and instrumentalization is theoretically reproduced unfortunately in many of the studies, as well. As Victor J. Seidler (2006, p. 102) points out:

> Rather than recognize how our bodies carry our emotional histories, postmodern theories often view the body as an external space onto which cultures inscribe prevailing representations. This fosters its own forms of cultural displacement, making it difficult for men to recognize ambivalences in their lived relationships with their bodies. Rather, the body as performance and display sustains an instrumentality that remains beyond question.

[20] In short, the "divide" Rosi Braidotti is postulating in *Metamorphoses* (2002, pp. 28-34) is that between the politics of gender represented by the work of Judith Butler (in America) versus the philosophy of sexual difference by Luce Irigaray (in the continental Europe).

[21] Here representationalism is not referring to the conception according to which language is purported to represent an external reality (the very notion of discourse is meant to attack this position), but more to the idea that male bodies are made visible qua representations through imagistic and linguistic/discursive accounts.

[22] See, for example, the work of Simone De Beauvoir, Sandra Lee Bartky, Iris Marion Young, Linda Alcoff, Toril Moi, Genevieve Lloyd, Kathleen Lennon, Moira Gatens, Elizabeth Grosz, Susan Bordo, Rosi Braidotti, Margrit Shildrick, and Gail Weiss. Feminist scholarship inquired various arenas and dimensions of social life in which women have been oppressed, including their bodies, body image issues, eating disorders, disability, cosmetic surgery, physical and sexual violence, self-defense, reproductive rights, and sexuality.

This "neo-disembodiment" of men is evident, with a few notable exceptions (such as the analyses of Norbert Elias and Chris Shilling), also within the growing area of the sociology of the body and masculinities. Shaped by the work of B. Turner (1996[1984]), A. Giddens (1991), A. Frank (1991) and others, sociology keeps maintaining the body in its "absent presence," in Chris Shilling's own famous words. Referring to the work of Morgan (1993), Connell (1987, 1995) and Peterson (1998), Whitehead claims that the male body is both omnipresent in the sociology of masculinity and yet relatively invisible, "for although study is of the embodied category of men, theoretical and empirical examinations of men's embodiedness are few" (2002, p. 181). Jonathan Watson argues that, due to the twin influences of Foucault and feminism, sociology of the body elevated social determinism "to a par with biological determinism," as it has "privileged *theorizing* of 'the body'; bracketed out the individual; and largely ignored practical experiences of embodiment" (2000, p. 51; italics mine).

Chris Shilling, one of the most prolific scholars on the issue of the body in sociology, also raises this point in the introduction to his *The Body in Culture, Technology and Society*:

> From being a subject of marginal academic interest, the intellectual significance of the body is now such that no study can lay claim to being comprehensive unless it takes at least some account of the embodied preconditions of agency and the physical effects of social structures. In sociology, discussions of embodiment pervade general theoretical works and specialist sub-disciplinary studies. Indeed, recognition that its subject matter includes thinking, feeling bodies, rather than disembodied minds unaffected by their senses and habits, has become central to the sociological imagination. Despite these advances, however, clear portraits of the body's status, generative capacities, and receptivity to structural forces, remain frustratingly elusive within most accounts of contemporary society. (Shilling, 2005, p. 1)

Accordingly, Shilling aims to reduce the "analytical elusiveness of the body" and sets himself to investigate the subordination of the embodied subject specific to the approaches sociology employs in the analyses of economy, culture, sociality, etc., by suggesting that

"classical sociological writings converged around a hitherto neglected view of the body as a multi-dimensional medium for the constitution of society" (2005, p. 1). He shows that, since the 1980s, the rise of interest in the body and embodiment, which "became so ubiquitous yet remains such a contested and slippery subject", was stimulated by several strands of social thought and analytical perspectives, defining the subject in different ways. Feminism's influence is noted alongside the interest in the body expressed by theories of consumer societies, Foucault's concept of governmentality, the analyses of technological advances challenging the "reality" of the body, and the various perspectives that sought to avoid the collapse of embodiment into "any unidimensional view of social action or structurally determinist analysis of society" (Shilling, 2005, p. 5).

> The body was a surface phenomenon, which had become a malleable marker of commercial value subject to the vagaries of fashion for theorists of consumer culture. It was a sexed object that had been used as a means of justifying women's subordination for feminists. It was an object that had been rendered passive by changing modes of control for Foucaultian analysts of governmentality. The body was changed into an uncertain and even a rapidly disappearing remnant of pre-technological culture for those interested in the meeting of meat and machines, which had occurred, with the development of cyborgs. Finally, it became a positive conceptual category for those concerned with addressing theoretical problems in their own discipline. Within each of these analyses, the spotlight rests on certain aspects of the body, leaving others obscured. (Shilling, 2005, p. 5)

Developing a notion of "corporeal realism," Shilling wants to account for a body-society relationship according to which neither the body is conceived in terms of its social construction nor the society in terms of its corporeal construction, but rather as a continuous interplay of distinct irreducible ontological dimensions by which bodies and social structures engender the subjects and their social actions.[23]

> In conclusion, this approach to the body as a multi-dimensional medium for the constitution of society is *corporeal* because it puts the body at the centre of its concern with social action and structures. Social action is embodied, and must be

[23] It is interesting that Shilling does not seriously engage with the "corporeal feminism" branch of sexual difference developed by feminist scholars such as Grosz (1994), Gatens (1996), Kirby (1997), Braidotti (1994, 2002). He discusses quite briefly only Grosz's *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994).

> recognized as such, while the effects of social structures can be seen as a result of how they condition and shape embodied subjects. This approach is also *realist* as it recognizes a distinction between (embodied) action and social structures (by attributing bodies with their own ontology, irreducible to society), and because it acknowledges the importance of examining their interaction over time. (Shilling, 2005, p. 15; italics in original)

His "corporeal realism" is set against three predominant perspectives of the body coming from the social constructionist examinations of the *ordered body* (here he includes the work of Foucault, Butler, Turner), the phenomenologically oriented approaches towards the *lived body* and a "carnal sociology" (Leder, Frank), and the *structuration theory* (Bourdieu, Giddens, Grosz), which ultimately, for Shilling, "serve to increase still further the elusiveness of the body" (2005, p. 16). While the social constructionist views on the body cannot account for how the body could be a source of the social, those drawing on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology might still replicate a distinction between theories of structure and agency. Structuration theories seem to offer a middle way between the previous two by looking at the body as a recipient of social practices and an active creator of its milieu. However, Shilling considers that analyses of the body within structuration theories also diminish the body's productive capacities precisely because Bourdieu, Giddens, and Grosz's perspectives tend to subordinate the body respectively to "the imperatives of social class, cognitive reflexivity and sexual difference" (Shilling, 2005, p. 18). All these three clusters of theoretical perspectives seem to miss out crucial aspects from each other and a meeting between themselves:

> While focusing variously on the body as a location for, as a source of, and as a means for the positioning of individuals within their environment, none allows room for the embodied subject's multi-dimensional implication in all three of these processes. It is one thing to acknowledge the body's importance as a location on which the structures of society inscribe themselves, as a vehicle through which society is constructed, or as circuit which connects individuals with society, but any comprehensive theory of the body needs to take account of all three of these processes. (Shilling, 2005, p. 19)

Although Shilling acknowledges the importance of the work of feminist theorists such

as Oakley, Eisenstein, Williams, MacKinnon, Irigaray, Kristeva, Grosz, and Haraway, he argues that feminists have focused on the sexually different body and that "the idea of embodiment as providing humans with certain common capacities and frailties tended to fade in their discussions" (2005, p. 3). What is also particularly interesting here is that Shilling's view of the shortcoming identified in the work of Elizabeth Grosz (1994), who explores both how the body offers the morphological substratum for sexual difference and how it is also structured by the inscriptive forces of sexual conventions, is based on the apparent conundrum of the relationship between sexual difference and the body's subordination to sexual difference; a sexual difference which seems to be conceptualized as if on the same plane as, for example, class and cognitive reflexivity as analytical categories. However, what Shilling is missing here is precisely that by locating sexual difference as just one among other type of categories, as systems of social signification, and, therefore, by de-corporealizing it in a way, he is in fact the one who reifies the dichotomy between the body and sexual difference and, consequently, disconnects the body from sexual difference. By leaving aside the question of how sexually different bodies participate in the structuring of the social organization of life, he pays little attention to the relationship between male bodies and masculinities.

Probably it is also in this sense that, as Edwards (2006, p. 151) points out, sociology of the body in relation to masculinity is overall as yet nonexistent as an independent scholarly area, even though Connell and Whitehead initiated more nuanced discussions on the issue of the embodiment of masculinity, on which I focus in the following.

R.W. Connell's conceptualization of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell 1983, 1987, 1995, 2000, 2005), accompanied by that of "multiple masculinities" (Connell 1995, 2005)

became most famous and central to the scholarship on men and masculinities.[24] Connell developed for the first time the concept of hegemonic masculinity in his paper "Men's Bodies," written in 1979 and published in 1983 in *Which Way is Up?* Drawing on psychoanalysis, the paper raised the importance of the participation (in terms of social construction) of the male body ("the physical sense of maleness") in the formation of hegemonic masculinity in practices such as sport, work, sexuality and fatherhood, according to which:

> [T]he embedding of masculinity in the body is very much a social process, full of tensions and contradiction; that even the physical masculinity is historical, rather than a biological fact. That is to say it is constantly in process, constantly being constituted in actions and relations, constantly implicated in historical change. (Connell, 1983, p. 30)

Although hegemonic masculinity is explored in relation to sexuality and homosexuality, it misses at this stage any consideration of the hierarchy of power among men. In a later phase, given the influence of gay activism, the concept is reformulated by incorporating "the heterosexual-homosexual dichotomy" acting as a central symbol in the ranking of masculinity. Accordingly, now hegemonic masculinity is "a particular variety of masculinity to which others – among them young and effeminate as well as homosexual men – are subordinated" (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985, p. 86). In *Masculinities* (1995), Connell defines gender as the way in which the "reproductive arena," including "bodily structures and processes of human reproduction," organizes at all levels identities, rituals and large-scale institutions. Masculinity becomes a social location in gender relations and practices and a product of these practices in terms of bodily experiences, personality and culture (Connell, 1995, p. 71). This is reiterated in *Men and the boys* (2000), where

[24] Based on Antonio Gramsci's neo-Marxist analysis of class relations (*Selections from the Prison Notebook* 1971), the concept of hegemony conceives of power as a contested entity between social groups and it has been used in the discussions on men and masculinities as in "hegemonic masculinity," "male hegemony," or "hegemonic heterosexual masculinity" (Hearn, 2004, p. 101).

masculinity is both a social position and set of practices in the gender order and a set of effects of the collective embodiment of practices on individuals, relationships, institutions, and global power relations. Hegemonic masculinity is then:

> [T]he configuration of gender practice, which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (Connell, 1995, p. 77)

Being one of the first to address the relationship between men's bodies and masculinities by rejecting both biological determinism and social constructivism or any combination or "compromise" between these two, Connell sought to "assert the activity, literally the *agency*, of bodies in social processes" (1995, p. 60; italics in original) through the concept of "body-reflexive practices." This concept was meant to capture somehow the object and subject (agential) aspects of bodies, to reconcile both bodily dimensions (outside biological determinism) and the social structuring (therefore, not cultural constructivism), and to reveal their mutual shaping when "particular versions of masculinities are constituted in their circuits as meaningful bodies and embodied meanings" (Connell, 1995, p. 64). Indeed, for Connell, the body is a crucial component in the construction of masculinity, though not one of passive materiality for it has various means of resisting social signification and control. Men's bodies change and may also oppose power during men's participation in social life. Bringing biographical stories of men with regards to, for example, labor and sport, Connell argues for the status of male bodies as active agents in social processes, thus bodies being both objects of social practice and its agents, whereby bodies are defined and appropriated by the very structures generated by those practices. Accordingly, "the body reflexive practices" show how performing while being aware of the performance in relation to social conventions, men are caught up between an inside and outside of the body, moving from personal to the social, while bodies are constructed and construct through their materiality the practices that produce social notions of masculinities.

In the article "Hegemonic masculinity: rethinking the concept" (2005), while defending the notion of hegemonic masculinity, R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt admit that "the pattern of embodiment involved in hegemony has not been convincingly theorized" (2005, p. 851). They argue that embodiment should be seriously considered as one of the limits to the discursive flexibility of gendered subjectivity (considering, for example, the issue of transgender practices) and they re-assert the idea that bodies are active forces in the construction of masculine subjectivities:

> The common social scientific reading of bodies as objects of a process of social construction is now widely considered to be inadequate. Bodies are involved more actively, more intimately, and more intricately in social processes than theory has usually allowed. Bodies participate in social action by delineating courses of social conduct—the body is a participant in generating social practice. (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 851)

However, Connell and Messerschmidt here seem to reiterate the same account in which "discursive" and "non-discursive" aspects of bodies are eventually collapsed into "the over-socialized and rationalized modes of embodied selfhood" (Gill, Henwood and McLean, 2005, p. 41). They emphasize that, when trying to define hegemonic masculinity, one should not take it only as a cultural norm but also as involving non-discursive practices, such as "wage labor, violence, sexuality, domestic labor, and child care" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 842). Given (a) this kind of understanding of non-discursivity and leaving the notion of bodies and embodiment without further investigation, (b) the unclear relationship between "how bodies are affected by social processes" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 837) and how they are also "agents in social practice," and (c) their need to defend against the accusation that hegemonic masculinity "marginalizes or naturalizes the body (because it is supposed to rest on sex-gender dichotomy)" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 837), it seems to me that Connell and Messerschmidt still work within a rationalist picture of male bodies that are ultimately rendered "visible" only through

discursive accounts, that is mainly through the concept of (hegemonic) masculinity/masculinities.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity received a series of critiques in the mid 1990s and 2000s, summarized by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) and again by Messerschmidt (2012).[25] The critiques of the concept facilitated a turn from the analysis of (hegemonic) masculinity/masculinities as a central notion to a more direct focus on (hegemony of) men and their practices. Hearn and Kimmel identify several "unresolved problems" with the concept of hegemonic masculinity concerning mostly the content of its definitional meaning, its explanatory nature, and the possible change of its target.

> First, are we talking about cultural representations, every day practices or institutional structures? Second, how exactly do the various dominant and dominating ways that men are—tough/ aggressive/ violent; respectable/ corporate; controlling of resources; controlling of images; and so on—connect with each other? Third, the concept of hegemonic masculinity may carry contradictions and, arguably, has failed to demonstrate the autonomy of the gender system, from class and other social systems (Donaldson 1993). Fourth, why is it necessary to hang onto the concept of masculinity, when concepts of, say, *men's practices* (Hearn 1996), *manhood* (Kimmel 1997), or *manliness* (or unmanliness) (Mangan and Walvin 1987; Liliequist 1999; Ekenstam, Johansson, and Kuosmanen 2001) may be more applicable in some contexts, and the first concept has been subject to such critique? (Hearn and Kimmel, 2006, p. 138; italics mine)

Given the limitations of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, Hearn argues that "hegemony" is nevertheless useful but it has been used in quite restricted ways; briefly, for

[25] The concepts of masculinity, masculinities and hegemonic masculinity have been subject to a variety of critiques coming from McMahon (1993) Donaldson (1993), Jefferson (1994, 2002, 2005), Hearn (1996, 2004), Clatterbaugh (1998), Collier (1998), MacInnes (1998), Petersen (1998, 2003), Wetherell and Edley (1999), Whitehead (2002), Demetriou (2001), Robinson (2003), Howson (2005, 2009), McCarry (2007), Moller (2007), Beasley (2008), Aboim (2010), Messerschmidt (2010). In relation to hegemonic masculinity, Messerschmidt (2012: 59) summarizes the major critiques: "Notwithstanding considerable favorable reception of the concept, it nevertheless attracted such criticisms as (1) concerns over the underlying concept of masculinity itself, (2) lack of specificity about who actually represents hegemonic masculinity, (3) whether hegemonic masculinity simply reduces in practice to a reification of power or toxicity, and (4) the concept's unsatisfactory theory of the masculine subject.". Interestingly enough, as far as the body and embodiment are concerned, Messerschmidt recalls that "Connell and Messerschmidt asserted that a more sophisticated treatment of embodiment in hegemonic masculinity was necessary, as well as conceptualizations of how hegemonic masculinity may be challenged, contested, and thus changed" (2012, p. 59). Messerschmidt concludes his article with some suggestions for future research on both hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities, among them one being that "gender knowledge will enormously benefit from further research on how hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities are constructed in and through the body" (2012, p. 73).

him "the focus on masculinity is too narrow" (2004, p. 107). Consequently, "it is time to go back from *masculinity* to *men,* to examine the hegemony of men and about men. The hegemony of men seeks to address the double complexity that men are both a *social category formed by the gender system* and *dominant collective and individual agents of social practices*" (Hearn, 2004, p. 107, italics in original). Accordingly, he discusses (Hearn, 2004, pp. 108-109; italics in original) seven major aspects of the agenda for the investigation of the hegemony of men in the social world: a) "the *social processes by which there is a hegemonic acceptance of the category of men*"; b) the *system of distinctions and categorizations between different forms of men and men's practices* to women, children and other men"; c) "*which men and which men's practices – in the media, the state, religion, and so on- are most powerful in setting those agenda of those systems of differentiations*"; d) "the identification of *the most widespread, repeated forms of men's practices*"; e) "*the description and analyses of men's various and variable every day, 'natural(ized)', 'ordinary', 'normal' and most taken-for-granted practices* to women, children and other men and their contradictions, even paradoxical, meanings"; f) "*how women may differentially support certain practices of men* and subordinate other practices of men or ways of being men" and g) '"*the relationship between men's formation within a hegemonic gender order, that also forms 'women', other genders and boys, and men's activity in different ways in forming and reforming hegemonic differentiations among men*".

In this larger theoretical setting, the issue of men's bodies appears in relation to the placing of biology and biological difference in a cultural frame, that is, in cultural systems of construction of men and men's practices (Hearn, 2004, p. 109). Hearn's proposal raises the problem of men's practices within various discursive networks of male power and privilege, but here still keeps men's bodies subsumed to an understanding of the category of gender. This is conceived apparently as being more linked to the materiality of male bodies, without

going, however, into actually thematizing the relationship between men's practices and the ways male bodies are active agents in this manner or not. The gender paradigm within which Hearn looks at men and their networks of relations and practices presupposes the same conceptualization of bodies as more or less passive vehicles of male structural power expressed and reproduced through various practices. The focus on men rather than on masculinity is meant indeed as a distancing from the immateriality and abstraction of discourses and as a coming closer to male individuals and their relations. However, Hearn's article leaves unproblematized the male bodies and their relationship to other bodies and their place in understanding how power operates within a limited discursive frame.

It has to be noted, though, that Hearn has done a lot of important work on the issue of men's violence towards known women (1998a, 1998b, 2008, and 2010), a vast area which brought indeed more poignantly and explicitly the issue of male bodies and embodiment. This way, Hearn could be considered one among the few who moves towards a more nuanced discussion on men's bodily materiality and embodiment. In his recent article "A multi-faceted power analysis of men's violence to known women: from hegemonic masculinity to the hegemony of men" (2012a), Hearn again makes the argument for a turn towards the "hegemony of men" as an explanatory framework for men's violence towards women (2012a, p. 596). Here, Hearn does something more than just changing the focus of analysis from masculinity, and hegemonic masculinity, toward men and hegemony of men when examining men's forms of violence. By addressing the material and discursive complexities of the construction, processes and structures of gender orders, Hearn puts explicit weight on men's bodies, the materiality and bodily effects of violence, violent acts, violent words/words on violence, and materialist-discursive theorizing of gender.[26]

[26] Hearn argues that the roots of theorizing on the hegemony of men and men's practices lie in the materialist feminist analyses along with deconstructive poststructuralism and, in relation to this, he mentions the notion of "post-constructionism" proposed by Nina Lykke (2010a). Lykke begins her article "The Timeliness of Post-Constructionism" (2010b) with the following: "'Feminist materialism' (Braidotti 1994), corporeal feminism

> Combining materialist and discursive perspectives, across micro and macro levels, means addressing individual and collective, including violent, men's practices, in the context of construction of men as a social category – rather than the gloss 'masculinities'. Separating masculinities, hegemonic or not, from men (McCarry, 2007) may not have too much effect on gender domination; changing men as a gender category might, pointing to possible shortcomings of (disembodied) social constructionism rather than seeing violence through embodiment and embodied experience. Men's violence to known women concerns much more than reference back to hegemonic masculinity. (Hearn, 2012a, p. 598)

Hearn's own empirical and detailed research on men's violence to known women contributed to the questioning of the role of the concept of hegemonic masculinity/masculinities and its related limits in explaining the relationship between men's practices towards women and other men and the masculine subjective formation processes (for example, the relationship of men's shame to the ways patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity/ies are legitimized or not). Moreover, the research also revealed and recognized the importance of men's bodily materiality in such processes and the material-discursive interplay in the accounts on violence and in understanding men's individual lives.

> In this research a crucial question has been the relations of men's talk (in the present, and about violence) and men's (past) actions/violences/body – highlighting the importance of the material-discursive in analyzing and opposing violence. What indeed could be more material, more embodied, and more discursive, than violence? My own research on violence has brought a practical and theoretical understanding of some of the limitations of the concepts of hegemonic, subordinated and other masculinities. Thus, I have since preferred to focus on the critique of men and *men's individual and collective material discursive practices* rather than critique of masculinities, a less than clear gloss which can change, come and go with less fundamental change in gender and gender relations. (Hearn, 2012a, p. 599; italics in original)

More recently, in his section "Male Bodies, Masculine Bodies, Men's Bodies: The Need for a Concept of Gex", from *The Routledge Handbook of Body Studies* (2012), Hearn

(Grosz 1994), 'material feminisms' (Alaimo & Hekman 2008), 'transcorporeal feminism' (Alaimo 2008, 2009), 'post-human' feminism (Barad 2003; Asberg forthcoming) — these are some of the names that have been called upon in order to grasp converging trends in contemporary feminist theorizing. A common denominator of the diverse and heterogeneous theoretical stances that are clustering under these names is the argument that there is a pressing need for theories of sex/gender that can relate to pre-discursive 'facticities' (Haraway 1991: 200; Braidotti 1994: 186) of bodies and transcorporeal relations. (…) I have suggested "post-constructionism" as an umbrella term for these converging trends. With the term as nodal point or momentary frame of joint reference, I want to facilitate cross-cutting discussions of these convergences and to map genealogies of contemporary feminist thinking about embodiment, the intertwinement of sex/gender and materiality/discourse" (Lykke, 2010b, pp. 131-132).

argues for his choice of using "men" instead of "male bodies," when talking about men's bodies, in order to avoid essentialism or any type of understanding according to which masculinity would be only men's property, aligning himself to the more recent feminist theorizing on bodily materiality. In this sense, he also proposes the concept of *gex*, a shorthand for gender/sex, which would address "the complex intersections of gender, sex and sexuality, rather than assuming that gender is a cultural construction of pre-existing sex, in this context the male sex" (Hearn, 2012b, p. 314). In short, Hearn wants to go beyond those accounts of men's bodies in relation to sexuality and masculinities that would be based on the separation between "embodied sexed bodies and disembodied sexed minds; the biological and the socially constructed; the material and the discursive; the socially constructed and the post-constructionist material-discursive" (Hearn, 2012b, p. 317). For that reason, for him, the concept of gex would translate "the complexity of the embodied material-discursive simultaneity of males/men's/masculinities" (Hearn, 2012b, p. 317). This approach echoes what Nina Lykke (2010a) coined "post-constructionism," an umbrella term that gathers theoretically converging trends (Braidotti, 1994; Grosz, 1994; Alaimo and Hekman, 2008; Alaimo, 2008; Alaimo, 2009; Barad, 2003). These trends stress the need to account for an agential materiality without falling into biological determinism or cultural essentialism. Indeed, when addressing the bodily material-discursive practices and processes accounting for masculine/male/men's bodies, Hearn links the concept of gex, and its material-discursive presuppositions, to those perspectives that draw their sources from phenomenology, sexual difference or queer theory in order to examine men's sexuality, ageing, disabilities, bodily limits and borders (Hearn, 2012b, pp. 315-316). However, the notion of gex needs further substantiation, as it is not quite clear how it goes beyond sex/gender relationship when accounting for the male bodily materiality. Precisely because "male bodies can be seen in many ways: as sexed, (sex-) gendered, or gender-sexed, or simply as 'gex'," the concept

might derive its potential explanatory power only from its relation to the material-discursive feminist accounts. Otherwise, it would remain just an abbreviation of the same sex/gender conundrum. Moreover, it is not yet specified how this concept would be different from that of sexual difference that, for sure, brings in both the material and discursive dimensions of male embodiments in relation to masculinities, that is the sex-gender(ed) aspects of men's identities and masculine subjectivity, and which represents one of the roots of the very post-constructionism Hearn invokes.

On another note, Whitehead's *Men and Masculinities: Key Themes and New Directions* (2002) offers a detailed introduction to the sociology of masculinity and discusses the male body by drawing on feminist and poststructuralist thought, while claiming openly that although feminist theory has produced a rich and dynamic debate on the body, little work has been done within sociology of masculinity that engages with these discussion (Whitehead, 2002, p. 187). What distinguishes Whitehead from other theorists in the area is his commitment to contribute to the development of the sociology of masculinity by engaging explicitly with feminist interpretations of poststructuralist and postmodern thinkers. Accordingly, as an alternative to the problematic concept of (hegemonic) masculinity, Whitehead builds an understanding of a "masculine subject," by drawing on Butler's notion of performativity, and of a "masculine ontology" based on the theoretical insights offered by Gilles Deleuze's philosophical work. For Whitehead, then, a concept of the masculine subject is useful for at least two reasons: on the one hand, it would highlight the multiple discursivity that locates individuality in the subject, while recognizing the performative character of such a constitution, and, on the other hand, it would connect man as a political category with masculine identity. This way, "by using the term 'masculine subject' neither man nor masculinity are (unintentionally) reified through critique; yet neither is the political significance of man (and woman) lost within a relativistic fudge" (Whitehead, 2002, p. 210).

Whitehead describes the process by which a masculine subject undertakes a "gendered quest" towards his masculine identification as a "masculine ontology." That is, the masculine subject is not inherently male/man, but it can become this only by being positioned in and positioning itself within those discourses that speak of maleness and masculinity (Whitehead, 2002, p. 212). Taking up Deleuze's positioning of desire as ontological ("a desire to be, to become, to exist as a social actor") and also Lacan's and Foucault's interest in "recognition and reflection in self-production," Whitehead connects masculine ontology with the desire of a masculine subject for individualization and emergence in the social world, strengthening at the same time the conceptual links between man, masculinity and subjectivity.

> In no sense are 'man', 'masculine subject' or 'masculine ontology' grounded or foundation. They are, I suggest, coexisting and self-sustaining elements in the subject's endless cycle of construction and maintenance of its gender identity. (…) Masculinity, then, is indivisible from the category of man. One sustains the other; masculinity being the discursive framework that man inhabits and from which he subjectively engages the social. As man does not exist as a foundational entity, he can only be made real through discursive expression and through engaging in the cultural practices that suggest manhood. This is the ontological quest of the masculine subject. (Whitehead, 2002, p. 215)

In this context, Whitehead's aim in the chapter "Materializing male Bodies" is twofold. By taking as a primary theme the materiality of masculinity he sets out a) "to explore some of the ways in which men's sense of themselves as embodied agents serve to inform their physical presence in, and relationships to, the world and to others" and b) "to consider the notion that the material form of male body is *inevitably* inscribed with masculinities; similarly, that masculinities, by definition, speak to and of the male (body)" (Whitehead, 2002, p. 183; italics in original). By asserting that the differences between the sexes make a strong claim upon the body/subject, Whitehead recognizes an agential role to men's bodies and explicitly raises the question of the importance of acknowledging that "males' sense of embodiment informs and shapes their multiple physical-discursive materializations and relationships – to their own bodies, to others' bodies (male–female), to

the spatial field in which they find themselves" (Whitehead, 2002, p. 183). However, later on, given that he takes up Foucault's conception of bodies and power, he argues that he is more interested in the modalities through which identity and materiality connect with the male body "to constitute it and to discursively exercise power and resistance upon and through it" (Whitehead, 2002, p. 184). Additionally, drawing on the work of Iris Marion Young (influenced by de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty) and Judith Butler, Whitehead places the links between gendered subjectivity, power, embodiment and materiality as discursive (Whitehead, 2002, p. 191) and, consequently, sees the male body as a materiality constituted through the dynamics and processes of cultural conditionings (Whitehead, 2002, p. 194).

This examination of the engagement with the issue of male bodies and embodiment in scholarship on men and masculinities seems to show difficulties in understanding both the nature of the materiality of men's bodies and its conceptual relationship to masculinity and masculine subjectivity.[27] One cannot argue that studies on male bodies lack references to several axes of differentiation and their intersectionality (such as sexuality, disability, race, ethnicity, class), as well as institutions and larger social structures or various areas of social life (hooks, 1984; Gutmann, 1996; Ouzgane and Coleman, 1998; Connell, 1998; Connell, 2005; Altman, 2001; Wacquant, 2004; Morrell and Swart, 2005).[28] Actually, the overemphasis on the importance of these categories, conceived of almost as "things," in explaining the relation to body and embodiment might be one of the key reasons in keeping men's bodies out of a discussion on materiality. Concerned with why "matters of 'fact' (so to

[27] Todd W. Reeser dedicates an entire chapter on "theorizing the male body" in his *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (2010, pp. 91-118), presenting various perspectives on male bodies and its relation to masculinity, but mostly from what it means for culture to construct the male body and how individuals give meaning to the male body. The preeminence of social and discursive constructionism is still pervasive even in here. There is no mention of Luce Irigaray's work and little of the concept sexual difference, except tangentially when recommending Naomi Schor's article "Dreaming Dissymmetry: Barthes, Foucault, and Sexual Difference" (1987) and Sara Heinämaa's *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference* (2003).

[28] See also the Søren Ervø and Thomas Johansson's collection *Bending Bodies: Moulding Masculinities, Vol.2* (2003) which gathers studies about the changes within masculine identities and discusses the construction of masculinity in relation to men's understanding toward their own and other men's bodies, sexualities and masculine dis/abilities.

speak) have been replaced with matters of signification (no scare quotes here)" (Barad, 2003, p. 801), Karen Barad argues that "thingification - the turning of relations into 'things,' 'entities,' 'relata' - infects much of the way we understand the world and our relationship to it" (2003, p. 812). In other words, the understanding of the materiality of the body and embodiment tends to be subsumed to the explanatory status of various analytical categories, albeit relational ones, such as class, power and discourse, which in fact presuppose or are dependent on that which they purport to account for, i.e., the bodily dimension of their own constitution. Anticipating the argument I want to make later in this chapter, Moira Gatens concludes in "A critique of the sex/gender distinction" (1996, p. 17; italics in original):

> In addition to the neutralization of sexual difference, the sex/gender distinction lends itself to those groups or individuals whose analyses reveal a desire to ignore sexual difference and prioritize 'class', 'discourse', 'power' or some other 'hobby-horse'. Their accounts attempt to co-opt or trivialize feminist struggles and feminist theory, reducing sexual politics to gender difference and positing as primary the relations obtaining between gender and power, gender and discourse, or gender and class - as if women's bodies and the representation and control of women's *bodies* were not a crucial stake in these struggles.

Furthermore, although there is a discernible turn from bodies as instruments or vehicles in the masculine subjective formation towards a view according to which bodies (somehow) actively participate in the subject constitutive social processes, there is still a pervasive discursivity, which subsumes the body and embodiment within social structures and regimes of power. What is at issue, therefore, is not necessarily the absence of the focus on male bodies *per se*, given their increasing visibility in scholarly investigation of masculinities, but rather those explicit ways in which they are conceptualized in relation to masculinities. It is possible that Kathy Davis (1997, p. 14) is quite right: "The body may be back, but the new body theory is just as masculinist and disembodied as it ever was." Anne Witz (2000, p. 2) makes even a stronger point by suggesting that "there *is* a history of bodies in the allegedly disembodied sociological heritage: a history of her *excluded* body and a history of his *abject* body" (italics in original). In short, for her, bringing the body back into

sociology might amount to a retrieval of the male body, without, however, being gendered as such (Witz, 2000, p. 10). By this, she means that in sociology it can be traced a history of an excluded female corporeality (women as saturated proximate fleshness, existing only in and through the body) and a history of an abjected male embodiment (men as a mediated and absent fleshness), "which attests to the impossibility of clear borders or lines of demarcation between the corporeal and the social, between the 'body' and 'society'" (Witz, 2000, p. 11). Witz argues that it is through the very notion of "male embodiment" that the tricky disappearance of male bodies in sociological tradition and texts is effected in the gap between female corporeality and male sociality. "Male embodiment" functions as the condition of the social, of the masculine forms of individuation, action and agency, yet male bodies are abjected, sliding between the social and the corporeal (Witz, 2000, p. 19).

The "absent presence" of male bodies I was referring to earlier seems to imply, therefore, that: a) male bodies are an object of research as an analytical category within the scholarship on men and masculinities, that is, as a concept employed in relation to other concepts such as power, subjectivity, sexuality, etc., so as to account for masculine subjectivity and men's practices within gender power relations, and b) they are also present in terms of a materiality which is accounted for discursively whereby masculine subject formation is substituted for the ontological understanding of men's bodies. Given that, at least in feminist theories of the body, embodiment signaled somehow that there is a constitutive relationship of the lived body to thought and knowledge, male bodies are, therefore, absent in terms of embodiment, that is, in terms of a lack of a distinct ontological status, and even analytical content (for its lack of differentiation), in relation to structural constitutive processes. It is precisely the coexistence of these two dimensions, *the discursive co-construction of masculinity* and *male bodies*, on the one hand, and the little interest in *male embodiments*, on the other hand, which is one of the main concerns of this chapter. At

the same time, it is apparent that there is an inextricable link between the issue of male embodiment and that of sexual difference, in the sense that the certain neglect of male embodiment goes hand in hand with an oversight of sexual difference perspective.

Related to this, what does it mean to talk about the "embodiment of masculinity," an expression so often cited? It seems to be the case that, used in its less philosophical and more sociological sense, the notion of "embodiment" (of masculinity) is meant to function as proof that the works on men and masculinities, are not lost in abstract, conceptual spheres of theorizing about "masculinities," but have a ground (i.e. "real" male bodies) while being immersed in the *empirical* studies on how male bodies are *constructed* and *used* in masculine subjective becomings. The variety of case studies and interviews with men (male bodies) talking about themselves, otherwise dominating the scholarly literature on men and masculinities, should be proof enough.[29] However, it is not clear how these (textual) bodies disrupt certain discourses; instead, one could see how certain discourses speak through these bodies. That is why it might be the case that the "embodiment of masculinity" does not refer even to an experiential or phenomenological body at all, but rather to a predominantly discursive body.

This particular understanding of discursive "embodiment" could be seen as just another expression of a larger still pervasive problem within academic research, namely what Barad (2003) calls "representationalism." Representationalism, according to her, is based on the separation of representations from that which they are supposed to represent. This system is expressed in the triangulation of *knowledge* (i.e. representations), the *known* (i.e. that which is purportedly represented) and the existence of a *knower* (i.e. someone who does the representing). In this sense, Karen Barad shows that:

[29] See, for example, the multitude of articles from the journals, such as *Men and Masculinities*, *The Journal of Men's Studies, Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies*, published in the last decade on various case studies focusing on masculinity's construction and men's sense of their individual identity in relation to health, sexuality, disability, race, etc., form diverse countries, regions and continents.

> Both *scientific realists* and *social constructivists* believe that scientific knowledge (in its multiple representational forms such as theoretical concepts, graphs, particle tracks, photographic images) mediates our access to the material world; where they differ is on the question of referent, whether scientific knowledge represents things in the world as they really are (i.e. Nature) or "objects" that are the product of social activities (i.e. Culture) but both groups subscribe to representationalism. (2003, p. 806; italics mine)

Starting with the linguistic turn and the post-structuralist and post-modern endeavors, there was an evident shift from the simple mirroring of a supposedly independent reality within the representational realm to the acknowledgement of the power of discursive practices over such a "reality." These are said to render the reality in intelligible ways to us, as it is not about a so-called "construction" of the world, but rather about its intelligibility; of how we acquire meanings of it. Discourse, more than just language or linguistic expression, is that which both limits and enables what can be said at certain socio-historical moments and Foucault made it explicit when he argued that discursive practices are the "material" conditions that constrain or facilitate disciplinary practices such as speaking, writing, thinking, calculating, measuring, filtering and concentrating (Barad, 2003, p. 819). The issue is that the sharp distinction between a true "external empirical reality" (empirical research) that waits to be revealed by a "language" (theories) that is meant to express, explain and understand that reality, and vice versa, is consequently not longer tenable. We grasp indeed the sense of reality through let's say "direct" "raw" sensorial and mental processes, but we render it meaningful through various conceptual apparatuses and intellectual frameworks that are actually part of sets and networks of significations shaped within our social ways of relating. The rigid separation between what we mean by empirical and theoretical is what exactly still keeps our ways of thinking in canonical chains. As Shulamit Reinharz (1992, p. 246) put it, both feminist and non-feminist researchers use theory in at least three relations to data: to explain data, to generate theory and to test theory. The latter one aims especially at the ideal of verification, which must be grounded ultimately in the acquisition of brute data.

But most of the researchers forget to question the status and the epistemic and ontological nature of these "brute data." Charles Taylor (1994, p. 184) argues that we want to think of them as "data whose validity cannot be questioned by offering another interpretation or reading, data whose credibility cannot be founded or undermined by further reasoning." This assumption is probably less problematic for the case of natural studies (or for those working in those fields), but as far as the social sciences are concerned, including the pro-feminist research, the problem of the "brute data" is quite valid and the way the notion of "embodiment of masculinity" is currently conceptualized translates into the implicit discursive/interpretative character of any experiences of men accounted for in the studies on men and masculinities.

The concept of "embodiment of masculinity" raises, nevertheless, additional questions concerning the relationship between experience and discourses, a relationship that has been a serious object of debate in the feminist theory between poststructuralist-informed accounts and phenomenological perspectives. The argument that experience is always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted was one of the major lines in Joan W. Scott's analysis of the status of experience in relation to feminist claims for political changes. In her article "The Evidence of Experience", published in *Critical Inquiry* in 1991, Scott critiques the appeal to experience as uncontestable evidence and as an originary source of explanation, therefore of knowledge, given that any experience is dependent on the subject's vision and its historical shaping. According to her, the evidence of experience might also reproduce, rather than disrupt, the ideological systems of oppression through the very categories of representation and the way they operate. These categories of representation, speaking of or referring to experiences, seem to be ahistorical for not having historicized the relationship between experience and its variable meanings within the workings of the ideological systems and subjective formation. For that reason, "we need to attend to the

historical processes that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences. It is not individual who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience" (Scott, 1991, p. 779). In short, experience is always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted (Scott, 1991, p. 797). Silvia Stoller, in her article "Phenomenology and the Poststructural Critique of Experience" (2009), examines the poststructuralist critique of the concept of experience within the context of feminist theory, referring mainly to Scott's text "Experience", which is a version of "The Evidence of Experience," appeared in Butler and Scott's collection of *Feminists Theorize the Political* (1992). In her interrogation, she attempts to show that phenomenology is able to withstand the poststructuralist critique of experience. In contrast to Scott's argument that experience represents an unquestioned precondition or source of knowledge, Stoller argues that, at least for phenomenology, experience is not a starting or foundational point of knowledge, but rather that experience and its structures are just the object of phenomenological examination (2009, p. 709). Experience, in the phenomenological understanding, is not ahistorical since "is always historicized in phenomenology because it is embedded in a reference structure of spatial and temporal horizons" (Stoller, 2009, p. 711). Nor is experience an unmediated perception, since "a richer understanding of phenomenology teaches us that an object is always apparent in a particular way," which represents an obvious break with the "natural," unmediated experienced world (Stoller, 2009, p. 714). As a consequence, actually agreeing with Scott's view that indeed experience is always already an interpretation, Stoller also shows that, in phenomenology, experience is "by necessity already interpreted" because "experience is always an experience of *something as a certain something*" (2009, p. 716; italics in original). In addition, phenomenology postulates an openness of experience, in the sense that experience is not disconnected from the changes and possibilities in the world. This aspect runs against Stoller's argument that the invocation of experience involves a

reproduction of existing experiences. But the most serious concern Stoller wants to dispel relates to the apparent pre-discursive character of experience invoked in phenomenology, as poststructuralists would argue. She asserts that actually poststructuralist theorists, by claiming that experience is both as a linguistic event and constituted discursively, equate pre-predicative with pre-discursive experience. In phenomenology, pre-predicative experience is non-predicative, which does not imply that is beyond discursiveness (Stoller, 2009, p.724). Moreover, given that the predicative experience is a logical judgment that can be expressed in a statement, that is presupposes the determination of an experience as expressed through language, then pre-predicative experience is the one that is not yet given a name and identified through language in predicative experience.

> Consequently, if we compare phenomenology with poststructuralism, we find that the poststructuralist notion of discursive experience appears related to the phenomenological notion of predicative judgment because predicative judgment addresses that aspect of experience so central to the poststructuralist project – namely, language. (Stoller, 2009, p. 725)

But this distinction still has to answer to the question whether or not pre-predicative experience is pre-discursive. Stoller argues that, insofar the pre-predicative experience is understood as that which is not expressed through language, the pre-predicative experience can be considered non-discursive, without necessarily implying that it is completely independent of language and discourse.

> [T]he pre-predicative experience does maintain a connection to language and discourse, but in an as yet unelaborated manner. In other words, *the discursive part of a (pre-predicative) experience cannot be reduced to the fact that an experience is expressed in a statement*, i.e., it cannot be reduced to either a statement of the above-described apophantic type or to any other spoken or written statement. The relationship between pre-predicative experience and language is indirect; the language conventions and the conventional meanings in a given culture have an indirect effect on pre-predicative experience. Language conventions affect experience even when experience is not articulated through language. Language has a background effect and need not make its appearance in the form of speech or text. (Stoller, 2009, p. 726; italics mine)

For that reason, the poststructuralist assumption that the pre-predicative experience is equivalent with the pre-discursive experience and presumed as being prior to or beyond language does not apply, as Stoller shows, to the phenomenological understanding of experience or at least to Husserl's distinction between pre-predicative and predicative experience. It is rather more about predication and pre-predication. While the former is a particular language act, i.e. a statement, the latter "refers to an experience that is not congruent with an apophantic expression but nonetheless bears an indirect relation to language and language-based meaning" (Stoller, 2009, p. 727). To conclude, Stoller's argument is that if experience is assumed as discursive when it takes the form of a statement constituting a predicative judgment, then the pre-predicative experience can be described as pre-discursive. At the same time, if the pre-discursive is not reducible to a statement constituting a predicative judgment, then, indeed, it might be possible to conceive of pre-predicative experience as discursive (Stoller, 2009, p. 728).

Returning to my discussion on men's bodily experiences and the way masculinities are accounted for, Stoller's argument sheds more light on the issue of the character of men's embodiment, that is, also on its relation to discursivity and subject formation. On the one hand, it might be argued that precisely because experience could be understood as always already interpreted or discursively constituted, "the embodiment of masculinity" expressed in the case studies on men and their bodies reifies discursively constituted masculine subjectivity. Then, "the embodiment of masculinity" would be nothing more than another discursive form of accounting for the construction of masculinities. However, there is a persistent practice of going "directly" to the "real" of men's bodies through various case studies and interviews that would serve as uncontestable evidence and explanatory source in the knowledge production on men and masculinities. Consequently, what is so "material" and so compelling in empirical work on men's "bodies" and "voices," that cries out for us to

return to it as a validating anchor? What is in male bodies and embodiment that forces to return back to them in order to talk about masculinities, but at the same time, ironically, abstracting them from any supposedly determining character of bodily materiality? Stoller's discussion on the phenomenological distinction between pre-predicative and predicative experiences in relation to language and discourses might be an answer to this permanent need to validate knowledge on how masculine subjectivities feed on men's diverse bodily lived experiences. Maybe it is necessary to pay much more attention to what the phenomenological perspective on (male) embodiments and experiences could offer in terms of showing how they might actually shape the workings of masculine subject constitution.

1.2 Masculinities and male embodiments

Why does existing research on men's bodies in relation to male embodiment and lived experience expose certain reluctance towards taking up a phenomenologically informed perspective? Also it may be the effect of various misconceptions regarding the relationship between phenomenology and feminism, and the poststructuralist perspective of gender and experience, in particular.[30] With regard to this, in her article "Sexual Difference, Phenomenology, and Alterity" (1999) and in *Feminist Phenomenology* (Fisher and Embree, 2000), arguing for a feminist phenomenology or a phenomenological feminism, Linda Fisher convincingly unpacks the entire problematic, examining the difficulties and the possibilities of the connections between phenomenology and feminism. Despite their apparent incompatibilities, either because phenomenology is accused of masculinism in its structure

[30] There is a growing literature related to phenomenology and gender, sexual difference, lived experiences and embodiments. See, for example, the work of Butler (1988), Young (1990), Bigwood (1991), Kozel (1996), Preston (1996), Vasseleu (1998), Evans and Lawlor (2000), Olkowski (2000), Sjöhlom (2000), Fisher (1999, 2000, 2002), Fisher and Embree (2000), Parkins (2000), Vasterling (2003), Hamington (2004), Stoller (2000, 2005), Heinämaa (2003, 2007), Oksala (2006), Olkowski and Weiss (2006), Chisholm (2008).

and orientation or because it is seen as essentialist, Fisher shows that there might be possibilities for a beneficial association between feminism and phenomenology, either in the form of a comparative or critical analysis or in the very project of a *feminist phenomenology* that would go beyond just a phenomenology of women's experiences and would "articulate an account that is in a fundamental way both phenomenological and feminist, (…) a framework reminiscent of a Gadamerian 'fusion of horizons'" (Fisher, 2000, p. 37).

Unfortunately, the reluctance towards phenomenology still encountered in feminist work is also present in studies on men and masculinities and this is exacerbated sometimes by the easiness with which some scholars either use the notion of "phenomenology" or call "phenomenological" a specific approach that has very little connection to the understanding of phenomenology as it was developed within the philosophical traditions of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, or Merleau-Ponty. Jorgen Lorentzen's article, "Masculinities and the Phenomenology of Men's Orgasms," published in the special issue on male bodies of *Men and Masculinities* (2007), is such an example. Apart from the title, the word "phenomenology" appears three more times and "phenomenological" just once. Here is one illustration of its vagueness:

> Different stories about the fragmentation of the body are found throughout practically all of our cultural history. In mythology, there is a fascinating concern with fragmentations of men, as though it were conscious of the *phenomenology* that is the basis of the male sexual existence. In Greek mythology, Cronos separates his father Uranus (the sky) from his mother Gaia (the earth) by cutting off Uranus' genitalia and flinging them far out into the sea. (Lorentzen, 2007, p. 82; italics mine)

Fisher (2000, p. 3) unmasks this type of conceptual ambiguity and argues that:

> [The] more traditional understanding of phenomenology is thus distinguished from and in many cases has little bearing on some appropriations of the term that can be found in some academic literature. Some fields, for example, have entire theoretical strains or approaches termed 'phenomenological', and in many cases there is a considerable quantity of work involving gendered or feminist analyses and such phenomenological approaches (in some medical research, for instance). The sense of phenomenology at issue, however, in many of these instances can be quite distinct

> from the traditional sense, or if based on or similar to the traditional sense, is often considerably simplified; the term 'phenomenology' frequently meaning little more than a subjective, non-positivist approach, sometimes meaning no more than a description of something.

Moreover, the sociology of the body and masculinities, neglecting the developments with regards to phenomenology, that is, in terms of a phenomenological sociology (its exponents being Alfred Schütz, Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann, Harold Garfinkel and, more recently, Dan Zahavi), holds onto a perspective of phenomenology as being somehow a-historical and unable to account for the social structures shaping the subject.[31]

> The phenomenology of the body offered by Marcel, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty is an individualistic account of embodiment from the point of view of the subject; it is consequently an account largely devoid of historical and sociological content. From a sociological point of view, 'the body' is socially constructed and socially experienced. Their descriptive analysis of embodiment is of course consistent with phenomenological methodology, which seeks to bracket out the question of existence in order to focus on the problem of meaning. Such an approach, however, brackets out too much, since in their own terms being involves meaning and vice versa. (Turner, 2008, p. 52)

Nevertheless, there is some recent research that is noticeably much more informed by phenomenological approaches. One of the first studies to use phenomenological interviewing in understanding the perception and construction of masculinities in relation to sport is M. Drummond's "Masculinity from a feminist perspective: or How feminism helped construct the new man" (1994). In his *Male Bodies: Health, Culture and Identity* (2000), Nathan Watson draws on T. J. Csordas' (1993, 1994) paradigm of embodiment in order to explore the issue of men's health. Based on D. Leder's (1990) discussion of Merleau-Ponty's *The*

[31] In the chapter "Phenomenological Sociology", in Michael Hviid Jacobsen's *Encountering the Everyday. An Introduction to the Sociologies of the Unnoticed* (2008), Overgaard and Zahavi (2008, p. 113) argue: "Phenomenological sociologists have consistently issued warnings against the tendency to substantialize and reify social matters and they have offered a corrective to traditional positivistic research methodologies. Societal reality, including institutions, organizations, ethnic groupings, classes, and so on, must be regarded as a product of human activity. The sociological task is to understand the workings of this productive or constitutive process. No account of everyday social life can be complete if it does not take into account the contribution of individual subjectivities. This is the fundamental message of phenomenological sociology."

Visible and The Invisible (1968) and on a critical assessment of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach (embodiment as the problem of perception; subject/object dimension) and Bourdieu's "habitus" (embodiment in the discourse of practices; structure/practice), Csordas' notions of *embodiment* and *indeterminacy* prove to be useful analytical tools for Watson to suggest that "embodied experience of masculinity is central to understanding the limits and potential of social, political and economic transformations on the individual." It was also fruitful for examining Sabo and Gordon's idea that "masculinity is intrinsically damaging to men's health" (Watson, 2000, p. 3). Chris Shilling's edited collection *Embodying Sociology: Retrospect, Progress and Prospects* (2007) also gathers analyses from various theoretical backgrounds, such as post-structuralism and phenomenology, attempting to integrate various dimensions of embodiment such as social power, cultural (re)production, lived experience and physical change. The collection examines embodiment in the context of consumer cultures, identity and bio-politics, and draws on sociological, feminist, and anthropological views trying to articulate an approach of an "embodied sociology." However, there is little said in relation to men and masculinities and their relationship to male bodies.

Nancy Tuana's pioneering anthology, *Revealing Male Bodies* (2002), addresses more clearly embodied male experiences by bringing together phenomenological investigations of embodiment, Foucault's understanding of the relationships between social power and bodies, and the feminist studies of embodiment developed by scholars such as Susan Bordo, Judith Butler and Elizabeth Grosz.[32] These articles, drawing mostly on Judith Butler's theory of gender (and in some on Judith Halberstam's analysis of "female masculinities"), leave unquestioned the connection between a postmodern understanding of gender and (male)

[32] The work of Irigaray, Grosz and Braidotti are indeed mentioned in passim, but they remain completely secondary to the centrality of Butler's theory of gender, performativity and body in the articles gathered in the anthology.

embodiment. The concept of embodiment might presuppose an open space for "non-discursivity" or to "something" (pre-predicative) that is not totally subdued by discourses, or to a "something," which is not just posited as "something" exterior to discourse, in Butler's terms. In that case, how can one use Butler's notion of gender performativity (and her specific understanding of the "body" and "materiality") and presume at the same time male embodied lived experiences as sources of masculine constructions and possible subversions? One thing is to give an account of male embodiment within a constructionist perspective and another thing is to take the embodiment as the borderline between discursive control and intelligibility, on the one hand, and non-discursive potential in disrupting this very intelligibility, on the other hand. While in the former the focus is on discursive constructionism, in the latter the body is the main point of departure.

According to a radical (de)constructivist line, one should conceive of "embodiment" in discursive terms. Embodiment becomes in this way just another synonym for individual subjective account of experiences that are, anyway, already shaped by cultural settings. While Claire Colebrook (2000a) and Vicky Kirby (1997, 2002) argue that Butler's account of bodies implies a passive bodily matter, Dorothea Olkowski (1997) believes that the reformulation from *Bodies That Matter* (1993) is quite distant from the idea of bodily passivity. Given her earlier phenomenology-informed articles on Beauvoir (1986, 1987, 1989a) and Merleau-Ponty (1989b), and her reply to Vicky Kirby's question in the interview from 2001, one could indeed ascribe to or find in Butler's vision the idea that bodies are somehow lived and active.[33] To leave something "outside" that might become disruptive

[33] "**Judith Butler:** (…) I believe that I wrote there that it is important to affirm the materiality of the body, but added the caveat that the very form that the affirmation takes will be cultural, and that the cultural affirmation will contribute to the very matter that it names. So it seems to me much more like a conundrum than a strict 'divide'." (Kirby, 2001, pp. 11-12)

wouldn't be a slippage, given that Butler herself, taking the Kantian epistemological position, admits that a real "in itself" escapes the linguistic articulation:

> The 'there is' gestures toward a referent it cannot capture, because the referent is not fully built up in language, is not the same as the linguistic effect. There is no access to it outside of the linguistic effect, but the linguistic effect is not the same as the referent it fails to capture. This is what allows for a variety of ways of making reference to something, none of which can claim to be that to which reference is made. (Butler, 1998, p. 279)

Alison Stone (2006, pp. 55-77), nevertheless, claims that Butler tries in both *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter* to deal with the problem of matter's passivity, but that ultimately she fails in both, since, in *Gender Trouble*, bodies are denied any inherent features or agency and, in *Bodies That Matter*, their supposedly inherent agency is still secondary to that of culture. In Butler's opinion, there is no ontological, pre-discursive "outside," but an "outside" that it is always in relation to a discourse (1993, p. 8) and "to posit by way of language a materiality [body] outside of language is still to posit that materiality, and the materiality so posited will retain that positing as its constitutive condition" (1993, p. 30). While in *Gender Trouble*, "it is only *within* the practices of repetitive *signifying* that a subversion of identity becomes possible" (Butler, 1990, p. 185; first italics in original, second mine) so as to question the realness, naturalness or authenticity of sex and gender norms, in *Bodies That Matter*, gender's instability "is the *de*constituting possibility in the very process of repetition" (Butler, 1993, p. 10; italics in original). Bodies are subversive only through resignifying repeated gender enactments and, in particular, male bodies may contribute to symbolic contestations only as instruments of subversive resignifications of what counts as masculine or feminine norms and practices, remaining thus "secondary" (Stone, 2006, p. 76) and "illiterate" (Kirby, 2002, p. 278). Accordingly, for Butler, it is not the (male) body the locus (i.e. source) of any resistance or subversion but rather the "psyche" and its regulatory formation (Butler, 1997, p. 18).

There is, on the other hand, a second more positive reading of this apparent paradox if we take into account the Foucaultian inheritance of Butler's portrayal of bodies. It can actually be illuminated through a different understanding of the relationship between the Foucaultian body and the phenomenological one. In *Foucault on Freedom* (2005), Johanna Oksala argues that feminist scholarship is dominated by the assumption that Foucault's account of discursive body is the same in both *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1*, whereas, according to her, in the latter Foucault presupposes more than just a body subjected to disciplinary technologies, namely an experiential body as the site of radical resistance. In Butler's understanding of the idea of resistance in Foucault (*The Psychic Life of Power* 1997), whereby "resistance appears as the effect of power, as part of power, its self-subversion" (Butler, 1997, p. 93), it would be quite naïve to believe that bodies have any agential role in resisting discursive impositions. However, Oksala constructs another reading of Foucault's understanding of the body and pleasure, without falling back "to the prediscursive body, or (…) non-normalizable wilderness" (Oksala, 2005, p. 126). For her, "The Foucaultian body is capable of generating resistance, of presenting not malleability but excess and transgression as pleasure" (Oksala, 2005, p. 131), because the discursive processes of normalization place the limits but also the bodily possibilities of transgression through various sexual experiences. She argues that, for Foucault, experience is "the limit between discursive intelligibility and unintelligibility" in the sense that, "power/knowledge network constitutes the subject and also all forms of experiences, but this does not mean that they are discursively constituted," as it is already implied in Foucault's concept of "dispositive," which is a general regime that is both discursive and non-discursive (Foucault, 1980, pp. 195-196). For this, it would be reasonable to argue that Foucault's experiential body has affinities with or is quite rooted in Merleau-Ponty's lived body (dynamic and historically constituted in its essentially open relationship to the world), making this way

possible a very coherent connection between a poststructuralist understanding of gender and a phenomenological account of experience.

Given these interpretations of an apparent paradox underlying the articles from Nancy Tuana's anthology, one still notices that even phenomenological studies dealing with male bodies rarely mention or engage with feminist theories of sexual difference.[34] Even Whitehead (2002, p. 205), who mentions Luce Irigaray's work among those of the poststructuralist thinkers that might prove useful in the analyses of men and masculinities, focuses mostly on Judith Butler's theory of gender and performativity. Often hastily charged with biological essentialism, universalism or heterosexism based, in many cases, on misunderstandings of rather partial readings and personal investments (Schor, 1994; Fielding, 2003), sexual difference philosophy (as far as Irigaray's work is concerned) is still regarded with great suspicion and consequently dismissed especially in the field of the studies on men and masculinities, where it seems to be a serious taboo.[35] What is there to be so much feared and avoided? I will neither discuss here the reasons behind the repudiation of this philosophical position, nor defend sexual difference against the typical charges. I do not want to reproduce the debates, but I will tangentially address, however, some of them in the next

[34] In a quite recent article, "Sticky masculinity: Post-structuralism, Phenomenology and Subjectivity in Critical Studies on Men" published in the journal *Men and Masculinities* (June 2014), Kalle Berggren notices an apparent insufficiency in conceptualizing subjectivity in the dominant theories within critical studies of men and argues that post-structuralist feminism and feminist phenomenology can offer fruitful insights when it comes to theorizing masculinities. In particular, by rereading parts of the work of Stoltenber and Seidler in terms of a consistency with an understanding of subjectivity elaborated by post-structuralist feminism and feminist phenomenology (mostly in the vocabulary of Sara Ahmed), Berggren conceptualizes masculinity as sticky "which allows us to see that subjects are positioned by competing discourses, and that through repeated enactment, the cultural signs of masculinity tend to stick to bodies" (2014, p. 247). Sexual difference, nevertheless, is not at all part of Berggren's rereading of the literature on men and masculinity through the lenses of feminist philosophy (phenomenology).

[35] In "Psychoanalysis on Masculinity" (1994, p. 31), Connell briefly mentions Irigaray's *This sex which is not one*, when discussing the importance of various insights coming from psychoanalysis about the making of gender relations, and implicitly about masculinity. Stephen Frosh, in his *Sexual difference: masculinity and psychoanalysis* (1994), mentions Irigaray's work in relation to language and the maternal, just in two of the six sections of the last chapter titled "Transgressing sexual difference". Otherwise, Irigaray's work is completely left outside of the theoretical corpus on gender in relation to men and masculinities. Given that Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference is a crucial presence in the debates developed in gender theory, I tend to equate the lack of interest in or discussion of her work in the studies of men and masculinities with its explicit dismissal.

chapter on sexual difference.[36] Rather, I will present a thread in Irigaray's philosophical trajectory to see what hints it could offer with different political consequences when trying to re-understand the connections between male bodies and masculinities. I will therefore embark in this thesis on reading Luce Irigaray by going to those places that might present starting points for new constructive perspectives on reconceptualizing "men" and "masculinities". In the following, I will show that sexual difference, while often implicitly dismissed or ignored, is actually *presupposed* in the theorizing of male bodies in relation to masculinities and even to male embodiments.

1.3 The (in)essentiality of male bodies

It seems to be the case that scholars dealing with masculinities and their relation to male bodies by using predominantly a discursivist account of bodies and materiality, Butler's perspective being the one most often invoked, took for granted Butler's project. Her task was that of disrupting the once secured terrain of feminism/s by deconstructing the sex/gender distinction and by demonstrating that to invoke matter (sex, body; in our case, the male body or male bodies) is to appeal to "a history of sexual hierarchy and sexual erasures which should surely be an *object* of feminist inquiry, but which would be quite problematic as a *ground* of feminist theory" (Butler, 1993, p. 49; italics in original). However, in this case, the need to account for a certain male materiality within discursivist logic of masculinity seems to raise a paradox.

[36] There is a vast feminist literature on sexual difference that can be distinguished in at least two types of endeavors. The first one is more focused on critical interpretations, analyses and re-readings of Irigaray, such as the works of Diana Fuss (1989), Margaret Whitford (1991), Burke, Schor and Whitford (1994), Elizabeth Grosz (1994a, 2006), Tina Chanter (1995), Tamsin Lorraine (1999), Cimitile and Miller (2007). This literature also raises discussions on the nature and the ontological status of sexual difference and/or the ethical, political and institutional implications of a culture of sexual difference: Cheah and Grosz (1998), Cheah, Grosz, Butler and Cornell (1998), Schwab (1998), Ziarek (1998), Deutscher (2002), Giardini (2003), Martin (2003), Jones (2011). The second cluster is more concerned in developing feminist projects based on Irigaray's thought (e.g. Braidotti 1991, 1994, 2002; Stone 2003, 2004, 2006).

While recognizing some of their roots in the feminist, gay and left-wing movements and rejecting the anti-feminist positions within men's movements, the engagement of scholars on masculinities with feminist theories is nevertheless very poor as compared to the use of perspectives, mostly of Marxian and neo-Marxist influence, developed by them.[37] Kathy Davis made the same point more than a decade ago when showing that "although acknowledging the influence of feminism as a political movement on the emergence of the body as a topic, many 'new' male theorists of the body seem generally reluctant to draw on feminist scholarship of the body" (quoted in Witz, 2000, p. 3). Terrance MacMullan also urged male scholars "to adopt a feminist gaze" since for him feminism has become an "advocate on behalf of all people suffering socially imposed domination due to categories of class, race, caste, sexuality, ability, age and gender" (2002, p. 3). Then again, when there is indeed an engagement with feminist theories of gender and body, Butler's philosophical work is the most cited especially for its usefulness in explaining the social construction of both masculinities and men's bodies.

Secondly, although they support feminist critiques of the sex/gender distinction, i.e. both a) the rupture of the logical sequence between a so-called maleness and masculinities, and b) the coincident construction of sex (male) and gender (masculinity), it seems that there is always a need to appeal to some "grounding" male bodies. This raises questions especially in the context of masculinity's disconnection from men's bodies, which I referred to at the beginning of this chapter. Without male bodies, masculinity would lose this way too much of its referentiality. For that reason, it is my contention that analyses on men and masculinities are caught up between the sex/gender distinction, when it comes to understanding male bodies, and simultaneous discursive production of gender and sex when it comes to analyzing masculinities. Though connected somehow (whereby masculinity derives its discursive

[37] See T. Digby (1998), B. Pease (2000), V. Seidler (1991), R. Connell (1995).

content from men's bodies), male bodies and masculinities are still disconnected (the maleness of men's bodies is cut off from masculinity's discursiveness). There is, therefore, a gap, which is left unscrutinized. And it is through this very gap, this sliding of male bodies through the sex/gender distinction and the discursive production of masculinities, that men's bodies are simultaneously assumed and devoid of meaning at the same time; both essential to masculinity's referentiality and inessential to masculinity's discursiveness. Furthermore, this sliding is possible precisely because of maleness' lack of analytical content, that is, a lack of specification in terms of sexual difference: maleness means whatever speaks of men and their practices and the maleness of men's bodies is, therefore, merely nominal. But there is one more thing; masculinity itself seems to be devoid of content, given that it always speaks of whatever men, and implicitly male bodies, might mean or do. Therefore, the double equation/equivocation: masculinities=men=male bodies. This shows that, although there is an intended arbitrariness between masculinities and male bodies in the desire to cut off masculinities from men, it appears that this relationship is not arbitrary at all. It is in this very sense that the sexual difference of men's bodily specificity, so crucial, remains unacknowledged.

In other words, the need to support the construction and variability of masculine subjectivities with the help of male bodies shows, ironically of course, what should have always been acknowledged, that bodies do matter more than is provided for in a Butlerian framework, and, consequently, male bodies, in particular, matter a lot when it comes to masculinities. Accordingly, "the battle" is not solely at the level of masculinities, but rather more at that of male bodies or both. That is perhaps why, despite his understanding of masculinity's relational character to femininity, R. W. Connell uses the plural "masculinities" (as if "multiplicity" applied to "masculinity" would challenge the logic) to include even those minoritarian or subordinated groups of men ("masculinities" that are rather "femininities" as

compared to "hegemonic masculinity").[38] To name them differently (or as "feminine"?) would stand for the negation, in a way, of the very "reality" of their male bodies, even if that "maleness" is taken as being part of a binary system of signification, i.e. discursive production of sex. Implicitly, gender is connected pretty well to sex and the prerogative of being "masculine" is secured even for the most disadvantaged of "men's family," and, apparently, the academic subfield itself. Consequently, given the importance of male bodies, why is it that sexual difference is absent in these studies?

Moreover, this question is also generated by the ambiguity of the status and the nature of the materiality of men's bodies, which is somehow presumed in the understanding of masculinities, in order to secure a certain link between bodies and their related subjectivities. On the one hand, there *are* bodies whose material presence always comes back into the question of their constitution (I would call it the metaphysical status of the materiality of male bodies). On the other hand, there is a specificity which "forces" these bodies to (re)present themselves as different than other (i.e. as male), even if conceived of as being constituted within the same type of social and political processes and structures (I would call

[38] One of the issues will always remain the nature and the work of power relation/s among the elements, i.e. among types of masculinity (groups of men), rather than just to proclaim the multiplicity of masculinities as the solution against a monolithic, ahistorical and static universal masculinity. Taking into account the diversity and variability of masculine instantiations is not enough to argue against certain patriarchal patterns of masculine impositions, especially if the hierarchical logic is still maintained within feminine/masculine divide, i.e. through the negation and devaluation of the feminine/feminized other. Mimi Shippers' article "Recovering the feminine other: masculinity, femininity and gender hegemony" (2007) takes up Connell's understanding of masculinity as relational to femininity and proposes, as compared to Connell's "emphasized femininity," the notion of a hegemonic femininity that would consist of "*the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women*" (Shippers, 2007, p. 94; italics in original). In her view, hegemonic femininity is ascendant in relation to what she calls "pariah femininities," as compared to Connell's "subordinated femininities," that is, those sets of characteristics that, when embodied by women, are sanctioned and stigmatized. Pariah femininities are those that are conceived of as contaminating the relationship between masculinity and femininity (Shippers, 2007, p. 95). What is really interesting in her argument is that, in contrast to pariah femininities, we cannot have pariah masculinities or subordinated masculinities, for the simple reason that there are no masculine characteristics that are stigmatized as contaminating or as subordinate, but rather characteristics embodied or expressed by male bodies that are deemed feminine and, therefore, inferior and stigmatized. Thus, "what were identified by Connell as subordinate masculinities, are in this model, simply hegemonic femininity embodied or enacted by men" (Shippers, 2007, p. 96).

it the ontological status of the materiality of *male* bodies).[39] The problem here is that both the metaphysical and the ontological statuses of the materiality of men's bodies collapse in its epistemic conditions, in the sense that there is a conflation between the being of men's bodies and the mode in which these bodies are known. The ambiguity in understanding the relation between male bodies and masculinities resides precisely in the ambiguous relation of the body to the "real," in the very fact that the so-called *reality* of the *maleness* of men's bodies, therefore sexual difference, is subsumed to language and discursive constitution. A certain "real", the male materiality, let's say an ontological dimension, is therefore collapsed in the social, or the ontic, if one takes on the distinction.[40]

Consequently, it can also be argued then that, first, scholars working on men and masculinities substituted the primacy of the "real" with that of the discursive, or, as Barad put it, matters of signification have overtaken matters of fact (2003, p. 801). Secondly, at the same time, when accounting for the nature of the materiality of men's bodies, i.e. their maleness, this is not understood as a relation to female bodies, as it is the case of the conceptual relationship between masculinities and femininities. This means that sexual difference - the differences between bodies - understood here in quite material terms, remains not accounted for in its materiality, precisely because this difference is conceptualized within/through the linguistic/discursive framework of gender.

This aspect echoes powerfully Moira Gatens' argument against the sex/gender distinction, which I consider quite relevant for the discussion even thirty years after its publication in 1983. Gatens states that, during the 1970s and into the early 1980s, "gender," favored against the category "sex," for its danger of biological reductionism, became a

[39] I will return in more detail to this in the third chapter on the ontological character of sexual difference.

[40] The ontological-ontic distinction, in Heidegger's terms, relates to the "ontological difference" that marks the difference between Being (the being of beings) and beings, as particular entities, that is a difference between the *ontological*, which concerns things in their Being (the meaning of Being, transcendental conditions that make possible particular modes of Being), and the *ontic*, which concerns particular beings (factual existence or facts about entities). (Heidegger, 1962, p. 31)

central explanatory and organizing category for diverse groups such as "Marxists, (usually male) homosexual groups and feminists of equality," all three of them with the effect of producing a "neutralization of sexual difference and sexual politics" (1996, p. 4). Against this neutralization process, whereby, "re-education is the catchcry of radical social transformation," Gatens sets on challenging both the assumption that the body and the psyche are passive *tabulae rasae*, passive entities (a rationalist view according to her), and the "alleged *neutrality* of the body, the postulated *arbitrary* connection between femininity and the female body, masculinity and the male body" (1996, p. 4; italics in original). Referring to the works of Greer, Millet, Oakley, Chodorow, Dinnerstein and Barret, who took up the notion of gender from the analysis of Robert J. Stoller's work on transsexualism, Gatens questions the two assumptions central to the "degendering" programme or re-education for social change. In relation to the neutrality of the body she is more than explicit: "there is no neutral body, there are at least two kinds of bodies: the male body and the female body" (1996, p. 8). Given that socialization theorists understand sex/gender distinction as a body/mind (consciousness) distinction, her argument is that if social processes and behaviors are located in the subject, rather than "in consciousness" or "in the body," then "the subject is always a sexed body" (Gatens, 1996, p. 9). From here it follows then that, by accepting the notion of sexually specific subjects, one cannot hold anymore onto the claim that patriarchy valorizes the masculine gender over the feminine gender. The difference in the social values and significance between the male body and the female body effects, therefore, a difference between male and female consciousness. In other words, since masculine male bodies are valued over masculine female bodies then, for sure, the problem rests at the level of male body rather than masculine gender.[41] And, for that reason, her straightforward conclusion: "Gender is not the issue; sexual difference is" (Gatens, 1996, p. 9). There is, consequently, a

[41] Later in her article, after examining the asymmetrical cases of male transsexual and female transsexual, Gatens argues: "It is not masculinity *per se* that is valorized in our culture but the *masculine male*" (1996, p. 15; italics in original).

non-symmetrical relationship between what is acted out by a male body and what a female body acts out, that is, there is a qualitative difference between, for example, "the kind of femininity 'lived' by women and that 'lived' by men".

> The 'feminine male' may have experiences that are socially coded as 'feminine' but these experiences must be *qualitatively* different from female experience of the feminine. His experiences are parasitically dependent on the female body, more particularly on the maternal body, by a process of identification. (Gatens, 1996, p. 10; italics in original)[42]

This then also dispels the claim that feminists of sexual difference are essentialist or ahistorical, in the sense that the body taken as object of study by theorist of sexual difference is not just a physical or anatomical one. This body is also an animate, lived and situated body, an imaginary body, that is, the "site of the historical and cultural specificity of masculinity and femininity" (Gatens, 1996, p. 12). Acknowledging the interconnections between networks of signification and cultural ways of being a man or a woman, it means, "there is a contingent, though not arbitrary, relation between the male body and masculinity and the female body and femininity" (Gatens, 1996, p. 13). For Gatens, then, the relation between the body and gender is not arbitrary, as the relation between a symptom and its etiology is not arbitrary: "to treat gender, the 'symptom', as the problem is to misread its genesis" (Gatens, 1996, p. 13). In other words, femininity and masculinity are not, therefore, arbitrary impositions/inscriptions on an indifferent consciousness or a neutral body.[43]

[42] In the second phrase, Gatens refers to the male transsexual, which is taken as a case "that most clearly demonstrates the asymmetry between masculinity/femininity and male/female" (1996, p.14).

[43] A similar argument is made by Joan Scott in her article *Millennial Fantasies: The Future of "Gender" in the 21st Century* (2001), where she urges for a re-conceptualization of sex/gender distinction given that a) "the increasing prominence of neurobiology, microbiology and information technology, the excitement about the Human Genome project, and the research for genetic explanations for all physical and social conditions have posed strong challenges to constructivism" and b) sex (body) remains therefore the major explanation for differences (Scott, 2001, p. 30). She also argues that the weakness of gender for challenging the claims coming from evolutionary psychology, for example, stems from its refusal to deal with corporeal sex. This was understandable at a given moment, since that the idea was to examine "social constructions" and their operation as systems of power, but, at the same time, the sex/gender distinction "both left aside and left in place" the bodies on which such constructions were occurring. Later Scott states: "If gender is the use we make of our bodies, our bodies themselves cannot be understood entirely in terms of social construction. Gender thus does not replace physical sex in discussions of sexual difference; but in the end, it leaves sex in place as the explanation for social construction. When gender depends on sex in this way, nothing can prevent its being identified with (or as) sex itself. What seems then to be conceptual and terminological confusion, is in fact an

Gatens' argument against the sex/gender distinction is relevant insofar it unmasks both the presupposition behind such a distinction and the effect of marginalizing sexual difference and of not acknowledging the fundamental relationship of sexual difference to (feminist) theory as such. The so-called arbitrariness of gender in relation to sex presumes the conception of a passive, neutral body and, at the same time, that of a symmetrical construction of gender as representation or system of significations (images). This reinforces, in short, the hierarchical and oppositional dichotomy between a brute material reality and its ideal representation (and, by extrapolation, thought itself). Therefore, as Colebrook (2000a, p. 83; italics in original) argues, "any 'bracketing' of sex or insistence on sex as an effect of *representation* also partakes in a representational refusal to question, or think of a way of questioning *what is* that gender re-presents." For that reason, the question is not about how the sexes are differentiated, but rather about the specific ways in which the real of the sexes becomes meaningful. The question is then about another ontology according to which the body is thought neither as a pre-representational materiality nor as a formative essence. Moreover, for Colebrook, this type of question echoes Irigaray's political project of rethinking sexual difference in relation to thought and theory as such:

> If it is the very character of corporeality to become through images, and if this becoming is always a relation to others, then theory will have to acknowledge its own status as an event of becoming and as a production of images. This means that feminist theory will no longer be the cause of theory (in general) for feminist politics and identity. Sexual difference is not a question within theory. For it is only because there is sexual difference, the becoming or imagining of specific bodies, that theory as such is possible. (Colebrook, 2000a, p. 90)

Then, turning back to the case of men's bodies and masculinities and its theorizing, the fact that sexual difference is presupposed but unacknowledged in the exploration of the relation between male bodies and masculinities (masculine subjectivity) also speaks to the marginalized status of sexual difference philosophy in the area of the critical studies of men

accurate representation of the interdependence of the two terms: if sex is not entirely natural, neither is gender entirely social" (Scott, 2001, p. 30).

and masculinities. Men's theorizing about men and men's bodies is, consequently, not cut off from the issue of sexual difference, since sexual difference might be the very condition of such theorizing. It wouldn't be too farfetched to argue then that sexual difference could be the limit of the relationship between the critical studies on men and masculinities and feminist thought and its political project. In other words, if thought as such and, by implication, theorizing men and masculinities, might be conditioned by the sexual difference that is meant to explain, the engagement with feminist theories of sexual difference could be seen, then, as an indicator of the pro-feminist thought and agendas. And it is precisely this limit that I wanted to question in the course of this chapter, a limit that the scholars on men and masculinities do not theorize. In short, this seems to be quite ironic: sexually differentiated academic zones but no use of theories of sexual difference.

These aspects lead me to consider that any study on men and masculinities becomes problematic if it doesn't have an explicit strong connection to the multitude of rich feminist theories and goals, as one of the aims is to develop new perspectives in order to influence and change men, and doing so, ultimately improving women's lives. This work should function as a feminist boomerang: studying men should turn back as a benefit for women and not as just another academic space for men. "We" are not and "we" were never in a symmetrical position so as to claim "independence" of any sort! Studies of men and masculinities should always have an explicit feminist framework and focus or, as Calvin Thomas argues, "masculinity studies can be not the betrayal or appropriation of feminism but rather one of its valuable and necessary consequences" (2002, p. 62).[44]

An analogy based on Sara Ahmed's argument developed in her on-line paper "Declarations of Whiteness: The non-Performativity of Anti-Racism" (2004) might shed

[44] I am concerned here also about the specific knowledge production and not necessarily about the contextual ways the subfield got institutionalized, though they are strongly interconnected. It is known, especially at the expense of young scholars, how knowledge is produced, reproduced and fiercely guarded within specific academic spaces, where "to fit in," often means actually "to do and to be the same".

more light on this matter. I see this analogy more as explanatory and less an argumentative one, functioning on three interconnected dimensions: the *fields of study*, in this case the critical studies of men and masculinity and the critical studies of whiteness, the *objects of study*, meaning masculinity (gender) and whiteness (race) and the corresponding *effects* of the relations between the fields and the objects of study (or the risks of the constitution of such fields). This analogy should work as an understanding of the inner workings between a field of study and its object of study without any equivalence between the terms (fields, objects, effects) of the analogy, meaning that the difference in the nature of some of the categories employed in the analogy, i.e. gender and race, as supraordinate categories of masculinity and whiteness, is recognizable.

Analyzing the self-reflexive turn in whiteness studies and how this field constitutes itself through various "anti-racist" modes of declaration, Ahmed argues, first of all, that the representation of whiteness as invisible, "as the unseen or the un-marked, as a non-color, the absent presence or hidden referent, against which all other colors are measured as forms of deviance" (2004, para. 1), presents several risks. One of them is that of transforming whiteness into "an essential something" when not making what can already be seen, visible in different ways.

> If whiteness becomes a field of study, then there is clearly a risk that whiteness itself will be transformed into an object. Or, if whiteness assumes integrity as an object of study, as being 'something' that we can track or follow across time and space, then whiteness would become a fetish, cut off from histories of production and circulation. (Ahmed, 2004, para. 3)

Another risk is that of reproducing whiteness as the focus of the intellectual endeavors, "however haunted by absence, lack or emptiness" (Ahmed, 2004, para. 4). In addition, whiteness studies might become "a discourse of love which would sustain the narcissism that elevates whiteness into a social and bodily ideal" and a field constructing

itself on pure self-reflection. The emergence of this field might also represent the emergence of a new form of whiteness, an anxious one, which would entail that "this white subject would come into existence in its very anxiety about the effects it has on others, or even in fear that is taking something away from other" (Ahmed, 2004, para. 7). Furthermore, this anxiety is signaled by the very use of the notion "critical" in front of "whiteness studies":

> But I think the 'critical' often functions as a place where we deposit our anxieties. We might assume that if we are doing critical whiteness studies, rather than whiteness studies, that we can protect ourselves from doing – or even being seen to do – the wrong kind of whiteness studies. But the word 'critical' does not mean the elimination of risk, and nor should it become just a description of what we are doing over here, as opposed to them, over there. (Ahmed, 2004, para. 8)

Analogously, in the field of the critical studies of men and masculinities, there was a pervasive assumption that "men"/"masculinity" were the invisible norm, hence the urgency to make men visible as a social category or naming men as men through various discursive practices.[45] How should function this making-visible of men qua men in a different way in order not to re-center or narcissistically reproduce the focus of men/masculinity in the academic space? The presence of the word "critical" in critical studies on men and masculinities thus takes on a new importance. The question is how can a "critical" intervention assure us that these studies don't play the same old game?

> If 'whiteness studies' turns towards white privilege, as that which enables and endures declarations of whiteness, then this does not simply involve turning towards the white subject, which would amount to the narcissism of a perpetual return. Rather, whiteness studies should involve at least a double turn: to turn towards whiteness is to turn towards and away from those bodies who have been afforded agency and mobility by such privilege. In other words, *the task for white subjects would be to stay implicated in what they critique, but in turning towards their role and responsibility in these histories of racism, as histories of this present, to turn away from themselves, and towards others.* This 'double turn' is not sufficient, but it clears some ground, upon which the work of exposing racism might provide the conditions for another kind of work. We don't know, as yet, what such conditions might be, or whether we are even up to the task of recognizing them. (Ahmed, 2004, para. 59; italics mine)

[45] For more on discursive strategies in theorizing men and men's theorizing see Jeff Hearn (1998).

It is this "double turn" that might assure the critical nature of the studies on men and masculinities, a turn towards men and masculinities by showing their positionings in the histories of violence in various forms against women and other men. This is, undoubtedly, one of the major intended aims in the critical studies of men and masculinities. But what is missing is the "(...) *turn away from themselves, and towards others*," that is a way of engaging with the "others" that would acknowledge how that turn was possible in the first place, i.e. the feminist critique of patriarchal power relations and sexual difference. My critique is not a new one. Rosi Braidotti raised the same issue in the early '90s and remains prescient, precisely because of the growing number of male scholars in gender studies/women studies and the institutionalization of studies on men and masculinities. In her *Nomadic Subjects* (1994), the section "Envy; or, with Your Brains and My Looks" (pp. 136-145) interrogates the position of men in feminism (or what she calls *Pheminism*) and questions the presupposed new symmetry between the sexes which resulted in the new focus on men and men's studies, and the neglect of the fundamental issue of "the historical experience of oppression on the basis of sex":

> It must be very uncomfortable to be a male, white, middle-class, and heterosexual intellectual at a time in history when so many minorities and oppressed groups are speaking up for themselves; a time when the hegemony of the white knowing subject is crumbling. Lacking the historical experience of oppression on the basis of sex, they paradoxically lack a minus. Lacking the lack, they cannot participate in the great ferment of ideas that is shaking up Western culture: it must be very painful indeed to have no option other than being the empirical referent of the historical oppressor of women, and being asked to account for his atrocities. (Braidotti, 1994, p. 139)[46]

[46] "'They' are those white, middle-class, male intellectuals who have 'got it right' in that they have sensed where the subversive edge of feminist theory is. 'They' are a very special generation of postbeat, pre-yuppie twenty-eight-to-forty-five-year-old men who have 'been through' the upheavals of the 1960s and have inherited the values and the neuroses of that period. 'They' are the 'new men' in the 'postfeminist' context of the politically confusing 1990s, where the Hillary and Bill Clinton effect is in full swing. 'They' are the best male friend we've got, and 'they' are not really what we had hoped for. 'They' can circle round women's studies departments in crisis-struck Arts faculties, knowing that here's one of the few areas of the Academy that is still expanding financially and in terms of students' enrollment at both undergraduate and graduate level. 'They' play the academic career game with great finesse, knowing the rule about feminist separatism and yet ignoring it. 'They' know that feminist theory is the last bastion of radical thought amidst the ruins of the postmodern gloom. 'They' are conscious of the fact that the debate about modernity and beyond is coextensive with the woman's question." (Braidotti, 1994, p. 138)

But this is not all. This concerns not only the physical presence of men in a very specific academic area, but also the very way of doing research and theorizing their own presence. I argue, then, that the blindness/neglect/absence of sexual difference feminist theory in the works on men and masculinities is not accidental and for Braidotti this neglect is more than sexism.

> What the heterosexual men are lacking intellectually - the peculiar blindness to sexual difference for which the term *sexism* is an inadequate assessment - is a reflection of their position in history. (Braidotti, 1994, pp. 138-139; italics in original)

As a way of concluding, in this chapter, I took an almost analogous step (in terms of the internal conditioning and not between the terms of an analogy) to what Judith Butler did in *Gender Trouble* for feminism, but obviously with a counter-twist, other reasons and aims: "I was writing in the tradition of immanent critique that seeks to provoke critical examination of the basic vocabulary of the movement of thought to which it belongs" (Butler, 1999, p. vii). Butler looked at some of the fundamental notions and concepts in feminist theory and questioned them in relation to their foundational nature for the political projects/agendas. As herself clarifies in the preface to *Gender Trouble*'s second edition, she sought "to criticize a pervasive heterosexual assumption in feminist literary theory" (1999, p. vii) by showing that any restricted meaning of gender has its own exclusionary norms and that there is a strong heterosexism at the core of sexual difference fundamentalism. Linking sexuality and gender, she moved on developing her own theory of the performativity of gender, whereby the materiality of the bodies is always already subsumed to the constitutive power of gender discursive forces. In the context of my thesis, given the intermingled history of the development of the studies on men and masculinities with feminist movements and thought, I questioned the conceptual grounds of the subfield (even if not a unified one) and its major presupposition as far as male bodies are concerned, the twist aiming at finally reaching the question of what it would mean to think of men's bodies through sexual difference as

theorized, for example, by Luce Irigaray. I also showed an internal contradiction in understanding male bodies through the paradigms employed by scholars analyzing men and masculinities and the implicit ambiguity of the status of men's bodily materiality in relation to masculine subjective formation within power relations. The predominance of the discursive constitution of maleness and male materiality is not accidental and is concurrent with the omission of the sexual difference paradigm, which, in stronger political terms, could be translated as an explicit marginalization, one identifiable even in the struggles and transformations in feminist theory. Futhermore, this marginalization is strongly linked, if not effected, by the very neutralization of (male) bodily materiality, in terms of lack of sexual difference specifications, in the discursive presupositions of the analyses on men and masculinities.

Interestingly enough, the ambiguity concerning the understanding of men's bodies' relationship to masculinities (and, implicitly, the presupposing of sexual difference and, yet, its lack of acknowledgement both, as a theoretical/analytical "object" in research and as a "subject" in academic space) could be read through Gilles Deleuze's conception of "critique" and "the legitimate use of representation," to which I will return in great detail in the forth chapter. In the *Logic of Sense* (1990), Deleuze differentiates between representations that are detached from their process of production, external to their object or expression, and, therefore, are *dead*, and representations that are *living*, which are attached to their process of production enveloping their object or expression. Consequently, in order for a representation to have a legitimate use, it has to become the envelopment of its own cause, that is, attached the process of production and actualization which links difference to representation of things in general for a human consciousness. In these very terms one could read the understanding of male bodies that I analyzed in this chapter as a particular expression of a certain representational thought through which the ideas/representations of men's bodies are cut off

from their sensibility/reality or corporeal depths, that is, from the process of production of thought as embodied. The "critique" I employed unconcealed the problem of the body and embodiment in its own difference. It has revealed the disconnection of representational thinking of bodies from their participation in thought production, on the one hand, and the effacement of the virtual differentiation that male bodies could bring in the process of representational production, on the other hand. I propose, in the next chapter, to look at the sexual difference philosophy of Luce Irigaray as a theoretical location that might both overcome the rupture between thought and language production and the real of male bodily materiality, and offer the possibility of rethinking even the agenda of the field and its political engagement.

Chapter 2. Male Imaginary and Sexual Difference

> It is this sameness that constitutes the subject as a living being but that man has not begun to *think*: his body.
>
> Luce Irigaray – *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993, p. 98)

In this chapter, I journey with Luce Irigaray along her critique of Western philosophical thought and, in particular, of its psychoanalytical discursive instantiation. First, I outline a thread of re-thinking male bodies and masculinities along Irigaray's project, hinting at what I might call a male/masculine "sensible transcendental," conceived of in its own specific sexual/sexuate terms. Along the way, I suggest that a phenomenologically informed account of the relationship between male embodiment and masculinity that draws on sexual difference perspective, that is, Irigaray's sexual difference philosophy, might prove itself transformative when examining men's ways of relating to their own bodies, to those of the others, and to the world. Then, I focus in more detail on the notion of the (male) Symbolic, which I explain as being, according to Irigaray's philosophy, the *phallomorphic* expressions of an "anal" male Imaginary shaping *thought* as such. In relation to this, I discuss one of Calvin Thomas's (2008) arguments connected to the ideas of several authors (such as Leo Bersani, Catherine Waldby, and Brian Pronger) who engage with male bodily fantasies and anxieties and who advocate "anality," i.e. the anus and anal eroticism, as an alternative bodily figuration to the monolithical phallic male body with the consequent promising restructuring of the masculine heterosexual subject. I show that, in Irigaray's terms, this figuration, however, might discursively both actualize the dream of the male "anal" imaginary and operate the same gesture of effacing sexual difference. Consequently, since the Symbolic is exposed by Irigaray as both male, based on an imaginary of the "ontology of the anal" (Irigaray, 1993a, p. 101) and organized on the basis of specific principles subjected

to the power of solidification/formalization/codification, a breach into the representational order is to be thought through a re-thinking of a different male imaginary, on the one hand, and of language and male representations, on the other hand. In both this and the next chapter I demonstrate that Irigaray puts forward important suggestions for such a rethinking. One important aim of this chapter is, thus, to look for alternative morphological locations for rethinking male imaginary and its symbolic and linguistic expressions based on the diagnostic offered by Irigaray and her own affirmative re-readings of the male bodily fantasies shaping the male imaginary and symbolic orders.

2.1 Toward a male "sensible-transcendental"

Focusing in her so-called first phase of the work on the critique "of the auto-mono-centrism of the western subject" (Hirsh and Olson, 1995, p. 97) according to which the masculine subject constructs and interprets the world only through his perspective, Irigaray considers that there is no "real heterosexuality," in the sense that the understanding of sexual difference in Western philosophical and psychoanalytical discourses is governed by an imaginary that conceives of sexual difference as if there were only *one* sex, and *that* sex is *male* (Whitford, 1991, p. 69).[47] Differently put, there is no sexual difference in the social imaginary of the West because the female body has not acceded yet to the symbolic order and because the male phallomorphic imaginary had the historical privilege of speaking within only *one* symbolic for *two* bodies, by setting up the parameters of the (same) identity according to which the feminine, female bodies and their sexualities were defined as secondary, deficient or derivative.

[47] Rachel Jones (2011, p. 8) argues that Irigaray's project might be defined more in terms of continuities and less in terms of divisions or shifts (as it is the case of the three-period characterization of her work), since her major concern transpires throughout her entire work, that is a continued focus on the need to cultivate a culture of sexual difference and of "being-two".

> Thus Freud discovers – in a sort of blind reversal of oppression – certain variously disguised cards that are kept preserved or stored away and that lie beneath the hierarchy of values of the game, of all the games: the desire for the same, for the self-identical, the self (as) same, and again of the similar, the alter ego and, to put it in a nutshell, the desire for the auto… the homo… the male, dominates the representational economy. "Sexual difference" is a derivation of the problematic of sameness, it is, now and forever, determined within the project, the projection, the sphere of representation, of the same. The "differentiation" into two sexes derives from the a priori assumption of the same, since the little man that the little girl is, must become a man minus certain attributes whose paradigm is morphological – attributes capable of determining, of assuring, the reproduction-specularization of the same. A man minus the possibility of (re)presenting oneself as a man = a normal woman. (Irigaray, 1985b, pp. 26-27)

The patriarchal logic perpetuates itself through a startling trick: male body/morphology projects itself into the symbolic as general and, therefore, sexless, and at the same time presents itself as irrelevant on the path towards transcendence. But, actually, it is the female body that is negated and rejected from the male form of "transcendence"/language, and simultaneously instrumentalized for the specular male self-caressing and auto-representation (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 24). When discussing the asymmetrical positioning of the masculine and the feminine, Rosi Braidotti argues (Braidotti and Butler, 1994, p. 38) that:

> The price men pay for representing the universal is a loss of embodiment; the price women pay, on the other hand, is at once a loss of subjectivity and a confinement to the body. Men become disembodied and, through this process, gain entitlement to transcendence and subjectivity; women become over-embodied and thereby confined to immanence.

Therefore, Irigaray's so-called second phase aimed at the birth of a feminine subjectivity, never pre-defined, within a culture of sexual difference, whereby "we must constitute a possible place for each sex, body and flesh to inhabit" (1993a, p. 18). By re-evaluating the "matter," Irigaray provides a potential image of "woman" as a sexed female able to reach specific modalities of transcendence: "A birth into transcendence that of the other, still in the world of the senses ('sensible'), still physical and carnal, and already

spiritual" (Irigaray, 1993a, p. 82).[48] What she does is to reunite the *Intelligible* and the *Sensible* through the "sensible transcendental," in which both corporeal and conceptual logics (Lorraine 1999) dispel the castration anxiety, that is, the refusal to face mortality and death.[49] Irigaray's sensible transcendental is a reworking of a dichotomy pervasive in the Western philosophical thought ranging from Plato's distinction between the Intelligible world of Ideas and the Sensible world of materiality to Kant's division between the empirical and the transcendental or Heidegger's ontological-ontic distinction (Whitford, 1991; Hodge, 1994). In *I love to you* (1996, p. 104), transcendence, for Irigaray:

> [I]s thus no longer ecstasy, leaving the self behind toward an inaccessible total-other, beyond sensibility, beyond earth. It is respect for the other whom I will never be, who is transcendent to me and to whom I am transcendent. Neither simple nature nor common spirit beyond nature, this transcendence exists in the difference of body and culture that continues to nourish our energy, its movement, its generation and creation.

An ethics of sexual difference, which admits the subjectivity of each sex, has then to defy the allotment of materiality, corporeality, and the "natural" to women and the "spiritual," transcendence to men: "(…) *while men need to take back and own their body*, women need to accede to a symbolic representation of their own" (Whitford, 1991, p. 156; italics mine). This implies a non-hierachized relational identification, a rather "horizontal transcendence," which is what represents the third phase of Irigaray's work: the exploration

[48] In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* Irigaray reiterates her critique of the Western culture and history which failed to think of and develop sexual difference both empirically and transcendentally: "It is surely a question of the dissociation of body and soul, of sexuality and spirituality, of the lack of a passage for the spirit, for the god, between the inside and the outside, the outside and the inside, and of their distribution between the sexes in the sexual act. Everything is constructed in such a way that these realities remain separate, even opposed to one another. So that they neither mix, marry, nor form an alliance" (1993a, p. 15).

[49] Irigaray introduces the figuration of the *angels* for the sensible-transcendental, which "would circulate as mediators of *that* which has not yet happened, of what is still going to happen, of what is on the horizon. (…) As if the angel were a representation of a sexuality that has never been incarnated. A light, *divine* gesture (or tale) of *flesh* that has not yet acted or flourished. (…) They represent and tell of another incarnation, another *parousia* of the body" (1993a, pp. 15-16; italics mine). The ancient Greek term *parousia* (gr. παρουσία - "a coming" or "a presence") is chosen by Irigaray precisely for its invocation of a divine or spiritual revelation/arrival of the flesh/body, which is also echoing the theological sense of a "second coming" of the divine, a rebirth of an embodied spirituality.

of a "new model of possible relations between man and woman, without the submission of either one or the other" (Hirsh and Olson, 1995, p. 96).[50]

Given that Irigaray's philosophical project focuses at large on rethinking the relationships between women and men, within a culture of sexual difference, as subjects in their own terms, it seems therefore only logical that sexual difference (in Irigaray's later texts renamed as *sexuate difference*) reveal itself as a fruitful framework for also engaging with the issue of masculinities and male bodies.[51] The implication of Irigaray's critical project compels us to look at men and their bodies from a totally different conceptual space, where the feminine and female bodies cannot be consumed, devalued or defined in masculine terms. Sexual difference asks, therefore, for a difference in thought and practice, for an interval between a masculine that retreats from monopolized symbolic and material spaces and assumes its own limits, and a feminine which is culturally articulable as an explicit affirmation of different female bodily expressions. Simply put, Irigaray suggests that men should start thinking and living their own bodies, and they should participate in the construction of the world within their own terms without devouring "others" (1993a, p. 98).

[50] Irigaray's "horizontal transcendence" opposes the Hegelian "vertical transcendence." Hegel's concept is already tautologically formulated. Transcendence in classical philosophical understanding implies already verticality. It is a hierarchical and an oppositional mode of relating between the self and the other, subject and object. Irigaray aims nevertheless at a non-violent and non-exclusionary type of transcendence, meaning that the category of "transcendence" is not to be dismissed in itself, to be deconstructed out of existence, but rather reconfigured. In "Pour une logique de l'intersubjectivité dans la différence" (in *Hegel-Jahrbuch*, 2007, pp. 325-329), discussing negativity in Hegel's dialectics, she argues that we need to move to another economy of consciousness, one that is not based on the relationship between subject and object and representations which underlines the philosophical tradition, but rather one founded on the relationship of subject-subject type (2007, p. 325).

[51] Throughout this thesis I will use the terms "sexual" and "sexuate" as Irigaray has used them at different points throughout her work. This distinction is an important one for Irigaray and one that she has insisted on in part as a way to deal with criticism that would conflate her use of the "sexual" in sexual difference with (hetero) sexuality, on the one hand, or with some "natural" bodily givenness, on the other hand. Jones (2011, p. 4) also argues that she understands sexual difference to be "that which western culture has forgotten and which Irigaray seeks to recover, while the sexuate involves taking up a positive relation to sexual difference by acknowledging it as the irreducible difference which inflects every aspect of our being". In *Conversations* (2008b), Irigaray conceives of sexuate difference more in terms of a global identity (Irigaray and Howie, 2008b, p. 76). Anne Van Leeuwen argues in her doctoral thesis "Irigaray, Heidegger and the Question of Sexual Difference: An Examination of the Phenomenological Stakes of Irigaray's later work" that: "(…) for Irigaray, sexuate difference does designate the *transcendent ontological ground* for the constitution of two worlds; instead, sexuate difference is nothing other than a *difference of worlds*" (2010b, p. 154; italics in original).

That is why, for her, it is inconceivable to place herself in a man's position, to think or speak for him.

> But is it up to me, I wonder, to speak of the other 'man'? It's curious, because it's a question that I am constantly being asked. I find it quite amusing… I am constantly being asked what that 'other' man will be. Why should I appropriate for myself what that 'other' man would have to say? What I want and what I am waiting to see is what men will do and say if their sexuality releases its hold on the empire of phallocentrism. But this is not for a woman to anticipate, or foresee, or prescribe … (1985b, p. 136).

Sexual difference as pure difference is then, for Irigaray, outside the oppositional logic of substitutability:

> Where Freud and Lacan posit a sexual difference based on the 'a priori of the same' – that is, a difference, understood as opposition, binary division, or the presence and absence of a single term, Irigaray attempts to develop a difference understood as Saussurian 'pure difference' – a difference without positive terms. Instead of posing woman as –A in relation to man, defined as A (a logic which inevitably prioritizes the positive term), Irigaray seeks an altogether different space for woman, one not defined in relation to men, but in their own terms – a 'B' rather than '-A'. (Grosz, 1990, p. 172)

How, then, could or should one conceive of male bodies and masculine subjectivities in their own terms? So as to make men's bodies visible, vulnerable and faithful to their imaginaries and their own possible symbolic expressions, to make men be their bodies or, in so many other cases, to be their bodies less, I believe a phenomenologically-informed account could take up this question and might have the advantage of going beyond the mind/body conundrum and set the future grounds for a male "sensible-transcendental."[52] Irigaray herself thought that it is imperative to:

> [R]ecover an immediate perception of the real and at the same time elaborate a symbolic universe which corresponded to it (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 147)
>
> It also demanded faithfulness to experience and rigor in its phenomenological elaboration. *A certain recourse, or return, to the phenomenological method seems*

[52] This is to say that, as Jeff Hearn suggested in a personal communication, in terms of violence for example, some men have to forget that they are only bodies.

> *necessary* in order to make enter into the universe of the rational some natural, corporeal, sensible realities which until now had been removed from it. (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 156; italics mine)[53]

But Irigaray cautions us against a use of phenomenology without a dialectics, that is, one that would permit the creation of a solipsistic feminine world indifferent or parallel to a masculine world, or a phenomenology which again would reify the narcissistic masculine subject. The phenomenological engagement has to be restructured according to a different logic or economy, that of a *subject – subject relationship* mediated or made possible through an interval, that is, a relational subjective constitution of each and other in their respective differences.

> The dialectical method, such as I use it, is not at the service of the reassumption (*Aufhebung*) of all singularity into an absolute objectivity to be shared by any subject. My way uses the negative as a path, which permits, at each moment, dialogue between subjects in the respect of singularities, in particular of gender. Here, the negative is therefore insurmountable and the absolute can never be unique nor universally shared. The negative maintains real and living *dialegomai* between subjectivities which, beyond appearing to self and to the other, must speak to one another in order to be and to become self, in order to elaborate a culture resulting from the spiritual fecundity of subjective differences. (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, pp. 156-157; italics in original)

To elaborate on a certain type of dialogue between Irigaray's thought and the phenomenological method is another challenge, given that there are ongoing debates over Irigaray's relation to phenomenology, in general, and to M. Merleau-Ponty and M. Heidegger in particular. However, as it is not in the scope of my thesis to either show that Irigaray employs phenomenology (though she apparently does so; see Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, pp. 155-156) or in demonstrating that a connection between her and phenomenology is well grounded, or that she had actually completely broken up with this philosophical tradition

[53] Merleau-Ponty (2005, p. 66) argues that: "The first philosophical act would appear to be *to return to the world of actual experience which is prior to the objective world*, since it is in it that we shall be able to grasp the theoretical basis no less than the limits of the objective world, restore to things their concrete physiognomy, to organisms their individual ways of dealing with the world, and to subjectivity its inherence in history" (italics mine).

(Olkowski, 2000), I seek instead to hint at an assemblage between sexual difference, as a feminist philosophical matriceal position, and phenomenology's view on the relation between body and language, materiality and representation, as a promising methodological line that privileges the (sexuate) body as the meaningful horizon of our existence and leaves a space for agential interventions in subjective and representational constitutions.[54]

I find the question of what it means to re-think "men" and "masculinities" within the feminist paradigm of sexual difference through a feminist phenomenological account, that is, generally through Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference, as highly challenging. Bearing in mind the idea that the apparently neutral phallic symbolic order is actually an assemblage of projections and expressions of male bodies and of their imaginary, I would go further into arguing that in fact this symbolic elides the multiplicities of male bodies and their lived experiences.[55] A re-embodiment and consequently a radical change of the male symbolic asks for revealing the links between individual accounts of bodily lives and subjective representations (also through different intersectional axes of signification – sex, age, class, disability, ethnicity, religion, etc.) experienced within specific structural milieus of power relations.

As Braidotti points out, embodiment and corporeal materialism as ways of radically re-enfleshing men could destabilize the male symbolic and the rule of "identity" per se

[54] There are several convincing feminist works showing that Irigaray's project has strong phenomenological underpinnings, given her extensive engagement with Heidegger's (especially the latter) work and her analyses on Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, in books such as *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993), The *Forgetting the Air in Martin Heidegger* (1999), *The Way of Love* (2002), *Sharing the World* (2008) and *In the Beginning, She Was* (2013). See for example Mortensen (1994), Vasseleu (1998), Sjöholm (2000), Weiss (2000), Chanter (1994, 2000), Heinämaa (2005), Halsema (2006, 2008), Van Leeuwen (2010a, 2010b, 2013). Such works reveal that Irigaray's philosophical thought is phenomenological indeed in both its methodological deployment and its questioning of the conditions of possibility of such thought. Accordingly, I see her philosophy of sexual difference as a phenomenological ontology in quite Heideggerian terms (1962, pp. 60-62), that is, a philosophical inquiry of Being as a phenomenal object, albeit radically reworked through sexual difference. I will return to this argument in more detail in the next chapter.

[55] Susan Bordo (1999, p. 265; italics in original) argues for a similar point: "But actual *men*, even men who are unambivalent in their acceptance of male domination as the natural order of things, are *not* 'one'. For actual men are not timeless symbolic constructs, they are biologically, historically, and experientially embodied beings; the singular, constant, transcendent rule of the phallus is continually challenged by this embodiment".

(Braidotti and Butler, 1994). The elitist formation of a male symbolic based on a unitary, rigid and self-closed hegemonic conception of a male body (what kind of and whose?) can be destabilized and reshaped by exposing how various minoritarian expressions of male bodily experiences are excluded from the picture. What dangers are to be unmasked there? Julia Kristeva gives some hints. According to her, in *Powers of Horror* (1982), the (male) Symbolic is based on fixed categories and "solid" structuration as opposed to the Semiotic space – fluidity, malleability, abyss, and the unity with the maternal. She argues that what is jettisoned from any symbolic system relates symbolically to what is expelled from the individual body and its orifices, the abject being always related to fluids and products that pass through the body's boundaries.[56] Hence, the abject is something that disturbs the rigidity of the Symbolic. Bodily fluids, she argues, remind us about the body's dependence on an outside and therefore about the impossibility of autonomy and self-identity. In line with Kristeva, Mary Douglas (1996) also holds the view that any system is mostly vulnerable at its borders or margins. Therefore the fluids and the orifices of the body will always represent the fragile points of the symbolic system of the body.

The work of several scholars (Bersani, 1987; Thomas 1996, 2002, 2008; Waldby, 1995) dealing with male bodies proposed "anality" as an alternative answer to both the monolithical phallic male body and the castration complex with the consequent promising restructuring of the masculine subject. However, for Irigaray, as I will argue later in this chapter, the story of the male ontology of the anal might be thus revealed again. Since for her the male imaginary is already anal, the answer is to be found somewhere else.

In her article "The Sex of Nature: A Reinterpretation of Irigaray's Metaphysics and Political Thought" (2003) and later in her book, *Luce Irigaray and the Philosophy of Sexual*

[56]Julia Kristeva (1982, p. 4) argues that it is not "lack of cleanliness or health that cause abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite".

Difference (2006), Alison Stone shows how Irigaray is developing a radical type of realist essentialism whereby sexual difference is "a fundamental difference between the rhythms of percipient fluids constituting women's and men's bodies, supporting this with a philosophy of nature that she justifies phenomenologically and ethically" (Stone, 2003, p. 60). Irigaray believes that human bodies are basically fluid, constituted of "mucous" (Irigaray, 1993c, p. 180; Irigaray, 1993a, pp. 109-111) and characterized by "porosity" which facilitates the contact of the bodily fluids with the exterior environment through active interpretive perceptual engagement. Furthermore, Irigaray:

> (…) holds that the specificity of a rhythm is developed and strengthened in response to the passionate perceptions of the corporeal fluids that it regulates. This implies that the sexes can enhance their rhythmical difference by accentuating the distinctiveness of their perceptions which is possible in turn, only if these perceptions are developed through receiving cultural expression and mediation (…) the "cultivation" of the "sensible". (Stone, 2003, p. 72)

Consequently, according to Irigaray, both men and women have a duty toward nature to accentuate their specificity within the cultural realm and, as Stone puts it, "our duty to realize nature implies our right to realize ourselves *qua* natural beings" (2003, p. 71). This conceptualization of sexual difference in relation to rhythms and fluids both as politically strategic and as ontological approach undermines the scientific "metaphysics of solidity" according to which reality consists of finite static entities. Unmasking the long-standing relationship between rationality and the mechanics of solids, the phallic subjection of sexuality "to the absolute power of the form…" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 110), Irigaray urges us to a recovery of the fluids. The need to investigate both the fluids and orifices of the male bodies is generated by the role they have in the males' anxieties and fantasies in the conception of their own masculinities and in the ways they project these onto their bodies and women's bodies. Since the male fluids and orifices are not thematized, as Elizabeth Grosz

puts it, there is a mystery about them as they are "unspoken and generally unrepresented particularities of the male body" (Grosz, 1994, p. 198).[57]

One needs to work, of course, with the caveat that this recovering of the "mechanics of fluids" on men's behalf, seen not as a *mimesis*, should not be another type of appropriation for the purpose of assuring the totality of the system. A so-called recuperation of what is concealed on the imaginary level by the specular image and on the symbolic level by the universal quantifier "all," ought never to be yet another subtle phallocentric mechanism of incorporation but rather an opening up of male bodily memories and corporeal possibilities. At this stage, I cannot conceive of a *masculine mimicry* that would finally account for a sexual difference yet to come. I do not think that one can operate a male *mimesis*, given that this gesture is, perhaps, "the one historically assigned to the feminine" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 76). Accordingly, there could be no minoritarian male mimesis that would turn against the patriarchal phallocratic Subject, precisely because only women had this position.

Bearing in mind Irigaray's conviction that "I am sexed implies I am not everything" (Irigaray, 1996, p. 51) and drawing on the potentiality of conceiving of men and masculinities outside the patriarchal order, there are possibilities of a new un-oedipalized "body ethics" in a world where we don't have "human" beings anymore, but rather at least women and men to begin with.[58] I therefore make clear my position not in favor of all sorts of hasty de-gendering projects, of going post-gender. I believe all the efforts of getting rid of gender (understood in this case as sexual/sexuate difference) in the name of some neutral universality/humanity, multiplicity or perpetual deconstructive identity positioning, might in fact represent "unfaithful" positions to a political context where "the feminine" is still devalued and the

[57] The male body is predominantly taken as a whole, as a monolithic closed morphology.
[58] This is not incompatible with Irigaray's conception of "humanity." It is the very sexual difference as the most universal and irreducible paradigm of difference that facilitates the achievement of "humanity". It is sexual difference that enriches "humanity": "We will also be *more* human. Not more men, as it is said, because we will be men and women." (Irigaray, 2001, p. 315; italics mine).

apparent sexual symmetry of power relations is often taken for granted. It seems to be the case that we are caught up between the One (the patriarchal logic of the Same, i.e. the male masculine within sexual indifference), the Two (sexual difference), and the Multiple (in my view queer, as both identity politics and against any type of constraining and stabilizing identity, might be such an instantiation). However, this triad gets often translated into the same logic: the One, the Two, and again the One or the Universal/the Masculine (again the erasure of the feminine in the proliferations of the same of the masculine).[59] Or, in other words, it seems that one step is missing. At worst, taking the multiplicity of a "post-gender era" as, indeed, a possible *telos*, I consider that we have to start from "two" in order to have equally valued multiple subjective embodied locations, as I am also suspicious of the inter-play of possibilities within queer positionings. Irigaray is more than explicit:

> So, I do not believe that to question the universal subject starting from the multiple is sufficient, because the multiple can always be equivalent to a multiple or sub-multiple of *one*. The explicit or implicit measure remains the *one*, more or less real, imaginary or simply mathematical. The critique of the universal subject cannot be limited to the substitution of the multiple for the one because it deconstructs certain values necessary for subjective constitution without a questioning radical enough to permit the emergence of other values. Thus, to deconstruct all reference to unity, to the absolute, to the ideal, to the transcendent, etc., without bringing about a reorganization of the energy invested in such values risks disintegrating the subject in favor of the savage reign of death drives or of the coming to power of an even more totalitarian authority, these two possibilities not being incompatible. (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 146; italics in original)

A world grounded in sexual difference and understood in terms of two different cultures would rest on a radically different conception of bodies, identities, and subjectivities and their relationship, with the aim of refiguring different coalitions and generating various ways of making and sustaining political claims. Greg Johnson (2003, p. 397) sums up the relation between Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and the bodily basis of the Utopian, when discussing Sojourner Truth's speech "Ain't I A Woman": "[S]he accomplishes something

[59] The disconnection of the masculine from male bodies, on the one hand, and the "appropriation" of the masculine as enacted by female embodiment, on the other hand, might be seen as a symptom of such a move.

that political philosophies of her time were unable to do, i.e. take seriously bodily phenomena as the locus for critically interrupting oppression and constructing alternative pictures of reality." In my words, male lived experiences could be the starting points for both deconstructing masculine hegemonies and for building utopian pro-feminist thought and political engagement.

2.2 Thought, rationality, and male imaginary

Luce Irigaray's political project, as I have mentioned in the previsions section, starts with the diagnostic that "sexual difference," as the regulatory order of power relations between women and men, in both its symbolic and material dimensions, is not a "real" one, but rather a "s*exual indifference that underlines the truth of any science, the logic of every discourse*" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 69; italics in original).[60] This means that the current understanding and organization of the so-called sexual difference within Western cultures does not support an equally valorized presence of a feminine female specificity within the symbolic realm, as it is dominated by a certain (male) imaginary and structured according to masculine norms. In simpler terms, "sexuality is never defined with respect to any sex but the masculine" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 69) and "the feminine," in particular, is defined "as nothing other than the complement, the other side, or the negative side of the masculine; thus the

[60] To clarify provisionally, though perhaps in a reductive manner, sexual difference, in Irigaray's early writings, does not refer to sex differences, i.e. the biological or anatomical differences between male and female bodies (consequently, it is not biological deterministic or essentialist) (Irigaray, 1985b, pp. 70-71; Irigaray, 1985b, p. 142), nor it is reducible to gender differences conceived of as socially and/or discursively constructed/constituted; it is more about how these morphologic differences are symbolized and represented within the Western culture and philosophical thought as and with the effect of having women in social and material less valorized positions. In her later works, Irigaray's position on the relationship between sex and gender turns more complicated whereby sex and gender are intertwined dimensions of sexual difference, which is reworked as sexuate difference in more explicit political terms.

female sex is described as lack, a 'hole'" (Irigaray, 1990, p. 81).[61] In *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985a), Irigaray states:

> Woman's castration is defined as her having nothing you can see, as her *having* nothing. In her having nothing penile, in seeing that she has No Thing. Nothing *like* men. That is to say, *no sex/organ* that can be seen in a *form* capable of founding its reality, reproducing its truth. *Nothing to be seen is equivalent to having nothing*. *No being* and *no truth*. The contract, the collusion, between one sex/organ and the victory won by visual dominance therefore leaves woman with her sexual void, with an "actual castration" carried out in actual fact. She has the option of a "neutral" libido or of sustaining herself by "penis-envy". (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 48; italics in original)

The "real" above, in relation to sexual difference, has less to do with a present and "true," "authentic" alternative, but rather hints at a different possible future grounded in the current problem itself which is set up as a fictional one, at the same time, and, thus, susceptible to change. Penelope Deutscher (2002, p. 29) explains it succinctly:

> "Sexual difference" in Irigaray's work refers to an excluded possibility, some kind of femininity (open in content) that has never become culturally coherent or possible. […] Sexual difference is not empirically known, except by its exclusion.

What is to be challenged and implicitly changed, in Irigaray's view, is the imbalance at the symbolic level between "men" and "women," which is not, however, to be confused with the prescriptive content of the heteronormative matrix.[62] Sexual difference as a

[61]When employing the notion of "imaginary," Irigaray is obviously having in mind primarily the psychoanalytical understanding, which was developed by Lacan in his interpretation of Freud's texts. However, for her, the concept of imaginary has fluctuating meanings, and Whitford (1991, pp. 53-57) explains this by giving an account of the history of the term and its sources in Irigaray's work (phenomenology – imaginary as the conscious, imagining and imaging mind; Bachelard (1943) – imaginary as a function of the imagination; Castoriadis (1975) – imaginary both as the primordial creative source or magma, and as a social formation).

[62] Irigaray is often accused of being heterosexist or heteronormative for privileging the heterosexual relationship in her work. For example, she states: "We are begotten by woman and man, we live in a society of women and men. Whatever our sexual choice may be we have to resolve the question of the two human genders' cohabitation, in and with each other. Anyhow, in I love to you I spell out how the relationship between woman/women man/men can become non-hierarchical, non instinctual. The book's objective is to create a culture of the relationship between genders. But this culture can become a model for a relationship in their diversity" (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 91). Despite the attempts to "rescue" her from these charges, Judith Butler, Alison Stone and Penelope Deutscher, just to name a few, are very trenchant critics. Alison Stone, for example, argues that Cheah and Grosz: "(…) allege that Irigaray is not praising certain sexual practices or 'life-styles' but a political culture which is 'heterosexual' in the sense of respectful of sexual difference (Cheah and Grosz, 1998, pp. 12–13). But Irigaray's advocacy of sexuate culture cannot be separated from her privileging of heterosexuality as a practice, since both, as I have argued, follow necessarily from her basic views in metaphysics and the philosophy of nature. This leaves no straightforward way of defending Irigaray against the

philosophical position, according to Rosi Braidotti's reading (1994) of Irigaray's work, has a double function: it is both diagnostic and utopian. On the one hand, from a descriptive stance, sexual (in)difference, as it presently manifests in the Western social order, is indeed sexist, heteronormative and homophobic, since the patriarchal orders function on various exclusionary mechanisms. Nevertheless, as a normative and utopian position, sexual difference (already conceived of as disconnected from the masculinist androcentric logic) prepares the ground for both the very questioning and destruction of those exclusionary patriarchal devices and the affirmation of that "excluded possibility," i.e. the feminine in its own sexually/sexuate differentiated terms.

Accordingly, Irigaray builds up a powerful critical diagnosis of the Western social order through the means of a deconstructive re-reading of philosophy and psychoanalysis. She argues that: "it is indeed precisely philosophical discourse that we have to challenge, and *disrupt*, inasmuch as this discourse sets forth the law for all others, inasmuch as it constitutes the discourse on discourse" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 74, italics in original). And, for her, psychoanalysis "still constitutes a possible enclave of philosophic discourse" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 160). Though she states that what psychoanalysis is describing is not necessarily false, the problem is that: "the state of things it describes is presented by psychoanalysis as a universal and immutable norm, instead of interpreting it as an historically determined state" (Irigaray, 1990, p. 81).

charge of heterosexism." (2003, p. 82). Penelope Deutscher's chapter "The Impossible Friend: traversing the Heterosocial, the Homosocial, and the Successes of Failure" (in *A Politics of Impossible Difference*, 2002) is another clear attack against Irigaray's overemphasis on the ethical dimension of the heterosexual imaginary. However, Margaret Whitford (1991, p.154) made a distinction between sexual identity and practices in a relationship, on the one hand, and generic identity and subjective position, on the other hand (which are mutually implicated, nevertheless), meaning that, for Irigaray, heterosexuality as sexual difference does not refer only to the former (i.e. the couple relationship), but rather more to the idea that the subjective positions (as a woman or a man) within the symbolic order are the necessary conditions for any kind of relationship and identitary practices.

Implicitly, her critique becomes first and foremost an attack on "rationality," where the psychoanalytical notion of "imaginary" has a specific function. As Whitford (1991, p. 53; italics in original) argues, Irigaray is not aiming at the dissolution of rationality, however, but at "the *restructuring* of the construction of the rational subject."

In the "Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine" (in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 1985b), Irigaray urges us to find out the ways philosophy managed to consolidate "the power of its systematicity, the force of its cohesion, the resourcefulness of its strategies, the general applicability of its law and its value. That is, its *position of mastery*…" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 74; italics in original). This way, she unmasks the power of the logic of the "Same" to reduce all "others" to its own economy, and the power to erase the sexual difference between the sexes in those forms of self-representation of the masculine subject. And precisely this subjective representation has to be contested by rethinking the major notions of the philosophical discourse such as "idea," "substance," "subject," "transcendental subjectivity," "absolute knowledge" in order to "give back what they owe to the feminine" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 74). Furthermore, since, for Irigaray, the re-reading of the philosophical discourses "has always been a psychoanalytic undertaking as well" (1985b, p. 75), one has to look at the ways the unconscious works in philosophy and one might discover that what the logic of the consciousness is erasing/repressing and designating as being the unconscious is pretty much connected to the feminine. Rationality and imaginary (the unconscious phantasies in the formation of the ego and narcissistic self-identification) are consequently two strongly associated concepts and any reading of a philosophical or psychoanalytical text has to relate to this connection:

> What is called for instead is an examination of the *operation of the "grammar"* of each figure of discourse, its syntactic laws or requirements, its imaginary configurations, its metaphoric networks, and also, of course, what it does not articulate at the level of utterance: *its silences*. (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 75; italics in original)

And, what Irigaray concludes is that rationality, in the Western history of thought, has always been represented (conceptualized, symbolized) as male. Further, Irigaray makes "a connection between the morphology of the body and the morphology of different kinds of thought processes," so that, for her, the imaginary phallomorphic sexual metaphoricity of the Western rationality is characterized by several principles: that of identity, of non-contradiction, and that of binarism (Whitford, 1991, p. 58).[63] Irigaray (1990, p. 82) explicitly states:

> I think we must go back to the question not of the anatomy but of the morphology of female sex. In fact, it can be shown that all western discourse presents a certain isomorphism with the masculine sex: the privilege of unity, form of the self, of the visible, of the specularizable, of the erection (which is the becoming in a form). Now this morphologic does not correspond to the female sex: there is not 'a' female sex. The 'no sex' that has been assigned to the woman can mean that she does not have 'a sex', and that her sex is not visible, or identifiable, or representable in a definite form.

In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray argues that Freud levels two kinds of critiques at the scene of representation, a direct one being the attack against "a certain conception of the present, or of presence, (...) when he indicates, in his practice, the impact of so-called unconscious mechanisms of the discourse of the 'subject'" (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 28). The other, an indirect blow, concerns his defining of sexual difference in terms of "the same" and, at the same time, the consequent unmasking of psychoanalytical discourse as the same

[63] As Whitford argues, Irigaray is not talking about the empirical or anatomical male body; she rather refers to an "ideal morphology" of the body (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 320), "in which the relationship to anatomy is metaphorical" (Whitford, 1991, p. 58). The metaphorical here refers to how the Western culture related to the body. Irigaray, however, is actually against the metaphorical logic underlying the Western philosophical canon, according to which one term replaces another to express a certain likeness, commonality or sameness. This is evident in her critical reading of Plato's Myth of the Cave where she unmasks the metaphorical use of the mother's womb and the umbilicus in the metaphorical constitution of the cave as the passage/journey towards truth. Against this, she will posit the figuration of two-lips, which for scholars like Fuss (1989, p. 66) or Whitford (1991, pp. 177-185) functions as a shift from a "*metaphorical substitution to a metonymic logic of contiguity*" (Jones, 2011, p. 171; italics in original): "Thus, while metaphor substitutes on term for another in ways that foreground what they have in common, metonymy depends in the relations between different terms that allow them to be associated or placed alongside one another. The lips are thereby taken to figure a shift from a logic that privileges equivalence and sameness, to one which relies on perceiving likeness between two identical terms, and which thus allows sameness to co-exist with difference. Whereas the former has sustained the identity of a masculine subject, the latter offers a way of figuring female specificity without reducing woman to the 'other *of* the Same'."

economy of the logos and of desire, a pervasive logic linked to classical philosophy. Therefore, rationality, through its laws of identity and non-contradiction (A is A and B is B, and A is not B; but B is eventually non-A), is symbolically male because it is phallomorphic and it is based on the very possibility of individuating, of "*form*-ing," of making *visible* objectified entities that characterizes rationality and, implicitly, its "very long standing" relationship to solid mechanics (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 113). The logic of the One (of the Same) shapes therefore any definition of male sexuality and sexual difference in general. Referring to Freud, Irigaray writes:

> (…) – he defines sexual difference as a function of the a priori of the same, having recourse, to support this demonstration to the age-old processes: analogy, comparison, symmetry, dichotomic oppositions, and so on. When, as card-carrying member of an "ideology" that he never questions, he insists that the sexual pleasure known as masculine is the paradigm for all sexual pleasure, to which all representations of pleasure can but defer in reference, support, and submission. (1985a, p. 28)

Moreover, in psychoanalytical terms, these principles are conceived of as mental and physical activities that are psychically projected "as equivalents of bodily activities" (for example, in the children's ego-formation whereby gifts, money, or babies are equated with faeces), meaning that, for example, "to judge that something is true is, in phantasy, to swallow it or to incorporate it; to judge that something is false is to spit it out or to expel it" (Whitford, 1991, p. 64). Therefore, the intellectual faculties (such as that of judgment, to assign truth or falsity to an assertion) can be associated back to the "type of thinking in which everything is perceived/ conceived on the model of the body" (Whitford, 1991, p. 64). Accordingly, one can understand why Irigaray argues that those principles of rationality are mental imaginary projections (unconscious phantasies) of specific male morphologic aspects and male bodily activities (e.g. erection/ (as) verticality/ (for) building/ philosophical

systems/ (through) rationality/ (towards) transcendence).[64] Since these structuring principles of rationality are unmasked as male imaginary thought processes, then, rationality seems to be nothing more than male phantasies (imaginary) that got generalized and enforced as a universal symbolic order:

> The symbolic that you impose as universal, free of all empirical or historical contingency, is *your* imaginary transformed into an order, a social order. (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 265; italics in original)

At more abstract levels, there is:

> A single practice and representation of the sexual. (…) 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. (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 86; italics in original)

Irigaray makes more than clear and even stronger the already circulated idea that the universal subject postulated by the philosophical discourses is quite a masculine and male one, given that what counts as rationality are in fact specific male imaginary phallomorphic expressions. One conclusion would be that rationality (which shouldn't, nevertheless, be conflated with mind/thought/representation as such) was never disembodied after all: it was always rather a male-embodied mind.[65] What counts as mind or thought is colonized by what

[64] An interesting argument on how corporeality is the bedrock of patterns of human thinking is made by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone in "Binary Opposition as on Ordering Principle of (Male?) Human Thought" (Fisher and Embree, 2000, pp. 173-194). Taking the example of a specific male experience, i.e. the penis with the ups and downs between penile erection and penile flaccidity, and its cultural distractions and veilings, she argues that binary oppositions arise on the basis of bodily experience and that "a decisively uneven polar valorization is a built-in possibility of the oppositional paring" with far-reaching oppressive effects (Sheets-Johnstone, 2000, p. 183). After discussing Freud's article "The Acquisition of Power Over Fire", Sheets-Johnstone concludes: "When we take the above corporeal matters of fact as a point of departure for understanding at a deeper level the distinction between penis and phallos or phallos and *the phallus*, then we have the possibility of articulating psycho-phenomenological conclusions to be drawn from the fact that fire and water do not mix. To have absolute control over 'the flame of love'- to have the power of *the phallus* - is equivalent to perpetual erection, which is to say *never having to pee*, for having to pee stifles the flames of passion and compromises autonomy. Power over passion in consequence means leaving the natural everyday body behind. In turn it means uneven polar valorizations. It means dominating nature. It means establishing a repertoire of 'I cans' that has no equal and no limits. It means ultimately oppressing whatever stands in the way of establishing and maintaining absolute power and control. It means Phallic Myth Syndrome has prevailed and *the Phallus* has unconditional domain *über alles*" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2000, p. 194; italics in original).

[65] This would be somehow similar to the line developed by Linda Fisher in her article "Is Reasoning Gendered?" (1998), where she argues that if representations are products of reasoning and reasoning as a

counts as reason or rationality, and consequently, since rationality is male, then "thought" appropriated/was attributed the same predicate. Then, the argument (developed by both feminist theorists and pro-feminist male scholars) that mind has to be brought back to the body, in general, or that masculinity has to be (re)connected with male bodies, in particular, is not easily tenable, as they were apparently never separated.[66]

The issue of the phallomorphicity of rationality concerns both the symbolic structures of thought operations and the ways embodiment participates in the constructions of these structures. When Irigaray critiques rationality and the philosophical thought as being shaped by male embodiments she doesn't refer only to those processes whereby a specific model of the body, i.e. the male one, was just transposed into thought practices. She also insists on the phenomenological nature of these symbolic transpositions in thought operations, meaning that the particular ways in which male bodies experience their own bodily activities, body schema, and worldly relations in terms of perception, vision, touch, and movements, etc., shaped the principles "we" attribute to rationality as well as to what counts as thought or to how thought should work.

The thesis of the *disembodied mind* is, however, still pervasive in feminist works and even in those which try to distance themselves from this assumption. Claire Colebrook's argument from her article "Incorporeality: The Ghostly Body of Metaphysics" (2000b) builds up a very interesting and counterintuitive line of reasoning in relation to the position of body and materiality within Western thought and feminist theories of body. Against the well-established thesis according to which feminist theories of corporeality broke up with the disembodied reason and phallogocentric Western thought, Colebrook boldly argues that

practice is situated and conditioned, and people are sexually differentiated in specific social, cultural and political ways, then these representations are shaped by sexual difference as a significant variable.

[66]In the case of "men," given that the feminist critique of the mind/body dualism became a crucial element for rethinking male bodies' relation to masculinities in the studies of men and masculinities, one among the theoretical and practical strategies to disrupt the binary, hierarchical and oppositional logic was to "reconnect" "masculinities" ("mind") with male bodies.

"recent corporeal feminisms are actually faithful extensions of the phenomenological critique of the embodiment of reason" (2000b, p. 27), that is, the concept of "lived body" simply connects the body with meaning and intentionality, and, this way, does nothing else than just to serve as a new foundational ground to which feminists might appeal, thus privileging again the mind. Instead, for her, what should be considered "is the radical difference between thought and the body: both the body's irreducibility to meaning and the event of thought or meaning as radically separated from any corporeal foundation" (Colebrook, 2000b, p. 27).

Let me unpack her argument in more detail. Colebrook argues that feminist theorists (such as Braidotti, Butler, Gatens, Grosz, Irigaray) developed two theses regarding the so-called disembodiment of Western thought. The "weak" thesis, based on a historical association between women and the non-rational (the body, the passions and partiality), which are devalued as compared to mind and masculinity, stresses that:

> Western thought is characterized by a *privileging of mind over body*. Reason is traditionally defined as pure thought capable of acting without the interference of the passions. The body's relation to thought is not denied. But the body is seen as secondary, inferior and as a disruption of the specifically human capacity for reason. (Colebrook, 2000b, p. 28; italics mine)

The "strong" thesis, best exemplified in Irigaray's work, contains both this structural historical association and the explanation for the connection between femininity and materiality (body):

> Not only does Western thought devalue the body and femininity; both the feminine and the body are *negated* in the constitution of thought *as thought*. Reason does not just occur through a subordination of the body. Reason is disembodied, and is essentially and radically divided from materiality. From this Irigarayan perspective, the body is no longer a term *within thought* but is located as the 'unthought' or repressed condition for thinking. (Colebrook, 2000b, p. 28; italics in original)

Colebrook concludes that this "strong" thesis, according to which thought, as other-than-embodied, necessarily negates materiality "*as feminine and as essential*" (2000b, p. 30),

or in other words, "*the structural and originary constitution of the feminine as negated corporeality*" (2000b: 31; italics in original), is still largely embraced within feminist theory and it is precisely this premise she wants to question. However, this premise turns, eventually, in the course of her argumentation, into a more reductive one: "The body is not just structurally devalued *within* the history of thought. The body's exclusion *is* thought" (2000b: 35; italics in original). Then, she proceeds to argue that, given this thesis, feminists of corporeal philosophy set "the task of thinking the body *beyond* the structural or semantic distinction between mind and body" (Colebrook, 2000b, p. 35; italics in original). But, surprisingly, Colebrook (2000b, p. 36) shows that this feminist assumption "does not accord with a tradition of ancient thought," since the problem with Descartes (and even with Kant) was not the negation of corporeality but rather the corporealization of the mind (for mind to be independent it had to be conceived quasi-corporeally or as another substance – *res cogitans*, as compared to the body- *res extensa*) and, that, in fact, the feminist critique of philosophy as disembodied is traceable in the phenomenological and post-structuralist tradition:

> Philosophy as the dream of pure consciousness is not, however, a phallogocentric bogie invented by feminist philosophy. I do not wish to suggest that feminist critique has been unfair to a tradition which has been really rather charitable to embodiment. On the contrary, I regard what I have referred to as the 'weak' thesis of corporeality to be quite a cogent one. The body has been consistently devalued and, traditionally, has been associated with femininity. But the idea of philosophy or thought as pure consciousness without remainder is one that emerged in the very tradition to which most feminist philosophers turn: phenomenology and post structuralism.

And, in her view, what phenomenology did in its attack against the previous metaphysics was to de-corporealize the body, that is:

> (…) no *worldly* being can ground existence, for the condition of any physical thing or givenness is the incorporeal event of sense. (…) Experience was no longer given to a subject, mind or consciousness, which could then be appealed to as a substance within the world. On the contrary, the world is originally *given* and it is from this pre-

> subjective givenness that concrete definitions of the subject are formulated. (Colebrook, 2000b, p. 38; italics in original)

Consequently, given that no "*corporeal* thesis" can be employed as an explanatory ground for meaning, experience, or political projects, then the incorporeal events (such as representations, visible relations, fantasies, codes and messages) should be the focus of the feminist research on the body:

> What needs to be thought is incorporeality. For it is corporeality, the idea of a human substance or essence, that has enabled philosophy to be a continual subjectivism. Thought can only be grounded in a subject if the subject is understood as some already given, determinate and essential ground. Consequently, there is nothing essentially radical (nor feminist) about thinking the body. If corporeality has been traditionally associated with what is substantively removed from mind, in order to establish mind as a separate substance, what needs to be achieved is not embodiment of mind but the de-corporealization of existence, including the body. (Colebrook, 2000b, p. 39)

Colebrook's alternative reading is a powerful and challenging one, but I believe that one intermediary step is missing (or, better, neglected) from her line of argumentation, which could indicate that her final proposal might be a hasty celebration of the "incorporeal." I summarize my point as follows. Although she is more than explicit when stating the role of the negation of the (maternal) feminine in the constitution of thought as such and in the formation of the philosophical discourse (Irigaray's "strong" position), she ultimately loses sight of the feminine and female bodies, when concluding that the body is excluded from thought. It is, obviously, not the body in its generality, which was excluded from what counts as rational mind, but the very female body and its feminine expressions in their male-fantasized generality. Colebrook took as a premise for her new argument a conclusion that was incomplete. And, given Irigaray's position that rationality (or pure consciousness) is nothing than male imaginary phallomorphic psychic projections (i.e., rationality is male), then I can argue that it was the *female* body (in its generality) that was negated from the constitution of the (masculine) mind, or, in other words, female and feminine bodily

expressions were denied access in the symbolic formation of a so-called universal thought that was structured ultimately according only to the masculine parameters. When Colebrook stresses that mind, since Descartes, was corporealized, she is partially right, given the maleness of rationality. Therefore, it is not an issue of mind/body divide, but rather of female body/ male-embodied (thought) binary, which can explain what it means to say that sexual difference was already operating in the constitution of thought, an Irigarayan idea also presented by Colebrook, but omitted afterwards:

> The production of the masculine subject only occurs through the idea of essence: the idea that what is given to the subject has some objective and already present meaning. It is not as though there are two sexes that are *then* rendered meaningful through a structure of concepts and associations. Rather, sexual difference itself occurs as the production of meaning and essence. Masculinity and femininity are not meaningful terms *within* the structure of meaning; their differentiation is the very origin of structure. The possibility of meaning or representation depends upon an original difference between thought (the subject) and that which it thinks (presence). (…) But if what it means to thinks is an effect of the negation of materiality, then the corporeality that the subject necessarily denies must be located in a constitutive exteriority. The "feminine" or "woman" operates as such an exteriority. (Colebrook, 2000b, p. 29; italics in original)

What Colebrook forgot to keep the track of was the very sexual difference she started with. Consequently, having as a premise the more radical conclusion that the female bodily psychic activities were negated by the male bodily psychic projections (or, in Irigaray's terms, the male imaginary took over/defined the feminine and imposed itself as the universal thought), one cannot keep on arguing for the *de-corporealization of the body* (as Colebrook wants), since I believe the concepts such as "existence," "substance," "materiality," "corporeality," and "body" cannot be conflated under the same sphere of meaning (indeed, there is a certain synonymy implied here, but only because of degrees, or, from general to particular, genus and species, or other ways of conceiving difference; which seems too close to the classical move of defining difference in relation to identity). What would be that larger set of meaning? In other words, how can I conceive of what counts as "thought" (not to forget

its maleness) as both a substance (res cogitans) and a non-corporeal (incorporeal) event? Then, I would have to presume that substance is not the same as the corporeal. But, for Colebrook, these terms are interchangeable:

> From the 'soul' of Ancient Greek philosophy and Descartes' *res cogitans*, to Husserl's transcendental subjectivity, philosophy has operated as a series of movements of corporealization. Some entity or matter – such as mind, perception, experience or consciousness – has been offered as an ultimate explanatory ground. This process of progressively *embodying* thought reaches its zenith, not in feminism, but in all those contemporary debunkings of the myth of consciousness undertaken by neuropsychologists and hard materialists. (Colebrook, 2000b, p. 39; italics in original)

In my perspective, to posit "thought" as a "substance" is not the same as to conceive of it as corporeal or embodied. I suspect Colebrook plays with equivocations. Her conclusion is that we should focus on the incorporeal, i.e. the gap between the corporeal and the incorporeal. Isn't this somehow confusing? Corporeal – gap - incorporeal? What's the "nature" or the constitutive workings of that "gap"? Or, is it something like corporeal-incorporeal (gap)-incorporeal? On the other hand, this would make me assume that she is still operating with the binarism she wants in fact to dismantle. So, when she attacks phenomenology, she is doing it already from a dichotomist position, whereas, at least in Irigaray's work, language (mind, thought) and materiality (body) are not ontologically "divided" anymore as oppositional binaries.

Then, since "thought" (understood as rationality) was always male-embodied, Irigaray's aim to reconfigure "thought" through the recognition of feminine embodied experiences remains one viable feminist task among others. Also, implicitly, in the case of men, to deconstruct the monopoly over the processes and mechanisms of the so-called neutral thought and to make visible minoritarian male bodily experiences and their relevance to symbolic articulations is also a challenging feminist task.

Taking up Heidegger's assertion that "*Most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking*" (1968, p. 6; italics in original), Irigaray contends that our way of thinking is still caught up in a formalized line of reasoning and understanding framed by logos and logic that are cut off from the natural.

> We should also ask ourselves whether we have begun to think or whether all we know of spirit is merely the operations of the understanding. In other words: we argue and debate within a field and with logical and grammatical tools defined in such a way that we cannot really think. The horizon of understanding we have debars us from that thought. *We discuss, we reason, but we do not think.* We finish back at square one, having produced natural and spiritual entropy along the way. (Irigaray, 1996, pp. 36-37; italics mine)

The first step in rethinking thought as such is to admit that the natural and the universal have to be rethought as *particularities*, given that men's dream of being *one* and *the whole* is a fiction, a construct from only one's point of view (Irigaray, 1996, p. 36). Sexual difference as "natural" has to express itself through at least two different ways of relating to the world, given that male and female corporeal morphologies are not the same and, consequently, the way they experience the sensible and construct the spiritual are also not identical (Irigaray, 1996, p. 38).[67] Refusing the artificial construct of humanity, i.e. the male's fiction of the idea of what the human being is, implies a return to the reality of sexual difference in a non-projective constitution of the universal.

> I belong to the universal in recognizing that I am a woman. The woman's singularity is in having a particular genealogy and history. But belonging to a gender represents a universal that exists prior to me. I have to accomplish it in relation to my particular destiny. (Irigaray, 1996, p. 39)

[67] I discuss Irigaray's understanding of the "natural" character of sexual difference in greater detail in the third chapter of the thesis in relation to her later works. Here, it suffices to say that, for Irigaray, sexual difference is universal because it is "an immediate natural given" (1996, p. 47). Being universal, sexual difference characterizes the entire nature (Irigaray, 1993b, p. 108; Irigaray, 1993b, p. 178) and also the non-organic phenomena (sea, light, seasons, winds, etc.) (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, pp. 111-112).

This will effect a revolutionary phase in relation to thinking, communication and time, as for Irigaray there are at least two models of transmission/communication: one which is hierarchical and exchanges the already established discourse and language, and one which is "between us here and now":

> The first model of transmission or instruction is more parental, more genealogical, more hierarchical; the second more horizontal and intersubjective. The first model risks enslavement to the past, the second opens up a present in order to construct a future. The first model operates by way of transmitted dependency, the second by way of reciprocal listening. (Irigaray, 1996, p. 46)

The first model is strongly connected to the manner in which rationality and understanding have been imagined as and became "thought" by male imaginary. Consequently, a radical change in thought as such will be possible only through a re-start from the natural/sexual difference, in order to refound reason.

> Male becoming, depending more upon the understanding, may appear to be more rational, but it is not insofar as it follows a natural immediacy that remains unthought and unorganized: the fact of belonging to a male sex or gender. (Irigaray, 1996, p. 46)

This restart from the natural presupposes the acceptance of partiality of one's embodied participation in the universal of sexual difference and implicitly of one's development of a partial relation to thought as such. Irigaray's radical critique reveals therefore at least two aspects: that thought was always already sexually differentiated (male embodied) and that it can become more and different through the bodily and cultural articulations of the feminine in symbolic terms.[68] In one of her interviews, Irigaray states that:

> In *To be Two*, bodies are invited to participate in the becoming of thought, ethics, and History. It's no longer about overcoming the body, more specifically the sexed body, as often happens in our tradition, rather it's about founding spiritual growth on the corporeal, the sensorial, and also on our belonging to a gender. Sensibility and intelligence are intertwined in a cultural becoming that doesn't claim to overcome singularity in the universal but rather save this singularity through a relationship of

[68] I will return to the discussion of Heidegger's view on *thought* and *the matter of thinking*, and Irigaray's reinterpretation of Heidegger's "poetic thinking," so pervasive in her later works, in the next chapter.

two, two irreducible to one, to the same, the equal. (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 124)[69]

In the following section of this chapter, I look at the male imaginary as being not just an expression of the phallomorphic projections in relation to the male bodily activities and experiences resulting in a universalized monopoly/colonization of thought, but also an *anal imaginary* in relation to the maternal body, according to Irigaray's critique. This aspect contributes to identifying other loci for *questioning* the male imaginary feeding the patriarchal symbolic and, hopefully, for *thinking* possibilities of envisaging novel non-violent male imaginary and symbolic expressions.

2.3 Male imaginary and the "ontology of the anal"

Irigaray shows that, by analyzing Freud's accounts of sexuality, one can infer that his sexual imaginary is actually also an *anal* one, since for him "the stage in which children are believed to be born through the anus, (…) continues to underlie his theorization" (Whitford, 1991, p. 65). The "anal," in Irigaray's critique of the love of Sameness characterizing the masculine subject, masks the dispossession of the maternal-feminine or the phantasmatic appropriation of its reproductive life force, given that it presupposes the psychoanalytical imaginary equation of genitalia and the erasure of sexual differentiated bodily zones:

[69] Here, through thinking the sensible-transcendental, Irigaray seems to be very close to Heidegger's distinction in *Der Spiegel's* interview with Martin Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us", between two kinds of thinking, which would oppose the representational thinking: poetry/poetic thinking (*Dichten*) and the meditative/philosophical thinking (*Denken*) (Heidegger, 1998, p. 106). Since the philosophical thinking may be still a species of representational thinking, that is a process of reasoning and discursive, the poetic thinking is the one that, by being more intuitive, more direct in a way, could bring forth, to presence, the mystery of the real, of the earth, the material, in union with thought (Young, 2002, pp. 19-21). I will discuss in more detail Irigaray's re-thinking of Heidegger's poetic language in the next chapter. On Irigaray's relationship to Heidegger's thought, see for example Tina Chanter (*The Ethics of Eros*, 1995), Ellen Mortensen (*The Feminine and Nihilism: Luce Irigaray With Nietzsche and Heidegger*, 1994; *Touching Thought: Ontology and Sexual Difference*, 2002), Krzysztof Ziarek ("Proximities: Irigaray and Heidegger on difference", 2000) and Maria Cimitile ("Irigaray in Dialogue with Heidegger", 2007).

> The love of sameness among men often means a love within sameness, which cannot posit itself as such without the maternal-natural-material. It represents the love of a production by assimilation and mediation of the female or females. It often constitutes a kind of *ontology of the anal* or else a triumph of the absorption of the other into the self in the intestine. (Irigaray, 1993a, pp. 100-101; italics mine)

More than that, this Freudian phantasy is exposed as a particular expression of the founding imaginary of the Western thinking in general. I quote Whitford's explanation at length:

> Freud's phantasy is not an idiosyncrasy peculiar to him; it is the imaginary of the ruling symbolic. In an important transition (and incidentally using Lacanian conceptualization against itself) Irigaray goes on to argue that this is not an example of the individual phantasy of any particular philosopher or psychoanalyst, but that speculation itself in the west is dominated by anality (what she refers to elsewhere as a kind of 'ontology of the anal' – E: 100); sexuality and thinking, in an imaginary operation, have become equated both with each other and with one and the same bodily activity. The diagnosis of an anal imaginary, then, moves at this point out of the domain of the technically psychoanalytic into the domain of social explanation, and becomes a social imaginary signification, which, as Castoriadis explains, has almost unlimited extension (…). (Whitford, 1991, p. 66)

Interestingly enough, "anality," posited as a possible subversive element for de-phallicizing or queering the hegemonic images of straight male bodies, has become lately a recurrent theme in the work of several scholars working on sexualities, masculinities and male bodies. In *Masculinity, Psychoanalysis, Straight Queer Theory* (2008) Calvin Thomas summarizes some of the main points developed in *Male Matters* (1996), his previous book that "explores, on the one hand, anxieties about the *ways* male bodies *are* produced, visibly rendered, *caused* to appear, both physically and in representation, and, on the other, anxieties about the matters that male bodies themselves *do* produce, render visible, *cause* to appear, both physically and in representation" (Thomas, 2008, p. 1). The analysis of the "production of men's bodies" (taken as a double genitive) leads Calvin Thomas to several related "corporeo-discursive fields." What concerns my present argumentation is a specific field, namely "*the physical production of male bodies in, by, and through female bodies*" (Thomas,

2008, p. 2; italics in original). Thomas then speculates on the consequences of one particular fantasy about the ways male bodies are produced by female bodies, a fantasy addressed by Freud's "cloacal" interpretation of birth, according to which, for children, childbirth is linked to defecation and "thus unavoidably ends up designating the child itself as voided, hapless turd" (2008, p. 3). Given that children are ignorant of the vagina and rarely witness childbirth, the Freudian "cloacal theory of childbirth" (in *On sexuality: three essays on the theory of sexuality and other works*, 1991) refers to the belief of children that a mother obtains a child by eating something special and gives birth through the anus, since for the child the only possible way to imagine the material leaving the body is through the anus.

The argument that the anal anxiety effects a repression or a suppression of the "fantasmatic figure of the *actively* cloacal mother, the abject*ing* mother that is prior to any abject*ed* or castrated maternal object" (Thomas, 2008, p. 3; italics in original), forces Thomas to conclude that "[t]he subject's 'anxiety of production' with respect to the abjecting mother is *prior* to any 'castration anxiety', and indeed, (…), the latter *normatively* functions as the former's symbolic remedy" (2008, p. 4). This argument will be re-asserted in his last book, *Masculinity, Psychoanalysis, Straight Queer Theory*, where he offers at a certain point a very clear and succinct understanding of the functioning of the castration complex:

> In other words, for Lacan, understanding "the unconscious castration complex" entails understanding that "castration" means both the *vital gaining* of sexual differentiation (in that the animal can become human only by accepting "symbolic castration" as the sacrifice of *real life*, the excision or expulsion of the real that symbolization produces and that produces symbolization, so as to achieve, however fragilely, *sociosymbolic viability*) and the *lethal loss* of sexual differentiation (in that if the male subject is "castrated" he loses what differentiates him from the other sex, becomes "no different" than a woman, drops out of sociosymbolic viability, loses his freedom *from* and so falls back *into* the pre-Oedipal mess of the pre-anthropogenetic real, the undifferentiated *hic and nunc* in which all things run together – and so might as well be dead). (Thomas, 2008, p. 46; italics in original)

However, employing idea that there is another anxiety close to the castration complex, namely that "certainly we've all lost objects from the anus," Thomas argues that this anxiety

mixed up with "the not completely abandoned cloacal theory of birth," might help expose the anxieties about gender or sexual difference, "as displaced scatontological anxieties about primordial symbolization" (2008, p. 47). Therefore, "what falls out of the anus," the anus itself, and anal eroticism could become sites of significant re-figurations of straight male bodies and straight sexual rituals. For Leo Bersani, in "Is the Rectum a Grave?" (1987), within the context of homosexuality and AIDS crisis in the 80's, the anus and the receptive male anal eroticism become the loci of radical desubjectivization or self-debasement, since phallocentrism is:

> not primarily the denial of power to women (although it has obviously also led to that, everywhere and at all times), but above all the denial of the *value* of powerlessness in both men and women. I don't mean the value of gentleness, or nonaggressiveness, or even passivity, but rather of a more radical disintegration and humiliation of the self. (Bersani, 1987, p. 217; italics in original)

In her essay, "Destruction: Boundary Erotics and the Refigurations of the Heterosexual Male Body" (1995), Catherine Waldby takes up Bersani's idea that the phallicized ego experiences sexuality only as power and argues that, since specific images of hegemonic masculinity are intertwined with the understanding of the male body as phallic and impenetrable, thus leading to a heterosexual economy based on non-reciprocal destruction, the anus and anal eroticism become possible sources of male disturbances, non-phallic expressions or masculine desubjectivization:

> In a sense then, anal eroticism is the sexual pleasure which conformation to a phallic imago most profoundly opposes. If the point of the phallic imago is to guard against confusion between the imaginary anatomies of masculine and feminine, and to shore up masculine power, then anal eroticism threatens to explode this ideological body. (Waldby, 1995, p. 272)

The denial (repression or elision) of receptive anal eroticism in heterosexual men is, for Waldby, a clear homophobic and misogynist response to the heterosexual male bodily anxieties: permeability and penetrability. The same point is made by Brian Pronger in "On

your Knees: Carnal Knowledge, Masculine Dissolution, Doing Feminism":

> The transformation of the limp penis into the large, hard phallus is the flowering of masculine desire. The expanding phallus is protected by the other side of this desire: the closed anus. Just as the phallus realizes its masculinity by taking space, so the tight anus protects masculine space by repelling invasion. Masculine desire protects its own phallic production by closing orifices, both anus and mouth, to the phallic expansion of others. Rendered impenetrable, the masculine body differentiates itself as distinct and unconnected. It is conquering and inviolable. (1998, p. 72; italics in original)

Waldby's and Pronger's articles put forward, of course, images of possible refigurations of heterosexual male bodies through opening literally or metaphorically erotic spaces and reshaping male desires. Nevertheless, this general position, that sees "anality" (the anus and the anal eroticism) as an answer to the phallic straight male body, becomes more intriguing when read through Irigaray's own view, according to which "the ontology of the anal" that characterizes the male imaginary is phantasmatically the founding substratum of the male Symbolic, since "[t]he penis (stool), the sperm (seed-gift), the child (gift), all make up an anal symbolic from which there is no escape" (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 75).

Is the "anal," as understood by Bersani, Thomas, Waldby and Pronger, the same as the one posited by Irigaray in her critique of male imaginary, given that Thomas himself explicitly appeals to the Freudian cloacal theory of childbirth? I believe that what Irigaray revealed as unconscious phantasy re-presents itself now overtly and discursively, in the works of these scholars, within/through the (male) symbolic realm:

> In this war, other *stores* will also be set up: the permanence of the booty and treasure. If what you want to get hold of, keep, accumulate, is perishable, if it can be taken away from you, if one look, for example, can change its value, then the toil, and the war will be relentless and endless. Therefore, in place of the feces - decomposed/decomposable matter that is taken from you and that is subject to being appreciated by another eye - will be substituted *the image, the specular production-reproduction. Which is also speculative. The eye will ensure the recovery, and the mastery, of anal erotism. The mirror will idealize the product* that will have introduced both into the field of optics and into an economy of reproduction. Perhaps through a process of "sublating" the automatism of repetition? The "idealized" object will be the fecal mess – displaced before, and in front of -, the penis, or even the

> body; these serve as "frames" equally for all fetishistic representations, including femininity. (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 95; italics in original)

According to Irigaray, the "anal", in male imaginary, projects the appropriation of the female sexual productive power; also "it does not seem to be a problem for Freud that the *mouth* and *anus* are 'neutral' from the standpoint of sexual difference" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 35; italics in original). For Irigaray, this Freudian fantasy has direct political effects in the way the female sexuality is conceptualized by a male imaginary, aspect that is insufficiently addressed by Thomas (2008, p. 6), even though he initially mentions this:

> One cannot productively address the productions of men's bodies (masculinized, empowered, and superordinated) without also addressing the production and the oppression of women's bodies, feminized bodies, queered bodies, and raced bodies (disempowered or subordinated bodies all)—without, in other words, addressing the various mechanisms of displacement, projection, and abjection that govern and support the dominant regimes of the visible.

In Thomas's view, indeed, the fantasy of being born through the anus, mixed up with the one of losing objects through the anus, expresses an anxiety that leads to the repression of the phantasmatic figure of an active maternal. The relation to the maternal seems, nevertheless, to define the male sexuality in its entirety, if one agrees with Irigaray's associative type of argumentation, therefore making the anal anxiety contradictory with the male desire to be again one with his mother:

> The more or less exclusive - and highly anxious – attention paid to erection in Western sexuality proves to what extent the imaginary that governs it is foreign to the feminine. For the most part, this sexuality offers nothing but imperatives dictated by male rivalry: the "strongest" being the one who has the best "hard-on", the longest, the biggest, the stiffest penis, or even the one who "pees the farthest" (as in the little boys' contests). Or else one finds imperatives dictated by the enactment of sadomasochistic fantasies, these in turn governed by man's relation to his mother: the desire to force entry, to penetrate, to appropriate for himself the mystery of this womb where he has been conceived, the secret of his begetting, of his "origin". (Irigaray, 1985b, pp. 24-25)

One might agree with the point that a fantasy can always translate an anxiety that might be reworked against itself or with the idea that male sexuality could be represented as a

paradox, in a permanent *fort-da*, with the manipulable object that can be thrown away and then retrieved (in our case the [m]other's body absence/presence). But, for Irigaray, it seems to be the case, this is not a paradox per se, because ultimately this male struggle with the desire for the "origin" finds its "peace" through creating "an(other) economy of desire."

> One could equally, however, see the child's manifest resistance to weaning as a symptom of the trauma occasioned by the *final break in maternal contact with the inside of the mother's body*: rupture of the fetal membrane, cutting of the umbilical cord, denial of the breast. A series of breaks with all that might be represented as the material causes of the child's body. Could its 'insatiable hunger' perhaps be the need to reabsorb its material cause? This would imply the inadmissible urge to devour the mother, to destroy this original nature-body from which one must eternally separate and be separated but to which one must eternally return and refer back. (…) So this 'hunger' is indeed insatiable, and no food will ever satisfy it. In fact it is not a matter of its being satisfied. Food can make you ill, can poison you if it should run short – as Freud tells us – but all the more if it falls short in its function of repeating-representing closeness to the mother, until such a time as the desire for origin can find an(other) economy. (Irigaray, 1985a, pp. 40-41; italics in original)

This new order of desire refers to the "hom(m)osexual monopoly," that is, the "exclusive valorization of men's needs/desires, of exchanges among men," not as "an 'immediate' practice, but in its 'social' mediation" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 171), as compared to the female relationship to the mother which cannot find itself yet expressed and expressible in the current encompassing male symbolic. In the context of showing how the current (male) order circulates women, signs and commodities from one man to another and requires hom(m)osexuality for the very possibility of this socio-cultural order, Irigaray puts the following question:

> Why is masculine homosexuality considered exceptional, then, when in fact the economy as a whole is based upon it? Why are homosexuals ostracized, when society postulates homosexuality? Unless it is because *the "incest" involved in homosexuality has to remain in the realm of pretense*. (1985b, p. 192; italics in original)

And then Irigaray gives as examples the father-son relationship as the guarantee of the transmission of patriarchal power and all the other homosexual relations, which cannot be

properly put in practice "because they openly interpret the law according to which society operates" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 193; italics in original). But there is more to this, as the unmasking of the mechanism of transactions would also affect the symbolic structure: "Once the penis itself becomes merely a means to pleasure, pleasure among men, the phallus loses its power" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 193). Anality would therefore indeed crack the symbolic system of the "heterosexual order" by revealing the homosexual economy of exchange and of desire whereby women exist only as mediations/transactions.[70] This is a crucial step but still doesn't talk about the ways we could move out and make possible new spaces for the advent of sexual difference and, implicitly, for novel expressions of non-cannibalistic masculine subjectivity, since one idea is not to remain blocked in the process of self-diagnosis without bringing in a difference, i.e. sexual difference, the material-symbolic relationship to the maternal and female bodies.

Then my question is: can the "anal" be both the grounding feature (fantasy, anxiety) of a male symbolic with disastrous effects on female sexualities and, at the same time, the grave for any phallic expressions of the straight male bodies? Isn't this a re-constructing of (one)self that again does not take into account the issue of sexual difference given its hom(m)osexual economy of desire? Is this the most serious challenge possible to imagining subversive re-articulations of masculine subjectivities? Is indeed the non-heterosexual symbolic with its material bodily practices and encounters the key to heteronormativity?

I take Irigaray's argument as a strong reminder of the importance of sexual difference when developing any project of reconfiguring/rethinking male sexuality and male bodies as opposed to the phallic heteronormativity. It seems to me that "anality," as discursive expression of a certain (male) unconscious, could actually repeat the same "danger" for not taking "sexual difference" into account, precisely for silencing or forgetting to account for *a*

[70] Irigaray herself suggested in "Je- Luce Irigaray" (1995, p. 112) that we should not confuse the ideological and cultural, that is patriarchal, *hom(m)osexuality* with the practice of homosexuality.

sexual difference, despite its advent against the phallicized male body. In a nutshell, "anality," in its solipsistic turn toward the (straight) male body, is just another, more explicit though, specular move on the masculine male Subject's side, for it is missing and still not "opening" itself to a dialogue with the "other" of the sexual difference, i.e. the female/maternal body. The farthest it could go within this speculative gesture is to apparently implode the *oneness* of the male phallic body and *multiply* it, by bringing in minoritarian male sexual lived experiences and practices. But maybe the "same" pleasure of a sexually undifferentiated body? I believe that it is not the straight male body under the attack here, but the social material-symbolic operations that constitute violently heterosexuality as the norm. Any attempt to rethink the male imaginary that does not take into account sexual difference would repeat the same violent reification of the logic of the Same, precisely because the issue is not the heterosexual body per se and its images/representations, but the primacy of heterosexuality based on the masculine self-representation of the male body as the negation of the maternal and female ones on the basis of the anxiety related to the production of life.

2.4 Male re-imaginings: breathing, touching and masculine self-affection

In many of her previous works, but more poignantly in *The Way of Love* (2002), *Sharing the World* (2008) and in the most recent book *In the Beginning, She Was* (2013a), while offering the same powerful critical diagnostic of patriarchal male modes of organizing and expressing thought, Irigaray also hints at rethinking men's positions and lived experiences in relation to their own bodies and women's, as well, in relation to language and the world. Among these, one can discern her call for men to question their own relation to what is constructed and projected as "humanity" by them. Since for Irigaray humanity has yet to be achieved, as the relation with the other as other is not cultivated and we are trapped in

both animality and collectivity (2013a, p. 76), what remains is a need to cultivate the *limit*, a concept borrowed and reworked from Heidegger in her re-thinking of the relations between and among women and men. Irigaray previously elaborated on this specific understanding of the universal and the limit as sexual difference in *I love to you:*

> I belong to the universal in recognizing that I am a woman. The woman's singularity is in having a particular genealogy and history. But belonging to a gender represents a universal that exists prior to me. I have to accomplish it in relation to my particular destiny. (1996, p. 39)

The same, then, should go for men, but not symmetrically, since sexuate difference presupposes two non-comparable and non-substitutable subjects in relation. The task, for men then, is to cultivate the limit, the finitude of their gendered embodied presence in the world, their male embodiment in relation to women's bodies and the world. Consequently, men would finally understand that they are *not all*, i.e. the universal and the world, and that the journeys made by men in and through the world have to be rethought. It is not accidental that again, in *In the Beginning, She Was* (particularly, in the chapters four "The wandering of man" and six "The return"), the Heideggerian concept of the "path," which becomes fully-fledged in Irigaray's own terms, is revisited in relation to her critique of Western male culture as one of estrangement and exteriority "rushing forward to build a world which eventually substitutes itself for us" (Irigaray, 2013a, p. 140). Parallel to this, "we" still have a tradition of the "return" - a concept that Irigaray reworks in her dialogue with Nietzsche -, or, better put, of the impossibility of returning home, to oneself. In these terms, Western male culture has constructed and transformed itself as a Greek double epic: while the positive one is about the creation of a world of men amongst men, the negative one is more about "the loneliness of the man who tries to return home" (Irigaray, 2013a, p. 141). In this second sense, Irigaray argues that the becoming of man is blocked in the wandering outside of himself, as he is unable to go both outside himself and then also return to the self. Because "man has searched

for his becoming in objects, things, representations or mental reduplications" (Irigaray, 2013a, p. 143) he lacks a culture of being-with, of speaking with; instead he has chosen "a culture of performance, of know-how, of mastery" (Irigaray, 2013a, p. 144).

Irigaray returns to psychoanalysis in her interpretation of this "going outside of man" as an effect of his struggle to construct his own identity by differentiating from "the first human with whom he shared life: his mother" (2013a, pp. 144-145). In order to reconcile man's identity crisis, there is a need for a return both bodily and culturally, specifically a return to the Greek culture, where one can locate almost lost meanings that could indicate a different path and journey even for men themselves. Examples of these are: ἕτερος or "hetero," the other of two different beings or duality; γένος or "genos", which refers variously to sex, gender, and generation, and the morphological verbal form of the *middle-passive/middle voice* which represents a certain return of the action upon the person acting, a form of returning to oneself to draw energy, inspiration, wisdom and then reciprocity (Irigaray, 2013a, p. 147).

This re-turning back to oneself, this self-affection, for man, is more related to oneness, given he is not yet differentiated from the maternal world and given the dream world of *all and everything*, which he constructed for the lack of cultivation of his relationship with the mother, substituted this way with the mastery of the world. This un-realized relation with the mother, Irigaray says, has resulted culturally in a focus on *genealogy* represented as natural reproduction, verticality and hierarchy, to the detriment of *gender* as sexuate identity or as a horizontal relation to the other. However, Irigaray explains, the same re-turn to one's self, the very *self-affection*, could paradoxically represent man's own path towards his new sexuate identity:

> Going back home is perhaps possible after many efforts, after suffering great hardships. Turning back to the self is no longer possible. Without freeing himself

> from his adhesion to the other, the first other, man cannot return to his self! For lack of cultivation of the *sensible relation with his mother – that is, of his first affects* – man has cut himself off from experiencing his own self-affection. (2013a, p. 151; italics mine)

Thus, Irigaray's suggestion is that cultivation through rethinking and reimaging the relation with the mother precisely in bodily terms would be the first step in this new journey of male masculine subjective formation. In *Sexes and Genealogies*, in the section "Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother" (1993b, pp. 7-21) and in *I love to you: Sketch for a Felicity Within History* (1996), Irigaray understands both the male imaginary and his symbolic expressions as masking/covering/inverting/negating a) the mother's body and reproductive power and men's creation, b) the mother's primary nurturing space and relationship to the child and c) that language appropriates the female puissance/sexuality/desire. The phallus takes symbolically the place of the umbilical cord (thus the castration complex obtains its primacy in relation to the original cut from the mother), the womb and the placenta are forgotten/erased/negated through a specific language defined in the terms of the male (iso) phallomorphic imaginary/fantasies in relation to his own bodily activities and experiences. At the same moment, in this critical gesture, Irigaray indicates important morphologic locations for rethinking the male imaginary with obvious effects in terms of positivizing female sexuality: a) the *navel* as the tribute place/scar memory for the primary bond/home (the umbilical cord, the placenta and the womb) with the mother and b) a radical re-interpretation of the phallic erection as the masculine version of the umbilical cord, not as the all-powerful appropriating signifier, but rather more of a repetition of the "living bond to the mother" out of respect for "the life of the mother":

> The penis evokes something of the life within the womb as it stiffens, touches and spills out, passing beyond the skin and the will. As it softens and falls, it evokes the end, mourning, the ever open wound. Men would be performing an act of anticipatory repetition, a return to the world that allows them to become sexual adults capable of eroticism and reciprocity in the flesh. (Irigaray, 1993b, p. 17)

My reading of Irigaray's rethinking of man's bodily relation with the mother's body is echoing that of Britt-Marie Schiller who, in her article "The Incomplete Masculine. Engendering the Masculine of Sexual Difference," from *Thinking with Irigaray* (2011), returns to the relation with the mother, primarily on psychoanalytical grounds, and develops three gestures that would prepare the space for rethinking a limited and incomplete masculinity. The first account of understanding in different way penetrability, for example, while phalicity is being displaced, is based on *nursing/breastfeeding* as an intimate source, according to which "the experience of being penetrated can open a male to a different sense of interiority and vulnerability" (Schiller, 2011, p. 133).

> There is an irreducible interval between two bodies: between his lips, a nipple; a breast not his; her milk flowing into his cavity, from her body into his body. The little boy's mouth is penetrated in this carnal act (he consumes his mother's milk, not his mother, as a projection of his fear of her as the theorized "devoured monster" [Irigaray 1993b, 15]). (Schiller, 2011, p. 135)[71]

While the second gesture would speak about a masculine transition in his subject formation not as one of renunciation, mastery and subjugation in relation to the mother, but rather one in terms of a safeguarded proximity with the mother, the third gesture, through a notion of "improvisation," would take man out of his enclosed circle of monologic solipsism and open him to an intersubjective relation, where he can "begin to speak with others in a non-assimilating, non-dominating dialogue, a play space wherein two subjectivities can unfold, be recognized and recognize each other without subjugation" (Schiller, 2011, p. 143). Schiller summarizes her use of Irigaray's *negative* of sexual difference for rethinking the masculine as a limited and incomplete subject in his own terms and within another type of relationship with his, thus recognized, other(s):

[71] It is through this particular understanding of permeability in relation to sexual difference, that is, in relation to a mother/woman's body, as an alternative to the masculine heterosexual phallic conception of a closed male body, that I envisaged my critique of "anality" and its implicit solipsism and, again, neglect of sexual difference, in my previous reading of Bersani, Thomas, Waldby and Pronger's perspectives.

> Cultivating incompleteness, the masculine gives up "the negation of the other gender for the labor of the negative vis-à-vis [him]self" (Irigaray 1996, 146). The incomplete masculine is neither omnipotent subject of phallic narcissism, nor is he the half that, joined with another half, makes a whole. Returning to and remembering the nursing site, the masculine experience of penetrating can be transformed from mastery to wonder. In improvisation, a differently elaborated negative provides a ground for a recognition of Alterity and non-reversibility in the transformation from mastery to play. On the Oedipal threshold, the dichotomy of desire and identification is transformed from misidentification and renunciation to expansion. And, finally, within the third of intersubjectivity, the negative of sexual difference transforms complementarity to limit and incompleteness. Its effect is not to assimilate but to recognize. (Schiller, 2011, p. 147)

Along these readings then, as far as male bodily expressions are concerned, I can draw on several dimensions in order to elaborate further Irigaray's indications about masculine morphology. One first possibility would be then the re-imagining of man's way of relating to his own sexuate and sexual body. For example, *testicularity, anality* and *male bodily fluids/orifices* could become figurations of a radically different male imaginary against the dominating phallic heteronormative representations of male bodies, but that would not be all. In this sense, this bodily re-imagining, that is, a re-thinking of male bodies, male imaginaries and their related masculine subjectivities, drawing on the relationship between sexual difference and phenomenology, might be based on several premises. Following Elizabeth Grosz's indications (1994), male bodies and masculine subjectivities would not be then distinct entities or two attributes of one single substance but rather a mutual modulation and expression. Looking at sexual difference as an ontological dimension of bodies and as a universal mode of being, according to which the embodied subjectivities are therefore sexed, a phenomenological approach would first reveal that the experiential specificities of male bodies have been hidden under the universality of the "human" and, at the same time, specific patriarchal conceptions of masculinities rest on certain views about how male bodies "should" be, feel or look like. Accordingly, the processes of subjective and bodily re-imagining and of generating new images of thought pertaining to a post-phallogocentric

understanding of masculine subjectivities entail at least a re-thematizing of male bodies as male embodiments. A cultural approach with phenomenological influences would reveal the mutual shaping between male experiential ontology and various masculine subjective representations.[72] Therefore, such phenomenological accounts of the male bodily-lived experiences must be supported by the idea that there are interactions between lived experiences, the imaginary, and the discursive construction of both (Whitford, 1991, p. 152). In this particular case, this re-imagining might show that there are kinds of interplays in masculine constitution, between: (1) the ways male bodies are experiencing both their "fluid" (blood, saliva, urine, semen, mucus, tears, sweat, vomit, faeces, etc.) and "solid" thresholds (skin, hair; even eyes) and orifices (mouth, anus, nostrils), (2) the imaginary projections of the "limits" of their bodies onto other types of bodies, and (3) implicitly, the constitution of their own subjectivities.[73] It is about how certain representations stem from physicality and about a picture of the enbrainment of the body and the embodiment of the mind, and, in particular, about the union between man's bodily imaginary and masculine subjectivity/symbolic.[74]. In short, one can envisage a possible male "sensible-transcendental."

Secondly, Irigaray also insists that men must rethink their relation to the mother and

[72] It is about not the classical understanding of ontology, but rather "in the sense of a phenomenological ontology, as the thematizing of the character and being of our experience, which speaks to the nature of our being generally" (Fisher, 2002, p. 689).

[73] Elizabeth Grosz, in *Volatile Bodies* (1994), raises the issues of both male fluids and of the relation between morphologies and sexual practices. Men's sexual practices shape too their perception of their bodies – bodies are "materialized" within shared sexual and cultural events they enter and other axes of signification and power relations contexts (i.e. heterosexual bodies will show quite different morphologies from those of gay or queer bodies, not of a biological kind but of an experiential one). Age and disability are also important dimensions, as they express and shape specific male bodily experiences. In a personal note, my grandfather's (82 years old by that time) account of his problems, in our personal discussions, with urination and defecation revealed their importance in understanding masculine instantiations and anxieties. He was diagnosed with benign prostatic hyperplasia and kidney cancer, and, since the moment he became immobilized, I was next to him for a period of several weeks. Taking care of a very specific male body, somehow vulnerable and decaying, in the most intimate ways, also revealed to me the intersubjective bodily dimension of our manner of being next to each other.

[74]To clarify the relation between Imaginary/Symbolic and identity/subjectivity in connection with men/masculinities axis, while subjectivity (masculinity) as a position of enunciation belongs to Symbolic (the Lacanian order of meaning), identity (man) is imaginary (bodily fantasies for example) and is structured or takes a representational form within the Symbolic.

her body and, in turn, how this relation might be differently represented in the cultural order without repeating the inverting gesture of negating sexual difference. The *navel* and the *umbilical cord* are such alternative morphological re-imaginings, as also is the *cultivation of breathing* and *touching* as remembering the mother, the life and the union of whom gave birth to him. As we faced a construction of male subjectivity through the elaboration of an interiority via a "correct" use of language, her other key insight is the need for transformations in language, as discourse, specifically in re-imagining male morphology, such as the cultivation of (male) desire through a new speech.

Thus, both bodily and culturally, one's path and the return to one's self, as the condition of possibility for that path, for both men and women, become the fundamental aspects of laboring together for a culture of "real" sexuate difference which recognizes *breathing* and *touching* as ontological dimensions of a carnal language and knowledge. Moreover, acknowledging the debt to the mother's first gesture of generosity (offering life in herself to an Other), generative power and nurturing, through breathing and touching, a bodily ethics based on what Irigaray called a "placental economy" would reconfigure the relationship between the sexes, on one hand, and men's relationship to the feminine maternal, on the other hand.

In the section "Culture of Difference" from *Je, Tu, Nous* (1993c), Irigaray argues that "one of the distinctive features of the female body is its tolerance of the other's growth within itself without incurring illness or death for either one of the living organisms" (1993c, p. 45) which has been ignored in the culture of men and between-men, or reduced to an almost religious blind veneration and fetishism of the mother-son-relationship without, however, taking into account the model of tolerance of the other within and with a self that this relationship expresses. This "placental economy" goes against the patriarchal culture which is governed rather more by two behavioral models, the Darwinian one, according to which life

is conceived as a struggle against the external environment and the other living beings, and the Pavlovian one, whereby the culture educates the subjects in repetition, in order to adapt and submit to the order, and "to do *like*, to be *like*, without any decisive innovations or discoveries of our own" (Irigaray, 1993c, p. 37; italics in original). The placental relational economy, instead, ensuring the growth of the one in the body of other, without being reduced to a mechanism of fusion or aggression/rejection, is an organized economy where the differentiation between the mother's self and the other of the child is already established before a given meaning in and by language (Irigaray, 1993c, p. 43).[75] The debt to the mother's womb and placenta is yet unacknowledged in a culture where the imaginary reduces pregnancy, birth, and childrearing to a state of an apparent fusion (mother-child relationship) from which one has to cut off from in order to attain the "autonomous" subject position imposed by the symbolic/cultural order. The non-oppositional relation between the self and the other that the placental economy seems to express was pushed outside by representational thought, devalued and negated, or imagined just a substratum for the symbolic system.

Irigaray compellingly showed in her critical engagement with Western philosophy (starting with her re-reading of Plato's Myth of the Cave in *Speculum*) that the mother's womb is imagined (metaphorized) as an inert container/cave (matter) for the male subjectivity (forms). This maternal repression and appropriation laid the foundations of the Western metaphysical account of origin (copies and original), re-presented through a metaphorical logic of substitution, which privileges oppositions and ruptures instead of proximity and contact (contiguity). This metaphysical thinking also presupposes a forgetting of touch and breathing (two fundamental dimensions of a relational life in the mother's womb, which long preceded the visual), which became so predominant in the Western

[75] The placenta, a formation of the embryo, seems to be, nevertheless, an organ that is independent of it and, therefore, plays a kind of mediating role between the mother in the fetus (no fusion between the two then) and constitutes a system of nutritious exchanges between the organisms without exhausting the mother (Irigaray, 1993c, p. 39).

oculocentric culture.

Irigaray uncovers the very same gesture even in Martin Heidegger's work, despite his powerful critique of the Western *metaphysics of presence*, which, as an onto-theology, is defined, in his view, by the oblivion or forgetfulness of Being as Origin (*Seinsvergessenheit*). According to Heidegger (in *Being and Time*, 1962; *Identity and Difference*, 2002; *The End of Philosophy*, 2003), Western philosophy, from Plato to Nietzsche, has forgotten the question of the meaning of Being and Being as such, failing to pay attention to the difference between Being and beings, meaning a difference between the ontological and the ontic (the status of Being is ontological rather than ontic, as it is in the case of beings). Or, as Julian Young (2002, p. 16; italics in original) puts it, "while being is the *transcendental* ground of our world of beings, Being, as the generative ground of being, is its *generative* ground." In the Western metaphysics, Being as such has been forgotten because it has been treated as a kind of ultimate being, as *presence*, bearing various names such as idea, energeia, substance, god, monad, or will to power.[76] This metaphysical view operates a division in reality between ordinary beings and their cause or creator (*causa prima/causa sui* and its reason-giving correspondent *ultima ratio*), hence its ontotheological character (Heidegger, 2002, pp. 59-60). Heidegger offers the following account of the ontotheological character of metaphysics:

> If we recollect the history of Western-European thinking once more, then we will encounter the following: The question of Being, as the question of the Being of beings, is double in form. On the one hand, it asks: What is a being in general as a being? In the history of philosophy, reflections which fall within the domain of this question acquire the title ontology. The question 'What is a being?' [or 'What is that which is?'] simultaneously asks: Which being is the highest [or supreme] being, and in what sense is it the highest being? This is the question of God and of the divine. We call the domain of this question theology. This duality in the question of the Being of beings can be united under the title ontotheology. (KTB 10-11/GA9 449) (quoted in

[76] In his essay "Time and Being," from *On Time and Being* (1972), Heidegger argues: "From the dawn of Western-European thinking until today, Being signifies the same as presencing. Out of presencing, presence speaks of the present. According to current representations, the present, together with past and future, forms the character of time. Being is determined as presence through time" (1972, p. 2).

Thomson, 2000, p. 301)[77]

The "presence," in the "metaphysics of presence," presupposes both the "now" and the "eternal," always present, found in the names given to Being. It is in this sense that the Western metaphysics of presence, as ontotheology, determines the oblivion of Being by treating it as another kind of being, that is, through an onticization of Being. The question concerning Being *as such*, namely Being as Being, is forgotten, while the question concerning the Being of beings became the guiding question of the philosophical thought. According to the latter, Being is treated as a "beingness" of beings, that is, only from the perspective of beings, of those which are *present* to or seen by us, human subjects, informing thus all the sciences dominating the western culture. Forgetting the ontological difference between Being as such and beings, metaphysics forgets Being by thinking instead beings which are representable as objects to a human subject; hence, the representational and subjectivist nature of metaphysical thought.

Heidegger introduces the ontological difference in *Being and Time* and, again, in more detail in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Heidegger, 1988, p. 17). Additionally, Heidegger discusses in *The End of Philosophy* a metaphysical difference, which, starting from Plato, is a distinction between essence (*esssentia*) and existence (*existentia*) (Heidegger, 2003, p. 2). These two differences (the ontological and the metaphysical) have been, however, conflated in the history of Western metaphysics (particularly in the medieval philosophical tradition), meaning that Being was conceived of as the essence of beings, of *existentia*. In Heidegger's view, the metaphysical difference between essence and existence belongs therefore more on the side of Being. The difference between Being and beings, the

[77] In the "Introduction" to Heidegger's *Identity and Difference*, Joan Stambaugh summarizes: "Metaphysics is ontology in that it thinks Being as the first and most universal ground common to all beings. Metaphysics is theology in that it thinks Being as the highest ground above all beings, ultimately as the ground of itself, *causa sui*, which is the metaphysical concept of God. Metaphysics is thus in its very nature onto-theo-logic" (2002, p. 15; italics in original).

ontological difference, although presupposed by metaphysics, remained its unthought, its unexplained pre-supposition (Heidegger, 2002, p. 50). In other words, according to Heidegger, the metaphysical distinction between essence ("whatness") and existence ("thatness") obscured the ontological difference between Being and beings, by thinking Being *as such* exclusively in terms of its relation to beings as their first and highest cause (hence, the onto-theological character of metaphysics). In this very particular sense, metaphysics is nothing but a history of the oblivion of Being, because when the division between essence and existence is taken into account, it is actually the essence, which takes precedence leading to a focus on beings. Existence is thought only in terms of what exists factually, here and now, in terms of beings, therefore only ontically. The effect is that of having Being forgotten (precisely for being equated with essence), which is set up as a permanent presence abstracted from the presencing of the ontic beings in determinate space-time coordinates. Moreover, for Heidegger, this kind of metaphysics presupposes a self-governing and self-knowing "human" agent/subject for whom nature exists only in so far as it is *present*, objectifiable and, therefore, useful. In *Identity and Difference*, Heidegger argues:

> Let us think of Being according to its original meaning, as presence. Being is present to man neither incidentally nor only on rare occasions. Being is present and abides only as it concerns man through the claim it makes on him. For it is man, open toward Being, who alone lets Being arrive as presence. (2002, p. 31)

According to this metaphysical perspective, the world or the real discloses itself for the Dasein as present, but as being-for us, as "standing-reserve," as "resource," as Heidegger states in "*The Question concerning Technology*" (1977, p. 23) when defining "das *Gestell*."[78]

[78] Since by "essence" Heidegger also understands "a ground of enabling" (in the essay "On the essence of Truth", from *Pathmarks*, 1998, p. 136, footnote a), then being is the essence of beings, that is, the ground of beings. The same sense of essence is to be found in "The Question concerning Technology" from *The Question concerning Technology and other Essays* (1977), where Heidegger argues that das *Gestell* (enframing) is the essence of modern technology and metaphysics, at its turn, is the essence of modern technology. The coincidence of meaning between *das Gestell* and metaphysics implies, then, that technology, as practice, is a metaphysical way of thinking and relating to the world, of revealing the world, that is a way of bringing-forth the world only for us and never in itself (metaphysics itself becomes this way a technological way of thinking).

Therefore, the metaphysics of presence also misses the dependence of Being on human being (*Dasein*). Implicitly, it also misses "the perspectival character of our basic perspective on things," its account of the being of beings which is elevated "into *the* (one and only) categorical account of reality itself"; or, "an absolutization of some (of any) horizon of disclosure" (Young, 2002, p. 29; italics in original). By being a particular type of revealing or disclosure of the world (as *Gestell*), metaphysics "blocks both the mystery of Being and its character as an 'Origin'" (Young, 2002, p. 30). And this is where Irigaray intervenes in her engagement with Heidegger. In her view, there is a prior error of the metaphysical thinking, a prior oblivion of the Origin, before that of Being as origin; it is the very matter of Being of which Heidegger himself seems to be forgetful of. The question concerning the "what" of Being (in German *es gibt*; in English *there is/it gives*; in French *il y a/il donne/ça donne*) is answered by Irigaray quite bluntly: "Of what [is] this *is*? Of air" (Irigaray, 1999, p. 5). Since from Parmenides, "to be" and "to think" are thought as being the same and, therefore, the question regarding the "what" of Being was never posed, but rather always presupposed, pre-established.[79] At the same time, by way of this equation between being and thinking, the "what" of thought itself has also been left unthought. Since the human being, the *Dasein*, is for Heidegger a distinctive ontologico-ontical entity because it is the very being through which the understanding of Being is expressed, made known (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 61-62), "the locus of co-belonging of thinking and the question of Being" (Leeuwen, 2010, p. 116), then the question concerning the "there is," the "what" of Being is inextricably linked to the one concerning the "what" of *Dasein*, its matter, its constitutive possibility.[80] Of "what" or

This is where the violence of modern technology lies: in revealing the world only as resource-full for us or as nothing but resource, technology "deprives us of the *ability* to stand in a gentle, care-full as opposed to violent, relation to things" (Young, 2002, p. 53; italics in original).

[79] In the next chapter I will discuss in more detail Heidegger's reinterpretation of Parmenides' principle of identity, in *Identity and Difference*, and Irigaray's corresponding critique of Heidegger in *The Way of Love*.

[80] In relation to this, Irigaray critiques at the same time Heidegger's reworking of identity as relational, in *Identity and Difference* (2002). I will come back to her critique in the next chapter when discussing the ontological character of sexual difference.

"from which" is then the Dasein that thinks Being? Irigaray's answer is again: "In the first 'meeting', before his thought's beginning, she gives – gives herself in the 'form' of fluids (Irigaray, 1999, p. 32). It is in this sense that the oblivion of Being is itself an expression of human thinking's inability to think its own material constitutive conditions, specifically, as Irigaray argues, the constitutive role of the first "place"/"origin," of the air and of the maternal; in short, of "she [who] gives-first-air" (Irigaray, 1999, p. 28).[81]

> The "oblivion of Being" of which Heidegger speaks, would redouble the oblivion of the fluid matter that made its constitution possible. Being itself would already be forgetting. (Irigaray, 2001, pp. 309-310)[82]

For Irigaray the "aerial matter" remains unthought by Heidegger, though it may be that this unthought is "the *a priori* condition of all of his *a prioris*" (Irigaray, 1999, p. 12). This unthinkable "fluid truth" is that to which man "owes his life's beginning, his birth and his death; on air, he nourishes himself; in air, he is housed; thanks to air, he can move about, can exercise a faculty for action, can manifest himself, can see and speak" (Irigaray, 1999, p. 12). Air is for Irigaray, then, the "arch-mediation" for it bridges the real and the logos, for it can be first the medium of life offered by a mother to the other inside her (the first gift of life), and also the voice and the very possibility "of naming-denominating, of appearing in presence" (Irigaray, 1999, p. 28). Air, as the first "fluid matter carried by the blood she gives" is the first gift that remains "an unthinkable beginning of Being":

[81] Here Irigaray seems to offer a transposition into feminine of Heidegger's *es gibt* (in French *il donne*) by using *elle donne*, referring through this pronoun interchangeably to nature (*la nature*), woman (*la femme*) and mother (*la mère*).

[82] In relation to thought's inability to thematize its conditions of possibility, as questioned by Irigaray in *The Forgetting of Air*, Anne van Leeuwen argues in "An Examination of Irigaray's Commitment to Transcendental Phenomenology in *The Forgetting of Air* and *The Way of Love*": "Irigaray's position in this text can thus be understood in meta-theoretical terms. Forgetfulness is transmuted into a kind of philosophical matricide and megalomaniacal domination of nature when this constitutive forgetting is itself forgotten. That is, this forgetting receives its most pernicious articulation in those specular philosophies that claim a kind of transparency and self-sufficiency insofar as they purport to bring their own constitutive conditions into articulation and thus claim to be self-grounding in this sense. The point, then, for Irigaray, is not to participate in this specular forgetting through a nostalgic call to remember she (who) gives air; the point, in other words, is not to attempt to retrieve a maternal origin and material nature vis-a-vis a tacit re-inscription of this specular logic; rather, the point, paradoxically, is not to forget this ineliminable and constitutive forgetting" (van Leeuwen, 2013, p. 459).

> It is unthinkable for its lack of any possible economy, for the faulty framing of its space-time, for its apprehension that is imperceptible by all the sense: for its advent prior to all saying. The Being of man will be constituted on the basis of a forgetting: of the gift of this *from which* of which he is. (Irigaray, 1999, p. 30; italics in original)

For Irigaray, this gift is without return, a debt of life that remains unpaid. How, then, should man acknowledge this debt? How should one think of this very first gift? Could thinking become finally thanking? In her generosity/gift, Irigaray again offers an answer: it is through the *cultivation* of air, of breathing, therefore through the acknowledgement of that which is the first to give autonomous existence to man. The Cartesian dictum thus changes into "I breathe, therefore, I am."

> Air, which we forget often in Western culture, is related to many things. Among other things, it grants us autonomous existence. I become autonomous from the moment I begin breathing outside my mother, and this continues to happen every day of my life. If I don't breathe autonomously, then I am not autonomous in relation to the world and to the others. (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 130)

Because of its mediating role, acknowledging air and cultivating breathing would then be the first step towards a male/masculine sensible-transcendental. Irigaray reworks Heidegger's interpretation of "dwelling" as "cultivation", as a dimension of being human on earth. In "Building Dwelling Thinking", in *Poetry, Thought and Language*, Heidegger argues that to be a human means to dwell (to remain, to stay in a place), as the old English and High German word *buan* (for building, for *Bauen*) would suggest (Heidegger, 2001, p. 144; italics in original).

> The old word *bauen*, to which the *bin* belongs, answers: *ich bin, du bist* mean: I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth *as* mortal. It means to dwell. The old word *bauen* which says that man *is* insofar as he dwells, this word *bauen* however *also* means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine. (Heidegger, 2001, p. 145; italics in original)

Whereas Heidegger urges for preserving the fourfold of earth and sky, divinities and

mortals (2001, pp. 147-149), Irigaray urges, instead, for the caring of breathing and touching, of these a priori conditions of life on "earth" (which echoes more the logic of *solid*ification), the first dwelling *gift*-ed by a mother's womb. The ethical implications of such cultivation are tremendous in terms of both the communication between and among men and women and with regard to our differences. In order to meet with the other with respect for differences between the two, each and every one has to acknowledge the need for autonomy and individuation, and also the fact that "that" which first guarantees this so necessary autonomy is the air itself (Irigaray, 2008b, p. 27).

> [O]ur culture is structured according to the removal or suppression of this primary element. Our culture is entirely grounded on logic, where being and thinking coincide and there is no room for a knowledge of life and of the relation. There is neither life no relation without autonomy, and there is no autonomy without air. It is not by change that in Eastern culture the wise cultivate breathing until they obtain the so-called "rebirth". Whereas in the West, which does not know a culture of breathing, we have constructed a world that resembles a prison, dialogue is possible solely among the likes, never with an other (male or female). *To forget the air means forgetting the element that makes individuation and relation possible*. (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 137; italics mine)

An entire collection of articles is dedicated to the theme of breathing and its cultivation in *Breathing with Luce Irigaray* (2013). Irigaray herself in "To Begin with Breathing Anew," the last article of the collection, urges again for a cultivation of breathing as that which "can render our body and our bodily exchanges spiritual" (2013b, p. 224). Through breathing, flesh becomes spiritual, overcoming this way the scission between the body and the spirit. The sensible-transcendental that Irigaray advocates so much for starts possiblly from this. Again, she raises the issue of the "a priori of all the a prioris," which is still lacking in our culture and from which we have to start again, that is, that "we are differentiated as living beings, especially through our sexuate identity" (Irigaray, 2013b, p. 225), a limit that we have to acknowledge so that a respect for life and the real could be possible. Touch and breath are intertwined dimensions of this limit, still unthought in the

current logic, which does not take into account nature and its invisible manifestations and therefore privileges seeing and listening to. This other logic or economy of relationality presupposes a change in the dialectics between the two, according to which the passion between the two would finds its limit, its measure through the breath that "tempers its immediacy, leading it to safeguard life and to be transformed into more and more subtle affect and exchanges capable of keeping desire alive and in becoming, in each one, but also between the one and the other" (Irigaray, 2013b, p. 225). In the article "Perhaps Cultivating Touch Can Still Save Us" (2011), echoing Heidegger's "Only a God Can Save Us," Irigaray again argues that the artificial neutrality of our world of communication is cut off from the natural singular energies and differences of both women and men who, therefore, live themselves through an individuation caught up between instinctive, uncultivated intensities (sublimated through domination or submission) and formal rules and standards, precisely because we lack a cultivation of the relation with the mother at both the individual and cultural level. Irigaray sees this *forgetting* of our mother(s) and of this first gesture of hospitality given by a woman (first breathings and touchings), which plunged us into a gap between uncultivated energies and formalized ways of behaving so distant from our natural belongings, as being best expressed by the two Greek gods Dyonisos and Apollo.

> (…) That is, between a god who stays faithful to his natural energy, but does not know how to embody it and oscillates between lack and excess of energy, and another god who favors remaining in a beautiful appearance, whiting an ideal form, at the price of subjecting to it the vitality of his energy. Neither the one not the other of these two gods has solved the energetic problem that an uncultivated relationship with the mother raises. (Irigaray, 2011, p. 131)

Using the images of these two gods, we can see how the masculine subject formation or individuation is not achieved yet, as it remains just an idea or dream of individuation. Since men don't take into account the woman in the mother, they are torn between the energies and desire for a merging with the unity of the maternal world representing the whole of nature, on

the one hand, and the desire for an emerging from an un-differentiation with nature through an ideal masculine shape, a dream of ideal beauty, on the other hand. In Aristotelian terms, one god would correspond to a matter without adequate forms (not accidently then Dyonisos' art is music and his privileged sense is hearing) and the other to a form without adequate matter (Apollo's art is sculpture and his privileged sense is sight) (Irigaray, 2011, p. 132). Man's neutral sexless individuation as solution to emerge from the fusion or confusion with the maternal world leaves unsolved the problem of his oscillating energies, his flow of life, which are organized "through a logic of representation that institutes an artificial permanent reality that is separated from the present and an embodied presence" (Irigaray, 2011, p. 133). This reality is a universal culture premised on undifferentiated others, groups, societies that allows him to escape from a merging with a universal nature. To this, Irigaray's answer is plain and simple: "to recover this humanity requires us to start again from our singular embodiment and cultivate it with respect for its difference(s)" (Irigaray, 2011, p. 136). Therefore, instead of "looking at" our bodies in a culture which privileges the one and the multiple, and obviously not the two (the same as the god Dyonisos who remains between the oneness of the natural world and the multiplicity of appearances or existences), the cultivation of our embodiments and desire for meeting each other and for sharing of eros could start from a revaluation of *touch* (and its god Eros). Touch was poorly recognized and lived in our culture both as a means to enter into relation with ourselves and with the other, with regards to the visible and the invisible parts of our embodiments (such as skin and mucous membranes).

> For lack of cultivation of touch, the internal mucous parts of the feminine body can be assimilated to the darkness of the maternal origin. And this prevents the most intimate aspect of our amorous sharing from happening, from being experienced by us. The ambivalence of man towards a return to the maternal body, to the maternal world, prevents him from behaving as an adult in love life, especially in love making, and the ignorance of the erotic potential of her internal mucous prevents woman from helping man to share with her at the most intimate level. Now this sharing is the one in which each one at the same time risks losing oneself as is sent back to oneself, to the most

personal core of oneself. (Irigaray, 2011, p. 138)

In other words, Irigaray is urging us for a revival of eros, which could guide us on the path of the journey towards a human individuation, each in its own sexuate differentiation, a revival that would imply the construction of a *carnal knowledge*, rather than of the mental knowledge, that would take into account the importance of touch in the subjective and inter-subjective constitution of oneself in relation with the other(s), that is, the construction of an ethical relationship based not on extraneous rules from reasoning and imaginings cut off from our embodiments, but on the respect for the otherness and on the very limits of our own bodies.

> It is a matter of acting in an ethical way rather than in moralistic way, that is to say, of respecting the place where the other lives, exists, is, more than behaving towards the other according to general principles that we imagine to be suitable for whatever other, but that do not care about their individuation. (Irigaray, 2011, p. 139)

This knowledge is based precisely on what Irigaray calls *self-affection* (which is not to be confused with auto-eroticism), a concept exemplified in her work through the two feminine/female lips touching one another. Irigaray admits that it is difficult for her to define the self-affection for man, since she is not a male, but she can at least question the culture in the masculine, which prevented the cultivation of such affection with specific consequences (2013a, p. 148). Her diagnostic runs like this: since the masculine subjectivity did not become differentiated enough from the maternal world and submitted to a dialectical process (she calls it maternal incest), the masculine subjectivity tried to separate itself from its natural and affective origin through a logic of coupling opposites (body/mind, nature/culture, sensible/intelligible, activity/passivity, male/female, I/other) that are masking the difference between the mother and the child, are ordering relational life through genealogy, neutralization and substitution for one another, and closing the male subject into a mental/dream world (homeostasis) to protect himself from external affects (Irigaray, 2013a,

pp. 148-151). The fact that, for men, "self-affection has been confused with a dependence on the surrounding world, through which man believes he touches himself again." therefore, an impossible return to oneself trough culture, fabricated discourse, language, objects, technologies, environments, houses, etc., as substitutes for the relation with the mother, his autonomy is only apparent and permanently fed by violence in entering in relation with the other. For men, to gain access to an autonomous and internalized self-affection then is possible (apart from a cultivation of our own life through, for example, the practice of breathing) only through a *relation between two*, which could help man to leave the horizon built without a real differing from the mother world, on the one hand, and the fabricated world of undifferentiated, neutralized others, on the other hand (Irigaray, 2013a, p. 159). At the linguistic level, self-affection presupposes a return to the *middle voice* as a way of internalizing the *middle-passive* and not the hierarchical and oppositional dichotomies of active and passive (to affect and to be affected) and is, in its turn, dependent on a relation between two who are different. For Irigaray, then, self-affection is not just a secondary task for sexuate individuation, but the very basis and condition for the human dignity.

> Self-affection today needs a return to our own body, our own breath, a care about our life in order to become subjected to technologies, to money, to power, to neutralization in a universal "someone," to assimilation into a anonymous world, to the solitude of individualism. (Irigaray, 2013a, p. 161)

In the next chapter, I focus then on Luce Irigaray's critique of language as "*a complicity of long standing between rationality and a mechanics of solids alone*" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 107; italics in original) and on the ontological character of sexual difference with more attention to bodily fluids and rhythms. My aim is to sketch an account of a different understanding of male discourse based on the alternative male imaginary morphology proposed in this chapter.

Chapter 3. Language of and The Ontology of Sexual Difference

> How does the subject come back to itself after having exiled itself within a discourse? This is the question of any era.
>
> Luce Irigaray – *To speak is never neutral* (2002, p. 4)
>
> So long as men claim to say everything and define everything, how can anyone know what the language of the male sex might be? So long as the logic of discourse is modeled on sexual indifference, on the submission of one sex to the other, how can anything be known about the "masculine"?
>
> Luce Irigaray – *This Sex Which is Not One* (1985, p. 128)

In this chapter I address three major themes: a) Irigaray's critique of the Lacanian conception of language, according to which its structuring is both based on the negation of the maternal generative power and against a "reality" more "fluid" than linguistic formalization can capture, b) Irigaray's understanding of the ontological character of sexual/sexuate difference, with attention to bodily fluids and rhythms (in works such as *Sexes and Genealogies, I Love to You* and *Democracy Begins Between Two*), and in connection to c) Irigaray's appropriation of Heidegger's conception of language, as compared to her earlier usage, though critically, of the Lacanian one, as it is developed in Irigaray's latest books *The Way of Love* (2002), *Sharing the World* (2008), and *In the Beginning, She Was* (2013).

I tackle the relationship between fluids, the imaginary and the symbolic and I argue for a need to return to a phenomenological-influenced approach towards male bodies, understood through sexual difference as male embodiments. Sexual/sexuate difference is understood in phenomenological terms as a *relational* and *experiential ontology*, since it is sexual/sexuate difference as a *relational identity* for both women and men, that governs their respective ways of engaging with and experiencing the world.

In this chapter, I am also guided by the question of what it means to conceive of masculinities by thinking of and through fluids. What function could "fluidity" have as a

possible "positive" revaluation of "something" that is otherwise supposedly negated/excluded? If we were to settle a connection between masculinities and male symbolic, on the one hand, and the "mechanics of solids" on the other, how could fluidity get an ontological primacy (which is somehow already presupposed) and therefore postulated as the foundational answer for a possible restructuring of social order? I will argue that it is not necessarily about the vicious circle of the discursively produced ontological status of fluidity as an answer to the violent masculine logic of formalization, but rather about how that "something," posited as fluidity and problematic for symbolic articulation, may become a subversive tool for the re-articulation of masculine expressions and a reworking element for thinking differently or imagining a different way of thinking, a different thought *as such*. I will build my position through a discussion on the relationship between thought, language and male bodies in the terms of a phenomenological approach as discernible in Irigaray's reading of Heidegger's work.

3.1 (Male) Language and "The Mechanics of Fluids"

Some of the articles I examined in the previous chapter raised the issue of "anality" while revolving around the argument for the status of the anal as *anxiety*, which I recognized, however, as problematic if submitted to a critical reading through sexual difference philosophy. The associative significatory chain between a) the expanding phallus and the closed anus, and b) the fear of getting a deferential phallus and an open anus, by which the anal is phantasmatically posited as anxiety (let's say prior to the castration complex), along the lines of feminine/masculine and homosexual/heterosexual divides, postulates the maternal related anxiety rather more as a source in itself. The maternal remains thus the site of struggle in a logic that, otherwise, does not allow for rethinking the relationship with the maternal.

What if we consider this anal anxiety rather another symptom of or a response to "something" more "dreadful" and "horrifying" as bodily experience? This is already hinted at in these articles, but not explicitly taken up and interrogated further. While Calvin Thomas talked about "what falls out of the anus" (the shit, the turd), Bersani about self-annihilation and the rectum-grave within AIDS crisis, Waldby pointed out the straight male fears of penetrability and permeability, and Pronger mentioned the need of opening up erotic spaces. I would argue that all these perspectives are strongly related and hint to something else, which, through Irigaray's perspective, can better explain why a self-shattering of the masculine subject is to be connected to "holes/orifices." What does the anus open or close, or to what and to where? What is there to be contained, hidden, protected, or even fought against? What anxiety might preexist this anxiety? Or, is the anal really an anxiety or just a mere symptomatic imaginary place synecdochally taken up as the real source of fretfulness?

There is a specific male *angst* which Luce Irigaray mentions from the start in her article "The 'Mechanics' of Fluids" (1985b, pp. 106-118) that is, the fear that:

> Women diffuse themselves according to modalities scarcely compatible with the framework of the ruling symbolics. Which doesn't happen without causing some turbulence, we might even say some whirlwinds that ought to be reconfined within solid walls of principle, to keep them from spreading to infinity. Otherwise they might even go so far as to disturb the third agency designated as the real – a transgression and confusion of boundaries that it is important to restore to their proper order. (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 106)

Irigaray is questioning the "*historical lag in elaborating a 'theory' of fluids*" that might have revealed that the "real": "may well include, and in large measure, *a physical reality* that continues to resist adequate symbolization and/or that signifies the powerlessness of logic to incorporate in its writing all the characteristic features of nature" (1985b, pp. 106-107; italics in original). According to her, there is a division between the language that is ordered by "postulates of ideality" and the reality that escapes symbolic articulation, which posits a

subject that will always remain within the constraints of a language that is of "meta-'something'". Therefore, for Irigaray, it is a question of how the "historical 'inattention' to fluids'" actually translates a specific structuring of the language that kept "*a complicity of long standing between rationality and a mechanics of solids alone*" (1985b, p. 107; emphasis in original).

Although Irigaray identifies a shift from the focus on concepts to the analysis of relations and processes among terms that allows some indeterminacy within the propositional, she believes that "a preponderant role is left to the *symbol of universality* – to the universal quantifier – whose modalities of recourse to the geometric still have to be examined." (1985b, p. 108). In other words, given that a) the "all" of the system has already "prescribed the 'not-all' of each particular relation established," and b) that this "all" needs a "projection onto a given space-map, whose between(s) will be given their value(s) on the basis of punctual frames of reference," the discourse has to find a place onto which to be able to formalize and systematize itself (1985b, p. 108). And, this place of "not-all" is the fluid feminine, since it serves as a "*projective map* for the purpose of guaranteeing the totality of the system" and:

> [A]s *a geometric prop* for evaluating the "all' of the extension of each of its "concepts" including those that are still undetermined, serves as fixed and congealed *intervals* between their definitions in "language", and as the possibility of *establishing individual relationships* among these concepts. All this is feasible by virtue of her "fluid" character, which has deprived her of all possibility of identity with herself within such a logic. (Irigaray, 1985b, pp. 108-109; emphasis in original)

Thus, according to Irigaray, the feminine serves in language only as "the *copulative link*" which has been appropriated by the subject in its construction of the formalized discourse, and this logic is behind any of the "systems modulating the order of truths," as there is a "syntactic equivalence among these various systems" that "have excluded from

their mode of symbolization *certain properties of real fluids*" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 109; italics in original).

This has, of course, significant implications to how the psychoanalytical subject is conceptualized, and, obviously, if the psychic and libidinal economy is structured by the Phallus, and the penis is only "the empirical representative of a model of ideal functioning," then the Phallus is not just transcendental but both dominates "the system of the economy of desire marked by idealism" and subjects sexuality "to the absolute power of form" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 110) [83]. In psychoanalytical terms, this would define the death instinct based on "*a double movement: an adaptation of certain characteristics of fluids to rationality, and a negligence of the obstacle that their own dynamics constitutes*" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 115; emphasis in original). Accordingly, for the "Subject" to be possible, to come into existence, it has to exclude "something," to kill through forms within representation that which always reminds of the impossibility of its immortality, of its unattainable (solid) containment (of vital/lethal fluids?) as an everlasting living Subject: [84]

[83] In his book, *Images of Bliss: ejaculation, masculinity, meaning* (2007), Murat Aydemir picks up Irigaray suggestion "that the consideration of semen *qua* liquid, its treatment as material object, can promisingly intervene in the economy of meaning and gender historically set in place," as both the phallus and the castration anxiety are posited against "an even greater apparential specter: the visibility of the quintessential male substance of sperm in its fluidity" (Aydemir, 2007, pp. xvi-xvii). As both presence and absence of solid, semen escapes the economy of solidification and threatens the masculine imaginary: "Indeed, as a liquid, sperm shares that crucial characteristic with the uterine, environmental, and cultural 'sea' that envelops and threatens masculine form. Semen, then, is somehow both central and excessive to the phallic economy, potentially as deforming as it is formative" (Aydemir, 2007, p. xvii).

[84] Klaus Theweleit's *Male Fantasies. vol. 1. Women, Floods, Bodies, History* (1987) deals with the fantasies of specific men, initially members of the Freikorps after the World War I, later the core of Hitler's SA, and raises the question of how for some male bodies the "desire production" becomes "death production" in relation especially to women's bodies and sexuality imagined as the source of the dread of subjective dissolution. For Theweleit, the soldier male's intense fear of the hybrid and the fluid lies "closer to his body. At some point, his bodily fluids must have been negativized to such an extent that they became the physical manifestations of all that was terrifying. Included in this category were all of the hybrid substances that were produced by the body and flowed on, in, over, and out of the body: the floods and stickiness of sucking kisses; the swamps of the vagina, with their slime and mire; the pap and slime of male semen; the film of sweat that settles on the stomach, thighs, and in the anal crevice, and that turns two pelvic regions into a subtropical landscape; the slimy stream of menstruation; the damp spots wherever bodies touch; the warmth that dissolves physical boundaries (meaning not that it makes one body out of a man and woman, but that it transgresses boundaries: the infinite body; the body as flow). Also the floods of orgasm: the streams of semen, the streams of relaxation flowing through the musculature, the streams of blood from bitten lips, the sticky wetness of hair soaked with sweat. And all the flowing delights of infancy: the warm piss-stream running down naked legs; the mire and pulp of

> You don't believe it? Because you need/want to believe in "objects" that are already solidly determined. That is, again, in yourself (-selves), accepting the silent work of death as a condition of remaining indefectibly "subject". (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 115)

Julia Kristeva argues in *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection* (1982) that there is a distinction between the meaning of death and the traumatic experience of being actually threatened by some kind of materiality, which confronts (or shows) us with our own possible death:

> A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not *signify* death. In the presence of signified death—a flat encephalograph, for instance—I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theatre, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. (1982, p. 3; italics in original)

Along these lines, I would argue that the anxieties generated by the penetrable male anus as the possible grave or gate of the (always) fragile masculine subject, reside in this very male death fear at the spectacle of fluidity, i.e. the threat of death that becomes an anxiety projected onto the Other(s), by killing both symbolically (through formalization, conceptualization, solidification of the "fluid") and literally the other(s), which relates to the frustrating desire of containing oneself, of keeping (him)self as one:

> But consider this *principle of constancy*, which is so dear to you: what "does it mean"? The avoidance of excessive inflow/outflow-excitement? Coming from the other? The search, at any price, of homeostasis? For self-regulations? The reduction, then, in the machine, of the effects of movements from/toward its outside? Which implies reversible transformations *in a closed circuit*, while discounting the variable of time, except in the mode of *repetition of a state of equilibrium*. (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 115; italics in original)

The de-subjectivization or self-debasement of the masculine, through the disquieting rectum-grave, is to be connected with an "initial" maternal horror, visually brought by the

fresh shit in the infant's diapers, the fragrant warmth that lets the body expand, the milkstream from the mother's breast, the smacking of lips on the comforter, the sweet pap that spreads over hands and face, the sucking on a never-ending thumb, the good-tasting stream of snot running from the nose into the mouth, not to mention the liberating stream of hot tears that turns a mask into a pulp and then a face again." (1987, pp. 410-411).

all-powerful vagina (which, not accidently, gets represented as *dentata*) that reminds of both possibilities of life and death (expulsion as life; or engulfment as castration), but which ultimately gets appropriated as just another "anus" (thereof the cloacal theory of birth). Actually female genitalia are colonized: the clitoris by penis, the vagina and the female anus by the male one. The "death" takes over the "life," the "solid" over the "fluid," the "form" over the "hole," the "masculine" over the "feminine." In other words, the receptive anal eroticism may have a function in destabilizing the "oneness" of the (heterosexual male) Subject also because it relates to the acceptance that death (conflated here with fluidity) is inevitable. The desire to become "objectified" and "instrumentalized", or to be passed through, is the one of accepting dissolution, and death. The "hole" as a source of horror (*horror vacui*) seems to play a crucial role in the male symbolic and it also has to do with the male fear of women's own sexual pleasure: [85]

> (…) her sexual organ represents the *horror of nothing to see*. A "hole" in its scoptophillic lens. It is already evident in Greek statuary that this nothing-to-see has to be excluded, rejected, from such a scene of representation. Woman's genitals are simply absent, masked, sewn back up inside their "crack". (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 26; italics in original)
>
> What remains the most completely prohibited to woman, of course, is that she should express something of her own sexual pleasure. This latter is supposed to remain *a "realm" of discourse, produced by men*. For in fact feminine pleasure signifies the greatest fear of all to masculine discourse, represents its most irreducible, "exteriority", or "extraterritoriality". (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 157; italics in original)

It becomes "something" either a) to be filled up, again, with a solid (or, even a fluid, but which will eventually take the form of a solid), b) to be passed through, towards another solid, or c) something which can envelope. The main point here is that the vacuum, the abyss where one cannot *see* (therefore cannot *object*-ify and control) becomes the spring of dreadfulness and the vagina/the feminine/the fluid/the male anus always remind of the

[85] Speaking about the representational realm, it is worth noticing that *horror vacui* is largely met in ancient Greece, in the arabesque Islamic art, in the Victorian age, and also in the "outsider art" and the "psychedelic art."

(in)escapable "nothingness" and, more, of the reality of another desire and death drive, i.e. the female one.

> The idea that a "nothing to be seen", a something not subject to the rule of visibility or of specula(riz)ation, might yet have some reality, would indeed be intolerable to man. It would serve to threaten the theory and practice of the representation by which he aims to sublimate, or avoid the ban on, masturbation. Auto-eroticism has been permitted, authorized, encouraged insofar as it is deferred, exhibitited in sublated ways. All this is endangered (caught in the act, one might say) by a *nothing* - that is, a nothing the same, identical, identifiable. By a fault, a flaw, a lack, an absence, outside the system of representation and autorepresentations. Which are man's. By a *hole* in men's signifying economy. A nothing that might cause the ultimate destruction, the splintering, the break in their systems of "presence", of "re-presentation" and "representation." (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 50)

Hence the staggering masculine maneuver: phantasmatically associated with death, the life giving female orifices and fluids got replaced by the anus at the imaginary level, and projected and abjected as sources of death at the symbolic level; being eradicated from the discursive representations of life, their place is taken by rationality, as the power of "object"-ification, "form"-alization, of solidification of the (feminine-maternal) fluid.[86] And all this relation to the negative, as far as men are concerned, through sublating the sex into representations, ideas, laws dominated by the Phallus, "will always have been *imaginary – imagined, imaginable – hence the impetus it gives to fictive, myths, or ideal productions* that are only afterward defined as laws assuring the permanence and circularity of the system" (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 52; italics mine). For this reason, we have so far only:

> A language that considers itself readily translatable, capable of being formalized in terminology of logic, in the form of deductions, conclusions, theorems, and aims to limit the play of multiple meanings so that only one clear, precise meaning exists is analogous to oedipalized male sexuality (which puts in place of the pleasures of the whole body/language system, the primacy of one organ/meaning). (Grosz, 1990, p. 178)

[86] Bryan S. Turner also, in his article "Social Fluids: Metaphors and Meaning of Society" (2003, pp. 1-10), discusses the ways the bodily metaphors indicate how the body is used for conceiving the social order or disorder and how the management of fluids and all sorts of deposits (i.e. excrement, urine, spit, semen) played a regulatory role in the "civilizing" process. He addresses how bodily fluids and orifices along the inside/outside dichotomy informed the ways the political governing was projected and also how the social anxieties are transferred to the body.

Implicitly, the (conceptual) complicity between language and vision/objectivity, or, better put, the vision as/of language (vision = language = mind's eye). Accordingly, for Irigaray, since women's pleasures are based more on the tactile than on the visual, their desires remain un-representable in the ocularcentric logic of discourse:

> Within this logic, the predominance of the visual, of the discrimination of form and individualization of form, is particularly foreign to female eroticism. Woman takes pleasure more from touching than from looking, and her entry into a dominant scopic economy signifies, again, her consignment to passivity: she is the beautiful object of contemplation. (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 26)

In "Speculating on the exclusion of the feminine" (2002, pp. 56-57), citing C. Vasseleu's work, Helen Baker writes:

> The ocularcentric tradition privileged vision over language, such that language was deemed 'inferior' to the sense of vision. It is clear, however, that one cannot divorce vision and language from each other since: "The ability to visualize something internally is closely linked with the ability to describe it verbally. Verbal and written descriptions create highly specific mental images". The relationship between the eye and language is of importance in understanding the tradition of ocularcentrism and its critiques. Language is deeply embedded with many visual images and metaphors, and there is a ". . . complex mirroring of perception and language . . . [which shows] how ineluctable the modality of the visual actually is, at least in our linguistic practice".

Having previously made explicit the relationships between rationality, male bodies, anality and death anxieties that culminate within a phallomorphic discourse privileging the visual and the form, detrimental to the tactile and the fluid, then one is left with the question of how one should imagine a "language" of the male sex where the masculine is "not-all," it does not reject the feminine, leaves open the instability of the meaning, as if the "fluid" might have had already entered as an alternative. How can one break through with a different "difference" into the language, which is already regulating even the possibilities of thinking this very disruption?

The irony, I believe, lies in the coexistence of the need to think of men in their own

terms on the one hand, and the fact that the few resources one has for such a thinking are to be found in the ways the feminine might not be! Irigaray herself refused to hypothesize about his "new" being and saying of the "other" man:

> But is it up to me, I wonder, to speak of the other "man"? It's curious, because it's a question that I am constantly being asked. I find it quite amusing… I am constantly being asked what that "other" man will be. Why should I appropriate for myself what that "other" man would have to say? What I want and what I am waiting to see is what men will do and say if their sexuality releases its hold on the empire of phallocratism. But this is not for a woman to anticipate, or foresee, or prescribe… (1985b, p. 136)

To conceive of a positive masculine "A" according to its own reference (i.e. starting from their bodies, from their multiple bodily experiences and expressions) is not the same with envisaging of a masculine as the negation of the non-A, that is, the negation of the patriarchal feminine which is the negative masculine. However, since I cannot wipe away from the start the relational character of the concepts (masculine-feminine), these negative kind of definitions are starting points that, nevertheless, might leave open the future of their significance.

Accordingly, in an apofatic kind of designation, we learn from Irigaray what the language in the feminine would not be: "it cannot be based on phallocentrism – singular meanings, hierarchical organization, polar oppositions, the division into subject-predicate form, a commitment to the intertranslatability of concepts" (Grosz, 1990, p. 179). In Irigaray's own account:

> That having been said, what a feminine syntax might be is not simple or easy to state, because in that "syntax" there would no longer be either subject or object, "oneness" would no longer be privileged, there would no longer be proper meanings, proper names, "proper" attributes . . . Instead, that "syntax" would involve nearness, proximity, but in such an extreme form that it would preclude any distinction of identities, any establishment of ownership, thus any form of appropriation. (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 134)

Marjorie Haas' article, "The Style of the Speaking Subject: Irigaray's Empirical Studies

of Language Production" (2000), also tries to recognize what a "feminine style" or "syntax" in Irigaray's view might be. She offers a detailed account of Irigaray's experimental work on linguistics (results published in *Le langage des déments*, 1973; *Sexes and Genealogies,* 1993; *To Speak is Never Neutral*, 2002). She argues that Irigaray's research is not just supplementary to her philosophical writings, but "in its specific depiction of sexed linguistic 'styles', illuminates both Irigaray's call for a new syntax and her own 'double' expressive style" (Haas, 2000, p. 65).

Haas identifies three crucial elements within Irigaray's framework that aims "at uncovering the unconscious desires and fantasies that inform linguistic expression" (2000, p. 67). The very first important distinction is the one between *l'énoncé* and *l'énonciation*. While for Whitford (1991, p. 42) this distinction is translated into the one between *the content of a statement* (énoncé) and *the position of the speaking subject* (énonciation), for Haas it is between *the utterance in itself* (énoncé), "a thing produced and separable, at least theoretically, from its origin, the speaking subject" (proposition, statement, sentence) and *the act of uttering* (énonciation) (2000, p. 67):

> Her experience as an analyst has made her skeptical of the very possibility of isolating an individual utterance as a meaningful element of communication. Her emphasis, then, in both her theoretical writing and her experimental designs, is on the activity of producing speech, and her object of study remains speech produced by a speaking subject.

Or as Irigaray (2000, p. 42) herself puts it:

> Roughly speaking, you would separate what's already said, written, recorded, etc. from what is being said here and now. Utterances refer to messages that have already been produced, finished, they are like dead, if you put aside the meaning they retain in their final form. Enunciation, on the other hand, designates speech as it unfolds, its live, actual engendering, not yet stabilized.

As an important consequence, focusing in her experimental method on the acts of

uttering of the speaking subjects, Irigaray manages to propose a non-comparative analysis of speech, meaning that when listening and analyzing women's answers she doesn't need to identify women's speech in comparison to a norm (for example, men's speech), as deviating or deficient (Haas, 2000, p. 68).

The second (and implicit) element concerns the split that is found in language between the *speaking subject* (subject de l'énonciation) and *the grammatical subject* (subject de l'énoncé), distinction that is connected by Irigaray to the child's control of personal pronouns and the beginning of the subject as singularity:

> The child's initial linguistic encounters offer two grammatical subject positions, "I" and "you," which correspond to the speaking subject positions <I> and <You>. But in observing the linguistic encounters between the parents, the child discovers that the grammatical "I" means "the emitter" and the grammatical "you" means "the receiver"—i.e., that the word "I" does not always mean <I>. Furthermore, these encounters introduce the linguistic third person in the body of the child who is now referred to as "she" or "he". Within the dialogue between these two others, then, the child is at the same time excluded as a speaking subject and included as a grammatical subject. This position of exclusion/inclusion is the void or blank, a primitive experience of nothingness. For Irigaray, it is this split, this "little death" that marks the child's entrance in to the circle of linguistic exchange. (Haas, 2000, p. 68)

By means of this split, Irigaray indicated in her earlier works both how sexual difference comes into linguistic being and how sexuality is marked from the start, through the usage of third-person terms, "he" or "she". In her later works she argues that even the initial "I" is sexually marked.

> She finds, for example, that women tend to use "I" in sentences that are directed towards another and explicitly include "you," whereas men tend to use "I" in sentences that are self-directed or are general statements about the self. (Haas, 2000, p. 69)

Consequently, given the fact that in Irigaray's findings even the pronouns "I" and "you" are sexually marked, then the act of uttering contains the *sexed positionality* of both the speaker and the interlocutor, which is the third characteristic of Irigaray's approach to

meaning, according to which she can identify four speaking situations: male speaking to female, male speaking to male, female speaking to female, female speaking to male (Haas, 2000, p. 69). Summarizing her analysis of Irigaray's linguistic problematics, Haas (2000, p. 70; italics mine) concludes that:

> Irigaray's research reports present two different types of findings. The first is that the *speaking subject is sexed*: men and women produce different utterings and thereby reveal and produce elements of sexual difference. The second is that the *grammatical subject is sexed*: grammar reflects, for both men and women, a valorization of masculinity and an erasure of femininity.

Based on these results, by using a combination of formal linguistics and analytic technique, Irigaray succeeded in identifying unconscious styles of expression (speaking patterns), which are bodily, gestural as well as grammatical styles, making this way possible to "listen" to femininity and to transform "her call for a new syntax into a particular set of grammatical interventions, including the introduction of a feminine generic and a feminine plural" (Haas, 2000, pp. 71-72).

And one particular illustration of this kind of strategic conversion of the unconscious feminine style into a powerful subversive expressive one is Irigaray's use of *interrogatives*, an ethical stance in itself (privileging intersubjectivity, limitation, dialogue) which otherwise characterizes her entire political project:

> Within her paradigm, the meaning of a question includes a desire to maintain relationship with an Other. Questions are a specific linguistic gesture; they present a *dialogic style* of engagement that is integral to their meaning and cannot be reproduced via other linguistic structures. Questions also reflect an element of *limitation*. In a question, the other is reached towards not only for engagement but also as a supplement to the limited perspective of the speaker. Questions remove the appearance of universality from the speaker by reflecting her limits. In dialogue the interrogative acts, as does negation, to accent the renitent borders of sexual difference. Questions are irreducibly distinct from both monological statements and hierarchical imperatives in that they disrupt the self-reflexivity of these other speech acts by introducing another, necessary, pole. (Haas, 2000, pp. 75-76; italics mine)

To sum up, Irigaray shows that it is possible to build another "linguistic home" (Irigaray, 1993a, p. 107) of and for women, meaning that the change in discourse has to be understood as a change in the position of the subjects of enunciation, where woman is not anymore the universal predicate, the object manipulated by/within language (or meta-language; that is why *parler-femme* has no meta-language, since the enunciation is directed towards an interlocutor and cannot speak about itself) (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 144).[87] Simply put, the change appears at the level of *parler-femme* as it refers to enunciation, while meta-language refers to the *énoncé* and, consequently, enunciation (speech) and meta-language are not compatible, as the latter cannot "overhang or encircle such a production of speech" (Irigaray, 1993a, p. 178).

As the maternal-feminine is the support of the formal characteristics of language (syntax) as well as the content of statements (themes), in order for women to become subjects in discourses there is a need of a different "syntax," "in which the predication was not simply one-way, in which women were not the 'universal predicate'" (Whitford, 1991, p. 45).

The absence of the maternal-feminine in language as well as in discourses (as still the necessary negated condition for the possibility of discourse) and the position of woman as universal predicate are to be discussed, of course, in relation to the Lacanian understanding of language, as Irigaray herself questions "the dereliction of lack in language" (Irigaray, 1993, p. 180). For Lacan, the difference between *need* (located somehow in the Real) and the *demand* (in the order of the Imaginary) is related to the way language functions in the child's relation to the mother's absence-presence: "Signification insinuates itself in place of the absent object, the object engendering desire. (…) Language is substituted for the satisfaction of need, which is subsequently transformed into demand" (Grosz, 1990, pp. 60-61).

[87] Irigaray's "linguistic home" echoes Heidegger's "house of Being". In "Letter on 'Humanism'", Heidegger states: "Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell" (Heidegger, 1998, p. 239).

Language, in Lacan's view, stands for the lack, for the absence of the mother and also for the desire of mastery. It's also the carnal shout of the initial lack, of the traumatic rupture from the Real (the Lacanian "Other" of the symbolic, namely the mother, the unconscious, society, language, woman, etc. - that something which always threatens the unity/oneness/identity of the subject; this way language stands for the compensation/replacement for the loss of the real).

> The system structuring paranoia—and theory too perhaps—seems indeed like a play to achieve mastery through an organized set of signifiers that surround, besiege, cleave, out circle, and outflank the dangerous, the embracing, the aggressive mother/body. (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 37)

Therefore, Irigaray is right to claim that the mother is absent from the language (but still sustaining it), and implicitly that it has to be brought back, or made explicit, visible, within discourse. How could the maternal-feminine come into language, since the language itself is predicated upon the absence of this maternal? The structuralist distinction (also used by Irigaray) between the (French) *langue* (language) and *langage* (discourse) is helpful in answering this question. When she refers to a different language she means "langage," i.e. discourse, a "different utilization of the resources available, both lexical and syntactical" (Whitford, 1991, p. 42). Here, language, from my own previous question, is, of course, a *langage*, i.e. the paranoid masculine *langage* (the masculine discourse), the male cry of the rupture from the mother's body, which nevertheless does not disappear, always there, but negated (precisely for its power to sustain the male anxiety of dependency and impossibility of reconnecting back) and made invisible.

Therefore, Irigaray, through her "language work," marks first the partiality of language/symbolic as masculine:

> Its function would thus be to *cast phallocentrism, phallocratism*, loose from its moorings in order to return the masculine to its own language, leaving open the

> possibility of a different language. Which means that the masculine would no longer be "everything". That it could no longer, all by itself, define, circumvene, circumscribe, the properties of any thing and everything. That the right to define every value - including the abusive privilege of appropriation - would no longer belong to it. (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 80; italics in original)

Secondly, Irigaray connects the language production to the negation of the maternal and its power reversal. The speaking subject, in the Lacanian perspective, while being cut from the initial wholeness with his mother, cannot express his desire (being with the mother) in language. Therefore the mother/woman does not have a place in language. Since the current specular economy of sexual indifference is predicated upon the negation of the maternal-feminine both in language (as *langage*) and symbolic, on the basis of a specific monopole of the male imaginary that got universalized as symbolic, the first task, indeed, is to effect a break through a feminine *langage* that would enact the cultural articulation of that "something" that was obviously negated by the current masculine *langage*:

> If this threshold (this ground that is no ground) is ever to be lived *for women's benefit*, they need language, some language [*le langage, du langage*]. This linguistic home that man has managed to substitute even for his dwelling in a body, whether his own body or another's, has used women as construction material, but (therefore?) it is not available to her. (Irigaray, 1993a, p. 107; italics in original)

That "something" refers implicitly to female morphologies (which is not an appeal to biologism), their bodily experiences, and the processes of their cultural flourishing (Irigaray, 1993a, p. 127). Therefore, it is more than necessary to argue for a *feminine syntax*, for the discursive presence of the m/other's body (a different body than mine) in language (as subject of enunciation), but it seems to be quite ironic to try to imagine a different discourse (*langage*) for the male sex, when the starting point appears to be the very discourse that keeps on erasing that which is always there to make it possible – the feminine.

What would be "that" location from which to find another source for the production of

a different male discourse? More, what location could guarantee that what is supposed to be the basis for a new male symbolic is not just another appropriation of an otherwise negated and devalued fluid feminine ("a teleology of reabsorption of fluid in a solidified form;" Irigaray, 1985b, p. 110)? Or, could this masculine be something new (or less than it is), without any possibility of cannibalistic self-referentiality, just because it retreats and leaves open the affirmation and articulation of that feminine, other than the Other of the Same?

> This language work would thus attempt to thwart any manipulation of discourse that would also leave discourse intact. Not, necessarily, in the utterance, but in its autological presuppositions. Its function would thus be to cast phallocentrism, phallocratism, loose from its moorings in order to return the masculine to its own language, leaving open the possibility of a different language. Which means that the masculine would no longer be "everything". That it could no longer, all by itself, define, circumvene, circumscribe, the properties of any thing and everything. That the right to define every value – including the abusive privilege of appropriation – would no longer belong to it. (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 80)

Consequently, wouldn't this very *questioning* of and for (an)other male and masculine "place" be the same old story of the auto-affective self-representation of the (male) Subject? For the danger of the Subject re-producing "one"-self and re-ensuring his dominance is always in and with "me": "It is surely not a matter of interpreting the operation of discourse while remaining within the same type of utterance as the one that guarantees discursive coherence" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 78).

This question also interrogates the relationship between femininity and masculinity in other terms. Given the idea that the central position of men, both in material and symbolic terms, is grounded on the oppression, in systemic and systematic ways of the "Others" (primarily "feminized" others) and playing on the psychoanalytical concept of "lack," I could argue that masculinity lacks actually its own "definition," its "self-referentiality." The frustration of the "Same" (Man) consists, so to speak, in the very fact that it is defined only through the terms of the Other (through negation, of course) and, perhaps, this is why it is

trying so hard to conceal this lack of self-sufficiency by making its "origin" appear "natural." This means that the Standard is not in itself a point of departure for everything else but it is a derivation from the Other, a fiction in itself. Femininity is not non-masculinity, but rather masculinity seems to be non-femininity. Judith Butler (1991, p. 13-31) exposed this anxiety in her argument about the relationship between heterosexuality and homosexuality. The idea that gender is a type of imitation for which there is no original is one of her leading mark. For Butler, gender it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the imitation itself. What is imitated is a phantasmatic ideal of heterosexual identity, one that is produced by the imitation as its "effect." That is why heterosexuality is compelled to repeat itself in order to establish the illusion of its own uniformity and identity. Repetition is the way in which power works to construct the illusion of a seamless heterosexual identity. Therefore, the parodic or imitative effect of gay identities works neither to copy nor to emulate heterosexuality but rather to expose heterosexuality as an incessant and panicked imitation of its own naturalized idealization. In this very particular sense, Butler alludes to the point that the Original (heterosexuality/Man) is nothing but a copy of the Copy (homosexuality/women). Penelope Deutscher (1997, p. 80) makes a related point:

> The same gesture, which excludes the feminine as other than 'man's other', simultaneously indicates that feminine 'remainder' and thus simultaneously destabilizes itself. In other words, Irigaray's proposal is that the very same gesture, which excludes woman-as-excess also, paradoxically, indicates that excess. Consequently, only by remaining in excess to her role as negative other can woman be produced as man's negative other. Thus, the feminine simultaneously supports and destabilizes masculine identity.

Therefore, masculinity, losing its referential place in the subject defining-process, and "castrated" once again of the "resources" which have provided its perpetual survival, has to find its unthinkable, unrepresentable through and only through itself (e.g. through its male

bodies?). On the other hand, it can be argued that, given the parasitic status of masculinity, any change for femininity would affect changes in masculinity; as a result, the task might be just the one of creating opportunities for the affirmation and revaluation of femininity/femininities, idea suggested somehow by Irigaray herself, that is that when women change the symbolic and imagine their own, only then it would be possible for men to start becoming men outside the patriarchal matrixes. I quote Irigaray at length:

> What can assist the woman in becoming subject is the discovery of the other, the masculine, as horizontally transcendent, and not vertically transcendent, to her. It is not the submission to the law of the Father that can permit the woman to become herself, corporeally and culturally, but the conscious and voluntary recognition in love and in civility, of the other as other. *This cultural becoming of the woman will then be able to help the man to become man, and not only master and father of the world, as he has to often been in History. It seems that the woman must give birth to the man not only bodily but also spiritually.* (Irigaray, 2004a, p. 27; italics mine)

But this would be somehow insufficient since it presupposes that "masculinity" is left untouched, as life is made of at least two in Irigaray's world. Then how could I (as a male subject) create possibilities for feminine affirmation without taking into account men's bodies? It is clearly a struggle on the both sides, in non-symmetrical manners, though.

Consequently, since the (male) symbolic operates according to male bodily fantasies that privilege those bodily experiences that are concurrently abjecting specific female bodily expressions, and since these imaginary bodily psychic projections got universalized as Symbolic due to certain impositions of certain hegemonic visible male bodies, and given that male bodies are not all the same, I may argue that if specific minoritarian male bodily experiences (that are negated precisely because of the analogic matrix of negative resemblance with the negated feminine) are culturally articulatable as a different imaginary, then their symbolic expressions would effect and affect a different position of enunciation for that otherwise new masculine. This means that male bodies, taken as incommensurable in relation to female bodies, i.e. not in a negative type of difference, would become the same

place for the disruption of those hegemonic representational constraints. Accordingly, the idea that minoritarian male bodily experiences (in terms of their representability) could also be the source of a different discourse (as langage) of the masculine is not necessarily contradictory, if we also rethink the relationship between masculine *langage* and male bodies.

Could we imagine a masculine position of enunciation that does not privilege the one, the logic of identity and that of non-contradiction, a discourse that doesn't work anymore only on subject-object divide, or a discourse that does not privilege the meta-language in the very act of speaking, but which would, nonetheless, be not a feminine *langage*?

> "She" is indefinitely other in herself. This is doubtless why she is said to be whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated, capricious…not to mention her language, in which she sets off in all directions leaving "him" unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. Hers are contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of reason, inaudible for whoever listens to them with ready-made grids, with a fully elaborated code in hand. For in what she says, too, at least when she dares, woman is constantly touching herself. She steps ever so slightly aside from herself with a murmur, an exclamation, a whisper, a sentence left unfinished…When she returns, it is to set off again from elsewhere. From another point of pleasure, or of pain. One would have to listen with another ear, as if hearing *an "other meaning" always in process of weaving itself, of embracing itself with words, but also of getting rid of words in order not to become fixed, congealed in them.* For if "she" says something, it is not, it already no longer, identical with what she means. What she says is never identical with anything, moreover; rather it is contiguous. It touches upon. And when it strays too far from that proximity, she breaks off and starts over at "zero": her body-sex. (Irigaray, 1985b, pp. 28-29; italics in original)

Because the trick lies here, of course: that "new masculine language" should not be "the same," in an apparently "mimetic" minoritarian manner, as the feminine yet to come. The world of female bodies and desires touching themselves within "their" own language, "*within the intimacy of that silent, multiple, diffuse touch*" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 29; italics in original) cannot be stolen (again) for a "revolutionary" self-flagellating affirmative male desire within a language of an alleged disruption of the phallocratic economy. Probably one task is just to learn to "hear" that language which is not "mine," than rather re-constructing a "new" one; to learn to listen differently to "that" language might be a male revolution in itself. And, of

course, first:

> (…) we need to pay attention to the way the *unconscious* works in each philosophy, and perhaps in philosophy in general. We need to listen (psycho)analytically to its procedures of repression, to the structures of language that shores up its representations, separating the true form the false, the meaningful from the meaningless, and so forth. This does not mean that we have to give ourselves over to some kind of symbolic, point-by-point interpretation of philosophers' utterances. *Moreover, even if we were to do so, we would still be leaving the mystery of "the origin" intact*. What is called instead is an examination of the *operation of the "grammar"* of each figure of discourse, its syntactic laws or requirements, its imaginary configurations, its metaphoric networks, and also, of course, what it does not articulate at the level of utterance: *its silence*. (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 75)

On the other hand, maybe it's not the case at all of imagining another masculine "language"/position of enunciation/"I," since Irigaray suggests that men should instead get out of their closed world of the "I" and express their own "style," one more appropriate to their corporeal belonging. In "The Three Genders" from *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993b, pp. 168-181) Irigaray investigates the sexualization of the discourse so as to shift its order by looking at two dimensions of the discourse. One concerns the level of formalization of meaning. The other relates to the level of style, "of the subjective involvement of the speaker, and the speaker's relation to the body, to gender" (1993b, p. 171). The investigation makes her conclude that psychoanalysis is one among the "therapies" which were invented to deal with the pathology/repression generated by the taboo on the sexualized morphology of and in the culture and the effects on the subject positions of enunciation. For example, the hysterics (especially the female hysterics) and the obsessionals (usually male patients) do not use the same structures of discourse, as for the former:

> the message, the object exchanged, the vision of the horizon in the world, tend to belong to the *you*, whereas for the obsession they belong to the *I*. The objection that there are female obsessives and male hysterics is not a valid one. The hysteric male model is different from the hysteric female one. The same is true for the female obsessive. (Irigaray, 1993b, p. 174)

The schema of communication in a feminine hysterical discourse appears as (I) – *the*

object/referent – (You), and, as an interrogative, leaves the (You) to give the meaning to the message, or to establish the object or something belonging to the world of the (You). As an example, for: "Do you love me?" or "I love what you love" (Irigaray, 2004a, p. 36). The pattern in the obsessive masculine discourse assumes a doubt in the relation between the I and the You, which keeps the message incomplete, by creating a monologue and forgetting about the You: "I tell myself that I am loved" or "I wonder if I am loved" (Irigaray, 2004a, p. 36). In short, the sexuate difference between the two is not heard, while each of them withdrawing into their own worlds without a possible communication with the other:

> If the utterance of the hysteric woman remains incomplete with regard to the (I) or even *I*, the locutor, the utterance of the obsessive man remains incomplete with regard to (you) or *you*, the addressee. (…) This dialogue unfolds for hysteric woman between present and future with a *you* about whom there is more or less fantasy. For obsessive man, it will take place rather between present and past, the patterns being (I) and *I*. (…) Sexuate difference which has to create an opening of each world, an attraction or a link between the two worlds, gets reversed in pathology because of an impossibility of living and sharing this sexuate difference. (Irigaray, 2004a, pp. 36-37; italics in original)

Irigaray reaches the same conclusions in her analyses of the sexualized structures of discourse among male and female schizophrenics, students, of Freud's theory about Dora, the language of legends and folk tales or of "the way in which the discourse of science, philosophy, art and religion have been shaped by gender" (1993b, p. 175). By uncovering who speaks, to whom, with what means, Irigaray intends first to unmask the logic of discourse underlying individual utterances for both women and men.

> The most important tendencies which appear after considering the results are that: *women* seek to communicate, especially to hold dialogue, but they address above all to *him* or *them-men*, who do not take interest in subjective exchanges and who turn themselves rather towards the past than towards the present or the future; *men*, for their part, take interest in the concrete object if it is theirs (my car, *my watch*, *my pipe, etc*.) or in the abstract object if it is defined by men and belongs to the community of men to express their psychological states, their genealogical or familial problems; men avoid staying and talking as two, especially two who are different, and they would rather remain in a scarcely differentiated group of their own gender. (Irigaray, 2004a, pp. 37-38; italics in original)

On the other hand, Irigaray also wants to facilitate the creation of a new style, un-formalized, irreducible to pre-established patterns of enunciation and expression, that is, a style that resists codification and reduction to oppositions (1993b, pp. 177-178). This new style would speak of the "I" of the text/speech, the "You" of the reader/listener and of their possible meeting and creation together, whereby man would go outside his solipsistic world of ideas and renounce his monopoly on the symbolic by thinking first about his body and flesh and then would start considering anew his relationship with the other, maternal and feminine. Given the lack of cultivation of sexuate difference, or, in other words, given man's inability to sustain a different dialogue with an You, generated perhaps by the absence of a relationship with his first human You in his life, i.e. the maternal You, it is then only by recognizing the subjectivity of this You in its difference that we could start constructing different ways of relating and communicating to each other, to many others, with respect toward their differences.

> The originary character of this *you*, this *you* differently sexuated with regard to the masculine *I*, would become the *a priori* framework we need to recover a just perception of any other in our culture. (Irigaray, 2004a, p. 38; italics in original)

Could *male bodily fluids/orifices*, *testicularity* and the *navel*, that is, an entire re-imagining of man's relationship with the maternal and the feminine, fulfill this function of recognition of the transcendence of the originary You? Could they express and affect something new, a new style in language with regards to the maternal and the feminine? Wouldn't a "new use" of "fluidity," as that which is negated in the constitution of the formalized language and metalanguage (male langage), be just another misappropriation from the masculine side, as once Irigaray warned us against? I want to think/hope that it wouldn't function right so, for "how, then, are we to try to redefine this language work that would leave space for the feminine?" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 79). In "Exceeding Hegel and Lacan:

Different Fields of Pleasure within Foucault and Irigaray" (1998), Shannon Winnubst makes a challenging argument about Irigaray's reconfiguration of morphology: since Lacan's concept of "phallus" is not reducible to "penis," then the non-phallic is not limited strictly to the non-penile; therefore, Irigaray's recuperation of the body is not reducible solely to the female morphology:

> Irigaray evokes, provokes, and wallows in those excessive pleasures and longings that Freud labeled hysterical. Her texts laugh, hysterically, with these pleasures. They are diffuse, without form, without place, exceeding all boundaries of morphology and epistemology. We cannot demarcate them. Nor can we insist that these fluid excesses are contained exclusively in the feminine morphology. As Grosz has developed, non-phallocentric male morphology would be attuned not to the consummation of its solid, penile erection, but to the intensities and flows of its unbounded desires. Irigaray thus does not recuperate exclusively the feminine body, in a move that would mirror the phallic claims to singularity, and thereby pose a threat to the singular power of the phallus: she does not castrate the phallus. Rather, she recuperates the body — both *the unmarked male body* and the marked female body — as it exceeds the strict demarcations of phallocentric concepts. (Winnubst, 1998, p. 28; italics mine)

Along Irigaray's lines, we have to work through the negative. I believe that there is an important distinction between the negated fluidity of the maternal feminine and the repressed fluidity of male bodies. Their apparent relationship is based on the analogic, on the projection of a negative resemblance. To think of male bodily fluids, its fluidity, through sexual difference is to imagine another type of difference, one that defies the rules of identity and of classical representation. To think differently is to create a breach into the classical metaphysics, one premised on the logic of solids. Coming back to fluids is also a matter of questioning the ontological status of sexual difference. Therefore, I turn to Irigaray's philosophy of nature that becomes in her later works the basis for her understanding of this ontology. Why this return to nature? What force is there so that one can take the ontological primacy of sexual difference also as a more powerful and accountable epistemic location? This would, obviously, also concern the conceptualization of language. To achieve a change

or a difference in men's language, in their position of enunciation, discourses, and symbolic, a different consideration of language is needed, one that is not anymore a substitute for the lack (for the mother's absence-presence, or for the rupture form the Real), but rather a carnal expression, both bodily and worldly event of being, a continuity in the relation with the world, in the meeting with the other(s). In this sense, I will also discuss Irigaray's reworking of Heidegger's conception of language and poetic thinking trough her philosophy of sexual difference.

3.2 Rhythms, fluids and the ontological character of sexual difference

Despite the fact that some scholars, such as Margaret Whitford and Ellen Mortensen, are open to look at Irigaray's works as "ontological" but are somehow unwilling to portray it as metaphysical, Elizabeth Grosz (2006, pp. 2-3) argues in "Irigaray and the Ontology of Sexual Difference," a paper presented at the graduate seminar on "The Future of Sexual Difference" (Paris, October 19-20, 2006)[88], that:

> I believe that it is precisely a new metaphysics, a new understanding of a fundamentally dynamic real, a new account of the forces of the real and the irreducibility of a real to its cultural representations that Irigaray develops, as much as a theory of the subject, or a theory of political order. If she elaborates a theory of the subject, which is the concern of her earliest psychoanalytically inflected writings, it is the first step of a broader, bigger, more ontological and less psychological direction.

To argue that sexual difference is not merely ontological (concerned with the nature of both being and ontic beings), but also metaphysical (concerned with the existence of the external reality) and natural, is indeed not a misreading, given that Irigaray herself explains her strategy:

[88] I am grateful to Elizabeth Grosz for granting me permission to cite this yet unpublished article.

> I start from reality, from a *universal reality*: sexual difference. (…) Certainly, this reality of the *two* has always existed. But it was submitted to the imperatives of a logic of the *one*, the two being reduced to a pair of opposites not independent one from another. (…) My procedure consists therefore in substituting, for a universal constructed out of only one part of reality, a universal, which respects the totality of the real. The universal therefore is no longer one nor unique, it is two. This forces us to refound our culture, our societies in order to reach a civilization at the same time more real, more just, and more universal. (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, pp. 146–47; italics mine)

For Irigaray, sexual difference is one of the most important questions of our times for several reasons: it is the basis of and the solution to women's current exploitation and it is necessary for the continuation and regeneration of the human species (Irigaray, 1990, pp. 12-15). Moreover, it is natural and made of at least two, it is universal as particularity and it is necessary for re-founding reason and thought as such (Irigaray, 1996, pp. 35-36). Irigaray is quite straightforward when emphasizing again and again the necessity of and the universality of sexual difference:

> The natural, aside from the diversity of its incarnations or ways of appearing, it is at least *two*: male and female. This division is not secondary or unique to humankind. It cuts across all realms of the living, which, without it, would not exist. Without sexual difference, there would be no life on earth. It is the manifestation of and the condition for the production and reproduction of life. (Irigaray, 1996, p. 37; italics in original)
>
> Without doubt, the most appropriate content for the universal is sexual difference. Indeed, this content is both real and universal. Sexual difference is an immediate natural given and it is a real and irreducible component of the universal. The whole of humankind is composed of women and men and of nothing else. (Irigaray, 1996, p. 47)

To conceive of the "real" in terms of difference, and not only in terms of identity, and, furthermore, in terms of difference as a necessary and universal sexual difference, is not a simple gesture of ontological reworking, but a direct move within the metaphysics as such, and this is precisely the distinctiveness of Irigaray's intervention. For such a conceptual move to be possible, the relation between being(s), bodily morphologies, and sexual difference have to be re-interrogated:

> If difference is, arguably, the greatest philosophical concept of the 20th century, the twentieth century's production of a new ontology whose implications ripple through all other forms of philosophy and thought more generally, then Irigaray's particular contribution to metaphysics is her insistence that difference, if it is at all – and it is not clear that difference has a being, if by that is meant an identity or stability – then it is primarily, or in the first instance, sexual difference. That is, all difference can only come from and be understood through the difference that manifests itself in bodily morphology and in the logics of knowledge that follow from the privileging of one type of bodily morphology over another, one type of dominance, mode of action, type of thought over all possible others. If difference is the engine of the world itself – as Derrida and Deleuze argue – then sexual difference is the engine of life, of nature itself. (Grosz, 2006, pp. 8-9; emphasis in original)

However, to postulate the ontological primacy of sexual difference (*the* difference itself) as the universal condition of any other differences is one of Irigaray's provocative statements:

> The problem of race is, in fact, a secondary problem--except from a geographical point of view-- . . . and the same goes for other cultural diversities -- religious, economic, and political ones. (Irigaray, 1996, p. 47)

Grosz (2006, pp. 15-16) offers two main reasons for such a belief, and consequently sets up herself to demonstrate that the ontological status of sexual difference is enough grounded despite the hasty accusations of universality or heterosexism. First, sexual difference (understood also as sexual relations, relations of reproduction) is the generator of the morphologies of race and others, which are secondary problems (Irigaray, 1996, p. 47), social categories produced by socio-political and historical valuations of bodily differentiations.

> Race, ethnicity and to a much lesser extent, class and religion, are a function of the sexual and reproductive relations of the preceding, parental generation, contingencies of desire and power, random evolutionary effects, in Darwin's understanding, of the relations of sexual selection. They are the sociological and political effects of the social negotiations of these ontological forces. Race, class, religion are divisions imposed by cultures on sexed bodies, bodies which are differentiated from each through the implications of sexual reproduction.

Secondly, sexual difference has primacy for the simple reason that it accompanies all

the other axes of signification, no matter whether they are related to the valuation of social categories or to variable relations. Consequently, for example, when Irigaray is talking about heterosexuality, there is no presumptive heteronormativity, since heterosexuality for her is not referring only to sexual relations but it is thought of, more generally, as sexual difference as such which operates as a framework, or, better put, in Irigaray's own words, as the air we breathe:[89]

> While heterosexuality is clearly governed by an oppositional understanding of masculine and feminine positions, theorists like Butler, Cornell, Weiss, Chanter, Ziarek and Deutscher argue that perhaps homosexual relations, or better still, queer relations, altogether bypass this oppositional structure! Queer, ethnic and race relations, for them, problematize Irigaray's ontological understanding of sexual difference. They act, ironically, as if queer operated somehow outside or beyond sexual difference when in fact it is constituted by the very practices that demonstrate sexual difference and its limits. No sexual practices undermine sexual difference: rather they demonstrate its malleability, its capacity for almost infinite variation. Sexual difference is not a norm but a fact of the body! (Grosz, 2006, pp. 16-17)

Moreover, the pervasiveness of sexual difference manifests in all sexual relations (even in the case of transgender persons, or more, intersexuality), and within any type of family, whether traditional or contested:

> The body of the lover in any sexual relation is never a matter of indifference, and even in the case of intersexed bodies, as relatively rare as they are, that is, in the case of bodies that are not clearly classifiable as male or female, the form, nature and capacities of the body are crucial elements of sexual attraction. Butler talks of non-traditional families, for example, but that the family, the right to marry, to have or adopt children, is itself an object of struggle within queer politics is only because heterosexuality has formed the template, even if it is a challenged template, for the creation of the family, especially non-traditional families, which express patriarchy as readily as the traditional family: somebody takes on the role of mommy or daddy, but it is no longer clear that the mommy is a woman and the daddy is a man. But to the extent that the roles of mommy and daddy are perpetrated even within gay families is the extent to which sexual difference and the ideal of the couple generated through sexual difference remains pervasive in our structuring of domestic relations. The same is true for sexual relations, those marked within queer theory as butch or femme, which must be seen, for whatever variation they may bring to the positions that within

[89] Irigaray (1996, p. 37) is again more than explicit on the inextricable relation between air and sexual difference: "Air and sexual difference may be the two dimensions vital for/to life. Not taking them into account would be deadly business".

> heterosexual relations are defined as masculine or feminine, as a complex and interesting variation of heterosexuality, a queering precisely of the sexually bifurcated couple. (Grosz, 2006, pp. 22-23; emphasis in original)

It is important here to stress again the Heideggerian distinction between "ontological" and "ontic" that can be found in Irigaray's texts but not explicitly clarified, as she sometimes conflates the terms:

> I am a sexuate *ontological* or *ontic* being, hence assigned to a gender, to a gender identity (…) It is a matter of demanding a culture, of wanting and elaborating a spirituality, a subjectivity and an alterity appropriate to this gender … (Irigaray, 2004a, p.11, italic mine)

Since sexual difference is universal and the other differences are somehow social and political, then the primacy of sexual difference is in terms of ontology, whereas in political terms there is no necessary devaluation of the other ontic, social and historical differences, as she argues in "Women's exile":

> I think the most important aim is to make visible the exploitation common to all women and to discover the struggles which every woman should engage in, wherever she is: i.e. depending on her country, her occupation, her class, and her sexual estate – i.e. the most immediately unbearable of her modes of oppression. (Irigaray, 1990, p. 88)

Consequently, it wouldn't be far-fetched to argue that, no matter the political and historical context, sexual difference it is not just another category of analysis among other axes of differentiation within, let's say, an intersectional approach, but rather its foundation; a foundationalism understood not in strict rigid terms of causality, but rather in terms of a permanent accompanying matriceal position, as an "implacable" situatedness. Therefore, the issue is not to take sexual difference's ontological primacy as a just one political strategy, as many of Irigaray's defenders did, but rather to assume the validity of the ontological assumption as a starting point for political affirmation:

Whatever historical circumstances are conceivable, there is no overcoming of sexual

> difference: each culture is impelled in its own ways to mark, accommodate, and perhaps erase sexual difference as it does with no other difference. That is why the future, whatever else unpredictable it might entail, will always contain and express sexual difference, to which it is inevitably drawn. While there is no given form or static force behind sexual difference, and while its forms of expression and representation are potential infinite in number, it is clear that no social upheaval is going to be thorough-going enough to eliminate or even overcome sexual difference. (Grosz, 2006, p. 29)

More recently, in the article "The Nature of Sexual Difference" (2012), Grosz recapitulates several claims concerning the nature of sexual difference. Sexual difference is "the most basic, irreducible, non-reciprocal difference between sexes," being a "difference in body, in the significance and meaning of the body and in the perceptual and qualitative immersion in the world that is developed through the body" (Grosz, 2012, p. 71). Being immeasurable, sexual difference is a relation that "is constitutive of the two sexes, which does not pre-exist their differentiation," always in a process of becoming and of differentiating itself (Grosz, 2012, pp. 71-72). Being universal, sexual difference is, nevertheless, irreducible to reproduction and, at the same time:

> (…) the engine or force involved in the production of all other differences, and thus has an ontological status that is radically different from that of racial, ethnic, religious, class and other differences, for sexual difference is both the universal accompaniment of all other lived differences and is one of the means for their transmission and propagation. (Grosz, 2012, p. 73)

Against the general "disclaimer" that Irigaray is a political strategic essentialist (based on a definition of essentialism as being what Whitford called "position," not ontology, 1994, p. 16), Alison Stone (2003, 2004, 2006) wants to show that Irigaray develops in her recent works (starting with *Sexes and Genealogies,* and continuing with *I Love to You*, and *Democracy Begins Between Two*) an unequivocally realist account of sexual difference with the help of a novel conception of nature.

For Irigaray (1996, p. 47), sexual difference is universal as it is "an immediate natural

given." More, being universal, sexual difference characterizes the entire nature (Irigaray, 1993b, p. 108; Irigaray, 1993b, p. 178) and also the non-organic phenomena (sea, light, seasons, winds, etc.; Irigaray, 2000, pp. 111-112). Stone argues (2003, p. 63) that, however, sexual difference loses its strong sense when used to describe natural phenomena and processes as it refers mostly to the continual alternation of two rhythmic poles (humidity-dryness, inhaling - exhaling, expansion- concentration). The rhythmic duality makes all natural phenomena to be "sexuate," as it reminds of human sexual difference:

> For Irigaray, then, all natural phenomena have poles, which are placed in their polar relations to each other by the complementary rhythms at which they suck in fluids (expand) and expel fluids (contract). Insofar as this rhythmic bipolarity inherent in all natural processes and phenomena makes them "sexuate", this is because this bipolarity approximates in structure to human sexual difference. The way each pole depends upon its other and yet follows its unique rhythm parallels the situation of the two human sexes, which differ fundamentally yet also depend upon one another within the overall process of human life, which regenerates itself through sexual reproduction. (Stone, 2006, p. 106)

Stone (2003, p. 64) explains that Irigaray uses a certain analogy between the rhythmic bipolarity of nature, in general, and sexual difference of humans, in particular, analogy that is based on:

> a distinctive understanding of human sexuation as consisting essentially in a difference between the *rhythms* characteristic of each sex. Irigaray thinks nature and sexual difference through one another, depicting natural phenomena as containing a bipolarity analogous to sexual duality, while understanding sexual duality upon the model of the rhythmical bipolarity inherent in natural phenomena.

This analogy might initially be a very circular argument in Irigaray's conception of nature and sexual difference, since she uses the human sexual dimorphism as the basis for her claim that nature presents a sexuate rhythmic bipolarity and then goes back to the human nature conceiving it as the full expression of this duality of rhythms because of the permanent engagement in cultural activities. However, if sexual difference is taken only as just a specific (human) realization of a universal rhythmic bipolarity (which doesn't have to be necessarily

designated as sexuate), through "cultural" manifestations, the argument might escape circularity, but apparently not lose its anthropocentric underpinnings:

> Irigaray's picture of nature is, broadly, hierarchical (E, 128/ 123), with non-organic phenomena realizing their bipolarity least perfectly; then come organic, open-endedly active, beings which can manifest their polarity more fully; finally, we have human organisms, who can participate in culture and thereby express their duality still more fully, by evolving cultural manifestations of it. (Stone, 2006, p. 108)

One implication of her position is that, given the sexual difference as a particular realization of a nature that strives for self-expression through self-differentiating processes, the dual rhythmic affirmation is an ontological difference. When Irigaray presents sexual difference as ontological, she has in mind these very fluid rhythmical differences and not the sexual reproductive functions or differences that concern only the "empirical" of the natural sciences, which is predicated upon the mechanics of solids:

> In our anthropological age, starting with certain sciences called human sciences, the ultimate anthropological difference that requires examination is the one between man and woman. Philosophy's task is to raise this difference to a level of thought, to a somewhat ontological level; it's been left uncultivated, left to empiricism, and in some ways, animality. (Irigaray and Lotringer, 2000, p. 71)

> If the empirical approach understands sexual difference and corporeality in terms of metaphysics of solidity, then Irigaray's "ontological" approach must, in contrast, understand sexual difference and corporeality in terms of metaphysics of rhythms and fluids. She replaces the scientific metaphysics of solid entities or substances with an alternative metaphysics in which temporal processes and circulating fluids are fundamental in constituting sexuate bodies—and, more generally, all natural phenomena. (Stone, 2003, p. 70)

The following scheme is my reworked form of Irigaray's argument for the ontological status of sexual difference, as Alison Stone presents it in *Luce Irigaray and the Philosophy of Sexual Difference* (2006).

I.

Premise 1. An ontological difference is a difference at the level of the nature of Being.

Premise 2. Nature is (part of) Being.

Conclusion 1. Differences in Nature are ontological differences.

II.

Premise 3. Nature is comprised of states of matter: solids and fluids.

Premise 4. Fluids (liquids, gases and plasmas) govern Nature in rhythmic ways[90].

Premise 5. Rhythms have polar dual dispositions: concentration or expansion, inhaling or exhaling (in physical sciences these would be "phases changes", changes in the states of matter: *melting* – change from a solid to a liquid; *vaporization* – from liquid to gas; *ionization* – from gas to plasma; *deionization* – from plasma to gas; *condensation* – from gas to liquid; *freezing* – from liquid to solid; and *sublimation*- from solid to gas)

Conclusion 2. Nature is governed by a bipolar rhythmicity.

Conclusion 1. Differences in Nature are ontological differences.

Conclusion 3. Differences in the rhythmicity of Nature are ontological differences.

III.

Premise 6. Human bodies are porous and made of solids and fluids (blood, water, air)[91].

[90] Émile Benveniste (whose works were quite familiar to Irigaray) argues that "rhythmos" (also understood by ancient Greeks as "schema," a "form" taken ephemerally, in terms of temporality), means literally a particular manner of flowing; therefore, for Irigaray, rhythms designate temporal patterns regulating human bodily processes and fluids: women's rhythm has cycles and irreversible changes, whereas men's rhythm is characterized by linearity (continuity) and punctuation of smaller cycles of tension and return to homoeostasis (Stone, 2006, pp. 100-102).

Premise 3. Nature is comprised of states of matter: solids and fluids.

Conclusion 4. Human bodies are natural (part of Nature).

Premise 4. Fluids govern Nature in rhythmic ways

Premise 5. Rhythms have polar dual dispositions.

Conclusion 5. Human bodies are governed by natural bipolar rhythmicity.

IV.

Premise 7. Sexual difference is the difference between human sexed bodies: male and female.

Premise 8. Female bodies are governed by cyclical and irreversible rhythms.

Premise 9. Male bodies are governed by linear (continuous) and punctuated rhythms.

Conclusion 6. Sexual difference is the difference between the rhythms governing male and female bodies.

Conclusion 5. Human bodies are governed by natural bipolar rhythmicity.

Conclusion 7. Sexual difference is (a difference in) the bipolar rhythmicity of Nature.

Conclusion 3. Differences in the rhythmicity of Nature are ontological differences.

Conclusion 8. Sexual difference is ontological.

This understanding of ontological sexual difference, rather more logical or rationalized in a way, is a type of what Stone (2004, p. 6; 2006, pp. 18-19) calls *realist*

[91] Irigaray describes human bodies as porous with permeable membranes, bodies made of fluid substances (blood, water, air) that communicate with the exterior; the flesh of bodies being primarily made of the "mucous" (Stone, 2006, p. 99).

essentialism, according to which the essential natural differences between male and female bodies exist independently and prior to any cultural representation of these different bodies:

> By realism, I understand the view that we can know about the world as it is independently of our practices and modes of representation. I therefore understand a realist form of essentialism to consist in the view that male and female bodies can be known to have essentially different characters, different characters, which exist independently of how bodies are represented and culturally, inhabited. According to realist essentialism, natural differences between the sexes exist, prior to our cultural activities.

Consequently, in short, Stone (2006, pp. 20-21) aims at demonstrating that, recognizing the insufficiency of re-conceiving corporeality only in symbolical terms, i.e. reimagining symbolic femininity (thus again the symbolic being privileged over the corporeal through the female body *as symbolized*), as Irigaray apparently did in the initial writings (*Speculum* and *This Sex Which is Not One*) that lead many of her commentators to consider her a political strategic essentialist, Irigaray (starting with *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*) turns to and develops an ontology whereby the revalued corporeal is active and expresses culturally the sexual differentiated bodies, gesture which compels Stone to call her a realist essentialist.

Stone is apparently correct in labeling Irigaray's later conception of nature and sexual difference as realist essentialist given that it is both metaphysical (Irigaray believes that there is an external reality - nature, cosmos - independent of us) and ontological (sexual difference talks about the nature of human beings, nature and Being in general). However, I think Irigaray, given the phenomenological tradition she is connected to, is less interested in arguing for the existence of an external reality independent of "us" (therefore not so much an issue of metaphysics)[92], as what is more relevant for her is to work with its "givenness";

[92] Dan Zahavi (2003, p. 14) argues that Heidegger would consider the question of whether the world we live in is real or an illusion (i.e. a metaphysical question) as "self-refuting since it presupposes that which it denies: 'The question of whether there is a world at all and whether its being can be demonstrated, makes no sense at all if it is raised by Dasein as being-in-the-world – and who else should ask it' (Heidegger 1986, 202)".

indeed, she is rather interested in the ontological character of sexual difference. Stone also seems to operate with a dichotomy she initially wanted to dismantle: reality/representation. When arguing that sexual differences are independent of how they are represented or symbolized is antithetical to Irigaray's idea of culturally expressive sexually differentiated bodies, whereby culture is automatically natural, but not necessarily vice versa (that is why Irigaray can also say that female bodies were not allowed cultural articulations).

On the other hand, an appeal to ontology doesn't imply necessarily an essentialist position, especially when Irigaray herself is against essentialism (a rather masculinist maneuver) and towards any kind of "magical" ontology that postulates "intangible essences" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 10). It's strange that Stone persists in calling her essentialist despite the fact that she is aware of Irigaray's stance towards this issue.

> In part, she denies that essential properties can exist because she believes that, if such properties were to exist, they would have to endure over time; but she believes, reality is fluid and everchanging, and therefore has no room for such properties. Moreover, she believes that women's bodies have traditionally been understood as having no stable form (S, 165/206), so that the notion of essential properties threatens to reproduce imagery which privileges the male body. Despite her hostility to belief in essences, Irigaray's substantive view that men and women differ naturally in respect of *determinate* characters or 'forms' appears to entail that men and women are constituted as men and women by these different features, features which are, therefore, essential to their sex. The later Irigaray seems to be an essentialist who denies her own essentialism. (Stone, 2006, p. 45; italics mine)

> Her conception of sexual difference remains identifiably essentialist insofar as she holds that cyclical or linear rhythms are necessary to make bodies female or male. These rhythms are the essential characters without which bodies (as collections of fluids) would not be sexed. As she says, there is a 'physis... proper to each' sex; although we should 'giv[e] up the appropriation of the other', we should not 'renounc[e] the proper [but] start... from a proper', which is dual. That is, we should recognize and seek to express what is proper to each sex: the rhythm of its growth. (Stone, 2006, p. 105)

What's noteworthy in the first quotation is that Stone might actually contradict herself. On the one hand she agrees with Irigaray that reality is fluid and always changing, therefore, those characteristics supposedly essential to defining men and women as different are not fixed and stable. On the other hand, she uses the notion "determinate" to describe again those apparently "stable" features, i.e. male and female rhythms ("forms"). Therefore, even if something is "essential," is not necessarily implying a determinist framework. A distinction between *intrinsicalism* and *essentialism* would be useful here, distinction also related to generality-particularity divide. While the former stresses the idea that "something" has intrinsic characteristics, the second, indeed, postulates that "something" has certain essential attributes that make it to be "something." It is not difficult to imagine that "something" has indeterminate characteristics, some of which can be activated and become essential to that "something" as "something." Obviously, is not about the existence per se of that "something," but the meaning it acquires for us as that "something" in specific contexts. In other words, I suppose Irigaray would say that men and women have intrinsic characteristics (different types of natural rhythms, left open to any definitional momentum), which are not knowable in advance or in totality, hence the lack of any determinate definition and, implicitly, of any essences. To claim that two types of natural rhythms regulate men and women's bodies is not the same to argue that these are men and women's essences. Rather, depending on their morphologies, different contexts, and various ways of relating to the world (and Irigaray stresses this difference; 2000, p. 85), men and women's bodies express certain characteristics in specific contexts and others in other contexts. Of course, "something" always remains there to remind us of some "stability," but not necessarily in the fixed sense of an essentialist position. In other words, Irigaray might call some characteristics "essences" not because they are stable (fixed or determinate), but rather because they become essential for defining them as such. The essential character is activated within the meeting

between that "something" and the world. That is why Irigaray is very close to the phenomenological tradition, position also supported by Stone who defends the idea that the processual character of reality is made directly aware of "in the structure of our pretheoretical, perceptual, experience" (Stone, 2006, pp. 11-12). Stone (2006, p. 95) herself argues that Irigaray, when talking about men and women's different worlds, implies different meaningful ways of relating and interacting with the world:

> This suggests that men and women experience and render the world intelligible in different ways. However, Irigaray clarifies that, for her, having a 'world' means having a particular way of relating to other people and to things: 'sexual difference corresponds first of all to a manner that human beings have of entering into relationship... the difference between the sexes [is] above all a difference in relational identity'. These different ways of forming relationships (here, Irigaray repeatedly suggests that women prioritize relationships between people whereas men prioritize relationships with objects) inform correspondingly different ways in which men and women perceive and interact with things and people.

3.3 A relational and experiential ontology of sexual difference

Since Irigaray relates the understanding of sexual difference as a difference in the natural bipolar rhythms to the idea of "lived phenomena as menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause – or, in men's case, to sexual impulses which follow a relatively constant pattern" (Stone, 2006, p. 110), Stone contends that Irigaray gives phenomenological connotation to her conception of nature and sexually differentiated human bodies. Moreover, Irigaray argues implicitly that a phenomenological approach towards nature is preferable than a scientific one, because it is connected to our perceptual, pretheoretical experience of nature and also because we, as embodied beings, cannot disconnect ourselves from this perceptual encountering of the world. Stone is apparently open to believe that Irigaray would challenge her interpretation of realist description of nature, as Irigaray gives "the impression that she

intends her accounts of nature only to articulate our experience of it but not to describe nature as it really is" (Stone, 2006, p. 111). However, Stone considers that Irigaray's phenomenological defense of her conception of nature is consistent with the notion of realism:

> Irigaray believes that perceptual experience does not constitute a self-contained realm of representations but directly gives us access to things in the world, so that the contours of perceptual experience simultaneously are the structure of the world. To the extent that an account of nature builds on and articulates our perceptual experience, then, we have reason to believe this account, and to believe that natural things really do exhibit the general contours, which this account elicits from our experience. (Stone, 2006, p. 112)

Stone's assessment is important because she is one of the few feminists who support explicitly the phenomenological underpinnings of Irigaray's work. She is right in arguing that, for Irigaray, the structures of perceptual experiences give access simultaneously to the structures of the world. Dan Zahavi argues that the distinction between appearance and reality, within the transcendental phenomenology, is not one between two separate realms but one internal to the realm of appearances. Consequently:

> Just as phenomenology is not *merely* concerned with meaning, it is not *merely* concerned with appearance, or to put it differently, meaning is not *mere* meaning, nor is appearance *mere* appearance. On the contrary, how things appear, what significance they have, is an integral part of what they really are. If we wish to grasp the true nature of the object, we will better pay close attention to how it manifest and reveal itself, be it in sensuous perception or in scientific analyses. The reality of the object is not hidden behind the phenomenon, but unfolds itself in the phenomenon. (Zahavi, 2003, p. 14; italics in original)

Therefore, phenomenology has obvious metaphysical implications, as it also speaks about the reality's existence. But to take the external reality as independent of us, as a consequence of also arguing that is *exists*, is not so much a phenomenological problem in itself. This also applies to Irigaray; of course she can be called "realist," due to her description of Nature as sexually differentiated, but labeling her as realist brings little except

the acknowledgment that she is not interested in conceiving sexual difference only as symbolized but also as natural, as part of the universe we live in; and Irigaray manages this pretty well: sexual differentiated bodies express their nature in cultural articulations. Therefore, Stone's focus on "realism," which seems to be however a redundant denomination as far as Irigaray's phenomenological stance is concerned, is not so much of a problem. But, rather, her insistence in calling Irigaray essentialist, for her claim that human bodies are regulated by two polar rhythms, is. It may be the case that Stone focuses on essentialism because she is rather more interested in the issue of reality and its essences, more in the metaphysical aspect of the discussion rather than the ontological one. She also does this because the duality of human bodies looks for her much more determinate and consequently dangerous than, let's say, a conception of bodies characterized by multiple apparently indeterminate forces. She attributes this position to Butler, with whom she is also concerned in her book. Actually, Stone's project is to combine Irigaray's position (sexual difference) with that of Butler (multiplicity of forces), by leaving out what is generally considered problematic in both of them. With the help of German Romanticist conception of nature as self-differentiating (such as Hölderlin and Schelling) Stone sets on to argue that:

> Nature, so understood, generates the difference between the sexes but, once realized in this form, passes beyond it by introducing sub-differentiations into each sexed individual, so that individuals are never simply sexed but always have an internal multiplicity of characteristics as well (2006, p. 8).

Accordingly, sexual difference remains natural, but becomes simply one materialization "of a broader natural process of self-differentiation, and so it should be culturally expressed in a self-critical, self-limiting form" (Stone, 2006, p. 9). However, Stone's trouble is that she wouldn't conceive of multiplicity within sexual difference, but rather as complementary. Irigaray's move is precisely the one of turning on its head the canonical violent relation between identity and difference: by postulating sexual difference as

ontological difference, she puts "identity" within "difference," and all the other multiple forces, differences as ontic expressions, are unfoldings of this ontological duality; in short, ontology is sexualized/sexuated. Therefore, given her argument that the contours of our bodily-sexualized experiences within the meetings with the world offer us also the structures of reality, I suggest that Irigaray is rather offering a *sexuate relational* and *experiential ontology*, meaning that human bodies experience and relate to the world in various, multiple and contextual meaningful ways *qua* sexed/sexuate beings. To call Irigaray an experiential ontologist is to acknowledge that she departs from the classical understanding of ontology, by operating a change (sexualization and fluidization) within ontology, by bringing forward the primarily experiential nature of our relations with the world as the basis for subversive cultural articulations, and ultimately, by overthrowing identity's rule over the concept of "difference". Luce Irigaray's critique is sustained insofar her conceptualization of difference, that is, of sexual difference, reveals its ontological nature (as a fundamental characteristic of Being) and, consequently, becomes not a particular instantiation of a general neuter one, but rather the way around, namely a difference which conditions both thought and the other ontic differences (characteristics of beings). This perspective has the advantage of leaving open the possibility for change, since the subversion might come from the very fact that we live and experience the world as sexed beings in multiple possible ways, despite the prevailing long-lasting patriarchal patterns of regulating power relations. That is why, one may persist in believing that changes within the symbolic, within the ways masculinities are conceived of and lived through male bodily experiences, are possible if we take distance from the hegemonic male bodily expressions and move towards those minoritarian male experiences that are still devalued and negated, so as to facilitate their presence in cultural, symbolic and linguistic terms.

In the article "Sexuate difference, ontological difference: Between Irigaray and

Heidegger" (2010), Anne van Leeuwen formulates a similar argument with regards to the relationship between identity and difference by assessing Irigaray's critical reading of Heidegger's conception from *Identity and Difference* (2002). She claims that Irigaray's twofold project, both of disrupting the Western metaphysics and of thinking of sexuate difference, gestures towards a questioning of the whole problematic of Being that functions through a debt to woman that has never been paid. This tribute (the constitutive exclusion of woman) is the ontological edifice, yet unacknowledged, of the entire history of metaphysics at the cost of forgetting sexuate difference (van Leeuwen, 2010a, p. 112). Van Leeuwen aims at showing that Irigaray's engagement with Heidegger's interpretation of identity, interpretation that expresses certain commitments of his *phenomenological ontology* (Heidegger, 1962, p. 60), is based on the same oblivion of sexuate difference and on the elision of carnality from the ontological realm, by equating thinking and Being, which is the old Parmenidean principle underlying still the philosophical canon. Thus Irigaray's reading would be a critical gesture within the very ontological domain itself, while being both a commitment and a critique of Heideggerian phenomenological ontology: "By reformulating the principle of identity, by rethinking the implicit commitments of phenomenological ontology, Irigaray is able to reformulate the *problematic of Being* in accordance with sexuate difference" (van Leeuwen, 2010a, p. 113; italics in original). Van Leeuwen's argument consists of several points.

First, she argues that Heidegger's philosophical project is a phenomenological ontology, in the sense that Being is the proper phenomenal object of philosophical inquiry. The phenomenological ontology understood in this way begins with an interpretation/hermeneutic of Dasein, because the Dasein is a distinctive ontologico-ontical entity, instantiating the very principle of identity, by being the mediating locus of thinking

and Being (van Leeuwen, 2010, p. 113).[93] In short, a phenomenological ontology departs from the human existence, precisely for the reason that this kind of existence is that (ontic) being through which and to which the meaning and structures of Being are manifest, that is, "ontologico-ontically distinctive" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 61).

> We can see, then, why is it that phenomenological ontology proceeds as a hermeneutic of *Dasein*: A phenomenological interpretation of the existence of *Dasein* is an articulation of the structures and meaning of Being. (van Leeuwen, 2010a, p. 115; italics in original)

However, Heidegger is reinterpreting the Parmenidean principle of identity by conceiving identity not merely as the unity of a thing or self-sameness (in the formula of A is A or A=A), as "that which, in itself without relation, persists in monotony" (Heidegger, 2002, p. 25). Instead, for Heidegger, identity is originary a self-sameness with itself, a sameness which implies an identity relation, "a mediation, a connection, a synthesis: the unification into unity" (Heidegger, 2002, p. 25). Consequently, according to Heidegger, the reworked ontological principle of identity speaks of the belonging together of thinking and Being, as parts to the same, and characterizes as such his phenomenological ontology. It is here that Irigaray intervenes and argues that actually Heidegger privileges again sameness over difference by taking up only the understanding of identity as "the belonging of parts to the same" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 69). The identity relation presupposes though also another understanding of identity that Heidegger, according to Irigaray, chooses to ignore, namely identity as "a co-belonging in a whole where each takes place" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 69). For Irigaray, Heidegger's conflation of the unity of identity with the subsumption of parts within sameness (van Leeuwen, 2010a, p. 116) would equate with the "belonging of Being and thinking to the same" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 69), which, corroborated with the centrality of Dasein for the unconcealment of the meaning and the structures of Being, would presuppose

[93] Heidegger argues that the phenomenological conception of phenomenon is not the self-showing of entities themselves, but rather "the Being of entities, its meaning, its modifications and derivatives" (1962, p. 60).

a neutral understanding of Dasein in terms of the two sexes and, implicitly, of both Being and human being as One (van Leeuwen, 2010a, p. 117).[94] Thus, Irigaray operates her critique at the very heart of the phenomenological thematization of the human being in its ontological dimension.

Secondly, van Leeuwen argues that, given Irigaray's critique of Heidegger's reworking of Parmenidean principle of identity, one of the implications is that thinking, understood therefore as discursiveness/interpretation, is conflated with a specific understanding of language which stresses the mono-logical or the homo-logous, "a monologue in two voices" (van Leeuwen, 2010a, p. 118). This positing of the Dasein as neutral also amounts to a fictionalization of human being as univocal, unmarked by

[94] David A. White argues in the article "Heidegger on Sameness and Difference" (1980) that, in order to understand what sameness means for Heidegger, one should understand the relation between thinking and Being (of their co-belonging in/to the same) which presupposes also an understanding of the nature of Being as such, meaning that the structure of Being, on the one hand, and the structure of thinking about Being (including its linguistic expressions), on the other hand, share properties defined by the structure of sameness (1980, p. 109). Against the tendency of considering sameness and identity synonymous, White claims that Heidegger actually distinguishes (in *Pathmarks*, *The Principle of Reason* and *Identity and Difference*) between the unity of identity as the "indifferent likeness of the empty, endlessly repeatable identity: A as A, B as B" and the unity of sameness as "the belonging together of what is distinct" (1980, p. 110). Consequently, sameness can be thought only in relation to difference. While identity is for Heidegger a mere abstract, logical concept "indifferently predicated of any and every being and type of being, sameness is an ontological notion which applies only to certain types of being and in ways which elucidate the hidden structure of those beings" (1980, p. 111). It is in view of this sense that Heidegger considers the ontological difference between Being and beings to be the sameness that concerned the Greeks in a different way as compared to that on which metaphysics, is based, i.e. sameness as identity. In short, for Heidegger, it seems that sameness always refers to two distinct beings, whereas identity is predicated of a being with respect to itself. On the basis of White's interpretation of Heidegger's distinction between identity and sameness, it may seem that Irigaray's critique is misplaced insofar she might confuse Heidegger's reworked ontological notion of sameness as difference with the notion of sameness as identity (self-sameness). However, as White later argues in his article, the notion of sameness in relation to difference (of degree or of kind?) is not elaborated further by Heidegger and, consequently, the predication of sameness might become a mere "conjunction of entities for purpose of drawing comparisons between some or all the properties of those entities" (1980, p. 117). Moreover, corroborating Heidegger's statements that Being and thinking co-belong in the same and that the ontological difference between Being and beings is the sameness from which metaphysics springs, it may be the case that there is no distinction between sameness as predicated of the relation between Being and beings and sameness as predicated of two particular beings, inference which might raise a paradox in relation to the nature of Being as different from beings. "Thus, if Heidegger intends to maintain that Being is in some difficult and undefined sense 'greater than' beings, then it comes virtually impossible to see how he can also maintain that both Being and beings belong in sameness." (1980, p. 118). Unless sameness as ontological difference between Being and beings on which metaphysics is based, is the one that actually Heidegger was critical of and, consequently, has reworked it as sameness in relation to difference. Nevertheless, irrespective of this probable conflation in both White's and Irigaray's contexts, I would argue that Irigaray's critique is sustained insofar it is rather targeting mostly the centrality of Dasein's neutrality as conditioning the elucidation of meaning and the structure of Being and its ontological difference in relation to beings.

difference, whereby carnality is ontologically elided, which would remind, to Irigaray, of the phantasmatic imaginary of the historical masculine subject:

> The two beings and Beings of the human species have become the two poles of a single human being who, in fact, does not exist. Invented by a masculine thinking and according to its necessities, this more or less ghostly being presents rather the characteristics of a masculine subject. (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 107; quoted in van Leeuwen, 2010a, p. 118)

Accordingly, since thinking of Being that belongs to the being of Dasein is articulated in the neutral and universal terms, unspecified by difference, thus being reduced to a monologue, to a tautology, to the logic of the same, language itself would be also thought of in non-dialogical terms. Thus, for Irigaray, the univocity of Being and thinking, characterizing the ontology of the same as the metaphysical foundation of philosophical thought, can be disrupted only by rethinking the principle of identity and recognizing sexual difference as a starting point of a phenomenological ontology.

> It is precisely such a reformulation that is at stake when she speaks of identity as 'co-belonging in a whole where each takes place', or as 'a difference between two terms autonomous to each other which, at first and last level, constitute a unity'. (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 69; quoted in van Leeuwen, 2010a, p. 124)

Finally, van Leeuwen argues that through this rethinking of the principle of identity, Irigaray transforms the Heideggerian project of phenomenological ontology, maintaining therefore her commitment to the phenomenological method, which now can offer ways of having access to the meaning and structures of Being through an understanding of Dasein, of human being, not partial and fractured, but rather one which "showing itself to be distinct, is ineliminably marked by sexual difference" (2010, p. 125).[95]

[95] Anne Van Leeuwen summarizes her argument, from her PhD thesis "Irigaray, Heidegger and the Question of Sexual Difference: An Examination of The Phenomenological Stakes of Irigaray's later work" (2010b), claiming in relation to Irigaray that she has attempted "to undermine the naturalistic interpretation of the parameters of her work, then, precisely in order to recast surrounding the question of sexual difference. To challenge the naturalistic interpretation is, minimally, to call attention to her account of the givenness of sexual

In the introduction to *The Way of Love* (2002b, p. 11) Irigaray summarizes the ontological implications of her rethinking of the relationship between identity and difference, and, consequently, of the human being and humanity in general.

> If the human is divided into two, always open and in interaction in its unity, the Being of each of its parts and of their common world no longer belong to a traditional ontology. Ceaselessly worked by the negative because of its duality, it remains linked to the real while becoming always more spiritual. But this spiritual transforms matter without abolishing it. It becomes flesh, the flesh itself becoming word. The one and the other interpenetrate and transmute each other such that the dichotomy between them no longer exists. The fixed polarities of the one, of the One, return to the duality of subjectivities which, with a view to their human becoming and in the name of the wisdom of love, renounce all completed personal fullness I order to work toward a more accomplished advent of humanity.

Coming back to the relational character of the ontological nature of sexual/sexuate difference, Irigaray offers thus an alternative to the traditional understanding to human identity as self-identity, identity to the same. This notion of identity refers, in Irigaray's view, to a conception of a fixed reality, not subject to change, not modifiable, almost a Platonic idea. In contrast, a relational identity, being counter to the solipsistic and auto-logical model of identity, goes beyond the dichotomic nature of thinking characterizing the Western tradition and, implicitly, of the social organization of human relations based on such a tradition. Always becoming, refusing therefore the opposition between being and becoming, relational identity acknowledges the "living connection to nature," making possible "a return to self which permits a being – and a remaining – self in the process of becoming" (Irigaray,

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difference. It is to question whether the modality of its givenness tacitly implied in Irigaray's invocation of this difference can be unproblematically interpreted within naturalistic parameters. It is to question, in other words, whether sexual difference is something that, as persistently elided and deformed within patriarchal discourse, can nevertheless be recuperated, something that, as extant, can serve as the normative ground for feminism. By merely sketching the stakes of Irigaray's engagement with Heidegger, I have tried to suggest that her invocation of sexual difference resists these naturalistic parameters. In *L'oubli de l'air*, we saw Irigaray invoke the feminine pronoun "*elle*" as well as the adjective "*féminin*" in order to diagnosis the operation of matricide that subtends the specular structure of phenomenological givenness. In *The Way of Love*, we saw that Irigaray invokes sexual difference in order to disrupt the *anthropic* vestiges of Heidegger's phenomenological interpretation of identity. In *Sharing the World*, we saw the culminating articulation of the legacy of these previous engagements: here, Irigaray insinuates herself in Heidegger's thought in order to think phenomenological transcendence as ineluctably fractured by sexual difference precisely in order to belie the insidious insistence of *anthropic* that would circumscribe his account of transcendence within a self-effacing logic of the specular." (2010b, p. 158; italics in original).

Pluhacek and Bostic, 2008b, p. 12). This continuous interplay being and becoming a self is most articulatable, for Irigaray, in the belonging to a gender and in the fulfillment of this gender. Moreover, the specificity of gender is always already relational in the sense that the girl's relation to she who engendered her is different from that of the boy. This difference is also discernible later in the case of women and men:

> [T]he girl is born of one who is the same as her, she can beget like her mother, which is not the case for the boy. Woman's corporeal identity is also accompanied by relational characters different than those of man: to make love and to engender inside oneself do not put one into relation with the other in the same way as making love and engendering outside the self (Irigaray, Pluhacek and Bostic, 2008b, pp. 12-13).

Consequently, relational identity designates another logic of relations to the self, the others, and the world, structured between the natural and the cultural. It is in this sense that Irigaray considers the cultivation of one's natural identity as a becoming able to construct relations that are faithful to one's self and the others who belong to another gender. Cultivating difference of identity is thus a continuous interaction and balance between difference and identity in view of preserving life and making possible the growth of each and other with respect to their own differences.

> It implies a constant relation between the same and the different, in which is assimilated from the different only that which does not destroy the organism of the same not that of the other. Willing only the same or only the different destroys life. Frequenting only the same or only the different represents a danger for the metabolism of life. (Irigaray, Pluhacek and Bostic, 2008b, p. 7)

This understanding of relational identity also implies that we live relationally in different worlds, which is not yet part of our culture, as we still make confusion between being-in-relation (differently as women and as men) and "dwelling in a same world," "sharing a common world" (Irigaray and Wheeler, 2008b, p. 55).

> It is difficult to realize that we inhabit different worlds while apparently we share a common quotidian reality. But considering only this dimension, we already are

> forgetting the level of a being in relation(s) with respect for difference(s) – that is to say, a being in relation with the other as such. (Irigaray and Wheeler, 2008b, p. 56)

Therefore, we need to acknowledge the difference in the ways we relate to the others and the world so that we could open ourselves, from our quotidian, to the strange, the unknown and the unfamiliar that the other and his or her world are for us (Irigaray and Wheeler, 2008b, p. 56). Only from this basis we can start establishing an intersubjective economy of relations. Consequently, for Irigaray, the relational character of sexual/sexuate difference as ontological derives from the fact that this difference is the most basic and and the most universal difference which shapes the connection between nature and culture, a connection which is always embodied and realized through the very relational identities of each and every one, men and women (Irigaray and Howie, 2008b, p. 77).

3.4 "Poetic thinking" for "becoming human"

Such rethinking between identity and difference has implications also with regard to language and its relationship to thought. Based on an understanding of identity as relational, language could then be understood more in terms of being-with rather than just being the same, more in terms of *speaking-with* rather than *speaking-of*. Irigaray re-reads Heidegger's "poetic thinking" in relation to language and writing, a thinking that would express her commitment to sexual difference. In the previous chapter, I have briefly touched upon Heidegger's critique of the representational and subjectivist nature of metaphysical thought, in relation to the question of the ontological difference, that is, between Being as such and beings, and the forgetting of Being in the history of philosophical thought. Since, for philosophy, the thinking of Being, intended to be a thinking of the Being of beings, is actually a thinking of beings, as both present and represented objectively to and by human

beings (as subjects that represent objects to themselves), truth in relation to both Being and beings becomes a matter of correspondence/ conformity/ certitude between the subject's representational thought/ vision/ seeing and the things in the world seen as objects.[96] One consequence is that thought itself seems to be cut off from Being. In *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking* (1977), for Heidegger, the task of thinking is concealed by the history of philosophy as metaphysics, premised on the understanding of thought as representational thinking.[97] What is neglected by this kind of thinking and which nevertheless gives meaning to thought, is the matter of thinking itself, the ground, the truth of Being. Here, instead of a correspondence between a subject's thought and the objects in the world, truth becomes, for Heidegger, *aletheia*, the "unconcealment" of the relation between thinking and Being and their belonging together (1977, p. 388), specifically *Dasein*'s accomplishment of its relation to Being. Against the representational thinking as *logos* (or *logics*) which

[96] Beings become for a subject, through seeing and making present, "ideas" (from the Greek *eidos*). Idea as that which is seen in the seeing, as appearance in its appearing, is the "whatness" of beings, that is, the Being of beings. This way, vision receives a central role in metaphysics and Being as Being, the un-seen, the concealed, is thought of as a being and, consequently, gets forgotten. Hence, Heidegger's characterization of the history of metaphysical thought as a history of "nihilism," since "*Nothing* is happening to Being" (in German: *Wie ist es mit dem Sein? Mit dem Sein ist es nichts.*) as Heidegger argues in "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead'" (1977, p. 104) from the collection *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (1977).

[97] As already mentioned in the previous chapter, Heidegger argues that in the West philosophy has been concerned about Being in a particular way, as "presencing," establishing this way an inextricable link between existence and presence. In the essay "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking" (1977), Heidegger explores the way the notion of Being got conflated with that of presence, how something *is* when it is *present* to us. Being dominated by this concept of "presencing," philosophy turned into sciences of beings ("regional ontologies") and Being remain unthought (as compared to what might be a "fundamental ontology"), thereof the end of philosophy and the birth of technological world: "The end of philosophy proves to be the triumph of the manipulable arrangement of a scientific-technological world and of the social order proper to this world. The end of philosophy means the beginning of the world civilization that is based upon Western European thinking" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 377). However, Heidegger argues that other possibilities for thinking in the Western history might not have been actualized, that there might be a *first* possibility, apart from the *last* possibility ("the dissolution of philosophy in the technologized sciences"), from which the thinking of philosophy would have to start. Thus, there might be still a task of thinking, one concealed in the history of philosophy, which is accessible neither from philosophy as metaphysics, nor from sciences stemming from philosophy (Heidegger, 1977, p. 378). The task of thinking, then, would be that of thinking its own matter, what comes first, namely the primordial Being. What remained unthought is not a thing, but a "clearing" (*Lichtung*), an openness, which makes possible the letting-appear as "opening" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 384), something, which precedes the presencing of, for example, trees, rocks, etc. Citing one of Parmenides' poems and linking "clearing"/"opening" to *aletheia* (truth as unconcealment), Heidegger considers him as the only philosopher who reflected explicitly upon the Being of beings: "…but you should learn all: /the untrembling heart of unconcealment, well-rounded, / and also the opinions of mortals / who lack the ability to trust what is unconcealed" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 387). Therefore, the task of thinking, for Heidegger, is to make explicit that which is truly first, what the Being of beings *is*, while not *presence-able*, not graspable.

characterizes metaphysical thought, "thinking Being" would be the new thought through which Being unconceals itself as opening, self-blossoming, as what makes beings present as they are in themselves, in their truth, prior to man's subjective, theoretical or scientific intervention. For Heidegger, in *What is Called Thinking?* (1968), letting beings be in their own presence, as presenced by Being as such, thought itself *gives* truly *thought* (*thank*-ing) to things and stays with them (as a *gathering*, a *recollecting* thinking - memory) as they are in themselves. While devoted to beings as they lie before us, thought co-belongs with Being, that which presences what is present to us. Heidegger argues that thought originates from *logos* (from the Greek *legein*) and, thus, id connected to *stating/saying*, which, in Heidegger's interpretation of Parmenides, is a is a *letting-lie-before-us*.

> Laying, λέγειν, concerns what lies there. To lay is to let lie before us. When we say something about something, we make it lie there before us, which means at the same time we make it appear. This making-to-appear and letting-lie- before-us is, in Greek thought, the essence of λέγειν and λόγος. The essential nature of stating is not determined by the phonetic character of words as signs. The essential nature of language is illumined by the relatedness of what lies there before us to this letting-lie-before-us. (Heidegger, 1968, p. 202)

Thought and language, therefore, are interconnected and united insofar both are "devoted" to what lies before us and let it be in its own presence. Therefore, for Heidegger, language is not to be manipulated or employed in order to designate things and the world or for the use man's own expression, but rather the words are to be listened to in the speaking of language, that is, in the letting language speak through man so that Being and beings are brought forth into language. Since saying is *laying*, in the sense of *letting-lie-before-us*, then language as a saying something about something makes it lie and appear before us, letting things be as they are presenced by Being. Therefore, instead of thinking Being as a being, represented and explained in thought and language as an object for us in relation to other beings, Heidegger proposes, as the new task of philosophy, a thinking and a speaking of

Being and beings which let them both come forth through us. In other words, a speaking and a thinking as events of disclosure of Being itself as different from beings, as unconcealment/truth. The thinking which brings forth that which lies before us and allows them to show themselves is called "poetic thinking", since *poiesis*, for Heidegger, is the occasioning, the unfolding, the self-blossoming of the natural, that is, the bringing-forth in itself of *physis* (nature). In short, *poiesis* is a mode of disclosure (*aletheia*) of Being, of unconcealment, of revealing.

Apart from this revealing *in itself* of nature (*physis*), *poiesis* also unconceals in a different way through *Dasein*'s work, as *techne*, as a bringing-forth into something else, into *another* mode of disclosure (Heidegger, 1977, p. 10). In Heidegger's view, the *poiesis* of art, for the ancient Greeks, was originarily conceived as *techne*, as a way of revealing, of bringing-forth the divine. However, Heidegger considers that *techne*, as the essence of modern technology, is not anymore a revealing per se as *poiesis*, but rather a confrontation and an opposition of human existence to *physis*, to a nature which is reduced to a space for "unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing and switching about", as *standing-reserve*, as *resources*, *objects* and *tools* for the use of human subjects, and never as something in itself. As I already mentioned in the previous chapter, this way of revealing is called by Heidegger (1977, p. 19) *Gestell* (Enframing), that is, a gathering of human beings into an ordering of nature as resource. It is against this type of revealing that Heidegger sets forth as an alternative a thinking and a language that will let the world be in itself. Language, this way, has an ontological status and function as it would found things in their Being (Heidegger, 1971, pp. 86-87). Poetic thinking and poetic writing would fulfill this function as a way of letting things appear in their own becoming and self-unfolding outside the human ordering of life. Simply put, the world would be in itself and for itself and not anymore for us.

Irigaray agrees with this and takes up Heidegger's conception of "poetic thinking" but

with a twist.[98] For her, Heidegger remains nevertheless trapped in his "house of language" for not being yet able to envisage and practice a speaking *between* two different subjects, but rather a speaking *about* objects or a speaking with himself through language (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 15). "How, in fact, to attempt an encounter with the other if the thinker – or the poet – dwells in language itself?" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 31). According to Irigaray, Heidegger despite his journey on the way to a different saying, he still privileges the proximity with language itself, not with the other or not even with a thing (Irigaray, 2002b, pp. 30-32).

> But the philosopher's partner is speech itself – of which he says moreover that it speaks only with itself. Like him, in a way? He interweaves, interlaces with the speaking of speech caring little, it seems, about interweaving, interlacing when speaking with someone, at least someone who is living and present. (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 31)

Simply put, Irigaray would agree less with the view that language is that which lets the meaning be, appear in the encounter between the subject, an other, or the world. To argue that speech speaks with itself alone, as Heidegger seems to do, is to subjugate things and the living to the word, and again the other senses to language, "as if the thing could not exist thanks to the perception that I have of it" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 31). Instead, for Irigaray, since it is not the thing that depends upon the word, the task of the word/language is to convey a real that already exists. But even before this, there is an initial silence of the world which has to be acknowledged, a silence which safeguards things and the other and their integrity, which lets the world be and grow before any appearing or any monstration (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 31). For not acknowledging sexual difference as an ontological difference, Being remains undifferentiated and, consequently, thinking and language remain caught up within the terms

[98] Heidegger always had a special status and appreciation in Irigaray's work. She speaks of him as the philosopher whom she re-read many times, with notes from different years, learning from him to think with rigor and to practice criticism towards oneself, considering his thinking "truly a masculine way of reasoning" (Irigaray and Still, 2008b, p. 25). Regretting the fact that she didn't have the opportunity to meet and converse with Heidegger, she also confesses: "And when I learnt about the death of the philosopher, it was difficult for me to accept that I will never talk with him" (Irigaray and Still, 2008b, p. 26).

of only *one* subject, the so-called human universal subject. This solipsism of language adds nothing new since starting from the already known and treating language as an envelope for transmitting meanings already settled, "saying no longer speaks, it repeats the said in a new situation, where meaning gets lost" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 17).

> In all of the reasoning, investigation, or commentaries of the Heidegger of On the Way to Language, the communication between two does not exist, the words to speak it are still lacking, as moreover in the whole of Western philosophy. Perhaps the philosopher is on the way toward it when he speaks of a necessary metamorphosis of the saying, for example in the commentary on Stefan George's poem "Words". But this would then signify that language necessarily lies at the very source of poetry – which it is possible to agree - and this would ignore that is sometimes impossible for a word to be in accordance with what is to be said. In an exchange between two, meaning quivers and always remains unstable, incomplete, unsettled, irreducible to the word. (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 28)

One could argue that it may be the case that Heidegger's new conception of language might express a different masculine way of relating to the world, less violent, perhaps. Irigaray acknowledges this when she transposes his view on language onto sexual difference:

> The highest rule of the word would consist in not appropriating the thing but letting it be as thing. What is sought here is beyond: how *to let be the other* while speaking, speaking to them. Moreover: how to encourage the other to be and to remain other. How to let the other come into presence, even to lead them there, without claiming to be their foundation. (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 29; italics mine)

However, this new understanding of language might repeat the same type of absolutization of which Heidegger himself was writing in relation to *Gestell*, that is, in relation to the absolutization of one way of revealing of the world for *Dasein* itself onto the totality of Being's unconcealment. Through this absolutization, Heidegger's view remains precisely masculinist insofar as the "human subject" is still conceived as one. But what happens, then, if *Being* and *Dasein* are both already *Two*? Would language also change? Irigaray claims that we could indeed have finally at least two "linguistic homes" for both woman and man, a sensible transcendental for each, that is, a union between being and Being,

of body and language within the horizon of sexual difference as the unconcealment of the human becoming.

> It appears however the most indispensable and the most sublime task for the human subject, the one able, beyond our oppositions and hierarchies, to recast the categories of the sensible and the intelligible in a rationality that as a result becomes more complex, more accomplished for human becoming, and nevertheless everyday and universal. We enter then into a new epoch of the relation to language. The interlacings of the relation to and of speech are displaced in developing the relation with oneself, the relation with the other. Speech no longer speaks with itself through the objects that it names and the mediation of a subject that has become its servant. It confronts other tasks, where it undertakes to speak what it has left in a still undifferentiated silence or opacity. It penetrates into other dimensions of Being, other spaces and other times, opens or un-covers other clearings where it has to make its way differently. (Irigaray, 2002b, pp. 43-44)

In one of her latest books, *Everyday Prayers* (2004b), less known, however, to the academic audience, Irigaray offers a collection of poems, written between August 1997 and July 1998, which embody in quite an explicit manner her own "appropriation" of Heidegger's "poetic thinking" and "poetic writing. In the preface to this short collection, she argues from the outset that art, in general, and poetry," in particular, are needed for opening new horizons, at both historical and more personal levels, as far as transformations in culture and thought are to be envisaged. For Irigaray, her thinking is continuously shaped, in addition to observing reality, by poetic writing, the logical analysis of discourse and by "frequenting nature, which revirginalises the body and the mind, and gives new perspectives on what has been thought and what is still to think" (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 29). Poetic writing has, nevertheless, a different status, as it does not separate *form* from *matter* (or, borrowing terms from Indian philosophy, *purusha* – spirit from *prakrti* – nature or matter), but rather facilitates a union between them.[99] Form "sets matter off, cultivates it with rhythms, scansions, by recourse to colors, tonalities and other evocations of tangible perceptions, instead of aspiring to dominate it through concepts" (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 30). Through this

[99] According to *The Vedas*, the oldest scriptures of Hinduism, the one god is made of two main parts, Prakrti and Purush. While gods are all instances of Purush, the goddesses are instances of Prakrti.

kind of understanding of poetic writing, which in a way promotes *phuein* (φύω), becoming, growing, Irigaray is able to envisage a union between the body and the spirit, both becoming flesh, outside the usual formalistic or cultural mediations practiced by thought in writing. Her telling can remain thus open ended, with multiple germinations and ways of being heard and received by an other, while "linked to a real and carnal generation" (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 30). Embracing and practicing poetic thinking and writing presupposes already a different relation to words, silences, rhythms, colors, sounds, smells, flavor, all of them somehow related to touch, which is this way celebrated by Irigaray in these poems that are meant to express a different relation to the world, through which nature is disclosed and not controlled. In short, the intention of the poems is to leave nature be, *to let it say itself* and release it from the utilitarian status imposed by human existence. Celebrating and supporting life, Irigaray explicitly distances herself from those male poets/masculine authors (she mentions, for example, Rainer Maria Rilke, Friedrich Hölderlin and René Char) who are commemorating or are blocked in "death, suffering and mourning" (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 31).[100] Praising life, nature, "a love more loving and happy," as well as "him – a lover," Irigaray's poetic writing "does not cut into the real to express it, but flows from a flow and into a flow that already exists: the flow that separates us," thus letting sexual difference disclose itself, become and be in language (Irigaray, 2004b, pp. 31-33). Language in saying, as a human dwelling, is, therefore, not the same for each and every one. Released from its representations and habits, by situating the subject differently in relation to the world, to the self and to the other, language can finally say the "forever in-finite ground of our difference, the one on behalf of which we must speak in order to be" (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 33). It is discernible here Irigaray's

[100] About Rainer Maria Rilke's *The Duino Elegies* (1923) she writes: "But even though some of the themes are the same – those of the angel or the flower, for example – their presence in the texts does not have the same meaning, the same connotations. 'My' angels are the servants of life, of love: tender, almost carnal. Those of Rilke are terrible, frightening in the encounter he maintains or fails to maintain with them. Rilke can scarcely imagine an angel flying from one lover to the other, to help them in their solitude or in their approach one to the other. Rilke's angel seem distant and irrelevant to the pathos of incarnation contrary to what I attribute to these spiritual creatures" (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 31).

direct intervention in Heidegger's conception of language as a letting be of things and of the world in their own becoming and self-unfolding outside the interpretative and discursive circle of language as viewed by Heidegger. She makes a direct reference to Heidegger's "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer", from *On the Way of Language* (1971) (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 34) and admits that her way of writing poems is also inspired by Far Eastern culture which favors "meditation, prayer, contemplation, homage to some local 'divinity'."[101] I quote Irigaray at length where she argues that her poems speak of the truth of nature, of the real, as a way of the world to speak itself through words, not as metaphors and allegories of a representational language, but rather as ways of saying the more appropriate for the living matter and its continuous self-becoming, and for that which accompanies the human daily existence as a different world.[102]

> The intention [of poems] is never to reveal once and for all as truth what has appeared today but to sing some aspect of the real, which today has manifested itself to me. This goes for the world, and also for us as world. No world is then defined as external to another, *as object* for another. Each one is perceived in its own existence, greeted in its autonomy and in its interaction with my own life. A tree, a flower, will not be reduced to mere *things*, nor a lover to an *object*. Each is left to its own birth, to a growing and a position in an environment, which are their own. Neither tree nor flower is, for all that, transformed into humans or parts of their world: more or less *allegorical* divinities, for example. (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 35; italics mine)

[101] Lin Ma argues in *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event* (2008) that Heidegger's "A Dialogue on Language: Between a Japanese and an Inquirer" is a fictionalized dialogue as it modifies factual details and the actual conversation with Tezuka Tomio on which it was apparently based. "Heidegger himself provides a somewhat misleading hint at the genesis of the dialogue: 'The heretofore unpublished text originated in 1953/54, on the occasion of a visit by Professor Tezuka of the Imperial University, Tokyo' (OWL 199/269). This note easily misleads readers into considering 'A Dialogue' as more or less a record of Heidegger's actual conversation with Tezuka, which is not the case" (2008, p. 21). Accordingly, for Lin Ma, Heidegger's model of dialogue still remains a monologue of Being's own saying with itself, since for him dialogue already "in its true nature unfolds itself as a monologue, in that it lets language speak from out of itself" (2008, p.192). "The topic of East-West dialogue could be seen as a site where Heidegger is experimenting with his configurations of the essential Saying of Being, in which resides his notion of dialogue. The discussion of the Japanese word for language and of hermeneutics proceeds in exactly the 'same' mode as an authentic dialogue does. From this perspective, we could be completely in agreement with Nancy that the alterity of Japanese thinking is totally subsumed under the alterity of language. The conclusion would then be that 'A Dialogue' is an architectonic monologue. It has nothing to do with East- West dialogue." (2008, p. 195).

[102] In relation to the metaphoric, Irigaray argues: "[A] metaphoric conception belongs to a masculine culture, based on the refusal of birth in nature, an inability to transmute that birth in one's own flesh as well as in a bodily relation with another. Hence the need to imagine a spirituality starting from a breath irrelevant to life, carried by words which no longer say the living but which seek to overcome it, particularly through all sorts of comparisons and images supposedly able to do better than life itself and which turn into poison for body and soul" (2004b, p. 49).

The same should go as far as the language and the saying of men and women are concerned. The truth of one's being and becoming, be it a man or a woman, is to be spoken in the living, in what is felt or experienced, through a language less metaphorical, closer to his or her real, whereby sensibility and movement are to be respected in their own differences and the duality of the subjects thus acknowledged. This language or discourse would unfold differently by reversing the primacy of the *substantive* as conveying the permanence and of the *verb* as denoting the transitory:

> The use of the verb reaches the eternal, and the use of the substantive reaches current life in its particularity, in its concreteness. The present participle – a hyphen between the two – also occurs frequently, a tense where verb and substantive combine or exchange their functions. (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 44)[103]

Human temporality would also be differently lived and thought. The present of the writing is not anymore about current events but rather would unfold a duration, "an eternity born from the instant," similar to that of "the elements of the nature: the sky, the air, the sun, the wind, the flowers…" (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 44). Moreover, this writing would reconnect nature and consciousness, by treating nature as autonomous living, as a surrounding universe, independent of human fabrication, as something given to us and to our consciousness in its own becoming.

> Our consciousness would then not be constituted by dominating the world, transforming it and integrating as a part of its own horizon. Consciousness learns how *to be with* nature, no longer considering itself superior to it, remaining able to put questions about nature and *to welcome* it without any preliminary. (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 45; italics mine)

[103] Already in *The Way of Love* (2002b, p. 59) Irigaray writes about the role of the verb in the reinventing even of language: "The verb of which the act will be sometimes assumed by a subject, sometimes left in an infinitive form – witness to the work of nature or to a still undifferentiated, sometimes common, energy. The verb of which the tense can be modulated: recalling a past, opening a future, remaining in the present or trying to arrive in it, to dwell in it, and which serves to build bridges between different moments, inside a single subjectivity or between two subjects. The verb of which can be said in diverse forms or modes: active or passive, interrogative or injunctive, to cite only these examples. And thus bring to light how, already within the subject, an act can be recognized in a complex manner."

Being-with nature extends, of course, in Irigaray's view, also to sexual difference, meaning to a being-with *the other* differently sexuated, independent of and foreign to us, whose (his or hers) consciousness is transcendent to ours (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 46).[104] The language of sexual difference is then a saying of each of the two, of "what he or she lives, what he or she is," of their own lived truth unveiled as a real from which finally their relationship can be founded. That is, a relationship cultivated on a saying "only from themselves, from their nature, their subjectivity, and their own vision of the world" (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 47). This would be the task of the so called "human subject" as a speaking subject: to create speech in order to speak uniquely, not to speak an already existing language as a way of sheltering, but "to succeed in transforming what happens, from within or from without, into saying" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 64).

In this respect, this novel "house of language" of sexual difference is finally united with that which can be called "a house of body." Irigaray's poetic writing is feminine in its manner, for letting it express itself while offering shelter to her body in union with her spirit:

> *The body is akin to a home* whose half-open lips are the threshold, whose ears receive sounds and words, whose eyes perceive and gaze well in advance of arriving at the hearth, at the centre of the inner, where it sometimes happens that the one or another, the one and the other leave, limits or boundaries for a common fusion. So there is no transfer of sense from the concrete to the abstract, through an analogy, but matter is transformed, either more or less, into a spiritual corresponding to it while still remaining matter. (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 48; italics mine)

Here, again, Irigaray brings in the theme of the air and its importance for both

[104] About the "transcendent" in relation to one's partiality and finitude as sexually differentiated, Irigaray (2008b, pp. 40-41) argues: "'Transcendent', for me, signifies that I cannot understand nor even perceive an other in its totality. I can perhaps understand or perceive some aspects but not the whole nor the origin or spring of the real I am meeting with. For example, I can understand or perceive something of the other through my senses and, in part, through my mind, but the true origin and meaning of what I perceive remains hidden from me. I could say that the core of the other escapes me, and that I could not substitute myself for the other because the other remains a mystery for me. I speak here about another living being, another human being different from me – the paradigm of this difference being the sexually different other."

survival and love. In her poems, language and body are made of air, are "more aerial and fluid in praise or in delight, heavier or more set in worry or pain" (2004b, p. 49). Soul would be then a breath, remained matter, "but a matter more fluid or of different consistency and density than that of the breath we need to survive" (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 49). For both body and soul, matter and language, air is not just an element of survival, but also the medium that facilitates transition from natural life to the spiritual one: "Perhaps air is the element which has the closest relation to Being in its different manifestations. It belongs to the universe but also to the human living, in which it operates a secret alchemy, a possible transubstantiation from body to soul" (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 49). Language is not lack, the cut off of the subject from the Real through the law of the Father, but a union, a relation from and with the carnal real of Being, the first relation being that with the mother.

> In order to think it, it is necessary to return behind oneself as same, and to consider the first constituting relation of subjectivity, the relation with the mother, where the body and the spirit remain present and often mingled. The so-called law of the father - which acts in onto-theology, particularly through its conception of unity, of Being, of thinking, of the same - will separate the logos from its carnal taking root, and above all from its anchorage in the relation with the other. (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 74)

In a wonderful passage, itself an exercise of Irigaray's own poetic prose, she passes from this love union between the body and soul of each of the two, to the love between the two as an elemental meeting within sexual difference, a sexual difference conceivable outside the specular and self-referential economy of the masculine subject, as critiqued by Irigaray in her reading of Lacanian psychoanalysis:

> This relation with myself and with the other is foreign to a specular narcissism; it remains related to the elemental matter, which constitutes the micro and the macrocosm. And if there is some mirror, this mirror is made of water, or living water. The beloved is expected with the return of the light; he appears thanks to the medium of the air, whose density allows radiance or not. The beloved is hoped for like the sun appearing from the clouds, he is dreaded like lightning, desired in the caress of the wind. Ecstasy in nature calls to mind ecstasy experienced with the lover, and the singularity of the union searched for with the lover does not preclude communion with nature. The unique one I wish to be for the beloved needs the intimate support of

> a universal element. Thanks to such an element, through that, we approach each other, maintaining our difference. We become both the one, and the other, and sometimes we discover mediations through which to meet, coming closer one to the other, visible or invisible, at various points of our paths, in different forms of our incarnation. (Irigaray, 2004b, p. 50)

Irigaray's conception of the union between body and spirit, body and language, is a "natural" and "immediate" extrapolation of the union between meaning and materiality, between the intelligible and the sensible as sexual difference in language. As carnal expression, language is a continuation of the sensible in its transcendence; not a rupture of the "human subject" from the "Real" through the Logos of the Man/Father, but rather an expressive faithfulness to the real (no quotation marks here) in its growing and self-becoming, of both woman and man. Language understood as such opens a different path for what the human might become. Becoming human, thus, necessitates first becoming woman and becoming man, respectively, through their own bodily and cultural cultivation, appropriate to their own real and rhythms of growing. For a "true" love between "real" subjects to be attained, we need first two subjects in their human becoming acknowledged as sexually differentiated. This becoming has to start from the closest and most original real possible, that is, from (within) oneself's Being as man and woman. Instead, so far:

> Strangely, man himself has not been considered as the productive ground of Being. The origin rather has been attributed to what appears as already produced by him. Projecting toward the past as well toward the future that which results from an unaccomplished status of the Being, which belongs to him, man finds himself encircled in a blindness that he confuses with the truth. (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 102)

Moreover, in order for "man" to become human, by becoming first man, he has to renounce monologuing with himself and projecting his partiality upon the whole of the world and the others, and to return to that first place where Being, and his Being, is already constituted as relational. This first (maternal) location is made of two, that is, a relation of difference between two ontico-ontological beings, which, moreover, "is what, most radically,

provides the relation between being and Being" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 103). Remembering this originary difference would escape the classical conceptualized knowledge and thinking would start, thus, anew: "In other words, the step to carry out toward the becoming of the human no longer obeys a science subjected to a traditional metaphysical representation" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 103). Constituted as a union between being and Being, man-human and woman-human have to fulfill this union respecting the difference(s) which they are, to cultivate their respective identities, both as a proper being and a proper Being (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 105). This difference between woman and man is, therefore, not a product of thought in the logic of the same of one subject, constituted inside a whole circled by thinking, but rather a real yet unthinkable and sensed only in the meeting and the speaking with another subject, through the "negativation of the whole of merely one subject as being the whole" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 107). Instead, this difference between the two, remained still unthought and masked by "immemorial forgetting," is a real excluded from thinking and reduced to simple naturalness and reproduction, an implication of which being that this dimension of identity remains uncultivated as human:

> Given the characteristics of reproduction, it is possible to say that identity then remains tied to an animality that prevents it from accomplishing a subjective becoming. What the human has at the beginning and what it has at the end are not put into a relation, and that leaves in abeyance what or who it really is. (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 109)

Having difference, thus, frozen in the immediate and the instinctual, the *being-two* and *being-with* of what the human is originarily is re-established fictitiously by a single (male) subject, in a non-appropriate manner and a totalizing projection according to his own particularities and necessities, perverting therefore the initial link to the real. This perversion in relation to the real prevents one of the two subjects to attain its (her) own Being and also hinders the "working towards the becoming of human being as *relation-to-the-other*" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 110; italics mine). Irigaray consequently argues that in order to speak of

the truth of being/Being, partially fictitious so far, we need to start again from a real made of three: "a real corresponding to the masculine subject, a real corresponding to the feminine subject, and a real corresponding to their own relation" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 111).[105] The speaking/unconcealment of the human real in its triple becoming as truth is, thus, both the *letting be* and the *making/working* of an interiority appropriate for each of the subject through negative paths such as withdrawals, silences, questionings, etc. (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 114).

> In a sense, the relation with the other leads to renouncing what we usually consider as finality. It constrains us to keep finality in suspense, so as to let the other be, to let the other come to encounter us without subjecting this other to our world. The finality of the one is not necessarily that of the other. In the other a stranger, a different culture approaches us that we cannot reduce to ourselves, to our imperatives. (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 116)

Moreover, the making of oneself in his or her own self-becoming means also to renounce "reducing the human itself, in oneself and in the other, to a being-at-the-disposal without faithfulness to resources of its own" (Irigaray, 2002b, p. 118). The humanity to come, that Irigaray envisages based on sexual/sexuate difference, is, accordingly, growing on the becomings of man and of woman as different reals in their own blossomings, as different unions between being and Being, whereby none of them is submitted to a violent and instrumentalizing logic which dominated so far the Western historical unfolding of the construction of only one (male) subject in relation to the others and the world. As a result, sexual difference, as humanity, is both real (Being) and thinking (Thought) as critical. It is critical, in the sense of being, first, a total critique, because it questions the very founding of a specific becoming of the "human." It reveals a sad (his)story, that of a "man" who lives in his fabricated fantasy of being already the "human" (an otherwise partial totality) at the expense

[105]As an implication of the discussion about re-thinking the real, Irigaray also speak of a triple dialectics: two dialectics of the male and female subjects in relation to himself and to herself, and a third, of the relation between the two subjects in difference. In *Thinking The Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution* (2001b, p. 39) she argues: "In *Speculum*, I wrote that to re-establish a political ethics a dual dialectic is necessary, one for the male subject and another for the female subject (pp. 223-4). Today I would say that a triple dialectic is necessary; one for the male subject, one for the female subject and one for their relationship as a couple or in a community".

of the lives of the radically different other(s), while still being just a male animal-not-yet-human. Secondly, sexual difference is critical because it is also affirmative and in a way optimistically redemptive, because what was neglected and casted outside the Thought of the one Subject (proved to be merely partial), is finally unearthed and revealed. Sexual difference as thinking is unconcealed as being more real and more universal as compared the man's partial real projected as universal reality.[106] Through sexual/sexuate difference as critical thinking we discover that what was negated was sexual difference as a real. At the same time, what is affirmed is the feminine subject, but what needs a second birth is the becoming of man.

Concluding, in the previous chapter and in this one, I have argued that, according to Irigaray, the cultural order (or the Symbolic, in psychoanalytical terms) is pervasively not only masculine, but also male, since "thought," dominated by "rationality," is a set of male imaginary phallomorphic projections predicated upon the "mechanics of solids," as experienced by men's bodies in relation to the world and the others. Moreover, this male imaginary is also an "anal" one, as it translates the appropriation of female sexuality and its reproductive power through the phantasmatic positing of the male anus as the source of life creation. Consequently, the valuation of "anality" might seem not necessarily a subversive tool, but rather just another symptom and not a source of male anxiety in itself. According to Irigaray's perspective, what is more threatening for the male imaginary projection onto and constitution of the world is the logic of fluids and fluidity. Positing, therefore, sexual difference, as an ontological difference between universal natural rhythms and fluids, supported by a phenomenological basis, Irigaray operates a direct challenge against this male Symbolic. Implicitly, turning to men's bodies, what has to be brought into cultural expression is that which was always negated form the beginning, i.e. male bodily fluids/openings. A

[106] For Irigaray, the distinction between real and reality is that the latter is man's formalized projection and constitution, or account, of the former. Irigaray reworks the "Real" of Lacan, by reversing the order in relation to language, arguing, in a Heideggerian conception of language, that the real precedes language.

feminist phenomenological approach towards the ways men experience the world with their bodies and perceptions of their bodily fluids/orifices on the one hand, and the ways minoritarian male experiences become culturally blocked, on the other one, might help us in finding exit points for facilitating novel masculine representational articulations undisconnected from and faithful to their own bodily real. In short, fluids have to breach into the male cultural organization of "human" relations. On the other hand, the re-imagining of male bodily experiences and ways of relating to the maternal and feminine bodies, as well as to other men's bodies (as suggested in the previous chapter), complements the rethinking of men's bodies and masculinities along the parameters of sexual difference understood in its ontological dimensions. In addition to its ontological character, sexuate difference is therefore understood as a relational process of identification based on particular and different ways for women and men of experiencing the others' bodies and the world in general.

Furthermore, the relational and experiential nature of sexual/sexuate difference as revaluation and affirmation of the relation with the maternal (and the feminine), in the subjective constitution of each and everyone, in contrast to the Lacanian psychoanalysis, permeates a conception of language based on the intertwinings between matter and meaning, the sensible and the transcendental; therefore, a language not cut off from its bodily belongings, but rather carnal expression and attunement with sexual/sexuate difference in its open-ended and internally differentiated manner of conveying the meaningfulness of the real. The transformation in the male language/discourse as effect of subjective reconfigurations becomes, therefore, the faithfulness of the masculine subjectivity to its bodily situatedness in relation to other bodies and the world, as a limited and relational subjectivity in its encounters and experiences. As finite and limited subjects in the world, men have finally to acknowledge their partial contribution to the construction of the world and of the human, previously masked by the pretention of being and representing the universal. It is in this sense that

Irigaray formulates a view of sexual difference along the lines of a feminist (experiential and relational) phenomenological ontology, a reworking, in particular, of Heidegger's own conception of phenomenological ontology. In the *Way of Love* (2002b, p. 19), Irigaray suggests that without taking into account sexual difference, even phenomenology as a method is not able to lay the ground for a different type of encounter between two human subjects. I believe an understanding of sexual difference as experiential and relational ontology accommodates the coexistence of sexual/sexuate difference as human ontology, in particular, and sexual/sexuate difference as ontological rhythmic bipolarity in nature, in general. It is about not the classical understanding of ontology, but rather of one in the phenomenological sense that thematizes the character and the being of our experiences, which, at the same time, talk about the nature of being in general[107]. As human ontology, sexual difference is premised on the need to start rethinking anew, at least from two human becomings differently sexuated: becoming woman and becoming man.

In the following chapter I will address the issue of the impossibility of "becoming-man" as postulated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004, p. 320) and I will argue, in relation to this, that Deleuze's conception of "critique," read through the lenses of Irigaray's sexual difference, can easily be applied to Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of "becomings." Through sexual difference, "becoming-man" will prove to be thinkable in its own terms, but outside the Deleuzian logic of positing "becomings", and in particular "becoming-woman" as the appropriate way of decentering the "Man" standard. This way, I aim at reworking the concept of "becoming-man," within the philosophy of sexual difference, as a figuration of what it might mean to be faithful to one's embodied sexuate nature in the processes of cultural becomings and articulations in novel and non-violent ways.

[107] I thank Professor Linda Fisher for raising and making this point much clearer to me.

Chapter 4. Sexual difference and the "becoming-man" of men

> Indeed, the aim of writing should not be representation but invention. (Colebrook, 2002, p. 4)

In the last two chapters, I have been indicating at times that one of the major themes in Irigaray's political and philosophical project (through which she proposes a non-patriarchal conception of a female feminine subjectivity conceivable and constructible on its own terms and, implicitly, a different envisioning of the relationships between women and men) is her discussion on "humanity" and on "becoming human." She does this through a specific questioning and a concomitant undermining of the historical Subject, unmasked by her as being the only "One," on the one hand, and as being actually the male subject, on the other hand. The partiality of this historical subject, both lived and imagined by the male masculine and concealed itself through a projection of an absolutization of this very partiality onto the entire world and the others, is revealed by Irigaray through a particular type of critique. This critical questioning is facilitated by a rethinking of "thought," which is fed by or "wedded," in Irigaray's own words, with the recognition of a bodily participation in the production of thought, that is, with the acknowledgement of sexual difference as conditioning the shaping of thought processes and structures. Or, as Tamsin Lorraine puts it, this critical thinking is the product of a blending between a "corporeal logics" and a "conceptual logics" (1999, p. 7). Thus, for Irigaray, sexual difference is both a way of engaging with the issues of the "real" of the world and the "thought" of "human" subjects, realizing a union between a real, lived differently by women and men, and a thought, attentive to its own roots and conditioning. Furthermore, sexual difference, while being more than a philosophical perspective to engage with (and not just one among theoretical frameworks from which one could chose), has tremendous political implications in opening up the imagining of different

subjectivities on behalf of both women and men by splitting the One Subject into two incommensurable subjects. For Irigaray, the becoming human is truly possible only by first creating the conditions for a culture through which to make possible, for the beginning, the becoming of at least two subjects: becoming (of) woman and becoming (of) man, whereby "each sex would then be 'other' for the other sex" (1991, p. 25). It is also true that Irigaray argues that becoming woman might actually be the condition for the becoming of man (she calls it a "rebirth of man") since it is only from the particular historical positions women have inherited and lived their lives through that a critique of the patriarchal relations is made possible in order to offer an alternative way of constructing and living a social life.

> What can assist the woman in becoming subject is the discovery of the other, the masculine, as horizontally transcendent, and not vertically transcendent, to her. It is not the submission to the law of the Father that can permit the woman to become herself, corporeally and culturally, but the conscious and voluntary recognition in love and in civility, of the other as other. *This cultural becoming of the woman will then be able to help the man to become man, and not only master and father of the world, as he has to often been in History. It seems that the woman must give birth to the man not only bodily but also spiritually.* (Irigaray, 2004a, p. 27; italics mine)

Irigaray is not the only philosopher to propose the becoming of woman as a way of imagining another subjectivity for both women and men and the many "others" excluded from the patriarchal ordering of sexual difference. In a different line, male philosophers also gave alternative accounts for transformations in "human subjectivity," by appealing to "images" or "figures" of "woman," Gilles Deleuze, Jacque Derrida and Francois Lyotard being notable names among them.[108] In particular, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's joint work proposes "becoming-woman" as a critique of the so-called universal subject of history singularly embodied by Man, a becoming-woman that would be considered by them as the

[108] Alice Jardine referred to this male tendency of using "the feminine" or "the woman" as "tropology of the feminine in French theory" (1985, p. 39). For many feminist thinkers (such as Rosi Braidotti and Seyla Benhabib), the death of subjectivity, so much prophesized by postmodern male philosophers, might let the "death of man" to have the potential to be the appropriation of "woman" by men.

key figuration for any other type of subjective formation and positioning, even for men. According to their philosophical and political project, becoming-man would not be then possible, however, in this subjective reconfiguration.

The current chapter addresses this aspect and develops the idea that sexual difference, as both critical thinking and real, that is, understood in both ontological and epistemological terms, might actually help conceive both becomings as possible, even if not in a closed Deleuzian framework. In addition, I will also show that Irigaray's conception of critical thinking is quite close to that of Deleuze and that their questionings of the historical subject converge in many aspects. In many regards, both Irigaray and Deleuze (and also Deleuze and Guattari) share similar positions when critiquing the traditional understanding of philosophy and the nature of philosophical thought on which the notion of (masculine) human subjectivity is based, as well as when they set off to propose ways of escaping patriarchal conception of identities and subjectivities through constructing new images of thought. However, when applied to Deleuze and Guattari's view on "becoming-woman," Deleuze's conception of "critique," read through Irigaray's sexual difference, might reveal itself susceptible of repeating the same type of error pointed out through this very "critique", that is, the un-acknowledgement of sexual difference as an ontological difference.

4.1 The critique of representational thought

Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, in particular the chapter on "becomings" (2004, pp. 256-341), may strike the reader with by now the already famous question: "Why are there so many becomings of man, but no becoming-man" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 320). Their answer goes like this:

> There is no becoming-man because man is the molar entity par excellence, whereas becomings are molecular. (…) Man constitutes the majority, or rather the standard on which the majority is based: white, male, adult, 'rational', etc., in short, the average European, the subject of enunciation. (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 322)

Simply put, the inconceivability of the "becoming-man" rests then on the idea that "Man" represents the reference point (the norm, the standard) in relation to which everything else is measured, defined and evaluated. "Man" is a majority in terms of exclusionary power relations. "Masculinity" (as the set of those axes of signification mentioned in the quotation) is the "Center," whose fixity is translated through the notion of "Being." "Man" rejects, consequently, the spaces of becomings, of the permanent mutations and divergences from the norm, by looking always for stable borders. That is why, for Deleuze and Guattari, one cannot imagine a "becoming-man."

Furthermore, this perspective, quite close to that formulated in feminist critiques, attacks the very logic that is pervasive within the Western practices, institutions and modes of relationality. This hierarchical and oppositional thinking is substantiated through different binary pairs like man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, rational/emotional, and many others. What Deleuze and Guattari do in their work in relation to this kind of logic is to destabilize it, dismantling the humanist masculinist Subject, i.e. the Man-standard, and temporarily privileging minoritarian positionings. The most minoritarian of all minor stances seems to be, for them, the "Woman" position, even if it still represents a "molar" entity (i.e. fixed, pre-coded set of stratified attributes of the patriarchal "femininity"). One can argue that the *binarium famosissimum* of Western thinking is exactly that which sets up and maintains the *man* (incorporeal/mind) and *woman* (corporeal/body) divide, that is the patriarchal conception of sexual difference that Irigaray is unmasking and critiquing in her entire project. That is why, for Deleuze and Guattari, "becoming-woman" is apparently the most important path in subverting the entire dualistic logic, given the special relation of "Woman" to the

"Man-standard," perspective adjacent to that of Irigaray's when urging for the imagining of a female feminine subjectivity standing on its own definable terms. In this formulation, since the "Man" as a standard is a fixed, stable majority in axiological terms, one cannot therefore conceive of a "becoming-man," i.e. a minoritarian position (becoming-man) that would derive from a centered one (Man), since becomings are always already decentered, continuous, and divergent from any fixed norm.

Nonetheless, one issue is that "Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming-woman is premised on the destratification from the man-standard. Such a premise threatens to leave the man-standard intact" (Lorraine, 1999, p. 187). Privileging the minoritarian position risks keeping in power the Center. This is where my thesis intends to interfere and show that one can actually imagine and propose this seemingly impossible "becoming-man" as a modality of undermining the "Man-standard." What happens if one imagines a "becoming-man" as an assemblage encounter between a "nomadic subjectivity" (as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari) and Luce Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference? I want to show that Deleuze's figuration of nomadic subjectivity might be promising in re-thinking men and masculinities as a flight away from the "Man-standard," but with one crucial difference. What might be also at stake here is that:

> Deleuze's, and Deleuze and Guattari's maps of alternative subjectivity (e.g., the Nietzschean celibate machine, the nomadic subject, the Kafkian bachelor agent) imply that personal subjectivity entails oedipalization; challenging the man-standard thus entails depersonalizing line of flight. *But until or unless we are prepared to abandon personal identity, depersonalizing lines of flight can only evade the man-standard, leaving the contemporary economy of subjectivity intact rather than transforming it.* Mapping a new kind of personal identity – an identity that is open-ended process rather than a molar entity – could be more effective. (Lorraine, 1999, p. 188; italics mine)

One possible task then is to redefine personal "identities" instead of erasing them (as Deleuze and Guattari seem to do) and one option, I hope, is through inflecting "becomings" with "sexual difference," overcoming therefore their apparent sexual indifference.[109]

In the following, I unpack this position and contextualize the argument within the larger philosophical project developed in the works of both Gilles Deleuze and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's. I first explicate the understanding of Gilles Deleuze's notion of "critique" and its application to his analysis of the philosophical thought so as to facilitate my subsequent argument that this kind of critique could apply as well to Deleuze and Guattari's position on "becoming-man," but with a necessary difference, i.e. sexual difference, which I consider as already presupposed in their understanding of becoming-woman. After I discuss Gilles Deleuze's critique of the philosophical thought as a critique of representational thought and the location of "becoming-woman" in this critique, as well as some of the feminist critical replies to this notion, I move to a discussion on "becoming-man" as an explicit ontological reaffirmation of sexual difference, with some caveats, given the historical privileged position of the masculine subject.

In the beginning of the conclusion to *Difference and Repetition* (1994), the section titled "Critique of representation," Gilles Deleuze argues that *difference* cannot be thought in its own terms as long as it is subjected to the requirements of *representation/identity*. Therefore, he proceeded on developing a critique of representation and of thought as they operate in philosophical thinking up to his own times.

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (2002) and then in *Difference and Repetition* (1994) Gilles Deleuze builds up and unfolds a specific understanding of "critique." In the former

[109] Rosi Braidotti's extensive work (*Patterns of Disonance*, 1991; *Nomadic Subjects*, 1994; *Metamorphoses*, 2002; *Transpositions*, 2006; *The Posthman*, 2013) stands as a major reference in thinking differently the relationship between the Deleuze and Guttari's nomadology and Irigaray's sexual difference philosophy.

book, he argues that "Kant was the first philosopher to understand critique as having to be total and positive *as* critique" (2002, p. 89), meaning that "nothing must escape it" and thus it should show the genesis of what it has been criticized, on the one hand, and that, dismantling that something under critique, it also unravels something new, affirmative, "because it can not restrict the power of knowing without releasing other previously neglected powers," on the other hand.

> As a general rule, the critique of the negative remains ineffective so long as it assumes as given the form of affirmation ready made in the proposition. The critique of the negative is radical and well grounded only when it carries out a genesis of affirmation and, *simultaneously,* the genesis of the appearance of negation. (1994, p. 206; italics in original)

Deleuze uses this understanding of critique precisely when engaging with the problem of a specific "image of thought" (a set of suppositions about what it means to think) which, for him, is internal to Western philosophical thought, and consequently, a true critique should concentrate on the destruction of this image of thought "which presupposes itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself." (1994, p. 139). According to Deleuze, both philosophy and the history of philosophy operated as agents of power in thought, meaning that, by playing the "repressor's role" (based on the imposition of the epistemic acknowledgment through the mandatory engagement with the philosophical canon), philosophical thinking constructed an image of thought on the basis of notions, themes and methods borrowed from the idea of an ideal State. In *Dialogues* (1987, p. 13) he argues:

> For thought borrows its properly philosophical image from the state as beautiful, substantial or subjective interiority. It invents a properly spiritual State, as an absolute state, which is by no means a dream, since it operates effectively in the mind. Hence the importance of notions such as universality, method, question and answer, judgment, or recognition, of just correct, always having correct ideas. Hence the importance of themes like those of a republic of spirits, an enquiry of the understanding, a court of reason, a pure 'right' of thought, with ministers of Interior and bureaucrats of pure thought. Philosophy is shot through with the project of becoming the official language of a Pure State. The exercise of thought thus conforms to the goals of the real State, to the dominant meanings and to the requirements of the established order.

This image of thought, as a whole organization that shapes thought according to the norms of an order of power becomes in the Deleuzian philosophical project one crucial element of critique. Basically, as I will show later, this image of thought as *representation*, for Deleuze, characterizes philosophy in its entirety, whereby the concept of *identity* subordinates the concept of *difference*.

> There are four principal aspects to 'reason' in so far as it is the medium of representation: identity, in the form of the *undetermined* concept; analogy, in the relation between ultimate *determinable* concepts; opposition, in the relation between *determinations* within concepts; resemblance, in the *determined* object of the concept itself. These forms are like the four heads or the four shackles of mediation. Difference is 'mediated' to the extent that it is subjected to the fourfold root of identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance. (1994, p. 29; italics in original)

The concept of "difference," in Deleuze's critique, is conceptualized in the operating of thought as a mere function of the concept of "identity", i.e., a negative one (therefore extrinsic and empirical, as something between two terms with one not being the other), as a mode of specification or division for the concept of identity (based on the Aristotelian model of the genera and species). This image of thought dominating philosophy fails to see itself as just one point of view among others and, implicitly, as non-universal, since "illegitimately universalizes its own contingent perspective without determining the *conditions* under which this perspective is possible and the *limits* to which it is subject" (Bryant, 2008, p.16; italics in original). This critique seems to be quite close to Irigaray's examination of the partiality of both the philosophical thought and of the masculine subjectivity.

In other words, the movement/processes of thought as such turned equated with a specific image of how to think on the basis of the model of *recognition*, namely of assuming something to be true just because it is familiar, recognizable for us. In this light, Deleuze set himself to offer a compelling critique of representation/thought by revealing its true genesis/movement and at the same time by liberating the affirmative power of the difference

understood on its own (as self-related, internal and generative), one not relative to something else.

How does this critical movement take place more specifically? In the following I discuss in more detail Deleuze's critique of the way the notion of difference was conceptualized and subordinated to certain requirements of the representational thinking in Western philosophical systems starting with Plato and Aristotle and continuing with Leibniz and Hegel up to contemporary philosophical conceptions. I briefly discuss Deleuze's "postulates" characterizing the image of thought, regulating both thought in general and the philosophical thinking in particular. For Deleuze, these postulates also translate two phases of the genesis/movement of thought, the first being the one from "sensible singularity"/"sensation" to what he calls "Idea"/"sense" ("the dynamic genesis") and the second one being the movement from "Idea" to "representation"/"propositions" ("the static genesis").[110] These two stages in the movement of thought are strongly connected to Deleuze's particular reworking of the Kantian doctrine of faculties, that is, of the process from sensibility to imagination, then to memory and finally to thought. This way, Deleuze proposes another way of thinking of how thought works and how representation relates to its object, revealing subsequently a different conceptualization of "difference" and its affirmative and transformative power in political terms.

The requirements of representation shaping thought are called by Deleuze the "the four iron collars": a) identity in the concept, b) opposition in the predicate, c) analogy in judgment and d) resemblance in perception (1994, p. 262) and all these four are the basis of "the

[110] In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze calls the movement from sensation to sense the *dynamic genesis* because it begins in the movement of "unindividuated bodies," understood as pure events of action, passion and interaction (1990, p. 192). The movement from sense to propositions or representation is called *static genesis* because it begins in a time without movement, or what Deleuze calls "the empty form of time" or "Aion" (1990, p. 62; 1990, p. 165). In short, for Deleuze the two geneses describe the movement from corporeal depths (or the time of "Chronos", of infinite present) to sense (Aion) and from then to propositional consciousness (the time of Chronos, but of the representations in successions). In other words, the unindividuated and chaotic matter from the acting and reacting corporeal depths is individuated in the order of language (1990, p. 168).

principle of reason" which makes *difference* both to exist and to be thinkable:

> [T]his path is a dead end, which brings it back to identity, making identity the sufficient condition for difference to exist and be thought. It is only in relation to the identical, as a function of the identical, that contradiction is the *greatest* difference. (1994, p. 263; italics in original)

In relation to Aristotle, Deleuze is concerned with the issue of either defining difference in terms of prior categories or showing that categories actually presuppose difference. For Aristotle, the essence of difference as the greatest difference is the predicate opposition between species of a same genus, while completely different things are mere others and cannot be captured under one category so their difference is left outside as unthinkable. Why is this problematic? First, from a formal point of view, according to Deleuze, Aristotle didn't find the greatest difference. The one he postulated is actually based on a specific difference between the species, which cannot account for the difference between genera. On the other hand, the specific difference is dependent on the definition of the genus. As James Williams (2003, p. 62) puts it: "So specific difference cannot be difference in itself since some differences elude it and since the definition of difference depends on the definition of concepts that itself depends on the definition of genres. Aristotle has not arrived at the essence of difference."

However, Deleuze finds in Aristotle's view on difference some challenging qualities: it is *productive* ("It is productive, since genera are not divided into differences but divided by differences which give rise to corresponding species", 1994, p. 31), *synthetic* ("It is synthetic, since the determination of species is composition, and the difference is actually added to the genus in which it was hitherto only virtually included", 1994, p. 31) and also a synthesis in the act of *specification*:

> The determination of species links difference with difference across the successive levels of division, like a transport of difference, a *diaphora* (difference) of *diaphora*, until a final difference, that of the *infima species* (lowest species), condenses in the

> chosen direction the entirety of the essence and its continued quality, gathers them under an intuitive concept and grounds them along with the term to be defined, thereby becoming itself something unique and indivisible [*atomon, adiaphoron, eidos*]. (1994, p. 31; italics in original)

Despite these characteristics, in Aristotle's perspective, difference will remain caught within the concept, meaning it will remain as thought only in relation to the concept it divides, on the one hand, and as "a predicate in the comprehension of a concept" (1994, p. 32), on the other hand. Simply put, Aristotle, according to Deleuze, confused the concept of difference with conceptual difference or as Joe Hughes summarizes: "He confused difference in the concept for a concept of difference." (2009, p. 42). Notwithstanding some philosophical moments, such as the Leibnizian or Hegelian projects, when representation moved towards being extended to infinity (more infinite) or more finite (i.e. incorporating difference as the infinitely large or the infinitely small of difference, on the one hand, or fixing difference as neither the too large nor the too small), Deleuze argues that representation remained blocked, because it "*nevertheless does not acquire the power to affirm either divergence or decentering"* (1994, p. 263; italics in original). Consequently, Deleuze asks a central question and his project becomes the elaboration of this question: "What motivated the subordination of difference to the requirements of finite or infinite representation?" His answer is the following:

> This Platonic wish to exorcize simulacra is what entails the subjection of difference. For the model can be defined only by a positing of identity as the essence of the Same [*auto kath' hauto*], and the copy by an affection of internal resemblance, the quality of the Similar. Moreover, because the resemblance is internal, the copy must itself have an internal relation to being and the true, which is analogous to that of the model. Finally, the copy must be constructed by means of a method which, given two opposed predicates, attributes to it the one which agrees with the model. In all these ways, copies are distinguished from simulacra only by subordinating difference to instances of the Same, the Similar, the Analogous and the Opposed. No doubt with Plato these instances are not yet distributed as they will be in the deployed world of representation (from Aristotle onwards). Plato inaugurates and initiates because he evolves within a theory of Ideas, which will allow the deployment of representation. In his case, however, a moral motivation in all its purity is avowed: the will to eliminate simulacra or phantasms has no motivation apart from the moral. What is

> condemned in the figure of simulacra is the state of free, oceanic differences, of nomadic distributions and crowned, anarchy, along with all that malice which challenges both the notion of the model and that of the copy. (1994, p. 265; italics in original)

This explanation echoes the discussion on the philosophical thought as a particular organization of thinking submitted to the requirements of power, ordering a "reality" which is anarchic in its expressions and which gets tamed through a transcendental illusion. This illusion has four dimensions corresponding to *Being, Sensibility, Idea* and *Thought*. These dimensions became four postulates of an image of thought, or what Deleuze calls "a dogmatic image of thought", meant to distort both the operation and the genesis of thinking as such and they "culminate in the position of an identical thinking subject, which functions as a principle of identity for concepts in general" (Deleuze, 1994, p. 265). Before going into presenting these postulates, I will first mention that, for Deleuze, representation implies various meanings, such as "thought", "concept", "form of identity", "thing" in general, thing as it is represented, an "object", "the perceptual world", but all these refer apparently to the objects as they are represented in their qualities and spatial extensions (1994, p. 235; 1994, p. 281). The first postulate is what Deleuze calls "*Cogitatio natura universalis*'" and it is introduced in his discussion on objective and subjective presuppositions. For example, in Deleuze's view, Descartes:

> (…) In presenting the Cogito as a definition, he therefore claims to avoid all the objective presuppositions, which encumber those procedures that operate by genus and difference. It is clear, however, that he does not escape presuppositions of another kind - subjective or implicit presuppositions contained in opinions rather than concepts: it is presumed that everyone knows, independently of concepts, what is meant by self, thinking, and being. The pure self of 'I think' thus appears to be a beginning only because it has referred all its presuppositions back to the empirical self. (1994, p. 129)

In other words, this postulate establishes that there is a universal capacity to think which strives towards truth or what is true and "that thought is about sharable truths that we want to share" (Williams, 2003, p. 115):

> This element consists only of the supposition that thought is the natural exercise of a faculty, of the presupposition that there is a natural capacity for thought endowed with a talent for truth or an affinity with the true, under the double aspect of a *good will on the part of the thinker* and an *upright nature on the part of thought.* It is because everybody naturally thinks that everybody is supposed to know implicitly what it means to think. The most general form of representation is thus found in the element of a common sense understood as an upright nature and a good will *(Eudaxus* and orthodoxy). The implicit presupposition of philosophy may be found in the idea of a common sense as *Cagitatia natura universalis.* On this basis, philosophy is able to begin. (1994, p. 131; italics in original)

In this sense, for Deleuze, the conceptual philosophical thought is based on the presupposition of a pre-philosophical moral image of thought, taken from the common sense, and thus, thought has a specific relation of affinity with the "true" towards which everybody is directed, since everybody is presumed to know what it means to think (1994, p. 131). Consequently, according to Deleuze, for thought to begin to truly think it has to relinquish this pre-philosophical image, this subjective presupposition and take as its starting point a radical critique of this very Image.

The second postulate refers to the "common sense" illusion and it is based on the idea that thought operates harmoniously with all its faculties (perception, memory, imagination, understanding, etc.), in a *concordia facultatum*, in order to explain its object of investigation. According to the third postulate, namely the "good sense", as an objective correlate to the "common sense", the object is supposed to be *recognized* as the same for and by each

faculty.[111] In other words, the unity is to be found now not only in the harmonious exercise of the faculties but also in the object[112].

> There is indeed a model, in effect: that of recognition. Recognition may be defined by the harmonious exercise of all the faculties upon a supposed same object: the same object may be seen, touched, remembered, imagined or conceived. (…) An object is recognized, however, when one faculty locates it as identical to that of another, or rather when all the faculties together relate their given and relate themselves to a form of identity in the object. (1994, p. 133)

The fourth postulate is made up of the previous ones and creates the "element of representation", that is, in order to grasp an object we depend on "similarity in perception", "opposition in imagination", "analogy in the judgment", and "identity in the concept":

> Such is the world of *representation* in general. We said above that representation was defined by certain elements: identity with regard to concepts, opposition with regard to the determination of concepts, analogy with regard to judgment, resemblance with regard to objects. The identity of the unspecified concept constitutes the form of the Same with regard to recognition. The determination of the concept implies the comparison between possible predicates and their opposites in a regressive and progressive double series, traversed on the one side by remembrance and on the other by an imagination the aim of which is to rediscover or re-create (memorial-imaginative reproduction). Analogy bears either upon the highest determinable concepts or on the relations between determinate concepts and their respective objects. It calls upon the power of distribution present in judgment. As for the object of the concept, in itself or in relation to other objects, it relies upon resemblance as a requirement of perceptual continuity. Each element thus appeals to one particular faculty, but is also established across different faculties within the context of a given common sense (for example, the resemblance between a perception and a remembrance). The 'I think' is the most general principle of representation - in other words, the source of these elements and of the unity of all these faculties: I conceive, I judge, I imagine, I remember and I perceive - as though these were the four branches of the Cogito. On precisely these branches, difference is crucified. (1994, pp. 137-138; italics in original)

[111] Todd May (2005, p. 76) nicely explains Deleuze's use of "common sense" and "good sense": "Deleuze does not choose the terms common sense and good sense arbitrarily. They have resonance for us. Common sense: that is what everyone who can navigate their way through life with a minimum of success possesses. To have common sense is to be able to recognize what is obvious. (…) Good sense: that is what everyone with good intuitions has. To have good sense is to know one's way around what is there. These are not the meanings Deleuze gives to the terms; but he is aware of the connotations they possess."

[112] Deleuze explains: "(…) we must refer to the precise difference between these two complementary instances, *common sense* and *good sense*. For while common sense is the norm of identity from the point of view of the pure Self and the form of the unspecified object which corresponds to it, good sense is the norm of distribution from the point of view of the empirical selves and the objects qualified as this or that kind of thing (which is why it is considered to be universally distributed). Good sense determines the contribution of the faculties in each case, while common sense contributes the form of the Same". (1994, pp. 133-134; italics in original)

In *Gilles Deleuze. An Introduction*, Todd May offers an example of how representational thought works:

> *What is that?* (A question of recognition.) *It looks like a cow*. (Resemblance, supported by the categories of good sense.) *I remember what cows look like*. (Common sense.) *It surely isn't a steer; they have horns.* (Opposition.) *It has hooves like a steer, though*. (Analogy.) *But it's a cow. In fact, it's the same cow I saw in that meadow yesterday*. (Identity). (2005, p. 79 italics in original)

And in doing so, representational thought "fails to capture the affirmed *world of difference*. Representation has only a single center, a unique and receding perspective, and in consequence a false depth. It mediates everything, but mobilizes and moves nothing" (Deleuze, 1994, pp. 55-56; italics mine).

Deleuze negates this dogmatic image of thought and reverses each postulate. Since all the first four postulates relate, according to Deleuze, to the movement of thought from the immediate object of sensibility to the Idea of that object, an inversion of these postulates would reveal a dynamic genesis that is sub-representative. The contemplated object is actually fragmented and not unified, according to a set of faculties that do not work harmoniously. Thought is thus not given and not co-extensive with the pursuit of truth (Hughes, 2009, p. 72). Rather, for Deleuze, thought is one faculty among other faculties (such as sensibility, imagination and memory) arranged along a "discordant" genetic line that activates when confronted with an encounter with the material impressions of the world (Deleuze, 1994, p. 139). Deleuze sees this encounter as being violent, as it forces the birth of thinking, as a solution to a problem occurred. The object of the encounter "forces us to think" starting with sensibility along the other faculties, from sensible singularities to Ideas. Deleuze calls this sensibility "transcendental sensibility", since the object is fragmented and not represented as in the "empirical sensibility" of human consciousness, with quality and

extensity as a full object. The first half of the movement of thought (the dynamic genesis), thus, passes on the fragmented object of the encounter from sensibility to imagination, memory and thought, according to a line from sensible singularity to Idea (or essences as products of thought).

The second half of the movement of thought starts with the Idea passing towards representation and is called by Deleuze "static genesis", characterized by other four postulates. All of them refer to the process of production of knowledge, whereby Ideas are actualized from sense into propositions.

For Deleuze a proposition is characterized by four relations: *denotation* (relating to an external, individuated "thing" or "state of affairs"), *manifestation* (relating to the one who speaks, the psychological subject of language), *signification* (relating to what one speaks, to the concept or the meaning of the proposition) and *sense* (the virtual, the Idea), which is the element generating both the propositions and the empirical consciousness co-extensive with representation (Deleuze, 1990, p. 181). Since there is an apparent vicious circle of co-determination between denotation, manifestation and signification, Deleuze argues that there must be something prior, pre-propositional, that determines the formation of representations, and this is the *sense* of the object, thing or state of affairs, to be "solved" by thought in language through propositions. This is also the "differen*t*/*citation*" process of actualization of the virtual/sense/idea (the problem) into representations (solutions), that is, into determinate, individuated "objects" (with quality, extension and time) as represented to propositional consciousness (Deleuze, 1994, p. 209). When mind is confronted with the horizon of "what happens or what appears", or with what Deleuze calls *ideal or differential elements*, thought sets off itself to make sense of them, that is to determine these indeterminacies through *differential relations* into *singularities* or Ideas with repeatable form (Deleuze, 1994, p. 278). This is the differen*t*iation process of Ideas in their virtuality. These Ideas are the problem

determined by thought at this stage as the virtual side of the object of perception to be later fully determined, which is now just "a thing in Idea" as Deleuze names it in *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (1953-1974).

> If it is true that qualification and partition constitute the two aspects of differentiation, it follows that the Idea actualizes itself through differentiation. When the Idea actualizes itself, it differentiates itself. In itself and in its virtuality, the Idea is completely *undifferentiated.* However, it is not at all indeterminate. We must absolutely underline the difference between the two operations, whose *distinctive trait is* this: — , differential (1) / differentiation (n). The Idea in itself, or the thing in Idea, is not at all *differentiated,* since it lacks the necessary qualities and parts. But it is fully and completely *differential,* since it has at its disposal the relations and singularities that will be actualized, without resemblance, in the qualities and parts. It seems, then, that each thing has two "halves"—uneven, dissimilar, and unsymmetrical—each of which is itself divided into two: an *ideal half,* which reaches into the virtual and is constituted both by differential relations and by concomitant singularities; and an actual half, constituted both by the qualities that incarnate those relations and by the parts that incarnate those singularities. The question of the *"ens omni modo determinatum"* must be posed in the following way: a thing in Idea can be completely determined *{differential),* and yet lack the determinations that constitute actual existence *{the thing is undifferentiated).* (2004, p. 100; italics in original)

This progressive determination ends with the full actualization of the Ideas into representations of things in the empirical human consciousness (differenciation): actualizing differential relations into qualities and singularities into extensities, Ideas become objects or things of representational consciousness (Deleuze, 1994, p. 210). As we can see, the movement of thought (through the two types of geneses, dynamic and static) starts from corporeal depths towards the propositional consciousness, passing through three types of orders: the primary order of the undifferentiated corporeal forces (sensibility, sensation), the secondary organization of sense (the virtual/Idea) which is produced by the first order, and the tertiary order of the propositions (representations) which is conditioned by the second organization (of the sense) in the movement of thought.

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze even uses a psychoanalytical language to account for the formation of both thought and human subject and consciousness. Affected by multiple

and various external forces, the body of the infant and its ego work on to escape from the chaotic materiality and corporeal depths. Though not being yet a constituted body, the body of the infant solves the bombardment of actions and reactions of the external world by synthesizing the perceptions of all the fragments and objects (partial objects) affecting the body. Deleuze calls this body, as this stage, "the body without organs", described as "a liquid principle capable of binding all of the morsels together, and of surmounting such breaking apart in the full depth of a body (finally without organs)" (1990, p. 189). In short, the body without organs is the infant's bodily power of synthesizing the initial impressions affecting it as a way of escaping from materiality, a process that is quite *meaningless*, that is, the corporeal depths are just "noise", pure materiality and physical phenomena as vibrations of matter, air or of light penetrating and invading the body of the infant (1990, pp. 87-88). In order for language to be possible, the ego of the body without organs has to escape the corporeal depths so as to differentiate between various types of sounds impressing the body, to liberate them from pure passions and pure matter (1990, p. 181).

The dynamic genesis is to be found precisely at this stage through the participation of the body without organs as a fluid principle of synthesizing the body's affections on the path of the genesis of sense and, later, of representations. Deleuze also calls this connective synthesis "pregenital sexuality", because it is responsible for the constitution of "partial surfaces" of erogenous zones. A second synthesis, a conjunctive one, of which the genital zone is responsible for, will bring all these partial surfaces/erogenous zones together and coordinate them into a whole surface to form a full body of "genital sexuality" (1990, p. 201). The body without organs/the infant's bodily ego makes the passage from the first synthesis to the second one through the contemplation of the objects affecting it and, subsequently, through a contemplation of the images of those objects. The body escapes the violence of the corporeal depths by generating images of that fragmented active materiality. These images

are then coordinated by the image of the phallus producing a global picture of the ego and of its affections (Hughes, 2008, p. 32). In an overt psychoanalytical language, Deleuze argues that a third (disjunctive) synthesis, also called "oedipal sexuality", comes into play, trying to bring together the previous two syntheses, but eventually failing to do so. Deleuze equates the first connective synthesis with the maternal body and the "mother image" (1990, p. 204) and the second one with the phallus or the "father image" organizing the infant's bodily confrontation with pure materiality. This third synthesis fails because there is an apparent insurmountable incompatibility between these two images: while the mother body is considered to having no principle of corporeal organization, the father body represents the unifying principle abstracted from corporeality. The ego of the infant has to move further away from this failure in order to make sense of its affections, since it loses at this first stage the phallus, that is, the principle of organizing its physical surfaces and body. This "castration" however does not throw the infant's body back to corporeal depths, but pushes it towards entirely different incorporeal and metaphysical surfaces as a new kind of organization and genesis of sense (1990, p. 208). So far, all these processes describe what was previously called a dynamic genesis of thought and representations, passing from the first order of the corporeal depths and sensibility to the secondary order of sense. Here, sense is produced through the mechanisms of *sublimation* (according to which the sexual surfaces are projected onto the surface of thought; becoming liberated incorporeal affections or what in *Difference and Repetition* appear as "ideal elements") and *symbolization* (according to which everything from the surface of thought is reorganized and reinvested by thought; or the ideal synthesis of difference from *Difference and Repetition*). In other words, the sense/the idea/the virtual is produced through the transfer of bodily affections and impressions (from the corporeal depths and the body without organs) as material fragments onto the level of thought as incorporeal. Being thus liberated from material origins and forces, thought

synthesizes them as Event, but returns to that materiality by individuating it and offering determinate characteristics (quality, extensity and temporality). This return represents the second half of the movement of thought, that is, the static genesis according to which the event/idea/singularity is brought into the forms of an object and subject (the denoted and the manifested) that can function in language (Hughes, 2008, p. 76). Based on these two aspects, signification (concept/generality) is produced through the subject's ability to maintain itself as stable and identical across different worlds, stability which makes language possible for the empirical consciousness (Hughes, 2008, p. 78).

According to Joe Hughes (2008, 2009), the description of the genesis of the representational thought, identifiable in Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, can also be found in Deleuze and Guattari's join work *Anti-Oedipus*. In here the corporeal depths form the first order of sensibility and partial, fragmented impressions, affections and objects are called *molecular:* "*partial object are the molecular functions of the unconscious*" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 325; italics in original), whereas the tertiary order of language and representations is made up by *molar* aggregates of cognition. These orders are produced through syntheses along two distinct types of geneses: a dynamic one called *desiring-production* and a static genesis called *social production*. In the first genesis, the body without organs is produced as a synthesis of hyletic data, as apprehension of the outside with its linked and interrupted flows and connected partial objects, on the one hand, and, secondly, when saturated, as a paranoiac bodily machine which escapes the sensible materiality and its partial surfaces returning to them as meaningless signs, on the other hand. Or, in other words, in this genesis, the body without organs first synthesizes the impressions and the material of perception and, subsequently, records/memorizes the synthesized data in the form of intensities (as degrees/quantities of affections). At this stage of the body without organs, as a field of intensities, the bodily ego becomes a nomadic subject, albeit not a real

subject entirely separated from its conditions of emergence. As Hughes argues, it seems that Deleuze and Guattari understand by the notion of the body without organs the bodily ego which traverses from apprehension of the outside (a "paranoiac machine" repressing partial objects/molecular perceptions), to the recording or reproduction of that outside (a "miraculating machine" attracting and memorizing partial objects) and then to affections thus produced (a "celibate machine" which reconciles the previous two syntheses into intensities and enjoys them by itself alone). Hughes clarifies:

> Each one of these machines is also a way of looking at the position of the body without organs in each passive synthesis. In the first passive synthesis, the body without organs is produced as a material part alongside other parts. As a paranoiac machine, it exists alongside partial objects and *repels* them in what Deleuze and Guattari called 'primary repression' (…). In the second synthesis, the body without organs attracts partial objects to its surface by recording them and appropriates them as thought they had not just produced it, as though it were self-caused. The third synthesis completes the reconciliation between the body without organs and partial objects, which had begun in the attraction of the second synthesis. (2008, p. 75)

The bodily subject represented by the body without organs in the desiring-production reaches the stage where it can make sense of these affections in order to be subsequently individuated as objects ("objectities") for human consciousness. Desire, as molecular multiplicity is just intensity and not yet extensity (outside of itself, as in a subject-object relationship). In the second genesis, through determination into subject-object dyad, desiring-production becomes social production of "molar aggregates" as "objectities" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 343). Deleuze and Guattari employ a Marxist terminology on the historical development of stratified social structure, but still retain a conceptual apparatus that would give an account about the production of representations. As in the first genesis, the body without organs passes through three different stages or syntheses: the body of the earth (under the territorial age of alliances; also called the connective synthesis), the body of the despotic

(in the despotic age of filiation; the disjunctive synthesis) and the body of capital (in capitalism/surplus value; the conjunctive synthesis).

> For it is less a question of abundance or scarcity, of a spring or the exhaustion of a spring (even the drying up of a spring is a flow), than of what is codable or noncodable. The germinal flow is such that it amounts to the same to say that everything would pass or flow with it, or on the contrary, that everything would be blocked. For the flows to be codable, their energy must allow itself to be quantified and qualified; it is necessary that selections from the flows be made in relation to detachments from the chain: something must pass through but something must also be blocked, and something must block and cause to pass through. Now this is possible only in the system in extension that renders persons discernible, that makes a determinate use of signs, an exclusive use of the disjunctive syntheses, and a conjugal use of the connective syntheses. Such is indeed the meaning of the incest prohibition conceived as the establishment of a physical system in extension: one must look in each case for the part of the flow of intensity that passes through, for what does not pass, and for what causes passage or prevents it, according to the patrilateral or matrilateral nature of the marriages, according to the patrilineal or matrilineal nature of the lineages, according to the general regime of the extended filiations and the lateral alliances. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 163)

The first two syntheses are coordinated in a third one, namely the incest prohibition that coordinates both filiation and alliance by determining marriage according to lineage (alliances according to filiations) (Hughes, 2009, p. 87). Through various historical methods (myths for territorial ages, tragedy for despotic ages and subjective representations for capitalism), desire is externalized. Though yet meaningless, territorial age translates intensity into extensity (the denoted and the manifested). Despotic representations unite several codes from the territorial ages under a common project of a despot.

> In point of fact, that is what forms the specific character of Asiatic production: the autochthonous rural communities subsist, and continue to produce, inscribe, and consume; in effect, they are the State's sole concern. The wheels of the territorial lineage machine subsist, but are no longer anything more than the working parts of the State machine. The objects, the organs, the persons, and the groups retain at least a part of their intrinsic coding, but these coded flows of the former regime find themselves overcoded by the transcendent unity that appropriates surplus value. The old inscription remains, but is bricked over by and in the inscription of the State. The blocks subsist, but have become encasted and embedded bricks, having only a controlled mobility. The territorial alliances are not replaced, but are merely allied with the new alliance; the territorial filiations are not replaced, but are merely affiliated with the direct filiation. It is like an immense right of the first-born over all

> filiations, an immense right of the wedding night over all alliances. The filiative stock becomes the object of an accumulation in the other filiation, while the alliance debt becomes an infinite relation in the other alliance. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 196)

This is the stage when meaning/signification appears in the process of production as opposed to "sense". In the age of capitalism, the objectities form the territorial and despotic ages are gathered under the form of the subject as representations, being decoded and realigned through permanent systematization and totalization.

All three accounts of the genesis of representational thought from *Difference and Repetition*, *The Logic of Sense* and *Anti-Oedipus* seem to share the critique against the common belief about what it means to think and how thought is produced. Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari show that western philosophical thought tended to define itself in terms of its own products (representations), without questioning its process of production and conditioning. Deleuze actually makes a distinction between "lifeless representations" which are cut off from their process of production and external to their object and "living representations" which are the consequential envelopment of certain expressions and linked to the conditions/agents of production.

> In fact, two types of knowledge (*savoir*) have often been distinguished, one indifferent, remaining external to its object, and the other concrete, seeking its object wherever it is. Representation attains this topical ideal only by means of the hidden expression which its encompasses, that is, by mean of the event it envelops. There is thus a "use" of representation, without which representation would remain lifeless and senseless. Wittgenstein and his disciples are right to define meaning by means of use. But such use is not defined through a function of representation in relation to the represented, nor even through representativeness as the form of possibility. Here, as elsewhere, the functional is transcended in the direction of a topology, and use is in the relation between representation and something extra-representative, a nonrepresented and merely expressed entity. Representation envelops the event in another nature., it envelops it at its borders, it stretches until this point, and it brings about this lining or hem. This is the operation which defines living usage, to the extent that representation, when it does not reach this point, remains only a dead letter confronting that which it represents, and stupid in its representativeness. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1990, p. 146; italics in original)

In this light, we can see how three "conditions" are revealed through this critique as actually determining the production of representation. If dead representations (framing Western philosophical thought) are hindering the discovery of the transcendental and reduce the pre-predicative life to expressions in conscious judgments, the Deleuzian type of critique shows that representations are produced, being rather just epiphenomena to be explained as products of difference (*Difference and Repetition*), of bodily forces (*Logic of Sense*) and desire (*Anti-Oedipus*). Dead representations offer instead false pictures of these three agents of thought production. The body is organized and conceived of as self-identical, monolithical and cut off from the real. Difference is abstracted from its own life of multiplicities and singularities, being submitted to the rule of representational thought as derivation of identity. Desire is seen as lack and interpreted from the point of the requirements of social structures (such as the role that Oedipus complex plays in psychoanalysis). Instead, the critique reveals a difference in itself that is productive and shaping representational thinking, a bodily force and processes participating in thought formation and a desire that is genetic and affirmative.

Although apparently using quite different technical vocabularies, Deleuze and Guattari offer almost the same account of thought production based on a trajectory from the body to representations in human consciousness. Moreover, this perspective clearly conceives of thought as bodily production and not as an ordering faculty opposed to corporeal materiality. In this regard, Deleuze (and Deleuze and Guattari) and Irigaray share a common critique of the hierarchical binaries operating in the Western philosophical thought. Through this critique, bodily forces are revealed to be the underlying agents of thought constitution and of possible subjective reconfigurations. Additionally, the affirmation of bodily agency in the production of human consciousness and representation is accompanied by a re-conceptualization of the notion of difference in relation to identity and the same. It is thus not only the body to be un-earthed form the rule of thought, but thought itself is reconfigured

from scratch by showing that its conditioning is the difference in itself, on the one hand, and the material and bodily multiplicities in their differential specificities, on the other hand. Through this revolutionary reworking of the notion of "critique", Deleuze thus reveals and explores the genesis of that which is critiqued (therefore, outside of any supposed self-engendering), in this case representational thought, and, subsequently, affirms that which always made possible the thing critiqued, that is, in our case three fundamental agents: difference, body and desire.

It is precisely this kind of critique I also recognize in Irigaray's work. She exposes how Western philosophical thought (and also its psychoanalytical instantiation), as rationality/ representation (the conditioned), is always already embodied, i.e. a production of a particular (male) sensibility (the conditioning). She also demonstrates how thought, the thinking subject and language are all colonized by the male imaginary, as phallomorphic mental projections of his relating to his own bodily activities and experiences (objectification, formalization and codification of life in male isomorphic terms), and, at the same time, shaped in the provisions of identity and sameness as imaginary projections in relation to the mother's body (appropriation and *inversion* of mother's reproductive power). According to Irigaray, the male masculine Subject is the one who had the historical privilege of defining what it means to think, i.e. framing thought in *identity/sameness* terms. On the other hand, the *affirmative* difference "liberated" in her critical operation concerns the body in a new relation to thought formation and representational expression, in general, and female bodily energies in relation to a different thought and a feminine cultural articulations, in particular. Consequently, when Irigaray is revealing the genesis/conditioning of thought and its sexuate nature she is sexually differentiating the critique itself in an explicit manner, engendering this way thinking in thought via sexual difference.

4.2 The "becoming-woman" of men?

It is interesting to note that Deleuze's use of psychoanalytical language in his account of thought and subjective formation seems to be not arbitrarily at all, but quite invested with explanatory power. In particular, when discussing the dynamic genesis and the constitution of sense as stages in the formation of representational thought, Deleuze employs the psychoanalytical framework of sexual difference, albeit in its strict Lacanian understanding, according to which the mother-image and the father-image are incompatible and unequally positioned in relation to the organizing power of the phallus. But Deleuze does not question this positioning or the genesis of such organization of sexual difference. While adhering to a Lacanian perspective on sexual difference, Deleuze does not show the genesis of this unbalanced power relation, which is more surprising since he locates it in the dynamic genesis of thought, that is, not at the tertiary level of language and propositional consciousness. He does not clearly account for how come the bodies of the mother and the father become sexually differentiated before the birth of the infant's body without organs. Though he agrees that the Oedipal structure may subject us to the fantasy of the Other he locates the political and historical genesis of this fantasy in capitalism, understood not only as an economic form but as a tendency of life towards exchange and the creation of surplus (Colebrook, 2006, p. 122). However, it may be the case that Deleuze ignores the possibility that sexual difference is the very force that produces in the first place those bodies that become later gendered in a way or another. It is sexual difference that produces the bodies without organs. The generative capacity of sexual difference, as life itself, remains unacknowledged and subsumed to the social and linguistic production, even if it participates, according to Deleuze, in the formation of sense, before the linguistic production takes place. This might surprise, since Deleuze's entire project is a critical rethinking of thought and of the concepts it produces, as he forcefully argues, again with Guattari, in *What is Philosophy*?

(1994). Perhaps, Deleuze had the intuition that sexual difference, even in its psychoanalytical understanding, retains its paradoxical position in relation to thought, as both pre-representative and representational. Colebrook argues that Deleuze might actually help thinking of sexual difference in this direction:

> "For if one *really thinks*, if one encounters what *is* in its radical singularity as possessing a power, force and potential--a capacity to relate--that goes beyond constituted terms, then sexual difference no longer explains the *thought (by a subject) of being*. Rather, thinking *is* sexual difference, the desiring response of life to life. And if life is sexually different--becoming through creation, encounter, striving and production--then no single point of creation, such as the difference between male and female bodies, can stand for or explain life or creation as such. Sexual difference is not, thereby, subsumed beneath a general notion of difference. For the concept itself is seen as an event of sexual difference, as one of the ways in which life preserves in its being, enables action and effects relations--relations that are both the effect of an encounter but that also determine what each point of relative stability in any encounter *is*." (2003, para. 8; italics on original)

Sexual difference may not be thus located only at the level of language order, rather seems to participate in language production as life production. It is not a condition of language but its very conditioning. In this regard, Deleuze and Irigaray seem to share a similar perspective. For Irigaray, the Lacanian conceptualization of sexual difference is in fact the patriarchal view on women and men's relationship according to which the feminine subjectivity does not yet exists in itself and for itself, being framed as just a secondary and specular effect of masculine self-constitution and subjective phallogocentric reproduction. Therefore, she is able to conceive of a female feminine subjectivity outside the masculine determination of social ordering and, implicitly, of a "real" sexual difference between two subjects definable in their own terms. Secondly, she can also conceive of sexual difference not only in terms of cultural and subjective relational processes, but also quite in ontological terms, as a real outside linguistic and cultural production/conditioning. I believe this might be one of the reasons why she speaks of *sexual difference* as real and ontological and of *sexuate difference* when discussing about human subjectivity.

For Deleuze, however, retaining its Lacanian sense, sexual difference, the one that Irigaray critiques, seems to be, nevertheless, the very one conditioning both thought production and subjective constitution. On the other hand, as we observe in *Anti-Oedipus*, sexual difference is also conceived as a molar social structure at the tertiary level of language and consciousness. Deleuze and Guattari's project of subjective reconfiguration would imply an escape from gender or sexual difference understood as sexed gender. According to the majority of feminist critiques (such as Irigaray, Jardine, Braidotti, Grosz and others) their imperceptible molecular becomings would attest for an obvious post-gender-ism. Brian Massumi explains in his book *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1992) that although Deleuze and Guattari do not deny the reality of sexual difference they do not consider it as foundational for subjective formation. "Man" and "woman" are considered, accordingly, just "empty categories", "logical abstractions" and "patriarchal constructs" of an oppositional binary thinking, socially enforced onto the bodies though a process of gendering (1992, pp. 86-87). It would then be only logical to agree with Deleuze and Guattari's project of destroying any categorical gridding, such as gender binaries understood as molar social structures. However, Massumi too does not go any further in elaborating on the nature of the relationship between bodies (forcefully gendered) and sexual difference or the processes through which these bodies are materialized within the social matrix of sexual difference. In short, it seems that he does not take into account the view according to which sexual difference might be actually more than just a molar, stratified social structure cut off from bodies and imposed onto them. The question of how bodies, in their agential nature, submit to a representational organization of sexual difference, as sameness in patriarchal terms, remains a question to be answered. Deleuze and Guattari argue that life expresses itself through active and reactive forces, that is, life as desire it is productive and also destructive, trying to liberate itself from its constituted relations and to reform new systems of relations

(Colebrook, 2006, p. 122). It is in this sense that desire desires against the flow of life, submitting itself to the rule of a signifier. Then, sexual difference, as a social structure regulating all bodies, it becomes a stratified system, a fantasmatic formula of relations submitted to the representational organization of bodily forces. Irigaray offers throughout her work a different but also powerful explanation: there is a prior exclusion of specific bodies (maternal and feminine) from the constitution of thought and of what it means to think done by other bodies (male and masculine) as an illusionary way of escaping their dependence on those bodies. The escape from materiality that Deleuze evokes in the formation of sense it's a male one by way of subsuming all bodies under the rule of Identity, or, as Irigaray argues, according to male isomorphic male imaginary bodily activities! One might argue that the "illegitimate" use of "lifeless representations" of sexual difference as molar structure that Deleuze reveals in the operation of representational thought is generated by the very negation of sexual difference as life force prior to any social structuring of the relationships between women and men and the colonization of such organization by male bodies alone.

Even if conceived just as a linguistic and explanatory tool in the description of the dynamic genesis, Deleuze's use of psychoanalytical language does not remain only at the metalanguage level, since his entire philosophical project is one of liberating the transcendental from representational/empirical constraints, that is, of not conceiving the transcendental according to the determination of the empirical, understood in the terms of human consciousness. Sexual difference participating in the dynamic genesis is part of the immanent field conditioning the genesis of representation; therefore, sexual difference is not just an effect of language or representation or of a social structuring cut off from bodily and corporeal forces. In other words, as compared to Irigaray, it may be the case that Deleuze is ambiguous since he conceives of *sexual difference* as both ontological and as a social structure when discussing human subjectivity. Along the conceptual fight in overcoming this

famous dialectics of Self/other and its multiple enactments of binary oppositions, Deleuze and Irigaray bring forward new images of thought against the patriarchal, oedipal and violent conception of the subject formation, through which one could go beyond the mind/body split. However, though having the same target, their strategic moves take opposite paths. While with his 'empirical transcendental' Deleuze posits a "nomadic subject" of a *post-gender* embodiment, Irigaray contributes with a novel conception of a 'female symbolic' for a "sensible transcendental", employing a notion of the body as ontologically sexually differentiated. The aim of the exposition starting from Deleuze's view on how representations are formed at the level of thought up to the affirmation of both bodily forces and the notion of difference, is to support the idea according to which sexual difference, shaping representational thinking (from unorganized perceptions towards organized knowledge), also subtends the understanding of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming-woman. This concept, as I show in the following, takes part in a larger progression of "becomings", from "small to large, from microperception to macroperception, from the unconscious to consciousness" and from "molecular perception to molar perceptions" (Hughes, 2008, p. 65), ultimately towards "becoming-imperceptible". As I explain its conceptual role in Deleuze and Guattari's project, I aim at showing that "becoming-woman", retaining the history of sexual difference, might be actually the key for also "creating" a concept of "becoming-man".

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of "rhizomatic thinking" as a counterpart to "arborescent thinking". The latter is linear, hierarchical, sedentary, and full of divisions. It is represented by the tree-like structure of genealogy with branches that continue to subdivide into smaller and lesser categories. It is hierarchical, vertical and dualistic:

> The Tree or Root as an image, endlessly develops the law of the One that becomes two, then of the two that becomes four…Binary logics is the spiritual reality of the root-tree. (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 5)

Whereas the arborescent thinking builds on representational thought, the rhizomatic thinking is said to be non-linear, anarchic, and nomadic, moving in many directions and being connected to many other lines of thinking, acting, and being. According to Deleuze and Guattari, one of the principles that inform "rhizomatics" is that of multiplicity. A rhizomatic system consists of a multiplicity of lines and connections: "There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines." (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 9). The point is that multiplicity is brought as the apology of plurality in opposition to unitary, binary, and grand-narrativizing models of Western thought. The rhizome is the ground for nomadic manifestations. The nomadic way of thinking is posited against the traditional understanding of philosophy as a closed, rigid, abstract, linear system of explanatory argumentation. In this sense, nomadic subjectivity is cast against the classical understanding of the unitary self-identical subject of the modernist projects. Deleuze and Guattari's nomadism is a mode of life disconnected from fixed origins, traditions and belongings as framed by Western philosophical thought. Instead, nomadism is a permanent movement between becomings; it is in fact a permanent betweeness. Nomadism is about non-privileging Being, the Center, and pure Presence. Drawing on this Bergsonian notion of "intuition" of becoming, Deleuze and Guattari argue that multiplicity is the field of becomings, becomings for themselves. There is infinity of becomings, but all of them are aiming at the notion of becoming-minor. In a way, this notion expresses the desire to privilege modalities of being a minority (i.e. woman for man, child for adult, nature for humans, imperceptibility to visibility):

> A kind of order or apparent progression can be established for the segments of becoming in which we find ourselves; becoming-woman, becoming-child; becoming-animal, - vegetable, or – mineral; becomings-molecular of all kinds, becomings-particles. (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 300)
>
> Yes, all becomings are molecular: the animal, flower, or stone one becomes are molecular collectivities, haecceties, not molar subjects, objects, or form that we know

> from the outside and recognize from experience, through science, or by habit. (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 303)

In this nomadology, desire is the very energy producing transformations and nurturing all becomings; it is the non-Oedipal, creative and productive force that has as teleological projection but one for itself. As we observed, desire as a force combines with other forces and gives birth to intensity. The interaction between intensities (either to affect somebody or something or to be affected by somebody or something) echoes the Nietzschean "will to power" as the will to transform and to become. The main contribution of this perspective on desire is that it is targeted against the psychoanalytical understanding of desire as a drive to fulfill the inescapable lack that forms subjectivity.

For Deleuze and Guattari, amongst all becomings, "becoming-woman" seems to be the most privileged becoming modality of otherness. As Rosi Braidotti (1996, p. 311) explains, this becoming is the starting point for changing the model of subjectivity dominating Western thought. Becoming-woman, however, does not refer to empirical females, but to a mode of relation and to the position of the historical minority in that relation, which is privileged to make possible the flight from Oedipal subjectivity, from the "Man-standard", from the centrality of a fiction. "Becoming-woman" seems to be the most important of all becomings in the sense that it stands for the main path through which this flight is possible:

> In this sense, women, children, but also animals, plants and molecules, are minoritarian. It is perhaps the special situation of women in relation to the man-standard that accounts for the fact that becomings, being minoritarian, always pass through a becoming-woman. (…) Becoming-woman necessarily affects men as much as women. (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 321)

Feminist thinkers like Irigaray herself, Alice Jardine, Rosi Braidotti, Grosz, and others expressed an explicit suspicion toward this concept. First, one can argue that it seems that

women are again used for male interests, i.e. "becoming-woman" used for a universal gender-neutral subjectivity freed of oedipal forces. It is still a "becoming-woman" for "others", and not for itself. Secondly, this "becoming" is a form of denaturalization of bodies and sexually differentiation that apparently dissolves subjectivity, which goes with Irigaray's critique of the "desiring-machines" and "body without organs" as a reminiscence of the bodily dispossession historically characterizing women's bodies. The notion of "body without organs" is a trope employed in the deconstructive process of the vision of corporeality as opposed to mind. This type of body challenges the view of the classical body as an organism, but not opposed to organs. It is a body without hierarchically organized organs such as penis, vagina, and mouth:

> The BwO is not opposed to the organs; rather, the BwO and its "true organs", which must be composed and positioned, are opposed to the organism, the organic organization of the organs. (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 175)

This is a "schizophrenic" body that frees flows of libidinal energies. It has no functional parts that determine and limit its own possibilities. What is at stake here is not what this body *is*, but rather what it *does*, how it can act or be acted upon, how it can affect or be affected:

> "We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body". (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 284)

Informed by a Nietzschean vision of a pre-significant body, this image of the body is posited against the psychoanalytical arrangement:

> Unlike psychoanalysis, which regards the body as a developmental union or aggregate of partial objects, organs, drives, orifices, each with their significance, their own modalities of pleasure which, through the processes of oedipal reorganization, bring these partial objects and erotogenic bodily zones into alignment in the service of a

> higher goal than their immediate, local gratification (the ultimate goal being reproduction), the BwO invokes a conception of the body that is disinvested of fantasy, images, projections, representations, a body without a psychical or secret interior, without internal cohesion and latent significance. (Grosz, 1994, p. 169)

It is a surface on which forces and flows of energy play. Deleuze's perspective refuses to conceive the body trough a totalizing picture and a hierachized one. The main idea is that a body outside a regime of significance as molar structure, a body taken as a raw force of energies and intensities, without the signs of value organization and social configurations, is a de-sexualized body, a non-gendered materiality. Therefore:

> In so far as the male/female dichotomy has become the prototype of Western individualism, the process of decolonizing the subject from this dualistic grip requires as its starting-point the dissolution of all sexed identities based on this hindered opposition. (Braidotti, 2002, p. 80)

For Irigaray, too, becomings and multiplicities necessitate an explicit neutralization of sexual difference, by privileging again a (male) desire that is not women's, on the one hand, and by relegating once again the bodily materiality onto already historically loaded embodied positions of women, on the other hand. The desire which traverses the "the body without organs" and expresses itself through various becoming in its flow of life is not the one that could account for women's specific bodily enjoyments:

> But isn't a multiplicity that does not entail a rearticulation of the difference between the sexes bound to block or take away something of woman's pleasure? In other words, is the feminine capable, at present, of attaining this desire, which is *neutral* precisely from the viewpoint of sexual difference? Except by miming masculine desire once again. And doesn't the "desiring machine" still partly take the place of woman or the feminine? (1985b, p. 141)

> That pleasure which perhaps constitutes a discovery for men, a supplement to enjoyment, in a fantasmatic 'becoming-woman', but which has long been familiar to women. For them isn't the organless body a historical condition? And don't we run the risk once more of taking back from woman those as yet unterritorialized spaces where her desire might come into being? Since women have long been assigned to the task of preserving 'body-matter' and the 'organless', doesn't the 'organless body' come to occupy the place of their own schism? (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 141)

Later, in *Conversations*, she reiterates her critique of "becoming-woman":

> As far as I am concerned, "becoming woman" or "becoming a woman" correspond to cultivating my own identity, the identity which is mine by birth. For Deleuze, it amounts to becoming what he is not by birth. If I appeal to a return to nature, to the body - that is, to values that our Western culture has scorned – Deleuze acts in the opposite way: according to him it would be possible and suitable to become someone or something which is without relation to my original and material belonging. How could this be possible above all from the part of a man with respect to becoming woman? Putting on the stereotypes concerning femininity? Deleuze would want to become the woman who Simone de Beauvoir did not want to become? (2008b, p. 79).

Alice Jardine (1985, p. 217) then may be right when asking if this becoming-woman "might not mean that she must also first disappear?" In other words, becoming-woman implies a kind of loss of identity (given the fact that for Deleuze this leads to "becoming-imperceptible"), is non-situated and, as Rosi Braidotti (1994) argues, it is possible only within European phallo-logoncentrism. Then, a main concern with "becoming-woman" is that it reinforces a masculinist gesture in the sense that the de-centering of the "I" is still made by the "I"/Center at the expense of the others (i.e. women) who don't "receive" (should they?) from the "I" any openings for their identities in political terms.

Gillian Howie (2008, p. 97) argues that 'becoming-woman' is defined in terms of schizo-processes, that is, a desiring-production in its absolute indeterminate free-state, a body without organs in permanent movement outside the social conditioning of desire and liberated from a stable centralized conscious subject. She later writes:

> The alignment of becoming-woman with schizo-processes indicates how subject identity might be more mobile if it were free from the (psychic) constraints of Oedipal organization and the legal and moral constraints of an overregulated social world. (2008, p. 101).

She explains that Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of Freud's case of Judge Schreber in the *Anti-Oedipus* indicating a "becoming-woman" which destabilizes dominant identities,

molar forms and relations, might actually be "a sadistic reincorporation into the same" precisely for being associated with schizo forces, flows apparently closer to the delirious and hysterical expressions of women's bodies (Howie, 2008, pp. 98-99).[113] She contends that, although "becoming-woman" undermines the masculine narcissistic identity, "philosophical abstraction allows sexual difference to be a hidden term":

> Becoming-woman suggests a radically androgynous transvaluation of values, and it certainly appears to leap over the risk of dimorphic essentialism in an un-gendered becoming. It does so by risking, instead, de-contextualizing and appropriating the affective body; interning the same dimorphic values whilst cutting the ground from critical interjection (Howie, 2008, p. 101)

Elizabeth Grosz, too, fears that both "becoming-woman" and "the girl" might represent an appropriation of female condition by men. She argues in *Volatile Bodies*:

> Men, as privileged adult and male subjects, must, then, invoke a becoming-woman, a becoming-child, and even a becoming-animal as ways of bringing into play the multiplicity of forces hitherto suppressed under the great dominations. But what this means for women remains disturbingly unclear. (1994, p. 177)

On the other hand, Claire Colebrook, in her recent article "Modernism without Women: The Refusal of Becoming-Woman (and Post-Feminism)" (2013, p. 436), points out two reasons why the concept still "has a purchase today". One would concern becoming-woman as a post-feminist concept that would mark "the transition from molar women's movements to a micro-politics in which both man and woman would be abandoned as basic political units" and the other would relate to the concept's power to be "the key to all

[113] In relation to "schizo-processes", Howie argues: "Unlike Deleuze and Guattari, Fredric Jameson believes that schizophrenia is primarily a social and political condition whereby reference is confused, ideas come to stand for objects, each idea is presumed interchangeable with others and concrete things are taken as though they were abstract. It actually marks the cultural condition of late (developed) capitalism in which the loss of the real object contributes to social and political confinement. According to Jameson, in late capitalism, the monadic – rather than nomadic – subject can no longer look directly for the referent in the real world but must, as the subjects in Plato's Cave, trace mental images of the world on confining walls. For Jameson, then, there is nothing inherently redemptive about schizo- processes; indeed the loss of objects in the process of abstraction poses and disguises real threats to the subject. (2008, p. 101)

becomings", in the sense that becoming-woman would be the main way of thinking also the "becoming" of the Oedipalised Man. This is how she explains the impossibility of becoming-man:

> Man is submitted and subjected to a system of his own making, beyond which he can neither think nor live. Without that system of differences 'he' would have no being. The Oedipalism of this mode of liberalism lies in its formalism and proceduralism: man is subject to a general system, and must always speak of the world only in terms that are shared and communicable; beyond that system of communication and ongoing legitimation there is only the chaos or fantasy of some lost origin. The notion of the 'beyond' of communicative reason, and politics generally, would be fantasmatic and other, figured Oedipally as that imagined plenitude that is constitutively lost when man accedes to the order of society. *Man is becoming; he is nothing more than his own self-deciding and legislating actions*. It follows, for Deleuze and Guattari, that there is no becoming-man; one cannot take on traits or styles or rhythms of man, because the very notion of 'man' is that of a being whose existence is nothing other than that of free self-variation. (2013, p. 437; italics mine)

Her interpretation of the impossibility of "becoming-man" is particularly interesting here because she supplements the general interpretation that "Man" is the Centre, a fixed Being, which, being majoritarian, cannot diverge from itself, with the notion of a *pure becoming* understood in terms of a liberal project of conscious self-creation characterizing the molar structure of Man, especially within capitalist framework. "Man" is pure becoming because it is void of essence, that is, as master signifier; it is immobile in its perpetual self-origination, cut off from its material and corporeal becomings (Colebrook, 2013, p. 443).

But then Colebrook argues that perhaps the major problem with "becoming-woman" relates more to its location in the series of becoming towards "becoming-imperceptible", that is, towards a non-gender or post-gender configuration of "human" relationships. The problem then would not be that "becoming-woman" is proposed as key path for undermining the gender binary, since it is sexual difference, as conceived in patriarchal terms, which sustains gender relations, whereby Man is the regulating norm. The problem, for Colebrook, is that one cannot move towards "becoming-imperceptible" (which should not be understood as

dissolution, but as escape from molar power structures of signification) without engaging with the logic of Man, since sexual difference seems to be more than just a molar structure. It is that which, as gender, "deployed to figure difference in general", underlies the possibilities of "creatively evolving life". It may seems that Colebrook agrees with the idea that sexual difference might be something more, that is, "*a profound and multiple sexual difference beyond bounded kinds*" (Colebrook, 2013, p. 445; italics in original). Then, I could infer, sexual difference expresses itself in both ontological (therefore, somehow foundational) and discursive modalities, which under the regime of representational thought becomes sexual indifference, as it was conceptualized in Irigaray's critique of patriarchal sexual difference. Although Colebrook distances herself from Irigaray's question of sexual difference as metaphysical, advocating rather for a perspective whereby we should think of sexual difference as a problem, she argues "If difference is to be more than just a single flow or system of relations then one might need to begin with *at least* one other sexed subject, one other body whose desire is not that of subject grasping the being of an object" (2003, para. 8).

Then, I may argue, the concept of becoming-woman has a history connected to that of sexual difference, and Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "concept" proves to be quite useful for understanding this historical entanglement, as I will show in the following. In his account of subjectivity, going beyond androcentrism, Deleuze conceived difference in itself to escape its simple opposition to identity or its dialectical sameness with identity. The point is that the politics of difference implies a becoming-minoritarian, or differently said, *making one divergent from the norm.* But Deleuze and Guattari collapsed specificities into multiplicities and eventually into unidentifiable particles toward imperceptibility. They show that we can rethink subjectivity and the body without reference to any symbolic framework, and especially the psychoanalytical one. As Braidotti argues, for Deleuze:

The entire process of becoming aims at moving beyond sexual dualism or gender

> dichotomy. The nomadic or intensive horizon is a subjectivity beyond gender in the sense of being dispersed, not binary; multiple not dualistic; interconnected, not dialectical; in constant flow, not fixed. (1994, p. 117)

Apparently, Deleuze frees us from any constraining rigid identities in order not to reproduce the Oedipal structures. But the main problem is, indeed, his usage of the notion of "becoming-woman", which represents in fact his own internal contradiction: on the one hand he is arguing for the dissolution of any oppressive regime of significance governing our subjectivities and bodies; on the other hand, he is bringing the image of "becoming-woman" as a path for this process. Simply put, he is using a historically negative "sexual difference" (women's conditions) in order to reach a non-gendered order. He is temporarily privileging a minoritarian position that is already framed within a regime of significance: sexual indifference. This implies that sexual difference, sexualities, and bodies cannot be simply stripped of their symbolic framework and then suddenly enter pre- or (post) -"significant" order.

4.3 The creation of "becoming-man" and its language

Rosi Braidotti (1991, 1994, 2002) points out the importance of history and memory in her feminist nomadologic philosophy of sexual difference. In one of her recent works, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (2011), in the context of mapping the workings of the political economy of global capitalism and elaborating on many of the themes already discussed in her previous works, she argues for a process ontology based on change and permanent movements. Becoming-minority/becoming-nomad is a central figuration of this ontology, since the phallocentric "Man" is already dead. She, too, agrees with Deleuze and Guattari on the inconceivability of becoming-man: "Insofar as man represents a majority, there is no creative or affirmative "becoming-man": the dominant subject is stuck with the

burden of self-perpetuating Being and the flat repetition of existing patterns." (2011, p. 29). Becoming-woman is the only path and the starting point for the deconstruction of oppressive identities precisely because sexual difference is constitutive to Western thought:

> [I]n so far as man, the male, is the main referent for thinking subjectivity, the standard-bearer of the Norm, the Law, the Logos, Woman is dualistically, i.e., oppositionally positioned as his "other". The consequence is that there is no possible becoming-minority of man and that becoming woman is a privileged position for the minority consciousness of all. Man, as the privileged referent of subjectivity, the standard –bearer of the norm/law/logos, represents the majority, i.e., the dead heart of the system. The consequences are, on the one hand, that masculinity is antithetical to the process of becoming and can only be the site of deconstruction or critique. On the other hand, the becoming-woman is a fundamental step in the process of becoming for both and all the sexes. (2011, p. 36)

Since the centrality of male sexuality, the compulsory reproductive heterosexuality, and women's position as the figure of otherness are constitutive of Western subject formation, then becoming-woman is "necessarily the starting point" in any deconstruction of patriarchal identities (2011, p. 39). However, Braidotti cautions that *politics of location* is crucial here and the respective processes of becoming for minorities and the majority are not the same. Real-life minorities (women, blacks, youth, postcolonial subjects, migrants, exiled and homeless) need to claim an identity:

> "This is both inevitable and necessary because, as I have often argued, you cannot give up something you have never had (Braidotti 1991). Nor can you dispose nomadically of a subject position that you have never controlled to begin with. I think, consequently, that the process of becoming-nomad (-minority, -woman) is internally differentiated, and it depends largely on where one starts off from." (2011, p. 42)

The difference in these asymmetrical processes is a qualitative one:

> [I]f one starts from the Majority position (the same), there is only one possible path: through the Minority (the Other) – hence the imperative to become woman as the first move in the deterritorialization of the dominant subject (also known as the *feminization of Man*). For those who start from the position of empirical minorities, on the other hand, more options are open. If the pull toward assimilation or integration into the majority is strong for minorities (hence the phenomenon of phallic women), so is the appeal of the lines of escape toward minoritarian becomings. (Braidotti, 2011, pp. 42-43; italics mine)

However, given this interpretation of the asymmetrical processes of becomings, it seems to me that this qualitative difference might still pose some problems. First, the relation between minority and majority in terms of the same/other dyad may be re-instantiated, in the sense that, it might retain a dialectics according to which the "same" continues to parasitically define itself in terms of the "other". Of course, de-centering presupposes cutting off from those nodes of power relations cannibalizing the others and how can one diverge herself if not through the minoritarian. But then, this presupposes that the majoritarian can pass through or experience the minoritarian, in a way that the minority already experiences it, which goes against the grain if we take into account the incommensurability of bodily experiences. Which is the nature of the relationship between these two different experiences of becoming-minoritarian? Or, is "the feminization of Man" a becoming-minoritarian that could indeed break the definitional chain in terms of the same and other? For Irigaray, I believe it is not, since the masculine reconfigures itself through a "feminine" already negated or devalued. Since the patriarchal femininity is the very specular image of the self-constituting male subject, it cannot be the very same that would facilitate a transformation in masculine subjective formation. That is why, Irigaray, in all of her works, urged for the articulation of a female feminine subject outside the phallocratic structurings. In short, the feminization of the masculine still remains the Other of the Same, and, given that the becoming-woman of woman would be, in Irigaray's words, becoming "the other of the Other of the Same", as Braidotti also reiterates (2011, p. 30), then becoming-minoritarian of men needs to find a different path incommensurably disconnected from that of becoming-woman. Colebrook shares a similar view:

> In this regard, while reservations were expressed about the appropriation of the feminine for yet one more liberating theory that had not yet considered the concrete embodiment of women's struggles, Deleuze could also be hailed as part of a post-modern pantheon of difference. Here, Deleuzian "becoming" would free the concept

> of woman from its humanist and patriarchal dependency on man, remove all thought of a prescriptive, identity-based or essentialist feminism, and enable sexual difference to be thought beyond its usual binary and hierarchical figures. While post-modernism in general is an anti-essentialism, Deleuze's becoming-woman has the added benefit of tying the project of fluidity, non-identity, difference and mobility to that which has always been identified with natural inertia, biology, timelessness and non-transcendence--the feminine. Woman or the feminine would be the key to all becomings, then, not because of any essence, but because man or the human has been constructed as that which establishes the truth of identity and presence. Woman could be affirmed strategically as that which has always been associated with the other of man; "becoming- woman" signals that space or imagined other necessary to the production of the male subject as the truth and order of female matter. (2003; para. 2)

Secondly, the majority ("Man") too has its own empirical referents, i.e., male bodies, which are never totally capturable under the heading of masculinities. The internal hierarchies even among male bodily lived experiences and masculine formation processes is the very sign that the becoming-minoritarian of men is also internally differentiated. It is in this sense that the feminization of Man is already the condition of the empirical minoritarian men, that is, a fiction of a patriarchal femininity lived in various ways by different male bodies. Which is, then, the relationship between the becoming-minoritarian of the already minoritarian men and becoming-woman? Apparently, we would have not only two asymmetrical paths of becoming-minoritarian for the majority and minority, rather several: the becoming-minoritarian (through becoming-woman) of the "Man" (by its empirical referents: the white, heterosexual, middle class, able males, etc.), the becoming-minoritarian of minoritarian men (also through becoming-woman?) and the becoming-woman of both majoritarian and minoritarian women themselves. Of course, becomings, as we observed in Deleuze and Guattari's work, are not teleological, that is, becoming "something", but permanent in-betweeness, lines of plight escaping the molar structures of Oedipal and phallic subjective constitution. Becomings, however, are always situated in bodily forces, movements and interactions. What is left undiscussed here is precisely the correlation between the "Man/Woman" dualism, as a molar structure, and the relationships between male

bodies and women's bodies in their incommensurability. It seems that gender remains once again disconnected from bodily materiality. Sexual difference is not only at the level of masculinity and femininity, but a relational embodied ontology. In short, my concern is that "becoming-woman" is conceived as the main path of decentering oneself because the historical minoritarian condition of being woman is conceptualized only of the level of gender, while bodies (both men's and women's) are left in an undifferentiated state of interaction, that is, sexual difference is seen just at the level of discursive production. Furthermore, the traces of the molar "Woman", or patriarchal femininity, within "becoming-woman" indicate a mimesis, close to that advocated by Irigaray herself, which is, however, based on an understanding of sexual difference as indifference. The feminine, so much retained in the becoming-woman, is not one appropriate to female bodies, as Irigaray so many times argued in her works. From here it follows the need for re-embodiment of becoming-woman of women. Asymmetrically and in an incommensurable manner, the same would go for men. Then, since becoming-woman is not becoming a woman, the becoming-minoritarian of men, as not becoming men, would be outside of sexual (in)difference, as conceptualized by Irigaray. Men have to become their bodies, outside the logic of substitution and cannibalization of women's lived bodily experiences.

Concerning the history of sexual (in)difference, in the chapter "Becoming-Woman and Other Male Phantasies", from her PhD thesis *Pleasure, Perversion and Death: Three Lines of Flight for the Viewing Body* (2000), Patricia MacCormack argues that the importance of "becoming-woman" is twofold as it raises a couple of questions. On the one hand, one still has to account for the specificity of women's lived bodies and histories given that "the desire to become process, non-fixity and becoming replaces the idea of an historical embodied self", and, on the other hand, it raises the issue of "responsibility for history" (2000, para. 1). For her, becoming-woman fails to express that women's historical conditions were not their own

choice or project, but rather that "this constant un-being of woman, who promises so much for becoming, exists at a place or a be-between that woman neither made for herself nor resides in willingly" (2000, para. 3). For her, memory and history play a crucial role in the concept of becoming-woman:

> Where Deleuze and Guattari advocate becoming-woman, the memory of "woman" is different to the history of women. A male becoming-woman would utilize the history of "woman" (the *idea* of woman) resistant to the memory of being (powerful) majoritarian. Women per se would utilize their memory of being women (in all their specificities) resistant to majoritarian powers in history. Male becoming-woman teeters on a precipice of assimilation. How can the majoritarian, he who desires becoming, know woman further from the basic fact of her not-being-man/majoritarian? A claim that man knows woman's memory (which would not be her memory but his history of her) would be more offensive. The enigma that is majoritarianism's relationship to women figures "Woman" in "History" over women's memory. (2000, para. 4)

MacCormack's argument seems to be highly relevant in that it questions the historicity of both "becoming-woman" and "woman" in relation to a patriarchal conception of sexual difference. Moreover, it explicitly men and women's lived histories are asymmetrical in terms of majoritarian/minoritarian positionings and "becoming-woman" cannot be a strategy for both of them, precisely because it would presuppose symmetrical bodily lived experiences, which is obviously not the case. The issue of bodies is quite crucial in this argument. Men cannot start un-Being, for any possible becoming, just by taking the path of becoming-woman. Becoming-woman presupposes a history of female bodily experiences that can never be shared by men's bodies. If one agrees with the idea that "Woman", as molar social structure, historically stratified by patriarchal order, is the Man's Other, that is, defined according to masculine majoritarian parameters (as Deleuze and Guattari do), then one should also take into account the underlying presuppositions concerning sexual difference, that is, one fabricated by male subject alone. It follows then that, since sexual difference it was historically always a sexual indifference, women need to express and construct their own

strategies of resistance against patriarchal ordering. It is in this sense, that I see "becoming-woman" as a strategy that offers the possibility for women to become in relation to their own bodies and historical lived experiences. Consequently, men, in order to reject their own centralized position, cannot become in relation to women's bodies, since it was by oppressing these very bodies that the masculine subject was constructed historically. In short, men, therefore, have to become in relation to their own bodies. And, here, sexual difference might be the answer for this project. Sexual difference, as critiqued by Irigaray, is not a "real" one, since only one historical subject defined this difference according to the desire and needs of male bodies. But for Irigaray, sexual difference does not presuppose just discursive subjective constitution. It privileges a certain relation between bodily forces and that subjective formation of both men and women. For a non-patriarchal conception of sexual difference, then, women need to define their subjectivity in their own terms and in faithfulness to their own bodies. Accordingly, men have to redefine their subjectivity in a non-parasitical manner in relation to women's bodies, that is, a first step might be to become through their own bodies having thus also the possibility to also redefine their subjectivity. This way, a concept of "becoming-man" could the answer to the problem of how can men decenter themselves by taking into account the historical relationship between sexually differentiated bodies of men and women. Otherwise, since "becoming-woman" cannot be the same answer for male bodies, men would be left in a static un-changeable location or node of power relationships. This would be the problem; the solution would be "becoming-man". Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of *concept creation* may support this argument, even though they were quite explicit about the inconceivability of "becoming-man", since sexual difference was not a metaphysical problem for them. In *What is Philosophy?* (1994) Deleuze and Guattari argue from the outset that philosophy is "the art of forming, inventing and fabricating concepts" (1994, p. 2). More rigorously, as they put it, the task of philosophy is to create concepts and

not to contemplate, reflect or communicate something. Each concept is defined by its multiplicity of components and has a history, that is, it is related to other concepts from other registers (Deleuze and Guattari call them planes of immanence), which were created as solutions for other problems (1994, p. 17).

> In short, we say that every concept always has a history, even though this history zigzags, though it passes, if need be, through other problems or onto different planes. In any concept, there are usually bits and components that come from other concepts, which correspond to other problems and presupposed other planes. This is inevitable, because each concept carries out a new cutting-out, takes on new contours and must be reactivated or recut. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 18)

Secondly, apart from a history, a concept also has a *becoming* in the sense that it relates to other concepts from the same plane, coordinating toward and answering the same problem. Furthermore, for Deleuze and Guattari, a concept needs not only a problem to which it answers, but also a junction of problems through which to connect to or combine with co-existing concepts. Thirdly, each concept is made up of components that are different but yet inseparable offering a certain conceptual consistency or, "endoconsistency" as Deleuze and Guattari call it (1994, p. 19). This consistency is assured by the *intensive* feature of the concept "as the point of coincidence, condensation or accumulation of its own components" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 20). Since a concept is incorporeal and does not have spatiotemporal coordinates, it is different from the states of affairs, and therefore, it speaks not of things or their essences but of the events. Being characterized by intensive ordinates, concepts are not discursive because they don't link propositions together:

> Concepts are measured against a "philosophical" grammar that replaces hem with propositions extracted from the sentences in which appear. We are constantly trapped between alternative propositions and do not see that the concept has already passed into the excluded middle. The concept is not a proposition at all; it is not propositional, and the proposition is never an intension. Propositions are defined by their reference, which concerns not the Event but rather a relationship with a state of affairs or body and with the conditions of their relationship. Far from constituting an

> intension, these conditions are entirely extensional. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 22).[114]

Concepts, bluntly put, need a plane of immanence, that is, a horizon of events populated by concepts. In other words, the plane of immanence is the image of thought; "the image thought gives itself to what it means to think, to make use of thought, to find one's bearings in thought" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 37). While concepts are intensive features, the elements of the plane are diagrammatic features or intuitions; the plane is a diagram of movements whereas concepts are intensive ordinates of these movements (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 40). "The concept is the beginning of philosophy, but the plane is its instituting" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 41), that is, the plane of immanence is pre-philosophical. It must be understood as not immanent to "something", because that "something" would reintroduce the transcendent, and this is what characterizes the representational image of thought that Deleuze so much critiqued. Deleuze and Guattari argue that when a plane of immanence is interpreted as immanent to something it occurs a confusion of plane and concepts, that is, "the concept becomes a transcendent universal and the plane becomes an attribute in the concept" (1994, p. 45). As Deleuze already argued in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze and Guattari also caution against the illusions threatening the plane of immanence: the *illusion of transcendence* (by making immanence immanent to something and rediscovering a transcendence within immanence itself), the *illusion of universals* (when concepts are confused with the planes of immanence), the *illusion of the eternal* ("when it is forgotten that concepts must be created") and the *illusion of discursiveness* ("when propositions are confused with the concepts") (1994, p. 50). Along

[114] One of Deleuze and Guattari's famous examples of concepts is the Cartesian cogito, which has three components: doubting, thinking and being: "The concept condenses at the point I, which passes through all the components and in which I' (doubting), I'' (thinking) and I''' (being) coincide" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 25).

these lines, we can then understand what Deleuze and Guattari mean by the connection between the plane of immanence and concepts and their relationship to immanence:

> When immanence is no longer immanent to something other than itself it is possible to speak of a plane of immanence. Such a plane is, perhaps, a *radical empiricism*: it does not present a flux of the lived that is immanent to a subject and individualized in that which belongs to a self. It presents only events, that is, possible worlds as concepts, and other people as expressions of possible worlds or conceptual personae. (1994, pp. 47-48; italics mine)

Then, the plane of immanence, populated by concepts, in order to escape the issue of being immanent to something, it has to be understood as "that which must thought and that which cannot be thought", i.e., the non-thought within thought as "the possibility of the impossible".

> Perhaps this is the supreme act of philosophy: not so much to think THE plane of immanence as to show that it is there, unthought in every plane, and to think it in this way as the outside and inside of thought, as the not-external outside and the not-internal inside – that which cannot be thought and yet must be thought, which as thought once, as Christ was incarnated once, in order to show, that one time, the possibility of the impossible (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, pp. 59-60).

In sum, then, philosophy comprises three elements that must be thought for themselves but fit together: the prephilosophical plane it lays out (plane of immanence), the conceptual personae that is brings to life and the philosophical concepts it creates.[115] One example would be: *Reason* as a plane of immanence, *Imagination* as a conceptual persona and *Understanding* as a philosophical concept (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 77).

Summing up, then, philosophy, understood in terms of the problem-solution dyad, is the creation of concepts as answers/solutions to Events/problems that occur on the plane of immanence; a plane presupposed by philosophical concepts that are the solution to the

[115] A famous example of conceptual persona is Socrates as "the principal conceptual persona of Platonism" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 63).

unknowns of a problem found in the conceptual persona (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 81). Deleuze and Guattari keep on reiterating the idea that concepts must relate to problems, to a history and to our becomings and that a concept cannot have a meaning outside this structure. It is in this logic that the whole argumentation of this chapter intends to support the "creation" of the concept of "becoming-man". One could indeed be suspicious toward the gesture of borrowing a concept from a philosophical system and relocate it within another philosophical matrix. But this is precisely what creation of concepts presupposes according to Deleuze and Guattari (1994, p. 18):

> In any concept, there are usually bits and components that come from other concepts, which correspond to other problems and presupposed other planes. This is inevitable, because each concept carries out a new cutting-out, takes on new contours and must be reactivated or recut.

And this is also linked to what critical thinking might offer new, especially when "to criticize is only to establish that a concept vanishes when it is thrust into a new milieu, losing some of its components, or acquiring others that transform it." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 28) Then how are we to take "becoming-man" as a concept? We have seen that it needs a plane of immanence, of consistency between its components and also a conceptual persona. We need to think therefore about what Deleuze and Guattari call the *taste*, that is, this tripartite philosophical faculty regulating the creation of concepts (1994, p. 77). Moreover, it needs to be the solution to a problem that occurs on the plane of immanence and, also, to connect with other concepts populating that plane. Again, I argue that what is crucial here, is to take into account the conception of sexual difference that Irigaray reworked in her philosophical project, that is, a sexual difference that allows both men and women to articulate their respective subjectivities according to their own asymmetrical lived bodies in relation to their own bodies, on the one hand, and to others' bodies, on the other hand. Sexual

difference, therefore, as an ontological difference, is an immanence that is not immanent to a subject or to a thought, but rather their conditioning; a sexual difference which always remained the unthought of thought while shaping it. Its conceptual persona might be Irigaray's "philosopher of love" and not the "lover of philosophy" that dominated the construction of Western philosophical canon (Irigaray, 2002). Accordingly, the concept of "becoming-man", as that "impossible possibility" from Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical system, would be thus both a conceptual and faithful consequence of sexual difference. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, inflected with Irigaray's sexual difference as affirmative project, "becoming-man" would be a concept within the plane of immanence that sexual difference is, along "becoming-woman" and the becomings of so many "others", but incommensurably relating to a "becoming-woman" of "the other of the Other of the Same", that acknowledges sexual difference as a permanent accompanying life situation and belonging. "Becoming-man" would be the solution to the problem instituted by the paradoxical central position of "men" as multiple and diverse embodied referents of "Man", and at the same time as internally and hierarchically differentiated through various nodes and milieus of power relations, nevertheless at the expense of women's bodies and lives as the most minoritarian amongst the "others". Becoming-man could be the conceptual answer to the problem of the possibility of change for men, on the one hand, and the implicit deconstruction of "Man" and its masculine instantiations, for novel reconfigurations and de(re)territorializations in their own becomings, on the other hand! The consistency of the concept of "becoming-man", through its own elements and also in relation to other concepts and its plane of immanence, is not easy for me to be grasped at this stage. But Deleuze and Guattari argue that we cannot assess this in advance; a concept need first to be created and then its success or failure would be determined: "Philosophy does not consist in knowing and it is not inspired by truth. Rather, it is categories like Interesting, Remarkable or Important

that determine success or failure. Now, this cannot be known before being constructed" (1994, p. 82). A plane of immanence laid out, thus, has to be *important* and I agree with the idea that sexual difference as being probably one of the, if not the most, urgent and novel questions of our times (Irigaray, 1993a). Its conceptual persona, a philosopher of love (love, here, as the ethical project between and among sexually differentiated subjects) would be *remarkable* and the concept of "becoming-man" would be *interesting* even if it could generate repulsion (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 83).

The creation of a concept is also inextricably linked to how one understands the nature of language and its relation to bodies and thought. Jean-Jacque Lecercle argues that Deleuze's work expresses a paradox in relation to language and his theory of meaning oscillates between grounding language either in the body or the thought, as a secondary element, but always returning to language (2002, p. 2). Apparently, for Deleuze, language betrays thought and the emergence of the event, as it freezes the common sense, and also betrays the violence of the event in articulate discourse. Taking language as a problem, Deleuze was seeking to exclude the "I", almost literarily the speaking subject, to de-centralize it and to bring in the impersonal and the pre-individual, as it can already be seen in his theory of becomings. *Correlation*, against dialectics, seems to be Deleuze's preferred strategy for de-centering language and relocating it in its material locus of birth, i.e., bodily forces (Lecercle, 2002, p. 18). As a proliferation of concepts, correlation is anarchic and open-ended of lines populated by various dualisms:

> Deleuze's anti-Hegelianism is more radical, in that he has recourse, instead of the dialectical development of the concept, to a correlation: two antithetical series, or rows, a series of columns structured through disjunction ('x, not y'), each member of a row thus having an opposite number on the other row. The cohesion of each row is not causal ('x therefore x''), but obtained through connective synthesis ('x and x''). The result is neither a single concept (although each row may be taken as an addition of determinations) nor a dichotomy, as contrasts proliferate along the row, which turns into a line of flight. (Lecercle, 2002, p. 16).

For Deleuze, then, language freezes reality re-presenting it in the form of dichotomies (nature/culture, mind/body, language/thought, etc.), which are in fact the very material that correlations are made of, as Deleuze argues that since language has invented dualisms, we must pass through them not in order to "get back to a prelinguistic pseudo-reality, but to trace a vocal or written line which will make language flow between these dualism, and which will define a minority use of language, an inherent variation" (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 34 quoted in Lecercle, 2002, p. 22). A transformation of language would presuppose then a becoming-minoritarian of language itself and "stuttering" would be its privileged form of passing through dualisms, which structured so far both reality and language according to Western representational thought. That is why Deleuze also refuses the use of *metaphor*, which is conceived as the correlate of representation because it presupposes several characteristics of representation: *difference* (between the represented and the representative), *separation* (between the represented and the representative), *replacement* (the representative is present in the absence of the represented), *hierarchy* (the representative is present in the absence of the represented) and *abstraction* (the representative is generalized or abstracted from the represented) (Lecercle, 2002, p. 56). In particular, the metaphor, as a representational instantiation, it presupposes a transfer of words that evokes a transfer of images, that is it establishes a connection between word-representations and object-representations. Secondly it presupposes a separation between a sign and the "true" literal sign in relation to its referent. While replacing the object because of its absence, metaphor also presupposes a hierarchy in relation to the literal meaning. As Deleuze opposed correlation to dualistic thinking and language, metaphor is also opposed by *metamorphosis*, which avoids the parallelism between the links between words and the links between things (words do not represent things anymore but are objects themselves). Metamorphosis also

escapes separation and replacement, being an assemblage of enunciation made up of singularities and not an abstraction. (Lecercle, 2002, p. 59).

One can observe that Deleuze and Irigaray share similar views in relation to language, as they both critiqued the formalization of language and consequently, metalanguage which are based on stratification, abstraction and universalization. Both are reluctant toward the metaphor and the metalanguage dominating linguistics and even philosophical thinking. While Deleuze aimed at conceiving a language outside a representational thought and its subjective imposition onto the speaker (and from here, the de-centering and de-subjectivation of language), Irigaray critiqued the monopole over language and thought by a single subject in history, i.e., the male masculine subject. Whereas Deleuze proposes a working of language as "stuttering", against the formalization of linguistics and as a way of escaping the representational nature of western thought based on oppressive subjective constitutions, Irigaray advocates a poetic language that would allow the articulation of at least two subjects. Then an apparent paradox haunts the concept of "becoming-man" in relation to language, since it asks for a restructuring of the masculine subject but at the same time it requires de-subjectivation. How to restructure, then, the masculine subject position of enunciation that is critiqued? How to change the male language and discourse given that the possibility of the question itself might be conditioned by that very discourse, language and thought? How there can be a "masculine" thought which interrogates its stability and possibility already through a question? First, this may be a paradox if the masculine language is conceived as total, as a system that defines and controls the possible ways of expression and production. Secondly, this might turn to be not a paradox in itself since it is already operating in more than one position of enunciation. If the de-centering of the male subject presupposes another subjective position, i.e. the feminine yet to come, then it is the feminist discourse that is already operating in the question and, therefore, sexual difference already works from within

the interrogation. This might mean that one needs to acknowledge that the first step in the de-centering of the male subject, from the logic of the I, as masculinist, as the ultimate universal subject of enunciation based on specific rules of ordering both language and reality at the same time in the phallomorphic image of its maker, is *to step back*, retreat (in terms of accepting his partiality) and create, promote "spaces" to those "events" which actually threaten the durability and supremacy of the male I in both its language, discursive, symbolic and material terms. But then, if this question, as desire to question, is possible only because sexual difference is already operative here in the very text under my eyes, then the only "event", which accounts for this, is the event of my particular male body in its expressive modalities and articulations of thought. Otherwise, if the male subjective position would be total, then its system would have to explain its own disruptive questioning; then the subject would be already split and this split, is the key to the restructuring of the masculine "I" into "another" male masculine "I".

It is in this very paradoxical sense that "becoming-man", as a concept, can account for the possibility of transformation in both the subjective and discursive formation of the male masculine. "Becoming-man" could still remain a problem as paradox, though it is meant to be in fact a solution. On the one hand, "becoming-man" is a solution to the question of change in relation to the masculine male subject and in relation to feminine subjectivity and, on another level, a solution to Deleuze's sexual indifference. On the other hand, as solution, "becoming-man" persist to be a paradox because of the ambiguous nature of the masculine subject as both centered and as a subject of self-interrogation, and consequently, as self-regenerating as a subject (this would be so un-Deleuzian). Maybe this very paradoxical nature is the indication of the possibility of transmutations in the masculine subjective formation, especially when "becoming-man" is conceived as a problem-solution paradox in terms of sexual difference.

5. Conclusion: ethical gestures of a "becoming-man"[116]

In this thesis, I have sketched a possible answer to the question of what it means to think about men and masculinities through the philosophy of sexual difference as developed by Luce Irigaray, employing the Deleuzian notion of "critique" and arguing, at the same time, for a concept of "becoming-man". First, I have examined the nature of the role of male bodies underlying the theorizing of men and masculinities in the growing academic field of critical studies of men and masculinities, that is, the predominance of the discursive constructionist perspective in analyzing the relationship between male embodiments and masculine subjectivity. I have argued for a turn to sexual difference theory as an answer to the "gap" between the representational thinking of male bodies and their participation in thought production. Secondly, sharing Irigaray's critique of thought, in both Western philosophical canon and psychoanalytical instantiations, I have examined alternative morphological locations for rethinking male imaginary in relation to male embodiments on the one hand, and in relation to the maternal and the feminine. Thirdly, I have argued for a need to return to a phenomenologically-influenced approach towards male bodies, understood through Irigaray's sexual difference as a relational and experiential ontology in phenomenological terms. Finally, while showing that Irigaray and Deleuze share a similar critique of philosophical thought and of the masculine historical subject, I have proposed a rethinking of the concept of "becoming-man" as an assemblage meeting between Irigaray's sexual difference and Deleuze and Guattari's nomadologic project.

If "becoming-man" is a conceptual expression of the possibility of thinking change in men's masculine subjective constitution in relation to both women and other men, then, what would be the lived practice of such "becoming-man" of men? For "becoming-man" is not a

[116] The title of this chapter echoes Irigaray's article "Ethical Gestures Toward the Other" (2010).

mere answer to individual dilemmas, it is rather part of an intensive rethinking of the ethical relationships between women and men in quite structural terms of the social life. Could "becoming-man" contribute to the culture of at least two different subjects advocated by Irigaray?

Irigaray reiterates some suggestions that can be taken as ethical gestures on behalf of "becoming-man", conceived as conditions that make possible and effective the ethics for "human" relations in their differences (2010, p. 3). As I have argued in the course of my thesis, the rethinking of the male masculine subjectivity presupposes a change in the way men relate to their own bodies (and among themselves), on the one hand, and in relation to women's bodies, on the other hand. The bodily dimension in rethinking men's relationship to the maternal and the feminine is crucial, as the cultivation of one's body, as faithfulness to one's gendered belonging, presupposes first a respect for life beyond reproduction and multiplication of oneself, which characterized so much the patriarchal ordering of gender power relations. "Becoming-man", then, would acknowledge that life is first and foremost sexually differentiated or sexually differing through diverse and multiple bodily expressions. It would recognize that sexual difference is life and that the first gesture of generosity is the one of offering life to another being through one's body, i.e., the maternal body nurturing with oxygen and blood. A cultivation of this sharing of life would require a respect for the air and breathing so necessary for becoming autonomous living being and individuating oneself. Irigaray argues that the forgetting of breathing and the lack of its cultivation led to a rupture between mind and body, which also organized hierarchically the relationship between women and men. Only by remembering how to breathe as a practice of respecting one's body, men could finally start not taking for granted the life, air and nurturing they were offered by a sexually different other. Breathing is not just for survival, it conditions all the manners in which we relate to the others and the world, through loving, hearing, speaking and thinking.

The recognition of the bodily conditioning of our engagement with the world would also facilitate a change in the ways "we", as "men", communicate and exchange with the others. It would also imply a radical restructuring and undermining of power relations through which men colonized and monopolized spaces, time, language, thought and other bodies. "Becoming-man" recognizes this multilayered monopoly and, at the same time, cuts itself from it by expressing the need for constructing a new masculine *culture of stepping back.* This new culture would create new spaces for relationships built on differences and respect for such differences.

There is, then, an apparent double task for the "becoming-man" of men. On the one hand, it asks for a retreat in order to allow new ways of relating to oneself and to others, and, on the other hand, it requires expression of its permanent becoming. While considering it indeed crucial for men to renounce the monopole over the world and the others, nevertheless, one should not forget the question of the need for men to express themselves, in an affirmative manner, albeit differently and in acceptance of sexual difference. It is not sufficient for men to learn to step back, but it is also necessary to find ways of articulating this as affirmation of their own becoming as men in order to fully contribute to the construction of a new culture based on sexual difference. This question haunts my writing on "becoming-man" and burdens my imagining in answering to this double task. The question is challenging not only because it raises the issue of how men can participate differently in this world by first acknowledging their positionings in networks of power relations and by cutting themselves off from these structures of violence and oppression towards others, but it also allows for men to start expressing anew, according to their own lived experiences and affects. I see therefore the aspects described by Irigaray as inextricably linked, but it may be the case that only by first learning to retreat men would start living and expressing themselves differently in relation to others. I see this need for a culture of stepping back in terms quite

close to "becoming-imperceptible" advocated by Deleuze and Guattari, but obviously along the lines of sexual difference perspective. For them, all becomings (-woman, -animal, -plant, etc.) lead towards becoming-imperceptible, which is not to become-invisible, though it raises the very question of *perception*. Becoming-imperceptible speaks about another way of understanding perception, not anymore as located in a subject-object relation, but rather as a movement "serving as the limit of that relation" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 282), beyond the oculocentric and dichotomist manner of ordering reality. Therefore, becoming-imperceptible would be a way of refusing the dualistic machines of the Western philosophical thinking and ontology and a different manner of relating to world.

How are we, then, to create these new "spaces"? Probably, we could start first to relate to space as something not to be "occupied". Understanding the finite nature of their gendered bodily belonging and of being not all, men would finally cease considering space and the external world as something to be conquered. Irigaray's notion of "interval" is meant to address, among others, also this issue. The restructuring of the subject-object relationship implied by "becoming-man", that is, in terms of conceiving the exteriority of oneself as part of a process of mutually constituting, then, space becomes a dimension to be guarded and respected and not one through which the masculine subject expands itself ad infinitum projecting itself through totalization and absolutization of its perception of the world. In concrete terms, this would produce almost a paranoid consciousness as once Sandra Lee Bartky (1975) argued a permanent awareness of one's movements, relationship to objects, other beings and space. This attentiveness is embodied and changes the way one perceives, looks and touches the world. By accepting one's limited embodied participation in the world, looking becomes something to connect with and not to seize in an objectifying manner so as to organize the "chaotic" space into an order suitable for "human" stability. Touching turns, thus, into a dimension for meeting the other in its own individuality and not for conquering

the other; touching, as an ethical practice, becomes a way of love toward the other not as possession but as respect for one's limits in relation to the other's embodied presence. This new way of relating to space through looking and touching nurtures a relation of intimacy and nearness based on the ability to remain within oneself. Irigaray calls it "self-affection", that is, the capacity of returning to oneself, which allows the meeting with the others without losing oneself. This self-affection requires, on behalf of men, an individuating differentiation in relation to both the maternal and the feminine, on the one hand, and from the world they constructed as a substitute for the maternal world, on the other hand. It's probably easier to see now the connection between self-affection and the transformed nature of relating, looking and touching the world and space as exteriorities. Since men historically conceived the process of their subjective individuation by way of possessing/using/appropriating the world, the surroundings and the others as instruments, then, in contrast, "becoming-man" needs to be seen as a permanent self-affection, which of course, is not to be confused with autoeroticism. Because self-affection presupposes also a rethinking of how we relate sexually to others. The mutual desire between others, as desire for an intimacy almost without bodily borders, can be cultivated through self-affection, that is, in a bordered manner through which the other is not objectified, fragmented in bodily parts or violently consumed for one's libidinal fulfillment. Eros would not be then Tanathos, in particular the death of the other, but a way of approaching the other while respecting its embodied presence as otherness.

Irigaray's "self-affection" is not just an indication of another logic of relating to oneself and the others in terms of creating spaces inbetween so that the meetings could be possible. It is a concept that presupposes also changes in the way we hear and listen to the other, so that we could authentically speak with the others while respecting our differences. But in order to hear so as to listen to the other, one needs to cultivate silence, as a space outside of ourselves where the others can come and express themselves. Silence and listening

would thus open our world and welcome the other's world not in pre-defined terms, according to a language and thought already stratified with established or coded meanings passed as information. Rather, silence would allow a listening to the other's words as something unique, not totally reducible to the meanings I have access to through the language I already dwell in. And here, again, the attentive consciousness of "becoming-man" would be reflected in the practice of what Irigaray calls "double listening", that is, a listening to one's language and to what others say. It is not, therefore, a matter of escaping one's language, but rather of not submitting our listening to a single or unique saying.

Facing another subject in its differences forces us to listen to another world, we can never totally capture, and to other words that are not ours, which are of another world beyond the language we live through the relation to our own worlds. Of course, the nature of language, as we conceive it, makes possible various intersections between the sayings, in terms of sharable common meanings, among different others. But this does not prevent a renewal in meaningful exchanges, for language is not abstracted from embodied participations, but a manner of entering into relation between at least two subjects in respect for their embodied differences. This novel understanding of language would be the basis for a culture of sexual difference where language respects the life of each other by paying attention to silence and breathing. When generated in the present, language doesn't lose its connection with the energy of the one's body, of the other's body and of the surrounding world. As bodily flesh, energy and life, language remains tactile and yet non-possessive and non-violent towards the others and the world. "Becoming-man" can be a male masculine expression of such participation in and for a language, thought and a world where at least two subjects can blossom in faithfulness to their own bodily energies, rhythms and differences.

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