

INTRODUCTION

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It has been ten years since the publication of *Engaging With Irigaray*. Since that time, three special issues of journals have been devoted to Irigaray's later writings, but there has been no book-length project that addresses the question that has been raised tangentially by both of these, namely whether Irigaray's corpus of writings, viewed as a whole, manifests a unity in her own sense of an ongoing open-ended dialogue that respects difference. This volume seeks to address that question and to consider the latest changes in the relational climate of Irigaray scholarship and its critics. Whereas Irigaray's earliest writings gave rise to a flurry of charges of essentialism, the question that dominated the 1998 special issue of *diacritics* on Irigaray's "middle" (post-1984) writings was what exactly she meant when referring to sexual difference as the question that determines our age. Today, the critique of Irigaray seems most focused on the shift in style and subject in her latest, most specifically political and "applied" writings that, at least at first glance, contrast sharply with everything she wrote before. And so our focus in this volume is on the unity of Irigaray's corpus—not its completion—if only in the sense of, as one of the authors in this volume argues, an impossible yet-to-come.

Recent Irigaray scholarship often makes reference to the shift in thematic focus, tone, and style of Irigaray's latest writings from her earlier, arguably more poetic and more textual philosophical commentary to a purportedly more overtly political, "applied" philosophy that "spells out" a message. This reference, however, rarely goes beyond what is seen as a nod to the obvious. This book considers whether

there has been a radical conceptual “turn” in Irigaray’s thought in addition to the apparent stylistic shift, and, if so, what the implications of such a shift may be. Similar to the language used to describe Heidegger’s *Kehre*, some Irigaray scholars seem implicitly to refer to an Irigaray I of texts such as *Speculum of the Other Woman*, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, and *Elemental Passions*, on the one hand, and an Irigaray II of texts such as *I Love to You*, *Thinking the Difference*, and *Je, tu, nous*, on the other, with *The Ethics of Sexual Difference*, published in 1984, marking a kind of turning point, both chronologically and thematically and in terms of the kind of critique that Irigaray began to receive even from her most sympathetic readers.¹

The interesting question to emerge from this debate is not so much a final answer as to whether or not Irigaray has made a conceptual “turn,” but rather what is at stake in arguing for or against this continuity, or for or against one style or focus of philosophical inquiry or another. How one interprets these issues of continuity and style reveals as much about current philosophical concerns as it does about Irigaray’s thought. This question already arose in brief in a *diacritics* special issue on Irigaray in 1998, but it was eclipsed by the discussion of the role and meaning of sexual difference in Irigaray. Our hope is to continue to stimulate and to further develop a debate regarding this question by collecting a variety of philosophical positions in a more extensive forum.

In interviews with Brena Niorelli and Ida Dominijanni, Irigaray insists on the continuity between *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* and *I Love to You* in particular (Irigaray 2000 [1998]², 129–41).³ Irigaray’s point is that, in spite of the chronological span between the original publication of the two works and, as the interviewer points out, despite even the seeming “significant difference” in the depiction of the relationship between man and woman, there is a “bridge” to be built between conceptions of intersubjectivity in the two works and, by extension, between the styles and foci of the two works (Irigaray 2000 [1998], 129). The bridge is arguably emblematic of the thematic and stylistic connections between her earlier and later writings. Interestingly, Irigaray also often describes the symbolics of the couple as a “bridge” and writes that “[t]he alliance between man and woman becomes . . . a bridge between nature and culture, a bridge which has yet to be built” (Irigaray 2001 [1994], 84).

The reconsideration of Irigaray’s later work as different from yet not opposed to her earlier style and focus calls into question a whole

series of oppositional structures. Perhaps one of the most salient of these structures is the oppositions between nature and culture, followed by the oppositions between the ideal and the real, the academy and politics, and intellectual analysis and practical application. Irigaray's method of challenging binary oppositions points us to her larger strategy of opening a place for change and difference, emphasizing spaces of ontological dynamism, rather than static totalizing concepts.

What would it mean to read Irigaray's later work not as a break from her earlier writings, but with this notion of the bridge as a means of bringing the more critical and speculative work into the context of the political? We are interested in considering whether one could read the earlier work's style of transformative mimesis as a prelude to the affirmative politics of Irigaray's later work, and whether the effort to take the symbolic and bring it into the realm of the civic succeeds or fails. One focus of discussion that we hoped would arise out of this consideration is whether the conjunction of two styles and foci can be seen as a unified project, as Irigaray herself appears to contend, or whether there is nevertheless a marked break, as many Irigaray commentators assume. As Carolyn Burke writes, perhaps "Irigaray's message is best served when both aspects of her style are present and engaged in dialogue with each other—and with the reader" (Burke et al. 1994, 257). We explicitly extend this dialogue to the consideration of questions of the intersection of theory and practice and the relationship between author and commentator, in particular the feminist commentator.

Irigaray herself has fairly recently argued for a conception of both theory and practice, based on the "tradition of India," that is ever open, never fully achieved (Irigaray 2002 [1999], 21), and extends this to a model of dialogue. We assert here that this can be taken as a prototype for feminist commentary with Irigaray herself. What Irigaray calls "an engendering preceded by an exchange of breath and of words" (Irigaray 2002 [1999], 52) aligns the breathing practices of yoga with nonappropriative dialogue that does not attempt to reduce the other to the same, a dialogue that might engender something new through its encounter with difference. The practitioner of yoga attempts to free herself from excessive attachment to any one theme or thought, not by berating herself when she slips back into a familiar theme or train of thought, but by observing the thought and letting it go, allowing for a new awareness to arise without trying to control its contours. As Irigaray notes, this is only accomplished in interaction with a spiritual guide,

that is, in dialogue, and there is no specified goal at the outset, nor a place where any one outcome is definitively achieved. There is always room for further growth, in particular that which would overcome static dualisms, such as that between mind and body, through breath, as we will elaborate on further.

Yet for us commentators, asserting such an open-endedness is not in itself a satisfactory substitute for articulating the trajectory of a thinker, in particular because, as Penelope Deutscher notes, “among the most interesting aspects of Irigaray’s corpus is the elaborate secondary literature it has provoked” (Deutscher 1998, 170). In accord with this statement, this volume seeks to bring out the subtleties of the responsibility of the feminist commentator in particular. Margaret Whitford contrasts interpretations of Irigaray that either “immobilize or energize” and argues that “it is more valuable to choose the dynamic interpretation, rather than imprisoning Irigaray in the limitations of her own perspective” (Whitford 1991, 6). Indeed, according to Whitford, “the important thing is to engage with Irigaray *in order to go beyond her*” (ibid.). We agree with this claim and contend that the strength of Irigaray scholarship lies in the fact that it can engage with Irigaray’s texts in a manner that pushes interpretation beyond the relationship of disciple to master, and thus has the potential to exemplify feminist theory at its best, a practice that Irigaray herself developed.

We therefore gather papers here that critically analyze Irigaray’s later thought with recourse to her earlier work, both on its own terms and in terms of the tradition that it seeks to deconstruct and transform. Our contention is that although the shifts in Irigaray’s later works may be more immediately striking to readers than their continuities, as scholars of Irigaray’s thought we cannot read these writings out of context, but must foster a dialogue around the question of just *how* the political focus of Irigaray’s recent thought emerges. In these analyses the volume as a whole reflects on the implications of the unity or apparent disjunction of Irigaray’s earlier and later thought. In particular, we have considered themes that have become prevalent in Irigaray’s later texts such as intersubjectivity, feminine subjectivity, civil identity, democracy, community, and non-Western traditions. In engaging with Irigaray’s later texts we seek to balance emerging and established Irigaray scholars in order to consider the tenability and implications of the temporal, stylistic, and political distinction that has been drawn in Irigaray.

We reopen here a question that was posed but not elaborated upon in the special issue on Irigaray of *diacritics*. Editors Pheng Cheah and Elizabeth Grosz address the question of the continuity of Irigaray's corpus and note with disappointment the fact that Irigaray's later work has been largely dismissed, though some of her earlier writings have earned a place in the canons of philosophy and feminist and literary theory:

Most commentators regard her as primarily a thinker of subjectivity, identity, sexuality, and desire, and rarely consider her as a political theorist or an analyst of social and cultural life. Thus, even the most sympathetic readers have tended to extract the social and political implications of her work from her earlier and primarily psychoanalytic texts, which are then taken as so emblematic of her work that her later writings are rarely read, let alone discussed. . . . Consequently, *Speculum of the Other Woman* and *This Sex Which Is Not One* have effectively functioned as synecdoches of her entire oeuvre. (Cheah and Grosz 1998, 5–6)

As Cheah and Grosz note, these texts are clearly groundbreaking and enduringly important works of feminist theory, but they do not represent the breadth of Irigaray's work, which has undergone numerous self-reflective transformations and changes of emphasis over the thirty-some years she has been publishing. Irigaray's work continues to reach a relatively narrow audience, mostly in academic and literary contexts, despite the fact that she is now addressing herself broadly to issues in the social sciences and politics in addition to philosophy.

Philosophy itself, we might add, takes Irigaray's work insufficiently seriously despite her many important readings of philosophy, which have had an irreversible effect on the way in which we consider certain texts. Hegel and Plato, to name only two, will never be the same since Irigaray turned her critical eye on them. Yet, it is in her later work that Irigaray attempts to address a perennial critique of philosophy, its inability to leave the "ivory tower" and concretely transform what it critiques. It is perhaps telling that in attempting to do precisely this, Irigaray has lost many of her previous interlocutors.

Illustrative of the debate among commentators is the consideration and often consternation regarding Irigaray's discussion of sexual difference. The special issue of *diacritics* somewhat narrowly focuses on

the theme of sexual difference, because Irigaray's emphasis on this theme in the early 1980s effectively dominated discussion of her work at this time. As the editors note, the focus on the duality of sexual difference caused great consternation among readers who had rejected the essentialism critique and who associated Irigaray with a celebration of multiplicity, both of sexuality and desire and of identity or subjectivity. Naturally associated with this worry was a more specific and serious concern, that Irigaray's new focus on sexual difference implied not only a reduction of her conception of identity but a distinct privileging of heterosexuality. Although the editors contest this interpretation, both Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell, whose interview forms the centerpiece of the issue, argue that Irigaray's more recent work has become increasingly conservative, in particular that the emphasis on sexual difference both preserves that traditional assumption that heterosexuality is the sexual norm and contributes to a homogenization and reduction of sexual, racial, and class politics.

In part, the present volume responds to this debate by looking at how the question of sexual difference has unfolded in a wealth of different directions in Irigaray's work in the years since this special issue appeared. The essays in this volume focus on the areas of nature and technology, social and political theory and praxis, ethics, psychoanalysis, and phenomenology. Sexual difference both continues to delineate Irigaray's concerns, in that her call for sexuate rights reflects her belief in the primacy of the question of sexual difference for our age, but has also been complicated by Irigaray's interest in non-Western traditions and "third" elements beyond the duality of male and female. The volume includes essays that argue for the continuity of Irigaray's early and late writings, as well as sharply critical essays that carry on the theme of disappointment in the turn that Irigaray seems to have made.

Ultimately, Cornell and Butler's discomfort seems to arise in large part from Irigaray's claim, in *The Ethics of Sexual Difference*, that "according to Heidegger, each age has one issue to think through, and one only. Sexual difference is probably the issue in our time which could be our 'salvation' if we thought it through" (Irigaray 1993 [1984], 5). Cornell associates this line with a Heideggerian move of "turning sexual difference into a way of thinking about the truth of Being in a particular historical era" (Cheah and Grosz 1998, 32). No wonder Irigaray is thought to have made a *Kehre*! If sexual difference is thought not as a quasi-Heideggerian epoch of Being, but rather in its full range

of symbolic, cultural, and political effects, it can perhaps be disentangled from the enormous baggage even a superficial linkage with the late Heidegger can entail. Indeed, in the 2002 work *The Way of Love*, her most recent work to be published in English, Irigaray explicitly states the need to go beyond the historical reflection of Heidegger, moving from the house of language toward being with the other in her difference (Irigaray 2002, 70–71).

Irigaray's "sensible transcendental" can be seen as an attempt to overcome a sharp distinction between the ideal and the real, such that the ideal might be instantiated in the real. The ideal is not to come from the outside in order to shape the real, but to be instantiated within the real, albeit not in a Hegelian sublation. Seen in this light, the early work of mimesis is, in Grosz's words, "an attempt to generate an anomaly that produces a new future . . . the breakdown from inside the system that allows that system itself to generate a future that isn't containable by that system" (Cheah and Grosz 1998, 40). Mimesis thus would link directly to cultural and social and political, not merely philosophical, transformation. When we reflect upon the mimetic strategy that Irigaray employs in her early work, we recognize its deconstructive use in uncovering the phallogocentric assumptions grounding philosophical projects. In addition, we argue that in the very act of destruction, a creation is also occurring. Irigaray creates a space for a new cultural, social, and political moment. Irigaray's mimesis in her early work is transformative *both* philosophically and politically in the sense that it opens up possibilities that will only come to fruition in her later work.

Indeed, the politics of Irigaray's later work can be seen as the "other side of the mirror" of her early strategy of mimesis as a phenomenological method of deconstructing the canon and exposing both the ways in which woman has been philosophically erased and positive possibilities for transformation. Irigaray has indirectly addressed this concern in works published since 1998, especially in her taking up of the themes of breath as a figure for unity in difference and of the love of the other that retains the other's difference. Using the practice of yoga as a primary metaphor, Irigaray shows that the concept of breath can mediate across East and West as well as fundamental philosophical binaries: body and soul, real and ideal, practice and theory. In *Between East and West* Irigaray also addresses the implication that sexual difference seems to take precedence over all other kinds of difference with reference to race and culture. Whereas before

it seemed that Irigaray was subordinating racial and cultural differences, just as differences in sexual identity, to sexual difference, she attempts to rectify this problem, although arguably problematically, through the concepts of *mixité* and respect for all forms of alterity.

This volume seeks to cover the incredible breadth of Irigaray's thinking, from psychoanalysis to phenomenology to social and political theory, and their relationship. Although we are thinking about turnings, we do so in order to overcome this kind of dichotomous categorization. We want to avoid the *distraction* caused by overfocusing on a division or a turning in a thinker's work, such as we have seen happen within Heidegger commentary. Thus, "returning" to Irigaray involves not only a temporal or spatial return, but also a focus on the idea of a "turn" in Irigaray as a return to themes that have concerned her all along. Most of the essays in this collection argue against the interpretation of a turn in Irigaray as a radical break. Although taking up different themes in her work, most of our contributors agree that it is important not to read any of Irigaray's writings in isolation from the others. If there is a theme that these diverse articles all share, it is perhaps relationality. Relationality in difference and the necessity of reading in context is at the center of all these essays—in the themes of intersubjectivity, sexual difference, and dialogue.

The idea of relationality as the interaction between two is already familiar to readers of Irigaray. But, in her latest work, Irigaray seems to gesture toward a way beyond the two, or a way that engages the two in such a way as to allow for a multiplicity or at least a third that would not simply be an extension of or sublation into a monolithic one. The discussion of relationality in Irigaray can often be reductive, either limiting her dialogue to only one other thinker or restricting her method to negation or appropriation. With the discussion of the third, Irigaray puts positive interaction at the center of her concern.

For example, in *The Way of Love*, Irigaray defines herself most explicitly against Heidegger in her reflection on being, world, and temporality, yet part of her critique is to show Heidegger's unwitting complicity with Hegel and other thinkers he himself critiques. The purpose of this critique is not simply dismissal, however, but leads into a discussion of positive possibilities to emerge from this engagement. Here, a critique of Hegel, in particular his conception of recognition as the basis for intersubjectivity and ethics, which Irigaray has often argued reduces the other to the same, is layered with an engagement with Heidegger:

If the Being standing in front of me forgets the other's difference, then I am not confronted with the singularity of my own representation and with what it implies for my looking. If what stays in-front-of is only a same unthought as such, I can turn back to my network of interrelations inside of one and the same world. . . . I return to myself unchanged in a closed History or world. . . . My ideal image is then deferred into the beyond, into God, which guides my steps toward the different, toward difference, without having any possibility of experiencing it. . . . The relation between those who are same and different weaves a groundless ground. It corresponds neither to the abyss nor to nothingness but results from an act of grounding which does not end in any ground. The ground is not equivalent then to a multiplicity of interweavings where man already stays and where he dwells—where he is both safeguarded and enclosed. (Irigaray 2002, 71–72)

The passage interweaves critiques of two thinkers and reflects a critique of Hegel that Heidegger draws on, yet it is turned against what is seen as a blind spot in Heidegger himself. Irigaray targets Heidegger's discussion of dwelling as a kind of withdrawal from, rather than an active engagement with, the world. Irigaray's response is complex and not merely negative. Rather, it provides the opening for a new engagement both with oneself and the other:

The meaning of "identity" is then modified insofar as it is no longer determined by the same understood as an equivalence between two terms—be they "thinking" and "Being." It is rather the difference between two terms—man and woman—that brings each one back to oneself thanks to the construction of a temporality in which relation to the same does not take root in a tautology but in a becoming. The same, from then on, is not appraised as similitude, but as a fidelity to oneself compelled by the care of the human, particularly as care of the other. (Irigaray 2002, 81–82)

What interests us about Irigaray's engagement with Hegel and Heidegger here is not merely her conceptual interaction with their thought, but also her ability to perform a new methodology for us. In the very act of engaging with Hegel and Heidegger she reflects

the trajectory of her own thought over time, the move from the deconstructive project to the constitution of identity and intersubjectivity, and ultimately politics. As readers, we cannot understand this last moment in her thought without having experienced her earlier engagement with the philosophical canon.

Respect and care for alterity relates to a dynamic temporality that holds possibility, rather than a cherishing of already constituted being, to be the most important human good. This possibility again is linked to dialogue and relationality that is never ascertained in advance:

In order to pass from the past to the future, a releasing all hold is indispensable, a letting be. Rather than a diving into the depths, why not envision it as the uncovering, the unveiling of a still closed sky. . . . The dialogue between two living subjects opens and closes again at each moment the question of what Being is. (Irigaray 2002, 83)

The desire to foreclose the possibility of a self-enclosed oneness leads Irigaray, in a move that surprises, given her almost exclusive emphasis on twoness heretofore, to claim that “the real exists as at least three: a real corresponding to the masculine subject, a real corresponding to the feminine subject, and a real corresponding to their relation” (Irigaray 2002, 111). This three has implications beyond the realm of sexual difference, and many of the essays collected here explore the question of duality and its overcoming.

Gail Schwab’s essay “Reading Irigaray (and Her Readers) in the Twenty-First Century,” with which this collection opens, offers us an expansive chronological perspective within which we can situate individual issues within Irigaray scholarship. Schwab’s historical overview opens the way to viewing Irigaray’s corpus as consistently addressing the female generic—from contesting its predetermination within the economy of the same to a psychoanalytic account of othering. Irigaray’s highly contested claim that all difference begins in sexual difference is contextualized as Schwab shows Irigaray’s intellectual trajectory to be dialogical, that is, a conversation with historical, cultural, and philosophical forces. In particular, Schwab speaks to the criticisms of Irigaray’s claim of the primacy of sexual difference and argues that Irigaray does not conflate sexual difference and heterosexism. Drawing on textual sources that are often overlooked, she

shows the female-male relationship to be one of ontological necessity in terms of the psychoanalytic necessity of the other, and not simply constitutive of sexual identity. Schwab writes:

The choice to live separately, apart from men and exclusively among women, is itself a choice that foregrounds the existence of the two genders. It can effectively fulfill a generic identity, and define a community, but nonetheless owes a debt to sexual difference—not to heterosexuality, but sexual difference, which, again, is not dyadic, not about heterosexual couples, or couples at all, but about, in the words of Liz Grosz, “the right of the other to have its other.” (Schwab, “Reading Irigaray and Her Readers in the Twenty-First Century,” 42)

Krzysztof Ziarek reads the third as a kind of energy in his essay “A New Economy of Relations,” showing Irigaray’s analysis to be a kind of transformed Heideggerian meditation on temporality and technology:

While the two kinds of energy, vital and cultural, become locked into the dialectics of production, a dialectics underpinned by the subject-object metaphysics, the third energy Irigaray alludes to breaks free of the nature-culture divide. It is neither natural (biological, physiological, sexual) nor cultural (intellectual, spiritual, technological, etc.). This “new” or “alternative” energy does not submit itself to manufacturing, creation, or production of objects and goods; in other words, it is not convertible into either production or consumption, and, as such, it does not operate in terms of the technological, and now, informational, economy of relations. (Ziarek, “A New Economy of Relations,” 62)

Ziarek’s essay explores the implications of Irigaray’s latest work, work that espouses a new relation to the other based on the recognition of the enabling invisibility of difference. Irigaray argues that difference cannot be made visible, for to do so would render difference into sameness through appropriation, but that the invisible energy of “letting-be” suggests an alternative to this economy of the same. Ziarek takes Irigaray’s claim about alterity and shows how it might suggest an alternative to the hegemony of late capitalist culture manifest as the consumerist Information Age, what he calls, expanding

on Heidegger's critique of technicity, the "info-technical economy of relations." Ziarek's essay demonstrates the connection between the transformation of Being into discrete units of quantifiable data and the economy of visibility. Irigaray's new energy of enabling attempts to transcend the dialectic of visibility through the actual recognition of difference. Following this reading, Ziarek gives a critique of the hegemony of the economy of visibility and its conception of the human being as primarily a productive agent as well as a strategy for fighting contemporary culture's movement toward quantification as knowledge. He shows how Irigaray redraws the relationship between visibility and invisibility that has been constitutive of the "Western metaphysical optics of being," and reconceives the human being as the one who has the ability to open up invisibility rather than make being visible and knowable. This reading helps us to conceptualize Irigaray's corpus as a continuum that begins with her phenomenological critique of the metaphysics of presence and continues in her positive positing of an economy outside simple dualism.

Ann Murphy's essay "Beyond Performativity and Against 'Identification': Gender and Technology in Irigaray" takes a different stance on Irigaray's critique of technology. Murphy argues that Irigaray's misgivings with reference to technology lead her to a dismissal of discourses of androgyny and performativity in gender identification, both of which Murphy reads as misguided attempts to attain a status of equality for women, doomed insofar as they are complicit with misogynist cultural norms. Reading Irigaray's critique of technology as a "technophobia," Murphy finds a dangerous tendency within Irigaray's concurrent reluctance to valorize narratives of transgenderism and transsexuality that might align with the attempt to normalize or naturalize experience on phenomenological grounds. She thus sees Irigaray as having moved beyond the subversive parody of the natural that she performed in her early work, but, troublingly, having become invested in categories she once insisted lay well beyond the grasp of discourse, namely the anchorage of sexual difference in biological nature. Murphy argues that Irigaray's later work forgets the growing impossibility of discerning between nature and technology. She writes:

At its most hyperbolic, and arguably its most ominous, Irigaray's investment in nature is accomplished as an appeal to a discourse that is at best dismissive and at worst hostile towards certain gender narratives. . . . To privilege the natural and even

morphological differences between men and women in a way that justifies the pejorative and even vitriolic treatment of the contemporary discourse on gender identification is to come dangerously close to exemplifying the dismissive and phobic manner in which some have navigated the philosophical discourses on transgenderism and transsexuality. (Murphy, "Beyond Performativity and Against 'Identification': Gender and Technology in Irigaray," 88–89)

Elaine Miller's essay "Reconsidering Irigaray's Aesthetics" also grapples with Irigaray's conceptualization of nature, this time with reference to aesthetics. Irigaray's aesthetics have been called uncharacteristically conservative by commentators, and it has been suggested that what makes Irigaray's contribution to aesthetics valuable concerns the integration of theory and aesthetic praxis rather than her discussion of actual art or artists. Miller expands on the immanent analysis of Irigaray's writings that directly concern art by contextualizing them within her larger philosophical corpus, arguing in particular that Irigaray's conception of nature, which has always been a contentious topic of discussion among commentators, can be illuminated by examining it in relation to her aesthetics. Supplementing both the psychoanalytic and the biological readings of Irigaray's discussion of nature with an analysis of Irigaray's engagement with German Idealism and Marx, Miller shows how "nature" is a highly complex concept for Irigaray, one which ultimately has important implications for aesthetics. In particular, Miller reads Irigaray's discussion of the beauty of nature with and against that of Hegel and Adorno. Adorno writes that natural beauty as a concept only arose in the early bourgeois period out of the historical progress of art, and the purportedly pure representation of nature in art occludes this historical emergence. Artworks that represent nature merely repeat the gesture of industry, relegating nature to raw materials. The beauty of nature can thus only be represented in art nonrepresentationally. Miller argues that "nature" functions in a similarly destabilizing way in Irigaray:

Irigaray argues that sexual difference, as the fundamental polarity in nature, is an immediate delineating force that must be preserved and addressed in all theorizing about nature or spirit (human activities). "Nature" functions similarly in Irigaray's writings to the way in which Adorno describes it, as

a cipher for that which resists the overarching contemporary economy of instrumental reason and calculative exchange value, or, as Irigaray might rather put it, of the male symbolic order. . . . For both thinkers, the beauty of nature represents a resistance to the colonizing power of a specific mode of thinking, that thinking that reduces alterity to something to be reworked and consumed. . . . [Beautiful art] keeps this promise of the beauty of nature by distorting the lens that purports to reflect reality back faithfully but in doing so reduces the other to the same. (Miller, "Reconsidering Irigaray's Aesthetics," 105–106)

Irigaray's writings on art can thus also provide a miniparadigm for her readers of the shift in Irigaray's writings from a primarily critical and deconstructive stance to the attempt to show what it might mean to construct positive, ideal representations of women's identity.

Kelly Oliver, too, addresses the theme of Irigaray's relation to Hegel, albeit with respect to ethics and politics, in her essay on the transformation of Irigaray's concept of vision from her earlier critique of the priority of vision in the Western tradition to her reconceptualization, in the later works, of vision as a loving look. In "Vision, Recognition, and a Passion for the Elements," Oliver traces Irigaray's transformed concept of vision and its connection to intersubjectivity through her engagement with Merleau-Ponty and Levinas. In particular, Oliver argues that Irigaray's new theory of carnal vision, that is, a vision of touch, can be connected to her attention to the elemental in a way that might ground her more recent thoughts on intersubjectivity. The loving look is a vision before vision, as Oliver writes,

. . . a tactile look that does not pry or gaze, but caresses in the flow of irrigation and irradiances. This look that sees without seeing, this look that touches the unseen substrate of the visible, seems to be an immersion in the ebb and flow of the moving elements that give birth to and nourish sensation and therefore thought, vision, and visions. A loving look becomes the inauguration of "subjectivity" without subjects. (Oliver, "Vision, Recognition, and a Passion for the Elements," 128–129)

Mediated by the elemental, in particular by air, the gaze cannot capture or objectify the other. Oliver guides the reader in understanding

Irigaray's later thought, which attempts to build the possibility of a new ethic of recognition. If we are to take Irigaray's ethic seriously, we must understand this recognition of difference as beyond the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, a recognition that ultimately subsumes the Other into the One.

Penelope Deutscher's essay "*Between East and West and the Politics of 'Cultural Ingénuité': Irigaray on Cultural Difference*" addresses contemporary concerns about the inadequate treatment of race and cultural difference in Irigaray's writings. Deutscher first takes up the problematic by making a comparison between Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir's tendency to generalize issues of racial difference. In the context of French intellectual discussions of the mid-twentieth century, including those of Fanon, Sartre, Césaire, and Senghor, Beauvoir is unique in not taking up the politics of *négritude*, nor even a concomitant politics of *féminitude*. Deutscher draws out the parallels between these works of the 1940s and '50s that Beauvoir neglected, on the one hand, and Irigaray's recent discussion of cultural difference, on the other. Although the two thinkers' positions on equality versus sexual difference are clearly divergent, they share a blind spot with reference to race. While both tend to generalize differences of race, Irigaray's inattention to voices of cultural difference is more problematic, in Deutscher's view, given her treatment of sexual difference, which one might think would serve as a model for analysis of cultural difference. Deutscher draws on Irigaray's recent *Entre Orient et Occident* to demonstrate Irigaray's failure to treat cultural difference attentively and with the same philosophical rigor that she applied to sexual difference. With regard to cultural difference and Irigaray's embrace of yoga and other non-Western ideas, Deutscher argues even more strongly that Irigaray might well be reifying the very structures of the economy of the same that she deconstructs with regard to sexual difference, such that the East is idealized as a mere mirror for the West, without a space for its own voice to emerge.

Deutscher's essay brings these questions to bear on Irigaray's work with regard to cultural difference in general, and race in particular, issues that Irigaray herself raises yet, in Deutscher's view, fails to adequately address, especially given the insights that Irigaray's earlier writing on sexual difference have provided. Deutscher writes:

The question Irigaray takes up in her recent politics is how to live with the (culturally different) other. Is cultural difference

just a matter of learning new means of living with difference? As Irigaray asked of sexual difference, what about fostering the conditions for new formations of difference? What if Western culture has been founded on the exclusion of the possibility of such formations? The conditions for the invention of new formations of difference might be as important as a politics of recognition of and living with difference. (Deutscher, "Between East and West and the Politics of 'Cultural Ingénuité': Irigaray on Cultural Difference," 143–144)

Nevertheless, Deutscher sees a possible productive line of critique arising from Irigaray's earlier writings that can be brought to bear on problematic depictions of race and cultural difference, even Irigaray's own.

Debra Bergoffen extends the idea of an economy beyond simple dualism, which Ziarek claims can be found in the figure of the third and Murphy believes Irigaray has overlooked, to argue that it provides the foundation of a new ethics for Irigaray. In "Irigaray's Couples," Bergoffen takes on that most disconcerting aspect of Irigaray's remarks—that sexual difference grounds all other difference. On the basis of this remark, Irigaray has been accused of heterosexism, as we have seen, and her later philosophical project has been called into question. Bergoffen offers an analysis of Irigaray's writings as pointing us toward the placental economy as a means of overturning the patriarchal psychoanalytic, historic, and political instantiation of sexual difference. The placental relation interrupts the patriarchal reading of ego development, whether through the Freudian oedipal moment and the Lacanian law of the phallus or through the assumptions of biology or cultural myths. Bergoffen argues that Irigaray dismantles the dichotomous thought inherent to the discourse of autonomy and provides a new conceptualization of ethics based in the community. Bergoffen writes:

What was identified in the placental economy as the hope of the ethical relationship and analyzed in the mother-daughter couple as the promise of individuated identity, is now considered from the perspective of the we of the community and the limits of subjectivity. Moving from the almost ethical to the ethical, and from the ethical to the political, the question now becomes: What sort of identity will/can ground a social

order where the boundaries of the self are protected and the difference(s) of the other(s) is respected? (Bergoffen, "Irigaray's Couples," 164)

However, Bergoffen goes on to critique Irigaray's own suppositions regarding the primacy of the couple, that is of the two, borrowing Irigaray's own analysis to further the political end of disrupting patriarchy's stronghold on ethical determinations.

Emily Zakin's essay "Between Two: Civil Identity and the Sexed Subject of Democracy" asks parallel questions of Irigaray's shift toward a focus on democracy and establishing civil rights for women. Irigaray seems in her recent work to be affirming the possibility of answering the questions of "what woman is and what she wants," questions she repeatedly challenged in her earlier works. In answering the questions of women's identity and desire, Irigaray seems to go against her earlier critique of a masculine politics of desire. Zakin argues that Irigaray's later work elaborates on and strengthens her earlier critique while also offering a promising relation between democracy, sexed subjectivity, and civil identity. She shows that Irigaray has consistently refused to abandon the psychoanalytic insight that subjectivity emerges in relation to parental others and is thus sexed from the beginning, and that her interest remains in seeing how reconceiving how sexual difference might illuminate our understanding of the relation between nature and the civil, opening up new political possibilities that defy the hegemony of what Zakin calls "totalitarian democracy," in which egalitarianism works toward the disappearance of women. Democracy proper should ensure the space of the "in-between" in order to avoid the collapse of civic neutrality into masculine subjectivity, and the only way this is possible is to ensure that women emerge as citizens in their own right and with their own rights. Zakin emphasizes that sexual difference implies an acceptance of loss and lack rather than a plentitude of stable identity. Thus, the theme of sexual difference develops themes articulated in Irigaray's early work, albeit with a new, increasingly political significance. In her rethinking of the conceptual bases of democracy, Irigaray does not recuperate themes that she had earlier dismantled, Zakin argues, but instead explores their concrete political possibilities. She writes:

Irigaray is thus attempting, with the idea of sexuate rights, to introduce the feminine into politics, and the body into language,

in a way that does not simply position the feminine as the outside, the limit, the subversion of the political. It would thus be mistaken to assume that the idea of a feminine universal must imply a reversion to content over form, status instead of rights, substance rather than subject, to a closed concept of the feminine. By demanding rights as women and not as persons, Irigaray is not basing political claims on an essential or substantive identity, but on the formation of universality itself. In this way, she aims precisely to give form to a feminine subject. (Zakin, "Between Two: Civil Identity and the Sexed Subject of Democracy," 194)

Margaret Whitford also addresses the psychoanalytical import of Irigaray's later writings. In "Irigaray and the Culture of Narcissism," drawing on the main variants of theories of narcissism, and emphasizing the work of Melanie Klein and the post-Kleinians, Whitford demonstrates the connections between Irigaray's critique of Western civilization and her other related critiques. To the untrained reader, Whitford argues, Irigaray's discussion of the female imaginary and symbolic may seem abstract, isolated from the contemporary urgent need for a critique and transformation of phallogentrism, colonialism, racism, or classism. Against this interpretation, Whitford shows that Irigaray's work of the 1980s and '90s can be contextualized within post-Freudian psychoanalytic work that moves away from an exclusive focus on the Oedipus complex, castration, and the role of the phallus (the Lacanian context) into other models of the psyche. Whitford's analysis reconstructs for the reader how the process of the psychic derailment into narcissism, which prohibits full maturation of the self and causes projective identification, is taken up by Irigaray on a cultural level such that the feminine other becomes the repository for the masculine projective fantasy of omnipotence, both rendering the feminine invisible and subsuming her into the economy of the same (though she is discussing an entire culture, not individual subjects). The essay is careful to avoid easy comparisons or conflation of Irigaray and Klein's work, but instead gives the reader an understanding of the psychoanalytic grounding of Irigaray's political claims, in particular Irigaray's abiding concern with the problem of cultural narcissism. Whitford calls Irigaray's diagnosis of narcissism "phenomenological," leading Irigaray to distance herself from strict psychoanalytic theory even while she makes use of its resources and techniques.

Characterizing narcissism as, in part, the inability to give up the fantasy of omnipotence, Whitford shows that Irigaray focuses on the fantasies of Western culture in general, in particular its hostility to anything new or other and its resistance to fundamental change. In refusing to acknowledge its debt to the mother-woman and, by extension, to nature or to the rest of the world, Western culture manifests a desire to destroy what it cannot possess. Irigaray's work oscillates, Whitford argues, between a critique of the narcissistic hatred of otherness and its cultural effects, and a quest for non-narcissistic models. Whitford states in conclusion:

To suppose that [Irigaray's] work concerns (white Western) women only would be to miss in a quite significant way the implications of her oeuvre, which—on my reading—is far from being a marginal analysis. On the contrary it is structurally similar to some of the major currents of social and political critique of the post-war period. (Whitford, "Irigaray and the Culture of Narcissism," 219–220)

Catherine Peebles's essay "Knowing the Other: Ethics and the Future of Psychoanalysis" also engages with the critique that Irigaray's recent thought has strayed from its earlier critical engagement with psychoanalysis. Addressing Penelope Deutscher's suggestion in 1998 that Jacques Derrida's work is now more productive for a feminist rethinking of ethics and psychoanalysis than is Irigaray's, Peebles argues that Irigaray's later work reflects a transformed rather than a discarded perspective on psychoanalysis. Peebles individually addresses the criticisms that Irigaray seems to now believe that the other can be stably identified and known, and the related claim that, for Irigaray, narcissism seems to be a completely successful subordination of other to the self. Both claims imply that Irigaray's thought has "fallen into sameness," or that she assumes that "cultural cannibalism" succeeds. This overemphasis on identity originates out of Irigaray's vision of two sexes, which it reinforces. Peebles complicates this reading of identity and narcissism through a reading of Irigaray's use of recognition and sexuate identity as destabilized through the notion of gender as being both of oneself and more than oneself, both external to the self and to be created by the self. Peebles concludes that insofar as Irigaray's thought continues to mark sexual difference as the site for the creation of ethics, psychoanalysis *must* continue to be operative in her

thought, even if it is a psychoanalysis that is “yet to come.” Thus, the positions of Irigaray and Derrida have a certain proximity rather than diverging in their focus:

What Irigaray and Derrida share, via their respective emphases on incompleteness and alterity, is an emphasis on the yet to be, the impossible, as a site of possibility and of creation. The important difference, of course, is Irigaray’s almost exclusive focus on sexual difference as an ontological category, and as a privileged category when it comes to conceiving ethics. While it is true that her more recent works do not spend as much time as the earlier ones on what psychoanalytic thought might or ought to contribute to her ethics of sexual difference, it is nevertheless the case that in marking sexual difference off as *the* site for the creation of ethics, her work necessarily supposes the possibility of psychoanalysis, or a psychoanalysis to come, as a primary locus for ethical interrogations, because it is, by definition, and like no other field of knowledge, primarily concerned with elaborating the significance of sexual difference. (Peebles, “Knowing the Other: Ethics and the Future of Psychoanalysis,” 237–238)

Sara Heinämaa’s “On Luce Irigaray’s Phenomenology: Between the Feminine Body and Its Other” returns to the question of the meaning of Irigaray’s claim that sexual difference grounds all difference. Heinämaa also addresses another common critique of Irigaray’s work by feminist commentators: how can woman be a subject in philosophy and speak in her works, given Irigaray’s own argument that, historically, philosophy excludes woman as subject (and women philosophers from the canon), and/or that philosophy defines itself in opposition to the feminine? Irigaray has been criticized for seeming to reject the philosophical canon in her early work, only to affirm it in her later work. Heinämaa argues that while it might appear that Irigaray takes contradictory positions on the role of women and the feminine within philosophy in her early and late work, in fact Irigaray’s corpus is continuous in its position on this issue. By showing that Irigaray’s early work is a critique of modern philosophy rather than of the entirety of Western philosophy, Heinämaa offers an alternative to the view that Irigaray’s early work totalizes and rejects philosophy, and thus shows Irigaray’s corpus to be logically consistent. Heinämaa draws

on Irigaray's statements from the 1980s and '90s to make the claim that Irigaray's work *in toto* is "to think through and, to work for, the constitution of the 'feminine identity.'" Heinämaa shows Irigaray's adaptation of Husserl's phenomenological account of the relation between intersubjectivity and objectivity to articulate an intersubjectivity of differently sexed bodies:

The critical side of her argument is that our notions of intersubjectivity are restricted by our inability to think beyond one kind of bodily subject, or even to recognize this subject as of one kind. What we call inter-subjective is actually just relations between bodies of one kind and their diverse versions. . . . by thinking through the sexual difference, in its bodily concreteness, we can arrive at the recognition of two different kinds of corporeal subjects. And this recognition serves as a basis for a true understanding of intersubjectivity, between "at least two." (Heinämaa, "On Luce Irigaray's Phenomenology: Between the Feminine Body and Its Other," 251)

Maria Cimitile's essay "Irigaray in Dialogue with Heidegger," like Heinämaa's, argues for a continuity of Irigaray's work. Her essay follows the trajectory of Irigaray's philosophical relationship with Heidegger from *Speculum* to *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, to *The Way of Love*. Cimitile argues that Irigaray leads the reader through a layering of theoretical positions into a new feminist politics that can be illuminated through her dialogue with Heidegger that evolves over time. An engagement with language is at the heart of Irigaray's analysis of the power structures of thought and relations between men and women. While Irigaray has learned much from Heidegger, especially in the uncovering of hidden elements that undergird what is present before us, in particular the privileging of one of two binary oppositions, Cimitile argues that Irigaray is not simply educated or influenced by Heidegger. Rather, we must understand Irigaray's dialogue with Heidegger as projecting the very movement of her thought. The sense of relationality that emerges in *The Way of Love* reflects the discourse between the two thinkers:

While it is easy to read Irigaray's latest work on Heidegger with an atomistic perspective, and thus as a dismissal or overcoming of Heidegger's thought, to do so does not

provide the means for a full understanding of what Irigaray offers us in her latest work, the importance of which lies not only in the text, but in the movement of thinking that has brought this text to us. (Cimitile, "Irigaray in Dialogue with Heidegger," 270)

In the course of her essay, Penelope Deutscher returns to the early critique of Irigaray as essentializing woman, showing that this criticism rests on the misconception that Irigaray's notion of feminine identity prescribes a subjective reality, when in fact she offers a hypothetical response to an excluded possibility. As Schwab also notes in her essay, many who offer this misconceived critique had not accounted for the whole of Irigaray's writings, even to all those available at the time that the critique was leveled in the late-1980s and early-1990s, but relied almost solely on translations of *Speculum* and *This Sex Which Is Not One*. One of the benefits of a second movement of Irigaray scholarship, which goes beyond the important work of bringing Irigaray's work to the attention of Anglo-American readers, is the added knowledge and hindsight that her later work opens up new questions on just such an issue as essentialism, an issue which one could argue has been a defining issue for Anglo-American feminism given the intersection of feminist activism and feminist theory in the twentieth century. The material conditions of women's lives from the early suffragist movement up until the 1970s and '80s, and still today, make it difficult to accept a theory of difference without worries of a backlash against the call for women's equality. Yet, Irigaray's latest work offers a real attempt to suggest an alternative to simple calls for economic parity and equal political representation that do not address the complexity of women's needs in systems whose very structure ensures that such measures alone will not guarantee them a true political existence. Ultimately, this volume does not seek to argue for the viability of any of Irigaray's particular views, but rather to explore the richness of her thought, which can only be fully appreciated by considering her work in its full context, taking into consideration the unity of her early and later writings. In so doing, we hope also to provide a paradigm of feminist scholarship, scholarship that at its best should be open to turning and returning to a thinker to allow her to explore the full range of her theoretical possibilities and to respond to her critics.

NOTES

1. This is not to imply that Irigaray's relationship to Heidegger is the primary lens through which to view her work, nor that it is invested in the hermeneutical project—the term “turn” and the reference to Heidegger are used analogically and structurally, not to imply content.

2. Throughout this volume, works by Irigaray will be referenced in author date form, with the publication of the English translation first and the original publication date in brackets, in order to give readers an immediate sense of the chronology of Irigaray's writings, which often were published in translation much later, or in some rare cases earlier, than their original version.

3. Although the former was published in France in 1981, its translation came out relatively late in English and, as a result, it is often mistakenly classified with the “later” Irigaray in Anglo-American scholarship.

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