

PART I

THINKING LIFE WITH LUCE IRIGARAY



# Introduction

## Thinking Life with Luce Irigaray: Language, Origin, Art, Love

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In the first chapter of *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community* (2002), in a critique of what she considers Schopenhauer's (mis)reading and (mis)representation of Indian philosophy and spirituality, Irigaray writes that "philosophy is a matter of death," and she goes on to quote Schopenhauer: "Death is the real inspiring genius or Musagetes of philosophy, and for this reason Socrates defined philosophy as *thanatou méléte* (preparation for death; Plato, *Phaedo*, 81a). Indeed, without death there would hardly have been any philosophizing" (Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* cited in *Between East and West* 23). Irigaray further notes: "A philosopher living and thinking life is *a priori* suspect in our philosophical culture" (ibid.). Nevertheless, she will forcefully declare in the introduction to *Between East and West*: "I love life, and I have searched for solutions in order to defend it, to cultivate it" (4), and ask: "How to go against the current? To stop the exploitation, in particular through a simple inventory, of the human and of his or her environment? How to return to where death has taken place because of the cessation of becoming, mistaking what we are? How to renew a cultivation of life, and recover our energy, the path of our growth?" (viii). Many thinkers and theorists are currently pursuing answers to these questions.

The contributors to *Thinking Life with Luce Irigaray*, the latest in a series of volumes resulting from ten conferences of the Luce Irigaray Circle, which took place between 2006 and 2019, attempt to address these questions and to “think life” through the multifarious strands of Irigaray’s philosophy, including, of course, the foundational strand of sexuate difference, and to show how the possibility of life in sexuate difference, far from freezing up into a rigidly codified binary of “two sexes,” might blossom rather into a living continuum of ever-evolving change(s) and difference(s) in language, culture, art, spirit, nature, human relations, and politics. The philosophy of Man, of the Universal and the One, as Schopenhauer understood (without understanding), is rooted, grounded, in death. However, as Mary C. Rawlinson, feminist philosopher of life and Irigaray Circle co-founder, has written in her 2016 book, *Just Life: Bioethics and the Future of Sexual Difference*, “Man has had his day” (13). It is time to move on, to try something different—to try difference. Life is never One, as Irigaray frequently reminds us; in fact, life is always at least two, and always generating the diverse and the multiple. The chapters that follow Irigaray’s both explore and illustrate what it might mean to think life in all of the above-mentioned domains, and in others besides.

### Origin, Maternity, and Relationality

Part 1: “Thinking Life with Luce Irigaray,” in addition to this introduction to the entire volume, includes an essay by Irigaray, “How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?,” presented via video link at the third conference of the Luce Irigaray Circle in the Fall of 2008. Irigaray began her brief but densely rich remarks by questioning the discouraging failure of twentieth-century women’s movements to have achieved women’s “evolution” at either the personal or the collective level—beyond, that is, a certain undeniable economic and social progress, both the importance of which and the limits of which Irigaray went on to acknowledge. Urging women to take control of their own liberation and to cultivate freedom for themselves and for their own becoming, “How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?” ranges over many of the themes that have formed the foundation of Irigaray’s major works and thought—themes that are integral to her life-centered philosophy. Particularly important in Irigaray’s essay is the problem of the noncompetitive and nonconflictual, but also nondependent and nonfusional, ethical relation to the other, a relation defined by respect for limits and by the creation of the “threshold,” or the “interval,” a space-between that allows two human beings to cultivate and maintain their own subjectivity while

creating a living relation between them. This has been a particularly rich area of exploration in Irigaray scholarship, as we shall see in many of the chapters that follow, which include a piece by Rebecca Hill, whose book on the interval has been highly influential (see Hill 2012).

Relationality could be said to constitute the main thrust of works like *The Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993), *To Be Two* (2001), *I Love to You* (1996), *Sharing the World* (2008), and *Teaching* (2008). More specifically in the area of ethical relations, “How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?” has some interesting things to say about desire and sexuality—ideas that look back to, and substantially develop, Irigaray’s call for the cultivation of desire in, for example, “Spiritual Tasks for Our Age” in *Key Writings* (2004, 171–85), where she emphasized the connection between sexuality and spirituality; in “How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?,” she underlines the link between sexuality and freedom:

Sexuality is, in a way, unnecessary with respect to our own life. As such, sexuality is also the place where the question of our human freedom is most critical. Sexuality can lead us to stay at or fall back into the mere elementary or material level of our instincts, or it can help us to overcome our native human belonging towards aiming at spirituality. Sexuality is the part of our body of which the function is almost only relational. [. . .] Sexuality attracts us beyond ourselves, and provides us with energy for this going beyond. (33)

Several of the chapters that follow develop the themes of love, eroticism, and sexuality—concepts/experiences that are obviously of central importance to the problem of “thinking life.”

Another Irigarayan theme in the area of relationality that appears in “How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?” concerns the urgent need to “return to our birth, with its bodily and contextual dimensions—that is, to our natural origin and identity” (27), and to acknowledge our debt to the mother and recognize our birth as the originary truth, not only of our own life, but as that of all of civilization. The relation to the mother is one of the pillars of Irigarayan ethics, and she has written about it extensively, in essays like “Body against Body: In Relation to the Mother,” “Belief Itself” (*Sexes and Genealogies* 1987, 7–21, 23–53); “When the Gods Are Born” (*Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* 1991, 121–90); “The Forgotten Mystery of Female Ancestry” (*Thinking the Difference* 1994, 89–112); “On the Maternal Order” (*Je Tu Nous* 1993, 37–44); and “Spiritual Tasks for

Our Age,” to name only a few examples. In “How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?,” Irigaray reaffirms that the way to women’s liberation does not follow the male path of “emergence from the natural origin that is generally confused with the maternal body and world,” in order to enter “a culture in the masculine” (26); such a trajectory is not only unsuitable to female subjectivity, but also actively “opposes it” (ibid.), as Irigaray writes. We shall see that the rethinking of the relation to and the debt owed the mother—conceptual problems that, like sexuality and love, are indispensable to thinking life—figure as prominent themes in many of the chapters in this volume. This is also a fruitful area of current research in Irigaray studies, as philosophers like Rachel Jones and Fanny Söderbäck, for example, continue to develop Irigaray’s thinking on the maternal relation, natality, and placental ethics (see Jones 2011, 2012, 2013; Söderbäck 2016).

Of course, Irigaray continues, woman “has a natural origin that she has to consider and cultivate, but she herself is also a natural origin” (28), and “she has to preserve the transcendence of the one to whom she gives birth as being another human with an origin different from hers. This requires the ability to distance herself from the work of her own body” (29). Being an origin goes beyond procreation, however, as “each woman, independently of giving birth to a child, is a place from which an origin can and must spring. This presupposes a certain way of dealing with life, with breathing, with energy, with language” (29). A woman, while acknowledging her maternal debt and cultivating a spiritual and ethical relation to the mother, must also take responsibility for and forge her own origin as a free human being, creating her self, her own spirit, and a language or medium appropriate both to express that self and to reach out to others. In some of her most recent work, Irigaray develops this concern for “being an origin” far beyond the concept of “women’s liberation” into an ontology of human becoming and urges us to give birth—through breathing, through the assumption of sexuate difference, and through appropriate relations to others—to an entirely new humanity (see, for example, *To Be Born* 2017). Irigaray’s emphasis on the becoming of the species has inspired the thought of Elizabeth Grosz, whose work on the ontology of sexual difference is foundational to current feminist thought on evolution, change, transformation, and becoming, or on “becoming undone,” to use Grosz’s term (See Grosz 2011, 2013, and 2016), and Grosz’s work in this area has influenced many contemporary thinkers and writers, including Rebecca Hill, Rachel Jones, Cheryl Lynch-Lawler, Kristin Sampson, Peg Rawes, Ellen Mortensen, and myself, to name only a handful of those who read her.

## Logic, Language, Art

Regarding the need to transform language as a medium, Irigaray has been questioning, studying, and analyzing language across the entire breadth of her oeuvre, in addition to (re)creating it (revitalizing it—that is, reinfusing it with life) herself in the highly original style of her writing, where she seeks, as she writes in “How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?,” “to think while being faithful to myself as a woman and not to submit myself to a culture that [is] not appropriate to me” (30). She began her own research and writing with sociolinguistic studies in *Le Langage des Déments* (1973) and with the essays in *To Speak Is Never Neutral* (2002), carried on with this work in her major essay “Représentation et auto-affection du féminin” in her edited collection *Sexes et genres à travers les langues* (1990, 31–82), and used the data and the insights she had acquired in her social-scientific studies to create important syntheses in several of the essays in *I Love to You* and in her pedagogical investigations with Italian schoolchildren in *Le Partage de la parole* (2001, partially published in *Key Writings* as “Towards a Sharing of Speech” [77–94]). Language and linguistics constitute one of the five principal themes of *Key Writings*, and, perhaps unexpectedly, language is also what is at stake in the *Way of Love*, whose title seems to promise something quite different, but whose execution demonstrates that finding the way of love requires a new language. The rethinking and remaking of language make up a vein of scholarship that has been central in my own work on Irigaray over the years (see Schwab 1998, 1998, 2016).

“How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?” calls for a commitment to creative exploration enabling women to connect to our own subjectivity and energy, to express difference and plurality rather than oneness and sameness, and to enter into communication with (the) other(s). It is incumbent upon us to develop new language(s), new logic(s), and new cultural forms; in an interesting comment that she (regrettably) does not pursue any further, Irigaray proposes that we move beyond our long preoccupation with the difference between metaphor and metonymy, and, instead, consider “another way of expressing the real that perhaps has to do with diaphor” (31), a type of metaphorical expression emphasizing, not similarities but rather differences (diaphora), creating the possibility of something new, leading “to a greater potential for living, growing, coexisting, and sharing with the whole of the real” (ibid.).

Irigaray writes in “How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?” that western logic and culture have used words

to duplicate the real and construct a world parallel to the living world. This constructed world is in a way finished, closed, just as a chessboard is limited, and the words—that is, the pieces that move on the chessboard—are also limited and defined, as is the case for their movements. There is no longer life in such a world but only a representation of the living world that aims to put it at man's disposal. (30–31)

The binary oppositions structuring language and thought in our Western tradition have transformed the “living real into dead realities” (32) cut off from nature. In the contemporary moment, the chess board has become a violent video game, where the “pieces”—more obviously representations of humans than the kings, queens, knights, bishops, and so on on a chess board, but no more alive—would seem to enjoy more freedom of movement and choice than their chess counterparts, but whose movements take place only in the representation of space, and whose choices are exercised only in the representation of freedom—the “choices” lying invariably between the “freedom” to overpower and to kill or the “freedom” to be overpowered and killed. Death is in either case the goal and the result. Many of the chapters in this book take up Irigaray's critique of death-dealing Western either-or binary logic and seek to find another path, or paths, rather—multidirectional, winding, intertwining paths of expression and becoming—of life and lives.

## Nature

Finally, in Irigaray's essay, we also take note of her expressions of concern about the state of our planet and her ongoing involvement in ecological and environmental issues, which first became explicit in her well-known, now-classic piece inspired as a response to the disaster at Chernobyl, “A Chance for Life” (*Thinking the Difference* 1–35), where she demonstrates her passionate advocacy for a nonexploitative, nonextractive relation to nature and the earth, and for a respectful relation to all that lives. As we begin to consider the ways that “our culture has damaged and endangered our planet” and come to recognize that “we have to rethink our behavior with respect to nature” (“How Could We Achieve Women's Liberation?” 27), we move beyond the human-centered concerns of relationality and self-expression and communication and begin to attend to life in the nonhuman, including animal and vegetal life, and the life of the earth itself—its water, soil, rock, air, and climate—that is, all of organic and inorganic nature, all that sustains

all that sustains us; we move from human life to Life. (I would mention in this context the collection of essays edited by Peg Rawes, *Relational Architectural Ecologies: Architecture, Nature, and Subjectivity* [2013], that deals with the ecology and the economy of the built and natural environments, as well as with human subjectivity and a politics of community and care. For further development of these issues by Irigaray, see *In the Beginning She Was* [2013] and *Through Vegetal Being: Two Philosophical Perspectives*, written with Michael Marder [2016].)

### Life in and through Nature, Desire, Freedom, and Love

In Part II: “Life in and through Nature, Desire, Freedom, and Love,” several of the contributors, in particular Rebecca Hill, Cheryl Lynch-Lawler, Kristin Sampson, Erla Karlsdottir and Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir, and Ellen Mortensen seek new ways of thinking that would open up “chessboard logic” in support of a fluid vitality. Cheryl Lynch-Lawler, Erla Karlsdottir and Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir, and Kristin Sampson re-examine some of the traditional binaries of Western thought—that is, nature-culture, male-female, mind-body, reason-emotion, sense perception-cognition, and life-death—and Rebecca Hill broadens the dialogue they establish with contemporary and classical Western thinkers to include philosophers and artists of the First Nations peoples of Australia. Ellen Mortensen, Fanny Söderbäck, Louise Burchill, Phyllis H. Kaminski, and I then shift the focus of thinking life onto problems of relationality and of life with (the) other(s), and consider the cultivation of love and desire through sexuate difference.

In “The Reenchanted Garden: Participatory Sentience and Becoming-Subject in ‘Third Space,’” Cheryl Lynch-Lawler, working with the insights gained in her psychoanalytic practice, seeks sense-based and emotional pathways to the reintegration of the mind, body, and spirit, as she takes up Irigaray’s challenge to the Western logic of solids and urges us to seek in the natural world, as well as within our psyche, a fluidity of thought and a connectedness to our own inner wellspring of creativity, all of which we have come perilously close to losing in our capitalist-consumerist world of overly mediatized digital images and networks—representations of life that are cut off from living, breathing life, as Lynch-Lawler shows. Irigaray writes in “How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?” that we have begun to “act, experience, and even feel as an element of a more or less huge machine in which the relations between two elements are regulated by the whole without any freedom, responsibility, or even personal experience” (36), and

her call for spiritual and artistic endeavor allowing us to connect to the whole of our being, as well as to others, vibrates here in Lynch-Lawler's rejection of traditional Western philosophico-scientific logic and her search for the wholeness of human subjective becoming in new ways of "doing" science, in sensory immersion in nature, and in a more holistic relation to self, others, and the world.

Irigaray has ceaselessly mined the canonical Western tradition, and in particular, the stories, tragedies, and philosophy of the Greeks, and her relationship to the Greek heritage has inspired many thinkers; I note here, in particular, the major collection edited by Elena Tzelepis and Athena Athanasiou, *Rewriting Difference: Luce Irigaray and "the Greeks,"* which includes important essays by Dorothea Olkowski, Mary Beth Mader, Lynne Huffer, Judith Still, Tina Chanter, and Luce Irigaray herself (see Tzelepis and Athanasiou 2010). *Thinking Life with Luce Irigaray* continues to develop this line of thought in the chapters by Rebecca Hill, Fanny Söderbäck, Kristin Sampson, and Alison Stone. Looking back beyond Aristotelian metaphysics, as well as beyond the pre-Socratics, to Homer and to the poets of antiquity she labels the "pre-pre-Socratics," in "Thinking Life through the Early Greeks," Kristin Sampson, in a further critique of the either-or logic of Western culture, examines the philological roots of the concepts of "life" and "nature," removing both terms from the binary oppositions of metaphysical thought, where "life" came to mean the "opposite of death" and "nature" the "opposite of culture." Sampson demonstrates the complexity and the amplitude of the concepts of "life" and "nature," whose pre-pre-Socratic meanings vary according to the vicissitudes of concrete situations and life experiences, and she opens up the possibility of rereading both pre-Socratic and pre-pre-Socratic Greek thought in order to come to greater clarity regarding the contemporary structuring of our concepts of nature and of life and to develop potentialities for future becoming.

Emphasizing, as do Lynch-Lawler and Sampson, the place of humans within and with respect to nature, Rebecca Hill looks at many literary topoi and strands of Western culture through the dystopian, post-environmental-disaster lens of Australian First Nations writer Alexis Wright's 2013 novel *The Swan Book*, in "Between Her and Her: Place and Relations between Women in Irigaray and Wright." Philosophers and feminist scholars will undoubtedly follow the direction taken by Rebecca Hill in her reading of the resonances between Irigaray's work and that of Alexis Wright, as they move away from criticism of Irigaray's thought (or lack thereof) on differences other than sexual/sexuate difference and as they begin to grapple with the potential of her work to illuminate intersectionality in useful ways—as Hill

does in her chapter. Intersectionality was one of the principal themes of the ninth Irigaray Circle conference entitled *Horizons of Sexual Difference*, directed by Athena Coleman at Brock University in June of 2018. Work by, among others, Rebecca Hill herself, Sabrina Hom (see 2013), and Emily Anne Parker (see 2014, 2018), who all made presentations at the 2018 conference, has already begun to open Irigaray studies in the direction of intersectional and decolonial thought. In this context, we should note the importance of striking a balance between ontological concerns and the demands of intersectionality. This balance will be crucial for the future of Irigaray studies. Australian feminist philosopher and activist Laura Roberts's new book, *Irigaray and Politics: A Critical Introduction* (2019), deals with ontological questions of space and time, as well as with the problematics of intersectionality and differences beyond sexual difference; Roberts's work may point to a path forward (see also Roberts 2015).

In her chapter, Rebecca Hill reads a "double matricide" in the systematic sacrifice of nature in the Western economic model coupled with the exploitation of the sexuality and the fertility of women in the reproduction of patriarchal society. The problem of matricide, and of the excessive violence against women in general, that lies at the foundation of Western culture is one of the principal themes in the chapters by Ellen Mortensen, Phyllis H. Kaminski, Alison Stone, and Emily Holmes. Rebecca Hill contrasts the dereliction—the placelessness—of women in the West with the ontology of space and time of the Indigenous peoples of the Australian continent, whose "country never leaves its people" and whose time is multidimensional—where "all times exist together" and no times "cease to be." Hill then goes on to discuss Irigaray's "interval," or "sensible transcendental," as the basis for the ethical relation to the other, as well as to all that lies beyond the human scale within both the temporal and the spatial universe. The interval will appear again and again in the chapters that follow; Fanny Söderbäck's, Louise Burchill's, Phyllis H. Kaminski's, Eva Maria Korsisaari's, Tomoka Toraiwa's, Karen Schiler's, Britt-Marie Schiller's, Caroline Godart's, and mine all grapple with the problems of relating ethically to the other in various domains, including the erotic, the spiritual, the pedagogical, and the political.

In their collaborative essay, "Nature, Culture, and Sexuate Difference in Luce Irigaray's Pluralist Model of Embodied Life," Erla Karlsdóttir and Sigrídur Þorgeirsdóttir critique, like Kristin Sampson, the hierarchizing binary logic of the Western cultural tradition, particularly the closed-off and static model of sexual identity as a male/female binary. Karlsdóttir and Þorgeirsdóttir, following Ellen Mortensen, read Irigaray's relationship to Nietzsche and her awareness of his longing to reconnect with a premetaphysical conception of

embodied life, as a source for her model for thinking life—where nature and culture; self and other; and male and female (along with other potential sexuate identities) interact and intertwine in a nonagonistic way, in a way that is fruitful and creatively generative of multiplicity, pluralism, diversity, and asymmetricality, establishing the foundation for the creation and/or renewal of democracy through civil identities based on the interplay of sexuate differences.

In “Between Heidegger’s Poetic Thinking and Deleuzian Affect: Irigaray’s *The Way of Love*,” Ellen Mortensen’s reading of *The Way of Love* illustrates Irigaray’s engagement with Heidegger and her critique of his too-exclusive focus on a language “steeped in death, nothingness, and sameness” (Mortensen 120), as Mortensen writes, reminding us of Irigaray’s, Lynch-Lawler’s, Sampson’s, Hill’s, Karlsdottir’s and Thorgeirdottir’s calls for a renewal of thought in a language that would be a “fluid, incomplete, and ever-changing language of difference and becoming, one that is energized by the elements of fire, earth, air, and water” (ibid.). Mortensen ultimately finds that Irigaray’s way of love requires a mode of speech that would lay the foundation for relationality—a language, as Irigaray writes in “How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?,” that “uses forms, but living forms, forms that are not fixed, closed, defined once and for all [. . .], words which reveal something of the living real” (31)—a language “that tries to express our whole being and speak to the whole being of the other” (35).

*The Way of Love* is not exclusively a book about a path toward a new language; considerations regarding the transformation and renewal of desire and sexual energy are prominent within it, as they are in so many places in Irigaray’s work. In “How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?” she writes that

if our needs generally concern us at a mere individual level, it is not the case with regard to sexuality. [. . .] Sexual attraction, in fact, has nothing to do with our individual needs, but rather with overcoming them. Sexual attraction can transform our needs into a component of our being at the service of our relational existence. [. . .] This presupposes training our immediate attractions in order that they become a desire that can be shared. To establish and respect limits is especially decisive. [. . .] Sexuate desire compels us to transcend ourselves, and it is maintained by the respect of the transcendence of the other in relation to ourselves. (34)

The next group of essays—comprising, in particular, Fanny Söderbäck's, Louise Burchill's, and my own—deals extensively with ethical erotic relations, and anticipates the further development of this theme we shall see in the chapters by Eva Maria Korsisaari, Britt-Marie Schiller, and Caroline Godart in part 3.

With an emphasis on the interval that both recalls, and contrasts with, Rebecca Hill's reading in "Between Her and Her," in "Time for Love: Plato and Irigaray on Erotic Relations," Fanny Söderbäck considers Irigaray's call for a new space-time in erotic love that would allow for the possibility of two irreducibly different subjectivities being "co-present" to each other in a ceaseless temporal becoming, across the interval created by love figured as the daimon Eros, as described in the beginnings of Diotima's discourse reported by Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*. Söderbäck urges us to read the *Symposium* with renewed focus on the form of the platonic dialogue, a form that creates complexities and ambiguities that carry us far beyond the traditional readings of professors of philosophy, who tend to find a quest for eternity, oneness, and universality in what they call "Diotima's ladder." Indeed, attentiveness to the dialogue form reveals that it actually models the concept of love as the interval "between." We might then consider—extrapolating from Söderbäck's argument—that the literary form and style of the Platonic dialogue present us with an exemplar of one of those "new" languages, or of those "new" artistic forms to which Ellen Mortensen's essay refers and Irigaray calls for in "How Could We Achieve Women's Liberation?"

Focused, like Fanny Söderbäck, on sexuate identity and on the erotic relation to the Other, Louise Burchill, in "Life-Giving Sex versus Mere Animal Existence: Irigaray's and Badiou's Paradoxically Chiasmatic Conceptions of 'Woman' and Sexual Pleasure," brings another perspective to bear on desire, sexuality, and love, as she looks at the work of French philosopher Alain Badiou and contrasts his concept of sexual difference to Irigaray's position. Burchill's detailed analysis shows that although Badiou, until 2011, denied sexual difference to have any real effectivity, or importance for thought, outside the specific field of love, he nevertheless defines "sexual disjunction" in such a way that the philosophy of Irigaray could well qualify, within his own terms, as "feminine," since Irigaray not only claims primacy for the relation between two in love and eroticism, but also views the between-two as both ontologically and epistemologically foundational. Thus, we see here that philosophy is both the love of wisdom and the wisdom of love, as Irigaray reminds us on the first page of the first chapter of *The Way of Love*.

Irigaray opened "How Could We Achieve Women's Liberation?" with a consideration of the problem of freedom, asking in her first subtitle, "At

What Freedom Do Women Aim?,” questioning an energy that “when it exists, has not yet found a manner of investing itself that allows it to be kept, to be cultivated, and to be shared,” and calling for the cultivation of an energy and a freedom that would be appropriate to “a woman herself” (26). My essay, “Freedom, Desire, and the Other: Reading Sartre with Irigaray,” connects to Irigaray’s essay, as well as to Cheryl Lynch-Lawler’s, Kristin Sampson’s, and Ellen Mortensen’s, in its emphasis on the renewal of freedom in subjectivity through the opening of closed networks in human thought, and like Fanny Söderbäck’s and Louise Burchill’s, it foregrounds relationality. In a close reading of Irigaray’s discussion of *Being and Nothingness* (1966) in *To Be Two*, I attempt to show that, unlike Sartre, who found that conflict between free individuals was inevitable, Irigaray rejects conflict/competition as foundational in human relations and sees a sharing of the world, or of worlds, as the only possible path to the individual’s freedom. The way of love is also ultimately the way of freedom.

Phyllis H. Kaminski also looks at Irigaray’s critique of Sartre’s analysis of human relations in “Daughters, Difference, and Irigaray’s Economy of Desire.” Her focus, however, is the concept of “daughterness”—the structural position occupied by all women within the various international patterns of familial, social, and economic exchange. In her opening essay, Irigaray emphasizes that women’s liberation cannot be measured solely in economic and social terms: “[G]oing no further makes us productive machines or social products without the creative ability that characterizes humanity as such. Indeed, a human being is a being which can transcend itself through its creation” (27). Kaminski similarly argues that beyond economic and social progress, it is the development, the self-creation, of the potential sexuate subjectivity of the Daughter, “making it blossom with respect for [her] own life, the life of the other” (28), that constitutes the way forward to “women’s liberation” and to renewed human relations in all types of settings, including social, political, and spiritual. Kaminski also takes up Irigaray’s insistence on the cultivation of an energy appropriate to female becoming and explores spiritual paths that we might once again name the way of love. She thus connects *Thinking Life with Luce Irigaray* to studies in the wider field of Irigarayan spirituality, an area in which she is herself a leader (see Kaminski 2013, 2013, among others), along with Emily Holmes, whose “The Age of the Spirit” is the next essay in the volume, and whose co-edited collections, *Breathing with Luce Irigaray* (see Holmes and Škof 2013) and *Women, Writing, Theology: Transforming a Tradition of Exclusion* (see Holmes and Farley 2011), constitute major contributions to religious studies. Phyllis H. Kaminski and Emily Holmes are, of course, indebted to the previous work in this area by Morny

Joy (see 2003, 2006), Amy Hollywood (see 2002), and Grace Jantzen (see 1999), as are many others, including myself.

## Revitalizing History, Philosophy, Pedagogy, and the Arts

Thinking life requires a transformation of the truth traditions of Western thought, and in Part III: “Revitalizing History, Philosophy, Pedagogy, and the Arts,” contributors consider some of the ways in which “life-thinking” has creative potential—in the weaving of new narratives in literature and in the documentation of history, as we see in the essays by Emily Holmes and Alison Stone, as well as in the rereading of traditional philosophical analyses, including those of the twentieth-century pragmatists, phenomenologists, and postmodernist theorists, as we see in the chapters by Anne van Leeuwen, Eva Maria Korsisaari, Tomoka Toraiwa, and Karen Schiler.

In “The Age of the Spirit: Irigaray, Apocalypse, and the Trinitarian View of History,” Emily Holmes examines Irigaray’s metaphorically trinitarian orientation toward Christian history and her reading of the contemporary spiritual moment as the inauguration of sexuete difference into Christianity, in an “age of the breath”—an age of “the spirit and the bride.” Holmes shows that Irigaray is not the first to read history with such “spiritual optimism,” as she takes us back to the narrative of the medieval Christian sect of the Guglielmiti, a group of thirteenth-century religious (mostly) women united in love and admiration for Guglielma, a saintly abbess they believed incarnated a third age of the spirit, wherein God in the form of a woman would redeem us all. Thinking life will require the recasting of the entirety of Western history in new and unexpected terms, focusing on those whose stories have been neglected, repressed in the official versions of events, official versions that have been the necessarily incomplete and misleading story of the hegemony of the One. A life-centered reading of History will render the stories of many others like the Guglielmiti, who—it should be noted here—were condemned to silence and to the stake, along with their own original versions of church and world history. Emily Holmes, co-editor of *Women, Writing, Theology*, is doing the work required to find their voices and their words.

In “Tragedy: An Irigarayan Approach,” Alison Stone returns, with Kristin Sampson and Fanny Söderbäck, to Greek culture; her focus, however, is the tragedians, and she marshals Aristotle’s, Freud’s, and Irigaray’s readings of Greek tragedy and myth in order to emphasize tragedy’s potential to document historical change and to inspire political action. Stone thus supports Irigaray’s claims, if not to an actual matriarchy that would have preceded the institution

of the patriarchy, at least to a time before patriarchal social structures were fully entrenched in Greek society, a time “documented,” as it were, in the great tragedians and in the earlier myths. Stone’s interpretation of the *Oresteia* recalls Rebecca Hill’s reading in “Between Her and Her”; Hill also emphasizes the way that Irigaray, among others, has unearthed the originary matricide(s) that underlie(s) the parricide that was read by Freud as the founding moment of culture and civilization. Freud’s reading is, of course, explicitly rejected by Irigaray in her opening essay and elsewhere, and Stone maintains, following Irigaray, that the cause of women’s dereliction in culture lies in damaged mother-daughter relations—a problematic that also resonates with the work of Ellen Mortensen and Phyllis H. Kaminski, as well as with mine.

In “The Ethics of Elemental Passions in Eugène Guillevic and Luce Irigaray,” Eva Maria Korsisaari also contextualizes Irigaray’s thought, but within twentieth-century secular philosophy, rather than Christian or ancient history. Like Cheryl Lynch-Lawler, Korsisaari explores the importance of the cultivation of life through the senses and sensory experience, although she places significantly more emphasis on the erotic relation to and desire for the other than on the relation to nature and to the self, a perspective recalling the essays of Ellen Mortensen, Louise Burchill, Fanny Söderbäck, and myself. Like many contemporary feminist scholars, and several prominent philosophers in Irigaray studies from the Nordic countries (see in particular Heinämaa 2006, 2011, and Lehtinen 2014), Korsisaari works in the phenomenological tradition, and she reads the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Emmanuel Levinas through the twentieth-century love poetry of Eugène Guillevic and through Irigaray’s meditations on love and sexuality, as expressed principally in her *Elemental Passions* (1992). Korsisaari finds that Irigaray and Guillevic take Merleau-Ponty’s and Levinas’s phenomenology to a new depth as they “describe the primordial dimensions of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, that affective and sensible level where our relations with the world or others are not analyzable in instrumental or practical terms,” as well as “an eroticism where [. . .] lovers would recognize each other as different” (Korsisaari 251), as Korsisaari writes.

Anne van Leeuwen’s “Deconstruction, Defiguration, Disconcertion: Reading *Speculum de l’autre femme* with Derrida and Lacan” also contextualizes Irigaray’s thought within twentieth-century philosophical debates, specifically in relation to Lacan’s and Derrida’s critiques of difference, identity, and representation in linguistics, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis. Van Leeuwen, while emphasizing the similarity in the projects of Lacan, Derrida, and Irigaray, shows that it is only Irigaray for whom “originary difference

refers to sexual difference” (van Leeuwen 258); thus, we note that for Irigaray, constitutive difference is grounded in and inseparable from life and growth. Neither strictly cognitive-symbolic nor strictly unconscious-imaginary, sexual difference requires becoming—that is, living, changing embodiment.

Historical narratives and philosophic debates can result in life-affirming real-world praxis and applications, as we see in the essays of Tomoka Toraiwa and Karen Schiler. In “Dewey and Irigaray on Education and Democracy: The Classroom, the Ineffable, and Recognition,” Tomoka Toraiwa establishes a striking and unexpected parallel between the American pragmatist John Dewey and Irigarayan philosophy, as she examines their respective approaches to the theory and practice of education and of its relation and importance to democracy. Toraiwa emphasizes both the need for and the difficulty of establishing ethical horizontal relations among students and between teacher and students in the classroom where authoritarian vertical relations have traditionally predominated. Rejecting prescriptive and formulaic solutions to the problem, Toraiwa, following Dewey and Irigaray, concludes that the student-teacher relation can only thrive ethically as “between two”—that is, as a particularized face-to-face relation—and that it is only on that same basis of “between-two” that education can be said to form the foundation for true democracy. We might further emphasize here that pedagogy is an increasingly fruitful area of inquiry both for Irigaray and Irigarayans, as demonstrated by *Teaching* and by *Building a New World: Luce Irigaray Teaching II* (2015), collections of essays edited by Irigaray with, respectively, Mary Green and Michael Marder, as well as by her earlier *Partage de la Parole* reporting on her linguistic research with Italian schoolchildren (see Schwab 2016).

Karen Schiler’s “Discursive Desire and the Student Imaginary,” as it lays out some of the current issues and controversies in college composition theory, clearly illustrates and provides concrete examples of the very types of vertical classroom relations that Toraiwa theorizes and shows how such relations can be harmful to students’ development as thinkers and writers. Schiler cautions professors to be aware of the complexities of student desire and of the student imaginary as they seek to “liberate” students and effect political change through their classrooms. She further challenges educators to beware the imposition of their own desires and their own imaginary on students, potentially practicing a type of politics in education that is precisely “nonliberating” and decidedly *not* the apprenticeship in democracy called for by Dewey.

Aesthetics has been an important area of exploration for Irigaray herself and in Irigaray studies, and I would note Elaine Miller’s thought in

this context (see Miller 2007, 2016), as well as Helen Fielding's (Fielding 2001, 2004, 2008, 2015). *Thinking Life with Luce Irigaray* includes a focus on Irigaray and the arts, beginning with "How Could We Achieve Women's Liberation?" where Irigaray calls for a renewal of creative artistic expression. She even claims that

we have to reverse the traditional hierarchy between philosophy and art here. Of course, the matter is not only one of granting superiority to art with respect to philosophy; rather it is of considering that art—at least in our epoch—could express our whole being better than philosophy, and can more easily overcome the dichotomies of our past logic. [. . .] No doubt art, then, no longer amounts to works of art that some artists create in order to be exhibited in an art gallery or somewhere else. Art refers to a language that tries to express our whole being and speak to the whole being of the other. (34–35)

This volume's chapters on the arts by Peg Rawes, Britt-Marie Schiller, and Caroline Godart all heed Irigaray's call as they consider the radical potential of the arts—that is, specifically, architecture, sculpture, and film, (and it would make sense here also to note the Platonic dialogue as explored in Fanny Söderbäck's essay, poetry as in Eva Maria Korsisaari's, and theater as in Alison Stone's)—to inspire political transformation and renew and recreate life. Whereas Peg Rawes focuses on problems of sustainability and its interface with economic and social issues of equality and inequality, justice and injustice, Caroline Godart and Britt-Marie Schiller explore visual and spatial metaphors in film and sculpture that express the development of intersubjectivity and underline ambiguities of separation and closeness, distance and intimacy that recall Rebecca Hill's work on spatiality, Fanny Söderbäck's on temporality, and Phyllis H. Kaminski's on "daughterness."

In her essay in part 1 of this volume, Irigaray confirms the importance of economic equality for women, while also maintaining that a new energy appropriate to female sexuate identity is required in order to move forward in women's liberation. In "Building Sexuate Architectures of Sustainability," Peg Rawes looks at different materials and structures for the built environment, as well as at stable and renewable energy sources that would both power and sustain future communities around the planet; in Irigarayan terms,

we might consider such sustainable materials, forms, and energy sources “open structures” that “can conform to a living growth” (“How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?” 32). While the emphasis in Irigaray’s essay is mainly on the cultivation of an interior energy required for the growth of sexuate subjectivity, Rawes clearly shows, in readings of “The Mechanics of Fluids” (*This Sex Which Is Not One* 106–18), “A Chance for Life,” and *The Way of Love*, the imbrication of all forms of earthly (including personal and individual) energy, while demonstrating that the form and mechanism of male sexual energy have determined, and limited, the types of energy we have available to us, and that the forms and mechanisms of female sexual energy offer alternative structural models for future energy sources, thereby bringing an important new perspective to current debates on the economics and politics of sustainability.

In “Habitats for Desire: Sculptural Gestures Toward Sexuate Living,” Britt-Marie Schiller explicitly takes up Irigaray’s challenge to seek artistic outlets as a means to found a new logic, to “transform the real,” as Irigaray wrote in “Fecundity of a Sexuate Art,” the introduction to part 3 of *Key Writings* (98). In a psychoanalytic reading of sculptures by Louise Bourgeois and Richard Serra, Schiller develops the possibility of creating appropriate spaces for female and male subjects living in sexuate difference. Along the way, Schiller—like Ellen Mortensen, Phyllis H. Kaminski, Alison Stone, and I—also delves into the mother-daughter relation as both the origin of conflict and suffering among women and the potential source of new ways of living and relating. Schiller has some very interesting things to say about the “aggressivity” of daughters and mothers, as illustrated by Bourgeois’s massive sculptural spiders, and she creates an important counterpoint to Irigaray’s critique of female aggressiveness in “How Could We Achieve Women’s Liberation?”

Scholars of cinema have begun to mine Irigaray’s thinking on female identity and subjectivity for film studies, and this has proven to be a successful excavation. I would here mention only two of the most interesting recent books in this area: Caroline Bainbridge’s *A Feminine Cinematics: Luce Irigaray, Women, and Film* (2008) and Lucy Bolton’s *Film and Female Consciousness* (2015). I anticipate many more intersections between film and Irigarayan theory as women, and as feminism, come to play a more important role in cinema studies. The final essay of this volume, Caroline Godart’s “The Feminist Distance: Space in Luce Irigaray and Jane Campion’s *The Piano*,” takes us back to Rebecca Hill’s and Fanny Söderbäck’s thinking

on the erotics of space and time, as she undertakes a new and highly detailed rereading of the Irigarayan lips, looking at female sexuality as she examines the interval through an analysis of the character of Ada in Jane Campion's *The Piano*. The lips here illustrate an eroticism "more or less internal and porous in relation to the outside world, to the other," a morphology which can "close while remaining open," requiring "open structures and meanings which can conform to a living growth," as Irigaray writes in "How Could We Achieve Women's Liberation?" (32). Godart's methodology demonstrates the power of the filmic medium to address questions of desire, identity, and relationality, as she teases out the erotic spatial complexities of Campion's film by looking at Ada as a woman seeking to experience her own desire, and yet ultimately finding *jouissance* in an at least partly phallogocentric relationship, and as a woman who "settles down" into spoken language and into a quasitraditional heterosexual relationship within the domesticized space of white Victorian colonial society—even as she reserves, in her dreams, a special place/space/time for herself under the waves, alone, anchored to her abandoned piano, listening (along with us) to its language, that which was her own. As Irigaray maintains, "language as art will never be universal nor permanent, but at the service of the embodiment of each one in their own singularity. This presupposes that this sort of language aims to express and share our complete energy [, . . .] discovering another manner of entering into communication that gives voice to our whole being in the present and allows the respect for our differences" (35).

In *Thinking Life with Luce Irigaray: Language, Origin, Art, Love*, readers of Irigaray, along with and led by Irigaray herself, occupy a living environment that is dense, fertile, rich, and diverse, variegated in tone, color, shape, direction, and intention—a creative space *of/for* thinking and writing. May this fecundity continue to bear fruit in language, in art, in love, and in politics into a living future, sustaining individual freedom in subjectivity and collective freedom in democracy.

## Notes

In attempting to create a context for *Thinking Life with Luce Irigaray: Nature, Origin, Art, Love*, I have discussed, or merely mentioned, the work of many fine scholars whose work I respect and admire, but there are just as many and more whose work I was unable to recognize due to space constraints. I ask for understanding from those whose names don't appear here.