Womanizing Nietzsche

■ *Philosophy's Relation to the "Feminine"* ■

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4 *The Plaint of Ariadne* [10]

Even though the English translation of Luce Irigaray's *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* appeared in 1991, there has been little commentary or critical engagement with the text published in English.[11] Occasionally a critic plucks a line from the text, or groups this work with others by Irigaray, and makes some general remarks; but no one has published a sustained reading of this extremely difficult and poetic text. Certainly most Nietzsche scholars with whom I have spoken about this work don't know what to make of it. Irigaray doesn't even mention Nietzsche's name until the last few pages of the book! Throughout this chapter I will engage in the difficult task of constructing a way to read this text.

I read Irigaray's *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* as the plaint of Ariadne against her appropriation by the god Dionysus, her appropriation by Nietzsche, and her appropriation by Derrida in *Spurs*, his reading of Nietzsche's woman. Irigaray attempts to reappropriate woman for/from woman by, among other things, appropriating Derrida's reading of Nietzsche. At the center of Derrida's text is the question of propriation and Irigaray turns this question into a question of appropriation. Using a version of what has become her well-known methodology of double mimesis, Irigaray both reappropriates the position of the feminine by taking up that position and speaking "from the other side" and at the same time appropriates Derrida's text by reproducing it in a debilitating way. Luce Irigaray's *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* is an attempt to answer the question of propriation from the side of the feminine, from the side of Ariadne, from the immemorial waters out of which we were born—the sea and woman's womb.

In the first section of *Marine Lover,* Irigaray creates Ariadne's response to the men who have tried to appropriate her for their own purposes. It is written as the final love-letter to end a bittersweet affair, because the addressee, the male lover, is incapable of marrying/merrying

an-other; he loves always only himself. In this "letter" Ariadne complains that in her face he sees only the mirror image of himself and in her voice he hears only the echoes of his own words. The feminine and the woman that he embraces so tightly (that he becomes confused about his own identity) is just a projection of himself; he is deluded if he thinks that he has really touched any other. The forlorn female lover of "Speaking of Immemorial Waters" writes to Nietzsche and the men who come before and after him that they have forgotten women. They have forgotten their mothers out of whom they were born; they have forgotten their sisters with whom they learned who they are; they have forgotten their lovers from whom they receive confirmation of themselves.

Irigaray's Violated Lips

Although his name is never mentioned, Derrida is an implicit addressee of *Marine Lover*. Derrida's *Spurs* is full of sails always passing over the surface of the immemorial waters without dipping in, sails ripped apart by sharp objects. With the question of woman, "the stylate spur (*éperon stylé*) rips through the veil. It rents it in such a way that it not only allows there the vision or production of the very (same) thing, but in fact undoes the sail's self-opposition, the opposition of the veiled/unveiled (sailed/unsailed) which had folded over on itself" (Derrida, *S* 107). Ripping renders everything equal; the folds are torn open so that all opposition and difference become the "very same thing." Irigaray's "Immemorial Waters" pleads that we no longer need to tear women apart with some spurring operation in order to annihilate their difference: "Let us be done with believing we need flints which only open up the solid shells of your ideas, or spurs to get your impassive things moving" (*ML* 37).

The midsection of *Marine Lover*, in French entitled "*Lèvres Voilées*" (veiled lips), reads like a response to Derrida's spurring operation: "believing he must crack this thing open, that he can only take possession of it through violence, by forcing her/it beyond the present appearances, man arms himself with some pointed object—probe, stiletto, sometimes a pen—so he can get inside her/it" (*ML* 105). [croyant qu'il doit ouvrir cette chose, qu'il ne peut se l'approprier que par effraction, la forcer au-delà des apparences présentes, "l'homme" s'arme d'objet pointu—stylet, poignard, parfois plume—pour pénétrer (Irigaray, *AM* 112)]. Irigaray suggests that man creates the distance between woman's lips and then does not know how to get from one side to the other. He creates the distance between himself and her and then he cannot figure out how to cross

it. He resorts to violence and violates her "lips"; Irigaray repeatedly uses the metaphor of lips to figure the female sex. In *Marine Lover* she says that the violence against woman's lips can be seen most clearly in the figure of the Virgin Mary, whose two pairs of lips form a cross as they are sewn shut by patriarchy, silent without sex (*ML* 166). Also recall Derrida's knives and letter openers that violently separate the virginal "lips" of books (*DS* 259). In *Spurs*, Derrida resorts to violence when he arms himself with Nietzsche's spur; he uses this spur against woman in order to make her give up her property, which is the very limit to the question of property itself.

Derrida reads the multiplicity of women in Nietzsche's texts as a sign "that Nietzsche had no illusions that he might ever know anything of these effects called woman, truth, castration, nor of those ontological effects of presence and absence" (S 95). He cites the heterogeneity of Nietzsche's texts as his proof. With his analysis of the multiplication of women in Nietzsche's texts, Derrida both figures woman, in her multiple personae, as that which cannot be possessed—cannot be property—and uses this figure of woman to deconstruct the notion of property. In his deconstruction of property, Derrida makes the figure of woman (as the figure of the undecidable) his property.

Where Derrida reads multiplicity in Nietzsche's women, Irigaray reads homogeneity. All of these woman, however they are characterized, are "the feminine" only within the masculine imaginary. Nietzsche creates these various women so that he can avoid any encounter with woman as an other. His woman is not an other; she is his creation. Derrida goes further and maintains that Nietzsche occupies the positions of his women. Nietzsche becomes woman. And within his own discourse on the feminine/woman, Derrida himself claims to occupy her position. Recall Derrida saying "I am a woman and I am beautiful." While this remark may be merely for literary force in his analysis of Blanchot in 1973, he answers an interviewer that he likes to think that he writes like a woman:

> Fauzia Assaad: Could not one find, in light of your text, a possibility of doing philosophy which is feminine?
>
> Jacques Derrida: I said "the woman (of) Nietzsche," the "woman Nietzsche": at the point where he affirms, at the moment where he is, where he loves the affirmative woman, he writes, if one can say, "from the hand of woman." Were you asking me a personal question? I would love to write as, like (a) woman. I am trying. . . (*Nietzsche aujourd'hui* , 299; my translation).

Irigaray interprets the desire by a man to be a woman as the ultimate refusal to love a woman (*ML* 39). She says that "mimicking the maternal-female role is equivalent to hiding it/oneself as other in the strategy for establishing the royal sovereignty" (*ML* 161). If man becomes woman, then there is no woman/other, there is only man and the woman/other is merely a mask worn by the selfsame. There are not two, but only one.

It is intriguing that Irigaray criticizes the mimetic strategy when it is used by Nietzsche and Derrida (although she never mentions Derrida) and yet she adopts this strategy herself. This raises some important questions: What is the difference between Irigaray's use of mimesis and Nietzsche's or Derrida's use of mimesis? What is the effect of Irigaray's appropriation of Derrida? And, how can a man read Irigaray? I will take up this last question first and come back to the question of mimesis.

Some critics might want to charge that just as there is no place for woman in Derrida's text, there is no place for man in Irigaray's texts. While I think that this is a serious concern deserving of more investigation, and Irigaray's strategy is not without its problems, there are some important differences between Derrida's style and Irigaray's. My argument against Derrida has been that his discussion of the feminine and woman is a discussion directed to and from the masculine and man. He does devote much attention to the feminine and woman in his writing, but in the end they are continually constructed as objects and reappropriated. Irigaray, on the other hand, addresses her text to the masculine and man. She uses the pronouns "I" and "you" to designate the female author in conversation with the male Nietzsche/Zarathustra/reader. Here, Irigaray is following Nietzsche's lead in *Zarathustra* where Zarathustra uses personal pronouns to address the woman whom he loves, eternity (see *Z* III "The Seven Seals"). While the masculine does occupy a position that is being called on by Irigaray to account for itself, it is not constructed as an object. Irigaray attempts to construct a dialogue (albeit one-sided) between masculine and feminine. She does not present a discussion of the masculine directed to and from the feminine or feminists. In many ways, she takes up the position of object assigned to the feminine and woman in the classics of Western philosophy and talks back. This is why many of her texts are difficult to read. The reader is often positioned as eavsdropping on a conversation in which s/he hears only one side, unless s/he can determine whom Irigaray is addressing in her text.

For example, Irigaray mimes Derrida's *Spurs* by speaking from the position of the mirror/woman. She takes Derrida's questions about propriety and truth seriously, but she asks these questions from the position of the other which Derrida has already closed off by assigning her/its

place. Irigaray does this, however, without ever mentioning Derrida or *Spurs*. She positions him and his text as "woman" in relation to her own text. That is, his text becomes the silent other from whom she steals (back what belongs to woman) in order to write. The problematic effect is that Irigaray usurps man's position in order to speak from/for the feminine.

When Nietzsche or Derrida attempts to mime woman by taking up the place of the other the effect is a recuperation of the other into the economy of the same. Because these authors mimic from and for their position as subjects, their mimesis can become a conservative strategy designed to maintain the status quo, which does not tolerate difference. In other words, they mime the other of the same. By miming the other qua mime, they merely represent woman as the mirror whose non reflective surfaces in principle cannot be seen. This becomes just another strategy to ensure that those surfaces that do not reflect the masculine will not be seen. Unlike Irigaray who speaks to, and not for, the masculine, both Nietzsche and Derrida speak for, and as, the feminine.

In her *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, Margaret Whitford describes the difference between Derrida's strategy and Irigaray's as the difference between "speaking as" a woman or man and "speaking like" woman or man (128). Whitford persuasively argues that while Derrida is concerned with speaking *like* a woman or like the feminine, he is reluctant to admit that he is speaking *as* a man: "Derrida, for example, is able to acknowledge that the transcendental subject is male, but is less willing to acknowledge that his own place of enunciation is male; he insists on his feminine voice" (*LI* 132). Whitford maintains, and I agree, that Derrida's feminine voice works on a slippage between speaking like and speaking as. Whitford powerfully describes this process in *Luce Irigaray*:

> Because of the slippage between speaking like and speaking as a man or woman, Derrida is in the position where he can speak like a woman (this is clearly important to him) but, since he has deconstructed the opposition male/female, he can glide over the fact that he is speaking as a man. He particularly does not want feminists distributing "sexual identity cards." So he is then able to point out that feminists are phallocentric in that they speak "like men" while at the same time refusing them the possibility of speaking "as women," which would be a phallocentric stance too. In both cases, women lose out. (128)

As Whitford points out, Derrida overlooks the fact that it is different for men to speak as men, like man, than for women to speak mimetically like man, as women. The effects are very different (*LI* 129). Derrida seems to think that men miming woman is more effective than either women speaking as woman or women miming man because it is subversive. While

it is true that it produces a different effect, I am arguing that it does not necessarily produce an effect that undermines phallocentrism; rather it can produce the effect of further excluding women and the possibility of speaking as women from the discourse of philosophy.

In *This Sex Which Is Not One,* Irigaray points out that in Plato there are two types of mimesis, productive and reproductive mimesis (131). Productive mimesis, which she identifies with the realm of music, does more than merely reproduce the status quo; it can provide new meanings and languages. Reproductive mimesis, on the other hand, which she identifies with the history of philosophy, merely reproduces the status quo in various guises. As long as philosophical discourse "does not question its own hierarchical relation to the difference between the sexes," it is merely reproductive. So long as it is "defined," "practiced," "monopolized" by a single sex, asks Irigaray, "does not writing remain an instrument of production in an unchanged regimen of property?" (*TS* 131). While Derrida does question philosophy's hierarchical conceptions of sexual difference, he does so by "becoming woman," by taking woman's place.

Rather than use mimesis to reproduce the subject in the dominant position, either by insisting on the subject-object dichotomy or by denying it, Irigaray attempts to go beyond the economy of the masculine subject and show something of what has not been represented of/from the other in the "unchanged regimen of property."[12] This is why whereas Derrida reads the women in Nietzsche's texts as Nietzsche's triumph over the subject-object dichotomy, Irigaray reads them as his failure to go beyond it.

Derrida uses the multiplicity of women in Nietzsche's texts to show that the object, woman, is not unified and therefore the subject is not either. He intends to deconstruct the opposition subject-object, man-woman. Within Derrida's discourse, woman in all of her guises, and because of her multiplicity, becomes the sign of the undecidable. He recuperates her multiplicity by turning her into a formula for the undecidability of language itself. He imagines her outside the discourse of truth because she represents both truth and untruth. She becomes for him the very possibility of discourse, the mark of undecidability, the "hymen's graphic" that produces the ontological effects of opposition and dichotomy (see Derrida, *S* 107, 111). This is why it is funny that woman is *his* subject; especially since it is obvious in his text that she is never her own subject. She is always only the subject of the advice given from one man to another: "one must beware to keep one's own distance from her beguiling song of enchantment" (Derrida, *S* 49).

Irigaray reads in Nietzsche's uses of woman the desire to master the other by absorbing it and thereby annihilating it in its difference. She argues that positioning woman as the undecidable is still to position her within man's game; the only difference between this game and the more traditional games that men play with women is that these ambivalent boys up the ante: "That he should will himself to be feminine doubles the ante perhaps. Doesn't change the game" (*ML* 117). He merely steals from her so that he won't have to acknowledge his debt (see *ML* 79). The game remains the same because man always ends up playing the castration game, which Irigaray argues reduces all difference to a question of more or less (*ML* 80–81). Within the game of castration there is no other way to conceive of difference than in terms of quantity. And Derrida too falls into the game of castration, not only because within his discourse there is no alternative but to do violence to yourself—chew off a limb—in order to at least demonstrate your good faith attempt to go beyond the metaphysics of presence, but also because he explicitly engages in the debate over whether or not woman is castrated/castrating: "Unable to seduce or to give vent to desire without it, woman is in need of castration's effect. But evidently she does not believe in it. She who, unbelieving, still plays with castration, she is woman . . . . woman knows that castration *does not take place* [*la castration n'a pas lieu*]" (*S* 61). Irigaray responds: "And whether or not woman wants castration, whether or not she believes in that operation, and finds it casting her again as seductress, isn't this/the id still thinking on the male side? This is still what man's woman would be like. And, perhaps, the masculine's feminine?" (*ML* 85).

Irigaray argues that the economy of castration does not allow woman to have any relationship to herself or to other women. By defining her always in some relation to castration—even if her relation to castration is disbelief—she is always and only defined in relation to the masculine and never the feminine. Irigaray alludes to another "truth" beyond the economy of castration that has a place when women embrace themselves and each other (ML 85). Taking woman's sex as a metaphor, as she often does, Irigaray suggests that women are always touching themselves in such a way that it is impossible to separate the subject of the touch from the object of the touch. Man, on the other hand, cannot embrace himself in this way. For man, "to touch oneself" is what sets up the subject-object/subject-predicate distinction (*ML* 91). He touches himself as a subject touching an object.[13] And even when man takes woman as his other, he cannot embrace her: "should the other serve as a sheath for him, at best he will make a wrapping of it, but not an embracing" (*ML* 85). Between the sword and the sheath there is no exchange.

Irigaray is concerned with the economy of exchange. Like *Spurs*, "Veiled Lips" is full of metaphors of economy. Recall that at the center of *Spurs* is the question of propriety or property. Involved with property are the questions of "propriation, exchange, give, take, debit, *price*" [la propriation, l'échange, le donner, le prendre, la dette, *le coût*] (*S* 112–13). Irigaray takes up these questions from the other side and asks: How does man finance the death of his other? What belongs, is proper, to woman? (*ML* 79, *AM* 86–87).

Within the economy of castration, nothing belongs to woman; she is not allowed any possessions. "The possessive, the mark of belonging, does not belong to her" (*ML* 86–87). Within the economy of castration, "the question that would be appropriate to her is always and forever impossible to formulate even if one wanted to make the effort" (*ML* 88). Everything that she has belongs to man. "She stakes him in a new game without his needing to borrow from the kitty. And therefore go into debt, risk losing" [Elle lui redonne de l'enjeu sans qu'il se voie repuiser dans la cave. Donc s'endetter, risquer de perdre] (*ML* 79, *AM* 85).

His theft is all in the name of "love." Man takes from woman because he loves her. But Irigaray wants to know why he never gives anything in return. He demands that woman affirm his identity, but he does not even allow her an identity: "And if, to the whole of himself, he says yes and also asks her to say yes again, did it ever occur to him to say yes to her? Did he ever open himself to that other world? For him it doesn't even exist. So who speaks of love, to the other, without having even begun to say 'yes'?"[14] (*ML* 190). If love is always only love of the same, then love is the murder of the other (*ML* 188). Man finances the death of the other by stealing from her, becoming her, in the name of his "love" for her. If Derrida reads Nietzsche as suggesting that when "we" love a woman "we" risk death, Irigaray responds that the risk is only that by killing her, "your" other, you also kill yourself (see Derrida, *S* 45–47). As I will explain later, this is what Irigaray suggests happened to Nietzsche. By taking away everything that is woman's, man's mirror becomes a void.

Within the economy of castration man does not go into debt as he takes from woman. She gives herself and he gives nothing in return. Within this economy there is no reciprocal exchange between two. There is only exchange as substitution, which is always defined in terms of the masculine possession, having or not having the phallus, or some substitute for it. Yet how can Irigaray suggest that this economy of castration is operating within Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* when Zarathustra proclaims the gift-giving virtue as the highest virtue? And certainly Derrida explicitly rejects the economy of castration in favor of a hymeneal economy. In

fact in *Given Time* does he not open up the possibility of imagining an economy beyond exchange as the circulation or substitution of goods, an economy where the gift is possible?

An Economy of the Gift

> This is your thirst: to become sacrifices and gifts yourselves; and that is why you thirst to pile up all the riches in your soul. Insatiably your soul strives for treasures and gems, because your virtue is insatiable in wanting to give. You force all things to and into yourself that they may flow back out of your well as the gifts of your love. Verily, such a gift-giving love must approach all values as a robber; but whole and holy I call this selfishness.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzche, "On the Gift Giving Virtue," in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*

The gift-giving virtue that Zarathustra describes seems to be a gift of oneself to oneself. Certainly, as he describes it here, the gift is a gift, even sacrifice, of the self, and all things are taken back into the self. Within this economy of the gift all things come from and return to the self. In addition, all gifts given out of the self are for the sake of taking something back in; they are forms of taking. Gifts move through complex circuits in *Zarathustra,* but are they ever given to an other? Is reciprocal exchange possible within the economy of the gift set out in *Zarathustra*?

Gary Shapiro analyzes the ambiguities of Zarathustra's gift-giving virtue in *Alcyone: Nietzsche on Gifts, Noise, and Women.* There Shapiro identifies scenes where Zarathustra engages in an exchange with his interlocutor. Specifically he cites Zarathustra's first encounter with the hermit and his encounter with the old woman who instructs him to take the whip when he goes to women. Shapiro argues that Zarathustra's encounter with the hermit/saint "could be taken as Nietzsche's transformation of the fable of the state of nature. Two isolated figures meet, figures who as hermits are represented as self-sufficient. But they enact neither the Hobbesian war of all against all nor the Hegelian battle to the death that is resolved only through the elementary social form of lord and bondsman. Instead they engage in a highly ceremonial and subtly orchestrated discussion of gifts, in which each verbal gesture is a giving or receiving" (24). We have to wonder after this encounter between the two hermits, Zarathustra and the saint, whether or not there is any exchange. In this scenario we have two charachters of the same type, one whose gift is his love of God, the other whose gift is the death of God. Yet neither of them gives his gift to the other; these are not gifts that the other is prepared to

receive. The saint gives Zarathustra advice that he will not take; and Zarathustra leaves before he gives the saint a gift that would be a taking away. So Zarathustra leaves before stealing from the saint. Shapiro suggests that this is his gift; Zarathustra gives to the saint by not stealing from him his belief in God. But what kind of gift is a gift that is merely not a taking away?

Although, as Shapiro points out, the old woman is given gifts by Zarathustra while the hermit is only not taken from, perhaps the hermit receives more than the old woman. For what Zarathustra gives her is an assortment of aphorisms that indicate that woman uses man as a means to a child and that she should love her man more than he loves her and respect his will more than her own.[15] Zarathustra gives her things that take away from woman. Shapiro points out that within *Zarathustra* gift giving is always ambiguous. It is always both a giving and a taking away. It is violent and makes demands on the receiver. It is always an act of selfishness. It is the lust to rule (see Shapiro *A* 17, 22). Both giving and receiving are dangerous acts. And Zarathustra suggests that it is better to steal than to receive.

In "The Night Song" Zarathustra laments that he longs to accept gifts from another. He wants love and yet he cannot receive from another: "But I live in my own light; I drink back into myself the flames that break out of me. I do not know the happiness of those who receive; and I have often dreamed that even stealing must be more blessed than receiving" (*Z* II 218). In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche says that this lonely dithyramb of the solitary lover expresses the suffering of Dionysus and that only Ariadne can answer such a cry (*EH* 308). "Who besides me" proclaims Nietzsche, "knows what Ariadne is!" (*EH* 308).

On my reading, Irigaray's "Speaking of Immemorial Waters" is Ariadne's refusal to marry the male lover—Nietzsche—Dionysus, Zarathustra, because he wants to marry only *his own* image of her; and it is this insistence on the selfsame that prevents their making merry together. The forlorn lover of "Speaking of Immemorial Waters" responds to Nietzsche/Zarathustra's night song by pointing out that she has always and only been whatever he made her out to be. Only he knows Ariadne, because he has made her in his own image. Ariadne's response is to demand her freedom:

> Let me go. Yes, let me go onward. Beyond the place of no return. Either you seize hold of me or you throw me away, but always according to your whim of the moment. I am good or bad according to your latest good or evil. Muse or fallen angel to suit the needs of your most recent notion. (*ML* 11)

> You meet Ariadne or Diotima or . . . You want to marry her. To chain her to your side, as guardian of your hearth, so that your work can be accomplished. She refuses. Stresses her freedom in the face of your will. You try to find your balance again, fail. Except in the eternal recurrence that creates an autological movement that cannot be reopened. By giving yourself up wholly to a center in which the other has no role except as counterweight or balance arm between you and yourself, you cannot get out of the circle. (ML 72–73)

On Irigaray's reading, within the circle of the eternal recurrence gifts are impossible. The circle maps the circulation of goods and property that always returns to its origin, in this case the male lover, and all giving is really a taking away. In *Given Time* Derrida describes this circular economy of exchange in which the gift is impossible (9). There Derrida maintains that the exchange of gifts cannot be reciprocal because the recognition of a gift, especially with the giving of a gift in return, annuls the gift as gift (*GT* 14). Once the gift enters the economy of exchange , or property, it is impossible. The gift, if it is possible, takes us outside of the economy of exchange. So, any gift is not a gift when it is acknowledged or recognized because acknowledgement puts the gift within an economy of exchange. On Derrida's analysis the only possible gifts are gifts that are not recognized as such by either the giver or the receiver.

Within the economy of exchange, on the other hand—an economy that Derrida also identifies with the economy of castration or property—a gift always returns to its giver. Derrida claims that through gift giving a subject wants to get his own identity back by reappropriating his identity as property (*GT* 11; cf. FV 448). The gift allows the subject to translate what is proper to him into property. By giving a gift the subject binds the receiver with debt and obligation; within the economy of exchange, the receiver is bound to return the gift (without literally *returning* the gift). Following Nietzsche's descriptions of the violence of giving and receiving in *Zarathustra*, Derrida interprets gift giving as a violent act that enslaves the receiver as soon as he accepts it (*GT* 147). Like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Derrida sees gift giving as a selfish act whose pleasure, even the pleasure of surprising another, is always autoaffective. What the giver really takes pleasure in is his power over the receiver as the cause of the surprise (*GT* 146). On Derrida's analysis violence is the absolute of the gift: "Such violence may be considered the very condition of the gift, its constitutive impurity once the gift is engaged in the process of *circulation*, once it is promised to recognition, keeping, indebtedness, credit, but also once it *must be, owes itself to be* excessive and thereby surprising. *The*

violence appears irreducible, within the circle or outside it, whether it repeats the circle or interrupts it" (*GT* 147).

At this point we could conclude that violence is perhaps the only absolute in Derrida's philosophy. As I suggested earlier, for Derrida reading and writing are violent operations. Philosophy itself is violence. Now gift giving is violence. Violence is irreducible *both inside and outside* the phallogocentric economy of exchange. Staying within the circle of phallogocentric exchange requires violence but so does breaking out. While everything else changes into its opposite to the point of undecidability, violence remains; yes, of course, it is also indistinguishable from its opposite, nonviolence, but this is precisely what makes it possible to say that all is violent. Both violence and nonviolence are violent. Does the converse—violence is nonviolence—have the same power within Derrida's discourse? In the end, is there nothing but violence?

Nietzsche identifies a violence at the heart of reason, language, and morality that levels all difference and turns it into the same. Freud identifies a violence necessary to enter the social that demands the exclusion of bodily drives and particularly of their association with the maternal body. And in the face of some attempts to think a nonviolent philosophy that does not begin with the Hegelian premise (for example, Levinas's philosophy), Derrida continues to insist on the primacy and inescapability of violence. In "Violence in Metaphysics" Derrida describes a discourse that is itself war and a philosophy that operates according to an economy of violence (116-17). Derrida maintains that Western philosophy cannot escape the violence of the Hegelian lordship/bondsman encounter (VM 119). Any engagement with an other, or with difference, is necessarily a war (VM 119, 130). Like the Hegelian violence, Derridian violence is constitutive and it is inherent in the self-other relation, or any relation across difference. Is our best hope in the face of violence, as Derrida suggests, to turn violence against itself? Or, can we risk imagining the possibility of nonviolence?

Derrida discusses the relation between violence and nonviolence in "The Violence of the Letter: From Lévi–Strauss to Rousseau." There he points out that anthropologist Lévi–Strauss becomes complicit with the very ethnocentric values that he is trying to undermine when he assumes that prior to the appearance of the anthropologist and writing that the Nambikwara were an innocent, nonviolent people (*OG* 114). Derrida shows that Lévi-Strauss's claim that writing is violence (which Derrida in fact believes, *OG* 135) presupposes that there is some pure and innocent presence in a speech before writing that is violated by writing (*OG* 119).

Derrida, of course, argues that there is an absence at the heart of speech that prefigures writing and for this reason speech already operates according to the logic of writing (*OG* 128, 139-40). If writing is violence, and speech is already writing, then there is violence prior to writing proper. But what is this violence? And why doesn't it presuppose some nonviolent presence that *it* necessarily violates?

Derrida is clear that his supposition that writing is violence is not like Lévi-Strauss's supposition that writing is violence. Derrida insists that his supposition does not presuppose the myth of presence: "Recalling in this introduction that violence did not wait for the appearance of writing in the narrow sense, that writing has always begun in language, we, like Lévi-Strauss, conclude that violence is writing. But, coming at it another way, this proposition has a radically different meaning. It ceases to be supported by the myth of myth, by the myth of a speech originally good, and of a violence which would come to pounce upon it as a fatal accident. A fatal accident which is nothing but history itself" (*OG* 135). Where as Lévi-Strauss identifies *writing proper* with violence, Derrida identifies what makes writing possible—what makes writing writing—with violence. Absence makes writing possible. While I agree with Derrida that language requires absence, I don't understand why this absence is necessarily violent. Nor do I understand how this absence can be violent or do violence without presupposing some presence which it violates. Is violence possible without violation? If presence is a myth and Derrida's essay is beyond the myth of this myth, then how is absence violent unless it violates presence? What is it that absence violates unless it is the myth of nonviolence or innocent presence?

Like Lévi-Strauss, we can do violence by seeing nonviolence where there is violence. This can become especially dangerous not only when we romanticize the other and thereby violate that other (as in the case of Lévi-Strauss's anthropologist) but also when we cover over our own violence by calling it nonviolence. We justify our violence by seeing it, or characterizing it, as nonviolent. We euphemize our violence away. On the other hand, however, can we do violence by seeing violence where there is none? Can we make something violent or create violence where there was none? Certainly, interpreting something as violent can in itself lead to empirical violence, war and retaliation. Yet, my neat distinction between two modes of violence—which tends to reduce everything to violence—presupposes presence, a reality, that is violated in its re-presentation (when it is misrepresented). Is representation necessarily violent? Is it violent because its presence is absence? Because it presents itself as

something that it is not? Because it thereby performs the feminine operation?

In his early writings, "On Truth and Falsity in the Ultramoral Sense," and *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche suggests that all representation, especially in language, does violence to the world. In these texts, however, Nietzsche holds on to a trace of some reality or nature that is corrupted in its representation. Something is lost in the translation of this nature into language. This is why in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche says that he prefers music without lyrics (*BT* §6). In his later writings Nietzsche seems to give up this remnant of nature or reality and suggest that our belief in such a transcendental realm is an illusion affected by our language (see *OGM* I §13, 45). Now, rather than corrupt reality, language creates it. On this view, to characterize something as violent could make it so. In addition, throughout Nietzsche's writings there is the suggestion that language corrupts or distorts some more primordial bodily drive force and thereby does violence to the instincts. Nietzsche often suggests that communication, language and grammar are the products of human animals becoming social; he romanticizes a presocial innocence in which aggressive instincts were directly discharged (see *OGM* II § 16, 84–5). As I have suggested earlier, for Nietzsche there is always a violence involved in language, in speaking and listening, as well as reading and writing. Moreover, for Nietzsche it is not only the case that language is violent, but also language should become violent. Nietzsche prescribes violence. Violence is what separates strong language from impotent language. Everything creative must be destructive.

While Derrida might agree that everything creative must also be destructive, he would not prescribe violence except insofar as it is necessary, possibly in order to avoid greater violence. Can we only hope to fight violence with violence? Derrida suggests this conclusion in his analysis of Levinas in "Violence and Metaphysics":

> Discourse, therefore, if it is originally violent, can only do itself violence, can only negate itself in order to affirm itself, make war upon the war which institutes it without ever being able to reappropriate this negativity, to the extent that it is discourse. Necessarily without reappropriating it, for if it did so, the horizon of peace would disappear into the night (worst violence as previolence). This secondary war, as the avowal of violence, is the least possible violence, the only way to repress the worst violence, the violence of primitive and prelogical silence, of an unimaginable night which would not even be the opposite of day, an absolute violence which would not even be the opposite of nonviolence: nothingness or pure non-

sense. Thus discourse chooses itself violently in opposition to nothingness or pure non-sense, and, in philosophy, against nihilism (VM 130; cf. FL 49).[16]

Outside discourse, beyond all oppositions, including the opposition between violence and nonviolence, is absolute violence. Absolute violence is primitive and our only safeguard against it is violence, the violence of distinguishing one thing from another, of protecting and exposing the myth of presence and property, the violence of writing. For Derrida, in order to avoid absolute violence, the unspeakable violence, we must continue to speak/write and to risk doing violence to the world and each other. He suggests that we must continue to speak/write to one another even insofar as our language itself does violence (FL).[17]

We could imagine that language is violent because it is necessarily generating/generated from a fundamentally violent intersubjective relationship. Or, we could imagine the language is violent because it violates or misrepresents intersubjective relationships; it fixes what is fluid. The first position presupposes that either violence precedes language and that language merely carries within it the violence of the intersubjective relation or that the intersubjective relationship is already linguistic and this is what makes it violent. To say that the intersubjective relationship is violent because it is linguistic might be to say that language is violent because it is intersubjective. In other words, what makes language violent could be the fact that it is intersubjective, that it takes two (and therefore three, a mediating element). To be linguistic is to be intersubjective and to be intersubjective is to be violent. Derrida seems to adopt some version of this last argument when he says "If it is true, as I in fact believe, that writing cannot be thought outside of the horizon of intersubjective violence, is there anything, even science, that radically escapes it? Is there a knowledge, and, above all, a language, scientific or not, that one can call alien at once to writing and to violence? If one answers in the negative, as I do, the use of these concepts to discern the specific character of writing is not pertinent" (*OG* 127). Is intersubjectivity necessarily violent? Is it also essentially or fundamentally violent? Is there any way to escape the fundamental violence of the Hegelian master/slave relationship?

At this point in my analysis it is unclear what Derrida means by violence. For Derrida is violence necessarily violation? In *Of Grammatology* Derrida distinguishes three different levels of violence in relation to Lévi-Strauss's analysis of the Nambikwara. First, there is the originary violence of language which replaces the absolute proximity of self-presence ("which has never been given but only dreamed of and always already

split") with the proper name (*OG* 112). The name breaks self-presence even while repeating the myth of self-presence. The second level violence is the prohibition of writing and the proper name which is legislated to protect the proper (self-presence) from its violation by the name. And "a third violence can possibly emerge or not (an empirical possibility) within what is commonly called evil, war, indiscretion, rape: which consists of revealing by effraction the so-called proper name, the originary violence which had severed the proper from its property and it self-sameness" (*OG* 112). The violation of the prohibition of speaking proper names operates on the level of empirical violence along with rape and murder. It is the violation of a legal prohibition that is enforced in order to return the property lost to language in the first place.

In a sense, in empirical violence it is what stands in for, and covers up, the original violence of language (absence) that is violated. Empirical violence is the violation of the law, the contract, the third party, that mediates social relations and both destroys and maintains the myth of presence. Since the third party or mediation is necessary for social exchange, self-presence is already absent; but self-presence is maintained in the third party who is positioned to mediate between two subjects supposedly present only to themselves. "This last violence is all the more complex in its structure because it refers at the same time to the two inferior levels of arche-violence and of law. In effect, it reveals the first nomination which was already an expropriation, but it denudes also that which since then functioned as the proper, the so-called proper, substitute of the deferred proper, *perceived* by the *social* and *moral consciousness* as the proper, the reassuring seal of self-identity, the secret" (*OG* 112).

The violation of the law can be complex in that the law can at once protect and violate the myth of presence or property. If, as Derrida maintains in "Force of Law," the law is born out of justice, then the law can never be just because the act of justice "must concern singularity, individuality, irreplaceable groups and lives, the other or myself as other, in a unique situation," while law requires a rule or norm that is not true to the singularity of the individual (FL 17). The law requires the mediation of a third party that both guarantees and prevents the myth of self-presence or the proper: "To address oneself to the other in the language of the other is, it seems, the condition of all possible justice, but apparently, in all rigor, it is not only impossible (since I cannot speak the language of the other except to the extent that I appropriate it and assimilate it according to the law of an implicit third) but even excluded by justice as law (*droit*), inasmuch as justice as right seems to imply an element of universality, the

appeal to a third party who suspends the unilaterally or singularity of the idioms" (FL 17).

This brings us back to the necessary violence of all intersubjective relations. When in "The Violence of the Letter: From Lévi-Strauss to Rousseau" Derrida asserts that all intersubjective relationships are necessarily violent, and in "Violence and Metaphysics" he suggests that we cannot escape the violence of the Hegelian master/slave relationship, could he be referring to the necessity for appropriation in any intersubjective relationship? Is he arguing that insofar as every intersubjective relationship requires a third party, and every third party is necessarily engaged in the process of translation or appropriation of idioms, and appropriation is violent insofar as it takes away from the proper or singularity of the individuals, then all intersubjective relationships are violent? This argument operates on the myth of self-presence or the proper; what is singular is properly proper and what is universal is appropriation of the properly proper. The process of appropriation violates the proper. Appropriation is the misrepresentation of self-presence. I can never see you as you see yourself and your view is the proper view.

Certainly intersubjective relationships require communication and exchange, the third party. Yet, this exchange does not have to be violent in the sense of the Hegelian master/slave relationship. It does not have to be a struggle to the death. Even the terrain of the negotiation between appropriation and alterity can be altered if we replace the Hegelian model with a new model of intersubjectivity. Within the Hegelian model of intersubjectivity violence is necessarily directed towards the other and at the onset of subjectivity the negotiation between appropriation and alterity is a hostile attempt to annhilate the other; but if we replace the Hegelian model, perhaps we can envision a model of intersubjectivity that can account for the so-called violence of the negotiation between self and other without requiring that that violence be directed towards the other.

In some of his writings, for example, "Force of Law," and "The Laws of Reflection," Derrida talks about *force* and violence. With the introduction of the concept of force, following Nietzsche, Derrida can refigure the constitutive violence, that might be necessary for any creation, in terms of force. The discussion of force allows for a law or language that, although constituted through a certain violence or force, cannot be reduced to violence. Constitutive violence as force is neither just nor unjust (FL 13). Perhaps this type of violence as force, as constitutive, does not violate. Ceratinly it complicates the issue of violation. In fact, although as Derrida points out in "The Laws of Reflection," constitutive

violence is always in danger of becoming excessive violence, the notion of force makes the always precarious, but necessary, distinction between constitutive and excessive violence possible.

In "The Laws of Reflection," Derrida maintains that this constitutional or constitutive violence can be forgotten so that the constitution or law can be effective only if certain conditions are met; included among these conditions are that the law be enacted and that the constitutive violence not *appear* too great or excessive (LR 18). In the case of South Africa, Derrida argues that the violence was excessive, or not excessive enough, because there were too many witnesses to the inequalities and constitutional violations. In other words, the white minority did not commit the genocide necessary to enable the forgetting of the constitutive violence. So either constitutive violence must be extremely and powerfully excessive or it must enact a law whose effect will make people forget the constitutive violence: those who suffer as a result of the law must be dead and their memories erased, and those who are alive must have no memory of injustice. Derrida claims that the excessive violence in South Africa allows Nelson Mandela to use the law against itself, since the constitution declares democracy and yet it did not produce democracy for all, but radical inequalities between white and black South Africans (LR 17–18).

Perhaps, then, when Derrida insists that Western philosophy cannot escape the violence of the Hegelian lordship/bondsman model, he is not suggesting that intersubjective relationships are *essentially* violent, but that they necessarily *risk* violence. Between Derrida and Levinas, we might imagine that language is an invitation to the other, which always necessarily runs the risk of violence. It makes no sense to think of language as essentially violence since we don't need language to do violence to each other, we need only sticks and stones. Yet, as Derrida reminds us, the invitation's double is "conductive violence" (ATP 65). Derrida indicates in his analysis of Levinas that to engage in conversation we must be willing to risk violence; we have to risk being victims and risk victimizing. More than this, engaging in a conversation always runs the risk of merely substituting words for weapons, or justifying the use of weapons with words that purify violence and try to turn it into a necessity or call it "justice" ("ethnic cleansing," "the final solution," "peace keeping missions").

While I agree with Derrida that in order to act or communicate, we always risk violence, I believe that we also need to imagine the possibility of nonviolence, even if this image is constantly called into question. The image of possibility is what continues to motivate action and communication. As Derrida insists, we must act in the face of these risks. In

"Force of Law" he maintains that the possibility of ethics is based on our uncertainty in the face of this risk: "A decision that didn't go through the ordeal of the undecidable would not be a free decision, it would only be the programmable application or unfolding of a calculable process" (FL 24). If we are certain in our action and face no risks, then we are merely following orders from some authority beyond ourselves; we are not free and therefore we are not ethical agents. This is Simone de Beauvoir's criticism of both Kant's and Plato's suggestion that to know the good is to do the good; doing the right thing becomes a matter of epistemology and not ethics (*EA* 33). Ethics requires the freedom to make mistakes, the freedom to do violence or refrain from violence. The problem, of course, is that it is not always easy to tell the difference. In spite of his own intentions, Nietzsche's texts become the ammunition of the Third Reich and for the good of the nation Heidegger joins the Nazi party. Although the risk of violence is essential to ethics, violence is not. Although every intersubjective relation brings with it the risk of violence, it is not reducible to violence.

Here again Derrida's distinction between constitutive and excessive violence might be helpful. Derrida suggests that constitutive violence or force is necessary in order to avoid the excessive violence of injustice. Every ethical and judicial decision must be both creative and destructive in order to be just: "In short, for a decision to be just and responsible, it must, in its proper moment if there is one, be both regulated and without regulation: it must conserve the law and also destroy it or suspend it enough to have to reinvent it in each case, rejustify it, at least reinvent the reaffirmation and the new and free confirmation of its principle. Each case is other, each decision is different and requires an absolutely unique interpretation, which no existing, coded rule can or ought to guarantee absolutely (FL 23). This unique interpretation is the violence as force which Derrida describes as neither just nor unjust in itself. Constitutive or interpretative violence or force is necessary in the name of justice, in the name of the necessary impossibility of nonviolence.

Derrida himself suggests that we need to imagine an impossible nonviolence towards which we aim, not as a horizon or a regulative principle, but as an immediate call to responsibility (FL 20). In "Force of Law" Derrida indicates that justice is outside of the law, outside of the mediation of language or law, because "as the experience of absolute alterity," justice "is unpresentable, but it is the chance of the event and the condition of history" (27). Justice calls language and law to account for their authority from the other side of the intersubjective exchange. Justice is

both the motivation and limit to that exchange. Justice demands the impossible because it demands that we continue within the realm of language and law, the realm of the myth of presence and property, to cultivate justice: "the deconstruction of all presumption of a determinant certitude of a present justice itself operates on the basis of an infinite 'idea of justice,' infinite because it is irreducible, irreducible because it owed to the other, owed to the other, before any contract, because it has come, the other's coming as the singularity that is always other. This 'idea of justice' seems to be irreducible in its affirmative character, in its demand of gift without exchange, without circulation, without recognition or gratitude, without economic circularity, without calculation and without rules, without reason and without rationality" (FL 25).

How, then, are we to diagnose Derrida's insistence on violence and the impossibility of gift giving? Is he suggesting that in spite of the fact that nonviolence and giving to an other are impossible that we still must continue to give? Is he suggesting that we must continue to perform the feminine operation and give ourselves for what we are not, to risk violence, the violence of castration, in order to avoid the absolute violence of complete annihilation? In *Spurs* Derrida associates the impossibility of the gift with the impossibility of woman. There Derrida has described the feminine operation as that of giving oneself for what one is not. The feminine operation *is* the violent operation of giving, giving oneself for something one is not. Derrida realizes that to define woman in terms of the economy of exchange is to define her in terms of the feminine operation through which she pretends to give herself up as property to be possessed by the male. But woman is not property, because there is no such *thing* as a woman, which is to say that woman is not a *thing*. She is not property. To give oneself for, then, is to pretend to be a thing, a piece of property, which of course is always to give oneself for something that one is not. Within an economy that turns everything into a presence/present or an absence, it is impossible to give a gift because, as both Nietzsche and Derrida suggest, the only real gift is a gift of oneself; property is never a gift. This is why, as Gary Shapiro points out, the only real gifts from Zarathustra are his speeches; and language is taken for something that it is not when it is reduced to property (through copyright laws, for example). Also, Being cannot be reduced to property. Being gives itself as something that it is not when it gives itself as a thing. Derrida claims that there is no such "thing" as Being because, like woman or language, Being is not a thing. Being is neither a subject nor an object. And this is why Derrida follows Heidegger in saying that there is no such thing as an essence of the *es gibt Sein*: "Just as there is no such thing then as a Being or an essence

of *the* woman or the sexual difference, there is also no such thing as an essence of the *es gibt* in the *es gibt Sein*, that is, of Being's giving and gift" (S 121).[18]

In addition to maintaining that the gift is given from/of oneself and cannot be reduced to property, a thing, or an essence, Nietzsche and Derrida maintain that it is a gift of oneself *to oneself*, but that is only because they are still negotiating the gift within the economy of presence/presents. Within this economy which seems to be based on exchange, there is, in the end, no real exchange or change because everything goes out of, and comes back to, itself. There is no exchange with, or of, an other. I want to try to imagine an economy in which gifts of oneself can be given to an other and in which reciprocal exchange is possible. Perhaps this is Derrida's vision, even Nietzsche's vision. By calling into question traditional notions of subjectivity, don't Nietzsche and Derrida make it possible to imagine a giving to "oneself" that can no longer be self-ish? Once we begin to rethink the self-other dualism, then isn't a gift to the other also a gift to the self?

In a fascinating comparison of Nietzsche and Hélène Cixous on giving and the gift Alan Schrift suggests that Nietzsche provides an alternative economy within which gift giving is possible. In "On the Gynecology of Morals: Nietzsche and Cixous on the Logic of the Gift, " Schrift sets out two possible economies which he figures, following Cixous, as masculine and feminine.[19] Within the masculine economy exchange is based on debt; every gift is really a debt that must be repaid. Schrift calls this an economy of reciprocal exchange. What he means by reciprocal is that every offer requires a counter-offer; no one gets something for nothing. On this model exchange is always a demand for something in return. He points out that what Cixous calls the masculine economy is grounded on Locke's definition of property, in the *Second Treatise of Government*, as whatever is taken out of nature and mixed with human labor. The masculine economy is based on an exchange of property.

Cixous makes a connection between property and the proper. In *The Newly Born Woman* she describes the Hegelian model of intersubjectivity through which one self-consciousness recognizes itself through another as an exchange of property (*NBW* 71, 78–79). On the Hegelian model, the self appropriates the other in order to acquire its own self-consciousness. Schrift continues Cixous's analysis: "The phallocentric desire that animates the Hegelian dialectic of self and other is a desire for appropriation: one confronts the other as different and unequal and one seeks to make the other one's own. The desire to possess, to receive a return on one's investments, animates an economy that Cixous suggests we call

'masculine' " (OGM). If the masculine economy seeks appropriation, it is because it is driven by the fear of expropriation. The masculine economy is driven by the fear of loss, the fear of castration. The masculine economy operates according to the logic of castration, which, as Schrift indicates, is an economy of scarcity wherein everything is defined in terms of loss and there is never enough to go around. Within this economy one person gains only at another's expense and every investment expects a return.

Within the feminine economy, on the other hand, the intersubjective relationship is founded on generosity and gift giving. Gifts of oneself are not property or possession, subjects or objects, that return over and over again to the self alone. Exchange takes place not in an economy of scarcity but within an economy of overabundance where giving of oneself does not require sacrifice and taking or receiving is not registered as debt only. Schrift associates this feminine libidinal economy with Nietzsche's discussion of generosity and plenitude. He argues that in spite of what Nietzsche explicitly says about the feminine, the economy endorsed in his text is a feminine economy as Cixous sets it out.

Schrift argues that Nietzsche proposes two notions of justice. One notion—the masculine—is based on debt and revenge: The creditor cannot forget the debt owed him and the debtor resents his debt. The second notion—the feminine—is based on generosity of forgetfulness: The creditor is rich enough to forget about debt. The difference between these two notions of justice is the difference between an economy of scarcity and an economy of overabundance. Schrift claims that two primary examples of gifts given from the spirit of overabundance are Zarathustra's gifts to his disciples and Nietzsche's gifts to his readers. Zarathustra presents his speeches as gifts and Nietzsche presents his texts as gifts. In both cases these gifts are gifts of the self that cannot be reduced to the realm of property. Yet a question still arises, "To whom are these gifts given?"

Nietzsche writes *Ecce Homo*, for example, as a gift to himself on his Forty-Fourth birthday. In fact he identifies all of his writings of 1888 as presents for which he is grateful, presents to himself (*EH* 221). And while Zarathustra is overfull, pregnant, with his gifts, who receives them without feeling indebted? Does Zarathustra steal from woman his gifts to others without acknowledging her? Do his gifts come from an other? Is his forgetting is an active forgetting of her, the first gift giver, the giver of life? Does he forgets that the gift of life comes from a woman, the mother? Hers was the first gift and to advocate forgetting is to justify forgetting her, the origin of life. From Socrates as midwife to a pregnant Zarathustra, philosophy is full of attempts to forget the connection between woman and life. The latest attempt to forget might be the poststructuralist scoff at the

"nostalgia" for origins. Rather than trying to substitute a masculine mother for a feminine mother (ala Nietzsche), they advocate forgetting origins altogether. For example, Gary Shapiro sings praises for the images of waterbirds—specifically, the halcyon—in *Zarathustra,* because womb-born animals suffer from a nostalgia for a fixed place of origin (the womb) while nest-born animals, especially animals born in nests that float on top of the water, do not suffer from this nostalgia (*A* 134). This forgetting could be another example of what Irigaray calls the matricide committed by philosophy. Irigaray suggests that man forgets his maternal origin and invents instead a masculine birth.

Derrida's insistence on forgetting the gift is ultimately also an insistence on forgetting the womb and the mother's gift of life. If it is necessary to forget all gifts and all acts of giving in order for the gift to be possible, then we are to forget the gift of life given through the act of giving birth. What is the first gift, if not the gift of life? What is the first act of giving, if not the act of giving birth? Any debt to the mother must be forgotten and all gifts must be given from and to the (masculine) self, even the giving of birth. As Derrida points out (following Heidegger), for Nietzsche production is masculine and the productive or fertile mother is a masculine mother (Derrida *S* 77). As I will indicate later, in Nietzsche's texts the mother, in order to create culture, must be a manly mother; the feminine and woman are valued only insofar as they are procreative, but real creative mothers cannot be feminine or women. Maternal creation is taken over by man; he gives birth. Later I will analyze the final section of *Marine Lover*, "When the Gods are Born," where Irigaray argues that all of Nietzsche's gods—Dionysus, Apollo, Christ—have their ways of usurping their mothers' creative power. For now, however, I turn to another example that Irigaray cites of man forgetting his maternal origin, Nietzsche's eternal return.

The Eternal Return of the Same

Gilles Deleuze, in his influential *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, reads Nietzsche's eternal return as the return of difference. On Deleuze's reading the eternal return is both a physical doctrine and an ontological doctrine. He reads the physical doctrine as the return of the being of becoming and the ontological doctrine as the return of the being of becoming as the self-affirming of becoming active. In the first case the eternal return is the return of becoming (48). What returns is the process of change through which nothing is the same. This is the eternal return of difference not sameness. The eternal return as ontological selection is the return of only

self-affirming active forces (72). In this reading the eternal return weeds out the reactive forces in favor of the active forces. The eternal return is the return of forces that multiply life rather than diminish life; only active forces return. The eternal return operates as the mechanism for the *self-overcoming* of reactive forces. In this way, the eternal return makes a gift of oneself possible insofar as self-giving is also always a process of self-destroying. Through the eternal return a new "self" is continually emerging. Through this process of continual self-destroying and self-creating, the never-ending process of othering takes place. The self becomes other.

Derrida offers the beginning of an interpretation of Nietzsche's eternal return in *The Ear of the Other* where, like Deleuze, he claims that the eternal return is a selective principle (45). What returns is the double affirmation, the self-affirmation of the hymen, the "yes, yes." Only the affirmative returns while the negative falls into the past. Like Deleuze, Derrida maintains that forces return; the eternal return, contra Heidegger, is not the return of beings, and it is not metaphysical (*EO*, 46). The force that returns is the "self's" gift to itself, its double affirmation, its "yes, yes" to itself.

Like Heidegger, and unlike her French contemporaries, Deleuze and Derrida, fathers of the so-called new Nietzsche, Irigaray reads Nietzsche's eternal return as the return of the same. On Irigaray's reading the eternal return is not the mechanism through which the self becomes other; rather it is a mechanism through which the other becomes reabsorbed into the self. Although as a student of Nietzsche's writings, I am more sympathetic to a reading of the eternal return as the return of difference over sameness, there is something fascinating, even compelling, about Irigaray's reading of Nietzsche's eternal return. For Irigaray, like Heidegger, the problem with Nietzsche's eternal return is a metaphysical problem, and it is a problem of difference. Unlike Heidegger, however, her concern is with the primacy of sexual difference and not the primacy of ontological difference. Irigaray's writings suggest that there is no ontological difference without sexual difference. Sexual difference is primary. And the history of the West is a history of only one sex; it is a history of the erasure of sexual difference. Now, with Irigaray, I ask, How and why has philosophy continued to forget, or cover over, sexual difference?

Nietzsche's Ressentiment

Irigaray describes Nietzsche's eternal return of the same as just a way of avoiding the difference of the female other: "And your whole will, your eternal recurrence, are these anything more than the dream of one who neither wants to have been born, nor to continue being born, at every

instant, of a female other?" (*ML* 26). She suggests that the eternal return is born out of resentment. Woman, the feminine other, is man's greatest resentment (*ML* 25). Like the slave morality of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, man affirms himself only indirectly through the denial of the feminine other. Compare Irigaray's analysis of the logic of Nietzsche's eternal return with the logic of the slave morality. Like the slave, man affirms only the selfsame and rejects to the point of annihilation everything different. This is the logic of Nietzsche's eternal return. On Irigaray's reading the eternal return is the return of the selfsame, which denies all difference and out of resentment appropriates and yet rejects the other—the feminine, the body, the earth.

For Irigaray, the *Übermensch* is another way to deny the other. She proposes that the *Übermensch* is just a "flying over life" that tears holes in woman's body and drains her blood drop by drop because it has forgotten that it is born out of the sea (*mer*), out of a woman, the mother (*mère)* (*ML* 18, 52). The *Übermensch* prefers the heights, the peaks, and bridges so that he can avoid contact with the sea, the immemorial waters of his birth; here Irigaray alludes to Nietzsche's metaphors in *Zarathustra* of going up to the mountains and hopping from peak to peak. Ellen Mortensen points out that for Irigaray it is not just the feminine other who is denied by Nietzsche's notions of the *Übermensch* and the eternal return. She suggests that Zarathustra appropriates difference or excludes it rather than recognizing it (IN 232). She sees this exclusion of difference as inherent in Nietzsche's notion of overcoming, which requires that the old perish for the sake of the new. Overcoming requires death, the death of the other. Mortensen says, "By focusing on death, the nothing and eternity in their so-called celebration of the body, of life and of the earth, Nietzsche's 'superior men' seem to flee that which they wish to reevaluate, claims Irigaray. They are on earth, but have no love for it" (IN 233). Zarathustra teaches death—the eternal, the beyond-man. Irigaray suggests that with the *Übermensch* and the eternal return, Nietzsche erects "idols even more fascinating because they are the work of an artist more and more gifted in lies" (*ML* 21). In this regard Nietzsche is like the nihilistic ascetic priest who sets up idols instead of valuing the earth.

Like Nietzsche's notion of the *Übermensch*, on Irigaray's reading, the notion of the eternal return denies the other—the feminine, the body, and the earth. The eternal return is the closed circle of the nuptial ring. Zarathustra says, "Oh, how should I not lust after eternity and after the nuptial ring of rings, the ring of recurrence? Never yet have I found the woman from whom I wanted children, unless it be this woman whom I love: for I love you, O eternity. For I love you, O eternity!" (Z III, "The

Seven Seals," 340–43). To Nietzsche's metaphor of the eternal return as the circle of a wedding ring, a nuptial celebration with eternity, Irigaray responds that "in the eternal return, she [woman] attends your wedding celebration, she takes part in it, but you yourself are bride and groom" (*ML* 32). She claims that Nietzsche/Zarathustra wants woman only under the guise of eternity (*ML* 43). Once again woman is turned into a metaphor or a language-body.

In addition, Nietzsche's description of eternity as a nuptial ring locks woman into either a closed circle or a bottomless well. Irigaray reads Zarathustra's eternal circle as a closed flat circle that has lost its roundness; it is two-dimensional, without depth: "That, for your eternity, everything should always turn in a circle, and that within that ring I should remain—your booty" (*ML* 11). If it is not a closed circle from which there is no escape and in which the same moves round and round, then it is a bottomless well: "For either your soul loses its wondrous roundness, or the place of turning back is merely a bottomless well" (*ML* 7).

The place of turning back is a turning back to "that from which one comes," the feminine other, the maternal body. This is Zarathustra's greatest resentment, that he was born of a woman:

> But your greatest sorrow and your greatest disgust are reserved for me. And in order to return to the depths of the earth, you still need to get back through the skin sickness that keeps you apart. That you covered her with to prevent you from wanting to move back inside her. That keeps you far away in ressentiment. . . . And your whole will, your eternal recurrence, are these anything more than the dream of one who neither wants to have been born, nor to continue being born, at every instant, of a female other? Does your joy in becoming not result from annihilating her from whom you are tearing yourself away? (*ML* 26–27)

For Zarathustra the return to the mother is a return to eternity, to a time before birth, a time without time. Irigaray sees this eternity figured only as a closed circle in which the mother is contained or as the threat of a bottomless well. Neither of these speak to the rhythms and cycles of a woman's time or a woman's body, or the time of the earth. The cycles of the earth are neither closed nor bottomless. They have rhythms. Becoming dances to the rhythms of the earth:

> And, for me, ebb and flow have always set the rhythm of time. But (they) come at different hours. At midday or midnight, at dawn or dusk. one moment is worth absolutely no more than the other, for the whole is present in each. At each hour comes fortune, multiple in the unwinding of its becoming.

> And (I) have no need to turn around and round to come back to the same or to enter eternity.
>
> For same have (I) been from all eternity, and, at the same time, ever different. And thus (I) come and go, change and stay, go on and come back, without any circle. Spread out and open in this endless becoming. (*ML* 14)

The rhythm of woman, the rhythm of the earth, is the rhythm of the sea with its ebbs and flows. It moves in cycles not in a circle. And although the tides are ever changing, they are not without their patterns. Irigaray compares the rhythms of the sea,which she suggests Nietzsche/Zarathustra forgets, to the movement of the sun, a central metaphor in *Thus Spake Zarathustra.*[20]

The sun's time is circular and unchanging. And even within time's circle Zarathustra prefers midday, the noon sun, a circle high in the sky. Irigaray asks, "Isn't your sun worship also a kind of ressentiment? Don't you measure your ecstasy against the yardstick of envy? And isn't your circle made of the will to live this irradiation—there will be no other but me?" (*ML* 15). The sea is dangerous because it is dark and does not just move according to the sun's movement (see *ML* 50). Everything is safer in the light of day when things can be perceived with the eye, at the greatest distance. Zarathustra, Nietzsche, and Derrida must shield themselves and arm themselves against the sea. They use sails as a defense against the sea; sails allow one to stay on the surface safe from the threatening depths and wild waters of the sea (*ML* 49). Sails allow one to stay above the sea, to keep one's distance.

Irigaray is not only concerned with time but also, perhaps more so, with space. While Derrida uses and repeats Nietzsche's advice to keep women in the distance because her power is in the distance, Irigaray criticizes this territorialism. Derrida goes further than Nietzsche to suggest that woman may not merely be a thing in the distance from which to keep one's distance, but that she may *be* distance itself (*S* 49). Recall that for Derrida she is not only in the background, she *is* the background. Irigaray diagnoses this positioning of woman as a fear of getting close to her (*ML* 39–40):

> And what is that terror awaiting them in the shadow? That featureless memory of the terrible fight between the slashing breakers and the streaming sails? That peril of water coming from sky and land? And that horror they feel for the might of the sea when she sheds all masks and refuses to be calm, polite, and submissive to the sailor's direction? . . .

> If only the sea did not exist. If they could just create her in dreams . . .They prefer to dry up, and die of thirst, rather than run the risk of sinking . . . .
>
> To think of the sea from afar, to eye her from a distance, to use her to fashion his highest reveries, to weave his dreams of her, and spread his sails while remaining safe in port, that is the delirium of the sea lover . . . . —but at a distance. (*ML* 51)

Nietzsche (and Derrida) use metaphor in order to keep their distance from woman. They create what Irigaray calls a "language-body" in order to keep the body—especially woman's body, particularly the maternal body—distanced and under control. In *Marine Lover* Irigaray criticizes the triumph of Apollo over Dionysus in Nietzsche's writings as the "precedence of interpretation over the movement of life" (71). And although she never even mentions Derrida in that text, her criticisms seem like a response to his reading of Nietzsche. To Nietzsche/Zarathustra/Derrida Irigaray says, "(The) evil begins at birth—the birth of your language. You have to go farther back than the point where you saw the light of day. To set your coming into daylight within this language-malady, does that not already mean acceding in your decline? Believing that what gives you life is an obstacle to life? And wanting life to be engendered from a language-body alone?" (ML 65) Here Irigaray criticizes the tendency to turn everything into language and interpretation. This of course is the primary lesson that Derrida takes from Nietzsche.

By turning the female body into just so many metaphors, metaphors that no longer have anything to do with that body, the deconstructive philosopher can safely distance himself from the female body and maintain his mastery over it. Man can ensure that he has control over his own origins and birth by inventing this language-body as the source of life. But Irigaray asks: What is farther back than this language body? What is prior to the onset of language? If we begin with the onset of language, if that is the hallmark of culture, then haven't we forgotten the maternal body? And in addition, Irigaray asks. What was left for her/woman to interpret? Everything, including her hymen, has already been interpreted for her within the language of philosophy (see *ML* 71). Within these interpretations, she has become nothing more than a metaphorical body, a language-body, drained of its blood. "Something red was lacking, a hint of blood and guts to revive the will, and restore its strength." (*ML* 79). On Irigaray's reading of Nietzsche, the feminine, woman, and the maternal have all been appropriated by the masculine. They are drained of their lifeblood, turned into metaphors, and made to serve a patriarchal philosophical language.

Up to this point, I have been constructing an argument out of Irigaray's *Marine Lover* without evaluating that text as a reading of Nietzsche. At first reading it may seem inappropriate to hold Irigaray's text accountable as a reading of Nietzsche; *Marine Lover* is written in a personal voice as a love letter from a spurned lover. Yet, don't we usually accept the account of a painful break-up from one of the parties involved as only *one side* of the story? Even if we are sympathetic, don't we suspect that the situation was more complex than the "Dear John" letter suggests?

Perhaps Irigaray has been too quick to identify Nietzsche's eternal return with sameness. In order to understand Irigaray's strategy and in order to be fair to Nietzsche, it is necessary to return to Irigaray's supposition that the eternal return is the return of sameness. We could interpret Irigaray as maintaining either that Nietzsche proposes a theory that opens up the possibility of difference but his theory falls short of its goal, or that Nietzsche proposes a theory that promotes sameness and his theory achieves its goal. There are places in *Marine Lover* that suggest both of these interpretations. Given all of the places where Nietzsche praises difference, change, and flexibility and the places where he criticizes equality, permanence, and rigidity it would be extremely difficult to defend the thesis that Nietzsche proposes a theory to promote sameness. On the other hand, If Irigaray is suggesting that Nietzsche falls short of his own goals, she does so in a style as unorthodox as Nietzsche's own. In addition to Irigaray's problematic reading of Nietzsche, even with her unorthodox style, she has not escaped the resentment of the slave morality.

In order to assess Irigaray's interpretation of the eternal return, it will be useful to return to Nietzsche's first introduction of the notion of eternal return in *Gay Science* (*GS* §341, 273–4). There Nietzsche presents a test to determine whether or not we can affirm our lives as we live them, complete with joy and sorrow. He describes a demon who steals after us in our "loneliest loneliness" and tells us that we will have to live every detail of this life over and over again eternally. It is crucial that the demon appears at the moment of our deepest despair because as Nietzsche says in *Zarathustra* "joy wants the eternity of *all* things, *wants deep, wants deep eternity*" (*Z* IV "The Drunken Song" 436). The response to the demon's proclamation is decisive: "If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you" (*GS* 274). As David Wood argues in "Nietzsche's Transvaluation of Time," the affirmation of the eternal return is transformative. The moment of an affir-

mation of the eternal return produces change and thereby the thought of the eternal return generates difference.

This "vision of the loneliest" appears again in *Zarathustra's* "On the Vision and the Riddle" when Nietzsche presents another version of the eternal return (*Z* III 267). Here Zarathustra speaks to sailors who embark "with cunning on terrible seas" until he is interrupted by a dwarf who tells him that he is a philosopher's stone that will fall back on himself (*Z* III, 268). The dwarf's mocking silences Zarathustra until he realizes that courage slays even death by proclaiming "Was *that* life? Well then! Once more!" Gathering his courage Zarathustra confronts the dwarf and tells him that he (the dwarf) could not bear the abysmal thought of the eternal return. Zarathustra points out a gateway between two paths, one future and one past, both eternal. Inscribed above the gate is "Moment." When the dwarf exclaims that "time itself is a circle," Zarathustra chastises him for making things too easy for himself. Zarathustra concludes: "And this slow spider, which crawls in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and I and you in the gateway, whispering together, whispering of eternal things—must not all of us have been there before? And return and walk in that other lane, out here, before us, in this long dreadful lane—must we not eternally return?" (*Z* 270). When Zarathustra asks "must not all of us have been there before?" he is standing at the gateway between past and future marked "moment." Is he asking haven't all of us been at this gateway, at the moment between past and future, before? And won't we all necessarily be at this place, this moment, over and over again eternally? Is what returns the moment? And if it is the moment that returns, what does it mean to call this a return of the same? Perhaps, like the dwarf, Irigaray's interpretation of the eternal return as merely the nuptial ring of recurrence, the circle of the same, makes things too easy for her. As David Wood suggests, perhaps the structure is the same but the content is always different (NTT 52-3). Moreover, like the version of the eternal return in *Gay Science*, Zarathustra's version is also transformative.

Zarathustra tells the riddle of a heavy black snake which crawls into the throat of a sleeping shepherd. This snake seems to represent the eternal return and the shepherd is gagging on it until Zarathustra tells him to bite its head off. Once the shepherd bites down on the eternal return, he is transformed: "No longer shepherd, no longer human—one changed, radiant, *laughing*!" (*Z* 272). Once again the eternal return generates difference in the decisive moment in which it is affirmed. The eternal return makes it possible to give one's life as a gift to oneself.

In *Marine Lover* Irigaray insists that both the eternal return and the *Übermensch* are forms of matricide which deny the gift of life that comes

from the mother. She makes her point by relying primarily on metaphors from *Zarathustra*: circles, rings, sun, heights, peak, bridges. She laments that the *Übermensch* is afraid of the immemorial waters of maternal birth, the sea; it prefers the mountain tops and sunlight to the dark depths of the sea. But what of the prelude to *Zarathustra* in which Zarathustra not only associates the *Übermensch* with the earth but also the sea? "All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man?... The overman is the meaning of the earth... *remain faithful to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes... Verily, a polluted stream is man. One must be a sea to be able to receive a polluted stream without becoming unclean. Behold, I teach you the overman: he is this sea; in him your great contempt can go under" (*Z* I Prelude 3, 124-25). In addition, speaking of *Zarathustra* in *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche talks about an alternative to the slave morality born out of a resentment toward the earth and the body: "This man [*Mensch*] of the future, who will redeem us not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism; this bell-stroke of noon and of the great decision that liberates the will again and restores its goal to the earth and his hope to man..." (*OGM* II §24, 96). This *Mensch* of the future will restore our values to the earth and to our embodied existence on this earth.

There is the suggestion in *Marine Lover,* which is brought out clearly in Mortensen's reading of it, that if Nietzsche's doctrines of the eternal return and the *Übermensch* provide ways for man to give birth to himself, then this implies that man denies his relationship with the earth. In other words, implicit in Irigaray's analysis is the traditional association between the mother and the earth, mother-earth. Although I agree with Irigaray that the mother and birth are problematic in Nietzsche's texts—to the point that he proposes a masculine mother—my project at the end of this book is to disentangle traditional associations of mother with earth. I will argue that the philosophical matricide identified by Irigaray is possible only *because of* the identification of mother with earth. While, against Irigaray, I believe that Nietzsche does move us out of a metaphysics that annihilates the value of the body, at the same time he cannot admit the value of the feminine pregnant maternal body. But the issue is more complex than Irigaray's text makes it out to be. Why, then, is her text so compelling?

This question is a question of style. Recall that Irigaray maintains that her style is one of productive mimesis. In her response to Nietzsche she

not only engages in a passionate dialogue with his texts but also accuses him of violence, of violating "her." She accuses him of not loving "her." She makes "him" out to be a hostile lover. Turning Nietzsche's genealogical method back on Irigaray's mimetic method, we could ask what is the meaning of the way in which she positions him as primarily the violent male lover? Why does she need to make him out as the villain in this affair in such a categorical fashion? If Irigaray claims that Nietzsche's doctrines of eternal return and the *Übermensch* are born out of resentment towards the mother, then what does it mean for her to mime that resentment? If, as Irigaray suggests in much of her writing, woman has been positioned as a reflective surface for man, then taking up her place of mirror Irigaray must reflect back in a productive, rather than merely reproductive, way the resentment in Nietzsche's text. She must make a space in which to create herself by taking up the place assigned to her as the resented woman. Yet, she does this by defining her lover as hostile and violent. Isn't this exactly the logic of resentment employed by the slave morality? The slave can define itself only in relation to a hostile other (*OGM* I §10, 36-7). Moreover, if, as Irigaray suggests in some of her other writings, she wants to engage a dialogue between different sexes, is the best way to do so to refuse to see anything but violence in the other? Perhaps it is obvious that *Marine Lover* is written not only out of pain but also out of love.

If Irigaray refuses to see any difference in Nietzsche, she does so strategically. The force of *Marine Lover* is Ariadne's lament, the voice of a woman. This lament is powerful because it is not only addressed to Nietzsche but also to all of the patriarchal traditions in philosophy. Irigaray wants this domestic fight, this lover's quarrel, to be out in the open (see *ML* 24-5). She suggests that by fighting on equal terms, we can break the mirror that woman has been forced to become (*ML* 66). By presenting her side of the story, Irigaray forces tensions in Nietzsche's work to an immediacy unprecedented in Nietzsche scholarship. She reflects violence back at itself in order to produce the possibility of something other. The fact that, like all revolutionary projects, she both succeeds and fails suggests that perhaps the eternal return is both the return of the same and yet the return of difference. If Irigaray's mimetic method is to succeed, then Deleuze is right that the eternal return must act as a selective principle that operates through the self-overcoming of reactive forces, the self-overcoming of resentment. Now, I too risk the repetition of the same for the sake of difference by continuing my analysis of Nietzsche's eternal return in its relation to woman's body.

Medusa and Baubô

Medusa and Baubô are two more of the metaphors of woman's body that Nietzsche employs in order to describe the eternal return. At one pole, Medusa represents the unrepresentable, the terrifying decapitated head swarming with snakes, the sight of which will turn men to stone, while, at the other, Baubô represents the equally terrifying exposed female sex, the sight of which is disillusioning at best and deadly at worst. These two poles are collapsed in Freud's imaginary when he interprets Medusa's head as the spectacle of the exposed female genitals.[21] He maintains that Medusa's head elicits in man the fear of castration; decapitation stands in for castration. When the male child sees his mother's pubis, he sees the spot of a missing penis surrounded by hair. On Freud's reading the Medusa's snakelike hair becomes a throng of penis substitutes which both evoke and protect against castration. Medusa's head becomes a fetish of sorts—it both acknowledges and denies castration by setting up a penis substitute.

In his "Nietzsche Medused," Bernard Pautrat presents a fascinating, if stretched, reading of Nietzsche's identification of the eternal return with Medusa, which turns the eternal return itself into a fetish. Pautrat points out that in various drafts for *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche refers to "the great thought as a Medusa's head: all features of the world harden, a frozen, mortal combat"[22] (160). Using this quotation from Nietzsche's notes for *Zarathustra* part IV, Pautrat is justified in interpreting "the greatest thought" as the thought of the eternal return. Then he proceeds to consider what it could mean to call the eternal return a Medusa's head and why Nietzsche did not mention Medusa in the final version of *Zarathustra*. He concludes that the thought of the eternal return has the same effect as a Medusa's head: it freezes the world in mortal combat; it is terrifying; it is impossible to look at (*NM* 160). The fact that Medusa's head is left out of the final version, he claims, makes it no less representative of the eternal return. His argument is that the eternal return is left out of *Zarathustra* and, by virtue of its displacement, it occupies the same place as the displaced Medusa. He maintains that throughout the text Zarathustra never describes the thought of the eternal return; he merely refers to it: "[Zarathustra] is never in a position to give an exoteric statement of [the eternal return]. The mode of representation of the eternal return is either the dream or the riddle, the responsibility for which is always left to others, dwarfs or animals. And each version which is given of it is immediately contradicted by the master of the return, who fails to

see his truth in it, the truth he wants to transmit to his future disciples" (NM 162–63).

Pautrat's argument stretches when he moves from Nietzsche's identification of the eternal return with Medusa's head through an analysis of fetishism to the claim that the eternal return is Zarathustra's fetish. He argues that "the thought of the eternal return as thesis of identity and identifiable thesis, arises as a fetish against the world of difference which *also* seeks to think itself in the eternal return" (NM 167). If we return to the arguments that I have constructed out of Irigaray's poetic suggestions in *Marine Lover,* and take them together with Pautrat's thesis, a stronger case could be made for interpreting Nietzsche's eternal return as a fetish.

Recall that the Freudian fetishist both denies and affirms castration. Additionally recall that for the Lacanian fetishist castration is not cutting off an organ but cutting off the possibility of gratification. What gratifies the philosopher? Discovering an unchanging, eternal truth. But if the world is constantly changing and all identity necessarily gives way to difference, then any principle, including the principle that asserts this Heraclitean position, must give way to something else. Nietzsche's eternal return is such a principle. With the eternal return, especially on Deleuze's reading, as we have seen, Nietzsche proposes a principle that promises the eternal return of difference. By doing so, however, he has absorbed difference within this principle of identity. He both affirms and denies the possibility of philosophical gratification by acknowledging difference even while identifying it with a fixed principle, the eternal return. On this point my reading of the interpretations of the eternal return put forward by Deleuze, Derrida, and Irigaray work in concert. The eternal return is both the return of the difference and the return of the same simultaneously; what is the same about life is difference itself. The principle of return both denies and affirms difference. But, what kind of a principle is it that guarantees the return of difference? Doesn't this priniciple challenge or alter our very notion of priniciples? In addition, doesn't it complicate the relation between sameness and difference?

Sarah Kofman suggests that Nietzsche's figure for the eternal return and life itself, Baubô, steers clear of fetishism. Kofman relies on a passage from *Gay Science* in which Nietzsche says: "Perhaps truth is a woman who has reasons for not letting us see her reasons? Perhaps her name is—to speak Greek—Baubô? Oh, those Greeks! They knew how to live. What is required for that is to stop courageously at the surface, the fold, the skin, to adore appearances in form, tones, words, in the whole Olympus of appearance" (*GS,* Preface §4, 38). On Kofman's reading Baubô is the

female double of Dionysus (B 197). She represents fecundity and the eternal return of life. Kofman notes that Baubô makes Demeter, the goddess of fertility, laugh by pulling up her skirts and showing her a drawing of Dionysus on her belly. Kofman says that "[t]he belly of the woman plays the role of the head of Medusa. By lifting her skirts, was not Baubô suggesting that she go and frighten Hades, or that which comes to the same, recall fecundity to herself? By displaying the figure of Dionysus on her belly, she recalls the eternal return of life" (B 196–97).

The role of Medusa in this case is to petrify by exposing her procreative powers. Kofman presents the connection between Baubô and fertility by pointing out that Baubô is "the equivalent of *koilia*, another of the 'improper' words used in Greek to designate the female sex" (B 197). Kofman overlooks what should be obvious in her analysis; the threat of Medusa may be this "improper" female sex itself and not merely its powers to reproduce. Baubô lifting her skirts, with Dionysus drawn on her belly, may also threaten castration. Kofman argues that the Baubô-Dionysus duo operates between castration and fetishism but cannot be reduced to either. She argues that because of his female double, Dionysus cannot be categorized: "Dionysus, a Greek god anterior to the system of theological oppositions, crosses himself out (*se rature*) of the distinction between the veiled and unveiled, masculine and feminine, fetishism and castration" (B 198). Kofman claims that like Dionysus, Nietzsche is his own double. He is both sides and therefore neither (B 187).

Following Derrida, Kofman seems to suggest that Dionysus is outside all dualism; he operates as the undecidable, neither one nor the other. Her discussion of the difference between fetishism and castration, however, seems confused. She maintains that they are opposites. While fetishism protects against the threat of castration by setting up a substitute for the maternal penis, at the same time it acknowledges maternal castration. So it makes no sense to say that fetishism is the opposite of castration, or that Dionysus is between fetishism and castration. Fetishism *is* the logic of the between.

It is odd that Kofman associates the skirt-lifting Baubô with Nietzsche's affirmative woman who is, above all "modest." She contrasts Baubô with Nietzsche's negative scientific woman who is not at all modest about what women want. For the affirmative woman, "modesty appears as a beguilement that permits the male to desire a woman without being petrified (médusé); it is a veil which avoids male homosexuality, a spontaneous defense against the horrific sight of female genitalia, and the opportunity for life to perpetuate itself" (B 191). It is also odd

that Baubô as the female double of Dionysus, who has "unspeakable relations" with Proshymnos, can provide the veil that avoids male homosexuality.

At this point it is interesting to compare Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's analysis of Nietzsche's relation to homosexuality in *Epistemology of the Closet*. Sedgwick interprets the phenomenon of the double or divided self as a camouflage for homosexual desire (161 n. 35). Using Sedgwick's thesis, Nietzsche's double character and Dionysus's double character could be veiled manifestations of an economy of homosexual desire. I can make the case for this reading stronger by addressing an issue implicit in this thesis, the relation between identification and desire. Sedgwick suggests that in Nietzsche's writing there is a conflation of the sense of "what I am" and "what I desire"; the object of desire is not other than the self (161). "In Nietzsche, for example, the unimaginable distance between the valetudinarian philosopher who desires, and the bounding 'masters of the earth' whom he desires, is dissolved so resolutely by the force of his rhetoric . . ." (161 n. 35). Sedgwick substantiates this claim by pointing to Nietzsche's identification with Dionysus, Christ, and "every name in history" (162–163). Nietzsche not only desires Dionysus, he identifies with Dionysus. He signs his name Dionysus. Conversely, Nietzsche not only identifies with Dionysus, he desires Dionysus.

The conflation of identity and desire in Nietzsche should not be surprising if we recall the logic of the master morality described in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. The master affirms himself directly without any relation to an other. Unlike the Hegelian dialectic, which requires a desire for recognition from an other, the master's recognition comes entirely and directly from himself. If we think of desire in terms of sexual desire, the master's desire for himself and others like him is a homosexual desire. Only the slaves require recognition from an other. Within the Hegelian scenario this desire for the other leads to the Unhappy Consciousness that is caused by a radical split between identification and desire. The Unhappy Consciousness desires what it is not. The master of Nietzsche's *Genealogy*, however, never reaches this level of Unhappy Consciousness, because he "idealizes" only himself; yet we cannot even say that he has any ideal insofar as he acts spontaneously from instinct, because he is not self-conscious. Self-consciousness, with its mate, bad conscience, is the disease of the slave.

In *Genealogy* Nietzsche is not suggesting that we return to master morality, if that would even be possible. Rather, the slave morality adds a psychological depth that could make the master's self-affirmation more meaningful and profound. The ascetic ideal is, after all, the ideal that

requires life to be meaningful. Through the wedding of the master's sensuality and the slave's discipline, a true creative spirit can be born (see *OGM* III §2, 98). Bad conscience gives birth to great health (*OGM* I §19, II §24). Does Nietzsche suggest that the self-alienation of the slave morality is necessary to move to a healthier relationship between identification and desire? Perhaps it is only after this self-alienation that identification and desire can come together. Prior to self-alienation there is neither identification nor desire. Both self-identification and desire require self-alienation and the resulting self-consciousness. So what is Nietzsche's identification with Dionysus? Is it the identification of a master or a slave? Is his identification with Dionysus an acknowledgment of the other, or is it a denial of that other?

The Birth of Gods

Dionysus is born of the womb of a dead woman who is cut open so that he can, as Irigaray says, give birth to himself (*ML* 125). According to the traditional version of the myth, Dionysus is the child of Zeus and Semele, a mortal with whom Zeus was having an affair.[23] Zeus disguised himself as a mortal in order to deceive Semele into having an affair. When Hera found out, she took her revenge by disguising herself as an old woman and convincing Semele to ask Zeus to appear without his disguise. Semele got Zeus to agree to grant her a wish and then asked him to appear without his disguise. The splendor of his godly appearance annihilated Semele instantly in a flash of lightening. The unborn Dionysus, a god himself, was not annihilated. Zeus sewed the premature Dionysus into his thigh so that he might finish the gestation process and be born at the right time. Dionysus was not born of a woman, but of his father.

Dionysus is raised by various women, primarily Semele's sister, Ino. In the name of avenging his mother, Dionysus repays his aunt for her nurturing by stinging her with madness. In Euripides' *Bacchae*, Dionysus believes that Ino is responsible for the rumor that Zeus is not really his father. Dionysus has heard that his aunt was telling people that his father was really a mortal and that his mother's father, Cadmus, had made up the story that Semele was impregnated by Zeus. On Ino's version of the story, Semele is struck dead by Zeus when he finds out that they are falsely blaming him for the pregnancy. In the name of his mother, Dionysus punishes all the women of Thebes:

> Because of that offense
> I have stung them with frenzy, hounded them from home
> up to the moutains where they wander, crazed of mind,

and compelled to wear my orgies' livery.
Every woman in Thebes—but the women only—
I drove from home, mad. There they sit,
rich and poor alike, even the daughters of Cadmus.
beneath the silver firs on the roofless rocks.
Like it or not, this city must learn its lesson:
it lacks initiation in my mysteries;
that I shall vindicate my mother Semele
and stand revealed to mortal eyes as the god
she bore to Zeus.24

In the name of his mother, he defends his divine paternity and turns on the surrogate mother who raised him. In defense of his divine paternity, he turns on all women, mothers and daughters alike. He makes them carry the symbols of his potency and worship him. The intoxicated frenzy of his devotees, however, leads them to tear flesh and eventually rip him to pieces.

So although, as Irigaray says, Dionysus "sets flowing the water frozen into solid walls," the waters of passion and bodily desire, he does so with such violence that once again we have entered an economy of castration and self-sacrifice: "His crazy desire loosens all bonds, destroys all homes, overthrows all institutions, laughs at all stability. Lets out what is already walled up. Sets flowing all the water that is frozen into solid walls. But he betters and wounds everything he opens up. And as he frees the fluid energies, he fractures the place they flow out of. As he lets the springs leap up once again, he annihilates the place from whence they come. By recalling desire, does he not destroy the body?" (*ML* 129).

With Dionysus the tension between divine and human is too great and he goes to pieces. Human desire is violently destructive; and the god of fertility and the desiring body destroys that very body with his desire. Even Nietzsche's favorite god, the god of sensuality, sacrifices the body; with Dionysus the body is sacrificed to desire. The body is not strong enough for desire. The phallus, Dionysus's symbol of potency, becomes an instrument of death as well as a symbol of life; and, for Irigaray, worshipping the fertile phallus is merely another means of forgetting the mother and her fertility (*ML* 136–37).

In Nietzsche's texts, Dionysus overshadows Ariadne, without whom his life has no meaning. Irigaray suggests that Ariadne is called on merely to echo and mirror the masculine (*ML* 117). Her voice is never heard. It is also significant that Ariadne is a goddess of childbirth and erotic love.[25] Nietzsche's focus on Dionysus with his fertility and potency blinds us to

Ariadne's fertility and potency. In fact in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche gives all of Ariadne's powers over childbirth to Dionysus. In Nietzsche's text Dionysus represents procreation, pregnancy and birth (*TW* "What I Owe," §4).

And what about Demeter, goddess of procreation and the earth, whose daughter is kidnapped and raped? Demeter will only produce in the company of Persephone, her daughter.[26] Separated from her, she is barren. Her daughter is her source of life. The company of her daughter ushers in the seasons of life. Persephone is the midwife, of sorts, for her mother. Artemis, twin sister to Apollo, is also a midwife for her mother. And she, too, has been forgotten in Nietzsche's texts in favor of her brother, Apollo.

In Nietzsche's texts Apollo counterbalances the violent frenzy of Dionysus. Apollo provides stability, temperance, and individuation to the Dionysian chaos. For Irigaray, Apollo's *jouissance* is the fight with Dionysus or tension itself; Apollo is the god of resistance and restraint (*ML* 145). In Apollo the divine is always mediated by this restraint which holds everything at a distance: "The whole is always already wrapped in a protective membrane that isolates it from a return to the rapturous undifferentiation within one unique orgasm with that originary mother. Everything is separated from everything, each thing inhabiting and inhabited by a dream that takes and gives shape. The poetry of the god shines forth and covers the whole with a still springlike, still matutinal gold. Still close to the solar illumination, but soon melted down into words that will generate and maintain a new, a patriarchal order. The sky will soon be solid bronze" (*ML* 149). Apollo's restraint resists any identification with the originary mother or nature. He insists on giving order to the chaos of nature by turning fluid nature into solid words. The mother's passion becomes the father's words.

Irigaray argues that in the shadows of Apollo's sun is his sister Artemis. From her, Apollo steals light; from her he steals creativity. Irigaray admits that "only the backing on which he weaves the miracle of his advent and of his Olympian gift of measured restraint can be interpreted thus." She claims that she interprets "only a thread through the myths of his rise to power" (*ML* 152). Then she proceeds to weave the story of Apollo and his twin sister, Artemis, who must stay in the shadows of the forest with only animals for companions so that her brother can shine. She is his underside, without whom he could not be who he is; his identity is dependent on his contrast with her. They are two parts of the same whole; they are twins who share not only their parents but also

their identity.

In order to make sense of Irigaray's analysis of Apollo, it is necessary to recall some of the myths surrounding this god and his sister. Apollo is the son of Leto and Zeus. Hera, jealous as usual, sends Python to pursue the pregnant Leto; she decrees that Leto should not give birth anyplace where the sun shines. As the story goes, Leto, on the run, gives birth first to Artemis, who immediately helps her mother across the water to safety on the island of Delos where Leto gives birth to Artemis's twin brother, Apollo. Artemis acts as the midwife to her own twin brother. He owes his life to her. Because of her role in Apollo's birth and the fact that, unlike Apollo, she caused her mother no pain during childbirth, Artemis becomes a goddess protector of pregnant women as well as (some) virgins.[27] Unlike Artemis, who protects pregnant women from pain, Apollo pays no debt to the mother.

In fact, it is Apollo's oracle at Delphi that commands Orestes to kill his mother Clytemnestra. Later, when Orestes wants to spare his mother, he is reminded of Apollo's words. After Orestes commits the matricide ordained by Apollo, he is pursued by the Erinyes, Furies with snakelike hair and eyes dripping blood, sent by Clytemnestra's ghost. Driven to distraction and pursued unto death by these castrating women, Orestes once again seeks Apollo's help. In Aeschylus's *The Eumenides,* as Apollo vows to help him, the chorus, howling with the furies, scorns Apollo: "Shame, son of Zeus! Robber is all you are. A young god, you have ridden down powers gray with age, taken the suppliant, though a godless man, who hurt the mother who gave him birth. Yourself a god, you stole the matricide away. Where in this act shall any man say there is right? . . . You gave this outlander the work to kill his mother."[28] Apollo sends him to Athens to plead his case before Athena. As Apollo points out in Orestes' defense at the trial before Athena, she has no allegiance to the mother, born straight from her father's head: "The mother is no parent of that which is called her child, but only nurse of the new-planted seed that grows. The parent is he who mounts. A stranger she preserves a stranger's seed, if no god interfere will show you proof of what I have explained. There can be a father without any mother. There she stands, the living witness, daughter of Olympian Zeus, she who was never fostered in the dark of the womb yet such a child as no goddess could bring to birth" (Aeschylus, *E* 158; cf. Irigaray, *ML* 94).[29] Apollo persuades Athena that the mother is not a parent but merely an altogether unnecessary nurse or soil within which the child grows. Athena accepts Apollo's plea and transforms the Erinyes into the Eumenides, who now serve as protectors of all suppli-

cants who beseech the gods.

So while Dionysus is born of a dead mother, Apollo orders the murder of the mother. He commands the death of the mother and forgets about his sister. While I have emphasized Apollo's matricide, Irigaray is concerned with his annihilation of his sister, Artemis. Irigaray argues that his identity is dependent on his annihilation of his sister. She maintains that Apollo's balance and harmony against Dionysian chaos are bought at Artemis's expense: "And he who entertains and realizes the dream of achieving peace in equilibrium, of overcoming the pain of living and of insoluble tragic dilemmas, also reveals himself to be the master of duels in which no violence breaks out, because one of the terms has been removed" (*ML* 152). Artemis has been removed. In fact, within the Apollonian economy all women are abandoned, denied, and used so that the sun god can create "his dreams or works of beauty" out of them (*ML* 155). Irigaray suggests that Apollo, god of truth and light, denies the other to the point of denying his own body (*ML* 157). The body is too dark, unstable, and chaotic; he requires order and restraint. He insists on the one, the selfsame, the truth. He represents everything that the body is not. Extending Irigaray's suggestive remarks on Apollo's denial of the body, I maintain that the body to whom he owes his life, the body of the mother, is the real target of Apollo's arrow. He denies the body altogether; and by so doing, he denies the significance of his birth out of the laboring body of a woman. He forgets that through her pain and nurturing he was given the gift of life. He repays his debt, however, with matricide.

For Irigaray, these male gods forget their debt to the maternal-feminine by miming the maternal-female so that they don't have to acknowledge woman's existence. They usurp women's procreative powers in order to ensure the power of the masculine order: "The fight and the compromises with the ancestress, the mothers, sometimes even the mistresses are on display. The brother-sister couple remains unresolved. Is this the deepest layer of the mimesis hidden in the night of truth? . . . In this way the god-men may defend themselves from the archaic forces: with Zeus mimicking the mother, Apollo the sister, Dionysus the mistress? Even as they ensure the power of the masculine order, which they aim to keep" (*ML* 161).

The last god-man that Irigaray reads as the mime of the maternal-female is Christ. Her stunning argument is that Christ "takes upon himself, mimics, the female in order to effect the passage back and beyond that creature whose flesh constantly incites men to lose control" (*ML* 166). He performs his mime on the cross when through the wound in his

side he gives eternal life. His wound mimics the life-giving womb of the mother; hers is the flesh that incites men to lose control. And by so doing, he takes us beyond the flesh into a world under the reign of the Father to whom the human body has been sacrificed. Christ reenacts the sacrifice of Mary, the virgin mother whose body is also sacrificed in order to give life. Irigaray calls Mary's yes to the word of the Father a no to herself (*ML* 167). Once again the body of woman is sacrificed to the truth of the Father: "What Truth supports such a respect for life? The word made flesh? Or the power of patriarchies that works by the repression, seduction, and legal rape of the body of women who know the value of gestation and childbearing? . . . Liberate fleshly encounters from the taboos that pervert them. Leave the Christians to their crosses!" (*ML* 170).

Following Nietzsche, and yet going beyond him, Irigaray argues that Christians have forgotten the most important part of Christ's message: incarnation. They have forgotten that Christ is a bodily incarnation of god. Like Dionysus he is god-man; like Dionysus he represents the unity of the human and the divine. But whereas with Dionysus, Eros is too violent and rips up the body, with Christ, Eros disappears altogether (*ML* 176–177). Irigaray reminds us that Christ did not heal with words but with touch. His divinity is his incarnation (*ML* 181). Like Nietzsche, Irigaray laments the death of God; she agrees that man has killed God. And she asks, "If for men their God is dead, where can the divine be spoken without preaching death?" (*ML* 20). She imagines a divinity beyond this economy of death and sacrifice.

In the last section of the last part of *Marine Lover*, when Irigaray finally mentions Nietzsche by name, she suggests that he reenacts the Christian tragedy of death that requires sacrificing the body. In the end she says that Nietzsche could not perform a revaluation of values because he does not go beyond the father-son relationship, in which he insists on being both the father and the son (*ML* 34). He loves only the other of the same in his "echonomy" of sameness; he loves only himself. And without a proper other, "he plunges into the shadows" (ML 187). "Sensing the impotence to come, Nietzsche declares he is the crucified one. And is crucified. But by himself" (*ML* 188). He kills himself when he kills the other.

Irigaray maintains that without acknowledging the difference of the other there is nothing beyond the violent economy of castration, in which the masculine is substituted for the feminine: "Only through difference can the incarnation unfold (*se déploie*) without murderous or suicidal passion. Rhythm and measure of a female other that, endlessly, undoes the autological circle of discourse, thwarts the eternal return of the same,

opens up every horizon through the affirmation of another point of view whose fulfillment can never be predicted. That is always dangerous? A gay science of incarnation?" (*ML* 188).

Rather than ripping through the folds of the other with some sharp object in the way that Nietzsche and Derrida do in order to make her yield what might belong to her, which will ensure that she does not exist, Irigaray proposes a nonviolent exchange without the fear of debt or loss: "Instead of tearing, let it [our embrace] return to something that has never taken place. The embrace of earth and air and fire and water, which have never been wed. Forget the knife-cut, the chalk-line partitions. Forget the appropriations at frontiers that belong to no one and are marked by arbitrarily solid lines that risk the abyss at every moment. The forfeit of the will, the insecurity of debt" (*ML* 21). For Irigaray the model for this new economy is not the master-slave relationship but rather the relationship between the infant and the maternal body and between the sexes.

The plaint of Ariadne is the plaint of the mother in childbirth. In this chapter that plaint has been heard as the cry to remember the mother. The last three sections, "The Eternal Return of the Same," "The Birth of Gods," and "The Economy of the Gift," have all given voice to that cry. Taking up Irigaray's powerful suggestions at the end of *Marine Lover,* I have elaborated the ways in which Nietzsche's gods—Dionysus, Apollo, and Christ—all appropriate the power of their mothers, sisters, or lovers without acknowledging their debt. They invent ways to give birth to themselves in order to forget that they were born of their mothers. Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return of the same is another way of telling a story in which man gives birth to himself without woman. By weaving together several readings of Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal return, I have suggested how it can be read as a fear of the feminine and a desire to give birth to oneself rather than acknowledge any maternal gift. In addition, the economy of the gift presented in *Zarathustra,* and endorsed by some Nietzsche scholars, prevents any acknowledgment of the maternal gift of life. The impossibility of the gift and giving within this economy is at its limit in Derrida's account of the gift in *Given Time.* I read his theory of the impossibility of the gift and the necessity of forgetting gifts and giving as yet another way to the mother's gift of life and her act of giving birth. The Greek myths of the gods, Nietzsche's stories of self-creation and Derrida's eulogy to the gift, all participate in what Irigaray has identified as the matricide committed by Western culture.