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*Myths, Matricide and Maternal Subjectivity in Irigaray*

This paper revisits the theme of ‘matricide’ in Irigaray, and argues for the importance of constructing a non-matricidal account of female subjectivity: an account that does not prescribe a primordial rejection or ‘abjection’ of the maternal body. This is important for two reasons: in order to acknowledge that our relation to our mothers – and not merely our fathers – plays a crucial role in the formation of the ‘self’; and in order for a non-conflictual mother-daughter relation to be rendered possible. Whilst separation from the maternal body is essential if women are to accede to subjectivity, this does not necessitate psychological ‘matricide’ in the strong sense: to deny the mother expression within the Symbolic economy (Jacobs 2004, p.19). I argue that what I term Irigaray’s ‘primary imaginary’ register – the infant’s encounter with the maternal body – coheres with what Alison Stone (2012) calls ‘potential space’: a mediating maternal ‘third term’ which sustains psychic links with the maternal body and prevents the infant from ‘merging’ with the mother. By repairing the links with the maternal origin, but at the same time allowing for separation, this model also makes female genealogy possible. However, Irigaray does not elaborate her theory in terms of an account of female psychological development (nor in terms of a non-matricidal account of individuation for both sexes). Indeed, Irigaray remains concerned with reconceptualising bodily organs such as the placenta and the womb. This paper therefore brings together Irigaray’s writing on matricide – principally in her essay ‘Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother’ (1993a) – with her attempts to evoke a ‘feminine imaginary’ – a maternal bodily imaginary – in her earlier texts, and argues that we might use her underdeveloped notion of a ‘primary imaginary’ as an anti-matricidal maternal bodily imaginary which persists in post-natal mother-infant relations.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, when her work was first being ‘discovered’, Irigaray was dismissed by Lacanian critics for supposedly attempting to provide no more than an ‘alternative account’ of female psychosexual development.<sup>1</sup> But whilst these critics failed to acknowledge the importance of Irigaray’s attempted ‘dismantling’ of western metaphysics – something which was hidden and obscured, perhaps, by the deliberate opacity of her mimetic and ‘hysterical’ style – they touched upon what has become a significant theme: the question

of the precise nature of this specifically ‘female’ account of psychosexual development. A major contributor to this emerging field has been artist and analyst Bracha Ettinger (2006), whose notion of a ‘matrixial borderspace’ – a subjectivizing dimension connected to the intrauterine space of the womb – has helped to reignite interest in psychoanalytical theories of femininity and maternal subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> It is in light of recent contributions by Ettinger as well as by Alison Stone (2012), Amber Jacobs (2007) and Griselda Pollock (2009) that this paper returns, with renewed interest, to Irigaray and the interconnected problems of matricide and maternal subjectivity that she addressed in her early work. Turning to Irigaray’s writing on the maternal imaginary and the intrauterine encounter, I shall attempt to develop these ideas into a more robust account of non-matricidal female subjectivity which moves beyond the ‘Oedipal’. I begin in Section I. by examining the role of myth in Irigaray, focusing on her account of the matricide committed in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*. I argue that whilst Irigaray uses myth in order to expose underlying psychic structures which have become embedded in our cultural imaginary, her solution of appealing to the mythic feminine in order to ‘repair’ the female *genre* is unsatisfactory, and fails to counter the matricidal structure which she highlights as central to the Oedipal schema. Looking for a solution to this problem, I then turn in Section II. to Jacobs’ (2007) argument that, underlying the manifest account of matricide in the *Oresteia*, is another, latent matricide – that of Athena’s mother, Metis – which, she argues, has been left unchecked. For Jacobs, our failure to recognise this hidden act of mother-killing has meant that the law prohibiting matricide has also remained unchecked, and, consequently, so too has the male phantasy of parthenogenesis.<sup>3</sup> Like Irigaray, Jacobs reads Greek myth as a constellation of male phantasies that has become consolidated in a phallic symbolic-imaginary order. Jacobs’ solution, furthermore, is to ‘mourn the mother’, to *introject* rather than to *incorporate* her, and, in doing so, allow her desire to be expressed symbolically.<sup>4</sup> This would also permit the Law of the Mother (the law against matricide) to be expressed in what she calls a ‘heterogeneous Symbolic’. However, after offering some criticisms of Jacobs’ solution, I suggest we adopt a more imaginative approach to Irigaray’s own work on matricide.

In Section III. I argue that we might develop Irigaray’s notion of a ‘primary imaginary’ – a term that she coins in her early essay ‘Linguistic and Specular Communication’ (2002) – as a maternal bodily imaginary which coheres loosely with what Kristeva calls the Semiotic *chora* (and has links with non-phallic *jouissance*). In Section IV. I contend that Irigaray’s project of translating the maternal bodily relation between mother and infant is also part of her wider

project of attempting to define a female sexual difference ‘beyond the phallus’. Because Irigaray does not explicitly apply this notion to an account of psychosexual development, in Section V. I suggest that we appeal to Stone’s (2012) concept of ‘potential space’ – an ‘evolved’ form of Kristeva’s *chora* – which, I argue, provides an illuminating way for us to approach the primary imaginary as a mediating ‘third term’ *within* the maternal dyad. This schema helps to circumvent psychological matricide by positing an already ‘triangulated’ mother-infant relationship.

## I.

For Irigaray, myths, as imaginary ‘landscapes’ which become Law (Irigaray 1988, p.159), are primal phantasies which reveal the underlying structure of the dominant socio-symbolic system: a structure which has historically been shaped by men’s psychological requirement to separate from the mother. In ‘Body against Body: In Relation to the Mother’, Irigaray describes how Clytemnestra’s murder in the *Oresteia* helps to illustrate what Freud interpreted in *Moses and Monotheism* as the victory of patriarchy over matriarchy (Cixous & Clément 2001, p.100):

One thing is plain, not in our everyday events but in our whole social scene: our society and our culture operate on the basis of an original matricide. When Freud [...] describes and theorizes about the murder of the father as the founding act for the primal horde, he is forgetting an even more ancient murder, that of the woman-mother, which was necessary to the foundation of a specific order in the city. (Irigaray 1993a, p.11)

Here, Irigaray alludes to the symbolic act of mother-killing which eventually becomes a trope for the erasure of the maternal contribution to ‘selfhood’. At this ‘turning point’ in the history of Western culture, ‘the question of filiation swings’; ‘sons stop being sons of mothers and become sons of fathers’ (Cixous and Clément 2001, p.103). The act of matricide (literal but also psychological) inaugurates the installation of a social order based on the elevation of paternal filiation to the status of Law. What Irigaray detects at work in the Oresteian myth in particular is the struggle between a pre-historical matriarchy (identified in the work of Bachofen, for example) and a burgeoning patriarchy (Whitford 1991, p.338).<sup>5</sup> This somewhat Nietzschean-Heideggerian notion of an ‘originary event’ is treated by Irigaray in the Jungian sense as a sort of ‘collective myth’ functioning on a psychic level, as integral to the Oedipus complex, and on a socio-cultural level, as the ‘mythology’ underlying patriarchy (Irigaray 1993a, p.12). According to Irigaray, the killing of the mother is a condition, as well as a symptom, of

patriarchy's operation, an act which underpins and perpetuates phallic binarism. She cites the paradigm of Oedipal matricide as the source of women's banishment from Western culture, as well as for the concomitant barring of genealogical relations between women: hence, she says, they are in a state of 'dereliction'. The intervention of the father's Law between mother and daughter 'forbids any corps-à-corps' with the mother' (Irigaray 1993a, p.14). In the *Oresteia*, Electra's punishment is not only hysteria, but also to be banished from a society which chooses to save the son at the expense of the daughter. The judgement exercised upon Electra is a motif of patriarchy's ban on women's participation, their hidden sacrifice or extradition, as well as their silencing and abandonment in madness (Irigaray 1993a, p.78). This motif is echoed in the myth of Kore-Persephone, as the collusion of the gods in Hades' abduction and rape of the daughter and again in Antigone, as the ultimate silencing and abjection of the feminine.<sup>6</sup> The idea of the 'mythic feminine', I suggest, should be understood on Irigaray's terms as a construct of the masculine symbolic-imaginary and its attempt to render the 'feminine' intelligible by bringing it under the phallic signifier. In the Lacanian schema, the 'woman' does not exist because phallic sexuality assigns her to a position of phantasy. This is particularly resonant in the case of the mother.<sup>7</sup> Irigaray contends that a woman-to-woman culture is occluded because the daughter can only relate to the mother in one of two ways: as a phallic mother – as an omnipotent, destructive force – or as a deficient and lacking persona, away from whom she must turn. In both cases, the mother remains associated with the dangerous, engulfing and overpowering maternal body, something which has historically been regarded as being diametrically opposed to the 'civilizing' Law of the Father.

Thus if the mother is to be brought out of silence and granted symbolic expression, Irigaray claims that the relationship between mothers and daughters must be 'rehabilitated'. However, there are two main problems with Irigaray's solution. First, what Irigaray proposes as an imaginative 'reclamation' of the mother-daughter relationship, which harks back to the period before the installation of patriarchal Law, is actually rather dubious. Irigaray argues that we must preserve the 'natural kinds of fruitfulness' of the mythic goddesses; she claims that we need to 'keep hold of them and establish a social system that reflects their values' (Irigaray 1993a, p.81).<sup>8</sup> But given that mythic feminine characters are supposed to be projections of the masculine Imaginary (in this respect Irigaray comes close to the Jungian approach to myth), it is unclear what is to be gained by this move in psychological terms. In what Irigaray perceives as this 'second phase' of her thought – the 'attempt to define those mediations that could permit the existence of a feminine subjectivity' – the 're-imagining' of mythic-feminine figures such

as Athena, Antigone and so-on, is similarly intended to provide women with an identificatory support in the form of a 'horizon of transcendence' (Hirsh et al. 1995, p.95). The recasting of mythic feminine figures is therefore essential to Irigaray's project of destabilising patriarchal cultural forms and developing the notion of a 'feminine imaginary'. Like Carl Jung, Irigaray acknowledges the importance of the role of myth in the process of individuation.<sup>9</sup> But as stated above, it is doubtful that this strategy alone is enough to counter the 'psychical matricide' entailed by the Oedipal schema, without which 'subjectivity' is considered to be impossible. For instance, Penelope Deutscher asks: 'Does Irigaray really think she has the power to create new myths? And does she place excessive confidence in the capacity of new myths and images to be socially transformative?' (Deutscher 2002, p.58). We might ask whether Irigaray places excessive confidence in the power of myths to be *psychically* transformative. Indeed, it is unclear exactly how Irigaray intends to counter or surpass the ostensibly far-reaching effects of matricide and the occlusion of the maternal in western tradition *solely* by propagating new 'myths', particularly when we consider the extent to which matricide has helped to shape western notions of selfhood and subjectivity.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, one of the most disappointing aspects of Irigaray's thought is its failure to work 'beyond Oedipus at a structural level' (Pollock 2006, p.89). I agree with Griselda Pollock when she argues that, until very recently, no specific theorization of femininity has been offered that would make a difference to the Oedipalized psychoanalytical model (Pollock 2006, p.90). This brings me to the second issue with Irigaray's solution to the problem of matricide. This issue concerns the relationship between Irigaray's use of mythic 'archetypes' as 'ego-ideals', and the use of 'projection theory' in analytic psychology.<sup>11</sup> I would suggest that Irigaray's call to use symbolic archetypes as 'identificatory supports' is actually reliant on an inverted form of projection theory, in which women are expected to consciously project ideals of femininity onto 'ego ideals'. This is problematic firstly because projection usually only operates so long as its dynamics are hidden (in Feuerbach's examination of religion, for example), and secondly because projection is primarily a *defence mechanism*. What Irigaray identifies as a problem relating to the infant's failure to *introject* the maternal other – rather than incorporating her as a Symbolic figure, as I shall discuss in Section II – cannot be solved by means of 'projection'.

Moreover, Irigaray's mistake is to attempt to remedy matricide by trying to rehabilitate the relationship between mothers and daughters *before* tackling the problematic issue of maternal subjectivity. For it is precisely the banishment of maternal desire to the realm of imaginary phantasy which precludes the mother from acceding to a distinctly 'maternal'

subjectivity of her own, instead suspending her inside the infant's phantasized space-time. Indeed, it is also this 'obfuscation' of identities that renders it difficult for women to differentiate themselves from their own mothers.<sup>12</sup> In short, we need to be clear about the maternal contribution to subjectivity *first* if we are to repair what Irigaray calls the female *genre*.

In Section III, I argue that it is possible to extract strands of Irigaray's early writing on the feminine 'imaginary' and weave them into an Irigarayan account of a post-Oedipal female subjectivity which circumvents psychical matricide and thus works 'beyond the phallus' at a structural level. However, I will first reflect on Jacobs' attempt to return the mother to the symbolic economy by re-engaging with the mythic significance of matricide. Although Jacobs' theory is commendable, I contend that it falls short of explaining how the Law of the Mother would operate alongside the existing phallic system.

## II.

According to Jacobs, Irigaray cannot symbolise the mother-daughter relationship in the absence of a 'cultural law'; that is, a law which differentiates mother from daughter (Jacobs 2007, p.135). To attempt this, as she does with the mythic feminine figures of Demeter-Kore, Clytemnestra and Iphigenia, and so on, is to re-enact the merging together of mother and daughter. Jacobs remarks:

It is not enough to go back to myth and to describe and promote the apparently once-harmonious mother-daughter relation before the patriarchal order effected its violent obliteration. In my argument, myth is not being used for the purpose of looking back to an imaginary and utopian 'before' but instead is being used as a way of creating a future that does not yet exist. (Jacobs 2007, p.137)

The 'founding feminine mythology' upon which Irigaray intends to construct her feminine symbolic remains, according to Jacobs, a projection of the masculine imaginary and works in its service (2007, p.138). What Jacobs proposes instead, is a structural theory of matricide which restores the mother to the symbolic economy: 'Theorizing matricide [...] is linked to the contention that the mother must be able to be theorized as a sexed subject whose relation to filiation and generational transmission is given expression inside the symbolic economy' (Jacobs 2004, p.9). To this end, Jacobs Returns to the *Oresteian* matricide and focuses on the 'latent' content of the myth, which, she contends, reveals a second, concealed matricide: that of Athena's mother, Metis (Jacobs 2004, p.24). In Aeschylus' play, the goddess Athena is responsible for establishing the first 'court' which decides on the fate of Orestes, the

matricidal son. Athena absolves Orestes of his crime because, in her words, ‘No mother gave me birth [...] in all my heart I am my father’s child’ (Aeschylus 1977, p.264 cited in Jacobs 2004, p.24). According to Hesiod’s account, Zeus pursued Athena’s mother – Metis – although she did not reciprocate his feelings (ibid.). Metis was raped by Zeus and subsequently fell pregnant with his child. Zeus then swallowed Metis, after which Athena sprang from his head, ‘fully armed and with a shout’ (ibid.). Metis was ‘never heard of or referred to again’ (ibid.).

The ‘incorporation’ of Metis renders her unspeakable, un-mournable, and, perhaps most crucially, un-symbolizable. According to Jacobs’ reading, the incorporation of Metis tells of ‘a prohibitive law belonging to the mother that patriarchal culture refuses to obey [...]. Recognition and obedience to the mother’s law would mean giving up the omnipotent parthenogenetic fantasy that underpins the father’s symbolic sovereignty’ (Jacobs 2004, p.32). On Stone’s reading of Jacobs, the *Oresteia* hides its premise because, in order to acknowledge Zeus’ crime, one must acknowledge the law that Zeus breaks in committing the crime: the law against matricide. The crime is the (enacted) phantasy of parthenogenesis, a crime against the mother, and so the law must be transmitted *by* the mother in order to prevent both boys and girls from indulging their parthenogenetic phantasies (Stone 2008, p.3). Thus the Law of the Mother is the law which prohibits parthenogenesis, but has been concealed. Men’s matricidal phantasies therefore appear ‘normal’ and ‘rational’. Thus for Jacobs, the foreclosure of these matricidal desires means that the male phantasy of self-creation has remained unchecked (ibid.). It is only when Metis’ law has been *introjected*, rather than *incorporated*, will we begin to be able to analyse different ways of ‘mourning, remembering, knowing and representing’ (Jacobs 2004, p.32). Moreover, to theorise matricide is, for Jacobs, to work towards an understanding of the role of the mother in the context of the cultural laws that determine socio-symbolic organisation (Jacobs 2004, p.19), something which would be essential in a post-patriarchal society.

Jacobs’ reading is important because it builds on several important motifs in Irigaray’s *oeuvre*, notably her view of matricide as a primal phantasy or foundation myth, which underlies, and helps to perpetuate, Oedipal subjectivity. For Jacobs, only when the Law of the Mother is recognised, and the mother mourned, will a woman-to-woman genealogy be permitted. However, Jacobs’ solution does not go far enough to counter the phallic binarism borne of psychological matricide and the Oedipal structure; Nor does it adequately deal with the ostensibly ‘untheorisable’ nature of female sexual specificity, and the ways in which it appears

to ‘prop-up’ masculine subjectivity inside the phallic Symbolic (although these features would presumably be symptomatic of the occlusion of the Mother’s Law). Although Jacobs’ model appears to make room for a ‘feminine register’ in the masculine Symbolic-Imaginary in what she calls a ‘heterogeneous Symbolic’, she fails to expand upon how exactly she sees this system operating. Stone, for instance, questions the manner in which Jacobs sees the maternal function as operating alongside the phallic function, given that the latter is premised on the reduction of the woman to an inferior version of the man (Stone 2008, p.6). Indeed, Stone also contests that Jacobs’ account would require that each subject situate themselves in relation to the mother (as a future mother or a non-mother) to become a subject, even though this Law apparently applies to sons and father as much to daughters (ibid.). In short, Stone argues that Jacobs’ account inverts the structural sexism of Lacan’s, ‘giving us matriarchy instead of patriarchy’ (ibid.). As a universal Law, Jacobs’ theory risks repeating the implicit sexism of Lacan’s account, yet it remains largely unclear how it would operate as one structuring principle amongst several (ibid). Moreover, it also seems somewhat simplistic to suggest that by simply acknowledging or mourning the death of the mother we would solve the problem of her symbolic death. Indeed, why is it necessary to continue to ‘kill’ the mother at all?

It is in light of these criticisms that we require a theory of subjectivity which acknowledges the mother’s contribution to the psychical evolution of subjects of *both* sexes that does not merely involve her ‘matricide’. This theory, whilst allowing for separation from the mother, preserves this relationship by acknowledging the primordial links with the mother’s body which give rise to subjectivity in its very basic form *in utero*. Furthermore, it seems that the solution to the problem of describing the maternal contribution to subjectivity can be found in the way that Irigaray attempts to evoke the *jouissance* of female sexual specificity in her early texts. For instance, Irigaray’s vision of a ‘sensible transcendental’ first arises from the fluidity, contiguity and plenitude of what she conceives as female self-affection: in the motif of the ‘two lips’, for example. And whilst these attempts have been met with criticism – as they are attempts to speak what in Lacanian terms is necessarily ‘unspeakable’ (Irigaray’s attempts to speak ‘woman’ – *parler femme*) – they perhaps provide the key for moving beyond the psychical ‘matricide’ implicit in the phallic model. I have argued elsewhere that Irigaray’s vision of the intrauterine encounter begins to work beyond the Oedipal paradigm: temporally, it deals with the psychoanalytically controversial period before birth; conceptually, it recommends a model of self/(m)other relations which throws the



Freudian-Lacanian depiction of a mother-infant ‘symbiosis’ into sharp relief. In the next section, I shall bring Irigaray’s notion of the pre-natal encounter (the ‘maternal sojourn’) into dialogue with the idea of a ‘primary imaginary’: a maternal bodily imaginary which is initially evoked by Irigaray in her early essay ‘Linguistic and Specular Communication’ (2000). I suggest that this primordial register in some way ‘persists’ after ‘Oedipalization’ (for instance, in the ‘feminine’ imaginary register that she alludes to in texts such as *Speculum* and *This Sex Which is Not One*), but that Irigaray’s thought falls short of being able to capture or define the ways in which it does so, and instead remains trapped in the dimension of physical organs (for example, the womb/placenta: see Pollock (2006)).

### III.

Irigaray’s early thought reveals a neglected ‘female’ or ‘feminine imaginary’: a specifically female *bodily* imaginary comprised of the rhythms, sensations and affects which centre on the mother’s body. Given Irigaray’s dynamic use of Lacan’s formulation of the Symbolic, it is in fact possible to appeal to a characteristically ‘female’ register which in some sense exists *alongside* or *within* the masculine symbolic-imaginary, but is inadequately symbolised (because there is no cultural law to determine it). This register has the capacity to influence and shape the subjectivities of both women *and* men, and is not merely a ‘future possibility’ – nor does it merely point to a ‘possible restructuring of the [masculine] imaginary’ (Whitford 1991, p.89) – but rather already works to shape subjectivity. I disagree somewhat with Margaret Whitford’s suggestion that one should not ‘equate the imaginary in Irigaray’s work with the archaic, maternal, pre-Oedipal space. From a structural point of view, the pre-Oedipal is produced by the symbolic, as well as informing it’ (ibid.). Whilst I concede that there are apparently several senses in which Irigaray appears to use, or gesture towards a use of, the ‘imaginary’, Whitford is too hasty in ruling out this particular interpretation.<sup>13</sup> For instance, in her essay ‘Linguistic and Specular Communication’ in *To Speak is Never Neutral* (2002), Irigaray highlights the emergence of a pre-Oedipal ‘primary imaginary’ register which is eventually ‘overwritten’ by the secondary ‘Imaginary’ at the Mirror Stage (it is the register of the specular image, hence of ‘specularization’).<sup>14</sup> This primal ‘nocturnal imaginary’ is described by Irigaray as the ‘guardian of life’ (Irigaray 2002, p.15), the register of ‘plethora images, sensations and spasms of infantile experience’ (Schwab 1994, p.353). But although this register is ‘produced’, in a sense, by the Symbolic, and hence by language, is there not also a sense in which it in some way

contributes to linguistic, and therefore also *psychosexual*, development? This, I suggest, is where Julia Kristeva's notion of the Semiotic *chora* proves useful.

Next, I shall initially compare what I have termed Irigaray's 'primary imaginary' with Kristeva's notion of the Semiotic *chora*, before arguing that Irigaray's mimetic evocation of the 'feminine imaginary' in texts such as *Speculum* shares the characteristics of what I regard as the 'primary imaginary': the register which evolves out of the infant's first identifications with the maternal body. However, unlike Kristeva's concept of the *chora* which arises *post-natally*, I argue that Irigaray's primary imaginary register emerges from the intrauterine relation. This highlights a crucial difference between the two thinkers, a difference which marks Irigaray out as beginning to move *beyond* orthodox Lacanian territory.

### III.I Kristeva's Semiotic *Chora*

For Kristeva, the *chora* refers to the earliest stages of the infant's psychosexual development, and points to the chaotic mix of sensations and perceptions that the infant experiences at a time when it has yet to distinguish its 'self' from the maternal body:

[T]he *chora* precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm. [...] Though deprived of unity, identity, or deity, the *chora* is nevertheless subject to a regulating process, which is different from that of symbolic law but nevertheless effectuates discontinuities by temporarily articulating them and then starting over, again and again. (Kristeva 2002, p.36)

This 'regulating process', as I got on to discuss below, is conducted by the maternal body. The *chora* provides the raw matter for the Semiotic: the emotional field tied to the instincts and drives which is also associated with linguistic prosody: the rhythms, tones, and fluctuations of speech. Kristeva argues that the Semiotic *precedes* meaning and signification, and is 'mobile, amorphous, but already regulated' (Kristeva 2002, p.44). Here, she describes its counterpart, the Symbolic, as '[L]anguage, constituted as symbolic through narcissistic, specular, imaginary investment' which protects the body from the attack of drives by making the place of the signifier (*ibid.*). For Kristeva – following Lacan – the Symbolic is the register of the signifier, of radical alterity, hence of the Other. But the Symbolic is also the 'death drive' which transcends the pleasure principle by means of repetition.<sup>15</sup> Language, furthermore, is comprised both of Imaginary and Symbolic elements; as I have explained, the Symbolic structures the Imaginary. The Semiotic, by contrast, is associated with the maternal body; the origin of the movements and rhythms of speech. If the Symbolic element of

signification (language) is associated with grammar and structure (syntax), then the Semiotic element is the bodily drive as it is discharged in signification. Associated with the maternal body, the Semiotic *chora* already embodies what Stone calls ‘a primordial self-organizing intelligence within matter’ (Stone 2012, p.75). The maternal body regulates the drives in such a way that they eventually become embedded in the laws that regulate language.

Thus when Irigaray refers to the ‘secondary imaginary’ (the Imaginary) as being ‘tied up with death’ (Irigaray 2003, p.15), she is subscribing to the Lacanian notion that the Symbolic – the dimension of the signifier – is also that of the death drive (or, simply the ‘drive’). Moreover, if the Semiotic *chora* is associated with the maternal body, and represents what Gail Schwab calls the ‘first step toward language’s liberation from the power of the phallus’ (Schwab 1994, p.353), I would like to advance the notion of a ‘primary imaginary’ as representing the maternal contribution to subjectivity developing *as a result* of this primordial encounter between infant and mother, as well as the origins of what Lacan calls ‘another *jouissance*’ beyond the phallus.<sup>16</sup> But why not reject Irigaray in favour of Kristeva’s more developed theory?

Kristeva explains how the Symbolic emerges as the consequence of an *anticipatory structure*: the Semiotic (ibid.). However, Schwab argues that although Kristeva newly establishes the importance of the pre-Oedipal relation to the mother, the ‘Mother’s Body remains alienated from/in the Father’s Tongue [...] The Kristevan mother is the “phallic” mother’ (Schwab 1994, p.357). Indeed, for Kristeva, the only way for mothers and daughters to re-establish the contact lost after the Oedipal stage is for the daughter to experience ‘motherhood’ for herself (Schwab 1994, p.358).<sup>17</sup> I agree with Schwab when she states that Kristeva maintains a traditional psychoanalytic reading which interprets female sexuality as the ‘mirror’ of male sexuality, a sexuality whose founding concepts are castration and the Oedipal complex (Schwab 1994, p.359). Indeed, unlike Irigaray (and Ettinger), Kristeva makes no attempt to elaborate ‘a sexual identity based on female parameters’ (ibid.). Schwab continues that Kristeva has described such a search for a female sexual identity as metaphysical and essentialistic, and that, instead of trying to understand fully what feminists such as Irigaray are trying to do, she ‘simply dismisses them’ (ibid.). Thus Schwab concludes that it is Irigaray, rather than Kristeva, that possesses the tools for opening up the discursive space necessary to ‘think’ the ‘feminine’ (Schwab 1994, p.362).

I have argued elsewhere that Irigaray’s depiction of a ‘placental economy’ helps to symbolise the mediation of the relationship between self and (m)other *in utero* (Green 2011).

Indeed, the placenta is one of the most important symbols that Irigaray harnesses in order to re-imagine the female body's (especially the maternal body's) relation to subjectivity. Unlike Kristeva's notion of the Semiotic *chora*, Irigaray's primary imaginary register actually *begins* with/in the womb. But how might Irigaray's vision of an intrauterine encounter be used to expand the notion of a primary imaginary (as akin to Kristeva's Semiotic *chora*) – and her use of a 'feminine' imaginary more generally – as her attempt to evoke a feminine sexual 'difference' beyond the phallus? Both of these features, I suggest, may be viewed as part of Irigaray's project of 'translating' the maternal contribution to subjectivity.

#### IV.

For Irigaray, the 'feminine' is not reducible to the 'one' that dominates the phallic economy, and which attempts to assign the 'feminine' meaning through the 'auto-representations' of male sexuality (Irigaray 1985a, p.233). The terms that Irigaray uses to evoke the 'feminine' are similar to those we might associate with the 'primary imaginary': the register arising from the pre-Oedipal encounter with the maternal body. For instance, she refers frequently to fluidity, contiguity, excess, multiplicity, the blurring of boundaries, and so on. One of the most important of these terms is that of fluidity.<sup>18</sup> The notion of the 'fluid' explicitly conjures the flux and flow of the intrauterine encounter itself. Naomi Schor remarks that water, like air, is 'highly valorised in [Irigaray's] elemental philosophy', and linked with the 'feminine' at the level of the body (1994, p.68). On Schor's reading of Irigaray, the 'matricide' which founds patriarchal culture institutes a primordial forgetting of not just 'air' (as in her reading of Heidegger), but of the fluids that nurtured both man and woman in the amniotic sac. Of course, this is a metaphor for the elision of the maternal-feminine *per se*: '... the flow of some shameful liquid. Horrible to see: bloody *Fluid* has to remain the secret remainder, of the one. Blood, but also milk, sperm, lymph, saliva, spit, tears, humors, gas, waves, airs, fire... light' (Irigaray 1985, p.237). And: 'The marine element is thus both the amniotic waters... and it is also, it seems to me, something which figures quite well feminine *jouissance*.'<sup>19</sup> Feminine sexual 'excess' might be conceived along similar lines as the notion of the 'fluid', and both work beyond the phallus on some level, although Irigaray does not specifically elaborate on how exactly. Later in her thought – notably in her piece 'On the Maternal Order' – Irigaray draws from the notion of fluidity in order to rethink the time spent in the womb as a time in which female corporeality helps to shape identity. By disobeying the traditional prohibition on the prenatal psychical encounter between infant and mother, this represents a clear move beyond

orthodox Lacanian territory. For instance, in her reading of Merleau-Ponty in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* – in which she again appeals to the image of the placenta in the ‘prenatal sojourn’ – Irigaray suggests that the ‘invisible’ fluidity and sensible immediacy of the prenatal encounter with the mother holds the key for unlocking a feminine sexual difference beyond the phallus.<sup>20</sup> Next, I return to Irigaray’s depiction of the womb, and argue that although her account of a placental economy draws our attention to the space of differentiation which exists between mother and child *in utero*, Irigaray does not explicitly apply this insight to an account of psychosexual development.

#### IV.I The Womb, the Umbilicus and Mediation

Irigaray frequently refers to the womb as a phantasized ‘place’ in phallogocentric discourse.<sup>21</sup> At best, the womb is regarded as a biological reproductive organ, standing-in for the female sexual organs because ‘no valid representations of female sexuality exist’ (Irigaray 1993a, p.16). Irigaray blames our failure to establish a sexual identity for women for the fact that the phallus has become an instrument of power and control, instead of representing the masculine ‘version’ of the umbilical cord (Irigaray 1993a, p.17):

If phallic erection respected the life of the mother – of the mother in every wom[a]n and of the woman in every mother – it would repeat the living bond to the mother. At the very place where there had once been the cord, then the breast, would in due time appear, for the man, the penis which reconnects, gives life, feeds and recenters the bodies [sic]. (Ibid.)

An ‘anticipatory repetition’ in the form of a return to the ‘world’ is regarded by Irigaray as essential if woman is to be released from the projections which man ‘lays upon her’ (ibid.). In her interview with biologist H el ene Rouch in ‘On the Maternal Order’, Irigaray urges that it is vital that we uncover ways of representing the placenta/umbilicus if we are to avoid forever retreating into the ‘original matrix’ of the mother’s womb and therefore ‘forever nestling into the body of another woman’ (Irigaray 1993a, p.14). Indeed, motherhood is perceived as a ‘desubjectivised social role’ (Irigaray 1993a, p.18) precisely because, as Tamsin Lorraine remarks, ‘the role of the mother is dictated by a social order premised on a division of labour between the producing masculine and the reproducing feminine’ (Lorraine 1999, p.83). She continues:

In refusing to obliterate the mother’s desire in deference to the law of the father, we give her the right to pleasure, sexual experience, passion, and speech. In translating the bond to the mother’s body, we discover a language that can accompany bodily experience rather than erase it. (Ibid.)

Although Lorraine does give any explanation as to what form this ‘refusal’ should take (presumably ethically, culturally, aesthetically), she does harness Irigaray’s enigmatic and paradoxical notion of a ‘sensible transcendental’ as equipping us with the corporeal logic required in order for us to ‘translate’ the primordial relation with the maternal body, as well as to enable us to reflect on the ‘radical break’ between the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ which characterises the trauma of birth as it is retroactively phantasized (ibid.). For Lorraine, it is vital that the mother is not ‘reduced’ to the intrauterine space of the womb, as this is symptomatic of our tendency to imagine that this space is readily available to us ‘through contact with feminine substitutes for the mother’ (Lorraine 1999, p.85). Thus, the placenta/umbilicus is an indispensable tool for helping us to imagine a primordial relationship which is not necessarily founded on ‘traumatizing expulsion or exclusion’ (Irigaray 1993b, p.42). In short, the placental/umbilicus helps to mediate the relationship between the female subject and the maternal body, preserving the identity of each party.

For Irigaray, then, the project of ‘translating’ the primordial relation with the maternal body – which is linked to what I have defined as the ‘primary imaginary’ register – is central to her broader project of establishing the mother-woman as an autonomous sexuate subject. Her call to find an ‘image’ to represent the placenta relates to her contention that the intrauterine experience must be re-imagined and re-thought as ‘an originary paradigm and model for our relationships to the world and to human others’ (Lorraine 1999, p.80); or, as Irigaray herself puts it, ‘the primal place in which we become body’ (Irigaray, 1993a, p.16). This is a theme which also runs through her experimental and poetic work *Elemental Passions* (1992), a work which may also be interpreted as a ‘response’ to Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of the ‘chiasm’ and the ‘flesh’ in *The Visible and the Invisible*.<sup>22</sup> Irigaray evokes the intrauterine encounter with the maternal body (and thus with female sexual specificity) as ‘preceding’ Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the chiasm. Irigaray seems to imply her that the invisible ‘sojourn’ in the mother’s womb represents an encounter with female sexual specificity that is constitutive of sexual difference prior to birth.

It seems, then, that Irigaray’s project of ‘translating’ the primordial relation with the maternal body – which encompasses what I have defined as the ‘primary imaginary’ register – is central to her broader project of speaking ‘as woman’. Her evocation of a ‘feminine imaginary’ in texts such as *Speculum*, in several senses resembles her description of the intrauterine relationship which points to some sort of ‘subjectivizing’ dimension which

operates outside of the phallic dimension and is linked to the early encounter with the maternal body. Further, her appeal to the image of the placenta – which functions as a more mature metaphor for the putative ‘negotiated’ intrauterine relationship – is also part of her task of thinking female subjectivity ‘outside’ of the phallic paradigm. However, as I remarked above, Irigaray is criticized for remaining in the dimension of physical organs, and fails to elaborate the significance of the placental model on a *psychical* level. In order to reinforce my suggestion that the primary imaginary is itself a *subjectivizing register* which operates on a corporeal level, in the following section I shall appeal to Stone’s notion of ‘potential space’: a psychic dimension evolving out of the infant’s relationship with the maternal body which ‘mediates’ the relationship between mother and infant. This notion enables us to make the move away from Irigaray’s metaphorical representations of physical organs, and to think about their significance in terms of the maternal contribution to the psychical evolution of the subject.

## V.

Stone’s (2012) notion of ‘potential space’ helps us to think Irigaray’s ‘primary imaginary’ as a maternal ‘third term’ which mediates the relationship between mother and infant and preserves the identity of each, thus eliminating the need for psychical matricide in the ‘strong’ sense described above. Stone draws on the thought of Kristeva, Winnicott, and Jessica Benjamin as well as Irigaray in order to rethink the relationship between mother and infant as ‘relational’, as opposed to dyadic or symbiotic. According to Stone, Kristeva’s idea of ‘maternal space’ represents a ‘latent form of triangulation that already exists with the mother-child relation’ (ibid.). Although Kristeva understands this notion in terms of an imaginary father (the paternal third term which breaks up the mother-infant dyad), Stone highlights the positive, civilizing and relational quality of the maternal ‘space’ itself, something which is overshadowed, perhaps, by the requirement to ‘break out’ of the purportedly hostile and threatening maternal bodily environment. Stone calls this space a ‘maternal third term’, an archaic, relational space which already ‘exists’ between mother and infant (Stone 2012, p.62). An evolved form of Winnicott’s original idea, Stone’s notion of potential space thus embraces the relational and imaginative conditions that allow subjectivity to flourish (Stone 2012, p.63).<sup>23</sup> She remarks, moreover, that ‘it is in the initial context of symbolic play with our mothers that we develop abilities to recreate and re-deploy meanings creatively and critically’ (ibid.).<sup>24</sup>

Maternal/potential space therefore constitutes the relational space that already exists between mother and infant *prior* to the operations of psychical matricide and the Oedipal scenario. Indeed, Stone calls attention to the ‘ambiguities’ surrounding the issue of matricide in Kristeva, for whom matricide cannot be ‘total’ ‘because the early maternal strata of the subject always return, as the semiotic dimension of its speaking and social relations’ (Stone 2012, p.64). We always remain entangled with the ‘archaic mother’, the mother that the infant encounters in its earliest stages of life, who orchestrates the ‘affective, energetic, and bodily environment that the infant inhabits’ (Stone 2012, p.65). As discussed above, Kristeva calls this environment the *chora*. The maternal body is therefore already the ‘bond between two’ (ibid.): a ‘two’ who are not yet differentiated, nor are they fully merged together either.<sup>25</sup>

Stone describes the *chora* as a ‘space in which significance begins to emerge through material, energetic movements and flows’ (Stone 2012, p.66), and it is in this respect that the *chora* *civilizes*, propelling the subject-to-be towards differentiation and separation. But why, Stone asks, does Kristeva use the term ‘matricide’ when she means separation? (Stone 2012, p.66) By referring to psychical *matricide* as opposed to just ‘separation’, Stone reads Kristeva as emphasising the maternal contribution to subjectivity; in other words, matricide is as important (if not more important) to establishing the boundaries of selfhood as parricide.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, Kristeva’s is a *hyperbolic* matricide. Unlike Irigaray, who nods to a phantasized act of mother-killing which has become embedded in the Western imaginary, Kristeva’s conception, when it is dressed down and put in a positive light, emphasises the civilizing function of the maternal bodily ‘space’. However, we do not have to accept Kristeva’s contention that this space is also one of abjection and ‘horror’.<sup>27</sup>

Further modifying Kristeva’s account of maternal space, Stone appeals to Jessica Benjamin’s (1998) notion of an intersubjective (psychic) space of ‘thirdness’, something she in turn adapts from Winnicott’s original idea of ‘potential space’ (Benjamin 1998, p.xv). Whereas Kristeva regards the mother-child relation as ‘triangular’ because it is mediated in relation to the imaginary father (the paternal ‘third term’), Stone contends that we might regard the mother-child relation as *itself* triangular by locating the third term *within* this relation (Stone 2012, p.68). Benjamin, for instance, remarks on the significance of the early, ‘two body’ experience of mother and child – a relation of ‘intersubjectivity’ which gives rise to representation:

Specifically, representation is mediated through the evolution of the transitional space, which includes not only the fantasy experience of “alone-with-other” but also dialogic interaction. [...] Language is heir to this



transitional space [...] inasmuch as we see it less in its Lacanian sense as subjecting the individual to the symbolic structure, and more relationally as forming the medium of the subject's acting on and interacting with the world. (Benjamin 1998, p.28)

Benjamin continues that this 'space of fluctuating convergence and divergence' between mother and child becomes a mediating 'third term' *within* the maternal (but also *analytic*) dyad (ibid.). This 'space' forms the basis from which to understand the position of the other. Moreover, separation is not merely imposed by an outside other, but by 'a maternal subjectivity that is able to represent affect and hence process the pain of separation between mother and child' (ibid.). Loss, separation and aggression are still fundamental to the process of differentiation and identification, but, according to Benjamin, these emotions are facilitated by the transitional space which allows loss to be transformed by representation. Thus we have separation, but without 'matricide' in the strong sense (i.e. of denying the mother symbolic expression by foreclosing her 'desire').

Potential space is therefore 'not merely metaphorical, but suggests a mode of relationality that is embodied' (Stone 2012, p.70). Stone remarks of Benjamin: 'In her recasting of Winnicott, potential space enables the child not to expel the mother from his or her self but rather to recognize the mother as an independent self' (Stone 2012, p.70). The supposed 'dyad' of mother-infant is exposed as a *triad*, with the maternal body acting as the psychical 'link' between mother and child. For Kristeva, this 'primary thirdness' represented by the maternal space allows for a 'spacing' between the maternal subject and the infant/subject-to-be. However, Stone and Benjamin differ from Kristeva in that this 'third' is *maternal* rather than *paternal*.

Stone goes on to further adapt the notion of potential space by reapplying the term to Kristeva's concept of *chora* (Stone 2012, p.72). Potential space, for Stone, is the 'evolved form of *chora*', and this, she says, makes extant its maternal character (Stone 2012, p.73). However, potential space remains distinct from the mother herself, and in fact *enables* this distinction to be made. Previously, mother and *chora* were connected together: 'one of the relata was largely conflated with the space of relation' (ibid.). In Stone's vision, *chora* expands into the ambiguous space between two. Potential space is therefore not merely metaphorical, but a *real* space of psychic mediation regulated by the maternal body. Indeed, this is reminiscent of Rouch's assertion in 'On the Maternal Order' that, 'it seems to me that the differentiation between the mother's self and the other of the child, and vice versa, is in place well before it is given meaning in and by language' (Irigaray 1993b, p.42). As described above, Benjamin

highlights the fact that this ‘differentiation’ is in fact the origin of the subject’s linguistic development.

Stone’s notion of potential space – an evolution of concepts from Kristeva, Winnicott, and Benjamin – helps us to think the primary imaginary register as a psychic space of mediation between mother and infant. As Stone remarks, ‘Far from enabling matricide, potential space enables a form of self and capacities for creative subjectivity that are decidedly anti-matricidal’ (Stone 2012, p.71). I have attempted to demonstrate how, considered in this way, the primary imaginary equips us with the corporeal logic required to translate the primordial relation with the maternal body, permitting us to acknowledge the maternal contribution to subjectivity as itself a *civilizing* process *before* the intrusion of the paternal third term. Furthermore, I have aimed to show that, by approaching the primary imaginary register as a mode of relationality which emerges *in utero*, and persists in the form of a maternal/potential space between mother and infant, psychical matricide is averted.

## Conclusions

Throughout her *oeuvre*, Irigaray consistently stresses the need to recover the generative power of the maternal body in order for women to be recognised as sexed subjects in their own right. When interpreted in light of her early psychoanalytical project, it becomes apparent that the question of sexual difference is intimately tied to the occlusion of maternal desire rendered necessary by the Oedipal account. Whilst the maternal body remains a liminal, out of reach concept – aligned with the Lacanian Real – then women’s subjectivity will continue to suffer. Paradoxically, the tendency in western culture has been to reduce women to their maternal function, whilst at the same time denying this function any real symbolic value: a form of symbolic matricide. This paper has attempted to highlight the inadequacy of Irigaray’s own solution to the problem of matricide, and has argued that, taken on its own, hers is an insufficiently developed solution. One of the main criticisms made of Irigaray’s attempt to develop an anti-Oedipal (and therefore anti-matricidal) account of female subjectivity is that it fails to operate on a ‘structural’ level. Griselda Pollock, for example, argues that Irigaray remains ‘uncomfortably on the unresolvable borderline between physiological understanding of actual bodily organs and the psycho-subjective which defines the anatomical as well as perceptual realities’ (Pollock 2009, pp. 6-7). I remarked earlier in this paper that Pollock criticizes Irigaray for not being daring enough with her use of the intrauterine model and for not moving beyond ‘physical organs’. Indeed, Pollock champions

Bracha Ettinger's (2006) use of the pre-natal/pre-maternal 'encounter' (the 'prenatal sojourn' in Irigaray), as a basis for recognising and developing a dimension of subjectivity, fantasy and thought that is not 'all about organs' (ibid.). For Pollock, Ettinger dares to think the potential significance of the pre-natal becoming-human as a profound 'limit' in psychoanalytical theory, which few have dared to breach. In this paper I have described how Irigaray's thought gestures in this direction, but remains significantly underdeveloped. I hope to have suggested some ways in which to move away from the metaphorical representation of organs, and begin to theorise the primary imaginary register as the basis for an alternative account of psychological development. I hope, moreover, to have suggested some ways to integrate several of Irigaray's key concerns within a more developed account of anti-matricidal psychosexual development that begins to move 'beyond Oedipus'.

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Whitford notes that Irigaray was initially coupled with Michèle Montrelay, who was 'writing something far more limited in scope' (Whitford 1989, p.108).

<sup>2</sup> Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to expand on Ettinger's thesis in a significant way, Ettinger (2006) is a useful example of how we might begin to theorise a dimension of subjectivity which is non-Oedipal and which restores the mother to the symbolic economy. On the surface, Ettinger appears to have solved on-going issues revolving around the elision of the maternal contribution to subjectivity by postulating the matrixial: a characteristically 'female' psycho-corporeal register. But whilst I find Ettinger's theory attractive – particularly because of the ways in which she reworks the late Lacan – I detect two main problems. First, her theory retains a quasi-matricidal schema, at least for men, who are still required to enact a violent separation from the mother, *qua* the Oedipal scenario. Second, although Ettinger claims that the matrixial paradigm stands in a non-hierarchical relation to that of the phallic, it nonetheless 'recedes' in favour of it, and I therefore fail to see how it purports to be transformatory in political terms.

<sup>3</sup> Reproduction without fertilization, *i.e.* in this case, without the mother.

<sup>4</sup> Introjection describes the process of taking in attitudes and ideas from others unconsciously, whereas 'incorporation' marks the failure of introjection; the failure to assimilate the '(m)other'.

<sup>5</sup> Bachofen (1815 – 1887) was an anthropologist who theorised a prehistoric 'matriarchy'. Bachofen's views are, however, controversial, and we should be wary of the extent to which Irigaray has absorbed Bachofen's views into her own writings (in 'Divine Women' (1993a), for example). Joy (2006) condemns Irigaray's 'uncritical adoption of such a discredited authority' given her trenchant condemnation of patriarchal texts (Joy 2006, p.27).

<sup>6</sup> Interpreted as desire *par excellence* by Lacan (*i.e.* desire which does not emerge as a result of symbolic castration): see his Book VII: *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*.

<sup>7</sup> The idealization of motherhood is the 'flipside' of matricide, according to Stone (Stone 2012, p.52).

<sup>8</sup> Michele le Doeuff is a particularly scathing critic in this respect. She remarks that 'In [Irigaray's] writing we find the three K's of Nazism, cooking with Hestia (*Küche*), children (*Kinder*) with the right to motherhood, and the

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church (*Kirche*) with leaden references to edifying (female) deities. The text is thus not very different from what the worst of men, and conservative women with them, have wanted for women.' (le Doeuff 2003, p.65).

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, 'Divine Women' in *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993a). Frances Gray (2008) also provides an extended comparison of Irigaray and Jung in her book.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. (Stone 2012, pp. 37-61) for a discussion on how 'matricide' has shaped western notions of selfhood and subjectivity.

<sup>11</sup> The distinction between 'ego-ideal' and 'ideal-ego' is tricky, and Freud often uses the terms interchangeably. In 'On the Introduction of Narcissism' (2006) he describes the 'ideal-ego' as the recipient of self-love during infancy: 'the formation of an ideal constitutes the necessary condition on the part of the ego for repression to take place' (Freud 2006, p.380). Similarly, for Lacan the ideal-ego is a narcissistic formation linked to the mirror stage. The 'ego-ideal', on the other hand, refers to the ego's quest to regain the narcissistic perfection of infancy under a new form. I understand Irigaray's suggestion in this second sense; i.e. the 'ego-ideal' as the image of oneself that one wants to become, the image of perfection that one wants to emulate.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion see (Whitford 1989, pp. 106-121).

<sup>13</sup> For an extensive discussion on Irigaray's use of these terms see (Whitford 1991, pp. 89-91).

<sup>14</sup> I understand 'specularization' as the 'splitting' (*Spaltung*) of the subject inaugurated at the mirror stage.

<sup>15</sup> Again see Lacan, Book VII: *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*.

<sup>16</sup> I have demonstrated elsewhere how Irigaray reads the intrauterine encounter between infant and mother as the pre-Oedipal maternal bodily relation that transcends phallic binarism (cf. Green 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Kristeva's 'Stabat Mater', for example.

<sup>18</sup> Irigaray's later thought describes a 'fluid' ontology of naturally sexually determinate bodies see (Stone 2006, pp. 98-99).

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in (Schor 1994, p.68).

<sup>20</sup> In 'The Invisibility of the Flesh' in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1984).

<sup>21</sup> See for instance Irigaray's dialogue on Plato in *Speculum* (1985a).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Sjöholm (2000).

<sup>23</sup> Stone adapts Winnicott's original concept which was first developed in his 1951 essay 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena'. She remarks, 'Potential or transitional space mediates between mother and child who are becoming differentiated' (Stone 2012, p.69).

<sup>24</sup> Stone's assumption is that mother-child relations would exhibit this civilizing character whether or not women were the primary caregivers empirically.

<sup>25</sup> This description comes close to Ettinger: the matrixial encounter between the 'I' of the mother and the non-I of the infant/subject-to-be see (Ettinger, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> The killing of the father was initially hypothesized by Freud in Chapter 4 of *Totem and Taboo* (1938). He claimed that the primitive totemic system 'resulted from the conditions underlying the Oedipus complex'; the sons' ambivalence towards the murdered father - who they simultaneously abhorred and adored - and the guilt arising from this ambivalence, then serves as the precondition of psychoanalytic thought (Freud 1938, pp. 204; 219). Cf. (Stone 2012, pp. 37-61).

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<sup>27</sup> We should also note that, for Kristeva, matricide is never fully achieved, as the maternal body relation is 'remembered' in the form of the Semiotic element of speech.

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