

TRUTH AS ETERNAL  
METAPHORICAL DISPLACEMENTS:  
TRACES OF THE MOTHER  
IN DERRIDA'S PATRICIDE

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The trace is not only the disappearance of origin within the discourse that we sustain and according to the path that we follow, it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a non-origin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin. From then on, to wrench the concept of the trace from the classical scheme, which would derive it from a presence or from an originary non trace and which would make of it an empirical mark, one must indeed speak of an originary trace or arche-trace. Yet we know that that concept destroys its name and that, if all begins with the trace, there is above all no originary trace.<sup>1</sup>

Derridean deconstruction has been a major force in the shaping of post-structuralist thinking in France. French feminist theorists of the past two decades have not escaped its influence. Indeed, many radical analyses have emerged from their adoption of Derrida's critical reading of western metaphysics. Despite this indebtedness to deconstruction, one feminist theorist has attempted a rereading of western metaphysics which moves beyond deconstruction, and indeed, which raises the question of deconstruction's affiliation with the metaphysics it seeks to subvert. In uncovering the mark left by gender on the dominant intellectual discourses

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in the West, Luce Irigaray exposes the matricidal basis of western thought.<sup>2</sup>

Following the Nietzschean heritage from which Derrida also draws, Irigaray analyzes the metaphors which have been reified into conceptual Truths by metaphysical thinkers. Idealism posits a strict dichotomy between the dual meanings of the word "sense," between thought and corporeality, between mind and body. Her work aims at analysing the pathos of such a disembodied subjectivity. By taking up Derrida's analysis of the repression of physical sense by intellectual sense in the constitution of metaphor itself, Irigaray seeks to uncover the repressed corporeality which forms the basis of metaphysics' reification of human thought.<sup>3</sup>

In the obliteration of physical senses from the equivocal definition of the word sense she finds the added repressive ideological content of a matricide over which and through which knowledge and truth have been constructed. Trained as a Lacanian psychoanalyst, sensitized to the repression of the maternal which Freud and Lacan theorize as a necessary prerequisite for cultural development, Irigaray turns her critical eye to the relationship between the repression of corporeality and the repression of maternal origin. She argues that the displacement/repression of corporeality, inherent in metaphors, conceals the displacement/repression of the corporeality of our origin, of the physicality of our mother's body. Her work demonstrates how the repression of maternal origin and the confusion between *arche* and *telos*, between woman as source and as object of desire, apparent in Plato's metaphysics, characterizes the entire corpus of Western philosophical thought. It is this hidden repression which lies at the base of western philosophy's reification of thought and its concomitant oppression of women.

Following the psychoanalytic precept that whatever is repressed surfaces in one form or another, often expressing itself as denial, she re-explores the metaphors which have articulated the philosophical representations of what is true and what is false, what is sense and what is non-sense. Under her scrutiny, that which has been declared false, non-sensical, that which has been excluded, is unveiled as unacknowledged variations, as transmutations of Plato's *mater*, one of the terms he uses to depict the matter which mediates the relationship between the physical and the Ideal. Its equivocality as earth, source, and mother is suggestive of what was marginalized by western metaphysics.

Yet if psychoanalysis, as a modern critique of western metaphysics, has made explicit the sexed maternal body as originary site and as original object of desire, Irigaray's extensive critique of Freud's essay, "Femininity," has shown how it merely reinscribes the mother within the metaphysical discourse she threatens to disrupt. It idealizes and neutralizes her as a universalized maternal and it displaces and metaphorizes her originary function as lack. By stamping this lack with the mark of the penis/Phallus as source and object of desire, it rearticulates sexual difference within an age-

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old hierarchical discourse of sameness in which metaphor seeks to establish identity by repressing one of its referents. Within this gendered imaginary, the masculine remains a transcendental referent whose scopophilic morphology and matricidal repression rivals that of Plato's.<sup>4</sup>

What about Derrida's deconstruction of Western metaphysics? Has it escaped the metaphysical construction of this denial? Where is maternal corporeality in his texts and what role does it play in the constitution of his metaphors?

Derrida, of course, is not oblivious to the gender question. His work aims at deconstructing Plato's metaphysical notion of Truth as presence inhering in the paternal word. He characterizes Platonic Truth as "the discourse of what *goes back to the Father*," the idealisation and reappropriation of Presence to Himself, speaking to Himself "within the logocentric circle" formulated through the concept of sameness, of similitude.<sup>5</sup> Derrida insists that voice as *logos*, as *phone*, as unitary presence, must relinquish its authority, recognizing that it is but another form of writing, that writing, as he puts it, is its defining metaphor. He decentres *logos* as voice, as *phone*, and dissociates the trace of the *logos* from the literal alphabetical graph to which it had been consigned. He reverses the hierarchical relationship between *logos* and *graphie*, reinvesting *graphie* as arche-trace, as arche writing, as *différance*, the site in which all difference is constituted, including the relationship of *logos* to *graphie*, of presence to absence.

Refuting the metaphysical definition of *logos* as unitary and originary presence, Derrida rejects not only the concept of unity but all concept of presence and of origin. Against Plato's reification of original paternal speech he locates the irreducible complexities of origin in writing, more specifically in metaphor, where it is a question not only of *entre deux signifiants*, the in-between of two signifiers, but of *entre-deux signifiant*, the in-between as signifier.<sup>6</sup> At stake here is the *jeu (de l')entre*, the play of the difference between, the play of in between. Since all language is metaphorical, this functioning of the metaphor as *entre* is, for Derrida, non-representable, non-explicable, except through further metaphor. From his perspective, metaphors can only "be written in the plural."<sup>7</sup> Hence, metaphor is defined as *the* eternal displacement.

In her critique of Plato's metaphysics and of its western heritage, Irigaray draws heavily upon Derridean deconstruction. In two articles entitled "*Le viol de la lettre*," and "*Le sexe fait comme signe*," written in 1969 and 1970 respectively, before what some have called her epistemological break represented by the 1974 publication of *Speculum de l'autre femme*, Irigaray addresses Derrida's work and its psychoanalytic implications directly.<sup>8</sup> She points out that the *phone* is not the unitary entity described by metaphysics. As a set of relationships between sounds it is non-isolatable, neither unitary nor autonomous. Moreover, it is constituted by the blanks, the silences, the absences of sounds which surround it, and these blanks are themselves constructed naturally and culturally by what is physically

possible and linguistically permitted.<sup>9</sup> If *graphie* metaphorically defines *phone*, as Derrida suggests, then their opposition is not multiplicity opposing univocity but the specific expression of multiplicity in *graphie* opposing the denial of multiplicity in *phone*. In maintaining the opposition of *phone* and *graphie* Derrida displaces all of the unrecognized complexities of speech onto writing and, despite the feminization of this graphic site, he continues to ignore woman as origin, the specificity and multiplicity of the maternal voice, the presence of a speaking mother. In Irigaray terms, the boundaries of our comprehension of and apprehension toward origin are once again, as in Plato, circumscribed by a denial of maternity.

In "Plato's Hystera," the final essay of *Speculum*, Irigaray enters into an implicit dialogue with Derrida, taking up exactly where he insists on turning aside. Her deconstructive play with equivocal meanings demonstrates how "*entre* intersects with the question of entering."<sup>10</sup> For Irigaray, Derrida's *jeu (de l')entre* attempts to appropriate the nonappropriable, to repeat the non-repeatable, the *entre en jeu*, the entering into the game of in between.<sup>11</sup> It does so by distancing itself from this entering, by positing interminable interpretations where every displacement would be displaced ad infinitum in a never ending non-referential game with no beginning and no end. Through the concepts of *différance*, *pharmakon*, hymen, and supplement, he argues that the multiplicity of writing denies the very possibility of origin, that metaphors are the irreducible site of the constitution of difference. But it could be argued that the self-referentiality of the Derridean concept of metaphor, like the self-referentiality of the paternal *logos* in Plato, remains caught within its own circularity, unable to grasp its own matrix. For the *entre en jeu* concealed by his concept of metaphor appears through his "chain of *différente* substitutions." Informed by Irigaray's critique, an analysis of these substitutive terms reveals how the etymological relationship among the French words *entre*, *entrer*, and *antre* questions the original status of the trace.

Although Irigaray subscribes to the Derridean suspension of the referent in the 1969 and 1970 articles cited, her critique of the usurpation of metonymy by metaphor developed in another article written at the same time, "La Mécanique des fluides" and her own deconstruction of Plato's "Allegory of the cave," reconsiders that suspension, seeking what lies behind metaphor, speech, and language.<sup>12</sup> But the referent to which she alludes is no longer the same as that found in the original binary opposition of sense and referent. If the deconstructed term escapes what Derrida has described as "the specular nature of philosophical reflection, philosophy being incapable of inscribing (comprehending) what is outside it otherwise than through the appropriating assimilation of a negative image of it," or as Irigaray would suggest, its image as negation, then the deconstructed referent also escapes the repressed denial of philosophy, which is only able to inscribe (comprehend) its desire by assimilating its negative image, its image as *dénégation*, as denial.<sup>13</sup> If, for Derrida, deconstruction

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accounts for both absence and its expression as presence, for Irigaray, deconstruction must account for an absent presence and its expression as "irreducible absence." If, as Rodolphe Gasché has expressed it, "deconstruction aims at something that can never become present 'as such' and that without concealing itself can only appear as such," Irigaray aims to show that what can never become present again is not necessarily what never was present.<sup>14</sup> The *entre en jeu*, manifest yet obliterated in the *jeu (de l')entre*, can never be repeated as such, for, as she never tires of repeating, birth is a unique experience. But, in psychoanalytical terms, as irretrievable origin, it nonetheless insinuates itself into the structure of our discourses.

Just as the mother wove her way into Plato's allegory through the terms which were meant to repress her, so she enters, as the *entre en jeu*, as the original entrance, into Derrida's *jeu (de l')entre*. From the point of view of the desire for origin, Derrida's denunciation of origin is but the presence of desire expressing itself as absence; or to follow Derrida's conceptualization, inevitably articulating itself as denial which, in retrospect, constructs the desire by which it itself is constructed. Feminist deconstruction must undo this negative construction to unearth the traces of the desire for origin inherent in the denial of origin. Based on Irigaray's analysis of Plato's allegory, the following reading of certain Derridean texts attempts such a deconstruction.

### Metaphor: The Derridean Critique of Metaphysics as the Discourse of the Father

The traditional philosophical categories, of origin, metaphor, Being, presence, absence, and the void circumscribe and delineate Plato's text and Irigaray's Derridean critique of the allegory. They are also fundamental to Derrida's own critical project. Origin sets the parameters for Plato's exploration of other philosophical concepts, but for Derrida, metaphor exposes the impossibility of defining origin other than through approximation. He counters the usual coupling of metaphor and presence with an emphasis on the relationship between metaphor and the void. For Derrida, as for Irigaray, the hymen plays a central role in the metaphorical approximation of the void through a non-centred circumscription of meaning. Their disparate depictions of the relationship between metaphor and the void, however, and their notions of what is being metaphorically circumscribed differentiate the contours of their respective analyses.

For Derrida what is at stake in the "metaphorization" of origin is not simply a question of the metaphorical nature of all philosophy. Rather, he points out that metaphor is itself a philosophical concept "enveloped in the field that a general "metaphorology" of philosophy would seek to dominate."<sup>15</sup> One must, therefore, go further than a metaphorical analy-

sis of the philosophy of origin, for this alone would leave the philosophical concept of metaphor outside its scope.

As a philosophical concept, Derrida tells us, metaphor has emerged and remains enmeshed within the system of oppositions which has so dominated Western philosophy. It relies on the equivocacy of the word "sense," which suggests the passage and return from sense perception to intelligible comprehension. The signifier, as sense, as meaning, refers to a sensible signified. Whether derived from *physis* or *techné*, from *physis* or *nomos*, which are themselves set in opposition, the signifier ultimately refers to what can be perceived by one of our senses. In Platonic terms, metaphor uses the perceptible to explain the imperceptible, translates sense as sensation into sense as meaning and hence transfers what is physical, what is sensible to the realm of the non-physical, the non-sensible, the meta-physical. For Derrida, "the movement of "metaphorization" is no other than the movement of idealization" and so he concurs with Heidegger in saying that "the metaphorical exists only within the borders of metaphysics."<sup>16</sup>

The problem this poses for the metaphorical analysis of philosophy is the impossibility of finding the source of the oppositions from which metaphor has arisen, of finding the original metaphor, and especially of finding it outside of philosophy. As he states it:

By definition, there is therefore no proper philosophical category to qualify a certain number of tropes which have conditioned the so-called "fundamental," "structuring," "original" philosophical oppositions,....To permit oneself to overlook this *vigil* of philosophy, one would have to posit that the sense aimed at through these figures is an essence rigorously independent of that which transports it, which is an already philosophical thesis, one might even say philosophy's *unique thesis*, the thesis which constitutes the concept of metaphor, the opposition of the proper and the non-proper, of essence and accident, of intuition and discourse, of thought and language, of the intelligible and the sensible.<sup>17</sup>

The problem with the "unique thesis" of philosophy, as Derrida tells us, is that it is silenced by the concept of resemblance, by the imitation of sameness, which is what metaphors and all other tropes are meant to establish. Oppositions are thus, for Derrida, but improperly metaphorized relations. If metaphors were to be well metaphorized, they would not exist. They exist only in so far as they fail to achieve the identity at which they aim.

Metaphors, traditionally understood, are thus caught within the mimetic duplication of sameness. Resemblance has been posited as the condition for the metaphor since Aristotle's *Poetics*. This imitation is always a return to nature, a return suggested within the very sense of the word metaphor, the moving from one sense to the other. Similitude is therefore

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the precondition of metaphor, as it is the precondition of Platonic Truth. Metaphors mediate between non-truth and Truth, attempt to return non-truth to Truth. As Derrida concludes, this concept of metaphor carries with it a sense "of a progressive erosion, of a regular semantic loss, of an uninterrupted exhaustion of a primitive sense." Paraphrasing Nietzsche, he claims that metaphor, thus defined, is but "the unveiling of a Truth."<sup>18</sup>

Truth, in Platonic terms, is the omnipresence of Being. Derrida reminds us that the sun, as "the most natural thing, the most universal, the most real, the clearest, the most external referent," the apex of sensible presence, has dominated the entire conception of metaphor, has served not only as the metaphor for Being, for the Truth of Being, but as the metaphor for metaphors. Yet, as he points out, the sun is not always present and what is proper to it, what can be metaphorized, can never be definitely ascertained. At best, the sun can be approached by an imperfect metaphor, which is, of course, as Derrida has claimed, simply a metaphor. And for Derrida, presence is even further undermined by the equivocity of the Greek word *eidos* which suggests a spatial translation in which the metaphor is "at home away from home." This articulates, for him, the paradigm of the traditional conception of the metaphorical process itself: "the idealisation and the reappropriation" of presence to oneself. This paradigm, he argues, encompasses the entire movement of the Idea from Plato through Hegel.<sup>19</sup>

Derrida questions the univocity of such a conception of metaphor and suggests instead that metaphor should be conceived as "a displacement with ruptures, reinscriptions in a heterogeneous system, mutations, separations without origin." From his perspective, it is not merely a semantic displacement of meaning that is at issue but a relationship between syntactic structures in which absence plays a crucial role. The sun's disappearance and reappearance exemplifies the role of absence in metaphors where mimesis represents what does not exist except through representation. Whereas analogies are relationships between pre-determined and pre-existent terms, in metaphors, as Jakobson has argued, one term is missing, is approximated only through the other. For Derrida this pre-determined absence means that metaphors can "always miss the true," and are but a "moment of detour where Truth can always lose itself." Since indeterminate displacement constitutes metaphor, and language is, for Derrida as for Nietzsche, essentially metaphoric, an analysis of this displacement would itself remain caught within it. A meta-metaphoric analysis is impossible.<sup>20</sup>

For Irigaray, metaphors elaborate upon the workings of the copula.<sup>21</sup> Just as the copula which disallows any relationship between subject and attribute still posits itself as their link, so the presupposed *comme* (as if) of metaphor "maintains the distance, underlines it, while attempting to reduce it, to reabsorb it."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, as Irigaray argues, if the functioning of metaphor, as of the copula, cannot be represented through a meta-metaphorical analysis, nor can it be represented through self-referential metaphoricity whose structure its activity is meant to occlude. A close read-

ing of Derrida's own metaphors reveals the self-referential metaphoricity inherent in his proposed chain of substitutions: *différance*, *pharmakon*, hymen, and supplement.

*Différance*: Traces of the Feminine

Countering the metaphysical notion of Presence as Origin, of representation as a return to the same, Derrida addresses the question of the gap between what is presented and what is represented. He articulates this *entre* through an exploration of *mimesis* inherent in metaphor and through the well-known concept of *différance*, the site of the void, where metaphors are constituted and within which metaphors move. As his work points out, the Greek term *diapherein* does not denote deferral as does its latin translation, *differre*, meaning to temporize, (*temporiser*), but also to temporalise (*temporaliser*) and to create space, to become the time of space, the space of time. This deferral has been eclipsed by the more common definition of *différence* as different from, not identical to. Derrida's concept of *différance* is an attempt to articulate the different meanings of the French verb *différer*, which, following the Latin, denotes both deferral and difference. The replacement of the "e" with an "a" indicates that deferral produces difference and is also that in which difference is produced. Deferral as constitutive of *différance* necessarily defines it as displacement but in Derridean terms it is a displacement, which is neither active nor passive, which resists "the fundamental opposition of philosophy: that between the sensible and the intelligible," that which the traditional concept of metaphor structured into its idealization. *Différance*, with an "a" is the present participle of the verb "to defer" but *différence* with an "e," "neutralizes" the activity of the infinitive with the passivity of its effect.<sup>23</sup>

For Derrida, *différance* does not stem from any category of Being. It exceeds all Truth while containing it, opening up the space in which this system of Truth is enacted. In metaphysical terms, *différance* "designates the constitutive, productive and original causality, the process of scission and of division of which differences are the products, the constituted effects." Derrida recognizes the ineptness of such metaphysical language since, in fact, *différance* is "not a cause [and] not an origin." *Différance* defies essence because its site is where chance and necessity are at play in uncontainable, ungraspable indeterminacy, the interminable play of the arbitrary. In fact, *différance* "is" in neither of Being's metaphysical forms, neither Existence nor Identity, neither presence nor absence. If anything, *différance* "is the non-full, non-simple origin, the structured and *différente* origin of differences." As such the word "origin," as that of "Being," does not suit it. In fact no word does, not even *différance*, which, according to Derrida, is "not a name...not a pure nominal unity" but signifies that "which dislocates itself ceaselessly in a chain of *différente* substitutions."<sup>24</sup>

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It is in this way that Derrida attempts to theorize what Plato ignored, to which he gave no Ideal Form, which had, therefore, no existence as either Being or Identity, as same or other.<sup>25</sup> We recognize its general location of course, as that of *mater*, matter/mother, in which everything is reproduced, which participates in both Being and Identity, same and other, yet exceeding both. In Platonic terms, *mater*, with its equivocal definitions as mother, as earth, and as source, is not the other of any One since she exists entirely outside the economy of sameness and difference. She is, in fact, the complete other, pure difference, a non-graspable, non-definable, ever-changing difference with no term or set of terms against which to compare her. And she is without origin since only sensible beings have origin. Yet, rather than unveil the mother whose existence is denied in Plato's metaphysical definition of origin, Derrida rejects origin altogether, much as he rejects voice, the *logos*, thus leaving buried what is appropriated by the Platonic paternal projections. Derrida recognizes yet maintains, albeit with a certain "embarrassment," the occlusion of the mother.

To get around the concept of origin, Derrida privileges the Freudian concept of trace, which constitutes both memory and the psyche as difference and as deferral. Nonetheless, if for him traces constitute memory, the psyche, and *différance*, it is not that they are graspable entities or past presences whose mark can be recaptured intact. The present is not established by reactivated, rememorized memories of the past, but by the chance conjuncture of traces of one memory with traces of another, or with a present occurrence whose re-markable feature is in part determined by these conjunctures. The future will never be a simple reconstitution of these, but a series of further chance conjunctures which will, of necessity, rearticulate these with each other and with others not yet incorporated, a process in which every trace is altered. The trace is thus effaced as it surfaces to be remarked, effaced as a trace of what has been itself effaced by it, to be reconstituted as a trace of a trace, ad infinitum.<sup>26</sup>

There are no conscious traces, since consciousness is presence to oneself, and Derrida, along with Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger, whose particular antecedence he acknowledges, starts with the concept of *différance* to question the very "assured certainty of self" articulated through the notion of consciousness. But neither does this suggest that the unconscious, as site of the formation and deployment of traces, is itself a presence seeking admittance to the realm of conscious presence, as, according to Derrida, Freud metaphysically defined it. Nor is it an absence which is but the metaphysical counterpart of presence. If for Freud the difference between absence and presence is but the detour of the same, defined as "the relationship to an impossible presence — as the irreparable loss of presence," for Derrida, *différance* is, in fact, this absolute other. He argues that if we can think together the same and its other, presence and absence, "it is evident — that we cannot think, together — the same and the absolute other." He therefore eradicates the concepts of presence as sameness but also of

absence as its metaphysical other. For him, the unconscious, *différance*, and its traces exceed both presence and absence, visibility and invisibility. We must learn, Derrida tells us, to conceptualize them outside the contradiction which metaphysics has assigned them.<sup>27</sup> For Irigaray, however, what this answer misses is precisely what metaphysics obfuscated: that the same and the absolute other are impossible to conceive together only in so far as the absolute other is not recognized as the origin which seeks to reinscribe itself as same and forever fails to do so.

In Derridean terms, *différance*, like Plato's matter/mother, is neither presence nor sameness, is neither absence nor the other of the differences constituted by it, but is that in which one and the other constitute themselves. Whereas Plato articulated his notion of origin within the concept of same and other, ignoring this absolute other of matter/mother, Derrida instead relegates origin itself to the realm of the absolute other, reveals thereby what remained hidden in Plato's denial but continues, nonetheless, to ignore the specific role of matter/mother within this realm. In opposition to the masculinized metaphysical presence of Being, Derrida does posit feminized *différance*. Whereas, in Platonic terms, woman is not difference, in relation to sameness, in Derridean terms she is *la différence*. Plato excludes her, Derrida reintegrates her, for in coining a new word, he was not obliged to follow the gender assignation of that which he was attempting to supplement: *la différence*. In fact, as the substantive locution for deferring, *en différencé*, on which he places such emphasis is masculine. Although the "a" of *différance* recognizes the gendered site which was concealed by Platonic difference, the *la* in *la différence* maintains the feminine in the place of the supplement.

### ***Pharmakon*: The Obliteration of Dichotomies and the Continuing Occultation of the Mother**

Further glimpses of this denunciation appear in Derrida's concept of *pharmakon* as writing, as the site of the production of difference, and the functioning of metaphor. For Derrida, the question of origin introduces the problematic of writing. Despite the fact that *différance* is not an origin and metaphors are necessarily plural, Derrida insists, though with qualifying quotation marks, that "the scriptural 'metaphor' thus crops up every time difference and relation are irreducible, every time otherness introduces determination and puts a system into circulation." He suggests that to set up a series of oppositions Plato would have had to posit "one of these oppositions....as the matrix of all possible opposition." What if, he asks, "one got to thinking that something like the *pharmakon* — or writing — far from being governed by these oppositions, opens up their very possibility"?<sup>28</sup> Elsewhere, in his analysis of Mallarmé's "Mimique," he reinforces this point, stating that

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the necessity of that metaphor, which nothing escapes, makes it something other than a particular figure among others. What is produced is an absolute extension of the concepts of writing and reading, of text, of hymen, to the point where nothing of what *is* can lie beyond them.<sup>29</sup>

In exploring this idea Derrida begins with the relationship between *logos* and *graphe*, speech and writing. He argues that for Plato, as for most Western metaphysical philosophers, writing is in excess. It is defined as the supplement of the supplement, the sign of the sign. For them, anamnesis, as reminiscence of Truth, passes through the word. *Logos*, as mnesis, is established by the presence and the law of the Father. Writing, as supplement, as remembrance, as an aid to memory, is thus but hypomnesis. While mnesis repeats Truth, the signified, metaphysical thinkers argue that what is repeated in hypomnesis is the signifier. Writing thus appears as pure mimesis, pure repetition which repeats itself eternally without reference to a Truth as presence. In metaphysical terms, the relationship between two forms of repetition is at stake. One is live repetition, occurring inside, within the soul, as the unveiling of Truth. The other is dead, occurring outside the soul, incapable of unveiling Truth. It can, in fact, contaminate the purity of anamnesis. Derrida suggests that this relationship between mnesis and hypomnesis, between inside and outside, is the containing structure of all oppositions.<sup>30</sup>

He argues that philosophy, however, has been deceived into thinking that it was distinguishing between speech and writing when, in fact, it was merely caught up in the play between two forms of writing. To begin with, it is problematic to establish the legitimacy of the *logos* by the presence of the Father, whose very definition as Father is itself established by the word, the law. As Derrida puts it,

the father is not the generator or procreator in any "real" sense prior to or outside all relation to language....it is precisely *logos* that enables us to perceive and investigate something like paternity. If there were a simple metaphor in the expression "father of logos" the first word, which seemed the more *familiar*, would nevertheless receive more meaning *from* the second, than it would transmit *to* it.<sup>31</sup>

For Derrida, what is more important than this discredit, however, is the fact that "the so-called living discourse should suddenly be described by a "metaphor" borrowed from the order of the very thing one is trying to exclude from it, the order of its simulacrum." He is referring here to Socrates' answer to Phaedrus, regarding the discourse of true knowledge "written in the soul of the learner," to which Phaedrus answers, "you mean the discourse..which is living and animate" — of which we could say in all justice, that "the written discourse [is] only a kind of ghost of it." This

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metaphor, Derrida suggests, is rendered necessary by the structure of Being whose essence is its possibility of being repeated, as nonidentity. Repetition, simulation, hence non-Truth is the very precondition of Truth.<sup>32</sup> Language used to describe this can only imitate this procedure. The *graphe*, as simulation of the *logos*, is its precondition, for

there is no repetition possible without the *graphics of supplementarity*, which supplies, for the lack of a full unity, another unit that comes to relieve it, being enough the same and enough other so that it can replace by addition.<sup>33</sup>

Writing, therefore, is not secondary to speech, it is its necessary supplement, which does not mean its origin.

The next step is for Derrida to show that writing is that in which *différance* traces its infinite metaphorical displacements, that writing and *différance* are coterminous. He concentrates on the fact that the god of writing is also the god of medicine, of *pharmakon* and that he is the one who presents writing to the Father as the remedy for, the aid to anamnesis. The various definitions of *pharmakon*, however, as medicine, as drug, as poison indicate that it can be both beneficial and harmful. Hence it has no proper nature. The dialogue between the god of writing and the Father revolves around this difference, where the god's emphasis on the remedial characteristics of writing is countered by the Father's insistence on the nefarious effects of writing as repetition, as mimesis, which, like metaphor, is good only in so far as it fails. For the Father, writing has no proper essence, no Truth. In fact, it undermines the Truth of essence.<sup>34</sup>

This lack of essence in *pharmakon* and in writing, in writing as *pharmakon*, produces difference, defines it as *différance*. The *pharmakon*, as Derrida tells us, has "no stable essence, no 'proper' characteristics....no ideal identity." It "constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them and makes one side cross over into the other,(soul/body, good/bad, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.)" The *pharmakon*, "without being anything in itself always exceeds them in constituting their bottomless fund. It keeps itself forever in reserve even though it has no fundamental profundity, nor ultimate locality."<sup>35</sup>

In all this, there are once again strong echoes, of Platonic *mater*, matter/mother. As an interesting revelation, what Derrida will underscore in this relationship between speech as paternal *logos* and writing as filial imitation, is the fact that "nothing is said of the mother." If we look for her, he suggests, we might see her "unstable form, drawn upside down in the foliage, at the back of the garden." Following the dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus, Derrida has outlined the relationship established by Plato between, on the one hand, true writing as *logos*, as the strong seed giving rise to the products of necessity, sown and reaped by the cultivator, and on the other hand, graphic writing as simulation, as the weak seeds

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which give rise to the ephemeral products of the gardener. The field of the cultivator, of *logos*, is thus opposed to the garden of the writer. Writing is the *pharmakon* and the mother, inverted, is in its depth. Water reinforces this silenced conjuncture, for if oppositions can be brought together and made to pass one into the other, it is due to the fact that "liquid is the element of the *pharmakon*." For Plato also, "water, above all things, is exceptionally necessary for the growth of all garden produce"<sup>36</sup> The repressed symbolic affinity between water and mother thus flows through the discourse of both Plato and Derrida.

Derrida, of course, is not unaware of Plato's displacement of the mother. In "*La pharmacie de Platon*," Derrida points out that

in the *Timaeus*, ... the introduction of the *other*, of *mixture*, the problematic of the *moving* cause and of the *site*, ... the irreducible third genre ... the duality of the paradigms, all this "constrains" us to define as *trace* the origin of the world, that is to say the inscription of the forms, the schemes in the matrix, in the receptacle. In a *matrix* or a *receptacle* which are nowhere and never offered under the form of presence or in the presence of the form, one or the other supposing already the inscription in the mother.<sup>37</sup>

Rather than draw out the implications of Plato's denial, however, Derrida invokes a similar denial of his own, hastening to add that: "here, in any case, the turns which we name with some embarrassment 'Plato's metaphors' are exclusively and irreducibly scriptural." He then goes discusses the reproductive metaphors which imbue Plato's text, underlining the characteristics of this third form, the matter/ mother as invisible, as formless receptacle, as the container through whom all passes, he insists that:

at the moment of ultimate difficulty, when no other pedagogical resource is available, when theoretical discourse cannot find any other way of formulating the order, the world, the *cosmos* of politics, ....[one] turns to the grammatical "metaphor" ... [The] structure is read as a form of writing, in an instance when the intuition of sensible or intelligible presence happens to fail.<sup>38</sup>

Thus at the moment that deconstruction approaches the corporeal mother as referent, when we find her inverted, hidden, missing, we are instructed to retreat to metaphoricity, reading the structure as writing, as *graphe*, as trace without origin. Derrida claims that we must "take the example of the science of grammar and the relationships between the letters to explicate the intertwinements weaving the system of differences." In fact, as he argues, what establishes the patricide of the Sophist is not

only that any *full*, *absolute* presence of what *is* (of the being-present that most truly "is": the good or the sun that can't be looked

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in the face) is impossible; not only that any full intuition of truth, any truth-filled intuition, is impossible; but that the very condition of discourse — *true or false* — is the diacritical principle of the *sumploke* [weaving].<sup>39</sup>

Weaving is an important metaphor in Derrida's texts where such unexplored and unexamined words as *tissue, tisser, texture, texte, textuel*, constitute, through their equivocal connotations as textile and text, the warp on which Derrida's text is woven. And weaving, in the Greek era was done entirely by women. Its goddess was Athena, born of Zeus, thus doing away with the mother altogether, as does Derrida's self-confessed patricide. In the depth of the production of the concepts of *différance* and of *pharmakon*, the maternal is yet again "passed over in silence," discerned by Derrida only as an effect among others, as a phantom, rather than as that in which all effects are formulated, as the garden itself. We will, however, continue to see her weaving herself back into what appears to be the condition of his discourse, most apparently, in "*La double séance*," where the hymen between Plato and Mallarmé suggests another, between Plato and Derrida.

### The Hymen and *le jeu (de l')entre*

In "*La double séance*" Derrida introduces the concept of hymen as that which "illustrates the suspension of differends," in which is inscribed a difference "without any decidable poles, without any independent and irreversible terms...*différance* without presence."<sup>40</sup> In his usual manner, Derrida discusses the equivocacy of the word, an equivocacy in whose play his conceptualization "takes forms." Here, however, as in few other places, an obvious and well known connotation is played down, disempowered in its cursory treatment, a connotation which nonetheless dominates this recharging of the signifier.

Derrida concentrates on the archaic poetic definition of the word hymen as marriage. The consummation of marriage signifies for him "fusion, the identification of two beings, the confusion between two." Between them "there is no longer difference, but identity." This is articulated through desire and its satisfaction, where past, present, and future are redefined in slightly different terms from his more Freudian discussion of the temporal aspect of traces. Here presence is dislocated through the accomplishment of a desire in which the difference between past desire and present accomplishment, between present accomplishment and future desire, between present accomplishment and past memory, is abolished. It is a structure of deferral/referral in which presence is no longer central, in which "non-presence, the gaping void of desire and presence, the fullness of *jouissance* amount to the same."<sup>41</sup>

From this, Derrida draws the conclusion that "there is no more textual difference between the image and the thing, the empty signifier and the full signified, the imitator and the imitated, etc." This does not mean,

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however, that one pole has collapsed into the other, for "in the confusion or consummation of the hymen the heterogeneity of the two places is suppressed" as is the difference between externality and interiority, as is "the independence of unity." At this point he refers to the pupil as the other Greek definition of the word hymen, to indicate that perception has always been linked to presence and that in this form it is no longer central. What is left then, he asks, but the dream, which

being at once perception, remembrance and anticipation (desire) each within the other, is really neither one nor the other ... announces the "fiction," the "*milieu*, pure, of fiction," ... a presence, at once perceived and not-perceived, image and model, hence image without model, neither image nor model, *milieu*.<sup>42</sup>

For Plato, the dream, like matter/mother, participates in both sensible and intelligible, is apprehended by a form of knowledge which is neither reason nor ignorance, but which, like its object, situates itself between, *entre*, in the *milieu* of both. The equivocity of the French word *milieu* is important in this context. It raises not only the confusion and dichotomy "between" two poles, two entities, but the place, site of this confusion and dichotomization. The *milieu* separates and encompasses. Confusion, undecidability, which is the main effect of the equivocity of this word, is the chief characteristic of the hymen, a trait reaffirmed by the word *entre* which, Derrida suggests "carries all the force of the operation."<sup>43</sup> Apart from the term hymen itself, it is perhaps this *entre* which is most suggestive of a trace which is left unexplored.

It is in the confusion between the two definitions of *milieu* as that which envelopes and that which separates, that the question of *entre*, the in-between is raised. *Entre* is itself not univocal. Apart from its different spatial and temporal significations of physically separating things and also creating time gaps between them, *entre* carries other suggestive definitions that are perhaps most clearly revealed by this short statement of Derrida's: "*L'hymen entre dans l'antre*." For the *entre* here, which is to enter and that which signifies in between, can be written with an "a" to indicate "a cave, a natural grotto, deep and obscure." Yet the two *entres*, with the "e" and with the "a", he suggests, are the same. To demonstrate, he draws upon etymology which shows their common origin in *antara*, *antro*. With this confusion we are now fully caught in the logic of the hymen, in the space between, in the space surrounding, in the space encircling, in that which separates but which has no separation.<sup>44</sup> For in Derridean terms, the hymen

merges with what it seems to be derived from: the hymen as protective screen, the jewelry case of virginity, the vaginal partition, the fine and invisible veil, which, in front of the hystera, maintains itself *between* the inside and the outside of the woman, and consequently between desire and fulfillment.<sup>45</sup>

*Entre* and *antre* are intertwined in more ways than their common etymological roots suggest, however. Derrida claims that "the hymen remains suspended between, outside, and inside the '*antre*,'" as was Plato's curtain/hymen/eyelid, the effect of which, however, he misses in suggesting that "one does not leave the mallarméan *antre* as one does the Platonic cave."<sup>46</sup> But is it not a question of exploring this *milieu* rather than of leaving it?

Rejecting the logic of the *logos*, of presence, of the palisades, how do we explore this hymen? The hymen, as the "structure of *entre*," is for Derrida the structure of writing. It is the void which intercepts the equation between the graphic sign and its sense. A text is not made of "signs" and "signifier." It is a composite of hymens, undecidables, voids, gaps, blanks, metaphors, *différences*, traces, and supplements that delineate not only the differences between presences and absences, but perhaps more significantly, between presences and presences, between absences and absences, between the *entres* of the *antres*. The hymen is that which recharges "the signified in the movement when it jumps from one to the other."<sup>47</sup>

As the site of *différance*, the hymen separates difference from its other, the outside from the inside, "making the outside enter the inside and turning over the *antre* or the other onto its surface," much as the Platonic *teik-bion* had done in the allegory.<sup>48</sup> In opposition to the implicit ambiguity of the Platonic hymen, however, the Derridean hymen, as in between, is itself explicitly in between. It is neither one nor the other, but both, "*à la fois*." Folded over on itself, the hymen is its own outside, its own inside.<sup>49</sup> Like the metaphor, it multiplies itself in irreducible plurality. But surely we can go further than this, for the hymen connotes more than this multiplicity. As the veil which bars desire and reproduction, the hymen stands at the conjunction of woman as object of desire and woman as maternal source of desire. The elements of this conjuncture are in fact woven together in Derrida's definition of the hymen as that "which desire dreams of piercing, of tearing in a violence which is (at the same time, or in between) love and murder, a tearing penetration which leaves a virgin womb," a *hystera*.<sup>50</sup>

The *hystera* is introduced by Derrida in an explication which justifies a particular citation of Freud's concerning the difficulty of opposing "the imaginary etymology of a word to the process of its transformation." The example is not insignificant, as Derrida admits, and one could question whether its purpose is solely, as he claims, to show a "certain displacement of language." For did Derrida himself not appeal to etymology in his discussion of the confused interrelatedness of the various definitions of *entre*, this *entre* which supposedly preempts "hymen" as the moving force whose effect is produced syntactically rather than semantically, through structure rather than through meaning? Yet he equates *entre* and *antre* semantically rather than through their syntactic relationship, which, in his text, is equally if not more suggestive.<sup>51</sup>

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Ignoring the important syntactic difference between *entre* as a verb — to enter — and *entre* as a conjunction — as in-between — Derrida loses the full force of his own claim that “*l’hymen entre dans l’ancre*.” Insisting on ascribing to *hystera* the fortuitousness, the arbitrariness of the signifier, he exiles the corporeal mother into the grammatical metaphor, inverting the site, the *ancre*, the place in which all is reproduced, transforming the hymen’s *entre en jeu* into the *jeu (de l’)entre*. What, we might ask, has Derrida’s structure of supplementarity added here, while redoubling, concealing, veiling with a hymen that is both pierced and not pierced, a presence thereby “perceived and not perceived,” *à la fois*?<sup>52</sup>

Derrida claims that “Mallarmé preserves...the differential structure ...of mimesis...even maintains (and maintains himself in) the structure of *phantasma*, as it is defined by Plato, the simulacrum as a copy of a copy,” with this exception, “that there is no longer any model.”<sup>53</sup> Derrida also maintains (himself within) the structure of phantoms, of the simulation of that through which phantoms and simulations are produced, with this exception; that he validate it, give it life, raise it from the depths of the cave, but no more than Plato does he theorize its denial. The model, the Father, is gone, but the mother is still missing. What remains is the unparented play of *différance* within the matrix of her now conspicuous absence.

### The Supplement and the Question of Absence

Absence informs Derrida’s choice of the word supplement as a further articulation of the interminable play of *différance*, of the irreducible structure of substitution. The absence inherent within metaphors remarks itself in the structure of the supplement as the necessity of the void, of the abyss. Like *différance*, *pharmakon*, and hymen, supplement rests on the equivocacy of the word itself and is linked to yet another equivocal French word. Here the word *plus*, in referring both to a nothing and to a something which is added, captures the ability of the supplement to unite within itself the two seemingly opposing gestures of alienation and reappropriation which are constitutive of metaphor. The supplement adds to an already existing plenitude by enriching it, but it also does so by replacing it, by filling the void which marks this plenitude and which this plenitude marks. Each of these functions replaces the other. It is itself, however, neither presence nor absence. It is not a question of reappropriating presence, of unveiling the Truth. “There is no *aletheia*” here, only glimpses, “a wink of a hymen,” an eyelid, which “admit both contradiction and non-contradiction . . . (which) belong to both the conscious and the unconscious.” What is at stake, rather, is a series of “substitutive significations” caught in a “chain of differential reference,” which is not simply a question of *polysémie*, but one of dissemination marked by an endless movement, an endless sowing, with seeds caught in the Nietzschean play of chance and of necessity which no logic can reduce to its own terms. The

supplement describes this structure of substitution in that it represents its inscription and effacement at the same time, like mirrors which establish and denounce presence, which constitute the image by deconstituting presence.<sup>54</sup>

The concept of supplementarity informs Derrida's theory of writing in that the signifier, as in a rebus, "refers, at the same time, and at least, to a thing and its sound." The essence of the signifier, like that of Being, is "the possibility of its own repetition." This is, in fact, the precondition of its acting as signifier, and clearly refutes the notion of the signifier as referring to a singular signified as presence.<sup>55</sup> As Derrida argues and as his own texts show, that to which words refer are caught in the web of the texts in which they are woven. For Derrida, "there is no hors-texte." Their referents are already lost, in fact, never existed as pure external entities. As he states: "the sign, the image, the representation which comes to supplement the absent presence are illusions which mislead." The real "doesn't appear, doesn't add itself to, except by taking its meaning from a trace and an appeal to the supplement." In fact, "what opens sense and language is this writing as disappearance of the natural presence."<sup>56</sup>

The supplement, however, is paradoxically caught between a "structure of necessity," the necessity of the abyss, the void which it supplements, and an "absolute contingency," where chance dictates that the supplement can always fail to appear, like desire or a dream which, of necessity, misses the mark, which may or may not pick up the trace. But if the self-referentiality of the signifier is belied by its repressed affinity with the metaphysical notion of Being, the fortuitous character of the supplement, as well as its conceptualization, is likewise belied by the thread of denied reference that is again woven here.

It is through his discussion of Rousseau's definition of natural presence as "maternal presence" that Derrida opposes the concept of the supplement as void to the metaphysical notion of presence. For Rousseau, the question of the relationship between the void and presence revolves around the mother, since what is at issue in *Émile* is the necessity and impossibility of supplementing "maternal solicitude." Derrida echoes Rousseau's preoccupation with the maternal, admitting that "if premeditating the theme of writing, we have begun by talking about the substitution of mothers, it is, that, as Rousseau himself said: 'more depends on this than you realize.'"<sup>57</sup>

It is no accident that Derrida chooses Rousseau and particular Rousseauian texts in which the mother as absent presence is articulated; that he opens his second chapter of *Of Grammatology* with this quote from Rousseau: "I felt as if I had been guilty of incest"<sup>58</sup>; that the hymen is a "substitutive signifier" for *différance*, *pharmakon*, and supplement, all independently circumscribing and circumventing that which eludes direct expression; that his quote from Freud, which he conspicuously claims to

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be fortuitous, refers precisely to this *hystera* which can only be represented through displacement.

In Plato's metaphysical conceptualization of opposites, the absent maternal presence is repeated in the representation of Being as the original presence. Yet, in Derrida's non-metaphysics of nothingness, of eternal displacement, maternal absence is repeated not through an overt repression but through an infinite "representation of representation" which denies origin altogether. For Irigaray, the fact that maternal origin can never be one "single unique reality" precludes neither its existence nor its acting as referent. The negation of the unique referent, like the negation of voice, of *logos*, remains caught in the matricidal opposition of unities which metaphysics inaugurated. It is not the referent, but rather an impossibility of accurate reference which inscribes the desire for origin in Derrida's text.

It is true that unlike the piercing of the pupil in the sighting of Plato's blinding Truth, Derrida's piercing of the hymen as "the accomplishment of desire" establishes the feminine not only as site but as object of desire. Whereas Plato leaves woman unrepresented, Derrida represents her as radical alterity, as "that which will not be pinned down by Truth."<sup>59</sup> Yet, as Irigaray reminds us in her analysis of "Plato's Hystera," representation does not exhaust repetition. Is Derrida's denial of Plato's concept of origin not a denial of a denial? Is his displacement of the mother, as primary radical other, into the feminine as originary site of *différance* not merely another *dénégation*? For his validation of a metaphorized feminine is not yet the recognition of the mother, of the interconnectedness of woman as source and object of desire, of the maternal/feminine.<sup>60</sup>

The definition of the hymen as that which separates desire from its fulfillment suggests to us the displaced object of its desire, the *hystera*. The metaphysically occulted relationship between woman and origin remains buried, no longer under the weight of presence, but in the midst of absence. Is this perpetuity of repression not rooted in a sexually specific fear and anguish of origin, as suggested by Derrida's paraphrase of Rousseau?

Does the example of fright come by accident? Does not the metaphorical origin of language bring us necessarily back to a situation of menace, of distress, of dereliction, to an archaic solitude, an anguish of dispersion? Absolute fear would therefore be the first encounter with the other as other, as other than I and as other than itself. I can only respond to this menace of the other as other (than I) by transforming it into other (than itself) by altering, in my imagination, my fear or my desire.<sup>61</sup>

Significantly, he goes on to add that "language does not begin with pure anguish, rather, anguish can only signify itself through repetition."<sup>62</sup> This fundamental repetition reveals, in Derrida's "eternal displacement," a metaphorized desire which denies corporeal origin, a displacement of the *entre en jeu* onto the *jeu (de l')entre*, of the *hystera* onto the hymen. The

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repetition of this anguish through language marks the psychoanalytic definition of the symbolic *entre en jeu* as yet another *jeu de l'entre*, as yet one more ritual in the meta-physical burial of the maternal/feminine.

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Notes

1. Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967), p. 90; *Of Grammatology*, tr. by G. Chakrovorty Spivak (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 61. For the subsequent texts that have been translated, the page reference will be given in French, followed by the English reference in brackets.
2. Although her emphasis on the repression of the maternal is a key element in Irigaray's critique of western metaphysics and of modernist discourses, it is not the only element. She also argues for the sexual specificity of discourse and sees in the metaphorical structure, so dear to deconstruction and to Lacanian psychoanalysis, an analogy to the classical dichotomy of presence and absence. She explores the psychoanalytical implications of the obsession with the death of origin, with death as origin, which characterizes both the deconstruction of metaphysics and of the traditional concept of subjectivity. In their infatuation with text, metaphor, signifiers, and self-referentiality, these theorists, she suggests, maintain the idealist structure of metaphysics in that the corporeal remains unthought and humanity disembodied. In all of these elements she sees a scopophilic tendency to distance, objectify, contain, and master. She links this to male sexual morphology, to the all too visibly exposed male sexual organ, to the instrumental nature of man's auto-eroticism that is mediated by the hand, a mediation which is rearticulated in their epistemology, constituting knowledge through the triad of subject, object, and instrument. Lacan's redefinition of the "subject" as split, as one who seeks the Other through the other is but a more recent version of this triadic division. To counter this she seeks to develop a discourse of proximity more in tune with metonymy, more reflective of the labial structure of women's sexual morphology.
3. For Derrida's discussion of the relationship between sense and metaphor see page 9.
4. Irigaray's critique of Freud and an Irigarean reading of Lacan is, of course, much more complex than is suggested by this cursory reference. And if psychoanalysis participates in the metaphysics it decries, Irigaray believes that it nonetheless offers some tools with which feminists can move beyond the phallic logic by which it has been restrained.
5. Derrida, *La dissémination*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), p. 56; *Dissemination*, tr. with an introduction and additional notes by Barbara Johnson, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 48.
6. This formulation of Derrida's project appears in Luce Irigaray, *Parler n'est jamais neutre*, (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985), p. 169.
7. Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie*, (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1972), p. 320; *Margins of Philosophy*, tr. with notes by A. Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 268. The Nietzschean influence is evident here, since for Nietzsche, "interpretation" could only be written in the plural.
8. *Speculum de l'autre femme*, (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1974) translated by Gillian C. Gill as *Speculum of the Other Woman*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985). The articles mentioned are reprinted in Irigaray, *Parler n'est jamais neutre*, pp. 149-68 & 169-88. In the introduction to this more recent collection of essays, she underlines the tentative nature of these early explorations where she was still participat-

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ing in the discourses from which she has since progressively disassociated herself. Though she has not since resumed a systematic analysis of Derrida's texts, we glimpse, in this early essay, traces of her developing critique.

9. Irigaray, *Parler n'est jamais neutre*, pp. 155-160.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 165 & 168.
12. Irigaray, "La mécanique des fluides," *L'Arc* 58 (1974); the "Allegory of the Cave" is the subject matter of her essay cited above, "Plato's Hystera," *Speculum*, pp. 301-457 (241-364).
13. Derrida, *La dissémination*, p. 39 (33).
14. Rodolphe Gasché, "Deconstruction as Criticism" in *Glyph Textual Studies* 6 (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 203.
15. Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie*, p. 261 (219).
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 269-270, ftnt. 19 (226, ftnt.29).
17. *Ibid.*, p.273 (229).
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 282 & 256-67 (237 & 215-16); idem, "La différance," *Théories d'ensembles*, collection Tel Quel (Paris: Les Éditions du Seuil, 1968), p. 57.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 302 (253).
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 260, 298-99, 318 & 288 (218, 250-51, 266-67 & 241-42). Irigaray would contest this of course. Though metaphor must, of necessity, miss the True in that metaphors displace the original displacement, traces of this second displacement are nevertheless evident and analyzable.
21. As she explains, the metaphysical concept of Being, as existence, denies the relationship of identity between all subjects and attributes except if that relationship passes through itself. Claiming for itself eternal presence, it distorts the presence of the subject as a subject which can be said to be here, now, in this way, manifested in other words, through attribution. Being divides the subject from all predicate, all attribute, whether qualitative or metaphoric, descriptive or representational. We cannot say that something is something. For despite the fact that attributes, by definition what is proper to a thing, attempt to ascribe this property to the subject, they cannot succeed, because only Being is proper and Being cannot be defined except by its own self-reference. Since Being is the only proper subject, attributes are but metaphors, projections, representations, duplications, imitations which are, of course, the metaphysical definitions of identity.
22. Irigaray, *Parler n'est jamais neutre*, p. 183.
23. Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie*, p. 285 (289); "La différance," pp. 43-47.
24. Derrida, "La différance," pp. 44, 47, 50, 53-54, 60 & 65. *Pharmakon, supplément*, hy-men form part of this chain of substitution.
25. For Plato, matter has no intelligible Form to which it corresponds and is therefore not a sensible copy. Likewise, it has no recognizable form and hence it does not itself determine form. As the mediating ground between the intelligible and the sensible, it participates in both, though not equally in each, nor in the same manner.

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26. Derrida, "La différance," pp. 59-60 & 63. He is also indebted to Freud for the concept of detour.
27. Ibid., pp. 56, 59 & 63-64.
28. Derrida, *La dissémination*, pp. 189 & 117-18 (163 & 103); "La différance," p. 44.
29. Derrida, *La dissémination*, p. 252 (223).
30. Ibid., pp. 124-26 (109-11).
31. Ibid., p. 91 (80).
32. Ibid., p. 172 (148-49). We see here the Derridean basis of Irigaray's analysis of the impossibility of Being positing its Existence outside the attributes which metaphorize it into Identity.
33. Ibid., pp. 194-95 (168).
34. Ibid., pp. 108-13 (95-100).
35. Ibid., pp. 144-146 (125-28).
36. Ibid., pp. 164, 173-5 (143, 150-52).
37. Ibid., p. 184 (159-60). I have here retained my own translation rather than use Barbara Johnson's for I prefer to translate "l'introduction de l'autre et du mélange" as "the introduction of the *other* and of *mixture*" rather than as "the introduction of the *different* and the *blend*." Also, Barbara Johnson has omitted part of the original text in her translation. The original reads: "tout cela 'contraint' (49a) à définir comme *trace* l'origine du monde, c'est-à-dire [l'inscription des formes, des schémas, dans la *matrice*, dans] le *réceptacle*." Omitting what I have placed in square brackets she has translated this as reading "all these things 'require' (49a) that we define the origin of the world as a *trace*, that is to say, a receptacle."
38. Ibid., p. 187 (162). Since Socrates was not in Derrida's original text as Barbara Johnson's translation suggests, I have translated *on* as "one."
39. Ibid., pp. 191-92 (166).
40. Ibid., p. 238 & 39 (210). I have retained Derrida's original word *différance* rather than translate it as "difference" as has Barbara Johnson.
41. Ibid., p. 237 (209). Again, I have preferred to keep Derrida's term *jouissance* rather than translate it as "enjoyment" as has Barbara Johnson.
42. Ibid., p. 239 (211). Here again, I present my own translation. *Autre* is not plural in the original text although Johnson translates it as such. Also medium has a connotation in English of substance and of the mid-point. Derrida's notion of site is lost in this translation.
43. Ibid., pp. 249-50 (220).
44. Ibid., p. 240 (212). "The hymen enters into the *antre*."
45. Ibid., p. 241 (212-13). Whose desire and fulfillment we might ask?
46. Ibid., p. 244 (216). (my translation) In "Plato's Hystera" Irigaray argues that the wall in the cave represents the placenta of birth, that through which we must pass to see the light of day. This wall, *teikhion*, behind which the stage managers hold up the statues

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whose shadows deceive the prisoners, is that through which the prisoners must pass on their way towards the fire, the true cause of the shadows, and out of the cave towards the sun.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 285 & 294 (253 & 261).
48. The erection of a wall in Plato's cave confuses the stark opposition which it is meant to implement between the cave and its passageway, between the protagonists and the spectators. The stage managers organize their show behind the wall which separates them from the prisoners. But this wall reverses the relative position of front and back walls. The prisoners watch the spectacle on the back wall, in front of them, but from the front wall, behind them, the stage managers watch the prisoners watching the spectacle. It also confuses the scenario in that the prisoners become part of the spectacle, while those who are an integral part of the allegory, the stage managers, occupy a relatively external position. Just as we cannot clearly demarcate what, in matter/mother, is attributable to the intelligible and to the sensible, so we are unable to ascertain, here, whether the activity in the passageway is part of the cave, outside the cave, both, or neither.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 259 (229). The concept of the *pli*, for Derrida, is related to the fact that the hymen is a fold of mucous membrane.
50. We see yet again, as in Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," the piercing of the hymen/pupil to arrive at that which lies beyond. In the allegory, the analogy of Truth and the sun is articulated through the piercing of the pupil by the brightness of the physical sun so that the light of metaphysical Truth may reach the soul. And in Greek, *kopn*, means both pupil and virgin, pupil and the hymen by which virginity is defined.
51. Derrida, *La dissémination*, p. 208 (182).
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 241, 239 & 250 (212, 211 & 221). I have translated *traversé* as "pierced".
53. *Ibid.*, p. 234 (206).
54. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, pp. 208, 228, 233 & 442 (145, 159, 163 & 314); *La dissémination*, pp. 293 & 250 (261 & 221). *Aletheia* is the Greek word which scholars have translated as Truth but which Heidegger suggests means disclosure.
55. But in its structural affinity to Being, the signifier's referent is arguably the Being whose unitary presence it is meant to replace. See above pp. 19.
56. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, pp. 137-39, 221, 227-28 (90-91, 154, 158-59).
57. *Ibid.*, p. 210 (146).
58. *Ibid.*, p. 145 (95).
59. Jacques Derrida & C. V. McDonald, "Choréographie," *Diacritics* Vol. 12, no. 2 (Summer, 1986):66.
60. It is interesting to note that Derrida acknowledges the feminine while disparaging the maternal, while Lacan acknowledges the maternal while disparaging the feminine. Of course, Lacan's acknowledgement of the maternal is qualified since immediately upon recognizing her as the primordial Other in the realm of the Real he exiles her to the role of the other in the realm of the Imaginary, fusing both realms and with it both of the maternal roles into a pre-human and pre-symbolic sphere. Likewise, Derrida's recognition of the feminine is curtailed by his insistence on the role of the supplement to which it is relegated. We are reminded here of the way in which Lacan theorizes the

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impossible jouissance of the woman as the supplement to the elusive maternal *object a*. Of interest also is the fact that in the supposed hymenal structure of Derrida's thought the feminine and the maternal are dissected as they are in Lacan's formulation. The hymen retains Derrida on the surface much as Plato's allegory failed to delve the depth behind the various screens/mirrors through which he demonstrated the illusive nature of knowledge. The hystera remains virgin territory.

61. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, pp. 392-93 (277).

62. *Ibid.*, p. 394 (278).