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# **Writing materiality into management and organization studies through and with Luce Irigaray**

## **Abstract**

There is increasing recognition in management and organization studies of the importance of materiality as an aspect of discourse, while the neglect of materiality in post-structuralist management and organization theory is currently the subject of much discussion. This paper argues that this turn to materiality may further embed gender discrimination. We draw on Luce Irigaray's work to highlight the dangers inherent in masculine discourses of materiality. We discuss Irigaray's identification of how language and discourse elevate the masculine over the feminine so as to offer insights into ways of changing organizational language and discourses so that more beneficial, ethically-founded identities, relationships and practices can emerge. We thus stress a political intent that aims to liberate women and men from phallogocentrism. We finally take forward Irigaray's ideas to develop a feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies that points towards ways of writing from the body. The paper thus not only discusses how inequalities may be embedded within the material turn but it also provides a strategy that enriches the possibilities of overcoming them from within.

## **Keywords**

**embodiment, feminism, Irigaray, feminist *écriture*, materiality, gender fluidity**

## **Introduction**

The neglect of materiality in post-structuralist management and organization theory is currently the subject of much discussion, notably in an important recent review article by Phillips and Oswick (2012), and Ashcraft, Kuhn and Cooren's (2009) excellent summary of approaches to exploring materiality. There is therefore recognition of the need to return to a continental philosophical tradition that attempts to transcend the subject-object dualism undergirding much of modernist knowledge production, and thus to avoid 'the bifurcation of the material and discursive' that is too often present in the texts of the proponents of discourse (Mumby, 2011). Academics are included in this turn: they are not disembodied subjectivities but sexuated subjects that are implicated in the accounts they produce. The material bodies that sit pounding keyboards will have different musculatures and organs; they may be perceived as leaky or hard; and they may also experience pains peculiar to one or other sex. While such bodies themselves can only be understood through and indeed as constituted within discourse, at the same time discourse is material and cannot be separated from such (academic) bodies (Butler, 1990, 1993). Furthermore, academics are *gendered* embodied subjects, and as such are not only subject to forms of gender domination and subordination; they also may (albeit unwittingly) reproduce those forms. In other words, we argue that when bodies enter then so does gender and gender discrimination. To take forward the material turn through introducing methodological plurality and combining discourse with non-discursive approaches, as suggested by Phillips and Oswick (2012), without awareness and understanding of gender could therefore perpetuate inequalities. To avoid this danger, we propose that the turn to materiality requires fundamental questioning of the gendered and sexuated nature of discourses, and their implication in the 'mattering' (Butler, 1990) of bodies and other texts.

This paper's contribution to the emerging debate on discourse and the material in management theory thus concerns the necessity of understanding gender, discourse and materiality as mutually constitutive: we caution against the risks in the material turn of further sedimenting gender and other inequalities, and thus perpetuating discriminatory relationships within organizations, academia and academic work. Specifically, we draw on the theories of Luce Irigaray to illuminate ways in which language incorporates gender discrimination within the constitution of relationships, working practices, research and working bodies (academic as well as managerial, thinking or labouring bodies). Irigaray's work helps us understand how the neglect of the embodied materiality of discourse privileges male/masculine norms, and thus how gender discrimination is constituted and re-constituted within organizational discourses. Irigaray's reading of grand male philosophers' work against the grain develops a revolutionary system of thought we draw on to outline how, in organizational scholarship, 'the material (including the economic and political) is normalized through discourses and various systems of signification' (Mumby, 2011: 1159). In other words, we use her work to demonstrate how the language of organization, which conceives of materiality in universal terms, is violent because its apparent rationality disguises ways in which it subordinates and controls the female as well as male.

However, not only does Irigaray enable our identification of how language and discourse elevate the masculine over the feminine, she also offers insights into ways of changing organizational language and discourses so that more beneficial, ethically-founded identities, relationships and practices can emerge between people in organizations. The paper's aims therefore extend beyond that of warning of the dangers of embedding inequalities in the material turn towards indicating a way of writing from the body that overcomes inequalities and enriches academic writing and understanding. Irigaray proposes the notion of sexual

difference between sexually specific subjects that is contiguous (Oseen, 2005), fluid and multiple rather than binary, hierarchical and exclusionary. By demonstrating how meaning is produced and re-produced and by disrupting it from within, Irigaray illuminates its provisional nature and opens ways for new significations. Thus her analysis of the sexuateness of discourse and how writing emerges from the body allows us to re-consider why and how writing can reflect and disrupt the ways in which both women and men theorize, speak about and locate themselves in and through organizations and organizing. We propose a feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies that involves writing from a body that is both female and male, that inseminates, conceives and gives birth, so as to facilitate more fecund working relationships.

This paper therefore addresses the discriminatory exclusionary practices and violence embedded in organizational language and helps develop a politics and practices for changing that language. Through drawing on Irigaray's theories, we build on the work of a few pioneers in management and organization studies who have introduced the work of this major theorist to the discipline (Dale, 2001; Atkin, Hassard and Wolfram-Cox, 2007; Oseen, 1997, 2005; Fotaki, 2011; Kenny and Bell, 2011; Vachhani, 2012; Phillips, Pullen and Rhodes, 2013). The relative neglect of her work in organization studies contrasts starkly with its influence in linguistics, philosophy, critical social and political theory and architecture. We cannot hope to do justice to all of Irigaray's contributions and so the focus in this paper is on two aspects pertinent to our arguments: (i) we show how fluidity is central to her deconstruction of signification processes and discourses, thereby disavowing claims of essentialism in her work; and (ii) we map intertextual forms and examine how through mimesis and dialogic engagement reader, writer and text are involved in forming and reforming fluid identities and relations.

The paper is laid out as follows. We begin by highlighting how gender discrimination is a function of the very language we use. We then provide an account of Irigaray's work on language, materiality, embodiment and sexual difference. The third and final part of the paper identifies ways in which Irigaray's *écriture féminine* may evolve into a feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies.

### **Language and embodiment in organization theory**

The introduction of post-modernist and post-structuralist theoretical perspectives to management and organization studies enabled a radical breakthrough in theorization of gender, subjectivity and identity (Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004). Post-structuralism's influence in management and organization studies has been largely upon representation, reflexivity, writing, difference, and the decentring of the subject (Hassard, 1994; Burrell, 1992). Feminist research has focused not only on these aspects but also on 'writing' and the materiality of language as a bodily act (Pullen, 2006; Gatrell and Swan, 2008; Gatrell, 2011; Phillips, Pullen and Rhodes, 2013). Overall, however, these issues are largely absent from those areas of management and organization studies where discourse analysis is the favoured mode of intellectual interrogation (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000; Grant and Hardy, 2004; Phillips, Lawrence and Hardy, 2004; Hardy and Maguire, 2010). In contrast, feminist post-structuralist theorists of organizations are concerned with the role of discourse in the construction of gendered relations of power, resulting in a concern to move 'from the *body of woman* to the *body of the text*' (Calás and Smircich, 1999: 660). In disavowing seemingly universal concepts of woman, womanhood and femaleness, feminist post-structuralists have enriched organizational scholarship by introducing deconstructive strategies to understand texts differently (see very influential works by Martin, 1990; Calás and Smircich, 1991; Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004 for examples). As such, subjectivities, power relations, forms of resistance

and so forth are shown to be discursive practices located within complex systems of signification: this deconstruction of essentialist notions of subjectivity opens possibilities of transformation and change (Mumby, 1996).

Yet in necessarily moving from the body of the woman, with its essentialized implications of inferiority, to the body of the text as is suggested by Calás and Smircich (1999), the text's influence on the constitution of the female body as subordinate has also been side-lined. In other words, feminist post-structuralists' deconstruction of taken for granted organizational practices (for example see Calás and Smircich, 1991, 1992, 1999; Mills, 1994; Fondas, 1997) have not focused on the materiality of language, and on how bodies produce and reproduce these. This absence is perhaps surprising given that both Foucault and Derrida, dominant amongst the male theorists who have had most influence in management and organization studies, were seriously concerned with the materiality of discourse (see Lenoir, 1998 for a review). However, since their theories of the subject presume male identity, with male bodies representing relations of power and domination in discourses, the male subject often becomes the explicit or implicit focus of organizational theorizing. As Oseen (1997) argues, this sexlessness of the universal subject - the subject that is considered as disembodied - has also been taken up by many feminist theorists in organization studies. Specifically, 'the exclusion of women from the subject position, the exclusion made possible by the structuring of language itself, and Western philosophy, as it is presently constructed in language, requires that women hold the position of object so that men can be subjects' (ibid.: 171).

Luce Irigaray's focus on sexual difference is well positioned to point out inadequacies in such post-structuralist enquiry by reaffirming the importance of theorizing the sexually specific body. There are hints of the possibilities of the approach advocated by Irigaray in the works

of some who regard the (discursively constructed) body as a central point of analysis. For instance, Ashcraft, Kuhn and Cooren (2009) have begun to explore the issue of various forms of materiality in organizations in the context of communication where the material is recast as simultaneously symbolic and ideational. They point out how the relative emphasis in symbolic activity *over* material forces leads to dualism between mind and the body, and how considering symbolic activity *as* a material force might result in the neglect of other kinds of materiality (ibid.). Others have argued that the lived experience of the body cannot be understood without taking account of affect and embodied passion (Dale, 2001; Grosz, 1994), notably because of the political implications of affect and desire (Kenny, Muhr and Olaison, 2011). This is emphasized in the work of scholars who are exploring the imbrication of discourse, gender and the materiality of bodies. For example, Dale (2001), one of the few readers of Irigaray's work in management and organization studies, examines how diverse bodies experience life and organizations differently because of ways in which bodies are subjected to and exceed organized life. Other work on embodied practices in management pedagogy support Irigaray's theories. Swan (2005), for example, examines specifically how the teacher's body is a surface upon which competencies and abilities are inscribed, often in hierarchical ways. In a similar vein, Sinclair (2005: 387) 'holds bodies, in their fleshy version, prominent, and [we need] to focus on bodies as possibilities, rather than as constraints', thus affirming ways in which material subjectivities of (women's) bodies are imprinted and positioned. Gatrell (2011) takes this work further in showing how the maternal body is a text that is inscribed within discourses that render it other, as outside, to organizational practices. Finally, and importantly, Kenny and Bell (2011:173) evoke Irigaray to explore female bodies in organizations. They show how contradictory and mixed messages about managing one's female body lead to a sense of dejection since there is no place for the feminine in contemporary organizational discourse.

An understanding of embodiment is enhanced by the work of many post-structuralist feminists who situate the exercise of power in organizations at the local level. This work argues persuasively that there are no overarching totalizing explanations of gendered relations of domination: power is exercised not from above but rather resides in local and individual practices of institutional life in which bodies are necessarily implicated (Trethewey, 1999; Acker, 1990, 2006; Pullen, 2006; Linstead and Pullen, 2006). Kenny, Olaison and Muhr (2011) draw attention to such embodied, ‘passionate’ engagements in research interactions in order to yield a closer understanding of the particular contexts, political and otherwise, that pertain to research participants.

This paper positions post-structural feminist perspectives at the centre of its inquiry. By developing some of those insights through the lens of Irigaray’s theory, we suggest that the more general marginalization of women’s bodies, inscribed as texts that do not belong in the public space of organization, is replicated in the Handbooks that are influential in constituting management and organization studies. *The Handbook of Organization Studies* (Clegg, Hardy and Nord, 1996) is typical in its illustration of the marginal position that gender occupies in organizational scholarship, both in terms of its content and its predominantly male authors. As Marshall puts it, ‘there are substantive sections of mainstream conversation that focus their referencing on a relatively small band of scholars and do not incorporate pluralist appreciations’ (Marshall, 2000: 171). Recent publications edited by eminent critical management scholars (see Grey and Willmott, 2005; Alvesson, Bridgeman and Willmott, 2009; Alvesson, 2011) similarly exclude women authors, rendering them minoritized (vastly outnumbered by male authors) or marginalized (allowed to speak only of sex or gender). Other handbooks are better at redressing this trend (see Tsoukas and Knudsen, 2005; Jeans, Knights and Martin, 2011). Yet while the work of female scholars who draw on feminist

writers is now appearing in major journals (Höpfl, 2000, 2007; Marshall, 2000; Tyler and Cohen, 2009; Kenny 2010; Vachhani, 2012, Fotaki, 2013; Ford and Harding, 2008) too often female voices continue to be silenced, discounted and/or misrepresented.

This situation is problematic: since writing involves and is concerned with corporeal practices (Pullen, 2006), we need to explore fully what it means to write gendered research from the feminine perspective/body. But it also provokes the question of whether there is such a thing as ‘the woman’ and how is she being constructed. In other words, who is this being that is excluded from organizational representation? Certainly, Irigaray would argue that there is at the moment no such thing as the woman as such. For her women are the rejected body and the disavowed part of men themselves and they are for this reason ‘unsymbolized, unarticulated and inarticulate’ (Oseen, 1997: 173; Irigaray, 1985a, 1985b). Her work on the absence of the feminine body from the symbolic, the sexuated structure and intertextuality of language, the fluidity of various forms of femininity and the materiality of the body, demonstrate how discourses and bodies are mutually constitutive, with women outside of such constitutive practices. The attempt to understand the gendered materiality of organizational discourse will therefore be enhanced if the potential of Irigaray’s work for this endeavour is better utilized. We turn now to outlining relevant aspects of her work for the discourse/material turn in management and organization studies, before suggesting some of the ways this theory could help in our understanding of organizations through developing a feminist *écriture* of/for organizations.

### **Text, body, context in organization theory with Irigaray**

In this section we draw on, and write through, the theoretic and poetical gestures of Luce Irigaray, a feminist philosopher seemingly exiled from contemporary critical organization

debates (Vachhani, 2012) to develop further a theory of writing in/about organization studies. We firstly summarize her main ideas concerning the absence of the feminine from symbolization and her proposals for how to overturn this absence, before discussing the implications this has for organization theory. We then discuss her ideas of fluid femininity, body/language multiplicity and intertextuality while drawing on work by feminists who have engaged with Irigaray's ideas in organization studies (e.g. Oseen, 1997; Fotaki, 2011; Vachhani, 2012). We conclude by exploring ways in which these aspects of Irigaray's work may influence the turn to the material in organizational discourse analysis. We do so through outlining a feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies that builds on the work of feminists working within this tradition.

### *Specularizing fluid forms of femininity*

Many feminists have shown in their writings how the feminine has been censured, but the complexities of embodied relational presence have largely been overlooked in organizational scholarship. Irigaray (1985a) provides an exceptionally probing analysis of phallogocentric assumptions embedded in Western thought, beginning with Freudian theory and ending with Platonic philosophy, that could give further insights into the censoring of the feminine in organizations. Most notably Irigaray argues that the feminine is repressed and censured through recourse to this philosophical logic of male sameness. In the *Speculum of the Other Woman* and her other key works she spells out the consequences of defining sexual difference by recourse to masculine systems of representation. Her questioning, structured as a reflective mirroring, strives to enact a speculum-like structure<sup>1</sup>: by starting with Freud and ending with Plato Irigaray reverses the normal historical order in an action which resembles that of the concave mirror, that is, the speculum that gynaecologists use to inspect the cavities of the female body. The speculum structure is further deployed through the devotion of the central

section of seven chapters to re-reading the works of male philosophers, with the book's opening and concluding sections presenting her discourse so that they paradoxically envelop them (Moi, 1985: 129-132).<sup>2</sup> This way of writing unravels how the constant repetition and reproduction of those theories produce (male) sameness since only the male subject has a place within language.

Irigaray follows a two-fold logic. At the outset, she mirrors male philosophers' theories by entering into close dialogue with them, and *deconstructing* their work not only through her words, but also through their *own* - often paradoxical - words. In other words, Irigaray employs the convention of one and the same masculine subjectivity in order to overturn it: her aim is to decry *sameness* and its constrictive omnipotent intent within prevailing systems of discourse. As the philosophical discourse has set forth the laws of the symbolic order of language, it is necessary to unveil how the domination of the philosophical logos stems in large part from its power to reduce all others to the 'economy of the same', that is, by eradicating the differences between the sexes in systems that are self-representative of the masculine subject (Irigaray, 1985a: see pp. 133-151 and pp. 227-240). Masculine and feminine subjects then become inextricably implicated in the masculine 'production of truth and meaning that are excessively univocal' (Irigaray, 1985b: 78). This logic of the same results in the perpetuation of binary classifications of sex and gender that render the feminine and female as distorted, lesser than masculinity.

Then, to *resist* this masculine sameness Irigaray articulates the need for an alternative feminine symbolic order, or a new economy of sexual difference, that opens up spaces for feminine sensualities. It is important to note that her work is *not* tied to an essentialist logic; rather, as we will show, in mimicking masculine representations it seeks to disrupt binary

constructions. Irigaray thus avoids male philosophers' habit of establishing a hierarchy; she does not reverse their ordering by putting woman in the superior place of domination: rather her work seeks to re-imagine a female symbolic that creates possibilities of social transformation and organizational/social change that resists logics of domination. By situating the body at the junction of nature and culture rather than drawing or denoting their tenuous boundaries, Irigaray opens up the possibilities for reformulation of the symbolic order through bodies representing different but equivocal forms of power. To achieve this she suggests: 'it's necessary that I exit the prison of a single discourse and that I show how this discourse was necessarily limited to a single subject' (Hirsch and Olsen, 1995: 100). Engaging with Irigaray we suggest that this cannot happen before women (and others) have a language and means of symbolization of their own with which to speak differently about organizations and organizing. Luce Irigaray proposes several strategies as to how can this be achieved, including a new way of writing from the body as a means of introducing gender multiplicity and fluidity, mimesis and dialogic engagement with the text, all of which are now discussed below.

*(i) Writing from the body*

In what became to be known as *l'écriture féminine*, Irigaray gives a first-hand account and demonstration of how the new way of writing could re-define the symbolic order by allowing feminine desire to express itself (Author/s). Like other contemporary French feminists, Irigaray argues that in writing the body women can discover their own new world, revealing ways in which their embodied presence and spirit become one. Such writing is associated with the literary genre that examines how bodies are inscribed, signified and represented in language. Writing from and with reference to the body involves using women's corporeality to recreate their own subjectivity through language as a move against the masculine

rhetorical structure that has defined it over time. As explained above, Irigaray takes on this challenge directly by reading grand male philosophers' work against the grain in order to question the absence of different (women's) voice/s that have been rendered less meaningful and relevant, or indeed meaningless and irrelevant.<sup>3</sup> For her, writings and bodies are inscribed with differing competencies and signs: to write from the body therefore is to recreate the world (Jones, 1985). Focusing on the body as a way of exploring creativity and subjectivity is essential if we consider how female and male bodily differences have been conceptualized historically in the arts and sciences. When writing about bodies men revel in the male body's physical strength, freedom and power (Moore, 1994; Bordo, 1994). In contrast female bodies, even when they are the centre of artistic creativity and subjectivity, usually have a rigidly codified and subjugated role (Bolton, 2011). This also influences how women see and think of themselves. Thus following Irigaray's work we argue that if the acquisition of language marks the entry into the symbolic order in which women are subjected to patriarchal law, women must disrupt the norms which subjugate them and re-create their own means of representation (Fotaki, 2013) in order to break away from that subjugation.

As a linguist, psychoanalyst and philosopher Irigaray locates the site of difference in the female unconscious: psychosexual specificity defines difference, and overcoming the oppression of the woman requires the liberation of female discourse through creating possibilities for it to emerge. Or as Vachhani (2012:1246) puts it: 'Irigaray's interest is in identity which is assumed in language'. In her commitment to an embodied materiality of language (and subjectivity), Irigaray prompts us to re-turn to the sexual difference of the body as a means of disrupting the chain of symbolic significations and new meaning creation. In writing through the body, the possibilities for unravelling the sexuate structures in

language are made visible as are the living textualities and embodied subjectivities that writing differently produces. Through the interplay between textuality and physicality Irigaray attempts to identify how materiality is filtered through and constructed by a set of discursive strategies that is concerned with a poetic and disruptive introduction of female bodiliness, which has unjustifiably earned her the derisive eponym of an ‘essentialist’ which we discuss now in brief.

*The essentialism that is not one*

Irigaray has often been accused of essentialism.<sup>4</sup> However, throughout her work she makes clear that her aim is not to advocate a theory of woman, nor is it to universalize womanhood. Her response to the question: ‘Are you a woman?’ for instance, reads as follows:

‘A typical question. A man’s question? I don’t think that a woman - unless she has been assimilated to masculine, and more specifically phallic models - would ask me that question. Because “I” am not “I”, I am not, I am not *one*. As for woman, try and find out...In any case, in this form, that of the concept of denomination, certainly not...So the question “Are you a woman” perhaps means there is something “other”. But these questions can probably be raised only “on the man’s side” and, as all discourse is masculine, it can be raised only in the form of a hint or suspicion’ (Irigaray, 1985b:120).

Furthermore, ‘essentialism’ conflates a variety of positions that are not always mutually compatible, thus ‘essentialism is not one’ (Schor, 1994: 60). For instance, strategic essentialism is not only necessary as a means of giving voice to the voiceless as advocated by

Spivak (1993), or as ‘a temporary strategic gesture in the interest of agency for struggle, no matter how dispersed the identities of the members’ (Calás and Smircich, 1999: 662 quoted in Prasad, 2012), but even more so for interrogating masculine sameness in order to allow new forms of discourse to emerge. In other words, the structuration of a phallogentric discourse shows up in the non-representation of the *feminine* in male discourse, and as such, must be investigated. This enables essentialism to be read as a ‘position rather than an ontology’ (Whitford, 1991: 16).<sup>5</sup> This is immediately apparent when reading Irigaray’s reputed attempts to ‘define woman’:

‘So woman has not yet taken (a) place... Woman is still the place in which she cannot take possession of herself as such. She is experienced as all-power-full precisely as her indifferentiation makes her readily power-less’  
(Irigaray, 1985a: 227)

Irigaray’s concern therefore is to show how discursive strategies exclude women. She uses her own discursive strategies to achieve this aim when noting that the female is: *not one - this sex which is not one, has not become, yet*. This means that women cannot be subsumed by the (masculine) same because the feminine cannot be described, referred to, given meaning and signified in male discourse because the terms of that discourse refer only to the male and they thus position her in the negated position of non-male. Irigaray therefore does not define ‘the woman’. What she does instead, is to show the philosophical conditions which *disavow* the feminine. Whitford explains why Irigaray ‘does not want to tell us what ‘woman’ is’ because ‘this is something which women will have to create and invent collectively’ (Whitford, 1991: 9). And although ‘Irigaray is not enough; she cannot alone fulfil our needs’ (Whitford, 1991: 5), her work provides us with resources to think differently the unthought and unsymbolized

which cannot be expressed within existing language. Whitford acknowledges that what is required is engagement with *two sexes* (rather than the single sex that is male or not-male), incorporating a new female symbolic, one that makes ‘fertile’ male and female readings ‘both at once’ (Whitford, 1991: 22-25). Introducing gendered and sexuated difference disrupts sameness through gender multiplicity and fluidity as is discussed next.

### *Gender multiplicity and fluidity*

Since human beings, female and male, are two irreducible subjects, Irigaray draws on the female body and notably, the vaginal lips, to point how this sex is not one, but an irreducible two, that is in constant contact with itself. This is captured in her example of how female genitalia, the sexual organs, are multiple and much more than two. Irigaray’s ‘labial politics’ powerfully and poetically expresses multiple identities and their fluidity<sup>6</sup>:

‘Between our lips, yours and mine, several voices, several ways of speaking, resound endlessly back and forth. One is never separable you/I are always several at once’ (Irigaray, 1985a: 209).

This feminist imaginizing (Jackson, 1999) is thus different from dualistic gender constructions that aim to disrupt gender binaries and propound an exclusionary sexual politics (Butler, 1990, 1993). That is, her writing of ‘two lips’ is not an attempt to construct a true theory of sexual difference starting from the foundations of female biology, but a challenge to the traditional construction of feminine morphology where the bodies of women are seen as receptacles of masculine completeness (see Schor, 1994: 48-51). The *feminine* then, is not to be understood as opposite to the masculine: the gendering of the term should be understood in a broad, non-realist sense (Kozel, 1996).

In returning to the body Irigaray shows that woman is multiplicity rather than the opposite of the man. Conceived in this plural and dynamic fashion woman (or other non-males) can never be identified as static and foundational, or as Irigaray states paraphrasing Aristotle's formulation 'as place, matter, envelope for the erection of the content of conversation, its form and shaper - man' (Irigaray, 1993c: 12). In her texts the influential Aristotelian dichotomy between a feminine matrix (an inert envelope, passive matter, malleable body) and masculine form (active soul) crosses its hierarchical boundaries, re-emerging as an embodied relation of gendered intersubjectivities. Encounters between subjects, for Irigaray, involve them in perceiving and articulating their differences and similarities, through contact with one another and with multiple aspects of themselves: encounters are thus fluid. In other words, Irigaray envisages changing the asymmetrical relations between men and women through a belief in fluidity, as she puts it poetically:

'Don't cry. One day we will succeed in saying ourselves. And what we shall say will be even more beautiful than our tears. All fluid'.

(Luce Irigaray, 1985b: 215)

While noting that female identity is multiple and fluid it is important to understand that Irigaray's use of the word *feminine* is *intentional* and *playful*. Like other post-structuralist feminists whose work is little drawn upon in organization studies (see McNay, 1999 and Flax, 1990, for examples), she requires us to read the corporeal feminine as never straightforward or complete - but in play, and becoming in myriad spaces. Butler acknowledges this strategy and posits that the 'feminine is unthematizable, the non-figurable' (Butler, 1993:48):

‘This textual practice is not grounded in a rival ontology, but inhibits - indeed *penetrates*, occupies and *redeploys* - the paternal language itself’

(Butler, 1993: 45, italics ours)’

Butler’s only criticism is a question: where then is the feminine? Irigaray’s answer requires that we *mimic* the discourse that has always fabricated essentialist sexed facts and truths about female (and male) sexuality. She recognizes agency to be inextricably interwoven with structures of the symbolic order involving language, norms and means of (re)presenting difference. These create the possibility for ‘re-signification’ in the symbolic, not least because of its fluidity and localization at all levels including that of the individual. Judith Butler (1995) also explains this position well:

‘Within feminism it seems as if there is some political necessity to speak as, and for women, and I would not contest that category... On the contrary, if feminism presupposes that woman designates an undesignatable field of differences, one that cannot be totalized or summarized by a descriptive identity category, then the very term becomes a site of openness and resignifiability’ (Butler, 1995: 49-50).

With her *penetrative textual strategy* of using the grand (male) theorists’ own words, Irigaray is able to unveil the essentialist and ‘sexed’ nature of the masculinist tradition (hijacked by organizational logics) but also at the same time prevent herself from being reabsorbed into the reductive phallogentric order. In other words, in assuming ‘the feminine role deliberately’ (Irigaray, 1985a: 76) she transforms woman’s masquerade, her so called femininity, into a means of *re-appropriating, and playing with, the feminine* (see Schor, 1994; Burke, 1994).

Through this ‘playful repetition’ (Irigaray, 1985a: 76), that is, by assuming a seemingly essentialist but truly sexed gesture, Irigaray is able to achieve sexual difference against that sexual *indifference* characteristic of the phallogentric tradition. In so doing she resists dominant modes of masculine heritage and history, thereby opening up a site for destabilizing binary constructions of gender/sexuality (see Xu, 1995: 77-78).<sup>8</sup> The ‘spaces of femininity’ (Irigaray in Hirsch and Olsen, 1995) or individual resistances, can be unveiled, surfaced and articulated through the *performances of writing*, by situating it as a living place on the borders between feminist thought and masculine traditions. This *writing performance* is unquestionably *sexuate*<sup>9</sup> (Irigaray, 1993b) and wrapped up with bodily sensitivities and desires:

‘The whole of my body is *sexuate*. My sexuality isn’t restricted to the sexual act... Not to contribute making language and its writings *sexed* is to perpetuate the pseudo-neutrality of those laws and traditions that privilege masculine genealogies and their codes of logic’ (Irigaray, 1993b: 53).

But Irigaray does not believe that this can be achieved *a priori* without redefining the symbolic means that are used to express it, as we now demonstrate.

*(ii) Mimesis and intertextuality: Playing with text/identity*

Irigaray gives us theoretical and poetical tools that both enable and enhance that sense of agency as women and researchers in and of organizational spaces that allows us to start to resignify the assigned meanings to which Butler refers. We are thus provided with a flexible theoretical framework where masculinity and femininity function as fluid psycho-linguistic structures rather than as static definitions. Irigaray’s conception of fluidity as non-sameness is

enhanced by strategies of mimesis and dialogical engagement with texts. Braidotti forcefully summarizes this:

‘Irigaray’s strategy consists in *refusing* to separate the *symbolic discursive dimension* from the *empirical material* historical. She *refuses* to dissociate the questions of the feminine from the presence of *real-life women* and in so doing she may appear to repeat the binary perversion of phallogentrism, by equating the feminine with woman and the masculine with men. But the apparent mimesis is tactical’ (Braidotti, 1989: 99, italics ours).

Mimesis is thus a tool used purposefully to subvert the social order as it is presently defined and preserved by patriarchal structure. Irigaray emphasizes the parodic and playful character of the mimetic role:

‘To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try and recover the place of her exploitation and discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced by it. It means to resubmit herself... to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make “visible”, by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible... It also means to ‘unveil’ the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply reabsorbed in this function. They also remain elsewhere...’ (Irigaray, 1985a: 76).

However, this playfulness is not inconsequential. While it serves as an example of writing from the body it arises from an awareness of the intersecting modes of power relations and

interweaving signifiers that influence how one is signified and presented. Since ‘to speak is never neutral’ (Irigaray, 2002), and since every text is dialogical, gaining its meaning in relation to other texts (Bakhtin, 1986), Irigaray mingles her voice with the voice/text of male philosophers, searching for an ‘entre-nous’ - what can we do together - in her revolutionary commitment to intertextuality. Her writings can be read as being beyond the reaches of binary sexual differences as articulated via masculine languages, and so connecting you and me (text and reader), in myriad spaces/places. This is because her commitment is to an intersubjective economy that permits equitable symbolic representation and exchange: Irigaray’s use of relational figuration of pro-nouns enriches a reading collaboration with *I You and Us: Je Tous Nous* (involving the author, the reader and the text, see Irigaray, 1993a). A form of such *performative textual engagement* implied by Irigaray is effectively articulated by Montefiore:

‘Irigaray’s insistence on women’s *fluidity and plurality* of speech is, then, as much a prescription for the *reader’s response* as a description of *female identity*: It describes an approach as well as the thing being approached. Correspondingly, her discursive method very often consists in offering at the same time withdrawing a list of definitions of the feminine, none of which quite fit’ (Montefiore, 1987:152 quoted in Whitford, 1991: 23, italics ours).<sup>10</sup>

Irigaray’s concern to performatively engage with her readers - you and me - resonates strongly with poststructuralist concerns to encourage writers’ reflexive awareness of their involvement in knowledge construction and interpretations:

‘...her work is offered as an object, a discourse for women to exchange *among themselves*, a sort of commodity, so that women themselves do not have to function as the commodity, or as the sacrifice on which sociality is built... Her work is for *symbolic exchange* only (Whitford, 1991: 52, italics ours).

In sum, Irigaray draws on the female body and sexual difference to open up new territories for exploring and challenging male codes of language and discourse. Irigaray writes through the body in order to bring to the fore the sexuate nature of cultural representations in organizations and society. To write from the body is to re-imagine/re-invigorate potentialities for resistance to any configurations of dominant knowledges and social and political orders. Her poetic writings symbolize attempts to ‘disrupt’ and ‘modify’ sexual and organizational relations, and present opportunities to challenge existing divisions and inequalities rather than simply reproduce them. She opposes the economy of (masculine) sameness, and introduces the notion of sexuate bodies whose sexed differences give rise to the domination of one gender over another. Put differently, Irigaray is committed to fluidity of identity and is concerned with unveiling how all language use/construction has gendered implications. Such is for instance a form of linguistic *mimesis* (see Irigaray, 1985a) which allows women to subvert the inherited social order as it is presently defined by patriarchal structures that will, without care, continue to inform management and organization studies. The bodiliness advocated by Irigaray is a useful mechanism for unravelling how gendered scripts are written and carved on bodies and psyches and how these have implications for lived experiences of women (and, we will argue, men) in organizations. It is thus clear why it is important that the material turn in organization studies must be informed by her insights into gender and its

functioning: Irigaray provides us with ways of connecting with textual resistances that can become regenerative and transformative.

Below we discuss the specific implications of those aspects of Irigaray's theories for management and organization studies more generally and the discursive/material turn within it in particular. This is followed by an outline of some first steps towards developing a feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies. We articulate a reflexive writing from the body as a process of giving birth to ideas rather than one of insemination in which active (female or male) minds conceive ideas that must be implanted in the passively waiting minds of students, managers and academics. In other words, the argument put forward is that the creation of ideas is a relational process occurring in the space in between thinkers and through interactions between them. We apply these ideas to examine how the space in-between might challenge organizational hierarchies, and discuss how it may help us think differently about organizations through Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference, gender fluidity and multiplicity.

### **Discussion: Developing a feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies**

A feminist *écriture* for/of organization studies would draw on Luce Irigaray's work to offer new insights about materiality premised on multiplicity and gender fluidity, thus enriching post-structuralist theorizing about organizations. Where Irigaray reads grand male philosophers against the grain in her *écriture féminine*, the feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies would challenge dominant debates within organization studies that are predicated upon a phallic desire for domination (see Fotaki and Harding, 2013 for a discussion). Thus for organizational scholars to be at the centre of language is synonymous with the phallic desire to control what can be sayable, that is, to be masters of the symbolic

order (ibid.). However, if we follow Irigaray's poetical language we could access new possibilities of expressing ourselves that may allow us to write and feel differently. It might for instance be concerned with rethinking our own embodied presence and how it impacts on our teaching, research and theorizing about management and organization studies. It could perhaps be extended to examining changing material interactions in organizations through an Irigarayan inspired 'poethics' (Toye, 2010; 2012) that would enhance working lives. We start by exploring how the researcher's reflexivity could or should be influenced by Irigaray's writings and then move on to discussing the concept of a poethics of relationality in organizations inspired by her work and the relevance of her ideas for understanding intersectionality in organizations.

#### *Reflexivity that comes from the body*

A contemporary feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies starts by changing how we think of ourselves as reflexive researchers and writers. Reflexivity has become an important concern in organization studies, where the researcher/writer is enjoined to acknowledge her subjective assumptions and limitations in interpreting and reporting on what she perceives to be reality (Cunliffe, 2003; Brewis and Wray-Bliss, 2008). However, although such critical approaches aptly highlight the tensions and paradoxes of the role of the researcher in constituting 'reality' and their power over the researched, the turn to reflexivity presumes, perhaps unintentionally, that a researcher can extricate herself and, as it were, assume the position of an outsider who is cognizant, if not fully, of the multiple ways in which her identity (Rhodes, 2001) or multiplicity (Pullen, 2006) is implicated in the research. Irigaray prompts us to challenge this view since she not only rejects the neutrality of language but also the possibility of separation of language from the body of the writer and that of the text. Multiplicity may be expressed in the texts we produce: texts which may be so distant from

supposedly neutral and/or objective accounts that they extend into experimental literary genres that aim to devise new languages for organizations. Irigaray's use of mimesis is aimed to achieve just this. In her writing she deploys a variety of poetic gestures, including strategic mimesis, or catachresis (that is, the excessive repetition and parody on which Butler relies), and reading of various texts against the grain, so she provides us with tools for how to bring about this process of upsetting that very knowledge that we, as academics, produce. The implications for the ethical position of researcher is thus different from that of Derridean undecidability (Atkin, Hassard and Wolfram-Cox, 2007; Rhodes, 2009) as it advocates the necessity of creating new symbols of knowledge after exposing the sexed nature of existing discourses and representations. In fleshing out gender as suggested by some organizational scholars (Fournier, 2002), we can untopple hierarchies of positivist logic, thought and reasoning as we reassert the embodiedness of subjective agency. This resistive strategy brings into motion a dialogic play and hopefully, and for that moment, at that historical place - the performative and intertextual become entwined: we come to experience feminine pleasures in, and of, themselves as embodied texts. To 'write the body' and 'write from the body' thus requires that reflexivity is corporeal, aesthetic and political. The ultimate goal of reflexivity, following Irigaray's ways of writing/disrupting, would be an alternative ethical position of/for organization studies.

So where are we, the authors of this text, as we advocate a new form of reflexivity, one written from the body? Where is our reflexive reflection from our feminine embodied subjectivities? As Dale (2001:30) states, she/we cannot (and should not) disconnect our embodied identity from our work - it is 'a deliberately political act that I critique the absent-presence [of the body] in organization theory' (Dale, 2001: 30). The question is: what bodies do we therefore reflect from as we reflexively examine our own influences on the research

we do, and how do those bodies influence the possibilities for reflexivity? Irigaray points towards a new form of intertextuality: she argues that since the only language that is available is modelled on male subjectivity each text is pre-conceived of as masculine. Reading such texts has a performative effect too: the reader is constituted in her identity as she reads. Therefore, when what is available to be read is masculinist, the reader is encouraged to continue in constructing the self through a masculine lens, regardless of whether the reader is female or male. This leads to the question of how we may give birth to the feminine, or to an identity that moves fluidly between feminine and masculine. That is, as well as trying to articulate how our subjectivity has influenced what we have researched and how we have interpreted the data, we also have to consider how we might affect and effect the putative readers of our text. Are we intending or pretending to inseminate them from a position of embodied masculinity as the academic convention dictates, imposing on them a specific reading despite our reflexive attempts to understand ourselves? Do we seek to inculcate a scientific ideal that requires that they, too, hear only a master's voice that states what knowledge is or should be? Or are we seeking to give birth – to something different and thus to a transformed reader who can take our ideas and use them for their own growth? Irigaray's work suggests we need a reflexivity that considers both author and reader, one that emerges from the body not as a phallic eruption of semen but as an inter-relational space or a connecting tissue between men and women that allows growth.

The very act of writing down our ideas is about creativity and as such it concerns both women and men. We must, following Irigaray, move beyond cerebral models of creativity where the locus of ideas is the (masculine) mind. Irigaray's use of the female body helps us extend the metaphor of the labouring female body to show the bodily dimension of creativity. Without bringing together both female and male there can be no birth: insemination is useless

without a womb as the space for creating the other. Birth (of ideas) follows, and birth involves hard labour and pain – it is far from romantic. This Irigarayan female morphological figure offers an alternative to the phallus and encompasses pain and tribulation as well as sensuality and pleasure, but also care and nurturing. This recognizes far more of what it is to be an embodied subject than does the phallic figure of pleasure through domination. That is, the academic endeavour of writing from the body conceives of a relational space between woman and man in which we produce, write and share our research. This also means that we need to acknowledge the intrinsic vulnerability of our bodily existence that prompts, underpins and makes possible our ‘creations’.

This is how we have attempted to write this paper. We have each worked on aspects of it in our individual and geographically separate homes and offices, meeting together to discuss the emerging ideas. There have been moments of joy in this writing that has involved togetherness and apartness, much hard slog, and also some difficult times as we have struggled to give birth to one paper from three different bodies. This has taught us not to romanticize writing from the body: the female body as it labours in childbirth is wracked with pain, and this metonymic relationship between the body that writes and the body that gives birth is an important one. This process of giving birth is far different from the contest that involves academics in business schools in the UK and many other countries demonstrating their prowess through publishing in highly-ranked journals. A feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies challenges this embattled notion of academic work and emphasizes conception and giving birth, care and nurturing.

*Relationality through Irigarayan poethics*

But even as we write this paper we are positioned in a hierarchical relationship to colleagues, as are most people who work in company with other employees. Hierarchy implies power (Acker, 1900; McDowell, 1997, 2009; Trethewey, 1999) that is exercised at a local level. Drawing their inspiration from a critical tradition many organizational theorists have investigated such hierarchical power relationships: between managers and workers; colonizers and colonized; leaders and followers. The control/resistance binary that often dominates such debates is located within a masculinist framework (Mumby, 1996). The feminist *écriture* for/of organization studies would offer new ways of dismantling these hierarchies. To illustrate this, we draw on Toye's (2010; 2012) development of an Irigarayan 'poethics', a neologism coined through her reading of Irigaray.

Toye (2012:187), a literary theorist, writes of the importance of space, time and the 'interval between' in Irigaray's work. The interval between is that space between two (or more) subjects: there can be neither a solo nor an individual subject, because subjectivity requires emergence in relation. Subjects are thus always conjoined. The 'interval between' or 'between two' is a place of subjectivity that is about becoming in relation. 'The interval between the two subjects becomes both a space and not a space, in that to be in an ethical relationship is not to be in a one-plus-one relation, but instead, it is to enter into a whole other ontology, one of "between two" (p. 188). Toye (2010:47) writes that Irigaray 'constantly emphasizes the space of mediation between two subjects, the figures used in Western culture to convey that space, and how a revolution in thought and ethics may occur if alternative occupants of that space can be figured. For Irigaray, that in-between space, between two subjects, is occupied by the phallus and it is the phallus which mediates relations between subjects. The phallus must be evicted from a position of a symbol of domination if new ethical relationships are to emerge.

Organizations, in this reading, are replete with phallic spaces in which those more senior in the hierarchy place severe limits upon voice, identity and becoming-ness of their juniors. The manager dominates the staff member; the leader the follower, the male the female, and so on. The feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies should denaturalize such hierarchical arrangements, and seek instead spaces where organizational subjects may flourish as equals engaged in processes of meaningful work. As Oseen (1997) puts it:

‘The subject-to-subject relations postulated by Irigaray, the new myths which allow for more and more human variety in the ways of doing things, are not possible in this form of organizing with its emphasis on command and control and its retention of hierarchical relations, however disguised’.

This too-brief discussion of the poethics of organizational writing builds on the longer discussion above, of how a feminist *écriture* for/of organization studies would challenge the ways in which we reflect upon ourselves as researchers. Organizational poethics puts those researching selves alongside other embodied subjects in an organizational space in which hierarchy can and should be challenged. Within that space self-making and identity construction takes place and new forms of ethical relationships can emerge.

Finally, we draw on Irigaray to propose new ways of thinking differently about subjectivity and identity in organizations through her critique of alterity, focusing particularly on intersectionality.

*Intersectionality in organizations*

Intersectionality is a central issue in gender theory that also encompasses debates on cosmopolitanism, hybridity, multiculturalism or even globalization (Walby, Armstrong and Strid, 2012). Intersectional theory considers the constitution of selves when bodies are positioned at the nodal point of multiple identities. Organizational research has until now not adequately examined axes of intersectional difference, nor considered its social transformational possibilities. Transnational and feminist post-colonial critiques are similarly downplayed, reaffirming a masculinist logic positioned in a Eurocentric frame which has skirted over implications of globalization for labour and skill changes, and broader human well-being agendas (see Puwar, 2005; author/s, 2011). Even less consideration is given to what becoming a subject might imply in diverse geographic scholarship and locales (Bondi, 2009). Consequently, Western scholarships eclipse feminizing logics concerned with and produced in predominantly non-western places and localities (see Minh-ha, 1989; Mohanty, 1998). This is a significant knowledge gap in research on gender symbolism and power relations in diverse geo-political contexts in the global sphere with multiple points of origin of power (McDowell, 1997, 2009). We need to question the patriarchal mis-representation of, and spatial significance of, difference (Harvey, 1996; McDowell, 2010), so as to embrace transnational modes of organizational praxis (Mohanty, 1998). In sketching future avenues for research, we propose the value of addressing this issue through Irigaray's concepts in relation to the dynamics of fluid femininities in diverse geographic spaces. This not only re-reads gendered organization and social relations, but enables a re-visioning of social and relational ethics in human work endeavours that is inclusive and promotes transversal politics (Walby, 2009, 2011).

Irigaray's work, articulated within a feminist *écriture* for/of organization studies, offers new ways of thinking about fluidity between identity categories. Feminist post-colonial theorists

in particular (Lugones, 2007) denote the inseparability of various identities that can only be understood as ‘curdled’, that is, retaining their various constitutive aspects but creating a new hybrid identity constituted within multiple relations of power in colonial/modernity. The feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies would develop Irigaray’s work on feminine subjectivity, for example to explain how in the Western tradition, ‘the other is always seen as the other of the same, the other of the subject itself...’ (Irigaray, 1995). Since Irigaray is committed to an intersubjective economy that permits equitable symbolic representation and exchange in organizations her work has the potential for extending this intersubjective communication to global community sites. In other words, by interrogating the ethical, ontological and social status of women she allows us to move towards the creation of a powerful female symbolic in global spaces so as to represent the *other* of sexual difference.

Thus if one looks to the future development of organization theory the message is that we invite *her*, the *other*, the *subaltern* in, so as to re-imagine new organizational formations and new identities so that no subject positions are silenced and in shadow (Mohanty, 2003). What happens when women and racial groups take up positions not reserved for them? There is perhaps an encounter that causes disruption and necessitates negotiation and invites complicity (see Puwar, 2005). Students of organizations need therefore to unpack how discursive repositories of bodiliness are presented and played out in diverse geopolitical contexts, that is, how notions of competence and identity are fleshed out and corporeality navigated (Benhabib, 1995). This is especially important given the globalized business world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The turn to the mutual embroilment of discourse and the material in organizational spaces, to a feminist *écriture* for/of organization studies, needs to be informed by insights that prevent the further sedimentation of global inequalities through overly-innocent approaches to materiality and discourse.

## Conclusion

Our aims in this paper were firstly ,to caution about risks that emerging interpretations of the relationship between discourse and the material could sediment gender and other inequalities; secondly to contribute to the small body of work on Irigaray in organization studies, and finally to begin development of a feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies. The paper has discussed Irigaray's work to show how she illuminates new ways in which gender inequalities are embedded in the very language through which we speak. Unless authors are aware of this grievous potential in language, the discourse/material turn will perpetuate those systems of inequality that many academics wish to challenge. We showed how Irigaray's work unravels sameness, that is, the presumption that women are nothing but an inferior copy of a supposedly better original: that is, the 'man' who is deeply ingrained in philosophy and science. Presumptions of sameness arise from language, in which hierarchy and power are embedded. Irigaray proposes that woman, rather being man's inferior opposite, is multiplicity, albeit a multiplicity that has no language through which to speak so can speak only from the margins of masculine discourse. She argues for a reformulation of the symbolic order through the body, where the material encounter of two bodies is one of fluidity and movement, and where the woman enacts the feminine only so as to make visible, through mimesis, what had been invisible (that is, that women are not inferior or different versions of men). The body as that which makes writing possible allows the author to consider how organizational structures, power relations and signifiers position the subject in conditions of inferiority/superiority. While there are substantive writings on sexuality and the body in organization studies literature, these are generally limited to debates which have been largely established through recourse to the *fathers* of philosophy including Irigaray's contemporaries Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Lacan. We have illuminated the value of turning to female philosophers if we are to work towards more ethical, caring organizations.

We have then applied Irigaray's theoretical perspective to start developing a feminist *écriture* for/of organization studies. We considered the topic of reflexivity to understand how thinking and writing from the body changes what and how we write because we conceive of ideas as a process not only of insemination but also of giving birth: reflexivity is improved if the writer considers whether the body that is written from is a dominant masculine position that aims to impregnate or a feminine space that nurtures growth and acknowledges pain. We challenged organizational hierarchy through a 'poethics' that better understands the destructive ways in which power works in organizations, and the conditions on which they rest (as the male rests on the female to ensure his own existence and visibility). Irigaray's body of work, in influencing the development of the feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies, helps us identify and challenge taken-for-granted oppressive hierarchical relationships wherever they may occur. We concluded our tentative steps towards showing how such an *écriture* might look through exploring intersectionality in a way sympathetic to Irigaray, that led us to warn of ways in which studies of globalization may sediment continuing inequalities, even as they may wish to challenge them, because of the gendered language used to understand globalization. There are numerous other potential contributions to the feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies: space allows us to illuminate only the initial steps in this project. Irigaray's work challenges the female/male binary, showing that female and male are fluid psycholinguistic structures, so her work is available for analyzing any areas of inequality. It offers the potential of writing from the female or male labouring body, and exploring the power of allowing those who are usually refused the pen the opportunity to speak.

Importantly, the feminist *écriture* of/for organization studies concerns both women and men since it opens possibilities for challenging the phallus's claim to dictate what is sayable and thinkable in organizations. Such a conception of organization will lead to a different affective

economy, opening up a non-psychotic relation between the feminine (conceived as neither male nor female) and creativity which informs knowledge production and ethics (author/s). In such a space moreover, as researchers, authors, reviewers and academic labourers, we have an opportunity to challenge millennia of masculine thinking that reduces women and men to ciphers through which power flows to the benefit of some and the sacrifice of the many. Irigaray helps us understand oppression that is otherwise beyond our conscious knowledge because we swim in it like fish in water; we have used her insights to point to a new way of organizational writing, one that should inform the discourse/material turn but go far beyond it. However, all we can do in the space of this paper is point towards this potential, and then return to the body that writes, to take forward the ideas we have outlined here – ideas which challenge the symbolic, encourage play and pleasure, both inseminate and nurture, and identify and deconstruct presumptions of sameness, rather than difference.

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## Notes

<sup>[1]</sup>The word *speculum* derives from the original Latin meaning of mirror: *specere*, to look. It also refers to an instrument for dilating cavities of the human body for inspection. She states ‘tuned horizontally into relation to the face, the concavity will make it seem as if it is turned upside down’ (Irigaray, 1985a: 183). But the concave mirror is also a lens that can ‘shed the secrets of caves’ and to pierce the mystery of the woman’s sex’ (ibid: 182). The *speculum* is a male instrument for the further penetration of the woman but it is also a hollow surface, like the one it seeks to explore (see Dale, 2001).

<sup>[2]</sup>Descartes is the exact centre of the book- the inner most cavity- ‘as if to demonstrate Irigaray’s contention that women constitutes the silent ground on which the patriarchal thinker erects his discursive construct’ (Moi, 1985: 131).

<sup>[3]</sup>The publication of Luce Irigaray’s doctoral thesis *Speculum de l’Autre Femme* in 1974 led to immediate expulsion from Lacan’s *Ecole Freudienne* at Vincennes. Ever since she has held an outcast position within French academia, and especially within psychoanalytic fields.

<sup>[4]</sup> Luce Irigaray's fearlessness towards speaking the body has earned her the dismissive label of ‘essentialist’. But Irigaray's works (1985a, 1985b) suggest that essence may not be the unitary, monolithic category that anti-essentialists so often presume it to be. Irigaray strategically deploys essentialism for at least two reasons: first, is to reverse and to displace Jacques Lacan's phallogormorphism; and second, is to expose the contradiction at the heart of Aristotelian metaphysics which denies women access to ‘Essence’ while at the same time positing the essence of ‘Woman’ as non-essential (as matter).

<sup>[5]</sup> Fuss too is convincing when stating there is no ‘essence to essentialism... essence as irreducible has been constructed to be irreducible’ (Fuss, 1989:4). Reviving John Locke’s binary oppositions she distinguishes between two kinds of essentialism: *real* and *nominal*. Real essence corresponds to the Aristotelian understanding and is unchanging, whereas nominal essence signifies a linguistic convenience that is more amenable to transformation.

<sup>[6]</sup> Schor (1994: 57-67) acknowledges her indebtedness to Gallop (1988) whose early work on Irigaray’s body politics urges us to ‘beware’ of too literal a reading of her references to female anatomy.

<sup>[7]</sup> Irigaray’s mimetic strategy is most convincing when she points out Freud’s failure to locate the facts of female specificity which Freud could not see because of his male lens (see Irigaray, 1985a: 29-40 and also Xu, 1995).

<sup>[8]</sup> Connections can be made with what Derrida calls paleonymy: ‘the occasional maintenance of an old name in order to launch a new concept’, and what Schor calls a ‘canny mimicry’ (see Schor, 1994: 66-67).

<sup>[9]</sup> Sexuate terminology here replicates Lacan’s construction - simply that language systems are structured in sexuate ways, with hierarchies, orderliness disavowing the silent feminine (see also Fotaki, 2013; Fotaki and Harding, forthcoming).

<sup>[10]</sup> Whitford (1991: 7-8) notes that the terminology of men/women; masculine/feminine etc. and its translation from French to English is not always so clear and she exclaims ‘I throw my hands up in despair’. Like her we hope that in interrogating Luce Irigaray’s use of the word feminine that our arguments are clear enough and that the reader will forgive the occasional inconsistency or ambiguity.

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Marianna Fotaki is professor of business ethics at Warwick Business School, the University of Warwick, holds a visiting professorship in Manchester Business School and has held a research position as a Marie Curie Fellow in London School Economics and Political Science. She is a graduate of medicine, public health, and holds a PhD in public policy from the LSE. Before joining academia she has worked as a medical doctor, a volunteer and manager for humanitarian organizations Médecins du Monde and Médecins sans Frontiers, and as the EU senior resident adviser to governments in transition (in Russia, Georgia and Armenia). Marianna has published over thirty articles on the marketization of public policy, gender and otherness and business in society in journals including: *British Journal of Management*, *Human Relations*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of Social Policy*, *Organization*, *Organization Studies*, *Policy & Politics*, *Public Administration*, *Social Science & Medicine* and *Sociology of Health & Illness*. Her monograph on *Patient Choice* by Edward Elgar, a co-authored book with Nancy Harding *Women in 21st Century* by Routledge and the co-edited collection with Kate Kenny *Affect at Work* by Palgrave are due to be published in 2014. Marianna serves as a Senior Editor for *Organization Studies* journal.

Nancy Harding is professor of organization theory at the University of Bradford's School of Management. She grew up in a coal-mining community and worked as a typist and on the lines in a factory before becoming a mature university student. Her doctoral grant helped support her family through the miners' strike of 1984-1985. Those experiences from the first half of her life inform her academic research and writing. She is the author of two monographs that explore the social construction (very loosely defined) of the manager (Routledge, 2003) and the employee (Routledge, 2013), with a third book on the social construction of the organization in the planning stage. She has co-authored two books and is working on a third co-authored book with Marianna Fotaki. She has published more than 20 papers in the usual journals, but the achievement that won her her most valued plaudits has been obtaining tickets for her grandsons to see Manchester United play Chelsea in the winter of 2012.

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