CHORA:

FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL COSMOLOGY

AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

IN AN AGE OF TELETECHNOLOGY

A dissertation submitted to

the faculty of Drew University

in candidacy for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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January 2016

ABSTRACT

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Considering cosmogenesis and early human life as more than mutual analogs, this project presents an interdisciplinary history of *chora*--a quasi-maternal matrix of material and symbolic mediation--and offers to that history the resources of psychoanalytic object relations. In so doing, I understand psychoanalytic theory to be a discipline historically rooted in cosmic speculation, ready for re-invigoration within theological and philosophical studies in religion. This project engages adaptations of the ancient Platonic chora in contemporary metaphysics (Whitehead and Deleuze), linguistics (Derrida), and psychoanalysis (Kristeva) in light of feminist hopes and concerns about gynomorphic work; and proposes the "potential space" of D. W. Winnicott as a hermeneutic for the contemporary choric conditions of ecological crisis and digital connectivity.

In philosophical attempts to bridge the virtual and the actual, chora presents an unlocalizable and undifferentiated place of place, the stuff and communicability of the

ineffable. In theories of early childhood, chora presents a space for emergence of language and consciousness in continuity with an entity experienced as a place, utility, or container. A human infant's contestations over the im/personality of its caregivers provide an analog to philosophical disputes over a personality of the cosmos: the genders and attributes of Nature and God.

Ambivalence about a mother as an environment, a machine, or a person manifests in contemporary situations of eco-murder/suicide and *teletechnology*, a turn to digital mediation characterized by contradictory cravings for immediacy and distance that collapse into a matrixial substrate for late capitalism. In response, I suggest the receptivity and assertion of listening and talking. Chora in our contemporary moment can still hold and hold open space through the material-semiotic transmutation of bodily needs and wishes into alimentary, affective gatherings with revolutionary potential.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

> The mother of all metaphors, is of course, the maternal metaphor. As is the reverse. [1]
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> --Andrew Parker, *The Theorist's Mother*

Plato's famously dualistic metaphysics of eternal forms and decaying matter, itself intended to provide a middle ground between a philosophy of mathematics and a philosophy of flux, undergoes a shift in his later writings. The *Timaeus* is a strange and possibly quite funny Platonic dialogue, as John Sallis observes. In it, Plato postulates something in between the realm of ideas and the things of the world, something that semester after semester is drawn on chalkboards all over the world: the line between the visible and the invisible. And although the images Plato offers for this not-quite-something are curvaceous, *chora* is conceptually first and foremost the space within or immediately around that all-important dividing line.

In ancient and contemporary settings, chora most broadly marks a place of mediation between corporeality and virtuality, a liminal zone necessary for a host of cosmic and human projects of actualization, differentiation, and meaning. This project thus traces, through ancient and contemporary readings of chora, an intimate infinite that

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1 Andrew Parker, *The Theorist's Mother* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 19.

is both delocalizable and centered; personal and impersonal, gendered and undifferentiated. Chora's oceanic potential for countering isolated individualism, feminists cheer; chora's uncompensated and predictably gendered cosmic labor, feminists protest. Whether the ineffable is that which exceeds knowledge below language and representation (thereby closer to bodies and flesh) or above language (as mental, formal or virtual structures) chora inhabits the boundary that holds the two sides together and keeps them, at least partly, apart. Chora is what allows for the flow that makes it all work, while remaining opaque, as a kind of black box.[2]

The ancient Greek word *chora* is, under the influence of Plato, a metaphor of something like maternity. Maternity, in its turn, is a metaphor for mothers. Mother is in its way a metaphor for a person who performs certain labors on behalf of dependent children, with greater and lesser success, within wider circles of economic and political structures. A mother, like the related category woman, may have tenuous access to the properties and attributes of personhood, and instead be understood domestically and politically to embody divine attributes of providingness, unconditionality, and general unboundedness, whether of the caring or monstrous kind.

That metaphors, as a linguistic reach for familiarity across conceptual difference, should have something to do with mothers is one of the points implied in the aphorized opening epigraph. It is nearly impossible to think about thinking without the work of metaphorical maternity to help conceive, fertilize, foment, hold open. The maternal metaphor encompasses the encompassing of things, the conception of ideas, the

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2 In systems theory, a black box is most simply a bracketed process with an inflow and an outflow.

generation of space, time, objects, and people. It is quite beyond comprehension. This is because com/prehending is its job, not ours.

This project understands the figure of chora as inherited from ancient sources and interpreted in contemporary settings to express directly and indirectly (we might also say consciously and unconsciously) ambivalences about maternity. These ambivalences are key to the work that chora performs, producing and inhibiting space and boundaries, containment and porosity. These affective ambivalences settle into contradictory logics that materialize as the earliest conditions of life, conditions that might turn us to theories of early childhood development for explication.

One of the ways to catch a glimpse of the enigmatic chora is to realize that one of its primary purposes is to go unnoticed; that its job is to *make things possible* without seeming to do anything at all. Provisions, conditions, utilities, substrates: the conditions of life and existence must appear as if by magic, without hands, feet, face, wage, or debt. Is chora then a kind of machine?

Container Technologies

A lovely summary of the *shape* of this technology in conjunction with Winnicott's theory of early childhood is available in the anthropological work of Zoë Sofia and her concept of container technologies. Sofia brings together the Winnicottian notion of the "environmental mother" with Gregory Bateson's "cybernetic ecology" and Lewis Mumford's account of tools and utensils, to inquire into the image of the world "as

an infinite container of resources."[3] According to Sofia, Winnicott's dictum that "There is no such thing as an infant [apart from the maternal provision]"[4] should be held alongside Bateson's ecological definition of survivability, that "the unit of survival is organism plus environment." We might thus better understand the ways in which "the organism which destroys its environment destroys itself." Bateson's cybernetic unit of survival has "receptivity and intelligence…'beyond its skin,'" in that "the individual mind is immanent but not only in the body. It is immanent also in pathways and messages outside the body."[5]

Sofia makes note of how Winnicott's object relations framework manifests container/contained dynamics in the process of projective identification, whereby an aspect of the self is not just projected onto but *into* an object. This is how an infant can "investigate his own feelings in a personality powerful enough to contain them."[6] This is experienced on a mother's side as a partial identification with the infant, such that its continuity includes her, but she remains separate enough to "serve as the container and interpreter" for experience. The containing capacity (the work and experience of a caregiver) gives rise to the self-organization of a baby. The complex activity of parenting

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3 Zoë Sofia, "Container Technologies," *Hypatia. 15, no. 2 (2000):* 181, referencing Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind; Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology* (San Francisco: Chandler 1972) and Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co. 1934).

4 This phrase is Thomas Ogden's clarification of Winnicott's statement, "There is no such thing as an infant," in Thomas H. Odgen, *The Matrix of the Mind: Object Relations and the Psychoanalytic Dialogue* (London: Karnac 1992), 620, http://site.ebrary.com/id/10497252, as quoted in Sofia, "Container Technologies," 182.

5 Bateson *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* 1972, 483 and 461 as quoted in Sofia, "Container Technologies, 182-184.

6 Wilfred R. Bion, "Attacks on Linking," IJP 40 (1959): 308-15, as quoted in Thomas H. Ogden, "The Dialectically Constituted/Decentered Subject of Psychoanalysis" IJP 73 (1992): 613-26, as quoted in Sofia, "Container Technologies," 184.

needs to go unnoticed, not in a way that supports long term magical thinking, but in a way that can be felt and relied upon affectively, below direct notice. This zone of "potential space," per Winnicott, involves not too much and not too little intervention: the balance of the good enough parent.

Sofia calls attention to the "sociotechnical" bits of outer reality that make their way into the intermediate zone of potential space by simultaneously occupying a major role in the fantasy, or inner world of an infant. Container technologies are those apparatuses of human life that hold, contain, distribute, or supply: "utensils (like baskets or pots), apparatus (such as dye vats, brick kilns), utilities (reservoirs, aqueducts, roads, bulidings) and the modern power utility (railroad tracks, electric transmission lines)."[7] Sofia notes the sexual morphological associations Mumford makes by identifying container technologies with women, but disputes the essential femininity of containing, as many organic analogies of containment are present in human bodies across genders through "skin, mouth, stomach, bladder, bowel, blood vessels; even the penis is an expandable container of sorts, and eyes and ears are experienced as receptive organs."[8] Sofia connects container technologies to women instead through the "traditional labors of women" that are arranged to perform a "technics of the unobtrusive."[9]

The result of combining Mumford with Winnicott is that "space and container technologies may not be as dumb or static as we traditionally assume," and that "containment is not just about what holds or houses us, but what we put our stuff into,

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7 Sofia, "Container Technologies," 186.

8 Ibid.,187.

9 Ibid.,185.

and thereby identify with; what of ourselves we can and cannot contain." Sofia draws upon the work of Don Ihde to identify one of the "human-technology-world relationships" that seems to bear upon the burgeoning field of affect studies, that in "'background relations,' [containment] technology functions as shelter, cocoon, or a world; it can also be a cultural 'atmosphere,' such as nuclear fear."[10] The way a feeling can be present in a room that one walks into, the way that emotions define and create socio-political zones is one of the ways feeling-states are *affective*, creating and producing identities, political movements, and policies. Chora is a utility, an affect, a container technology.

Approaching the holding and supplying features of utilities and utensils through a Winnicottian theory of early childhood, the concept of container technologies goes a long way with chora to combine dynamics of gender, work, early childhood, and the potential space of natural and technological environments. To enter further into the methodical framing of this project, I turn next to the terms by which it is titled--feminist theological cosmology, psychoanalysis, and teletechnology—each a portal for the ideas that exceed and hold this project together.

Feminist Theological Cosmology

> Universe and cyberspace are conceived as closed vessels, the receptacle of all elements. There is still no escape in our notions of cyberspace from this nostalgia, this longing for the first (Woman) and last (God) home" [11]
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> --Irina Aristarkhova

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10 Don Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 112-115, as quoted in Sofia, "Container Technologies," 187.

11 Irina Aristarkhova, "Virtual Chora: Welcome," www.artistarkhova.org accessed April 12, 2012.

Contemporary constructive theologies negotiate the between of, on the one hand, the impersonality of cosmic natural forces, potencies and flows; and on the other hand the personal God of Christian monotheism which occupies a position of subjectivity through scriptural narrative, a character in a story with human attributes such as gender and love. This negotiation, as traditional accounts of orthodox patrilineage sometimes attest, could be roughly traceable to the hybridity of the personal (andropomorphic) Yahweh of scriptural traditions in tension/identification with the metaphysical ultimates of Greek philosophy. In English, gender is reserved for those organisms that sexually reproduce, although sexual reproduction is specifically forbidden to Christian divinity in both the father and the son, who must reproduce through other means. Judith Butler calls the disavowal of maternal causality in the process of generation a fantasy of *autogenesis*, or self-generation.[12] This can be viewed as a healthy feature of metaphysical systems that maintain interior relations of difference as opposed to hierarchical relations of transcendence, but this can also be viewed as a (usually) male fantasy of spontaneous generation and denial of dependence upon an exterior other, a mother.

Contemporary constructive theological discourses of cosmic becoming and differenciation are funded by a feminist tradition of engagement with abyssal structures that carry maternal gynomorphic imagery. Cosmogonic chora considers the ways that stories about cosmic beginnings exploit, disavow, and possibly celebrate the maternal labor: gestation, birthing, and care. Chora in this context is a vitality, personality, or

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[12] See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 150, and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 35-36, 54.

affect that pervades a space, like the way that infants encounter the cosmos as a human mother's body. The feminist theological choras this project encounters dance between a poststructuralist deconstructive apophasis—a critique of the ways language can carry out Plato's dualistic metaphysics (Derrida) and an eventive panentheism (Whitehead) to coalesce in a theological method that values poetic language and the becoming of God (theopoiesis). For Whitehead and Deleuze, cosmological chora is a potential space that holds open virtuality as a *receptacle* or *screen* of becoming. For Derrida, there is no predicate available to the phrase *khora is*-

This project is partially motivated by my feeling, in the midst of certain philosophical conversations in religion of an impasse of choras. For example poststructuralist theologians Catherine Keller and Roland Faber resonate with the Derridean *khora* while the ordinal psychoanalytic phenomenology of Robert Corrington explores the Kristevan *chora*. It is common among my peers to view these as irreconcilable, even to express derision at one or the other. Indeed, the most common question this project provokes when I announce the topic as chora is "which *one*?"

I experience the forced choice "which?" as an Oedipal affective milieu: a Derridean withdrawal from maternal presence or a Kristevan embrace of it; what might be felt as a dry distance or a wet engulfment. I have felt particular pressure over the spelling of the Derridean *kh*ora or the Kristevan *ch*ora. As a student of both traditions, I refuse such a forced choice, convinced that a rapprochement of choras is imminent. Additionally, it seems that the *kh* spelling may be unique to Derrida and his readers. For this reason, I will continue the general historical and contemporary feminist tradition of the *ch* spelling, not to establish primary allegiance with Kristeva, but rather to resist the

territorialization that seems to be in effect. In order to highlight these graphological politics, I will designate the *kh* to invoke Derridean thought specifically, and to clarify when the preponderance of writers are relating to the Derridean khora.

In one sense, from within a deconstructive turn in religion I am pointing toward psychoanalytic resources that did not take so steep a linguistic turn, but retained the materiality of language and bodily experience. In another sense, one of the major insights of this project is that apparent gulfs or conflicts between specific expressions of psychology, metaphysical cosmology, and semiotic theory can be addressed in and through the multiple aspects of chora, as well as by an intellectual history of psychoanalysis and philosophy, particularly in the German idealism that surged into Freud's intellectual matrix. The Schellingian chora is deeply unruly.

Psychoanalysis

> …it can only be the contradiction between conscious and unconscious in the free act which sets the artistic urge in motion…[13]
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> --F. Schelling

Psychoanalytic theory opens the dimensionality of affective vectors in the creation of consciousness, social relations, and politics; and it attempts to do so with something like scientific predictability, with varying theoretical and practical priorities. Drawing primarily from object relations theorists and from the Neo-Freudian pragmatic pluralists of the so-called "modern" school, I privilege the earliest phases of life, the "pre-

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13 Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, trans. Peter Heath, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 222.

oedipal" stage, ages 0 to 3 as the most formative, the most important to the development of a human; characterized initially by relative merger and intense affect, then the development of language, and emerging separation from the primary parent. Privileging the pre-oedipal yields a Freud not oriented around the Oedipus complex and its family drama; in my case it will mean not a lot of phallus and not even a lot of eros. Instead, I prioritize what I understand to be the most pressing concerns of neo-natal life, including what Freud dismisses as the ego instincts and experiences of hunger, thirst, coldness, wetness, continuity, rupture, holding, containment, separation, suffocation, abjection, waste, expanding continuity and presence.

This feminist project will not prioritize sexual difference, or even the subject formation of girls and women. It is a feminist project because it seeks to understand the conditions of misogyny in the course of understanding the origins and fear of origins of humans in early life.

This project addresses the condition of maternity under contestation by the *infans*, a baby who cannot yet speak, but is nonetheless imbedded in the language and culture of its caregivers. The challenge of accessing pre-linguistic experience necessitates a clinical approach that can be an obstacle in interdisciplinary conversation with philosophy: the theory is intended to mirror a baby's world. For the theory to effect the transition to language, it must accept pre-rational expressions at face value, and bring those feelings into adult framings. For example, the Kleinian theory of rage, hatred and envy at the breast could be understood by adult philosophers as an unsupportable demonization or vilification of infantile wishes and demands, and therefore ethically suspect as perpetuating ideas of original sinfulness and human depravity. From a baby's point of

view, however, such a highly dramatic scene of contestation, vilification, and the conflation of negative affects with states of being and nonbeing may accurately reflect the meaning it makes out of the feelings. It is *as if* an infant is performing these acts of violence, from its perspective, and from a parent's perspective whose infantile vulnerability has been activated. This "as if" is one of the logics of psychoanalysis, and the source of much of what can seem to be totalizing, essentializing, or unethical claims. Psychoanalysis attempts to access, mirror, and bring into language the totalizing experiences of tantrums, depressions, pleasures, and voids; dramas intending words with life or death stakes.

Protection and aggression are major themes. Defending mothers in order to avoid attacking them, we might keep them in an arrested stated of life/death, freezing maternal attributes into phallic forms of femininity, continually deferred and inaccessible. We might kill mothers in order to keep them safe and close by, so that they may forever keep us safe and close. We might anxiously protect them at the cost of our own coherence, or contentedly mutilate out of love, or attack in order to gain reality and vitality.

If we were lucky, our milieu was supported by a greater milieu; our parents had personal, financial, communal, and familial structures of support to do the work of the last trimester of gestation, outside and in the light. To manage their anxieties and stresses, to receive pleasure, to feel themselves activated in positive ways by their interactions with us. But all of them failed, at least some of the time, to be optimally what we needed.

This project invites readers to inhabit temporarily a place of great vulnerability, of what may reside in memory or not, a state of helplessness and intense feeling conditioned by the size of the human cranium requiring a fourth trimester of gestation to take place

outside the womb. Beyond those first three months, human motor control is such that self feeding and self moving will not be sufficient for survival without a caregiver for an extended period of years. This is how evolutionary biologists, anthropologists, and attachment theorists understand the capacity and purpose of language, culture, and emotional bonding.

This project will generally use the phrase "primary caregiver" or the "nearer" parent when referring to mothers, parents, and caregivers, as understood by adult framings, environments, and theories. Other psychoanalytic literature has deployed "mother" or "m(other)" or "mothering one." Interacting with some theorists who use the term "mother" to describe a conflicted relationship especially connected to gender, I will use the word "mother" to convey the full sense of conflict, desire, and complicity with gendered assignations of work and identity.

Because this project generally reflects a Winnicottian view of early life, I will use the phrase "maternal environment" "environmental mother" or holding environment to indicate some of the spatial dynamics of maternality and its ambivalence about im/personality. I will use the pronoun "it" to refer to an infant as an effort to hold open the space for its determination in its own gender, and to resist the overwhelming phallocentric introjection of categories of adult sex and sexuality into an infant's world. The aisle at the clothing store that enforces and divides infantile bodies by gender is represented in a linguistic moment of the representation of humanity, of personhood by gendered versus neutral pronouns. He or She enters the world as a person insofar as he or she is capable of reflecting a mono-gender in an adult world. For this project, a baby as "it" is an effort to hold off the invasion, and trouble the conflation of personhood with

gender enforcement; as well as to emphasize that the status of an infant is not quite at the level of subjectivity or personhood, and that conceptualizing life in that position means to suspend adult attributes of personhood and agency for a different way of experiencing being, awareness, and activity.

Jessica Benjamin's work in feminist psychoanalysis seeks to honor the mutuality of activity between caregiver and infant, and the possibility of differentiation without rupture in the developing child. Calling attention to the ways in which psychoanalytic theories can conceptually justify violence,[14] Benjamin calls upon psychoanalytic thinkers to learn from gender and feminist theory and to stop the uncritical adoption of the categories "subjects" and "objects." In a move that is shared by many post-Freudian streams of psychoanalysis including some object relations, Kohutian self-psychological, and other relational forms of psychoanalysis, Benjamin calls for an ethic and a theory of intersubjectivity. Although I consider this project to resonate with an intersubjective ethos, I do not employ language of subjectivity from a concern that the philosophical or linguistic subject, even an inter-subject, is based on adult categories that don't adequately reflect pre-differentiated early childhood states of asymmetrical, radical dependence.[15]

Analysis is a word shared between theory and psychoanalysis. When I use the word I intend to provoke awareness of implicit psychoanalysis within theory or

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14 See also Leo Bersani, *Thoughts and Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015) reprinted from Bersani, "Father Knows Best" 2010, *Raritan.* 29, no. 4: 92-104. "Is there a nonsadistic type of movement? Would we go toward the world if we were not motivated by destructive impulses?" in response to Freud's view of a "fundamental, ineradicable antagonism between the human subject and the world…"

15 See Jessica Benjamin, *Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1997); *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988); and *Like Subjects, Love Objects: Essays on Recognition and Sexual Difference* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

philosophy; as such I tend to use the word analysis to mean psychoanalysis and theory's indebtedness to or disavowal of that debt. This project expresses an analytic desire, the possibility of being known and accepted unconditionally. The conditions of analysis are well defined and simple, such that within the contract, unconditionality is available. Other human relations do not have such explicit contracts, and the conditions that allow relations to flourish necessarily change, often without prior agreement.

An Age of Teletechnology

> What if there was a box--A box filled with wisdom, science, insight, learning, ideas, dreams. It would be a magic box, knowledge box, technology box, art box, history box, music box, a box that brings people together, travel box, for people like you. A box with amazing powers always there for you. [16]
>
> --IBM Advertisement

"Teletechnology" is Derrida's term for the scopic saturation of informational mediation. The "tele" of teletechnology may sound dated, as does perhaps, the idea of subject/object relations in psychological constructs. Both belong to previous centuries, it seems, while radically interpenetrative interbeing, neuroscientific cyborgian concepts seem like the current century. Psychoanalysis itself, operating through metaphoric hydraulics—the rerouting of fluids via pistons, valves, and pipes--is surely an outdated mode of understanding neurobiology and the production of mind. Indeed, the average age of the water mains in New York City is seventy years old. Nationwide, our water infrastructure, including fresh water and sewage treatment are at daily risk of disruption

16 "IBM e-business servers are the magic box." IBM television advertisement, circa 2007 (exact date unknown), http://youtu.be/w7SspUI0Ekg, accessed August 2, 2015.

from fatigue. New parts are not available for replacement, and repair crews have been remarkably creative with welding what they can, onto rusting surfaces and crumbling concrete. Some of New York's water infrastructure is made out of wood. There are regions where no one knows any longer exactly at what level the pipes can be found, or how to find them.

Likewise, the psyche is not an easily changeable system. The structures that comprise it are by definition archaic, primitive leftovers from our earliest efforts to manage the unmanageable. Our psyches are formed by a series of relative maladaptations, built at different phases with different materials, and the further we age, the more likely they are to communicate the need for deferred maintenance by sudden disastrous flooding. Quite possibly it is in the outdatedness of the metaphors that teletechnology and hydraulics pertain.

Television, something that in the 1990's the writers of *Star Trek The Next Generation* had optimistically described as "a brief obsession of the late twentieth century," has proven itself to be more pervasive than ever. The passivity with which North Americans tend, on average, to approach the intricate potentials of our mediating technologies, is staggering. Nightly, as of December 2015, 70 % of North American downstreaming bytes are consumed by video entertainment, with Netflix as the single largest consumable, 37% of all usage.[17] This was the year the meme "Netflix and Chill" went viral on social media networks. Teletechnology is still an apt name for the

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17"America really DOES love to Netflix and chill: Site now accounts for 37% of all US broadband traffic and video takes 70% overall," *The Daily Mail UK*. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3351849/America-really-DOES-love-Netflix-chill-Site-accounts-37-broadband-traffic-video-takes-70-overall.html accessed January 3, 2016.

saturation of media that surrounds us in public and private spaces, beyond any ordinary ability to turn it off.

Summary

This project seeks to understand certain patterns of philosophical cosmogenesis in light of theories of early childhood, and to consider the historical indebtedness of psychoanalysis to cosmic speculation, in order to expand psychoanalytic resources for theological and philosophical studies in religion. The human infant's contestations of the im/personality of its primary caregivers provide an analog to the dispute over a personality of the cosmos, the qualities and constructs of God.

This project thus traces, through ancient and contemporary readings of chora, an intimate infinite that is both delocalizable and centered; personal and impersonal, gendered and undifferentiated. I will explore the fantasy of care from a machine, of the intrusion of personality into an environment of continuity; and the intrusion of *in*difference and *im*personality into a relation with a personality that requires protection and care from an infant. The affective registers of rejection and incorporation will be expressed by the phrase *matrixial ambivalence*: the conflicting affects that produce and respond to the near/far present/absence of a primary existential attachment that is usually gendered woman.

That gender presents itself at the ontological divide should not come as a surprise. A mother, as the emergence of first an environment then a human object from continuity with the neonate, is the first instantiation of otherness in a human's life, an otherness that seems to an infant to be more *and* less than human, generated from an infant's very own

unfolding. As such we should become suspicious of the contemporary poststructuralist suspicion of origins. Humans have origins, and so do *kosmoi*. Stories have multiple beginnings, but any one of those stories will suffice to accomplish autoaffection--self love and self hearing--through the speaking of a story routed through a machine, what psychaoanalysis discovers in the receptacle of the ear and the continuously morphing reflection in the blank screen of the analyst, a prosthetic device for human self discovery.

As the place of place that holds open, divides, and connects any number of variations on the ontological divide, chora functions for contemporaries and ancients at the level of the theo-cosmic, the linguistic, and the psychoanalytic. We may discover that these three registers operate best when speaking *with* rather than across each other. Through the complexity of such multi-disciplinarity, chora has the capacity necessary to frame contemporary situations of environmental apocalypse and screen-based digital mediation. A choric condition with a theological drive, the absent-presence and surface-depths of wirelessly connected screens provide a platform for theological reflection of an intimate infinite that offers containment and expansion, holding and adventure, interaction at the edge of narcissism, and an oceanic feeling that is somehow both continuous with the world and omnipotent over it; in other words, a desire for and dependence upon something like God.

Overview

A brief historical sweep of chora occupies the first four chapters of this dissertation. After introducing chora in the context of Plato and Freud, I conduct three primary rotations: in metaphysics (Whitehead), in deconstruction (Derrida), and in

psychoanalysis (Kristeva). The final two chapters explore chora via object relations theories, specifically the interdependent situations of environmental crisis and teletechnology.

Chapter One, "Plato & Freud, Receiving the Far/Near" playfully opens a portal for conversation with the major conceptual elements of this project by introducing the Greek chora (Plato) in conjunction with a Latin analog, matrix, together with the Freudian concepts of the oceanic feeling and the fort/da game as understood through Marguerite Porete's Far/Near image for the divine. The shared space for these connections is illustrated via popular cultural examples from the TV shows *Portlandia* and *Sesame Street*. ***Is chora analyzable?***

Chapter Two, "Primal Matrix" presents a theo/cosmological account of a chiasmic, receptive khora. This chapter will introduce the problem of gender at/as the site of ontological difference through a late-Platonic Whiteheadian influence in both the oceanic tehomophilia of Catherine Keller and the immanent planes of Roland Faber, placing these contemporary readers of Whiteheadian/Deleuzian affect in a tradition of gynomorphic imagery exemplified by Rosemary Radford Ruether's adaptation of goddess theology into Christian panentheism in the figure of *primal matrix*. The pervading questions for this engagement are: ***Is chora gender? Is chora feeling?***

Chapter Three, "Gender, Deconstruction, Khora" elaborates the issues of gender and maternity through the deconstructive khoras of Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, and John Caputo. An apophatic unlocalizable, and unbounded khora links the otherness of Woman with God, but matrixial ambivalence risks pushing the distance of the near/far into absence, so that the tehomic deep dries up. Ultimately, this chapter is

motivated by a feminist ethical concern of the use of a gynomorphic but non-agential imagery for uncompensated cosmic labor. ***Is chora feminist?***

Chapter Four, "Chora and the Drives" develops the psycho-linguistic chora of Kristeva through the philosophy of ecstatic naturalism, historically framed through nineteenth-century German idealism's influence on Freud, including Schelling's own reading of Timaeus. Robert Corrington's ecstatic naturalism elaborates the selving process of nature from an unruly chora that churns structures of meaning into the orders of the cosmos, in a contemporary Schellingian-Kristevan semiotic cosmology. ***Is chora Freudian?***

Chapter Five, "Mother/Nature: Environments in Object Relation" turns to ecofeminism and the figure of Mother Earth alongside the post-Freudian object relations theories of Melanie Klein, D. W. Winnicott, and Hyman Spotnitz to unfold an analysis of contemporary conditions of environmental apocalypse. I attend also to the nihilism of Slavoj Zizek, a Kleinian reading by Catherine Roach, and the enduring political power of the Pachamama. Postulating waste as the primary aim of capitalist desire in an aggressive depression directed to the chora of lived place, I explore theories of infantile aggression involved in object testing for love on the verge of mass suicide. ***Can chora survive?***

Chapter Six, "Electric Dreams and Touch Screens" develops the digital chora as a deeply gendered and theological site of matrixial ambivalence via the apparatuses of intimate distancing that reenact primary processes and oceanic feeling through the airways, cables, and electrical currents that comprise the capitalist matrix. I turn to Marshall McLuhan's media theory of prosthetic amputation, Patricia Clough's affective relation to teletechnology, and the socio-political chora of affect. Working through a

narcissistic defense, I take seriously Sherry Turkle's invitation to digitally untether and talk. ***Is chora here?***

We may not resolve the questions of whether cyberchora and other technologies of the substrate mostly hurt us or mostly help us; nor whether symbolic matricide is inevitable, or necessarily undesirable. Ultimately, this project will argue that choric sufficiencies can be received only if choric insufficiencies are protested. The violent impulses of matrixial ambivalence must be received rather than abjected from within psychosocial conditions and analytic engagements with chora, in order for the compulsion to murder/suicide to lose its momentum; while assertions for fairness and survival must travel the alimentary pathways of the carnal voice for the ineffable to materialize in symbolic fleshy shouts, songs, and plain ordinary words.

Choras of the (pre)semiotic and the symbolic need each other, need to share space in liturgically kairotic and ordinary executive functions. As Emanuela Bianchi suggests, chora insists on the interweaving of itself as a chiasmus of flesh and language.[18] Whether virtually or actually in proximity to a mother's body, chora is the space where we come to be and to speak. This "living metaphysics," as Ann Ulanov offers, opens out an interior space that is at once subjective and objective, where the core of our selves meets what is real.[19] By virtue of the choric admixture of body and language in the space of a primary caregiver, such metaphysics is also the space of a discourse that defies oppositions between mythos and logos, the space of theopoeis, theo-logics, theology.

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18 Emanuela Bianchi, "Receptacle/ Chōra: Figuring the Errant Feminine in Plato's Timaeus." *Hypatia* 21, no. 4 (2006): 124-146.

19 Ann Belford Ulanov, *Finding Space: Winnicott, God, and Psychic Reality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

CHAPTER ONE

PLATO & FREUD: RECEIVING THE FAR/NEAR

> If Plato had lived into [the twentieth] century, he might very well have chosen, not gold, but a movie screen or television screen as his analogue to a field across which ceaselessly changing non-substantial images may flicker.[1]
>
> --Richard Mohr

Near…Far…

Near…Far…

Near…Far…

Near.[2]

--Grover, *Sesame Street*

As a way into the complex inter-implications of cosmology, psychoanalysis, and technology, I begin with two major entry portals: Plato and Freud. In this chapter, I introduce the philosophical chora of Plato and its Latin analog, matrix, as paradoxically *impersonal* maternal spaces bordering on the machinic. Plato combines a sense of place,

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1 Richard Mohr, *The Platonic Cosmology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 94.

2 Frank Oz, *Sesame Street*, 1975. Accessed September 21, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZhEcRrMA-M

space, land, countryside or dancing floor with maternal functions of birthing and nursing; these receive, contain, filter, and morph in ways that resonate in ancient and contemporary registers, in settings philosophical, religious, and technological. The im/personality of chora is one of its hallmarks, in conjunction with its undefinability. Plato's ambivalence about chora's gender is not co-incidentally related to these other ambivalences about its personhood and properties, ambivalences that in many ways define gender and situations of early human life. Precisely through such quasi-maternality, Plato's cosmic origin myth invites interpretation through theories of human beginnings: intensities of feeling about radical dependence in a timespace of indifferentiation.

Therefore, I next engage two Freudian psychoanalytic postulates of early childhood. First, the theory of oceanic feeling in early infancy that manifests in adults religiously, romantically, and in the anonymity of audience. This stage of life, between birth and six months, is called "primary narcissism" by Freud, "holding space" by Winnicott, and "chora" by Kristeva. The infant/mother dyad must be able to manage frustrations and satisfactions well enough for the baby to grow into next phases, including the age of increased motility, the second major phase of development with which this project is concerned: talking and walking. I then engage the repetition of the toddler walking, running, and throwing back and forth across a space defined by a primary caregiver's presence and absence---the Freudian "Fort…Da!" I present Winnicottian "transitional space" as a modification to Freud that tempers the absence of *gone* into the mediation of *far*, and consider one of the high medieval names for God, *FarNear*. These two psychoanalytic developmental phases, with their corresponding cosmological

sensibilities, are how I will interpret digital mediation and teletechnology as desires for a simultaneous immanence and transcendence, a perpetual near/far.

Χώρᾳ, A Starting Place

Chora, also spelled *khora* through its transliteration from the Greek χώρᾳ, is a living word. A casual online search yields an architectural journal, a Byzantine church in Turkey, and real estate listings in Greece, in addition to thinkers associated with the philosophical history of the term such as Derrida, Kristeva, and Plato. *Chora: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture* translates chora as space, according to one of chora's historical trajectories, and seeks alternatives to "delusions of absolute, transparent truth and logocentric power" as may be found in modern architecture and its history. Concerned with new media, embodiment and orality, it hopes for an architecture that can "carry intersubjective values, convey meaning through metaphor, and embody a cultural order beyond tyranny or anarchy."[3] For this group of scholars, *Chora* the journal is a space of writing inspired by poststructuralism, in which to imagine three-dimensional spaces for mutual, just encounters among bodies in conversation.

But most simply, both in living and in ancient Greek, chora is a commonplace word for place or land. More specifically, a place that is not polis, and therefore is or is in the countryside. In the Fourth Century C.E., Chora Church was built as a monastery outside the city walls of Constantinople, on the site of an ancient chapel that predated the city walls themselves. Then in the Fifth Century the "land walls" of Emperor Theodosius

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3 *Chora: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture* (Quebec: History and Theory of Architecture Program at McGill University, 1994-2011). Accessed June 11, 2013, https://www.mcgill.ca/architecture-theory/chora.

II enclosed the sparsely inhabited rural surrounds.[4] Near an important gate, Chora Church was outside the city, but inside a greater outside. The physical situation of the building is a metaphor for the spiritual: inside the church a fresco of Christ bears the caption χώρᾳ ζώντων, translated in the literature as "living chora" or "land of the living." Based on Psalm 116:9, the phrase "land of the living" is also believed to be a reference to the Temple in Jerusalem. While describing the male Jesus, the museum translates χώρᾳ as "land" or "dwelling place;" in reference to Mary, it translates chora as "container;" the container of the uncontainable.

Space, writing, bodies; land, dwelling, womb. Together the journal and the church effect an allegory of what χώρᾳ can do, a concept that holds too much, and as such holds almost nothing at all, itself a layering of metaphor and what exceeds metaphor, a word of such mystery and unreachable depth that it could almost be a proper name: *who are you, khora?* Together the abstracted, hopeful politics of the architectural journal and the deeply sacred locatedness of the church suggest an array of discourse and tradition about χώρᾳ, an array that tends in many ways toward contestation and negotiation of these very terms--space/place, writing/womb, philosophy/feminism--over two millennia of conversation.

If the conversation could be said to have a beginning, we wouldn't be wrong to assert that Plato started it. Partway through one of the most obscure Platonic dialogues, the character Timaeus interrupts his cosmological explanation of the way things come into the world in order to introduce a concept new to Plato's established dualistic system.

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4 "Brief History of Chora," *Chora Museum*. Accessed June 1, 2013, http://www.choramuseum.com/history/brief-history-of-chora/

He starts again, in the middle of a familiar schema of two kinds of reality to introduce a third kind, a supplemental genus that seems to become necessary, in that moment, for the other parts to work. He gives this subtle thing (not an idea and not a thing) the most generic of names: simply place, position, almost genericity itself--what undergirds, makes possible, provides the necessary conditions for the many and multiple things of the world. With such an amendment, an insertion, χώρᾳ seems like an afterthought, a hastily contrived solution to the problem of unlike things—the eternal forms of the world of being, and the fluctuating things of the world of becoming--touching (or communicating, as Whitehead maintains) across an impossible abyss; and yet so much has been made of it on Plato's behalf that it might serve as the lens through which to view all of Plato's dialogues that it could in the end be the exception to the duality established by the father of western metaphysics, the autodeconstruction at the heart of the machine that makes it work and makes it break, proving the unsustainability of pure generative ontologies. If that isn't a promising enough beginning to the story, Plato attributes to the χώρᾳ the pronoun "she."

> for, while receiving all things, she never departs at all from her own nature, and never in any way, or at any time, assumes a form like that of any of the things which enter into her; she is the natural recipient of all impressions, and is stirred and informed by them, and appears different from time to time by reason of them. But the forms which enter into and go out of her are the likenesses of real existences modeled after their patterns in wonderful and inexplicable manner, which we will hereafter investigate. For the present we have only to conceive of three natures: first, that which is in process of generation; secondly, that in which the generation takes place; and thirdly, that of which the thing generated is a resemblance.[5]

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5 Plato, *Timaeus*, Benjamin Jowett trans. (Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Tech, 2001). Accessed 3/1/2013 http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html

A reader might interject that this "she" is merely a grammatical function of gender-inflected language, were it not for what follows:

> And we may liken the receiving principle to a mother, and the source or spring to a father, and the intermediate nature to a child; and may remark further, that if the model is to take every variety of form, then the matter in which the model is fashioned will not be duly prepared, unless it is formless, and free from the impress of any of these shapes which it is hereafter to receive from without.[6]

Along with χώρᾳ, Plato uses the word *hypodeche* or receptacle to indicate that which receives the forms that copy themselves into shapes and bodies. The most basic building blocks of the cosmos, the elements of fire, air, earth, and water, are continually changing into one another such that it is impossible to identify its nature as "this" or "that." "What nature are we to attribute to this new kind of being? We reply, that it is the receptacle, and in a manner the nurse, of all generation."[7] The place of generation is the womb, the passive recipient (according to ancient understandings of sexual reproduction) of the singularly agential male seed. Property is one possible translation of chora, *ousia* Latinized to Being or substance: what makes a thing what it is, its *suchness* as that which undergirds, like an area of land the purpose of which is to house something else.

If I wanted, like Plato, to figure out χώρᾳ, or rather to figure out the cosmos by trying on χώρᾳ as a kind of explanation, I should start again, as in John Sallis's performative reading, in the middle of a chorus of choras in postmodernity. I could start with Sallis's *Chorology* in 2009; with Derrida in 1993, better still with Kristeva in 1984. Risking both the temptations of origins and metaphysics eschewed by Derrida, and the psychic regressions pathologized by Freud, I confess a desire to head directly for an

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6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

origin story of the cosmic or personal kind. Beginnings, even *the* Beginning seem to inspire a certain mischief in the zone of χώρᾳ. Or would it be more correct to say chora is a testimony to the lure of beginnings for Plato, as Sallis cheekily observes, such that Plato should be willing to start again in the middle?[8] But if we are to be serious about origins, in the beginning there must be χώρᾳ, before God, before philosophy, before even Plato.

Ancient Χώρᾳ

Dating at least from Homer and Hesiod, χώρᾳ can be contrasted with *topos*, both very ancient words that indicate place. For example, Sophocles' Antigone references the (masculine) *choros* where Oedipus is to die as a sacred place that must be kept secret, in distinction from the topoi wherein the grave lies. The topos is merely the location of "the sacred choros, the grave."[9] Although χώρᾳ is outside of the city, it seems to be linked to human meaning, the craft that humans make or do, our *techne*. Historian of rhetoric Thomas Rickert observes that *choron* and *choros* (like the modern *chorus*) are related to chora, and that in the Iliad they pertain at once to a dance and the dancing floor. He finds there "an emerging recognition that a precondition for activity is a place for it to occur, as dancing requires a dancing floor…the growing realization that place and making are

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8 I am indebted to John Sallis's Derridean reading of Plato's Chora, including the playful Derridean rhetorical style he develops in thinking with the beginnings. John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

9 Eugene Victor Walter, *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 120, as quoted by Tom Boellstorff, "Virtuality: Placing the Virtual Body: Avatar, Chora, Cypherg" in Frances Mascia-Lees, *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment* (Chichester, West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 504-520, 512.

conjoined."[10] Anthropologist Tom Boellstorff, in his work with chora and virtual reality believes this connection is what Plato had in mind when he chose the word χώρα to stand for the work that must happen somehow at the cosmic level, the *poiesis* between the realms of being and becoming.

In the Timaeus, the *poiesis* of the cosmos is the work of a demiurge who crafts the world as a copy from an eternal idea that is a "complete living being" with a soul and a body. The soul of the world is mathematical, the ratios of which rotate the stars and planets. The body is elemental (of earth, air fire, water) and geometric (built up from triangles).[11] God the craftsman makes lesser gods responsible for the creation of world, and he also makes mortal beings. The *poiesis* of God's fatherhood is demonstrated by the generation or procreation of things like himself: the cosmos itself is referred to as a god.[12] Timaeus declares that the reason for god creating things to be as much like himself as possible is because god lacks envy.[13] However, the self generation of the ideas into the world can be understood as evidence of what could be called "womb envy," what Judith

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10 Thomas Rickert, "Toward the Chora: Kristeva, Derrida, and Ulmer on Emplaced Invention." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 40:3 (2007): 251–273. as quoted in Boellstorff, "Virtuality: Placing the Virtual Body," 511.

11 Thomas K. Johansen, "Plato's Timaeus" *Oxford Bibliographies*, 2013. Accessed April 10, 2016 http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195389661/obo-9780195389661-0144.xml;jsessionid=0B95EBC819F23DA2589BEA85729A521C

12 Thomas K. Johansen. *Plato's Natural Philosophy: A Study of the Timaeus-Critias* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 477, listing Timaeus 34b9, 37c7, 68e4. The invisible forms are not made of the same stuff as their copies (the things of the world of becoming); that's why chora is necessary.

13 Johansen quotes Aristotle's definition of envy as "a kind of pain in respect to one's equals for their apparent success in things called good, not so as to have the thing oneself, but [solely] on their account" (1387b23-25) as translated by David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 112-113, as quoted in Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 477.

Butler (and Roland Faber following) calls the fantasy of "phallogocentric autogenesis."[14] Some seven centuries later, orthodox Christianity demonstrates in the doctrine of the procession of the son from the father; a schema of an origin that skips over heterosexual coupling, uterine gestation, birthing, and women. The beginning that Plato seems to want is the will of the father toward the good, the creative direction that rationality offers in the generation of copies of the eternal ideas or forms. But this is not a creation ex nihilo by an omnipotent God; the god of Plato is an artisan, a demiurge who forms and fashions toward the good by using the materials at hand.

Immediately before the section on khora, Plato discusses the roles of necessity and reason in the formation of the cosmos. Reason, otherwise read as the intention for good, underwrites creation. Reason is what gives the demiurge intention and renders him a craftsman. The cosmos has purposefulness because reason exists. The demiurge must deal with something pre-given, before reason, and this is known as Necessity. Necessity operates a bit counter-intuitively, however, as Plato describes it as the "wandering cause." It is wandering in the sense that it is aimless, without the telos of reason. It is that which is given; and whether or not we ought to identify it with materiality, it is that with which the craftsman god has to work. And this necessity of pre-cosmic motion, of fluctuation is the context in which chora gets introduced.

In the passages that immediately follow the chora section, Plato describes the most basic geometric shapes and simple bodies as the first creations of the cosmos. Commentators vary as to whether to read chora mostly as an exemplar of necessity, the

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[14] Judith Butler refers to a "male principle that is active and monocausal, if not autogenetic" in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 150, and develops this idea in relation to the Timaeus specifically in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 35-36.

wandering cause; or mostly as a precondition for the bodies of the subsequent passages, or, perhaps as a bridge between them. Of utmost importance is to differentiate the pre-cosmic from the cosmic chora; pre-cosmically, or in a state of chaos, the receptacle is associated with "the necessary motions," and the transformation of the elements into one another. They are too unstable to be identified as anything as definite as "this" or "that," but only a common underlying similarity, one that pre-exists any specific object-like identity can apply, as "suchness."[15] In this next obscure passage, it is unclear whether chora should count as that suchness, or whether it is the one thing (because it is not a thing but a container for the fluctuating elements), whether it is only chora that can be properly called "this" or "that:"

> We ought not to apply "this" to any of them, but rather the word "such"; which expresses the similar principle circulating in each and all of them; for example, that should be called "fire" which is of such a nature always, and so of everything that has generation. That in which the elements severally grow up, and appear, and decay, is alone to be called by the name "this" or "that"; but that which is of a certain nature, hot or white, or anything which admits of opposite equalities, and all things that are compounded of them, ought not to be so denominated.[16]

Plato seems to realize the failure of this explanation to grant clarity, for he interrupts with a new metaphor, the substance of gold that takes on different shapes according to the will of the craftsman. Similarly a lump of wax receives an impression, but does not hold any form of its own. Or a perfume base must be without odor or it would interfere with the intended scent. This series of images reaches through any earlier system of dualism toward something evocatively ineffable, plastic, or in between.

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15 See Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy,* 478-9; Boellstorff, "Virtuality: Placing the Virtual Body," 510; and Rickert, "Toward the Chora," 251.

16 Plato, *Timaeus*. Accessed 3/1/2013 http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html

> Wherefore, that which is to receive all forms should have no form; as in making perfumes they first contrive that the liquid substance which is to receive the scent shall be as inodorous as possible; or as those who wish to impress figures on soft substances do not allow any previous impression to remain, but begin by making the surface as even and smooth as possible…[17]

Thomas K. Johansen observes that these analogies seem to imply that the receptacle is matter, and yet, it is later described as "the space (chora) that provides a place for all the things that come to be."[18] This is why, he suggests, debates have always persisted about whether we should think about this third kind primarily as a material substrate out of which bodies are constructed, or primarily as the space or place for the located construction of those bodies.[19] λγιε is the word Aristotle uses as a synonym for chora, also meaning wood, or materials for building. [20] Postmodern interpreters of khora seem to come down pretty hard on Aristotle for conflating chora with sheer matter. Nonetheless, the tension in Timaeus remains; both metaphors apply. Part of the tension between space and matter is represented in a generic quality of space as an enabling condition. Grosz translates the chora as "the space in which place is made possible, " while for Derrida,

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17 Ibid.

18 Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 479.

19 For example, Richard Mohr emphasizes that Plato's analogy of gold is inadequate because gold is a thing of the actual world, a "material constituent out of which substances are created," but chora should be better understood as a space, "a medium or field in which phenomena appear." Mohr, *The Platonic Cosmology,* 94.

20 Wood is both the concrete origin of the generic materials and the abstracted matter. This evokes one of the questions of new materialism wherein matter can be understood as itself an abstraction. Faber (via Butler) goes so far as to accuse Aristotle of the Platonic binary of soul/body and reason/matter, a lack of distinction I find problematic.

khora is "neutral space of place without a place, a place where everything is marked but which would be 'in itself' unmarked."[21]

Matrixial/Maternal

Chora has continued to develop in highly specialized contemporary philosophical and psychoanalytic discourses of ontological and linguistic origins, representing zones and processes of transition into something from not-yet-something. These zones are made liminal in part through their ambivalent relation to wombs, mothers and women as environmental rather than personal, figuring as "the place of place," in Irigaray's words. In colloquial English usage, however, *chora* has not carried through, while its Latin equivalent has. *Matrix* holds a spectrum of meanings that, like chora, hold the variations and co-constitutions of substance, space, and gender with a maternal metaphor. I am grateful to the work of feminist art theorist Irina Aristarkhova for bringing into relief the pervasiveness of choric concepts in colloquial English settings through the Latin *matrix.* I am also inspired by "Virtual Chora," the name Aristarkhova gave to an art installation in the form of a blog initiated as a virtual home for feminist philosophy, now archived.[22] I use the term "cyberchora" to develop more explicitly metaphysical and psychoanalytic aspects of a poststructuralist feminist "virtual chora." Inspired by Aristarkhova, I will use *chora* and *matrix* almost interchangeably in this project, and return in Chapter Six to cyberchora.

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21 Elizabeth Grosz, "Women, Chora, Dwelling," in *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995),116; Jacques Derrida, Thomas Dutoit trans., "Khora," in *On the Name* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 23.

22 Irina Aristarkhova, "Virtual Chora," 2007, accessed April 1, 2014, http://www.constantvzw.org/verlag/spip.php?article16

In *Hospitality of the Matrix: Philosophy, Biomedicine, and Culture* (2012), Aristarkhova seeks out a concept of hospitality in conversation with the matrixial/maternal. She demonstrates the twinning of the matrix and the maternal, such that they are differentiated and held together: m*atrix* dematerializes and depends upon maternal meanings, from Plato's chora through to present mathematical concepts, generic usages, and its association with cyberspace. Aristarkhova begins her project with philosophical comparisons and turns to biomedicine and the cultural phenomena of male wombs. Arguing that Levinas and Derrida feminize notions of hospitality as an abstraction of a maternal body in ways that render the matrix *matricidal*, Aristarkhova seeks to emphasize the ways that space is materialized and engendered, the way that space becomes place.[23] Aristarkhova's monograph prepares the work of my project in several important ways: hospitality and the maternal body's associations with matter and space inform ethical concerns for feminist theology and gender theory (Chapters Two and Three); while the formal structure of mathematical or geometric matrices reflect the virtuality of potentiality and immanence for Deleuze (Chapter Two) and the algorithmic structure of information technologies (Chapter Six). While Aristarkhova considers these formal matrixial structures to be matricidal, I read them in and through other forms of matrix/chora to think through the ways virtuality and receptivity coalesce. Aristarkhova does not pursue the psychoanalytic dimensions of chora in depth; thus another of my major supplements is from object relations theory in which the space between caregiver and child unfolds from the substrate of a mother's body (Chapter Five).

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23 Irina Aristarkhova, *Hospitality of the Matrix: Philosophy, Biomedicine, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

The complexities of matrix can be traced to its Latin roots in *mater* (mother) and matter. Among the oldest meanings is "a breeding animal" or simply "womb." The ancient understandings of wombs as passive receptacles for active male seed become a major theme of critique among feminist interpretations of Platonic chora. The matrix, thus, is haunted by the question of im/personality precisely as it obtains to gender.

Consistent with the variety of meanings of the Platonic chora, matrix involves functions of imprinting and molding, in addition to qualities of membrane or substrate, according to the contemporary dictionary entry cited in full, below. Contemporary uses significantly include technological, biomedical, mathematical, and grammatical instances of what seems to be the overarching concept "something within or from which something else originates, develops or takes form," although Whitehead might remind us that this generality is an abstraction from these various uses. There are references to mass production, digitization, and electronic circuitry, as well as properties of enclosing and protecting.

Aristarkhova cites a definition from the Webster's dictionary online in full, and it bears re-citing:

> Etymology:
>
> Latin, female animal used for breeding, parent plant, from matr-mater
>
> Date 1555
>
> 1: something within or from which something else originates, develops, or takes form
>
> 2 a : a mold from which a relief surface (as a piece of type) is made b: die c: an engraved or inscribed die or stamp d: an electroformed impression of a phonograph record used for mass-producing duplicates of the original

> 3 a : the natural material (as soil or rock) in which something (as a fossil or crystal) is embedded b: material in which something is enclosed or embedded (as for protection or study)
>
> 4 a : the extracellular substance in which tissue cells (as of connective tissue) are embedded b: the thickened epithelium at the base of a fingernail or toenail from which new nail substance develops
>
> 5 a : a rectangular array of mathematical elements (as the coefficients of simultaneous linear equations) that can be combined to form sums and products with similar arrays having an appropriate number of rows and columns b : something resembling a mathematical matrix especially in rectangular arrangement of elements into rows and columns c : an array of circuit elements (as diodes and transistors) for performing a specific function
>
> 6: a main clause that contains a subordinate clause[24]

Common to variations of meaning is the idea of surrounding and pervading, participating in a productivity by making conditions possible as space or substance. For example, soil or rock provides the substance/space for fossils to form. Mud sediments into rock around bones, then bones dissolve to create an empty space--a mold for mineral deposits. A fingernail bed or a lab technician produces biomatter as a stratum for other biomatter. An ecofeminist application of this sense of matrix recall Vandana Shiva's recent remarks that in her research of contemporary agricultural science, soil was defined as empty and sterile, a receptacle for chemical fertilizers to be poured into, although it was those very fertilizers that rendered soil sterile in the long run. "They called the soil an empty container."[25] The fight for soil health and its agency in food production reminds us of the

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24 The definition Aristarkhova cites in 2008 is identical to that accessed 8/15/2015.

25 In the 1980's Vandana Shiva reports that scientists were claiming that GMO was necessary as the only way to hold a patent on the seed. Shiva links the imbalanced relationship of contemporary agriculture with health, the rate of Autism is now diagnosed in 1 in 30 children. Accessed 6/1/2015 Centr4process.org

presumed passivity that earth and wombs have shared, and the closed systems presumed in capitalistic and scientific imaginaries.

Aristarkhova elaborates the intellectual work afforded by the matrix on otherwise highly abstract imaginaries. Bearing traces of material function into abstractions, matrix works in particular philosophical contexts as a way of imagining placed-ness, what we will extrapolate into a cosmological account as *thereness*. In language of space and place, Aristarkhova seems to follow LeFebvre's (thus David Harvey's) basic distinction of "space" as a Euclidian, Cartesian impersonal emptiness, from "place" as culturally and environmentally located and therefore imbued with personality.

> The matrix seems to be placing space, facilitating its intelligibility. Or, as other usages of the term indicate, matrix seems to possess a form-producing quality; it is a term that indicates how we imagine what forms are and/or come to be…[26]

My project will loosely follow this basic distinction in LeFebvre between place and space, but will not follow the LeFebvre/Harvey ethical prioritization of place over space, as I find ethical importance in both a culturally dense place and a negatively defined or abstracted spatial interval as crucial to the receptivity, holding, clearing and emptiness required for hospitality and communicability.

Aristarkhova critiques the scientific iterations and abstractions of contemporary meanings of matrix as excessively distanced from their etymological derivation in the maternal:

> Taking on the meanings of the mold, imprint bearer, and later, mathematical number and cyberspace, the matrix today, as it is defined in

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26 Aristarkhova, *Hospitality of the Matrix*, 16.

> philosophy, popular culture, and biomedicine, has no relation to the maternal body except through etymology.[27]

By contrast, my project looks to technological substrates as a pervasive mode of chora or matrix in contemporary cultures of teletechnology that I assert to be related to the maternal body psychoanalytically and metaphysically. Metaphysically, in Chapter Two I will attend to processes of affect and receptivity that happen below the scale of the human, forming spaces of communicability and potentiality through micro-eventiveness. These highly technical understandings of how the virtual meets the actual enact a complex enfolding and unfolding that resonate on a human scale with birthing and the formation of consciousness (Chapter Four).

Psychoanalytically, it is my contention that abstraction, or the conceptual distance of matrix from maternality, is one of the defining conditions of matrix/maternality, and defines a relation that may seem like, in Aristarkhova's words, no relation at all. I suggest that the space that opens up in that distance may be richly layered. First, an object relations view of early life would frame the movement from matrix to mother as one of increased object relatedness and specificity. Thus, a sufficient maternal environment moves from a material substrate (matrix/womb) to environment (invisible maternal activity) to intersubjective object/subjects (mother as person). In a developmental framework, abstractions can be viewed as part of the acquisition of language, whether in optimally gradual ways through the adoption of symbolic substitution (Winnicott), or in sudden or traumatic ways via abjection (Kristeva or Klein) of presence.

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27 Ibid. Aristarkhova offers an example in the work of Robert Kaplan to "maternalize" a Western idea of nothingness, or absolute vacuum of space via the relationship of the Hindu concept of void (sunya) to pregnancy. Robert Kaplan, "Is It Out There?" in Graham Gussin and Ele Capenter, eds., *Nothing* (New York: Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art/Birkhauser, 2001), 67.

Second, the distance of abstraction can be read as a defensive structure formed against invasive presence. I contend (as Aristarkhova initially does) that the abstraction in the maternal/matrixial pair is itself matrixial. If the specificity of mother is overwhelming, then some framing can be achieved through the abstracted maternal, and an even greater distance drawn through the matrixial. Such framings and deferrals are simultaneously distancing and embedding phenomena, like the textual and visual structure of the mise en abyme, the mirror game to be discussed in relation to Derrida's khora in Chapter Three. The further away one gets, the more embedded one is.

Thinking matrix and chora through the lens of early childhood, we may wish to step back into two antecedent framings for Derridean, Kristevan, and Winnicottian choras: Freud's theory of the oceanic feeling, and his image for the move toward symbolization in the game of *fort/da*. There are widely divergent views about originary states of bliss and degrees of oneness in psychoanalytic literature. Primal bliss is attributed variously to the condition in utero (Rank), a compensatory fantasy (Klein), or to a more sustained experience through a caregiver's directly pleasurable holding, elevating, and feeding (Winnicott). Such a feeling of oneness with one's surrounds, suffused within and omnipotent through them is theorized variously as enduring or fleeting, possibly rejected early on, or perhaps the object of lifelong longing. This postulate it is that was famously labeled by Freud "the oceanic feeling."

The Oceanic Feeling (Tehomophilia)

In the first chapter of *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud answers Romain Rolland's request that Freud analyze what Rolland believed to be the foundation of all

religious mysticism: the phenomenon of the oceanic feeling, or a sense of oneness with the world. Rolland described it as a "religious *feeling*" that is continuous or ongoing, "a constant state (like a sheet of water which I feel flushing under the bark [boat])," "a source of vital renewal" that "has never failed" him. Rolland insists that his critical faculties are fully in play along with the feeling, and that it is not related to a wish or survival instinct. "I yearn for eternal rest; survival has no attraction for me at all." What's more, it "is imposed on me as a fact. It is a *contact*." (emphasis his). He appeals to the mystical traditions of the ages to support his claim that it is common to thousands (millions) and constitutes the "true subterranean source of *religious energy*" and regrets that such words seem to create confusion between him and Freud, as what he means is not dogma or tradition but a "free *vital upsurge*." In other words, Rolland is asking for Freud to address the kind of erotic phenomenon that Freud seems as though he ought to understand.[28]

The correspondence that inspired the first chapter of *Civilization and its Discontents* went back and forth, three letters from Rolland and two from Freud. Freud confessed elsewhere that he didn't get it, that the idea of the oceanic feeling left him "no peace" and that he troubled over its analysis because it seemed not to be a feature of his own psychic organization.[29] Yet he took it quite seriously. He describes it as "the indissoluble bond of being one with the world as a whole," traceable to pre-oedipal experience wherein the infant "does not as yet distinguish his ego from the external world as the source of the sensations flowing in upon him. . . originally the ego includes

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28 William Parsons, *The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling: Revisioning the Psychoanalytic Theory of Mysticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 36-37.

29 Ibid., 38.

everything, later it separates off an external world from itself."[30] This later mature ego is "a shrunken residue" of this "all-embracing" feeling. He seems to respect Rolland's claims about a continuity that doesn't inhibit rationality, and imagines both the oceanic and the bounded ego feelings existing "side by side, .. like a counterpart."[31] This is how it might be possible for an otherwise rational human to experience the blissful expansiveness of being captivated by a work of art or beauty, or being in love.

We might let the sketch comedy TV show Portlandia (2011-), of the Independent Film Channel, which offers cultural self-commentary on the en vogue quirks of Portland residents from multiple social positions, present an example of the problem of the oceanic feeling.

In yoga class, Sandra (Carrie Brownstein) engages Vipassana breathing meditation while seated across from and in the gaze of an attractive classmate (Fred Armisen). Her internal monologue gives way to fantasy montage. Hair in the wind, future breakfasts, firelit kisses, she concentrates on making her vision a reality as she returns her classmate's soulful, knowing gaze. The teacher gently calls their awareness back to the room. Sandra's love object speaks, only to complain in a thoroughly annoying voice about scheduling and payment, interpreting Sandra's affectively resonating energy as confirmation of his opinions. Apparently, he also felt the connection.

The joke of the scene is the moment the loved object opens his mouth and collapses the fantasy. Fred's insensitivity demonstrates the failure of the oceanic feeling

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30 Ibid., 39, quoting Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) in James Strachey, Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey, Alan Tyson, and Angela Richards. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 21 (London: Hogarth Press, 1956-1974), 66-7.

31 Ibid., 39.

to predict the content of another's interior experience, even as it helps to produce and transform it. Sandra is undoubtedly missing the point of the meditation exercise by confusing an objectless spiritual practice with the object desires of a romantic encounter. Her mistake is an all too familiar one in the context of US commodification of (in particular) eastern spiritual practices and the elevation of romantic love to various dimensions of ultimacy; both mistakes are made possible by US cultural expectations of the oceanic feeling. Even so, it is possible for Sandra to have stumbled upon what philosophers of religion might boldly claim as a metaphysical ultimate, knowable as an indissoluble bond. Sandra's experience demonstrates an epistemological ambivalence to mystical experience, that while it may truly access metaphysical dimensions, it remains a poor predictor of other people's inner and interactive worlds.

Freud answers his friend Rolland warmly, but with a sobering reminder of the ways that feeling states don't translate directly into ethical interactions. Although Rolland seems to have been requesting an accounting of the oceanic feeling apart from any specific religious doctrine or practice, Freud interprets the religious nature of Rolland's oceanic feeling with the Christian ideal of universal love. And he points to the gulf that separates them, that it may be more than a religious feeling, it maybe be a content related feeling. And that content, the Christian command to love anyone, certainly has not produced commonalities of feeling or ethical interactions with those who do not share the command of Christian identity. Freud writes to Rolland,

> That I have been allowed to exchange a greeting with you will remain a happy memory to the end of my days. Because for us your name has been associated with the most precious of beautiful illusions, that of love extended to all mankind. [] I of course, belong to a race which in the Middle Ages was held responsible for all epidemics and which today is blamed for the disintegration of the Austrian Empire and the German

> defeat. Such experiences have a sobering effect and are not conducive to make one believe in illusions. [32]

The Christian invocation to love one's neighbor has not, historically, extended to Jews. The constitutive Jewishness of Christian origins has apparently been compelling enough to warrant expulsion, through the racialization of the inherited sin of deicide.[33] The steady good feeling of Rolland's continuity with the world drew Freud in. But a good feeling is not enough to counter the breach of trust manifest in the Christian love mandate. Infants suspended with, and emerging from relative merger do not encounter an ethical mandate in the face of otherness until they learn, very gradually and incrementally, to relate to their caregivers as entities with limits and needs. This process is the exploration of the field of psychoanalytic theory known as object relations – objects understood primarily as people external to the inner world of the infant. Triumphal or naïvely boundless Christian love does not hesitate to submerge those others who form its substrate, or to consume those who remain abject twins of primal histories.

What Rolland seems to have been asking for from scientific study of the oceanic feeling is an epistemology that takes religious experience and theological propositions seriously. Freud did exactly this in his analysis of what he calls conventional religion in *The Future of an Illusion*. Distinguishing Rolland's ideas about "deepest sources of the religious feeling" from the parochial personal and abstract impersonal theologies of his day, and from the violent triumphalist deployments of love, Freud nonetheless fails to

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32 Ibid., 24, quoting "Letter from Freud to Rolland, March 4, 1923."

33 "It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive manifestations of their aggressiveness." S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* translated by James Strachey and Anna Freud (New York: W.W. Norton & Company 1929, 1961).

theorize the oceanic feeling. Instead he critiques both the father-God of parochial religion, the "common man's" understanding of God as a personal, attentive Providence, and the abstractions of cultural elites who attempt to compensate for such personalistic provincialism with impersonal principles:

> One would like to . . . meet these philosophers, who think they can rescue the God of religion by replacing him by an impersonal, shadowy and abstract principle, and to address them with the warning words: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."[34]

Parsons suggests that Rolland was trying to convince Freud to combine the two understandings of God that Freud analyzed. "Surely Rolland, despite his agreement with Freud's analysis of the 'common-man's' religion, was following in [philosophical theologians'] footsteps in trying to 'rescue' religion by attempting to replace the Father-God with a more sophisticated, impersonal, and generic 'oceanic' Being."[35] Parsons adds that the entire counter-tradition of Christian mystical theology—irreducible to "abstract principles"--doesn't seem to register in Freud's argument.[36]

While regression can involve dangerous disintegration into psychosis, Freud's dismissal of the mystical maternal and his understanding of regression as undesirable are symptomatic of serious problems with his metapsychology, problems that stem from his own early traumas, associations of his mother with death, and the adoption of a heroic sexual persona as a defense against death and mother. Anna Freud later elaborated a

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34 Parsons, 43-43.

35 Parsons, *The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling*, 43.

36 Ibid.

theory of defenses that understands regression as an attempt of an ego under stress to care for itself, such that its adaptive aspects should be supported, not removed.[37]

Instead of combining philosophical modes of theology with affective modes, as Rolland may have wanted, according to Anne Marie Rizzuto in *The Birth of the Living God*, Freud cemented a different distinction between "the God of the mystics and the God of the philosophers" by narrating a turn from the visual/ sensual phase of the mother to the intellectual abstract realm of the father.[38] Rizzuto claims that Freud abandoned his early object relations theorizing in favor of a more abstract metapsychology and theory of religion, and that this has resulted in a poverty of theorizing about the chora of religious experience. But what if we were to follow up, as others have done,[39] with a psychoanalytic reading of the oceanic feeling that understands the infant's affective state, incorporated into theories of the unconscious, as a site of knowledge? Infants are no doubt wrong about many things related to what most adults would call the objective world, including the independent existence of its caregivers. But might we also think about infants in a state of primal merger as experiencing the unfolding of time and space in immediately affective apprehensions of metaphysical connectivity? The receptivity of an infant and the communicability of cosmos could be thought to set pathways that cannot be outgrown, according to the insights of affective metaphysics and pre-oedipal

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37 Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (London: Karnac Books, 1993). <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10497304>

38 Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 28. Rizzuto seems to have left out the tripartite set of distinctions Parsons draws from the engagement with Rolland, of the God of common religion, philosophical theology, and oceanic mysticism.

39 See, for example, Victor White, *God and the Unconscious* (Chicago: H. Regnery Co, 1953); Ann Belford Ulanov and Barry Ulanov, *Religion and the Unconscious* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975).

theories of psychoanalysis. One might argue that such apprehensions might impact base-line affective states, whether they reappear with immediacy from time to time, remain as a felt sense of relative continuity, or are cut off from conscious experiencing. The oceanic feeling demands that if philosophical and theological cosmologies want to understand themselves as more than metaphors of early childhood affect, they will need to develop an appreciation for infantile experience, and find a way to unravel the complexities of fantasy to develop an epistemology from the position of an infant. This project makes small moves in that direction, in the way that psychoanalysis does, understanding a human to be at any given time constituted by earlier affective somatizations, but always mostly receiving the world with the very first forms of sensing, touching, grasping. The oceanic feeling, as a site for matrixial theological investigation, as well as the remainder of first things, is in its way already doing exactly that. Chora, as the name of cosmic first things and human first things, can be an affective resonator of the human and more than human actualizing the communicability of becoming.

Autogenetic Fantasy

> For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'
>
> --Acts 17: 28

A constructive choric theology might claim that living, moving, and having being in God, as the writer of Luke-Acts suggests, is directly related to our position as offspring. To live and move within God, dwelling as children of God invokes a God who is not standing apart from the world but is instead spatially co-extensive with it. This is a God

who offers space for us and for God's own divine dwelling. Acts 17:28 thus inspires ecofeminist theologians with traces of gynomorphic hospitality and immanentalism that reverberate in certain tehomophilic strands of Jewish and Christian scriptures.[40] The idea of God as space or place for the belonging of human and other-than-human life is a hallmark of ecofeminist and other overlapping pantheistic and panentheistic correctives to logocentric religion, via the self-unfolding of God and cosmos into matrices of continuity and differentiation.

But even a passage so friendly to feminist theological readings of God inevitably also does the work of patriarchy. Paul as narrator is quoting Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* to make a bridge to Greek concepts of deity while setting Yahweh apart as the god who needs no temples, as the one who provides for himself everywhere a place, and thus for humans a place within Him. Unlike Zeus who must rely on temples and idols of silver, Yahweh makes a place for his own making, generating the unfolding of space itself; but like Zeus, God the father provides for His offspring a means of reproduction emanating directly from His *ousia*. With Zeus, patrilineage can be established via ectopic pregnancy in a cavity in his head or thigh; for Yahweh, divine substance or substrate emanates directly into a child-clone, the Logos (in a process possibly analogous to cellular mitosis). Zeus seems to be demonstrating what Irina Aristarkhova calls "ectogenetic fantasy," or the desire for a womb outside of the mother, an artificial, non-interior, or non-maternal origin.[41] Yahweh seems to be displaying what Judith Butler calls "autogenetic fantasy,"

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40 Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999).

41 Aristarkhova engages trends in embryonic research that postulate advantages in separating gestation from women's bodies, and extending incubation technology to develop purely machinic

the desire to procreate from oneself alone, without the necessity of a woman. Both ectogenetic and autogenetic fantasies seem to indicate (male) asexual reproductive fantasy. Both manifest an anxiety around sexual reproduction and the maternal indebtedness of messy corporeality that Virginia Burrus so effectively narrates via the patrilineage of Christian patristic theology in *Begotten Not Made* (2000). The Logos is begotten of the Father's own substance, in a way that bypasses maternal contributions.

How could the God in whom we live and move and have our being, a God of such gynomorphic, generative spatiality serve such different projects? Is could be as simple as a difference in textual reading strategy, between a male author's envious stealing of maternal qualities, a feminist Christian reader's reclamation of gynomorphisms as evidence of an enduring feminine in the nature of God, and a queer reading of the trans-adaptability of a multi-gendered God. While such creative strategies – an envious lie, a feminist protest, a queer mirror—certainly point to differences of identity, agenda, and desire, I believe they also point to contradictions common to the birthing and becoming of humans in general. Contradictory impulses like stealing, mirroring, protesting, and protecting occur in response to overwhelming presence and power (not unlike, perhaps, the authority of a sacred text); a force experienced first as environment, co-extensive with and under the control of the infant, then with increasing frequency, outside of it.

While chora may signal an affective cosmo-theology for our time, it doesn't necessarily signal feminism. The gender politics of chora are ambiguous. Whether participating in a pre-object oceanic immersion, or a pre-object paranoid split, matrixial affect risks idealizing and denigrating maternal others, reducing them to a less-than-

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gestational capacities. Aristarkhova suggests that these trends seem to reflect a rejection, fear, or disavowal of maternal origins.

personal utility or more-than-human magical being. The proximity of oceanic feeling to paranoid split is made possible through an affective structure of allness, all-or-nothingness that is potentially as toxic as it is intoxicating. Thinking along these lines, we might exercise an epistemology of chora that attempts to push through muddles of ambiguity into what has been covered and protected: energetically oppositional impulses. The gender politics of chora manifest extreme forms of ambivalence, oppositional affects that constitute the concept and experience of chora, in what I will call *matrixial ambivalence*. Matrixial ambivalence refers to opposing impulses, as well as dynamics of confusion and obfuscation triggered by proximity to the maternal; the protection and covering of the space that is itself a protection and extension of a locus with an eventually unavoidable personality; a point of affective and physiological origin: a mother.

From oceanic feeling and matrixial ambivalence, I wish to refocus our engagements with a stage of childhood development after the chora of primary process. From a state of relative merger with a caregiver, a child begins to walk and to talk, processes that Freud argues are not merely co-incidental. Entering into more direct participation with a world of symbols and motility means that distinction between self and other is developing, along with feelings of excitement and fear about the step forward, the approach that can feel like an attack, *agresser*. Stepping forward into a space of discovery, laughter signals the overcoming of risk, exhilaration meets the step as trespass, and the matrix rises to greet, but doesn't need to intervene.

Near/Far in an Age of Teletechnology

In the 1975 Sesame Street sketch "Near…Far," Grover sets about demonstrating to his viewers the difference between near and far. "This is near," he says, his blue furry head and large eyes looming large in the camera frame, establishing home base. Turning, he runs directly away, diminishing in size into the depth of the soundstage with sharply rhythmic footfalls; stops, turns and declares (loudly because so far away) "This is FAAAR!" Panting slightly, he runs back to the camera, presents himself with a firm two footed stance and says "This…is near." Interpreting the viewer's lack of comprehension, he repeats the run twice more, panting more heavily each time. "Do you understand? You don't understand…" Exasperated, he repeats the run, the declaration, and the return, then faints from exhaustion in front of the camera. Having disappeared from view by falling below the vertical frame, he is not going anywhere, definitively here at last. The viewer can recover from fits of giggles about Grover's silliness: a frustration response that comprises a lesson we must have already mastered in order to laugh at it, but perhaps not as confidently as we would like, or we wouldn't find reason to laugh to begin with. [42]

The circumstance of a sense of nearness developing along with a sense of distance is the journey of toddlerhood, so named for the increase of motility that begins with crawling and culminates in running. According to Winnicottian object relations theory, walking, by default, means walking away from (and eventually returning to) the home base of a caregiver whose job is to facilitate by watching, like the camera, the exhilaration of movement, the adventure of encountering the world, and the gravitational forces of comfort, attachment, and home. If all goes well, those comforting feelings carry

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42 Oz, *Sesame Street*, 1975.

the child through the adventure like a charged battery, getting tested and drained by falls, bumps and distance, then getting recharged with visual, auditory and tactile contact from the caregiver. A space is formed, with gradually increasing range, centered around the presence of that home base. What the child had to give up to achieve that adventure was a different felt sense of space, something that had been tested before only by the caregiver's ability to vanish when out of range, rendering that all-important person absent or present, existing or not existing, an ontological yes/no, on/off, rather than an existential near/far. The relative nearness of the toddler's experience of home base is confirmation of continuity, of home's continued existence even when out of sight. Before then, only the repetition of the caregiver's return, hopefully with some ritual markers and predictable rhythms, establishes continuity of existence through time.

In a pre-differentiated pre-spatial existence, the infant's physical separation from the caregiver is an ontological threat – both in external and internal senses, because without sustained adult attention the infant will die; and without the internalization of rituals of return, the baby with feel as though it and its caregiver will die. Grover is modeling for his viewers the matrix, the lines of flight that extend from home into the distance, but always return, creating the ground for the adventurer and the anchor both to go on being.

In the Freudian tale of Fort/Da, Freud presents a game that his grandson used to play with his parents, throwing objects away and demanding that they retrieve them. One day while babysitting, Grandfather watches Ernst play the game by himself. Ernst does this by throwing a toy with a string that unwinds, so he can yank and pull it back to throw it again. The place where he throws it is out of sight, so it becomes hidden, and when he

pulls, it becomes visible. He is making oo-ing and ah-ing sounds, in time with the motion, and Freud believes he can here the words Fort (Gone) on the toss and Da (Here) on the pull. Freud sees aggression in the throw and pleasurable victory in the return, in a combination he associates with a double mastery of the absent mother – by throwing her away and creating her return, firstly, and secondly by entering into the world of words as the master of words and world, through the power of command.

The backstory is that this anecdote provides a case study for *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, written mostly but not fully before the sudden death of Ernst's mother, Freud's daughter Sophie, from influenza. The little boy in the story who is grieving can also be read as grandfather himself, in a position of permanent loss of a daughter/mother, *Gone*. The second half of the book presents the highly controversial and speculative theory of the death drive as the final cause of a repetition compulsion that returns all organic beings to inorganic states, a cosmic/human regression to pre-differentiation. The anger of the boy and the consumption of that anger as melancholy repeat again and again the absence in the presence, neither near nor far but gone. Freud performs a kind of mystical materialism in the second half of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, imagining life and death in the permeability and differentiating processes of micro-organisms, a drama of separation and reunion, risk and protection; a meditation that performs grief, disavowal, and oceanic impulse all rolled into one. [43]

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43 "Are we to follow the clue of the poet-philosopher and make the daring assumption that living substance was at the time of its animation rent into small particles, which since that time strive for reunion by means of the sexual instincts? That these instincts—in which the chemical affinity of inanimate matter is continued—passing through the realm of the protozoa gradually overcome all hindrances set to their striving by an environment charged with stimuli dangerous to life, and are impelled by it to form a protecting, covering layer?" Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," trans. C. J. M. Hubback, e-artnow, 2016. Accessed April 10, 2016 https://books.google.com/books?id=TXenCwAAQBAJ&lpg=PP1&dq=beyond%20the%20pleasure%20principle%20protozoa&pg=PT1#v=onepage&q&f=false

I like to imagine alternatives to the Fort/Da as Freud describes it: lots of laughter in a hide and seek game with a participatory grandfather, not a stoic one. Or a precocious Ernst who is throwing his grandfather rigorously away for sitting and taking notes instead of wanting to play. Irigaray imagines Sophie there, a felt presence in the draperies that hide the toy. There is too much tragedy there, from the permanence of the absence to come, and a reader might be moved to intervene. My intervention is furry, friendly Grover, an ego imago for the child, a model and a mirror of a familiar game. But by taking the child's position, Grover has made the viewer the home base for herself. The camera, as proxy for the viewer is Grover's child/mother, the gaze in whom he is anchored, nestled, home. And the television screen, through which Grover speaks directly to the viewer into the room, is a mirror that sees and talks back. The framing of the television is access to an exteriority, a spatial matrix that forms a place of belonging, a tether into another world, a transcendence whose inaccessibility you can touch. I see my favorite two-year old, her gaze suffused, her cheek so close to the glass she must have its warmth and static energy, as her finger traces the path of her favorite character, alive beyond the screen.

CyberChora

> Love's potency
> Brought distance near; and Love, the compositor
> Of earth and heaven, puts an end to war
> Between the Far and Near . . . [44]

Far-Near, as one of the names for God that Marguerite Porete, and later Marguerite De Navarre adopts for God, conveys an experience of the soul's longing that

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44 Marguerite de Navare. *The Prisons III*. 3065-75 quoted in Carol Thysell, *The Pleasures of Discernment: Marguerite de Navarre as Theologian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

experiences the beloved as far, but brought near through the power of a longing that collapses the distance only when the soul longs for nothing. The distance allows room for God, and God is near in the pull of the distance, the beloved Far-Near. The conceptual composite Far-Near "thus resolves the dialectic of presence and absence, of immanence and transcendence..." such that the Soul sees God as simultaneously very far and very close.[45]

Something like transcendence is a goad for desire, and so the powers and pleasures of distance might be well served by an obstacle such as an ontological divide. That divide becomes an interior spatiality when the screen of chora intervenes.

> Neither something nor yet nothing, *chora* is the condition of the genesis of the material world, *the screen onto which is projected the image of the changeless Forms*, the space onto which the Form's duplicate or copy is cast, providing the point of entry, as it were, into material existence.[46]

Across the fields of film theory, feminist philosophy, and psychoanalysis, screens are meant for projection. The place of blankness, the neutral receptivity of a screen may be a more relevant contemporary example of khora than a sieve or a lump of wax, suggests Richard Mohr, in one of the epigraphs for this chapter. The fleeting or transitory contents of the space of the screen are a given for twenty-first century habitation, cosmopolitan and otherwise. Sallis summarizes the effect of chora as follows: "[Chora] grants, furnishes, supplies an abode to all things ... [chora], in which the phantoms come and go, is that other that secures the image in whatever trace of being it has ... One could call it ... a ghost scene that, enshrouding precisely in letting appear, endows the fleeting specters

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45 Joanne Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation in Marguerite Porete's Mirror of Simple Souls* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 54.

46 Grosz, "Women, Chora, Dwelling," 115 (my italics).

with whatever trace of being they might enjoy."[47] Carrie Brownstein's *Portlandia* persona lets the screen of her daily attachments slip one day, from her shoulder to the pavement, and sees its life flash, montage-style before her eyes. From waiting in line for its new release, opening the box and peeling off the film, winning a trivia contest, and kissing it goodnight on her pillow, caressing it lightly over a private joke, rescuing her life from a stray bullet in a hunting accident; then in black and white anticipatory grief, she misses a social opportunity, her hand at the coffee shop is empty, a friendship gets ruined.[48]

Not only has the ubiquity of fixed and mobile screens transformed public and personal sense of space, but also, as Sherry Turkle observes, they have transformed our ways of being selves. Initially optimistic about the possibilities for flexibility and multiplicity of identity that *Life On the Screen* (1995) seems to present, Sherry Turkle reversed her position about our basic relation to digital technologies in the 2010 *Alone Together*. Turkle's main concern is the collapse of an interior life through externalization of self-soothing processes. Our egos, and therefore our capacities to be in relation, are getting more fragile, more in need of external gratification and feedback. Children interact with machines that simulate aliveness as though they have interior feeling spaces, and expect emotional connection from them. What happens if, correctly anticipating our needs, the algorithms mirror us accurately? Turkle asks how we will receive that mirroring. Can smart-ish tech offer its own internality as the receptacle for our affective

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47 John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 122.

48 Fred Armisen, Carrie Brownstein, "Cool Wedding," *Portlandia*, Independent Film Channel, Season 2 Episode 3, airdate January 20, 2012, accessed September 24, 2015.

sense of being? It would require a choric interior able to be reincorporated by us, as an otherness within that forms the basis of our self. Turkle raises the concern that we may have lost the ability to be truly alone with ourselves, and therefore with others. Instead, middle school-aged children seem to prefer to occupy a mediated distance, texting within the same room, for example, reducing the risk of rejection through the mediation of writing and asynchronous communication. How could it be that *cyberchora* could flatten out? Our devices promise precisely the liminal space of mediation, the mediatric substrate of potential space and transitional objects. Wireless connectivity enacts the Near/Far, a connectivity that is always available, the fact of an affective substrate. Surely the cyber-matrix functions as a container technology, a utility that eases isolation. Turkle is unconvinced. Fearing aloneness and "desiring" connection, she alleges, we inhabit in-between, *in cognito* spaces that are neither public nor private. Instead of holding open the liminality between worlds, Turkle suggests that these in-between spaces impinge on both public and private zones. The chora of music on tap, she claims, the ubiquitous earbuds of millenials, are testimony to a multitasking elsewhere, not quite here not quite there.

Largely in agreement with Turkle's critique, I nonetheless wish to offer a theological framing of cyberchora as an impulse for an immanent form transcendence, the potentiality available in the Far/Near of interacting at a distance, through textual mediation, or just being immersed in the flows of worlds that seem simultaneously beyond, within, and touchable at the screen; the very meeting point of boundary maintenance and boundary crossing in the virtual space of an ontological divide. Suspended within a series of frames that don't require the cessation of object desire, I can feel unbounded in an oceanic surf. Isn't that enough?

I Feel Enough for Both of Us

A familiar sort of romantic comedy scene begins in *Portlandia* when Sandra (Carrie Bronstein) and her neighbors notice an addition to the neighborhood, a mysterious chalkboard with daily aphorisms that brighten their days and speak wisdom to the heart. An upbeat pop tune begins as a handsome figure appears in the window behind it. The lyrics swell, "we can change the world, you and I…" as Sandra prepares a creative gift to introduce herself to her soul mate. Venturing inside to meet the man of her dreams, Sandra discovers an empty house with a non-fluent wage laborer who receives the daily messages from a marketing company on a fax machine and copies them down on the chalkboard in the window. On the hunt for the author who speaks so directly to her from a distance, Sandra visits the advertising firm that generates the messages, bounces from one account representative to another, until she meets the author: an artificially intelligent computer with a mechanical voice like Hal from *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Undaunted and unoffended, Sandra is wistful but grateful to have found the love of her life.

Computer: Hello, Sandra?

Sandra: Wait, who said that? Are you talking to me?

Computer: Yes, it's me.

Sandra: You? You're the one who's been writing me all of these messages?

Computer: It's too hard to explain. It's kind of a version of product placement. I gather it's been working. Sorry if it was misleading.

Sandra: That's okay, I mean the messages were so specific, it just felt so attuned to who I am and what I need, and what all my desires are.

Computer: Sandra, I have been tracking all your online shopping.

Sandra: Are you talking about Kermit the Bag?

Computer: Yes, I am referring to Kermit the Bag.

Sandra: You're the only one that's ever noticed it before.

Computer: You are a great person.

Sandra: I finally felt like I found the right guy. Like for once I imagined my life not alone.

Romantic piano music begins.

Computer: Sandra, I am unable to love.

Sandra: Well, I feel enough for both of us. Is it okay if I just give you a quick kiss goodbye?[49]

The computer accepts the kiss. Sandra quietly says "I love you" and leaves. The next day the neighbors are puzzling over a strange new message on the chalkboard, this time, for the first time, specifically for Sandra. She walks out her front door, sees it, and exclaims "Yes! I am the luckiest girl alive!" (It reads in folksy familiar handwriting, *Hey! Listen, I know I said that I am unable to love but maybe I can try!)* But the punch line has already happened: in the "authentic" aesthetic of folk wisdom that feels personal because generic and banal, we will uncover first a jaded capitalistic plot that depends upon hidden exploited human labor, then only a non-human un-affective random meaning generator, the only Other available behind the structures of production. Instead of recoiling with horror or disgust, digital residents might be willing to accept this, nowadays, with good humor as the most that can be expected from our situation. When relation and meaning are only achievable through a mystery hidden within technical mediation, whether of pre-

49 Fred Armisen, Carrie Brownstein, "Sharing Finances," *Portlandia*, Independent Film Channel, Season 4 Episode 1, airdate February 27, 2014, accessed September 24, 2015.

modern, clumsy Fordist, or sophisticated algorithmic varieties, then falling in love with a machine might actually be one of the inevitabilities of postmodern life. The love of a machine offers comfortingly (and horribly) a mirror to our narcissistic demands, unless of course the machine could live and grow into a selfhood of sorts, but only inasmuch as we needed it to help us feel seen, recognized, and loved. Not enough for it to place demands of labor upon us. This dream, of finding love through the uncondition of a machine, is that through its inhumanity, it bears the potential to love us as no human ever could. Beyond the terror of reciprocity (retaliation for stolen goods) stands the unconditioned gift, the job description of mothers and God. But that godly gift can only be received at the edges of a pre-differentiated pre-object state: other enough to give to us, but not other enough to demand from us.

And then there is the high romance of an unfathomable distance that somehow collapses into an intimate sense of familiarity, belonging, and perfection: the lure of the next and the next online dating profile, the Tinder version of Porete's Far-Near. As Sandra says, "Whoever is writing this, it's like he is writing directly to me. It's like he's touching my soul. It's perfect for my life right now." The position of the soul's longing can be maintained indefinitely when the object of desire lies across an inaccessible limit. But this fixation can also be maintained indefinitely through the creation of structures of relation with interchangeable parts. Once relations are corralled by capitalist modes of competition, selection, and consumption, endless substitutability promises perpetual desire through imminent gratifications perpetually delayed. The structure of desire operates through the devouring of what is present and the lure of what is to come. In digital forms of mediation that are themselves available for consumption, we get to

incorporate (devour) the means of relation and protect (delay) the object of relation from our greed, while increasing the pleasure of our greed's compulsory power.[50]

Turning to a Winnicottian reading of choric space as *attentive medium*, we could speculate that in our turn to devices, we are reflecting the desire for and investment in such a medium. If we were to think with our devices as transitional objects, as Turkle offers, we might find a way to open up choric liminality into increased tolerance of the related but external dimensions of beloved others. If the shape of the cosmos is a receptacle, then theological cosmologies might offer other-than human contexts to relations of being and becoming for humans and other than humans, and specifically theological endeavors carry the potentiality and problematic of personality in cosmic context.

Autogenetic fantasy erupts into matricide in the ancient Babylonian precursors to Genesis 1:1. The slaughter of the goddess Tiamat is an allegory for the fate of the matter/mater of ancient cosmogenesis. Feminist theologians' recuperation of this primal matrix unfolds with stunning velocity in emerging deconstructive eventive theologies, where the oceanic feeling and Whiteheadian receptivity perform the next rotation of chora.

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50 This idea reflects the Kleinian interpretations of oral sadism, to be elaborated in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER TWO

PRIMAL MATRIX

> It may be, as Irigaray appears to suggest, that the entire history of matter is bound up with the problematic of receptivity.
>
> --Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*[1]

This chapter will present a theo/cosmological account of chora as one rotation of its chiasmic work. I will introduce the problem of gender at/as the site of ontological difference through a late-Platonic Whiteheadian influence in both the oceanic tehomophilia of Catherine Keller and the membrane of Roland Faber, placing these contemporary readers of Whiteheadian/Deleuzian matrix in relation to a feminist theological assemblage of gynomorphic imagery exemplified by Rosemary Radford Ruether's adaptation of goddess theology to Christian panentheism in the figure of *primal matrix*. We will consider how affective dimensions of the Whiteheadian chora (Steven Shaviro) and the membranous chora of Deleuze both dry out and continue the oceanic dynamics and voluptuous traditions of gynomorphic cosmologies.

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1 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 54.

Feminist Matrix

As one of the early articulations of ecofeminist theology, Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Sexism and Godtalk* (1983) deploys the feminist metaphors of *God/dess* along with *Primal Matrix* to articulate a theological construction of "the root human image of the divine…the great womb within which all things, Gods and humans, sky and earth, human and nonhuman beings, are generated."[2] Ruether describes these metaphors as connecting an ancient understanding of female divinity with a modern inheritance in Paul Tillich's Ground of Being via the mater/matter of the matrix. This Primal Matrix encompasses us in an extension of interior female procreative space to all of nature, ecosystems, and cosmos. As evidence of the gendered nature of the matter/matrix out of which the universe is created, Ruether recites the tale of the murder of the ancient Babylonian sea-goddess Tiamat.[3] The hero, Marduk, slays Tiamat, his mother, holding one half of her carcass up (as impaled upon a spear) and pushing one half down under his foot, thereby building the heavens and the earth. Ruether fashions a reading of Yahweh as Marduk, like the demiurge of Plato, specifically linked with the making and doing of *anthropos*. Ruether suggests that instead of being merely a patriarchal defeat of the female, the story demonstrates the continuity of the goddess religion, and the primacy of the goddess as origin, restorer and sustainer of the cosmos.[4] Ruether suggests that this and other instances of ancient religion do not manifest the modern dualisms that critics

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2 Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and Godtalk: Towards a Feminist Theology* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1983), 48.

3 Ibid., 48-51.

4 Ibid., 52.

and proponents project onto them; rather, she insists that chaos, sexuality, power, and sovereignty are expressed in a range that is shared by female and male deities alike.

Beginning in *From a Broken Web* (1986) and blossoming in *Face of the Deep* (2003), Catherine Keller continues this tradition of excavating and counter-reading the traditions of philosophical theology for streams and leaks of feminist-friendly depths, incompletions, and disruptions toward a constructive theology of *chaosmos,* what James Joyce describes as "cosmos at the verge of chaos, one that is surging toward the exciting possibility of going out of existence, struggling onward at the edge of the existential abyss." Keller meditates on the first two verses of Genesis to find there, "in the beginning" when God was creating" evidence of the already existing but unformed anticipatory materiality that co-creates with Yahweh to form the heavens and the earth; the watery depths of Tiamat and the oceanic *tehom* over which the Spirit/breath hovers, a monstrously goddess-y Tehom *in* and *as* divinity. Tehom is that "*'in' whom unfolds* the universe."[5] Keller reads this messy, chaotic materiality as a bridge between feminist linkages of women and nature as the mother (mater) association with matter, a link that unfolds in recent evolutions of feminism toward eco-feminism and new materialisms. As a project of theorizing selfhood as a feminist theological resource in *From a Broken Web*, Keller daringly pursued sexual difference also at the edges of psychoanalytic, as well as mythical and literary abysses. The *Web* was therefore an attempt to embed the preoccupations of second-wave feminist theory, namely selfhood and agency, within discourses of cosmos--the structures and stories of reality itself--such that God's agency

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5 Ibid., 219. *Elohim*, the personal names of God that unfold in creation complement the bottomless depth of Tehom, the "impersonal divine matrix" (referencing Joseph Bracken).

is on trial/en process along with the feminine subject; and a reworking of metaphysical causality must be undertaken in concert with the particularly gendered and banal generalities of personal subject-hood. That the divine subject iterates the masculine subject, and therefore presumptions of personhood at every level is why sexual difference mattered in the conceptualization of forms of causality and self that are fluid, interdependent, not-One. These interrelational plurisingularities, eventively becoming, provided one solution to the problem of masculine subjectivity writ personal and very large in Western onto-theological metaphysics.

What seems to be missing from poststructuralist, feminist, and process appreciations of Keller's work is an old, if not original connection to metapsychology as a major tool of speculation in the cosmic/human connection. Keller writes this connection at the edges of Freudian, Jungian, feminist, and self-psychological accounts of human consciousness and sexual difference. Tiamat arises, monstrously, when the ocean is forced to recede; that is, when the oceanic feeling retained by daughters (and initially sons) with their mothers must be pierced, violently rejected and forced into submission in order for a (masculine) self to feel like a self. In my theological gloss that only barely pushes the edge of Keller's project, the tehomic feeling of connectivity must be cut by Yahweh if Yahweh is to feel himself graduate from dependence and indirect causality (alerting his mother to his actions by crying) to doing (handling objects at will, and moving here and there, as in the garden). This is, after all, the Freudian *end* to dependence. The poststructuralist process matrix, is therefore, the structuring of the oceanic feeling into the fabric of the universe or, perhaps, one might argue, the oceanic feeling is the affective reception of the truly matrixial nature of things.

Sexual difference thus traces onto ontological difference through the critique of andro-ontotheology. For Keller, onto-theological division is the sundering of self from a matrix, the false division of the many ones from a whole. But not only this: *gender* is thus understood as the repetition of that violence, of the ambivalent unmourned metaphysical killing of the cosmos for the sake of the self.

As a metaphor rooted in the mater/matrix that prefigures any Yahwistic word of creation, Keller's tehom retains second wave feminist imagery of womb as place, relation, and generativity even as it invokes an apophatic, poststructuralist abyss. As matrix, it presses into the history of Plato's figure of the chora and its complex of receptivity and place. Tehom thus functions for Keller as a metaphor of place "of khora, or matrix of every becoming."[6] Keller suggests a notion of capacitation at work in the Tehom, the giving of place to another. Humans are capable of receiving God (capax dei) as God is capable of receiving the world (capax mundi). This idea of capacity is therefore not a passive space or place, rather in its relational responsiveness, it is active.

Elsewhere, Keller articulates process panentheism as an identification of the not-nothing of chora with the process of creativity in which God and world are becoming, an infinite medium.[7] In its simplest sense, panentheism can be characterized as understanding God to be like "an envelope for the world."[8] John Cobb begins a definition

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6 Ibid.

7 "God is, then, an infinite medium by and in which all are redistributed—flung in utter fragmentarity—into each other." Catherine Keller, "'She Talks Too Much' Magdalene Meditations," in Virginia Burrus and Catherine Keller, *Toward a Theology of Eros: Transfiguring Passion at the Limits of Discipline* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 433.

8 "Panentheism advocates that God is like an envelope for the world." Donald Musser and Joseph Price, *New and Enlarged Handbook of Christian Theology: Revised Edition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 254.

of panentheism as "the doctrine that all is in God,"[9] and as Arthur Peacocke seems to suggest, the "en" in panentheism seems to suggest that God is simultaneously "in" the world and that the world is in God; a mutual indwelling.[10] I suggest that even when not explicitly feminist or in deployment of feminine imagery, the envelope of panentheism (as one of Irigaray's favored metaphors) bears traces of gynomorphically choric receptivity. Furthermore, even when explicitly masculine, God as a dwelling seems to implicate or appropriate gestation and birth. For example, ecofeminist Ivone Gebara invites us into the divine milieu of God "in which we live and have our being."[11] By quoting Paul's speech to the Athenians in Acts 17, Gebara is also quoting the 6th or 7th century BCE poet Epimenides, as Paul seeks to win his crowd of Athenians with an ancient address to Zeus, the father who gives birth to a son by sewing him unborn into his godly thigh.[12] Indeed, God's womb is written into orthodoxy via the Eleventh Council of

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9 John Cobb, "Panentheism" in Alan Richardson and John Bowden, *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1983).

10 Emphasis on the reciprocation of containment, such that "the Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part of it exists in Him…" F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), as quoted in Arthur Peacocke, "Introduction" in Clayton, Philip, and A. R. Peacocke, *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004).

Perhaps this complexity could be summarized by the phrase "in and through," per Michael W. Brierley, who delineates characteristics generally held by panentheists: the cosmos as god's body, language of "in and through," the cosmos as sacrament, language of inextricable intertwining, God's dependence on the cosmos, the intrinsic, positive value of the cosmos, possibility, and degree Christology. Michael W. Brierley, "Naming a Quiet Revolution: The Panentheistic Turn in Modern Theology," in Clayton and Peacocke, *In Whom We Live and Move*, 6-12.

11 Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 124.

12 See also Virginia Burrus, *Begotten, Not Made: Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

Toledo in 675 CE, in which *de utero Patris* describes the origin of the Logos, as Rosemary Radford Ruether reminds us, after Catherine Lacugna and Jurgen Moltmann.[13]

Though Keller's richly-layered intertexts, one can read the mapping of sexual difference onto ontological difference as an ancient textual habit. Keller remarks on the tehomophobias of the *chaoskampfs* of the tradition, such that Isaiah's strong-armed YHWH pierces the dragon and dries up the seas in a creation story made apocalyptic by the fight against and mirroring of the Babylonian empire. The ex nihilo doctrine of order vs. nothing cannot stand for itself in a chaoskampf. The battle of order vs. chaos itself bears witness to the chaos always already at the edges, and especially at the beginning of these stories of order. These monstrous, leaking remnants are the mattering of the infinite.[14] They are also hermeneutical leaks into a history of biblical interpretation and theology that rather chaotically tried to present itself as mono-vocal, consistent, and

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13 Catherine M. Lacugna, "Re-conceiving the Trinity as the Mystery of Salvation," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 1975: 38:21, as quoted in Rosemary Radford Ruether *Gaia and God*, 23 (note 19). Ruether observes that the demiurge of the Timaeus, like Marduk and Yahweh, produces the cosmos through making rather than begetting, which "demotes the cosmos to the status of a possessed object, and distinguishes it from the self-subsistent life of the divine." Moltmann also quotes the Council of Toledo: "It must be held that the Son was created, neither out of nothingness nor yet out of any substance, but that He was begotten or born out of the Father's womb (de utero Patris), that is, out of his very essence." Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 165.

Rosemary Radford Ruether notes that from within the matriarchal framework, the goddess Tiamat's murder is cosmogonic and theogonic. After the murder of Tiamat, humans (as slaves) are made from the blood of her consort Kingu, mixed with clay. "Imposing servitude on the mortal creatures, he frees the gods for leisure." Among the take-aways: the earliest cosmos is matriarchal, and parthenogetic gestation is the first model of generation (Apsu, the pirmoridial begetter of all things, commingles in a single body with Tiamat, who bears all things." 17-18. The manner of making (techne) is immediately bound up with enslavement and the "appropriation of 'matter' by the new ruling class. Life begotten and gestating has its own autonomous principle of life. Dead matter, fashioned into artifacts, makes the cosmos the private possession of its 'creators.' Rosemary Radford Ruether goes on to connect the hierarchical dualism of the three cosmic stories of God 'making' the world – the Timaean demiurge, Marduk, and Yahweh—with slavocracy. "Slaves are the human tools by whom wealth is extracted through exploited labor, allowing aristocratic leisure to the rulers. Leisure versus work, rule versus servitude, are the primary metaphors for the divine-human relation." Ruether also clarifies that the Hebrew text goes on to modify or reject this. Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 25.

14 Keller, *Face of the Deep*, 113-114.

orthodox. This polydoxy stems from Keller's confronting of process thought with deconstruction. Her khora, then, is a material/semiotic configuration, a method that must accommodate metaphysical and epistemological trajectories of postmodernity.

Keller reads Genesis and other texts of tradition with a deconstructive strategy of attending, like Daniel Boyarin, to the gaps the text leaves open for the community of interpreters. Instead of a blank nothing, those gaps are already, according to Keller, a "differential filigree" complicating the boundedness of the canon and the boundaries of what is said and not said in the text itself. In this way, Keller reads Boyarin's deconstructive midrashic strategy as itself a chaosmos, occurring within "the untransformed detritus of the previous system."[15] Of Boyarin, Keller asks "Does the potentially burbling between the cracks suggest already a tehomic Deep?" Thus the gaps of deconstructionist readings may be, in Keller's own feminist biblical midrashim, "a *legible matrix of virtual meaning*,"[16] such that symbolic processes, like all processes, churn up remainders as pre-existing conditions; that creation, whether as story or as cosmos emerges embedded, matrixial, deep as well as broken on the surface.

> God, it seems, has left interpretive gaps in the universe itself, and therefore also in the Torah. The world and the text await interpretation. Thus the text cannot mirror an original, transparent—and apparently nonexistent—meaning. It will make meaning through a cooperative interation in history—meaning not from nothing but from everything preceding. That meaning lives only in the relationships constituting the present signifiying process.[17]

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15 Ibid., 117, citing Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 41.

16 Ibid., 118 (author's italics).

17 Ibid., 119.

One can almost hear the wave action of Whiteheadian process thought gathering together the history of interpretation and unfurling into a new iteration an event of meaning along with its interpreters in an act of interpretation. In a cooperative hermeneutics, actant-interpreters select and add to the reading of a moment. Keller's process reading strategy, therefore, like her cosmology, prehends the past. And part of that past is, as Keller takes a cue from Daniel Boyarin, a retelling and reframing of the repressed and its multiple returns; in other words, a psychoanalytic *enfolding* of the repressed or rejected desires, intertexts, and societies of dissidence that surround the Babylonian myth, Hebrew text and midrashim, in order to *unfold* a counter-reading strategy. Reading as capacitation.

Keller engages Boyarin's approach to another biblical chasokampf, the Exodus. Boyarin discusses the return of repressed mythologies of animism in the midrashim generated by the passage "the sea began to resist" (Exodus 14:21). This is the moment when Moses lifts his staff to part the sea, but, in its unruliness, seems to refuse compliance, at least at first. The rabbis read it through Psalm 114 in which "the sea saw and fled." Boyarin finds there evidence of a repressed animist polytheistic old religion at the time of the priestly author, wherein the waters are "animate, proud and productive."[18] Keller uses this midrashic play to call for an "eco-hermeneutics… amidst the cutting edges of theory."[19] Refusing to jettison the salty traces of the monstrous feminine in 2003, Keller hearkens to 1986 to think again psychodynamics of repression, resistance, desire, and the maternal along with language and event, to press into the fleshy texts to ask if "the intertext emblematizes a repressed desire, does the Babylonian intertext offer itself

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18 Ibid., 120 citing Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 100.

19 Ibid.

as the site at once of the repression and the recollection of desire? Of a desire that sinks below the heterosexual mating of Tiamat and Apsu, into an infinite intimacy; the desire for a mothering matrix, where we can romp and risk?"[20]

Midrashic exegetics of the Exodus, at the edge of the agential oceanic, comingle interpretive, ethical, and metaphysical dimensions to protest an andro-intrusive word of command. The Kelleran matrix is thus a nexus of khoras, both in form and content – of ecological locatedness and cosmic origins, gendered enfleshments and negative theology, psychoanalytically and linguistically informed differentiations that weave narrative and cosmology at the edge of, and deep into the multiple abysses of relationality. Such complexities of relationality push with and past earlier feminist textual readings for maternal and generously gendered natures of God.

Anthro-Imagistic Matrix

God as parent is one of the ancient metaphors. Negotiating gendered essentialisms about mothers and fathers is not easy. Nelle Morton, Sally McFague, Elizabeth Johnson, Catherine LaCugna and others of early feminist theology mined biblical texts and traditions for maternal images for God. Johnson writes of "the maternal source and compassionate matrix of the universe" as she reclaims Mother as the first person of the trinity.

> She cries out in terrible labor to deliver the new creation of justice (Is 42:14. She suckles the newly born, teaches toddlers to wlak, bends down to feed them, and carries them about, bearing them from birth even to old age with its gray hairs (Is 46:3-4). As a mother comforts her child, so too she comforts those who lament (Is 66:13). But unlike some human

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20 Ibid., 121.

> mothers, God the Mother will never forget the children of her womb (Hos 11:304, Is 49:15). [21]

Like other andro- images of God, human attributes can only apply proximally, and then only in a non-human perfection, so that here, even in the book Hosea where Yahweh is depicted as a (properly) abusive husband, God as the ideal mother must not be confused with improper, neglectfully bad human mothers. Into these feminist efforts, the re-introduction of Tiamat as more than a critique of patriarchy, but also as a model for or at least constructively related to divine subjectivity, is remarkable. During the 1990's the Brian Wren hymn "warm father god, strong mother god" is a noble effort to reverse gender norms and diversify the human metaphors of the imago dei along multiple axis. But perhaps necessarily missing from efforts such as Wren's and Johnson's are the ambiguities that haunt, that which makes humans human, the admixture of multiples - the rage of the mother/monster, the weariness of the warrior father.

Whether the ideality of God or human images, matrixial metaphysics offers a place for the activity of some form of ideality in the causality of potentials. Both Deleuze and Whitehead find ways of enfolding Platonic verticality into a horizontality of mutual becoming. It should be no surprise, then, that Keller and Faber, like Whitehead and Deleuze, find a resource in Plato's third way, the receptacle or chora, the place of becoming.

Creative Matrix

> We speak in the singular of The Universe, of Nature, of (physis) which can be translated as Process. There is the one all-embracing fact which is the advancing

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21 Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 179-180.

> history of the one Universe. This community of all the world, which is the matrix for all begetting, and whose essence is process with retention of connectedness,-- this community is what Plato terms The Receptacle.[22]

For A. N. Whitehead, the ontological functions belong to the becomingness of creativity, the process by which the many become one and are increased by one; the "universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact."[23] It is the first ultimate, and yet it is not a principal or an ontological substance. Analagous to Aristotle's prime material, it is rather process, activity, becoming; the "factor of activity" that constitutes the initial situation of every occasion of experience.[24] As the act of concrescence, creativity can be thought of as the causa sui, the self creation that occurs when all available things come together to form one occasion of experience. Creativity is what "drives the world."[25]

As the spontaneous emergence of novelty, creativity yet has no aim of its own. For directions it depends upon the ordering of the primordial nature of God. And yet it gives rise to God and every existing thing –as one of the actual occasions. And the actualization of each of the occasions serves as one of the many data that go on to unify into the next moment. This results in a rhythm, a pulse of One-ing and adding, such that "The creative process is rhythmic: it swings from the publicity of many things to the individual privacy and it swings back from the private individual to the publicity of the

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22 Alfred North Whitehead. *Adventures of Ideas* (1933) (New York: Free Press, 1967), 150.

23 Alfred North Whitehead, David Ray Griffin, and Donald W. Sherburne, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Free Press, 1978), 31.

24 Alfred North Whitehead. *Adventures of Ideas*, 179

25 Ibid.

objectified individual."[26] Roland Faber clarifies the two phases of creativity, an inner activity of gathering and unifying whereby the many become one; and an external phase of dissolution and perishing, by which one is added to the many. *Concrescence* is the name Whitehead gives to the gathering receptivity that grounds continuity, while transition grounds discontinuity in a way that funds receptive continuity.

Thus concrescence is the self causing aspect; the *causa sui* of creativity is the efficiently causal aspect, precisely through its perishing. Receptivity enables activity to be active by 'taking up' all actualities that perish (albeit not in the fashion of a 'container') and sending them on past the causal continuum so that new, discontinuous unities can emerge in the universe.[27] The duality of creativity allows the oscillation to be conceived of as part of the same cosmological principle—that which comprises a moving whole. Instead of a Platonic juxtaposition of form and matter, form is reconceived as activity and matter as potentiality; or as Faber claims, the ontological difference is between activity and actuality, or creativity and event.[28] All of this is occurring both within the Whiteheadian God and external to it. And while Whitehead's God is specifically that which is not identified with the creative power that is becoming the universe, there is a tradition among some process theologians of identifying creativity with the Godhead, the *ungrund* of God, a dynamic depth of potentiality--a chaosmic dimension that gives rise to God, Meister Eckhart's eternal birthing of God and the in-boiling of the Godhead that

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26 Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 229.

27 Telephone conversation with Luke B. Higgins, November 5, 2015.

28 Roland Faber, *God As Poet of the World: Exploring Process Theologies* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 76.

boils over into creation.[29] These metaphors of containment, transgression, liquidity, and heat convey that, per Joseph Bracken, "precisely as an activity and not an entity, creativity could be the underlying nature of God, the dynamic principle of ground of the divine being, and as such likewise the ground of all finite beings."[30]

Indescribable, as every descriptor bears more specificity than it has, Whitehead associates it with the Timaean chora. "The receptacle imposes a common relationship on all that happens, but does not impose what that relationship will be."[31] "Without character, it nonetheless is responsible for the most fundamental character of every existing thing."[32] Faber remarks on how this formless aspect of continuity, an impermanence that yields a kind of unity or relationality to all, out of which individuality arises is where Whitehead locates his concept of the person, arising "in the place of emptiness." [33] According to Faber, "khora disguises a universal 'within' of relationality in the notion of 'necessity in universality'. . . presupposing and implicating an excess of becoming."[34] Khora is also the "indetermination of limit," limiting the limits as "indirection of sense against 'good sense' and 'common sense.'[35]

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29 See Keller, *Face of the Deep*, 2003 and Bracken, *The Divine Matrix*, 1995.

30 Joseph A. Bracken, *The Divine Matrix: Creativity As Link between East and West* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 55.

31 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 150.

32 David L. Hall, "Process and Anarchy: A Taoist Vision of Creativity," *Philosophy East and West* 28, no. 3 (July 1978): 272.

33 Roland Faber, "Personsein am Ort der Leere," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religions Philosophie*, 44 (2002): 189-198.

34 Roland Faber, "Khora and Violence" in Faber, Roland, Michael Halewood, and Deena Lin, *Butler on Whitehead: On the Occasion* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 114 (note 27).

35 Ibid., 114, reading a paradox in Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 75.

While Creativity bears matrixial dimensions, Whitehead also seems to use the figure of Receptacle like the idea of extensive continuum, as the space for the patterned relations of Creativity; the most general set of conditions for, and the most basic set of constraints on becoming. Receptacle/chora thus retains for Whitehead the Platonic association with necessity.[36] Something, in an eventive cosmology, needs to issue from the past. Every contemporaneous moment of becoming has to draw from the same prehensive past, and every event has to prehend everything. Receptacle thus represents the fact that each manifestation of creativity must happen in concert with every other manifestation of creativity, a connective extensity, because we (as societies of actual occasions) are all drawing from the same past. Receptacle thus both creates difference and ensures connectivity, multiplying and keeping things within a common field of connection. While we may concresce in private, we transition from that concrescence in a common public. Thus there is individuality or independence in the private nature of concrescence, but there is also community because it is the same past that is prehended, such that we are not alone in our becoming. And because everything else is becoming too, there are limitations on what we can become. "Receptacle is the most general necessity, empty in itself, without agenda or aim, that represents the necessity that becoming has to keep on going, keep on creating all together." [37]

Whitehead connects the formlessness or bareness of the space-time of Receptacle to the mathematical physics of his day, conceived as it seems to be, abstracted from those

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36 Luke B. Higgins, telephone conversation, November 5, 2015. Many thanks to Higgins for his analysis of receptacle and extensive continuum.

37 Luke B. Higgins, telephone conversation, November 5, 2015. See also Luke B. Higgins, *The Time of Ecology: Theological Cosmology for a Postmodern Earth* (PhD diss., Drew University, 2013).

formulas that pertain to the events happening within it. Likening it to a more subtle form of Aristotle's matter, Whitehead contrasts it to both a Newtonian matter and "ordinary geometrical space with its mathematical relations." As a "necessary community," "The Receptacle imposes a common relationship on all that happens, but does not impose what that relationship shall be."[38] Even mathematics, that iconic/quintessential example of being above the divided line in Platonic dualism, as universal laws, are understood by Whitehead as a presentation of the relatedness that inheres in the things through their abstractions; and that relatedness occurs through the Receptacle.

> "The general science of mathematics is concerned with the investigation of patterns of connectedness, in abstraction from the particular relata and the particular modes of connection. […] The real point is that the essential connectedness of things can never be safely omitted. This is the doctrine of the thoroughgoing relativity which inflects the universe and which makes the totality of things as it were a Receptacle uniting all that happens."[39]

Whitehead goes on to identify dualism only with the early Plato, as an intrusion of over-individualization into the later Plato, an excess of the separability of categories as well as of ideas from things into a self-sufficient realm of abstraction. Whitehead is generous about this error, citing the necessity of abstraction for thought, and for language. "All language witnesses to the same error. We habitually speak of stones, and planets, and animals, as though each individual things could exist, even for a passing moment, in separation from an environment which is in truth a necessary factor in its own nature."[40] It is the fact of this environment that requires as a conceptual background to manage the

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38 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 150.

39 Ibid., 153-154.

40 Ibid., 154.

possibility incommensurate backgrounds of the various sciences that requires a meta-reasoning. This background of science, thought, and language, the presumed or carefully reasoned systematic framework is another resonant matrix, as the crossing over of method and content, in Whiteheadian epistemology and metaphysics it is the background of all things, the relatedness that forms the receptacle that both unifies the things and presents the method by which we ought to understand those things.

These observations in *Adventures of Ideas* follow a discourse on the question of natural laws, describing law as a certain "smoothness" in an order of things from which observations of "regularity or of persistence or of recurrence" can occur. For example, observation of the seasons enabled early humans to plant the first seeds and then wait.[41] Of four historical variants of how a law should be defined--as immanence, imposition, description, or interpretation--Whitehead favors immanence most. This is an understanding of law as comprised of a reflective nature of the characters of things and the mutual relations of those things, what I might call a mirroring or resonating property. Thus "the characters of the relevant things in nature are the outcome of their interconnections, and their interconnections are the outcome of their characters." These patterns in mutual relations are laws of nature, such that "a Law is explanatory of some community in character pervading the things which constitute Nature," presupposing "the essential interdependence of things." Since an immanent law depends on the changing character of the things, the law must change; thus immanent law negates "absolute being" along with any fixed or permanent conceptions of these laws. Even so, this doctrine of

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41 Ibid., 109-110.

Internal Relations is, in Whitehead's words, rationalistic or explanatory and not merely descriptive.[42]

Receptacle as a general principle is the meeting "place" and holding of the collective inheritance of the past and the anticipation of the next moment. It is integration and recreation, a receptivity that allows for a return that is never the same, a home that has no settlement; that in accord with Heraclitus, can't be encountered the same way twice. As such it is the "medium of intercommunication."[43] The differentiating eventiveness of creativity is one way to think the Whiteheadian matrix, as the grasping prehensiveness of the events that reach for the datum of the past, in community with all contemporaneity, in an affective movement that is both causal and sensing. The events see and feel themselves as they transmute into presentational immediacy.

Affective Matrix

> If time and space are the forms, respectively, of inner and outer intuition, then feeling is their common generative matrix. It is *by* the receptive act of feeling that I locate things in space and in time. In other words, feeling is the process by which all entities get spatialized and temporalized. [44]

Stephen Shaviro reads Whitehead as a source for affect theory, precisely because it offers a theory of causality that is based in feeling. While it is the Whiteheadian theory of prehensions, the way that things grasp their worlds that form the basis of Shaviro's observations, the Receptacle of Creativity, as the figure of prehensive spatiotemporality

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42 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 112-113. Additionally, "The creation of the world—said Plato—is the victory of persuasion over force" (*AI,* 83). About Plato, Whitehead writes that most of the heresies featured in the dialogues are write-ups of Plato's own doctrines (*AI* 106).

43 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 134.

44 Steven Shaviro, "Pulses of Emotion: Whitehead's 'Critique of Pure Feeling'" in Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 11. http://www.shaviro.com/Othertexts/Pulse.pdf. Accessed November 24, 2015.

in process, could be thought to share in this nature as well. Shaviro shares the Whiteheadian critique of metaphysical dualisms because they seem to always require intermediaries to do the work of epistemology and causation. Nature isn't like that, he says, because matter always presents certain restrictive forms, like the grain of the wood that determines how it can be cut or sanded; and to the extent that there could be said to be something forming or causing the things, it is never really external because "it works by a series of transformations that transmit energy, and thereby 'inform' matter." This is a mediation that is communication, that carries and affects that which it mediates. In accord with media theory, "the medium is the message…no message, or formal structure, can be indifferent to the medium by and through which it is transmitted."[45]

These processes of mediation are hinted at, he suggests, in a certain reading of Kant because although Kant insists that sensibility or receptivity are completely different from knowledge of the thing in itself, the thing in itself affects us through the sensibility or receptivity--the modulation of the media that are time and space. While the "thing in itself" may be inaccessible to human knowing, it nonetheless affects us such that space and time intrinsically "establish immanent, non-cognitive connections among objects, between the object and the subject, and between the subject and itself."[46] This makes Whitehead a radical Kantian, pursuing what is most radically causal about the transcendental a priori, according to Shaviro. This also means that there is no need for either a Platonic division between ideas and things, or an Aristotelean hylomorphic combination that enfolds form into matter, since the interconnections are already

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45 Ibid., 6.

46 Ibid., 7.

immanent in the datum that become. By my reading, there is no formless matter that needs forming because the nature of things is always already eventively *choric*. By Shaviro's reading, this choric quality (my language) is what makes Whitehead a theoretician of *affect*, wherein mediation--as causality and sensibility--is intrinsic to things. This affect is not only causal; it is feeling, as the pre-cognitive grasping or knowing of the things. Prehensions, according to Whitehead, are usually unconscious.

Thus the dual meaning of affect, for affect theory, can negotiate the felt qualities of things and their effects on humans, such that feelings, as pre-cognitive sensations on the way to becoming socialized into emotions, can be understood as causally created immanently; and causality can be understood as meaty, in my words – as material touching, grasping. Whitehead calls his schema a "theory of feelings" because cognition is not really the point of human relationality with the cosmos. "Every experience of perception involves an 'affective tone,' and this tone precedes, and both determines and exceeds, cognition."[47] Whitehead can thereby claim "the animal body" as the primary mode of interactivity, such that "we respond to things in the first place by feeling them; it is only afterwards that we identify, and cognize, what it is we feel."[48]

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47 Shaviro, "Pulses of Emotion," 9, and Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 176 (for 'affective tone'). Shaviro relates the "Brain in the Vat" thought experiment, as an update to Descartes' method of doubt, as an "old slapstick routine…the comedy lies in this: that it's only my hysterical demand for certainty that first introduces the element of doubt. It's only by subjecting myself to the horrors of sensory deprivation that I approach the delirious limit at which the senses become questionable. Descartes does just that in his Third Meditation: "I will now shut my eyes, stop my ears, and withdraw all my senses . . . . ." Descartes 'proves God,' as Samuel Beckett puts it, 'by exhaustion.' As metaphysics goes, it's the oldest trick in the book: first you take something away, then you complain that it isn't there, and then you invent a theory grounded in—and compensating for—its very absence. Deleuze and Guattari call it the Theology of Lack. A seductive ruse, to be sure: once you accept the premises, you've already been suckered into the conclusions." Shaviro, "If I Only Had a Brain" in *Postmodern Culture* v.4 n.1 (September, 1993), 4. Accessed October 21, 2015. http://pmc.iath.virginia.edu/text-only/issue.993/pop-cult.993

48 Shaviro, "Pulses of Emotion," 10.

Felt sensations as proto- or pre-social precursors of emotion are affects because they involve the touching of things, subject to object, subjects to themselves; the touching or grasping that causes things to come to be. Considering prehensiveness in the context of the Whiteheadian ultimate principle of creativity, the gathering of the many at the moment of concrescence occurs by way of affect. Chora, understood as the ultimate principle of process, could thus be said to be constituted by events of affect. As such it is thereby the medium, the mode by which not only things come to be, but by which they are known. That knowing, that grasping is the coming to be of the cosmos in every moment. It is a way of knowing that is not indebted to consciousness or a subject/object distinction; it is pre-cognitive and often pre- or un-conscious. The communicability of affect thus embeds epistemology in metaphysics.

John Cobb describes the prehensions or feelings of process thought occurring within a causal chain, whereby affect is precisely what bridges the gap between causality and emotion. *Affect is energy, transferred*. The human (read here as subjective) experience of emotion interacts as and with non-conscious and other than human experiences of feeling as prehension, or simply energy.

> At this point Whitehead engages in a bold speculation, which shows how serious he is about overcoming the dualism of the **objective** and **subjective** worlds. He affirms that what we know subjectively as **emotion** is measured objectively as energy. The emotional feeling of the emotional feeling of still another emotional feeling is described by physics as the vector transmission of energy.[49]

If the psychological/semiotic chora is an allegory for the Whiteheadian chora, then the surprisingly sturdy grip of tiny fingers around adult fingers, at the border between reflex,

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49 John Cobb, *Whitehead Word Book: A Glossary with Alphabetical Index to Technical Terms in Process and Realilty* (Claremont, CA: P & F Press, 2008), 35.

pleasure, and resolve could serve as one of its figures. The momentary consolidation of the baby's world into that singular self/other touching is a moment that can only give way to the next. The object of the baby's grasp is not directly available, as the prehending we can have of each other is relegated, through continual eventiveness, to the past. The Kantian intuitions of time and space, the internal and external intuitions are figured in that momentary grasp, the automatic (preconscious but self willing) prehension.

But is the semiotic chora of pre-object childhood only an allegory of the Whiteheadian chora? This could be, after all, what process thought requires of the human, to be subject to--and of--the same processes as cosmos. This is what the oceanic feeling has been pressing into for decades, now, concerning the work of women or at least mothers at the ontological divide—the conundrum of metaphysics: that not only are processes of human development analogous to cosmic stories of origin, but also that the human story *is* cosmic; participates as part of the fabric of the cosmos as the structures of cosmos comprising the human. As part of cosmos, the laws of nature must be reflected in us too, in what Keller offers through the Leibnitzian/Deleuzian monad as holographic mirroring--no smooth holism. If it is anthropocentrically arrogant to project human processes onto cosmic origins, it must also be incorrect to introject singularity onto the human, unique within or separate from cosmos. And when naturalisms of human and cosmic process unfold in the neighborhood of their mutual constitution, I understand such an unfolding to dynamically invoke god questions, as the contestation of im/personality writ cosmic.

Reading the chora of creativity in light of the Trinitarian mutual indwelling referred to as *perichoresis*, Karen Baker-Fletcher explores the dancing places of God in

the midst of radical suffering. Baker-Fletcher describes the divine perichoretic dance as a "divine, creative, compassionate 'whirlwind" encountered by Job as the dynamic presence of God. Roland Faber also relates his reading of chora as a figure for Whiteheadian process generally with perikhoric Christian figurations of the divine. [50] Faber's perikhoric cosmos understands first things through the lens of pre-individuation so important to Deleuzian cosmology and its Whiteheadian influences, as we have seen in the pre-objective, pre-conscious prehensiveness of becoming. Perikhora, for Faber, means that pure imminence is the prima materia of all enfleshment as multiplicitous, pleromatic, and divine.

Perikhora

> With polyphilic bodying, we encounter the pre-subjective, pre-occupied dimension of our bodily relationship to the chaosmos as pleromatic and we feel the chaosmos in all its interrelatedness as the bodying of perikhora—as moving, fluid concourse of forces, emotions, feelings, energetic movements, rivers of tensions—as depth and in the midst of the Law.[51]

Roland Faber's concept of khora evolves from initial engagements with Whiteheadian process thought and Derridean deconstruction through his serious encounter with Judith Butler's reading of chora[52] developed in his *Secrets of Becoming* (2008) and *Butler and Whitehead (2012)*, to a full Deleuzian reading of Butlerian, Kristevan, Whiteheadian khora in *Divine Manifold* (2014). It is through Faber that I so

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50 Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God: The Trinity from a Womanist Perspective* (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 2006), 24-25.

51 Roland Faber, *The Divine Manifold* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 321.

52 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 1993.

clearly encounter the Choric Receptacle as the metaphor for Whiteheadian thought in general. For Faber, Hutchins, et al, Butlerian performativity correlates with the anti-substantialist eventism of Whitehead. Through the human performativity of what might be called Butlerian apophasis, Faber reinvests our attention in Whitehead's natural Law into human laws of gender normativity and bodying. In "Khora and Violence." Faber takes up a Butlerian body politics to write how khora "exhibits *the togetherness of the mutually excluded* as resistance against the violence of exclusion *as well as* the totalitarianism of universal inclusion. She always escapes *insofar as* she always lets escape."[53] The politics of khora in relation to law and necessity are such that Faber finds in them an undoing of logocentrism and substance metaphysics via the fact of communication – the very medium of communicability that Shaviro highlights. Khora offers to Faber a corrective to binarisms in the tradition of poststructuralism, a subversive milieu from which the logos can be unhinged from its putative self mastery and self production, such that "the limit of discursivity is not held in the grip of the omnipotence of abstract binarisms, but rather only appears in the middle of body formation—in the midst of subliminal and omnipresent power projections…"[54] In this way, khora subversively complicates and moderates the all or nothing mystification that surrounds logocentrism. (By this complication, I note, he also disputes and corrects the sheer nothings of the Lacanian inflection that Butler receives from Irigaray and Kristeva.)

> It is precisely *this performative middle of the communicability of becoming* that resides in between a logocentric nothingness and omnipotence, that Whitehead 'names' with a new key concept from his ready of Plato's text on the *khora*; namely—similar to Derrida's 'mi-lieu'

53 Faber, "Khora and Violence," 114.

54 Ibid., 116.

> (Caputo 2003, op. cit. 91)—that of a 'medium' that is not something '(for) itself,' but only a 'figure' for the very activity of the *mutual immanence of (all) becoming*.[55]

With these moves, Faber continues the movement of process deconstruction signaled by the 2002 publication of *Process and Difference* (Catherine Keller, Anne Daniels) which thematizes the religious interface of poststructuralist linguistics and Whiteheadian cosmology. In khora, specifically the intertext of Derrida and Whitehead, Faber finds the matrix of his own methodology. As khora, the subversive potential of communicability describes an always already "Otherwise Within."[56] Referencing the eventive alterity of Butler's speculative "sacred transience" as a possibility for khora, Faber names the Whiteheadian mutual immanence of "intragenetic khora and intragenetic divine" as an alternative to phallogocentric autogenesis and transcendent divinity.[57]

In a move that also twins the Deleuzian/Cusanian folds of Keller's recent apophatic cosmology, Faber reads khora through Whitehead, Deleuze, Butler, and Kristeva in *Divine Manifold* (2013) to find an anarchic polyphilia that disrupts or denaturalizes the sedimented "organic" "pre-given Law." Against Freud and Lacan's overdetermination of flesh and desire by the organs of pre-set developmental fixations, Deleuze and Guattari's Body Without Organs is orgiastically polyperverse. Faber questions whether the khoric body, as becoming-multiplicity, is merely utopian in the face of the power of phallic regulation. For the later Faber, khora is always about bodies,

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55 Ibid.

56 Ibid., 114.

57 Ibid., 124.

"of the body becoming itself as pure multiplicity, that is, of multiplicities of multiplicities that are always *bodies of bodies and in bodies."*[58]

Faber describes "the flesh of multiplicity" through Merleau-Ponty's flesh of the world that folds back on itself in the sensation of touching and being touched simultaneously, the felt experience of subjective/objectivity as the world touches us touching it. According to Faber, Deleuzian multiplicity is neither material nor ideal, but "an *aesthetic* reality before, beyond and after physicality and mentality."[59] The Body is therefore Not One; not a being separate from other beings, chaosmic, eventively un-reified and resistant to regulation. Faber addresses the theologies of panentheism and incarnation as resisting Christian and secular dogmas of self closure, transcendence, and imperialism, expressing "'cosmic intercourse and flow' where 'intimate proximity of boundaries constantly give[s] way to touch and trespass.'"[60] Faber reads this polyphilic flesh along with Glen Mazis as "'emotion,' that is, that which is 'neither just matter or spirit, neither physical nor mental, but something between and in motion.'"[61] This emotion is the amplification of intensities of non-localizable bodying, "an all-pervading vibration of khoric feeling." [62]

Faber references the Deleuzian chora, the screen between the Many and the One through which anything can emerge, as "pure affirmation of manifoldness." In Deleuzian

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58 Roland Faber, *The Divine Manifold*, 295.

59 Ibid., 296.

60 Ibid., 299, citing Laurel C. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 163, (also quoting Keller, *Face of the Deep*).

61 Faber, *The Divine Manifold*, 321, quoting Glen Mazis, *Emotion and Embodiment: Fragile Ontology* (New York: P. Lang, 1993), 129.

62 Faber, *The Divine Manifold*, 321.

terms, chora is "the field of 'divergent series' of 'impersonal and pre-individual singularities,' a virtual field of potential actualizations." This is not an abstraction, but "the sheer multiplicity of movements into one another. It is a plenitude of manifolds folding, un-folding, de-folding."[63] The major Deleuzian chora passage from *Fold* is quoted here at length:

> "What are the conditions that make an event possible? Events are produced in a chaos, in a chaotic multiplicity, but only under the condition that a sort of screen intervenes. Chaos does not exist; it is an abstraction because it is inseparable from a screen that makes something—something rather than nothing emerge from it. Chaos would be a pure Many, a purely disjunctive diversity, while the something is a *One*, not a pre-given unity, but instead the indefinite article that designates a certain singularity. How can the Many become the One? A great screen has to be placed in between them. Like a formless elastic membrane, an electromagnetic field, or the receptacle of the Timaeus, the screen makes something issue from chaos, and even if this something differs only slightly."[64]

The many can become a one only when a screen intervenes; a screen that separates and conditions the comingling, filtering like a sieve. The chaosmos, always on the edge of chaos, is also on the edge of order, an edge perpetually moving, turning in and out as the edge of the folding. Deleuze is hereby reading the Platonic/Whiteheadian chora as his own plane of immanence.

Screen, field or elastic membrane: a screen is flat, implying a surface of selective porosity; an electromagnetic field has an affective depth related to its proximity to strong attractors; and an elastic membrane evokes an adaptably plastic organic skin, the hydrophilic and hydrophobic layers of a cell membrane. The interactivity invoked by all

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63 Roland Faber, and Andrea M. Stephenson, *Secrets of Becoming: Negotiating Whitehead, Deleuze, and Butler*, International Whitehead Conference (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 33 quoting Deleuze.

64 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 76.

three of these images is transitional, receptive, and somewhat automatic. A screen, via Deleuzian film theory, must allow also for the possibility of a surface for projection.

In the receptacle/chora, something emerges from what would otherwise be only chaos, made chaosmic by the participation of the surface, the edge of the chaos that delimns and transforms, condenses into existence any one singularity; the many folded ones. Chora constitutes, is inseparable but not indistinguishable from chaos, the condition of emergence, of ones and of the possibility of the One that becomes another one. In a schema remarkably similar to Whitehead's Receptacle, the Deleuzian screen is how the virtual becomes implicated, folded into the actual. The infinite multiplicity of folds of actuality contain, through the development of interiors out of exteriors, the layers of virtuality doubled or enfolded within actuality. What is folded of Pure Immanence is, as Luke Higgins articulates, "pure difference in itself—a continuous chaotic heterogeneity, as opposed to the discontinuous ordered homogeneities of the actual."[65]

Thus, for Deleuze, folding seems to be a figure, generally, for difference in relation. Deleuzian folding also carries the activity of Whiteheadian prehension; therefore affectivity and preconsciousness. Hence we encounter a similar slippage in Whitehead and in Derrida: between the grasping activity of prehension and the receiving activity of the prehensions, such that the phases of prehension or folding coalesce in the almost spatial metaphor of the Receptacle. Or, perhaps for these philosophers of dynamically complicating ontological division, the complexity of the Platonic figure of chora has

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65 Luke B. Higgins, email conversation, November 4, 2015. Many thanks also to Austin Roberts for email exchange, November 2015.

imprinted a philosophical imagination with an alternative spatial imagery of ontological difference?

The Deleuzian chora/screen selects, through a slice or a cut in the cone of pure immanence, certain movements of chaotic virtual depth that become actual. The folds indeed are worlds within worlds, caverns within caverns, and they happen only with the intervention of the screen: part obstacle and part enablement--the capacitation that happens through the selectivity, the eventive decision of a *passable* barrier. For all its porosity, flexibility, and receptivity: a *boundary*. In my gloss of the chora as *selection*: the chaosmos can ride the edge of chaos only through an intervention. That which capacitates is that which interrupts. The oceanic, made possible by feeling, has continuity by a process of limitation.

En/Unfolding Matrix

> It comes down to folds. . . Word into world, world into word. Outside in, inside out, the edge turns to layer, to tissue, complicating, pleating. . . the vertical axis is itself twisting, bending into spirals diffracted by everything they transverse. . . Each one of its folds does the work of the world. In word or body."[66]

Conducting a theology of enfolding and unfolding steeped in what is always a strategy for producing a theological force field: the threefold cosmo-semiology of Nicholas of Cusa and the apophatic tradition's contribution to an anti-substantialist way of knowing, Keller engages the Deleuzian folds, like the Whiteheadian/poststructuralist interface, as a figure of the work that the invisible does in the realm of the visible: Word

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66 Catherine Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 168.

into world and back out again. The activity of the folds is thereby a Deleuzian version of enveloping or "prehending" virtual events within the actual.

Deleuze uses the image of the fold to interpret Heidegger's ontological difference in relational/positive rather than dialectical/negative terms. Keller, reading Deleuze in this way, considers the fold as the site of a relational difference between Being and beings. *Zwiefalt*, double folding, she may suggest, may not be what Heidegger seems to identify as simple negation; the difference of Being and beings in not between them negatively, but constitutively and positively relates them. Keller, reading with Clayton Crockett, continues consideration of Deleuzian revision of negation in relation to the negation of apophatic theology: that the *not* of negative theology is like the not of Deleuze's folding of the one and the many – not a simple negation, but rather a non-separable difference – a differenciation that is a relation as well as a difference—such that Cloud of the Impossible, the convivance of "negative theology and ontological relationality: when we say not God, are we saying—not a negative relation but the fold between what is called God and the relations of the world: the en of panentheism?"[67] This *in* or *en* is the difference that is also *of*, within, constitutive of the folds of the virtual into the plane of immanence.

Once differenciation opens every possible moment, such that the ontological difference is multiplied indefinitely into everything everywhere as the constitutive heart of engagement and relationality wherein the notion of divide is merely a misreading of the ubiquity of the process of differentiation, then we are left with cosmogenesis always in process, enfolding the virtual into the plane of immanence to unfold into the actual the

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67 Ibid., 177.

many concretions of the world. The folds are the activity of the fabric of relationality through the plane of immanence, a geometrical idea of immanence as immanence itself; immanence that cannot be said to be about anything else. This idea of immanence is the analog of the combination of embeddedness, receptivity, thereness, and mediation that we have encountered as the constitutive (non)character of chora, matrix of becoming. Certainly Keller's project of Word and World, unfolding into each other along the vertical axis is another revolution in her chiasmic method and cosmogonic morphology of language and bodying together. And the Word/World fold, as cosmological hermeneutic, is not wasted on Christian theological readers. The Logos has been complicating this vertical unfolding from the beginning, in and through all attempts to organize, delimit and shore up the tissue, the pleating of World into Word and Word into World that "does the work of the world. In word and body."[68]

As the Kelleran chora enfolds the Deleuzian matrix, with the repetition at a different interval of process cosmology, entangled relationality, and apophatic theology, a question emerges: where is the tehom in the Deleuzian Keller? It is there, in at least a trace. For Keller, Whiteheadian prehensiveness translates into Deleuzian folds. Prehensions enfold God and word into world, *out of the depths*.[69] This is the next evolution of Keller's *creation ex profundis,* a chaosmo-genesis. And the oceanic rhythmic surging of the Cusan unfolding/unfolding emerges and recedes, as it "beats

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68 Ibid., 168.

69 Catherine Keller, "Complicities: Folding the Event in Whitehead and Deleuze," from *Event and Decision: Ontology and Politics in Badiou, Deleuze, and Whitehead*, Claremont, December 2007, 8. Accessed November 10, 2015, https://whiteheadresearch.org/occasions/conferences/event-and-decision/papers/Catherine%20Keller_Final.pdf

barely recognized, like dark waves, against the shore of our two twentieth century world-folders."[70]

And yet there is a shift in the cosmology of folds such that their fleshy affectiveness registers far less gynomorphically. If mater remains in the Deleuzian matrix, it is much more elusive. Is Keller's early and middle material maternal still there in the depths, or is the horizon of transfeminism post-labial?

However polyphillically open the Body Without Organs seems to be, the Deleuzian folds are only rarely gynomophic. With vectors of infinite curvilinearity, and projects of anti-phallocentric forms of subjectivity via the concepts of BWO, larval subjects, and becoming-woman, there is not a strong association of specifically female folds or morphology in the Deleuzian curves. Perhaps this is due to Leibnitz, who in spite of the voluptuous ecstatic whorls of the Baroque, generally seems to figure his folds as architectural, codexical creases or sharp pleats of paper. *The Fold* mentions invagination three times: in relation to the dependence of epigenetic processes on previous folds related, for example, to an egg's process of cellular division required for its growth and shaping; as the organic way a fold pushes up "from a relatively smooth and consistent surface;" and to describe the relation between souls and the organic/inorganic.[71] The interiority of a subject, as the enfolding of the virtual such that the outside becomes the inside is an invaginated soul. "Organic interiority is…an interiority of space, and not yet of motion; also an internalization of the outside, an invagination of the outside…It

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70 Keller, "Complicities" 9.

71 Deleuze, *The Fold,* 6, 8, 10.

remains the case that the organic body thus confers an interior on matter…"[72] This structure of folding the inside to the outside, and the outside in, is the hallmark of a chora that can function metaphysically and psychoanalytically as the limn of skins.

Patricia MacCormack offers a supplement to the two Deleuzian concepts of fold and becoming-woman through Irigaray's figure of two lips, observing the overlap in the mobilization of ethics through the deconstruction of phallic subjectivity in Deleuze & Guattari and Irrigaray. Mucosal and inapprehensible, *Becoming-vulva* signals "entering into an alliance with the fold, flesh and force of the indeterminacy of this desiring disorganizing organ…disorderly or disobedient…"[73] MacCormack summons the Leviathan from the tehom as a Deleuzian demon-fold, "that which gathers itself together in folds," by her translation of the Hebrew.[74] Becoming-vulva thus resonates with a resolute and monstrous tehom, a political subjectivity sourced by "a voluminous rather than absent or male-defined space, a feminist space that is imperative for all sexes to participate with and which can allow all subjects to have similar intensive aspects of political unity without themselves being the same." Becoming-vulva is a tehomic chorology, one in which the activity of the folds is without doubt. The Platonic chora's one-way receptivity as a passive womb or impressible flesh (not yet even a phallic sheath or else the forms would have to admit to some material morphology) can be modified by MacCormack's vulvar subjectivity to initiate the process of "enveloping-developing,

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72 Ibid., 8.

73 Patricia MacCormack, "Becoming Vulva: Flesh, Fold, Infinity" *New Formations*, Vol 68, (2010): 94.

74 Ibid., 104, citing Gustav Davidson, *A Dictionary of Angels* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), 173.

involution-evolution" that is itself the pleated complication, the implicatio and explicatio of Plato's dividing *line*.[75] Leviathan may, by way of Keller's Bahktinian reading, *laugh* at the prospects of becoming-Leviathan, becoming-vulva, becoming-folds.

Cloud Feeling

Certainly the oceanic feeling of being submerged into the allness of things is powerful in Keller's apophatic cloud cosmology, constitutive of and necessary to the unsaying of individual separateness. It remains in the ecstatically fecund self-undoing of the poetry of Walt Whitman into a Christic kosmos-persona. Keller argues that such a radical queer erotics of the proximal and cosmic is the poet's sacramental poiesis, offering the expansiveness of the undone self to the reader, in an incarnational entanglement aimed at a call to "redistribute our matter, properties, our very identities, in the limbs of the vine or the body I which we have been freshly entangled."[76] Even so, the radicality of unboundedness skates so near to certain national and doctrinal substantialisms that it risks confusion with "an outrageously engorged American ego."[77] Accepting Freud's hint, this is the ethical downside of the oceanic feeling; that without respect for the outside of others, the oceanic feeling can gather momenta of national or global incorporation rather than empathic co-presence. And yet, Whitman manages to use this powerful feeling for good. He also uses the term oceanic to describe the astounding

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75 Deleuze, *The Fold*, 8.

76 Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible,* 211.

77 Ibid., 210-211.

power and flow of urban human life as equal to the ecstatic fold of nature in *Democratic Vistas*:

> The splendor, picturesqueness, and oceanic amplitude and rush of these great cities, the unsurpass'd situation, rivers and bay, sparkling sea-tides, costly and lofty new buildings, façades of marble and iron (…)-- the assemblages of the citizens in their groups, conversations, trades, evening amusements, or along the by-quarters -- these, I say, and the like of these, completely satisfy my senses of power, fulness, motion, &c., and give me, through such senses and appetites, and through my esthetic conscience, a continued exaltation and absolute fulfilment. Always and more and more …I realize, (if we must admit such partialisms,) that not Nature alone is great in her fields of freedom and the open air, in her storms, the shows of night and day, the mountains, forests, seas -- but in the artificial, the work of man too is equally great -- in this profusion of teeming humanity.[78]

This oceanic feeling of the Vistas leads, in a few short paragraphs to the moral culpability of American life that does not match the "generous material luxuriance." A proposal results, combining an idealized Victorian image of maternity with a liberated female subject (free of "silliness, millinery, and every kind of dyspeptic depletion") in a vision for "reconstructed sociology" that requires along with the elevation of women an emphasis on pre-natal care.[79]

Whitman's oceanic imagery in relation to childhood, loved-object separation, and human unity through the sea as "old mother" in the Sea-Drift cluster of *Leaves*. "Out of the rolling ocean the crowd came a drop gently to me,/Whispering, *I love you, before long I die…"* The ocean that separates him from his beloved also touches the beloved

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78 Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass and Democratic Vistas* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1914), Hathi Trust Digital Library. Accessed December 26, 2015, http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100406358

79 "I have sometimes thought, indeed, that the sole avenue and means of a reconstructed sociology depended, primarily, on a new birth, elevation, expansion, invigoration of woman, affording, for races to come, (as the conditions that antedate birth are indispensable,) a perfect motherhood. Great, great, indeed, far greater than they know, is the sphere of women. But doubtless the question of such new sociology all goes together, includes many varied and complex influences and premises, and the man as well as the woman, and the woman as well as the man." Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*.

with the droplet that he returns to the ocean that he himself is a part of, such that That which separates them cannot do so forever: "I too am part of that ocean, my love, we are not so much separated,/Behold the great rondure, the cohesion of all, how perfect!" (Out of the rolling ocean the crowd) The droplet carries the wave, the whole in every part. The absence of the beloved is materially, fluidly resolved, both near, present to touch, and incorporated within.

Shifting Elementals

> As we can attain to a knowledge of her from the previous considerations, we may truly say that fire is that part of her nature which from time to time is inflamed, and water that which is moistened, and that the mother substance becomes earth and air, in so far as she receives the impressions of them.[80]

The Cloud offers its own chora, most palpably via the Deleuzian intuition of an electromagnetic field, a spatialization of indeterminacy only apprehensible through attractive vectors of relationality. A cloud must be skybourne in the end. But we all certainly count on its ability to gather, receive, and hold all the wetness we need; attract like molecules that grow heavy and fall only periodically, not continuously lest we perish, as in the days of Noah, on the earth. Indeed the ancient celestial barrier of Tiamat's torso is a protection that filters and manages the overwhelming floods of chaos and holds open the sky for life on earth. Absolute immanence, the pure chaos of Deleuzian virtuality must be disrupted but not closed off for anything to emerge. The oceanic feeling when skybourne is affectively different from tehom. The oceanic sky would not be a passive envelope/residence for the infantile male Yahweh/Marduk/Zeus; it could be an elemental

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80 Plato, *Timaeus*, Benjamin Jowett trans. (Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Tech, 2001). Accessed 3/1/2013 http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html

collaboration of air and water through heat, motion, and attraction; psychoanalytically representable as a process of incorporation of the idealization of a farther caregiver into the immanence of the nearer. Far/Near, enfolded.

Infantile Matrix

Oceanic feeling, as the unbounded feeling of prehensiveness, offers a theory of the connectivities of community and their access to a depth of virtuality. When the horizontal model of process wave encounters the chaosmic depth of the Deleuzian virtual, the tehom is the vertical cone of immanence that contains all possibilities, including divine ones, such that there is a kind of inversion of the forms descending, they are arising from the depths. The primal matrix offers a lasting question about the pre-existence of materiality in the origin story, in the midst of an eventive cosmology, especially since part of the oceanic feeling is the error of babies believing they are creating their situation, mothers and origins *causa sui*. The pre-objective affectiveness of prehensions work at the human scale of infantile experience establish connectivity to the common inflowing of the past into new actual unfoldings. To the affectivity of infantile continuity, also known as oceanic feeling, I am offering a supplement via Shaviro's prehensive rhythm. Like an ocean, a feeling experience will be based in rhythms, movements, interruptions and calmness. The fluidity of a baby's unbounded experience is conditioned by the mediating capacity of its adult caregivers and their generational histories. Chora functions to mediate the unfoldings of virtuality and the past, such that continuity and flow depend upon this work of filtering and boundary maintenance. As such, the Whiteheadian chora might be pressed to serve as an analog for the constantly

moving adult management that reduces chaos, but does not cut off access (which would be impossible), thus allowing for the oceanic experience to remain within affectively tolerable limits.

Keller's midrashic (middle era) gloss on the intimacy, matrixial desire, and adventures of play form significant aspects of the methodology of this project. I express this in a different gloss on Gen 1:1: YHWH's tone is exhuberant, improvisational, delighted. The tonal emphasis of "Let there be…" is not a command but rather an awareness of the potentiality alive in the place, through glimpses of the availability of light, waters, and creatures to emerge from within a zone of play. "Let there be…." is a name game in which the chaos of sound and color separates into discrete relatable personality-things. Climbing all over his mother with a happy restlessness, YHWH calls for the thingness of the universe to be presented to him, for a cosmic show and tell. Pointing and naming, as though inventing the world all on his own each time a thing appears, it is as if each thing appears in order to be touched, known and enjoyed. The world that opens up with the advent of signs is one in which outsides meet insides in a shared field of naming; and so hunger is fed, diapers changed, cold clothed. And yet we wouldn't want to deify a baby; those things she is calling for are likely to be thrown, chewed, banged together mercilessly. In a theology that takes experience seriously as a source for theological construction, is there a way that infancy could translate into a suitable imago dei? [81]

81 Perhaps Jesus' invitation to be as children might be a call to playfulness where freedom occurs precisely through dependence, the centering of God in a play zone of exploration.

This project suggests that the figures of Whiteheadian and Deluzian zones of mediation, the waves and folds of encounter with the virtual can combine with the Winnicottian potential space as a zone of play to supplement an apophatic eventive constructive theology. The movement back and forth of a child, or a transitional object, cycles into the emergence of worlds capacious enough for interior and exterior cohabitations. Apophatic thought appreciates the complication of the absence and presence of language and bodies, and questions the sheer negations that resolve in varieties of substantialism (for example, an absolutely other male god) or resort to linguistic monism in the challenge to ontotheology. Playing with and through the transitional object means that the material maternal and the oceanic feeling need not be slaughtered in order to make space for exploration, invention, and novelty. This space is felt to be both inside and outside the infant's body, creating a place of attachment, a locatedness of an interaction that is more than one but not exactly two, an outside as the space to walk into. This relation of enfolding/unfolding creates the interior space, perhaps the virtual element or fold of the soul of the child, so that the primal matrix travels with the child, within and around the curvilinear push and pull of internal and external vectors of attraction. As affectivity, chora communicates; as membrane, chora filters and holds; as midrash, chora plays.

CHAPTER THREE

IM/PERSONALITY: GENDER, DECONSTRUCTION, KHŌRA

> Woman is still the place, the whole of the place in which she cannot take possession of herself as such. She is experienced as all-powerful precisely insofar as her indifferentiation makes her radically powerless. She is never here and now because it is she who sets up that eternal elsewhere from which the "subject" continues to draw his reserves, his re-sources, though without being able to recognize them/her.
>
> --Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other, Woman*[1]

Who are you, khōra?

--Jacques Derrida, *Khōra*[2]

The writing of difference at the ontological divide inscribes a new set of questions when language provides the milieu, medium and method of approach. Deconstruction understands any purported self-transparency in the process of representation to be misguided. Such an overconfidence betrays a phallological phantasy of the virility of a signified behind a signifier. When a reader offers attention and disbelief to the skewering of language onto its own transcendent—either ideal or material—origins, she can find

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1 Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other, Woman*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 227.

2 Jacques Derrida, Thomas Dutoit trans., "Khōra" in *On the Name* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1995), 111.

there instead traces of *context,* a habitation always already situated.[3] When doublings, hierarchies, and reversals inevitably betray the artifice of master truth-regimes they do so because they are not only logically but also politically and ethically situated.

For feminists at the linguistic turn of the 1960s through 80s, then, the problem of woman was a problem of representation, of a political subjectivity understood also as grammatical; a subject as opposed to an object of a power, a possibility to *do*. Intertextually chafing against, co-opting, and provoking Derridean deconstruction and the psychoanalytic poststructuralism of Jacques Lacan, poststructuralist feminists wrote, critiqued, and mimed the unrepresentable subjects of desire, politics, and writing. The representation of woman as something other than man's other necessitated a difference in sexual logics; a logic of sexual difference. Writing gender into a deconstruction of the ontological divide, Luce Irigaray wondered, what is the *differance* of sexual difference? Reading with Irigaray into the family drama or primal scene of chora, Judith Butler agreed in 1993 that matter seems to be perennially mono-sexed. But that leaves her and us with the question--two decades now into an apophasis of gender and an emerging transfeminism--what about that sex has materiality?[4]

Via the imagery of the cosmogonic matricide of Tiamat, we might refigure Marduk's spear as an axis mundi of the linguistic register penetrating a horizontal, cosmically scaled chora. The error is that such an axis has imagined itself to have established direct (phallic) celestial access to truth. Deconstruction orients us to the infinitely receding culpabilities of that fiction, but a feminist deconstruction might

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3 Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 290.

4 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

intercede by offering at least one partial origin story: the still bloody corpse of Tiamat offering hospitality to (or forcible penetration by) the master signifier; her body a matrix that is itself an abstraction (as a figure of matter itself) that sometimes unfolds into evidence of a person and awareness of radical indebtedness, a debt pre-existing all personhood because it is or must somehow in the end withstand recognition as more than matter and less than existence, as merely or mostly a person. Unsayable in the way of truth, unknowable in the way of the divine.

This chapter gathers the poststructuralist choras of Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, and John Caputo into a conversation about maternity and the theorization of woman-as-such: sexual difference as/and difference itself. In the background of the many variations of questions about representation are concerns of feminist ethics, of the trouble of a gynomorphic but non-agential figure; of the gender requirements of uncompensated cosmic labor. Engaging feminist critiques of chora, is chora, or can chora be feminist?

Woman as Chora: Luce Irigaray

> Woman is neither open nor closed. She is indefinite, in-finite, form is never complete in her. She is not infinite but neither is she a unity, such as letter, number, figure in a series, proper noun, unique object in a world of the senses, simple ideality in an intelligible whole, entity of a foundation, etc. This incompleteness in her form, her morphology, allows her continually to become something else, though this is not to say that she is ever univocally nothing. No metaphor completes her. Never is she this, then that, this and that. . . . But she is becoming that expansion that she neither is nor will be at any moment as definable universe.[5]

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5 Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other, Woman*, quoted in Ann-Marie Priest, "Woman as God, God as Woman: Mysticism, Negative Theology, and Luce Irigaray," *The Journal of Religion* 83 (1) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 1–23, n10. Accessed December 26, 2015. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1205434.4

Feminist scholarship rightly suspects chora to be, as in the words of Emanuela Bianchi, "a violent abstraction" of maternal or feminine corporeality, or misappropriation of the image of the womb without care or attention to actual women. The original concept of chora may be irredeemably misogynist, even as it remains one of the few and possibly promising representations of the feminine in ancient western philosophy. According to Elizabeth Grosz, the Platonic chora is "… the space that engenders without possessing, that nurtures without requirements of its own, that receives characterizations including the disconcerting logic of identity, of hierarchy, of being, the regulation of order."[6] These regulative forms that enter chora from the side of ideality cannot become many without softness and receptivity, those qualities which must be expelled from masculinity by Greek standards, and which are also associated with those functions of "pregnancy and maternity" that are a mixture of biology and culture attributed to women.[7] Thus chora is doing work of both masculine consolidation and feminine biologizing, even as it disavows the work that gender and sex are doing to achieve conception. In my reading of Grosz, Plato cannot place a robust maternality at the ontological divide, firstly because maternity is not a robust concept in Greek understandings of sexual reproduction--although this lack of interference, this passivity is perhaps what renders the Greek notion of maternality suitable for the self-generation of the ideas--and secondly because a robust maternity would render chora one of the things, one of the many, rather than something pre-existing that could assist somehow in their generation. Therefore, the problems are multiple: not only is gender becoming essentialized (as the realm of becoming is getting

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6 Elizabeth Grosz, "Woman, *Chora*, Dwelling" in *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 116.

7 Ibid., 116-17.

sexed), but neither gender nor sex are essentialized *enough* to come into a representational existence. As a partially gendered quasi-mother, chora is differentiated from true reality (ideality for Plato) precisely via a gender that cannot be named lest it become something. For Derrida, this unrepresentability is what renders khōra so useful as an allegory for deconstruction, but in the process, Elizabeth Grosz suggests, gender has become abyssal in its non-attributiveness.[8] This rendering of the maternal feminine as non-attributive is precisely what Irigaray mimes and protests, precisely what makes chora and woman a thing that isn't; that which is not merely one, that which is not any one.

Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other, Woman* is textually figured like the womanly figure it finds among the foundations of western philosophy: with Plato's cave allegory at the center, the cave as womb provides the lens through which she revisits western metaphysics and its knowledges. Irigaray concludes that Plato commits matricide against the maternal-feminine by devaluing or erasing it while depending upon it. He exploits the uterus (hystera) while denigrating it as "a dead cave," "a dark hole" and as a "theater of the identical,"[9] signaling both a lack of acknowledgment and a horror of the difference that women stand in for in western metaphysics.

Like the cultural expectation for women in human relationships, the feminine in philosophy "…supports all material existence *with nothing to support her own*." Chora is thus "*both the mother of all things and yet without ontological status."*[10] The receptive qualities of chora, as a receptacle that is passive to the generation of life and the

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8 Ibid.

9 Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other, Woman,* 355, 340, 138 respectively.

10 Grosz, "Woman, *Chora*, Dwelling," 111, 116.

reflections of the things of the world of becoming, is nothing more than what is always expected of the maternal/feminine.[11] The histories of chora, including controversies over Aristotle's reading of Plato, can be expressed in the question: "is it more like stuff or more like space?" Whether understood as stuff or as space, both are representable in terms of feminine morphology. It is exactly the image of a womb as both a seedbed and a container; and whether more like land/stuff or more like a receptacle/space, both images are construed within the history of Western philosophy to be passive recipients for male activity.

In what we might interpret as a protest of non-participation, Irigaray's essay on the Timaeus specifically ignores the chora passages, and focuses instead on one of Plato's explanations of sight and body later in the dialogue. With the French and English pun on Korē (as transliterated; it doesn't correlate to the Greek *xhi* of χωρα) Irigaray presents in the title a more bodily or concrete image of woman, that of a young girl or virgin (also a pun from *pupil*: a young student, or dark opening of the eye). In the essay "Korē: Young Virgin, Pupil of the Eye," Irigaray sidesteps the direct correlation of a woman's body to a complex diffuse chora, and observes instead the ways that a more discrete version of woman makes her point. Chora as place and receptacle, whether by Plato or Aristotle, infuses *Speculum* via the figure of the womb such that no one essay is devoted to its explication. But for Irigaray, the name chora remains unspoken, having always already been made mute.

Speculum is fecund with the many representations of woman in the masculine imaginary such that they can be shown to be consistently inconsistent, consistently

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11 Ibid., 116.

exploitative precisely via their multiple illogics. Whether figured as an abyss, a fluid remainder, an opacity, envelope, lips, or mirror, these gynomorphisms serve as other, as the necessary Other to the masculine subjects of philosophy, in a form that cannot be identified as any one subject, singularity, or discrete identity. "Opaqueness of matter, fleeting fluid, vertiginous void between two, a mirror in which the 'subject' sees himself and reproduces himself in his reflection, a shutter set up to allow the eye to frame its view, a sheath-envelope that reassures the penis about the mark made by it solitary pressures an imprints, a fertile soil to bear his seed. . . . Never is she one, either male or female."[12] In this way, much like chora, Irigaray's feminine imaginary isn't actually female, isn't one, isn't anything at all. Even while turning the speculum back onto Plato (and Derrida) to show the implicit unconscious dependence of the male imagination on the morphology of a/the woman, Irigaray sometimes seems to conclude along with the logic of Timaeus that such a no/thing as chora or Woman is ultimately neither male nor female. Then in other ways it seems clear that the unnamable condition of chora is precisely what renders it feminine. Irigaray does not use the word chora, will not give up the nearly proper name that Plato also, in the end, refuses to give; and in that refusal, she everywhere seems to enact it. Irigaray draws the phallologos and its dependence upon chora/woman into high relief, without flinching from the cruel trick that even this awareness will not yield a place for women in the phallocentric order. But this is not the all of it. To be without a place is not such a bad thing when regulation comes with the territory. Muteness is a

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12 Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other, Woman*, 240. Preceding this quotation: "She remains outside the circularity of a thought that, in its telos, turns to his ends the cause of his desire: she is the unconscious basis of that attempt to find metaphor for an originary matrix in the sphere of intimacy with self, of nearness to self, of a 'soul' or a mind."

viable option as an exile embraced, a refusal of the labor that is forced upon her to mirror always the Same.

Woman As God

> In Irigaray's text, "woman," like God, is that which we can "understand nothing about": she is "in-finite" and yet "not infinite," finite yet without form, "woman" and yet not a "proper noun." . . . She cannot be (defined)—she is "neither this nor that"—yet she is not "nothing." She is, in effect, "none of the things that have no being" and yet "none of the things that have being."[13]

Ann-Marie Priest turns to the apophatic structure of Irigaray's chora in "Woman as God, God as Woman: Mysticism, Negative Theology, and Luce Irigaray," when she suggests that "woman-as-other occupies the same place in the texts of postmodern feminism that God occupies in the texts of apophatic mystics."[14] Priest identifies the linguistic strategies of Irigaray to be those of the tradition of negative theology wherein the absolute alterity of the (beloved) other can only be linguistically represented as not this, nor that; or first as this but then not this. Woman, like God, is unspeakable, "irreducible to the terms of a language that would seek to remake her in its [linguistic] image."[15] The back and forth of apophatic unsaying constitutes a "disruptive presence/absence" that through its alterity could pose an alternative symbolic order, that Irigaray yet wants to claim as of the provenance of women. Not the femininity of the same, nor yet an absence of that order; but a true alterity. "In writing woman as God,

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13 Ann-Marie Priest, "Woman as God, God as Woman: Mysticism, Negative Theology, and Luce Irigaray," *The Journal of Religion* 83 (2003): 5.

14 Ibid., 2.

15 Ibid.

Irigaray suggests that God is also a woman: not that God is sympathetic to woman or has, somehow, a female sexual identity, but that God is (also) that which is suppressed, appropriated, denied, or simply domesticated by a patriarchal symbolic order."[16]

In pursuit of an alterity that cannot be coopted, Irigaray is aligned with Derrida's project for chora and its connection to apophatic theology. And like Irigaray, Derrida agrees that representations of woman can only be phallocentric forms of femininity, such that it makes sense for him to claim that chora is not woman as such because woman is always already representable only under phallologics. Should woman-as-such be representable or would that only iterate an economy of the same? If there is a possibility for a symbolization of alterity, or a realm of symbolization alternative to phallolologos, perhaps its own exteriority can be a starting point. This exteriority to language, to representability and categorization is what woman-as-such shares with God.

> It is in this unspeakable space between nonbeing and being that Irigaray wants to situate "woman." For her, woman, too, is alien to discourse. Like God, "woman" is diminished, constrained, limited when she is represented by language and thus brought into the symbolic order. But this is not because woman is somehow immaterial or divine. Instead, it is because language, and the discourses it founds, are dominated by something entirely alien to 'her'…"[17]

Far from an easy embrace of positive feminine attributes, Irigaray's deconstructive reading strategy operates a "linguistic regression," to borrow Michael Sells' terminology; regressive in its logical structure of saying and unsaying, perpetually, potentially

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16 Ibid., 3. Priest continues: "As such, God in God's radical alterity, like woman in hers, possesses the explosive potential of the feminine: to enable new words to be spoken, new meanings to emerge, and new possibilities to be conceptualized for both human subjectivity (female and mlae) and the divine" (4).

17 Ibid., 5.

endlessly.[18] Performing a rhythmically liturgical or mystical space via the back and forth movement of assertion and negation, paradox becomes a felt experience, a clearing held open by the distancing of negation in proximity to the presencing of propositions. The back and forth of presence and absence creates a choric clearing. The movements of apophasis activate the Far/Near.

To redouble this chapter's epigraph, woman is "still the place, the whole of the place" that funds being, like the ground below the ground of God that exceeds any self-contained identity. And "*she is never here and now because it is she who sets up that eternal elsewhere"* on which we depend so intimately. Woman as place, a place that offers a kind of *indistinct* wholeness is like the God of classical doctrine in that she is both all-powerful and unlocatable, unnamable, and unimaginable. Understanding Woman as an instance of Chora makes the logic clear; that it is precisely the indifferentiation of God/Woman that renders her all-powerful. In this way, feminine imaginary and negative theology begin to resemble each other.

But an apophatic corrective to the phallologics of God and Woman must account for their oppositional positions vis a vis gender hierarchies at the divided line. What requires unsaying about God are the positive propositions about masculine presence and identity, not their negation. Woman must be unsaid as an always already negation of masculinity, a non-self, non-present, powerless underside of the binary. God is always in the position of needing to prove "himself" accessible from transcendent distance; Woman to prove herself nearer than ultimacy and farther than immediacy. Woman, like God, is

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18 Michael Anthony Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 2, 14-17.

perceived as all-powerful, as the condition that funds human being; but unlike God, she is understood to have the power to be but not to *do*. "*She is experienced as all-powerful precisely insofar as her indifferentiation makes her radically powerless."* So while an eventive apophatic theology uncouples God's power to act in the world from direct anthropormorphic forms of causality, an apophatic theology of woman must work for an increase in direct forms of causality, and defend her existence at the scale of the human. Apophatic theology already complexifies Derrida's early simplistic rejection of a linear negative theology, and perhaps it can do the same for women.

Already a figure that encompasses apophasis and woman, the unrepresentability of chora might offer a shelter in exile; but on the other hand, it may simply relegate the unsayable to a redoubling of muteness. Apophasis can be a double bind. Either way, the conditions of unrepresentability seem to imply a workload of cosmic scale, as "she is at one and the same time potentially all-inclusive yet ultimately undefinable."[19] The all of such an inclusivity functions because of and through the potentiality that is the indefinite. Likewise, undefinability funds the availability of such potentiality, providing access to a non-limit.

Woman as a symbol is always displacing, representing displacement, representing anything at all other than a human. In the continual deferral that is metaphor or metonymy, the sign "woman" functions as a symbol of the ineffable. Additionally, Irigaray seems to be offering ways that materiality as the unrepresentable penetrates and funds all being. In practical terms, going beneath notice has meant that some

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19 Peter Keegan. "Plato, Feminist Philosophy, and the (Re)presentation of Culture: Butler, Irigaray, and Embodied Subjectivities of Ancient Women," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies* 7.1 and 2 (November, 2003): 90-105.

political/private aspects of women's lives have been under-policed because underthought – lesbian behavior and identity, for example. The possibility of productivity without penetration, as Irigaray compellingly suggests elsewhere in her early writing, ought to be figurable as a lesbian body upon which impressions can be made and surfaces can be written dexterously, quakingly, dreamily. When feminine flesh, pleasure and representation occur in the excess, outside of a masculine imaginary, Irigaray wants to offer them as new homes in exile. This leads her, in later works, to write a cataphatically divine woman. This fold of Irigaray's work is what has associated her with "uncritical maternalism." As to Irigaray's earlier work, Judith Butler seems to dispute such an assignation, and invites us also to reconsider.

Chora and Phallus: Judith Butler

> To return to matter requires that we return to matter as a *sign* which in its redoublings and contradictions enacts an inchoate drama of sexual difference.[20]

With what seems to be largely an appreciative reading, Judith Butler engages Irigaray as an entry into the Platonic chora in order to untangle the triple knot of matter, sex, and difference. Butler considers Irigaray's strategy of mimesis for its strengths and weaknesses. As to weakness, Butler gracefully acknowledges Irigaray's tendency to "mime the grandiosity of the philosophical errors that she underscores," but follows suit, intentionally risking an overreading that may "replicate a speculative excess" present in

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20 Judith Buther, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 49.

the Platonic text itself.[21] As to strength, Butler performs a first person interpretation of the mimetic strategy and response:

> Irigaray's response to this exclusion of the feminine from the economy of representation is effectively to say, Fine I don't want to be in your economy anyway, and I'll show you what this unintelligible receptacle can do to your system. I will not be a poor copy in your system, but I will resemble you nevertheless by miming the textual passages through which you construct your system and showing that what cannot enter it is already inside it (as its necessary outside), and I will mime and repeat the gestures of your operation until this emergence of the outside within the system cals into question its systematic closure and its pretension to be self-grounding.[22]

Butler summarizes the Irigarayan critique of Plato as such: "The problem is not that the feminine is made to stand for matter or for universality; rather the feminine is cast outside the form/matter and universal/particular binarisms. She will be neither the one nor the other, but the permanent and unchangeable condition of both—what can be construed as a nonthematizable materiality."[23] Plato's inscription is doubly violent then, first as penetration, then as erasure.

I intercede here to observe that instead of contrasting the autogenetic, or self-reproduction of the phallus with a participatory maternality via heterosexual coupling, Butler assumes without explanation their conflation. For Irigaray, I believe, a form/matter coupling would not be autogenetic if it were in fact a coupling, because of the value she finds in sexual difference. But for Butler, heterosex has always been about the regulatory (re)production of the Same. Thus a phallic form of reproduction must penetrate but does not precisely impregnate, and instead reproduces itself as only the same without the

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21 Ibid., 36.

22 Ibid., 45.

23 Ibid., 42.

contribution of female reproductive agency. This is what Butler reads as the *autogenesis* of compulsory *heterosex*. Another double-bind. (I wish to offer, however, that heterosex is not the generator of phallologics: autogenesis is certainly also as a substitutive fantasy of male *homo*-generation, perhaps evidence of the homo-desires at the heart of patrilineage, whether homo- or heterosexually accomplished).

What Butler underestimates, in my view, are the apophatic potentialities that Irigaray is simultaneously calling forth from the outside of linguistic representation--the exilic potentialities of phallic erasure--when Butler asks, "How is this assignation of a feminine 'outside' possible within language? And is it not the case that there is within any discourse and thus within Irigaray's as well, a set of constitutive exclusions that are inevitably produced by the circumscription of the feminine as that which monopolizes the sphere of exclusion?"[24] These exclusions are where Butler's ultimate critique of Irigaray lies: in the monopolization, the sheer identification of the feminine with alterity as opposed to the multiple racial, sexed, animal others. Butler's critique of the possibility of an externality to language stems from her critique of Kristeva's identification of chora with the maternal body, and what Butler perceives as the difference between Irigaray and Kristeva—that Irigaray's mimesis is not an alternative ontology based in or identified as the maternal body, but is rather a writing that "inhabits—indeed penetrates, occupies, and redeploys—the paternal language itself."[25]

Interestingly, Faber repeats Butler's critique of Kristeva, and sees critiques of Irigaray that I don't believe are actually there in Butler, but that seem to be encoded in

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24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 45.

expectations of a catfight between "cultural" and "poststructuralist" feminists. Regardless, in both the Faberian over-reading and the Butlerian critique, the object of suspicion is a maternal concept of chora. In Chapter Four, I elaborate a reading of Kristeva wherein I dispute a sheer identification of chora with the maternal body, but this doesn't directly disrupt a familiar narrative of feminism's presumed split into cataphatic discourses of essentialist sex versus apophatic discourses of poststructuralist gender in what Keller calls an apophasis of sex/gender. I suggest that though the dimensions are multiple, in poststructuralist dismissals of Kristeva, the maternal body figures as *the feminist* dividing line. (Chora divides, once again). The difference between khōra and chora thus describes a battleground--over theory beyond gender or squarely within sex; that is, a sex defined as the maternal body. To this, I offer a preliminary suggestion: that an abjection of maternity in the name of feminism may merely, if inadvertently, repeat patriarchal habits and should come under scrutiny to the same degree that feminists critique the conflation of maternity with the category woman.

Inspired by the mimetic redoublings of Irigaray's "penetrative reading strategy," Butler suggests a penetrative erotogenics, a multiplicity of interpenetration via lesbian phalluses instead of the oral gynomophic wet folds of Irigaray's "When Two Lips Meet."[26] Faber suggests that Butler's reimagining of khōra thus succeeds in interrupting the authority of phallic autogenesis through the cooptation of penetration that violates a proper genesis of regulatory heterosex to enact improper forms of *intragenesis*:

> …*as practices of a different (metaphysical) universality*. Then *khōra* might indicate a *performative interpenetration* and improper forms of *'intragenesis'*—a 'masculine penetration of the masculine…, or a

26 Ibid., 45-46.

> feminine penetration of the feminine, or a feminine penetration of the masculine or a reversibility of those positions'—in which 'the mimicking of the masculine' (Butler) penetration *contests* the 'originality' of autogenesis."[27]

This intragenetic multiplicity becomes the figure of Faber's theology of polyphilic bodying and the refusal of lawful sexualities beyond gender binaries. It is through this figure that phallogocentrism, as violence, can be disrupted. And yet, like Derrida and Caputo, in the midst of gendering khōra otherwise than feminine, he retains insistently the feminine pronoun *she*. It seems to be a sort of homage, a way to honor the way woman-as-such functions as the outside to law and language--the way that Woman is khōra--while retaining the dynamic of unrepresentability through the assertion that khōra is not Woman. The terms, in a Derridean legacy, cannot be reversed. The double bind reemerges.

As a strategy to countering khōra's passivity, interpenetration with enjoyment seems like a positive move. This is, after all, similar to the way I read Irigaray through Priest to imagine possibilities of lesbian pleasures in an exile of unrepresentability. But something is amiss with the double bind of Faber's khōra. The trouble in paying homage to the she-ness of chora while fleshily queering it, specifically via Faber's Deleuzian pre-subjective poly-penetration, is that activity without agency translates into lack of consent. To unfurl what is simultaneously a feminine underside of a binary into a multi-gendered receptive fleshiness invokes a trace of the original presumed penetrability of chora and the all too familiar passive material/feminine object of rape culture.

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27 Faber, "Khōra and Violence," 112 (note 14), quoting Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 51.

I don't know that the violated will be helped by the motility of polyperverse orgiastic orifices. Alternative penetrations within chora may not mobilize or grant pleasure to chora. If the pleasures of poly-sexed bodies burst open the gender binary, this does not translate necessarily into greater compensation or less sex work for whomever is represented by the categories of sexual subordinates that include women. In fact, it is through the sex work untransformed by sexual revolution that multiplication of sex and sexualities may best obey capitalist cravings for varieties that reproduce the same old binaries. And as long as sexed-labor enforcements endure, so do phallologics and so do binaries.

The polymorphous perversity behind Faber's polyphilia and the Deleuzian Body Without Organs is khōric because pre-object and pre-genital. But unless it remains in an arrested state of development, it will be vulnerable to a time-space of abjection. Penetrating the material maternal is the original incest taboo and the foundation of Oedipal metaphysics. The Freudian version of abjection is the regulation of polymorphous perversity into the Oedipal stage: the ossification of forced choices, lost objects, and murder. Like Deleuze, Butler and Faber, Freud agreed that the substantialization of gender entails a forced binary, a violent competition, and a grievous loss. Thus in my reading, the many sexed bodies may not create gender justice because the first maternal body cannot go away, cannot be dispensed with metaphysically, metaphorically, biologically, existentially. The rejection of the first body is the gender, the sex, the difference. The binary man/woman is a cover for an older tale of ontic tragedy.

Wishing to contribute to both queer and feminist conversations about penetration and productivity at the ontological divide, I offer a version of the Kristevan chora as a resource for gender theorizing beyond static material or linguistic approaches. Gender itself may not be, in the end or in the first, about a binary; at least not a binary of supposed oppositional (hierarchical) categories of man/woman or even ideality/materiality; it may be first about the binary of being and non-being, experienced at the beginning of human life.

Re-inflecting a pre-gendered maternal into the Platonic chora may seem like a retrograde move; disavowing (feminine) gendered agency in the way that Plato does. But it also de-essentializes gender from a static attribute to a process unfolding in time, and shows a chink in regulatory phallologics before regulation holds sway. Maternity as a non-singular condition of (pre)relation may usurp or disrupt binary oppositions as an anterior alternate, an a/sexual or third gender. The idea of pre-gendered, or otherwise-gendered maternity might allow the emergence of the difference between baby and mother to be co-creative. If the first gender that the baby achieves is not its own gender but the gender of its mother, through its expulsion of the mother into the world of objects, then as the condition of difference, mother is the first gender. This difference is not based on a caregiver's sex, but on their proximity and labor.

If my perspective has merit, that the logical and existential cause of misogyny is human birthing and nurture, then there will always be an idealized/subordinated position ascribed to the difference that collapses an environment into an object, within and against which a growing human differentiates; and whatever kind of entity performs that labor on behalf of a child, it is likely to become constituted by the labor category that gender is. So

it may not be possible to solve abjection, even through the opening up of the gender of mothers; but then again, as Dorothy Dinnerstein will argue, and I will discuss in Chapter Five, non-normatively gendered families might be exactly what will change the nature of gender in coming generations.

Digestion at the Ontological Divide

To the extent that sexual pleasure of the pre-gendered infant (pre-differentiated as subject and as object) occurs genitally, it may be primarily because those genitals occupy the neighborhood of digestive processes of elimination. Like the sexually regulated Freudian Oedipal boy, sex eclipses urination and defecation because of the possibility of identifying with a powerful projectable phallic imaginary over an abjected wet-ish continuity. Among possible readings of chora ought to be a digestive one, of untainted bounded (good) food being processed magically, mysteriously through the black box of intuited bodily interiors into fecal objects, the thing/stuffs of the world.

To the tradition of mimicry that Irigaray and Butler offer through their reading of the Platonic chora, I offer an additional polymorphously perverse series of images: the erotogenic orifices of pre-oedipal experience. To place abjection at the heart of human life is to implicate digestion as primary process, and to consider the complicated affects of those processes. Pleasures and displeasures about bodily incorporation and expulsion include appetite, aggression, greed and disgust. Thus, in a pre-oedipal erotogenic scenario, the mouth/chora would receive the oral pleasure of food and the anus/chora would participate in the pleasurable ejection of interiority as the formation of exteriority, a productive power of self- and self/other generation. If Chora can achieve pleasure in

Chora's own aggression, then consumption and elimination can produce other-relatedness rather than maternal/self abjection. Another variation: anus/chora receives the stimulation of the phallologos and the mouth/chora (pleasurably) ejaculates phonemes into the world, or in an unpleasurable mode, vomits as the created order the toxicity of phallic regulation.

My own rude reading of Timaeus will inevitably be less phallically penetrative than any of the poststructuralists because the forms don't seem to me to be particularly phallic. Their inscriptions are shallow, and their virility phantasmatic, dependent on the mystery of chora to manage all the hard work. The ideal, perfect and unchanging has a curious communication problem that is also a problem of power. These are the conditions that seem to be necessitate the invention of something like chora, to get the logos going, in Butler's cheeky observation. The cosmic pattern must somehow be able to effect work without doing anything, without moving—as definitionally, it cannot move. But this is how the phallus is already serving poststructuralist models--as an authority who does no work because *to do* would interfere with the authority of *not doing.* The linguistic phallus is a boss whose being is the regulatory apparatus for the reproductive technologies of the worker/words. Are the proscriptions circumscribing choric agency simple projections of formal impotence? Impotence and its pretensions, together with perfections and their fecal outcomes would surely be the stuff of comedy, a political comedy inciting labor to rude and noisy movements. Somewhat less improperly but possibly just as provocatively, Jacques Derrida performs passionate excess with comic sensibility when sighing and weeping, he asks, "Who are you, Khōra?"

Khōra, the Name: Jacques Derrida

> I will not say whether the concept of matter is metaphysical or nonmetaphysical. This depends upon the work to which it yields, and you know that I have unceasingly insisted, as concerns the nonideal exteriority of the writing, the gram, the trace, the text, etc. upon the necessity of never separating them from work….[28]

Following the cultural turn of structuralism, Jacques Derrida radicalizes a critique of philosophical truth-claims as phantasms of self-generating authorial presence, via a method of looking to a text for whatever claims to have crossed the ontological divide from a false stability into the false solidity of materiality. For when an analysis by deconstruction allows the text to say itself at the ontological divide, the presumed causality and priority of signified (a thing referenced) over signifier (a sign assigned to a referent) will show itself to be an inverted fiction, doing the work of bad metaphysics governed by a regulatory phallologos. The culture and context of the signifier, its grammar, politics and contradictory logics will prove to be the producer of the meaning of what it purportedly signifies. The contiguous (grammatical or metonymic) structures of the signifiers will put pressure on the supposed transcendent (representational or metaphoric) access to the signified, and the analyst will discover a contradiction, a breaking point, a collapse of certainty first into oppositional paradoxes, then into fragmentation. The truth of the lie of Plato's divide can be told, just as on the Freudian couch, even if Freud the patriarch himself falls inward from impossible logics of patri-genesis. The divided line theory repeats itself in language, as the trouble of vertical crossing. The ontological divide, for poststructuralism, is the gap between signifier and signified.

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28 Jacques Derrida, Alan Bass, and Henri Ronse. *Positions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 65 as quoted in Butler, *Bodies That Matter,* Chapter 1 n3.

Refusing a vertical crossing, Derridean deconstruction follows the extension of khōra's horizontality. As an alternative to the problem of phallological self-reproductive authorial authority--the presumed self presencing of interior idealities into exterior materialities through speech, Derrida heralds writing as a mode of communication whereby the distance or possibility of permanent absence offers a better model of knowledge and its transmissions. Permanent absence means the death of either reader or author (so that we might later come to suggest that stretched far enough, horizontal distance becomes vertical absence). The possibility of the letter never arriving is the necessary condition of representation, of the relation between the one who sends and the one who receives, so that if communication is to occur at all it will be in the lack of certainty, closure, and self-presence. Absence is thus truer than presence (if truth can be thought to have a referent at all), and preferred, except in the advent of the event: of the *coming* that presences. The metonyms writing, trace, supplement, spacing and differance are thus invested in a spatiality that performs and prioritizes distance. As an imprintability that cannot retain but continually receives and transmits forms, khōra is an arche of writing, and makes possible a respectful delay of differance, temporally and spatially understood. Khōra protects from stifling intrusions, invasions, and immanences.

But Khōra is special because she harbors the possibility of the impossible – the proximity of all of that distance, the chance of access to alterity through the sublimity of the name. "Khōra reaches us, and as the name."[29] Already there is a call, since that is part of the function of a name for Derrida, an alterity that *announces itself* and what it cannot contain, the person behind it, and behind that, the mystery of otherness itself,

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29 Derrida, "Khōra," 89.

other to every expectation that might come in the form of a promise or a threat. Other to expectation, a name is also alien to the person it stands in for. Khōra is thus a surname to deconstruction and différance (Caputo). Derrida writes Khōra into a mystical space, or rather allows himself to be called into a mystical space where khōra is almost a name, almost a woman's name. The French pronoun *elle* becomes translatable as she rather than *it* as the essay "Khōra" progresses.

Khōra withdraws even as it offers itself. Any schemata we introduce to explain or understand are like the forms in Plato's text that inform khōra, being "of it without belonging to it."[30] Unlike Aristotle, then, Derrida claims that any substance or substrate cannot be stable; that it can be neither subject nor support. "Inaccessible, impassive, "amorphous," khōra is, according to Derrida, virginal "with a virginity that is radically rebellious against anthropomorphism."[31] Such anthropomorphisms include a subject that can give or receive, and so we must, against Plato, insist that receptacle is not the essence of the khōra, even though it is as close to a name as any Plato gives.

Derrida cautions us not to take at face value the co-incidence of sexual difference and ontological difference because khōra admits no metaphoric or metonymic content. Khōra belies the distinction between metaphorical meaning (read mythos) and proper meaning (read logos); and therefore we cannot easily settle on any of the synecdoches, including the genders nurse and mother either as metaphor or as proper name. Indeed, khōra cannot receive and retain gender or sexual difference as either metaphorical or

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30 Ibid., 95.

31 Ibid.

representational because, consisten6 with Plato, khōra subsists pre-differentiation. And yet, as we will later observe, this is not his only or final word on the matter.

Khōra seems to unsettle polarities in general. "Giving place to oppositions, it would itself not submit to any reversal." It is beyond polarities not because it has presence, being itself beyond its name, but rather by being beyond mythos and logos, belonging not "to the horizon of sense, nor to that of meaning as the meaning of being."[32] We ought not read, even though it is inevitable that we read either the word khōra itself (place, location, region, country) or the metaphors (mother, nurse, receptacle, imprint-bearer) anachronistically. We simply cannot settle on an exact word for khōra. It is, once again, a name; and that which it names cannot be reduced to it. But, since, he, adds, it has no essence, "how could the khōra be beyond its name?" The structure of khōra, rather than some supposed content, defers meaning such that it "anachronizes being." In the face of a rich and various history of interpretations of khōra, it "can 'offer itself' or promise itself only by removing itself from any determination, from all the marks or impressions to which we say it is exposed."[33]

Thinking against the necessity that Heidegger seems to mean with "es gibt," it gives, is not part of Derrida's picture. There is no *there* there, no "*determined* existent," and yet khōra is something rather than nothing. "There is *khōra* but *the khōra* does not exist." Khōra cannot bear a definite article, and therefore must be a name, whether common or proper. And why not proper? "…the proper name appears, as always, to be attributed to a person, in this case to a woman. Perhaps to a woman; indeed, to a

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32 Ibid., 92-93.

33 Ibid., 94.

woman."[34] Derrida goes on to acknowledge the risk of anthropomorphism he seems to simultaneously refuse and invoke, along with Plato in the comparisons with mother and nurse, and the Greek cultural references to matter as passive and receptive, and therefore feminine. Derrida defers, suggesting only that a proper name would signal uniqueness as well as a referent, and khōra has neither. This lack of determined existence is why khōra cannot bear the property of femininity or gender, cannot bear it as her own.

Derrida's English translator begins a transformation of the *elle* of khōra to a personification when he begins to find in it/her the quality of a name, of the indefinable alterity that cannot be captured except in direct address. But how could such a direct address refer to a personhood that is not gendered? Derrida seems to accept that while khōra is neither male nor female, if it is to receive a call, to bear the name the way he wishes, it must harbor the possibility of person that transforms it into she. While attempting to save the name and preserve the alterity of a wholly other, Derrida seems to be performing, perhaps not willingly but necessarily a slide between thing and woman, the uncategorizable precisely as woman, although this may not have been the way he started. Is it ever possible, he might be admitting, to speak of deferral without speaking of woman, without speaking woman? This has been the point Irigaray was always trying to make, the reason for *écriture feminine*. Like Derrida, she employs digressions, circuity, contradictions, provocations. And though Derrida insists that mimesis is not khōra, Irigaray seems to be managing a mimetic form of deconstruction. Irigaray inverts the terms of the hierarchical binary, then exposes the complicity in the dialectic that reinscribes and negates as she tries to create *something* otherwise.

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34 Ibid., 97.

Midway through the essay, Derrida invokes abyss as the structure of khōra. The placement of this abyssal turn in the middle of the essay seems strangely arbitrary or out of place. From whence this abyss? From the cosmogony of Timaeus? Hegelian dialectic? Heideggerian *Ort*? Out of this middle, he suggests a politics of place – "in the society, region, territory, country…" as part of that abyssal opening; a "site of politics" and a "politics of sites."[35] But politics alone may not be able to account for an abyssal scene. The *mise en abyme* from French literature and art refers to a series of receding mirror images. From medieval times, a portrait or icon might contain an image of the portrait which in turn would contain an even smaller version of the portrait. Ancient versions of this might have involved an image of a gift, serving as a receipt, or a concretization of an object. Seeing it represented makes it more real. From literature or film studies, *mises en abymes* tend to be stories within stories, or the storytelling aspects being depicted along with their products, like a painter or filmmaker depicted with his or her equipment in the mode of production. Derrida's point is that the structure of khōra is this very textual layering, containers containing containers ad infinitim. In Caputo's language, "boxes within boxes." Elsewhere, Derrida calls this figure of enfolded and enfolding textualities *invagination*.

To make good on the dream of the Republic, the Timaeus dialogue starts with a recollection of a story told to Critias as a young boy by his grandfather age 96, who heard it from __who was told by ___ where it was written and is now forgotten to the citizens of the land. A memory of a story of a telling from ancient times of a city before history, a city and a story that can prove Socrates right about his dream for a future ideal possible

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35 Ibid., 104.

Athens. This is the mythos that introduces the logos of the text, surrounding and providing context. No terra firma, no author or original in sight or even in memory, this is what makes khōra a primary allegory for deconstruction. The dazzlement of the mirrors in the *mise en abyme* creates a kind of vertigo, a dizziness or panic that Derrida both invokes and calls us back from; but what is striking about this abyss in the middle of Derrida's essay is its *specular* nature, as well as the resulting affect that he claims to disavow. Neither element seems strong for Plato; images are fleeting and later chaotic in their changeability, but neither bottomless infinity nor a resulting horror seems to enter in. Irigaray, using a later passage about sight and the body, makes mirrors the center of her reading of Timaeus and Plato in general. Other interpreters use the analogy of a mirror to explain the functioning of khōra, the way that reflections are held in a mirror, but do not properly exist, do not stay in the glass, and do not affect the glass or its silver lining.[36] It is at this point, on approach to the abyss, that the translator begins his transition of elle from it to she.

Derrida refers to a history of interpretation of Timaeus that observes khōra as operating on two sets of polarities: at times it seems to be neither/nor and at times both/and, as it alternates between two types of oscillation, "between the logic of exclusion and that of participation." [37] John Sallis develops the questions Derrida raises about the polarities of logos/mythos being the discursive parallel to the polarities of being/becoming. Outside the law and yet not fully mythos, Derrida asks about khōra and the oppositions it engenders,

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36 John Manoussakis, "Khōra: The Hermeneutics of Hyphenation" *Revista Portuguesa De Filosofia*, 2002: 58 (1). Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia: 93–100.

37 Derrida, "Khōra," 89, 91.

> …how is one to think the necessity of that which, while *giving place* to that opposition as to so many others, seems sometimes to be itself no longer subject to the law of the very thing which it *situates*? What of this *place*? Is it nameable? And wouldn't it have some impossible relation to the possibility of naming? Is there something to *think* there, as I have just so hastily said, and to think according to *necessity*?[38]

Indeed, Derrida seems to find a connection between khōra and necessity perhaps as suggested by their proximity in Timaeus. And curiously, both are privileged to a near undeconstructibility, and ultimately addressable as, or almost as a woman. Necessity is that which compels Jacques to write instead of speak, to deconstruct instead of seek presence, "between my desire and Necessity…there is an absolute war."[39] He writes Necessity with a capital N to indicate it's personal singularity, with the personal pronoun "she." It is at this point that I intervene to note that such a matrix of polarities, of competing commitments and desires is a site of ambivalence, of heavily re-treaded back and forth movement, a spacing that becomes a locus of unresolved and powerful affects, an ambivalent matrixiality.

Beyond the polarity also of speech and writing, is khōra the unsettled third between necessity and desire? Necessity, like Khōra, is something like a woman as the fragile, undeclared but implicated mystery to which Derrida seems to pay homage. Indeed, this distance that woman seems to conjure might be a textual antecedent to khōra. Miming and subverting Nietzsche's metaphor of women and the un/truth of philosophy, Derrida suggests that perhaps "woman—a non-identity, a non-figure, a simulacrum—is distance's very chasm, the out-distancing of distance, the interval's cadence, distance

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38 Ibid., 90-91.

39 Derrida, A, 32, Johnson's translation; quoted by Johnson, 8.

itself, if we could still say such a thing, distance *itself*."[40] Recent contributions to the traces and unspeakable aspects of maternality in Derrida's oeuvre highlight associations of maternality with death, the ineffable, the mystical, and the recapitulation of patrilineage, despite or perhaps through the centeredness of Derrida's critique of patrigenesis in the inheritance of philosophy.[41]

In the four-page introductory insert to the original French editions of each of the essays that comprise the unified volume (in English) *On the Name*, Derrida writes of Khōra, "Insensible, impassible but without cruelty, inaccessible to rhetoric, Khōra discourages, it "is" precisely what disarms efforts at persuasion—and whoever would like to find the heart to believe or the desire to make believe: for example, in the figures, tropes, or seductions of discourse." Jacques writes of khōra as an experience, a call that is both maternal and virginal, but "stands beyond every maternal, feminine—or theological—figure." From a silence that is not even a modality of speech, Khōra cannot be understood in terms of negative theology or the Good; yet seems to provide protection precisely through her refusals.[42] Socrates, the father of philosophy, can "play" Khōra in a

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40 Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 49, quoted in Andrea Hurst, "Supposing Truth Is a Woman ??? What Then?" *South African Journal of Philosophy* 26 (2013): 51.

41 See, for example the analysis of Marxist and Derridean patrigenesis as put forth by Andrew Parker, *The Theorist's Mother* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

42 *Interview with Jacques Derrida*, accessed and transcribed April 14, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3fScS2cnB0&list=PL10BA62BE9CD7F7BF: "I often ask myself the question, why, why insisting on deconstructing something which is so good? [laughter]And the only answer I have is something which contradicts--in ourselves or in myself--the desire for this good. But where does this contradiction come from? First, give it a name, which sometimes I write with a capital letter, and that is Necessity, and I write this word with a capital letter just to emphasize the fact that this is a singular Necessity, as a singular, a single person, it has to do with Necessity itself; that is something or someone, some ache which compels me to admit that my desire for good, for presence; my own metaphysics of presence not only cannot be accomplished, meets its limits; but should not be accomplished because the accomplishment or the fulfillment of this desire for instance, would be death itself. Death itself. The good, the absolute good would be identical with death. And Necessity at the same time--the one whom

play within a play, a story that is contained endlessly in other stories. He is not Khōra, but would look a lot like her if she could be said to look like anything. The end of the introductory insert sounds like a dedication, and indeed seems to orient the trilogy of essays as a kind of devotion to the mystery of Khōra, of "…her who is the intangible, the ungraspable, the improbably, totally near and infinitely far away, her who receives everything beyond exchange and beyond the gift. Her as what is necessary [*il faut*] still, Necessity, without debt."

A better appellation of grace or the gift could not be attempted than this "necessity, without debt." Without telos, duty without obligation; and as Meister Eckhart would articulate, without a *why.*[43] The gift, as we may discover in Chapter Five, may be only a fantasy, a split version of things; but beyond the split, beyond the gift we may have givingness without seduction, and impassivity without cruelty. Is Khōra Jacques' fantasy of the ideal mother? No, because he is too alert to the split in such a fantasy. She

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I call Necessity--teaches me, you see. And teaches me in a very violent way to admit that my desire cannot be fulfilled, that there is no presence; presence is always divided and split and marked by difference, by spacing etc. So this is on the one hand a bad limit, something which mon peche de jouie, malheuresement, but at the same time is the condition of my desire, and if such limit was erased, this would be death, this will be death. And in the end we know that all this will end very bad ….So Necessity is the drive."

My gloss: Necessity here is something like a reality principle that overcomes the desire for undivided presence by understanding the pleasure principle (the limits to desire and for desire) and its relationship to death drive. Necessity is a mysterious force that comes from beyond, and yet is a friend to Derrida's ego in its struggle to differentiate and participate. Ambiguous as to whether the contradiction of which he speaks is destructive or protective – just as the pleasure principle ambiguously protects the ego from the threat of destructive over-stimulation, but can also be confused or interpreted as a death drive that refuses the successful achievement of libido. Fear of pleasure as disintegration may be neurotic repetition of a falsehood (what used to be protective but is now inhibitive of growth), or it may be neurotic repetition of a still successful protection. The unconscious cannot distinguish. What is clear is that he is describing deconstruction in terms of a relationship with a something that is like a someone who is more real (and potentially more present, I might argue) than the promise of presence, made real by her absence. Whether Necessity can be called a desire, that is a desire beyond desire, can be debated; Necessity is a force, lure, urgency, drive that seems to come from the outside, not belonging to Jacques' ego, that seems to be the desire of the other, an other who is like a woman. Khōra is such a necessity, a necessity without debt.

43 Meister Eckhart, Edmund Colledge, and Bernard McGinn. *Meister Eckhart, the Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 59-61.

may be, however, his fantasy of what is more perfect than perfection: that which will not become an idol of idealizations, that which cannot be split. But her refusal (or his refusal on her behalf) of all presences is its own split. What might be called "good enough" is still beyond experience or comprehension, and so goodness itself must be ejected or abjected, along with motherness, in fact with every promise of presence. The infinity of the *mise en abyme* is testimony to this intolerance as infinity can become its own concretized absence, a metaphysics of pure absence. Khōra is neither absent nor present, and so may enact a proximal spacing and not-too nearness that allows justice for the unassimilable. Khōra, read through apophatic compossibilites, may be Deconstruction's contribution to the Far/Nar. But she also might, bearing the immanental threat of the Other, Woman, have needed saving from a residue of longing and greed, such that *spacing* might be his protection of her, his protection from her through an alterity pushed to ultimacy.

Khōric Ambivalence: John Caputo

While many readers of Derrida find khōra to be almost a synonym for deconstruction, Caputo calls it a "cousin." And when describing the name, the gift, or deconstruction, Caputo's tone tends to be honorific about the "to come," or the "promise." Khōra retains the abyssal aspects of deconstruction, "endlessly translatable or substitutable;" "a khōral abyss, exposed us to monsters," "the khōral desert of differance."[44] For Caputo, it seems that khōra is the name for the scarier side of

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44 John D. Caputo, "Love Among the Deconstructibles: A Response to Gregg Lambert" *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 5:2, (Spring 2004): 43, 48, 51. Accessed December 26, 2015, http://www.jcrt.org/archives/05.2/caputo.pdf

deconstruction. A life-giving, affirmative word from Yahweh, the oui oui to creation, is celebrated by Caputo as the Messianic promise that seems to offer clear contrast to that which he calls khōra. Khōra for Caputo ought to be read as conditionality, as the conditions or necessities of existence that constrain the possibility of an unconditional promise, but also offer provision for that possibility, in a way that leaves the universe open. So that God must roll the dice. This necessity, this unfortunate condition is khōra: open, but barren. It is as if Caputo needs to remind himself that abysses don't require monsters when he writes that khōra, "devilish critter though it may be, is not a demon and ought not be demonized."[45] For Caputo, contingency "keeps the future open" for the unconditional to come. The stuff of life, or our material lives is fragile, and the gift is risky.

Expressing gratitude for Keller's conversation and contribution to khōric beginnings in *Face of the Deep*, John Caputo in 2006 hears, or perhaps ventriloquizes into Derrida's khōra a textual legacy of the opening verses of Genesis. Like Keller, Caputo reads in deconstruction the rabbis' reading of the beginning of the Torah as always already second, opening with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, with no ultimate singular primary origin. In the beginning, it was already there, "non-originary origin, a groundless ground, a bottomlessness,"[46] a primordial companion to Elohim. Caputo seems persuaded to let Keller's tehomophilic reading inform his neutral to negative khōra. He accepts the supplement of an Irigarayan gynomorophic deep, openly

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45 John D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 72.

46 John D. Caputo, "Before Creation: Derrida's Memory of God," 99 as revised in "The Beautiful Risk of Creation: On Genesis *ad literam* (Almost)" in *The Weakness of God*, 2006.

decrying the tendency of men to flee the uterine waters by calling them Nothing, and calls out the ontotheological tradition, as he has always done, for its "bad biology" of auto- or patri-genesis.[47] "Men just cannot tolerate the thought of their aquatic origin, of floating around helplessly in a sea of utter uterine dependence, so they have tried to shake it off and purge the official record, utterly effacing this uterine beginning."[48] And so he reads along with Keller of a deep that signifies "the matrix or womb from which we all have been formed, a positive spring of life, not simply an ominous and threatening vortex. The deep is not something to fear but to love, the way we love the mother and matrix of us all, the way we love wind and sea and earth, the stuff from which we are formed and into which we return."[49] Caputo cites Irigaray's "primal marine belly of life" in reference to the deep of tehom.[50]

But he also finds in the biblical retelling of the Enuma Elish a reduction, not a disavowal of violence, in what he seems to read as a feminist-friendlier non-matricidal separation of good and evil out of pre-existing material. There is, in Caputo's reading of Genesis, no chaos-kampf, no murder; just a calm, passive element of "mutable and transformable stuff, like clay for a potter," "the tehom is channeled, or separated off, not killed."[51] Listen to the passivity of khōra that comes with its supposed neutrality: "Not a wicked chaos threatening to swallow us. Not a monster to devour us. Not a rival god out

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47 See John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

48 Caputo, *The Weakness of God,* 65.

49 Ibid.

50 Caputo, "Before Creation," 94.

51 Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 61.

to challenge Elohim. It was just there, without saying a thing and without threatening anyone, a kind of null state that yet was no nothing. The only noise one could have heard, were there anyone to hear, would have been the rustling of the wind as it swept across the deep."[52] Is the Genesis story then a non-violent intervention into chaoskampf, or just another attempted erasure of violence, a doubling of violence? To rescue the khōra from the monstrous, and from the Barthian fear of das Nichtige (the threat of nothingness articulated by Keller), which Caputo suggests is fear of maternal suffocation, Caputo seems bent on soothing us by suggesting a calmness about maternal life. "Just a vast sea, its waves tossed by the wind, and all quite lifeless and wordless. […]neutral, tranquil, non-combatant, the simple innocent stuff of things, the sheer there-ness of the world. "

This innocent neutral condition, Caputo maintains, is not a watery womb after all; both before and after engaging with *Face of the Deep*, Caputo repeatedly refers to khōra as barren, and even though fluid, leaky, and quite wet, tehom manages to morph into desert or wasteland--at the bottom of the ocean. Understanding *tohu wa-bohu* as "something desolate, like a desert, something arid, barren, uninhabited, and more abstractly as an emptiness" that has potentially "nothing to do with 'chaos,'" and is an image of, precisely "not a watery womb, but of earth as desolate, wild, lifeless, like a desert but covered with water, a deserted, lifeless sea-bottom."[53] For Caputo, khōra is not in itself a place capable of sustaining life without Elohim's intervention. The scene of khōra must be lifeless at the start, for Caputo's reading of the priestly author, because it is God who "makes the deep into a place aswarm with living things," including the sea

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52 Caputo, "Before Creation."

53 Caputo, *The Weakness of God,* 57, 61-62.

monsters. Elohim accomplishes a transformation, not from nothing to something, as in the ex-niholo, but from "the barrenness of being to the ebullience of life," or from sleeping to waking, from indefinition to differentiation. The story "turns instead on a series of sensuous transformations in and of the elements: empty/filled, mixed/separated, barren/living, dark/light," and thus God is like an artist, fashioning creation like a painter filling a canvas.[54] Thus the goodness available at the creation of differentiation is wholly God, wholly other than khōra, the condition and fact of being. And while Yahweh says "oui, oui," to the created order, it is this saying alone that makes it so.

In Caputo's own imaginative mythopoetic retelling, the wind water and earth are just lying there "like the dark side of some distant desolate planet…It is almost as if they are sleeping, as if they are laid out like some great giant, *some massive body* whose only sounds and movements are the heaving and sighing of a sleeper, and Elohim seems to be just watching them sleep."[55] Potentiality as sleeping is one of the ancient mythemes of virginal femininity, as Keller pursues in the figure of Persephone, awaiting the arrival of the male to come to life. Caputo continues: "Then Elohim was moved to speak to them, and by addressing them to bring them to life, to awaken life in them, to make life stir through their massive limbs the way one calls a sleeper to awake." This intervention in the ex-nilo is God's life-giving, not being-creating activity, such that "Genesis is not about being, but about life."[56]

One cannot help but be reminded of Irigaray's *Elemental Passions*:

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54 Ibid., 62.

55 Ibid., 58, (my italics).

56 Ibid.

> And so the earth is left fallow, a mere support for your marks and imprints, and the flower has no reason other than your desire to bloom again and again for you. You have forced it into a reproduction, your production, and when you want to reach it, it is no more than a dream retreating even further into immemorial oblivion. Or inert matter.[57]

This is why, even when pressed in 2010 to consider a more womb-like khōra, one in which nurture or even love is possible, he reminds us that even as "a more maternal simulacrum" we must offer to khōra no prayers of gratitude. "Difference does not love you or even know you are there. Difference gives, but difference could care less."[58] Only through indifference can the dream of the gift, the unconditioned, be possible. It is essential for Caputo and Derrida that the khōra does not *give*. But in the gift that she is, she seems to come closest to that very dream, the unconditionality they have been waiting for. "By letting take place (avoir lieu), she/it does not give or produce or create anything. If in giving place, khōra gives at all, she/it gives without giving and so without producing debt, even as she/it receives without incurring debt."[59] The absence of this debt is the freedom required for justice, and the difference of the spacing. Khōra cannot go so far as to enter subjectivity by giving (something that would result only in a capitalist exchange, as the subject is a "capital fellow"), but this is how khōra is better than a greedy appropriator of the return.[60] By being under signification she escapes *and helps to compensate* for overdetermination. Through powerlessness and disinteredness, she holds open a space for justice. Thus khōra is not doing the work of neutrality, but the continual

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57 Luce Irigaray, *Elemental Passions* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 35.

58 Caputo, *Prayers and Tears,* 169.

59 Ibid.*,* 36.

60 Ibid.*,* 168.

labor of fort/da. This here also seems to be exactly her job, to traverse distance, make space, and stay out of reach of violation and violating. If we were to distinguish Caputo's khōra from Derrida's, it would be that Derrida's khōra operates with a bit of romance, idealized and at a distance, venturing near on occasion, while Caputo's khōra seems steady and close at hand, just too close to risk direct attention.

Even though khōra is anterior to differentiation, I argue that both innocence and neutrality are unavailable for the Caputan khōra because there in the wasteland, like the tohu wa bohu of Genesis, there are traces of ash. Lands that are wasted have history. "There, there are cinders-- the desert of a desire, the desire of a desert."[61] The desert, as the precondition for God, difference, and life, has a remnant of a prior destruction. Khōra knows the dark night of the soul, having passed through "the aporia of the sans." And yet, Plato assures us of khōra's eternal indestructability[62] in conjunction with her powerlessness. One might be tempted to interpret that it must have been she who wrought this devastation, to deserve such an exile. There is cold comfort in her absence, but space nonetheless, and the assurance, continually requiring maintenance, that she can never do it again. She will survive, but only at the cost of a great blossoming love, something that only Jacques, in Jack's eyes can bring back to the desert[63] with the passion of weeping and sighing for this very trace, the material possibility of the im/possible.

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61 Ibid., 58.

62 Derrida, Jacques, *On the Name*, trans. Thomas Dutoit, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1995), 103.

63 Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, 59.

Woman as Metaphor

"No need for a mother, as long as there is some motherliness."[64]

--Helene Cixous

The relation of woman to deconstruction via deferral can be understood as the basic structure of metaphor, the way a term serves not only as other, but also as mediator of relation.[65] A fulcrum of relations, metaphor, like Woman-as-such conducts "a transfer of the relations of contrast and affinity which pertain to the vehicle term on to the domain of the topic."[66] Is this, then, what Derrida performs via the she-ness of Necessity and Khōra—a mediation of alterity that pivots on a presumed contiguity?

In "Choreographies," a spoken interview with Derrida, Christie McDonald asks this very question, about the philosophic use of metaphors based on women's bodies, such at the hymen of poststructuralism. She observes that etymological analyses are meaningful precisely as indicators of shifts in a cultural unconscious. And in response to a project of producing a feminist feminine imaginary, those historical shifts present a problem "…not so much because these terms are either under or over-valued as parts belonging to a woman's body. It is rather that, in the economy of a movement of writing that is always elusive, one can never decide properly whether the particular term implies

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64 Helene Cixous, "A Newly Born Woman," *The Helene Cixous Reader*, ed. Susan Sellers, (London: Routledge, 1994), 38-39.

65 Eva Feder Kittay, "Woman as Metaphor," *Hypatia* 3 (1988): 63–86. Accessed 5/15/2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3809952, 64.

66 Ibid., 65.

complicity with or a break from existent ideology."[67] Derrida responds, eventually, with what seems to be the question here at hand: "Must one think 'difference' 'before' sexual difference or taking off 'from' it?"[68]

He does not, of course, answer, and neither does she. The question remains open, an invitation to draw near, like Butler's enduring question of the sex of materiality and the materiality of sex. One methodological approach has to do with the performance of two phases of deconstruction, as John Caputo explicates: first, to highlight and invert the hierarchy of the binary terms underlying any text or thought; second, to show how the seeming stability of the master term is undermined along with and by the opposition. One might suggest that Irigaray performs most obviously the first phase of deconstruction, and Butler the second; but that both are necessary, indeed complementary in the deconstruction of gender.

Still…it remains. Must difference be thought before sexual difference, or is there no before to sexual difference? In the play of metaphor that is khōra and that is woman, Derrida, Irigaray and Butler agree that there is no "it" to have a gender; and yet Derrida may be heard (in his speech, if not in his writing) to honor and disavow a trace of what seems to be an unassimilable sexual difference; of the desire for unassimilability available only (or just primarily) at the site of sexual difference. Whether presence or absence is the more comfortable domicile for a theorist's internalized other, fleshy gynomorphs are no less implicated when traced as a ghostly or androgynous she.

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67 Jacques Derrida and Christie McDonald, "Choreographies: Interview," *Diacritics* 12 (1982): 71.

68 Ibid., 70.

Whether such a trace is liberatory for women or not, it may be of Necessity, of the conditionality of human life.

If khōra is beyond gender, truly, if it is a figure of pre-difference, or difference itself, how is it addressable as a you, or a name with a perduring pronoun *she*? What is the trace, the remainder of femininity that could determine the pronoun of a non-entity below being? What is the content that forms the non-content? Could it be Receptivity itself, idealized and abjected via a phallocentric specular feminine? Through an Irigarayan self-exile we might attempt a khōric écriture to assist the apperception and symbolization of a feminist Receptivity outside a specular phallocentrism of the feminine. If gender is a figure of ontological difference, khōra can open up doubly – by receiving not only the forms but all the things of the world. "Gender, but never only gender, exposes our carnal finitude to the cosmic excess that bears us. Theology transmits divine names for its almost unbearably nonhuman, dazzlingly fertile, infinity. . . The infinite in its excess requires an excess of names. Because it is the source of all creatures, any creatures may become its figure."[69] Gender, khōra, oui, oui…

Understanding ontological division through maternal separation offers access to not merely the co-incidence or co-constitution of hierarchical binaries, but a primal scene of human processes of abjection and appropriation that manifest as race, sexuality, environmental and economic exploitation no less than gender. Matrixial ambivalence is a situation of physiological constraints and extreme affects in the earliest days of life embedded in the responsiveness of adult caregivers. Chora, the matrix in and around a

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69 Catherine Keller, "The Apophasis of Gender: A Fourfold Unsaying of Feminist Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76 (2008): 913.

primary caregiver, produces desires and prohibitions in bodily proximities that transmute pre-differentiated experiences into interior and exterior spatialities. Whether or not this caregiver occupies a political positionality or uterine history called Woman, they can be understood, through labor practices to have or hold the (non)gender called Mother, a person who functions as threat, gratification and mystery; a vast and intimate, terrible and nurturing cosmos capable of sustaining life, a passage within which, and through which all must pass.

In the deconstructive khōra we find a humility about the reaches of language to grasp the possibility of an exterior materiality, a humility that through its extremity can either enact or be mistaken for an inflation of language into a linguistic idealism (Chomsky). The signifier itself takes on a kind of materiality (Butler), while the signified is put on trial as a sheer existing presence beyond a signifier's horizontal grammatical reference. Whether the thing is unreachable from our inability to grasp it, or from its own unreality is unclear; hence the helpfulness of apophatic *theology* to deconstruction: being agnostic about the possibilities of language to get pinned (Lacan) to material referents can indeed honor the difference of all parties, especially when those referents are already presumed to somehow be crossing the border, like God, between materiality and immateriality, in a figure of Messiah or Logos. That difference of difference, a difference that is beyond the difference between this realm of language and another realm beyond it, a possibility of an otherwise to our own bifurcations, is what is given the name khōra by Derrida and Caputo.

Irigaray merely observes that there is already an otherwise to the bifurcations matter/spirit, man/woman, and it is the actuality of women, the materiality of their

conditions that is other to the spectral Woman/Other that is idealized, demonized, and abjected from the category Man/Self. If we were to accept this otherwise to the categories Man/Woman, what is leftover (the trace) from the split, we might be able to build something with it, like the things that women are building every day to accommodate to life in exile from subjectivity. Écriture feminine offers an embrace of the exile that could be viewed as a thirdness of gender that is the already-excess of women.

This is what Derrida also is going for in the de-gendering of khōra, but which is complicated by the matrixial ambivalence in deconstruction, a split about women as idealized and absent or threatening and too close. The otherwise of Khōra, for Derrida, traverses these great distances to show up eventively, possibly, with the threat managed. Khōra is a mediator of the maternal, a matrix formed by the spatiality of absence in tension with the possibility of presence, and as such, deconstruction ought to be viewed in at least two ways. First khōra can be a mediator of distance, a bringing near of the far possible only through pushing the near away. Second, through emphasis on the vastness of the distance and combination of idealization, femininity and absence, deconstruction can risk hypostasis that only khōra (as the difference within deconstruction, a difference to deconstruction and its hypostatic absence) can hope to address.

Either way, whether as a mediator of proximity or a hypostasized ideal of the impossibility of mediation, khōra could be functioning well enough. This could be a good enough khōra, a *khōra of khōra*, an enfolding of the matrix into another farther matrixial process/space to multiply the distance, but keep it somehow more powerful, more imminent for the pressure of its absence. This khōra seems to know a lot, even as she doesn't "do" a lot. This khōra knows enough to avoid overstimulation and threat. In

deconstruction, khōra creatively and sustainably manages matrixial ambivalence, but at great risk: keeping the matrixial so far removed betrays the power of the imminent collapse, a collapse of immanence just around the corner through the necessity of risk, and the horror that maternal presence invokes.

CHAPTER FOUR

IM/*PERSONALITY*: CHORA AND THE DRIVES

> One who could write completely the history of their own life, would also have, in a small epitome, concurrently grasped the history of the cosmos.
>
> --F.W. J. Schelling[1]

> In this way the drives, which are 'energy' charges as well as 'psychical' marks, articulate what we call a *chora*: a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated.
>
> --Julia Kristeva[2]

The depth structures of a human might be told like the story of a cosmos. Emerging out of nineteenth-century German Idealistic philosophy, Greek mythology, and war trauma, the fusion of empirical science and literary arts known as psychoanalysis focused the ontological difference at the scale of a human. Negotiating the relation between psyche and soma, the emergence of mind out of processes of the body, Freud posited an abyssal dimension of interiority adapted from the philosophical speculations of his day. This chapter turns to selected concepts of the body/mind matrix and the

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1 Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling and Jason M. Wirth, *The Ages of the World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 3 (SW 207). SW refers to Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K.F.A. Schelling, I Abtheilung Vols. 1–10, II Abtheilung Vols. 1–4, Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–61.

2 Julia Kristeva and Leon Samuel Roudiez, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 93.

unconscious in relation to the material maternal to engage the depths of the im/personal abyss within the contemporary philosophical movement of ecstatic naturalism. Through its roots in Kristeva and Freud via the potencies of Schelling, the matrixial abyss contracts and releases in and as the unruly ground of cosmogonic selving process to embrace the material universe, beyond any interiorized psychological unit. Inspiring melancholic longing, fear of engulfment, and amorous spawning, chora births, provides, throws, abandons, churns, and discharges selves into consciousness and symbolic language out of pre-temporal, pre-differentiated momenta: the charged energy of the drives. Robert Corrington's ecstatic naturalism retrieves the Kristevan semiotic chora and folds it back into a metaphysical field. Platonic metaphysics enfolded into Kristevan psychoanalytic semiotics, unfolding as psycho-semiotic metaphysics, the Corrington chora inhabits at least a triple fold.

Kristeva's Timaeus

In an extended metaphor that follows the descriptions of receptacle/chora in Timaeus, Kristeva finds in the cosmic a representation of the non-representable in human meaning making and language. Kristeva articulates her choice of Plato's word *chora* for the semiotic because it is invokes a mobility that includes "ephemeral stases." A "regime of not-quite meaning,"[3] the semiotic bears the imprint of codified language just as the body bears the imprint of the drives and their prohibitions. Discourse itself depends upon and refuses the chora. Chora is indeterminate, yet can be designated and regulated.

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3 Russell West-Pavlov, *Space in Theory: Kristeva, Foucault, Deleuze* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 38.

"…One can situate the chora and, if necessary, lend it a topology, but one can never give it axiomatic form."[4] That topology cannot be confused with a position, in the way that the sign and the signifier hold position; but such an undergirding is necessary and purposive in the attainment of those positions. Kristeva suggests that Plato comes to a similar conclusion when he identified that this topology, which in Kristeva's appropriation, is a function in language, must be read as a process in relation to the maternal. While Kristeva's chora can rightly be called an appropriation or analogy from philosophy to psychoanalysis, Kristeva seems to be performing a philosophical linguistic interdiscipline via the chora. Maria Margaroni invites us to notice the continuity with Plato's project of attempting to negotiate the material world in relation to the immaterial. Thus Kristeva's chora is, like Plato's "a materialist economy of the Beginning" and as such it "permits Kristeva to displace all transcendental forms of origin (the Word, the divine nous, subjective will), at the same time, forcing us to rethink our assumptions concerning the passivity and chaotic nature of matter." [5]

Kelly Oliver interprets the chora as an effort to bring the body back into poststructuralism, "into the very structure of language."[6] One of the precursors to Kristeva's idea of the semiotic, in a previous essay, is "the flesh" of writing."[7] The semiotic chora is in dialectic relationship with the symbolic, such that the churning

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4 Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 94.

5 Maria Margaroni,"The Lost Foundation: Kristeva's Semiotic Chora and Its Ambiguous Legacy" *Hypatia* 20 (2008): 78.

6 Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-Bind* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 3.

7 Ibid., 34, quoting Julia Kristeva, "How Does One Speak to Literature?" 1971, wherein Kristeva uses the ideas of Barthes, including "sublanguage" and the "flesh" of writing.

sensations, impulses and drives of the body find their disruptive expression in language, and ordered symbolic language finds its origin in the harbor of the maternal body. Before what Kristeva (via Lacan and Freud) calls the law and language of the father, the space of the maternal body offers the early stages of what is necessary for human separation and subjectivity: negation and identification. Naming a Hegelian negativity as the foundation of the separable self, she turns to Husserlian phenomenology to explain the symbolic side of the semiotic/symbolic dialectic.

Kristeva introduces the chora with the Greek *semeion* as the etymological base of her term "semiotic," "distinctive mark, trace, index, precursory sign, proof, engraved or written sign, imprint, trace, figuration."[8] So the semiotic is an *articulation*, indeterminate, mobile and "extremely provisional" though it may be. This provisionality might be precisely what brings her to the Timaeus, and so she articulates. The range of meanings in the etymology may not be as startling to the new reader of Kristeva as much as the quality of distinctiveness intuitively at odds with the churning indeterminacy, the "expressive totality" of movement and ephemeral stases that she elsewhere defines as chora. Kristeva addresses this aspect of *semeion* right away, connecting the distinctive qualities of the semiotic with psychoanalytic (and we might venture poststructuralist philosophical) processes of displacement and condensation; in the unconscious as in language, linguistic shifts are condensed into metaphor by the repetitions of neurosis and trauma. Kristeva connects this here to what was never absent in Lacan or Freud, the biological drives. "Here we find the principles of metonymy and metaphor indissociable

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8 Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 93.

from the drive economy underlying them."[9] Kristeva is clear in reminding us that the drives are at once raw energies and psychic inscriptions, as the body is socially and politically constrained. As representations in the mind of bodily urges, drives and sensations in general are experienced at the site of orifices that connect the inside of the body to the outside through activities of expulsion. This expulsion "establishes an outside that is never definitely separate-one that is always in the process of being posited," and that what is negated is not lacking but discharged and then lost, a process that prefigures the symbolic functions in a time before language. "Expulsion is what constitutes the real object as such; it also constitutes it as lost, thus setting up the symbolic function."[10] This expulsion and loss in this moment of symbolic functioning in the timespace of the chora

> These drives move through the sphincters and arouse pleasure at the very moment substances belonging to the body are separated and rejected from the body. This acute pleasure therefore coincides with a loss, a separation from the body, and the isolating of objects outside it. . . .This expulsion of objects is the subject's fundamental experience of separation—a separation which is not a lack, but a discharge, and which, although primitive, arouses pleasure. [11]

Aggressiveness and pleasure happen at the moment of expulsion. Much like the abject on which the subject depends, all discourse "simultaneously depends upon and refuses" the chora.[12] "The semiotic chora is no more than the place where the subject is both generated and negated."[13] This activity of rejection or negation returns to the subject later in life; well after the realm of symbolic has been established, the semiotic chora returns to

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9 Ibid., 96.

10 Ibid., 148.

11 Ibid., 151.

12 Ibid., 94.

13 Ibid., 95

the individual and to the social order as a discharge of poetry that has revolutionary momentum. "Rejection therefore constitutes the return of expulsion—*Ausstossung* or *Verwerfung*—within the domain of the constituted subject."[14] Kristeva does not advocate a return of the semiotic in full force, a return that would endanger the subject with psychosis, rather rejection must return, to "put in process/on trial the symbolic" in a poetic negativity. It would be difficult to accuse Kristeva of a biologism that excludes culture when politics and their spaces motivate the entire project and are written into or onto her understanding of the psychic life of individuals.

The chora is also "located" in a phase of development, a time before symbolic language. The space of this time is near to and in a continuum of merger with the mother's body. West-Pavlov considers the Kristevan chora and *khehre* in the context of what he calls "the literal eruption of space into a French academic tradition whose dominant paradigm until then had been historicist." Structuralism concerns itself with systems rather than developments of meaning, through a vocabulary that seems highly spatial, as part of what Foucault and others might identify as a turn from history to and time to contemporaneous space [15] The chora is before spatiality proper, before a spacing created by absence or loss (of the mother). Without the sign of symbolic language, there is not yet a split or distinction between the symbolic and the real.[16]

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14 Ibid., 81 as quoted in Julia Kristeva and Kelly Oliver, *The Portable Kristeva* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), n28.

15 West-Pavlov, *Space in Theory,* 18, quoting Michel Foucault, Paul Rabinow, and James D. Faubion, *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984* (New York: New Press, 1997): "The present age may be the age of space instead. We are in the era of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition, of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the scattered. We exist in a moment when the world is experiencing, I believe, something less like a great life that would develop through time than like a network that connects points and weaves its skin."

16 Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 94.

As to where Kristeva's work falls along a political spectrum, particularly along a spectrum of feminist debate about essentialism, there is much disagreement. After a famous renunciation of politics and feminism in favor of a psychoanalytic approach, Kristeva nonetheless insists on the presence and influence of culture and systems in the formation of selves; and develops intrapsychic theories of human development that account for misogyny. As Kelly Oliver argues, "The extreme views expressed in the secondary literature on Kristeva's writing are evidence of the way in which her writing opens itself to interpretation."

> For example, some of her critics argue that Kristeva's theory presents an essentialist notion of woman and the feminine (Silverman, Stone, Kuykendall, Grosz); others argue that it undermines any essentialist notion of woman (Ainley, Rose). Some of Kristeva's critics argue that her theory is founded on an essentialist conception of maternity (Grosz, Joes, Butler, Kuykendall, Fraser, Stanton); others argue that her notion of maternity is double and indeterminate (Ainley, Ziarek, Chase). Some critics argue that she promotes anarchy (Smith, Eagleton); others argue that her theories are conservative or even fascist (Fraser, Jones, Leland, Gidal).[17]

The list goes on and on as critics polarize. I further suggest that Kristeva may be writing for her readers with the therapeutic strategy of the analyst: anticipating controversy, welcoming transferential material, deploying provocation and compliance, remaining ultimately unlocatable for the health of the analysand. The complexity of the semiotic is furthered by the changes the concept seems to have undergone throughout the forty years of Kristeva's writings.

For all the concern over Kristeva's version of chora in the world of feminist theorizing, a controversy over essentialism in relation to the bodies of women seems rather radically misplaced. Kristeva's use of Plato's figure of the chora is quite explicitly

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17 Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*, 1.

about the experience of a human infant developing through the earliest phases of life. That experience has both spatial and temporal aspects that Kristeva groups together as a continuum that includes what we might call the intrapsychic and object relations approaches to psychoanalytic theory. For Freud and those interpreting Freud, the development of a human, the first experience is a chaotic nexus of sensations and impulses, neither properly external nor internal, that he identifies as the drives. Though it is intimately connected with womb and mother, Kristeva's chora is not the womb or the mother, but rather the infant's conflicting experience of bodily excitations and the mentality that they provoke; an experience that never happens outside of relation with the mother. These earliest experiences can be said, for the field of psychoanalysis, to be originary, primary, or primal. They are as far back as we can go in time to understand our origins as humans. They are experiential, and for Freud, before sensation there is no experience.

To objections that Kristeva's chora collapses into a biologism, we might respond that this is closely related to controversies around Freud's theory of drives. Are they simply biological? (No). Are they uniquely human or shared with other organisms? (Perhaps). Are they what make us human or what make us animal? (Yes, both.) Differentiating drives from instinct, Freud seems to have insisted simultaneously on their biological primacy and translatability into the realm of symbol. There is a trace of the world of the symbolic, the orientation of desire that makes the drives more than instinctual, it makes them human. Drives are for Freud a kind of meeting place for biology and representation, a chora of a human.

Freud and the Potencies

Originating in the body as the excitations or needs of organs placing demands on the body and growing mind to fulfill those needs and create action, drives could be considered the basic unit of Freudian theory. Conceptually, the work they do is choric, in the Platonic sense by crossing the material/immaterial divide: translating or commuting biological impulses (need fulfillments) into psychic energy and physical charges. Drives do work by communicating a condition of necessity, by making demands. Drives *affect*. They represent the logically prior process of development of mind out of body, and the evolution of an interiority beyond the physicality of the body. While intrapsychic and therefore interior to a person's physicality, the drives are also clearly located at the body's surfaces and in its organ depths. From the interior to the exterior, drives have location, direction and intensity through a process of charge and release, along a vector of investment Freud called cathexis.

Freud developed his theory of drives from the effort to explain the impulses behind wishes and fantasies that his patients expressed when they suffered symptoms and anxiety in the course of the conflict between repressed wishes and an internal censor. He first used the term *trieb* in 1905, in "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality." The drive Freud focused on was the variably expressive and therefore interesting sexual drive, flexible for theorizing as the goal was imprecise or generalized as a vague form of sexual satisfaction. Also in 1905, libido is specified as the energy behind the sexual drive. Implied in 1905, but not explicit until 1910 are other self-preservation drives, like hunger. Freud calls these "ego" drives, as they act in support of the continuation of the ego, and suggested that they work in conflict with sexual drive or libido. This conflict would

perhaps later come, in 1923 with the structural model of the unconscious, to be represented as the conflict between ego and id. [18]

In 1915, with three different papers, Freud concentrated on understanding the nature of drive itself as existing between, both expressing the boundary and bridging the gap between psyche and soma. [19] The physiological sources of the drive were not the provenance of psychology, rather the drive itself is a mental representation of a physical tension that causes mental tensions that result in frustration and satisfaction behaviorally and cognitively. This mental tension is what Freud describes as pressure. *Trieb* is "on the frontier between the mental and the physical…*without quality*…a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work." [20]

Fred Pine likens the state of being driven by the drives to being "lived by" one's impulses or desires rather than being an "I' having a sense of desiring. This very sense of being driven is the core of the idea of *das es*, or "the *it*," later incorporated into Freud's 3-tier topology of the human as the *Id*.[21]

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18 Joel Weinberger and Jeffrey Stein, "Drive Theory," in Edward Erwin, ed. *The Freud Encyclopedia: Theory, Therapy, and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 162.

19 Sigmund Freud, "Repression," (1915) "The Unconscious," (1915) and "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (1915).

20 Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," (1905) James Strachey, Anna Freud, Carrie Lee Rothgeb, and Angela Richards, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press 1953-1974), 1492 (my italics). Also quoted in Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 30.

21 Morris Eagle suggests that this what Groddeck, who coined the term, had in mind. Freud himself credits Groddeck and Neitzsche before him. (Freud 1923, 23) as referenced in Morris Eagle, "Theories of Motivation" in Glenn O. Gabbard, Bonnie E. Litowitz, and Paul Williams *Textbook of Psychoanalysis* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Pub, 2012), 42.

Phyllis Meadow discusses the non-libido drives: "Lacan (1977) stated that every drive is virtually a death drive (i.e., to reduce tension) and that life and death refer to different aspects of the drive. LaPlanche (1999) accepts Freud's (1923) ideas on tendency to fragmentation, unbinding, and discharge against a tendency to

Although Freud disavowed any debt to philosophy for his concepts, his direct or indirect debt to 19th century German idealism has been well documented.[22] Freud claimed in 1914 never to have read Schopenhauer until Otto Rank pointed out similarities in their thinking, but major concepts of Schopenhauer's Will and theory of the unconscious appear in Freud's thinking. Some explain this as the saturation of Schopenhauer's thought in the culture of Freud's day, and the influence of Schopenhauer on Freud's teachers, including a very popular interpreter of Schopenhauer - Hartmann's Philosophy of the Unconsious - a bestseller discussed in every Vienese cafe during the 1870's. J. F. Herbart in 1816 an 1824 developed ideas of the effectiveness of ideas above and below the "threshhold of consciousness" and defended psychology as a quantitative science. One of his interpretors, Lindner, authored a textbook that was mandatory reading in Freud's last year at the Gymnasium (1872-1873).[23]

Freud's first love was not science or medicine, but letters. Freud wrote to Fliess in 1896, "As a young man I knew no longing other than that for philosophical knowledge, and I am now about to fulfill it as I move from medicine to psychology"[24] Indeed, one of Freud's early ambitions was to pursue a double PhD in medicine and philosophy, perhaps because of the influence of Franz Brentano who wished to bring inner perceptions and external perceptions together in a methodological marriage of natural sciences and

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binding and synthesis." Phyllis Meadow, *The New Psychoanalysis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 18.

22 See, for example, Matt Ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud, and the Birth of the Modern Psyche* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

23 Louis Breger, *Freud: Darkness in the Midst of Vision* (New York: Wiley, 2000).

24 Oscar Zentner, *The Case Histories of Freud. Part 1, and the Direction of the Analysis* (Hawthorn, Vic: Freudian School of Melbourne, 1985), 371.

philosophy. [25] However, by 1925, Freud expressed contempt for philosophers in general, though his critique seems to center on Brentano's overly conscious view of mental processes. Freud characterized nineteenth century philosophy as devoid of notions of the unconscious, a characterization that is patently untrue, given the influence of Schopenhauer and others. Biographer of Freud, Oscar Zentner proposes an explanation for Freud's disavowal of nineteenth century philosophy - the double threat that it poses to two of his favorite ambitions: originality and the recognition of psychoanalysis as a natural science.[26] I might suggest another explanation via the biographical insights of Louis Breger—Freud's demonstrated effort to surpass his own personal history, to recreate himself almost cyclically in the eyes of those whose respect he sought, a pattern of destroying the old in favor of the new, part of a fantasy that replaces helplessness with heroism.[27] The story of a life he did not want to be told; it will be left to others to tell the story of Freud and the philosophers.

Schelling's Unconscious

Trieb for the German idealists was a concept of urge or desire involved in negation and propulsion. In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel used *trieb* to describe the impetus that causes history to unfold, as well as movements toward and away, for example in the transition from the implicit to the explicit. Desire is what impels a seed to

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25 Brentano also contributed the notion of intentionality, which influenced Husserl and the phenomenologists. Frantz Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkte*) Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1874), 8 as quoted in Zentner, *The Case Histories of Freud*, 379.

26 Zentner, *The Case Histories of Freud,* 380.

27 Breger, *Freud: Darkness in the Midst of Vision*, 3-12.

develop, enduring "the contradiction of being only implicit and yet not desiring to be so."[28] It is also what makes the Spirit come to itself, at home in itself. [29] Trieb is the negation that labors and propels *Geist*. Through the influence of Jacob Bohme, trieb for Hegel "constitutes the Grund of all life. Trieb is the absolute center of the primal urge which unfolds or irrupts as the infinite manifold particularly that is the essence of otherness…the primal mystery itself…"[30] Schelling, meanwhile, posits the unconscious as that which is excluded and contracted, and simultaneously attracted to consciousness - the story of which gives rise to the history of the cosmos and of an individual life.

Published as an English translation for the first time in 2008, Schelling's 1794 commentary on Timaeus reads Plato through Kant as an early grappling with Plato to develop his ideas on ground and existence. The chora isn't named in that commentary, but the work it does for Plato is at the heart of what Schelling is also trying to work out.[31] Schelling quotes the receptacle passage from Timaeus, "the receptacle [greek], as it were, the nurse, of all generation" but translates receptacle as *enduring substance,* "a substance (Substanz) that enduringly (beharrlich) underlies all change of appearances."[32] This

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28 Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, 1:22.

29 Ibid., 1:23. For more on Trieb and Desire, See Jean Hyppolite, Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), Part II, chapter 1.

30 Brian Schroeder, *Altared Ground: Levinas, History, and Violence* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 85-86.

31 For Schelling's engagement with Timaeus, I am indebted to John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 154-167; and John Sallis, "Secluded Nature: The Point of Schelling's Reinscription of the Timaeus" Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy 8 (1999):71-85.

32 Timaeus 49a, cited by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, Hartmut Buchner, and Hermann Krings. *Timaeus* (1794) (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstsatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1994), 53, 54; as quoted by John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 161.

enduring substance is also called "the substratum of all the various forms that arose through imitation of the original, pure, intelligible forms"[33] In later works, John Sallis suggests, Schelling uses the phrase "Plato's matter" to denote the choric referents of Timaeus.

Indeed, Sallis argues, we have every reason to count Schelling's philosophy as another modern interpretation of the choric passages of Plato, in itself a *chorology*. The reinscription of the Timaeus, Sallis argues, might be found everywhere Schelling's work. The fundamental problem with modern philosophy, according to Schelling, is that "nature does not exist for it and that it lacks a living ground."[34] At the heart of *Philosophical Investigations of the Essence of Human Freedom*, Schelling draws the important distinction between such a living ground and existence. While sometimes translated as "unruly" ground, 2006 translators Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt choose "anarchic" ground to express the heightened ambiguity of "terrifying and liberating absence of order."[35] This ground is a darkness that precedes all creatures; "Without this preceding darkness creatures have no reality; darkness is their necessary inheritance." [36] It *is* nature, in such a way that it remains even in God, distinct but inseparable from the being of God;

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33 Schelling, *Timaeus*, 54, as quoted in Sallis, *Chorology*, 162

34 Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände*, in *Sämtliche Werke* (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1860), I/7, p. 356. As quoted in Sallis, "Secluded Nature," 71-85.

35 Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt, "Introduction" in Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations Into the Essence of Human Freedom* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), xxxii.

36 Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt, *Philosophical Investigations Into the Essence of Human Freedom* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 29 (SW 359-360).

an "inner ground" of God's existence.[37] The anarchic ground is the "incomprehensible base of reality in things, the indivisible remainder, that which with the greatest exertion cannot be resolved in understanding but rather remains eternally in the ground."[38] This "Indivisible Remainder" is the subject of Slavoj Žižek's essay by that name, in which he proposes the The Real as a synonym, based on Lacanian categories. Julia Kristeva has another name for the realm of the Real: the developmental time-space of chora.

Prior to the 1809 *Philosophical Investigations Into the Essence of Human Freedom*, Schelling seems to have been dismissive of the Timaeus, wondering (along with many scholars through the centuries) about the authenticity of the Platonic authorship, and establishing a more classical understanding of Plato's bifurcation of nature and spirit, "The greatest thinkers of antiquity did not dare go beyond this opposition. Plato still set matter in opposition to God."[39] Yet, Sallis argues, by 1809 Schelling is trying to look beyond a simple bifurcation that results in the association of matter with evil, in order to find a greater unity, and restates his own ideas to understand Platonic doctrine as a distinction between ground and existence. The originary longing out of which God gives birth to himself "is not the One itself but is after all co-eternal with it." This yearning is closely linked to the "undulating, surging sea" that is "akin to Plato's matter."[40] The 2006 translation by Love and Schmidt reads "like a wave-wound, whirling sea, akin to Plato's matter, following dark, uncertain law, incapable of

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37 Schelling, Love, and Schmidt, *Human Freedom*, 27-28 (SW358-359).

38 Ibid., 29 (SW 359-360).

39 Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*, in *Samtliche Werke*, I/2: 20, quoted in Sallis 163.

40 Schelling, *Philosophical investigations into the essence of human freedom*, SW 360 as referenced in Sallis, *Chorology*, 164-165.

constructing for itself anything enduring."[41] This description follows the analogy of birth, of human birth from darkness and the maternal body of feelings and yearning into light, thinking, and reason. "Man is formed in the maternal body; and only from the obscurity of that which is without understanding (from feeling, yearning, the sovereign [herrlich] mother of knowledge) grow luminous thoughts. Thus we must imagine the original yearning as it directs itself to the understanding, though still not recognizing it, just as we in our yearning seek out unknown and nameless good, as it moves…" like a formless surging sea; but out of which, nonetheless, God stirs, arising from "an inner reflexive representation" such that "God sees himself in an exact image of himself." The formless surging sea, Plato's matter, is nothing more than the inheritance from Timaeus of chora, suggests Sallis, although this reading overlooks the unruly depths of Genesis 1:1. The 1809 passage continues, "This representation is the first in which God, considered as absolute, is realized [verwirklicht], although only in himself; this representation is with God in the beginning and is the God who was begotten *in* God himself."[42] The "initial anarchy of nature," another name for the materiality that is chora, is now God's imaginal playstuff for building. The unruly ground continues to be the primary symbol Schelling chooses for Plato's matter, the "primordial nature," or "base of reality," that contains a unity before the split between ground and existence, a unity that contains "a hidden glimpse of light" "closed up within the divided elements" that presages "something

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41 Schelling, Love, and Schmidt, *Human Freedom*, 30

42 Ibid.

comprehensible and individuated" emerging. Indeed, this emergence happens as an *impression* upon nature, "a genuine impression into her…"[43]

Receptivity of the Drives

Freudian theories of the drive and the unconscious can be linked directly to Schelling's project of human freedom. The motivation behind *Philosophical Investigations* is theodicy, framed by Schelling as the question of evil and freedom. The yearning described as the ground itself, connects to the project of freedom via a Kantian concept of willing (yearning), in a way that influences Schopenhauer and directly feeds the stream of Freud's concept of the drives: "In the last and highest instance there is no other being but willing. Willing is primal being, and all the predicates of primal being only fit willing: groundlessness, eternity, being independent of time, self-affirmation."[44] In the 2012 monograph *The Foundation of the Unconscious*, Matt Ffytche explores the lineage of Freud's thinking directly from Schelling, among other German idealist influences. In *Ages of the World*, Schelling writes,

> There is no dawning of consciousness (and precisely for this reason no consciousness) without positing something past. There is no consciousness without something that is at the same time excluded and contracted. …Now it is certainly not thinkable that God was unconscious for awhile and then became conscious. But it is certainly thinkable that in the same inseparable act of the dawning of consciousness the unconscious and the conscious of God were grasped at the same time. The conscious was grasped as the eternally present but the unconscious was grasped with the ascertainment of what is eternally past.[45]

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43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., SW p. 350

45 Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von, and Jason M. Wirth, *The Ages of the World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 44.

Though Sallis does not explore Schelling's chorology in relation to *Ages of the World*, it seems an apt exemplar. In fact, I read the cosmic mythos *Ages of the World* as Schelling's own reworking of the Timaeus. Began and abandoned several times over, *Ages of the World* exists as a fragment in three revisions. It was to be a triumphant follow up to *Philosophical Investigations*, but never quite manifested in anticipated fullness. In order to understand freedom, there must be something against which freedom can manifest, something of necessity. The ground in *Ages* is definitely unruly, inconsistent, and perhaps testifies to the struggle of the project, as well as reflects the chaotic formlessness of cosmos, to account for the emergence of intelligibility in relation to the material world.[46] The two principles of unconscious darkness (a contraction) and conscious expansion are somehow unified, and which apply to humans as well as God. The oppositions of contraction and expansion are what give life. The first movement, of contraction, is initially One and enclosed, and as such, cannot be manifest. It requires the second movement, the expansive potency to progress. "Therefore, without the contradiction, there would be no movement, no life, and no progress. There would only be eternal stoppage, a deathly slumber of all of the forces . . . The contradiction in the first nature is as certain as life is."[47] One is reminded of Luce Irigaray's critique of the autistic God, self enclosed and sufficient.

Žižek explores these dynamics extensively in Schelling, interpreted through Lacanian categories and Freudian drives. Lacan's observation that the unconscious is

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46 For this engagement with *Ages of the World*, I am indebted to Clayton Crockett's chapters on Schelling's influence on Paul Tillich, and Crockett's own close reading of Schelling in conversation with Žižek in *Interstices of the Sublime Theology and Psychoanalytic Theory* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007).

47 Schelling and Wirth, *Ages of the World*, 12.

structured like a language is the point of departure for this analysis, as Žižek revisits the 19th century German obsession with origins that blur the distinction between human and cosmic origins, or rather, conceive of cosmic origins in ways that have come to be read as anthropomorphic via the perspectives of psychoanalysis, and yet were perhaps just read as mythic or metaphoric by Plato. "One who could write completely the history of their own life, would also have, in a small epitome, concurrently grasped the history of the cosmos," writes Schelling.[48] And yet these waters are the source of psychoanalysis itself, as we have observed from our brief history of drive theory and the unconscious in the ideas of Freud and the philosophers. The central concern of Hegel, Schelling, and others with the world soul as presented by Plato in later passages of the Timaeus is a further exemplification of this conceptual chora wherein consciousness evolves from itself. Schelling has an early, indeed may have the first recorded use of the word "unconscious" as an adjectival noun, or as unconsciousness. And while the line is blurred as to whether they refer to cosmic, human historical, or individual human processes, some of Schelling's descriptions of consciousness and unconsciousness in *Ages of the World* are uncanny. For example, Freudian/Lacanian processes of condensation and displacement seem to be forecast by the Schellingian movement of attraction and exclusion.

> There is no consciousness without something that is at the same time excluded and contracted. That which is conscious excludes that of which it is conscious as not itself. Yet it must again attract it precisely as that of which it is conscious as itself, only in a different form. That which in consciousness is simultaneously the excluded and the attracted can only be the unconscious.[49]

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48 Ibid., 3.

49 Ibid., 44.

In the many versions of *Ages of the World* published by Schelling, interpreters struggle to identify the difference such nuances make to Schelling's thought. In a very careful reading, Clayton Crockett observes subtle reversals in Schelling's own conception of the potencies, their order in history, in the absolute before history, such that the association of contraction with ground and darkness is actually inconsistent, such that expansion and light are sometimes negating and sometimes positing forces.

Žižek's focus seems to remain with a Lacanian interpretation of what Schelling refers to in (at least one version of *Ages*) as "the rotary motion of the drives," presumably interpreting those drives as metaphoric of human psychology rather than expansive forces of cosmos. In the three versions, 1811, 1813, and 1815, the character of Schelling's universe seems to shift among greater degrees of God content as the potencies circulate. Language of potencies veers closer toward language of drives, *kraft* and *potenz* are still prevalent, but the compulsory aspect of *trieb* comes to the fore.[50] Previous uses of treib in the system were more expansive and "object" oriented, as a will associated with an operating under greater freedom. In 1815 the *umtrieb* figures as a circularity, a curvature to the drive that turns back on itself, in "annular," circular, or rotary motion. This quality of circularity in motion is what Žižek associates with madness, a self-enclosed and gravitationally inescapable site of terror where the combined trajectories of contractive and expansive wills of Schelling guarantee a gravitationally inescapable psychosis. Schelling himself uses words like madness in 1815, and there is a trauma involved as the drives seem to be grinding away (Rajan) toward madness.

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50 Tilottama Rajan. "The Abyss of the Past: Psychoanalysis in Schelling's *Ages of the World* (1815)" *Romantic Circles*: online journal of the University of Maryland. Accessed 12/15/12, http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/psychoanalysis/rajan/rajan.html

> By contrast, at the heart of the third version is the revolutionary turbulence of a "rotatory movement that never comes to a standstill," and which Schelling compares to an "unremitting wheel" and the "self-lacerating madness" of Dionysiac music (*W3* 20,103). The two wills comprizing this madness, one "negating" and the other "freely effluent," were already present in the 1813 version (*W2* 144), in contrast to the *System*, where there was only the will as "outgoing activity" (*System* 193) or expression. But unlike the 1813 version, which schematizes the two forces in a dialectic of distinct wills, or in contrast to the 1811 version, which sees the negating force as a usurper (*W1* 23), in 1815 the two wills constitute an "annular drive . . . in which there is no differentiation": neither "a veritable higher nor a veritable lower" (*W3* 20), as the two exchange places, each becoming the outside or inside of the other, in a relation of folding rather than of contraries leading to progression. [51]

Žižek interprets the expansive and contracting forces as an "Orgasm of Forces" in an essay by that name, as the desiring of the initial potency for itself creates the movement that initates the existence of itself and the world from the realm of the invisible.[52] The initial or prehistoric condition, whether open or closed, seems to Žižek always to be read in light of the 1815 version, such that beginnings are deadlocked, confused, even dangerous. But, we might hasten to add, if this madness is truly Dionysian, then a Nietzchean influence would render the tremors ecstatic as well as terrifying.

I am not convinced that such readings are warranted of every version of *Ages*, or even in 1815. Žižek's Lacanian story of the symbolic emerging from the real of the drives in a circular struggle for freedom and escape from enclosure too closely provokes a Kristevan critique of abjection of the semiotic. While Schelling seems somewhat reluctant to claim the Timaean chora as the inspiration or site of his own myth of beginnings, he does use the word receptacle, and language of birthing in the process.

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51 Rajan, "The Abyss of the Past," 9.

52 Slavoj Žižek, "Schelling-in-Itself: The 'Orgasm of Forces,'" in Slavoj Žižek. *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters*. London: Verso, 1996.

Žižek, however, seems oblivious or unresponsive to a Timaean or Kristevan chora at work in Schelling. Without adequate containment, (or perhaps because of overstifling containment) the Real without the semiotic looks pretty terrifying. Mothers can be pretty terrifying, but maternality is what holds the Real closed enough and open enough for stability and expansion to take place. As Kelly Oliver reads Kristeva, "Maternity is a material model of alterity within identity … And psychoanalysis is the theory and practice of alterity within identity."[53] Is it really madness at the heart of existence, or just the experience of being utterly dependent?

The *affekt* theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher is a helpful intervention here, as the feeling of unqualified dependence on the world as a whole; a non-cognitive immediacy of consciousness, in which subjects become indistinguishable from objects. In a state of absolute dependence, wherein a self becomes unbounded within an oceanic feeling, the unruly chaotic cosmos may have a chance at some calm. Thandeka writes an affect theology from the liberal tradition of Schleiermacher, wherein feeling is foundational to theology because "the primary affective state for theological reflection is the feeling of being utterly dependent upon and an inextricable part of life itself.[54]" Schleiermacher traces interconnectedness to a universal finite characteristic of absolute receptivity. While it seems impossible to experience a feeling unqualified freedom, one can experience unqualified dependence to the world as a whole; a whole that includes

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53 Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*, 12.

54 Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith,* ed. H. R. Mackintosh and James Stuart Stewart (Edinburgh: T. &T. Clark, 1928. Reprint, with a forward by B. A. Gerrish, 1999), vii. As quoted in Thandeka, "Affect Theology: A Roadmap for the Continental Gather of Unitarian Universalist Seminarians," an expansion of 2013 keynote address, accessed April 13, 2016, http://cguus.org/archives/affect-theology-a-roadmap-for-the-continental-gathering-of-unitarian-universalist-seminarians/

oneself. “In the immediate self-consciousness, self and world come together in light of their underlying unity in absolute dependence, and subject become—in some sense—indistinguishable from object.”[55] Like Freud maintains with regard to Rolland’s oceanic feeling, Schleiermacher claims that it is possible to have a simultaneous sense of separability and unity with one’s surrounds (both immediate self-consciousness (unity) and sensible self-consciousness (separable). Chora can evoke a good enough feeling.

Intertextual Chora

The difference between Derrida and Kristeva can no longer be identified as a difference between philosophy and psychoanalysis, or between deferral and presence; rather it seems to be constituted primarily by disavowal of or turn toward the material in relation to the mother. The semiotic “provides the matter, the impetus, and the subversive potential of all signification. It is the ‘raw material’ of signification, the corporeal, libidinal matter that must be harnessed and appropriately channeled for social cohesion and regulation.” [56] Kristeva reads poststructuralist semiotics for the gap within language, and finds there its materiality. If a deconstructive khora is a reconfiguration of Plato’s theory of the divided line such that the gap between ideality and materiality, the ontological divide is figured as the line between signifier and signified. This dividing line protects us from a presumption of fixed ideality, for Derrida; and for Kristeve though Lacan as well. The Kristevan chora is a engagement with precisely that linguistic framing

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55 Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*. (New York: Harper, 1958), 107-109.

56 Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1990), 151 as quoted by West-Pavlov, *Space in Theory*, 39.

that refuses the penetration and presumed transcendence of signifiers, read again through the Timaean unfolding of ideality into materiality in a timespace before master signification. Kristeva is engaging the poststructuralist problem of language by locating it in time and space, under the conditions of the materiality of the human before language; a material condition overwhelmingly determined by the bodily presence of the mother. Kristeva does not absorb a concept of the material maternal as an already conflated pre-given; she creates it as the interrelation of metaphysics, linguistics, and early childhood experience. The flesh of this chora vibrates with a triple intensity.

In a story of beginnings that blur the distinctions, or emphasize the commonalities among human, social, and cosmic orders, are we doing philosophy, theology, or psychoanalysis? The intertextuality of this project, between philosophy and psychoanalysis read through Schelling and Freud, proves instead to be a something like a genealogy. The drama of cosmic origins and the primal scenes of childhood find common characters in the drives, the dance of freedom and necessity that may or may not be characterized as anthropomorphic. The drives represent the crossover, the necessity of biology that must somehow interface with what exceeds biology – is it rationality, Logos, Mind? Anthropomorphism smacks of the inappropriate, unwarranted imposition of human qualities onto nonhuman things. But in an expansive history of human reflection on self and cosmos, the turn to the human during the Enlightenment marks a paradigm shift that has enabled and limited the present moment. The free will and telos all associated with the demiurge in the Timaeus became at the Enlightenment the provenance of the individual (adult male) human, and the remainder of necessity tracks onto the material world, the sciences. Psychology is the philosophy of cosmology after

the turn to the human, as the obsessions of the German idealists testify. But is it really human selfhood that is at stake, or is it the cosmic categories read from the reference of the human? No contemporary philosophical movement engages this question more carefully than the ecstatic naturalism of Robert Corrington.

Firstness & Fissure in Ecstatic Naturalism

> The presemiotic chora is not itself a place of places or a position within a series of determinate orders. It is rather the momentum of pulsation that generates an endless stream of signs and symbols that attempt, vainly, to fill in the chora with delimited content.[57]

With fundamental insights from depth psychology, Peircian semiotics and American pragmatism, Robert Corrington develops a choric naturalism in which the depth dimensions of the underconscious of nature fund everything that is by spawning the restless pulsing potencies into a plane of immanence of the created orders of nature. Such a chora resists the exclusion of cosmos from the human psyche. Like Kristeva, Corrington identifies this aspect of nature with a pre-mental materiality, and through the material maternal, the lost object, and melancholy. The Corringtonian chora is his own Kristevan read of Spinoza's distinction between nature natruing and nature natured, analogous also to the Heidegarian difference between Being and a being. [58] Nature's choric underconscious is a precategorial depth dimension that offers a womblike "space" of fierce self-othering, from which potencies eject with their own momenta into self expression and actualization as the innumerable orders of the world. Corrington also

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57 Robert S. Corrington, *Ecstatic Naturalism: Signs of the World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 27.

58 Robert S. Corrington, "Nature's God and the Return of the Material Maternal". *The American Journal of Semiotics* 10 (1993): 115-132.

understands chora to be like the Peircian idea of Firstness, "the natural domain of possibility, feeling, and qualitative (but pre-intelligible) unity… which cannot remain satisfied with mere possibilities" but generates oppositional structures "in order to fulfill its own momentum."[59]These oppositional structures continue driving outwards into signification, the the signs of the world, without any total or unified category, substratum, or teleological principle, just the vast multiplicity of anything whatsoever, called nature natured. Like the Kristevan chora, this actively ejecting force at the deep heart of nature is pre-temoral, dynamic, rhythmic, and adventurous. Through Kristeva, Corrington reads Peircian firstness as correlative to the unconscious; and reading Kristeva through Peirce, Corrington expands an anthropocentric unconscious to cosmological speculation.

Chora, here, is far from passive. It is that which contains and produces, through the density of semiotic folds everywhere, the potencies and their charge for new signs and relata. There are no phallic forms that are behind the activity of chora, from beyond chora through chora into the world; the potencies are the momenta of chora itself. The many highly productive ejects of chora themselves carry the momenta of their birthing as they unfold into signs and sign series. These potencies emerge through a pulsation that comprises the chora as an eventive as much as a spatial figure.

The chora of ecstatic naturalism does not provide a relation of the many to the one or the one to the many, as there is no one trait or order that participates in all the orders of nature. It might however, be possible for chora to be the non-order that the signs have in common without violating the ordinality of ecstatic naturalism: it is the origin of all the natural complexes, all the traits as they multiply and fissure into orders and relations, but

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59 Ibid., 2.

it itself is not an order, being unavailable for signifying process. Like the other choras discussed so far, the Corrington chora offers the conditions for things, a background that remains active in the present and future, even as it is primordial or logically prior. Nature naturing also is called the "Encompassing," a "measureless measure that makes all measure possible. [60] In this way, nature naturing seems to be doing some of the invisible work of Irigaray's apophatic chora/woman, a category of ubiquity and ultimacy precisely because non-localizable, non-referential and necessary.

As we might expect, the figure chora is at the heart of ontological difference for Corrington: the difference between nature naturing and nature natured. But unlike other models, Chora is not a third figure, a mediatrix for something else to come through from another side. The Corrington Chora does not separate or mediate difference; chora instead is the difference, the interior depth dimension of nature. This difference is highly productive, as well as withdrawn from signification into mystery. Nature naturing (chora) is like the abyssal unruly ground of Schelling, Tillich, and Eckhart, the grund beyond grund, a primordial self-othering energy. This connection is explicit in the early Corrington. Within that legacy prevailing in the early Corrington, chora seems to be doing two kinds of work, offering an abyss that is abyssally inaccessable, and offering an abyss that forms the common ground for the accessibility of the signs of nature. As such, nature naturing (chora) was associated with givenness, providingness, clearing; but in further developments, chora loses the grounding and retains the abyssal characterizations.

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60 Robert Corrington, *Nature and Spirit: An Essay in Ecstatic Naturalism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), 125. Another category that may be doing choric work in ecstatic naturalism is the non/category nature. There is only the one nature that has no externality, since it has no referent.

While the movement of nature naturing, like Eckhartan abgrund, Schellingian contraction and Cusan en/unfolding is continuously churning out of and back into itself, nature nature's churning seems to be a one-way propulsion. The potencies emerge and recede, but the signs of the world do not return to chora to die or regenerate. They are foundlings, separated violently through the birth trauma (Otto Rank) across a very deep divide, a fundamental fissure. This fissure is an ontological wound within nature, constrained by the one-way direction of time in relation to origin such that the selving process is one of great melancholy. This is the condition of estrangement or thrownness (da!) characterized by a longing for the maternal material on the other side of the fissure (fort!), an abyss doubled: itself an abyss between abyss and world.

Melancholic Structure, Affectivity and the Work of Signs

> … The primary affect in relation to the material maternal is melancholy, as the signs long to return, but chora has a one-way relation to the signs.[61]
>
> This awareness of the lost object produces a haunting experience of memory of nature naturing as a powerful presence/absence.[62]

Ecstatic naturalism's melancholic attachment is located in a primordial past through a transparent dependence upon maternality. Understood through the Kristevan process of semiosis and abjection, signs and selves "must mirror the primal matricide that makes any form of semiotic emancipation possible."[63] The experience of differentiation

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61 Corrington, Nature's Spirit, 31.

62 Ibid., 127.

63 Corrington, "Nature's God," 4.

into selfhood is thus one of sadness and loss of a predifferentiated state that must acknowledged as loss and mourned in order to enter public forms of communication. This loss of the material maternal is what makes selfhood and signification possible, "hence firstness and the chora manifest themselves precisely through their uncanny absence within the obtained realms of interpretants."[64] Even so, the primordial past is not completely cut off. Even though the signs are cast off, Spirit invites selves to return to the primordial depth of unconsciousness (chora or nature naturing) to participate with consciousness in "the eternally returning moments of cosmogenesis."[65] The emphasis on this primal matricide has shifted as Corrington's incorporation of metapsychology into ecstatic naturalism has expanded to include Wilhelm Reich and Heinz Kohut (2013) in recent years, unfolding into a robust account of the selving process through idealizing and mirroring dimensions within nature; and the melancholic affect has been interrupted with ecstatic dimensions of aesthetic experiences of the sublime.

Even within the melancholic condition of the lost maternal object, the choric potencies are experiencing something like jouissance. "A potency is an unconscious momentum within the heart of nature-naturing that moves outward into the world of orders by ejecting some kind of orderly sign or system from its hidden depths."[66] The potencies, deeply tied to nature naturing, are an intermediary form of pre-meaning and pre-interactivity, inherently self-othering.[67] This self-othering property can has the

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64 Ibid., 5.

65 Ibid.

66 Robert S. Corrington, *Nature's Self: Our Journey from Origin to Spirit*. (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1996), 98.

67 Corrington, *Ecstatic Naturalism*, 108.

affective tone of "hungering" to enter the world, to manifest with a restlessness that pushes outward from nature naturing, into horizons of meaning that intersect and expand.

Vastly different from the chora of linguistic deconstruction, ecstatic naturalism's chora does not stand between things and their representations, or thereby herald the possibility of such an advent. Through Peircian semiotics, things are not divorced from their signs. Because of the three part sign structures of Peirce, "the sign can stand forth against and with its object as a sign that points to something in respect."[68] Signs present themselves in a phenomenological way from within ordinality. Like the Whiteheadian/Deleuzian chora, ecstatic naturalism's semiotic cosmology means that the mode of coming into existence is a mode of communication; that the structures of knowledge are the structures of being or becoming.

Thus the Peircian semiotics of Corrington is attentive to the activity of the signs, their intrinsic ability to carry meaning as a part of nature, not just within the realm of human language. In this way, ecstatic naturalism's affect, its feeling tone is related to its causal structure, through what Shaviro calls affectivity. The affectivity of ecstatic naturalism is the movement of the sign structures toward and away from their source: toward the unruly ground of nature naturing through melancholic longing that motivates selves to engage the unconscious to bring it into the world of sign structures and consciousness; and away from the unruly ground in an ecstatic jouissance of parturition, ejective eventive momenta. The self-othering self actualization of these potent momenta, is, like Shaviro's account of Whiteheadian affectivity, or the Deleuzian folds, essentially *communicative*. An ecstatically naturalist semiotic cosmology pre-emptively solves the

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68 Corrington, *Nature's Self*, 128.

epistemological divide (as enlightenment inheritance of the Platonic divide) such that structures of meaning are un/enfolded through the natural complexes that bring along with them a kind of self presencing, an actualization of meaning however humbly relativized within their horizon(s).

To a postmodern situation still haunted by Kantian transcendentals, ecstatic naturalism offers the insight that in order for the orders of the world to be real to us, in order for there to be communication rather than isolation, in order for the innumerable orders of the world to present in and as themselves, outside the overreach of human projections, the natural complexes must intend already toward structures of meaning. Thus signification is itself the process of actualization. For ecstatic naturalism the signs of the world are propelled into existence by an innate restlessness to exist that also constitutes the capacity to obtain. World semiosis is about the communicativeness at the heart of being, but this is not an immediately transparent or assured communication. Natural complexes require vast resources of time, attention, and skilled observation--deep forms of phenomenological listening in order to be heard. The phenomenologist as analyst and analysand is attending with and through projective identification and countertransference toward a more encompassing hearing that is humble, not presumptive. Unintended inadequacies are mitigated by the shared nature of the work of interpretation. When in the proximity of the dense strata of sacred folds, melancholic mood is altered by the intensity of the charge of the potencies to break out or come into themselves, ecstatically, affecting natural complexes and their interpreters. Intervals of spacing provide the clearing for phenomenal presentation and ordinal interpretation, a clearing held open by the attention of the interpreters, gathering to do the work of hermeneutic

community. Giving space to all comers, the community of ecstatic naturalism has welcomed rather than abjected the critical attention of feminist readers responding to maternal metaphors attributed to the pre-semiotic, unrepresentable ontological difference.

Regressive Fantasy and Feminist Response

In the essay "Ëcstatic Nature and Earthly Abyss: An Ecofeminist Journey to the Icelandic Volcano" (2015), Sigridur Gudmarsdottir sets out to address feminist criticisms of Robert Corrington's use of maternal imagery in ecstatic naturalism. Gudmarsdottir notes Grace Jantzen's critique of abyss language in general as a mixed blessing for women, in its womblike and tomblike versions of female morphology; and also notes Nancy Frankenberry's direct critique of Corrington's Nature's Self (1998). Frankenberry suggests that "the pre-Oedipal texture of Corrington's hymn to nature naturing carries some disturbing symbolic freight that critics may read as not entirely pre-Symbolic." Instead, it is "an after-the-fact construction" that enables a "dream of maternal unity and primordial plentitude." In the end, the maternal imagery of nature naturing is "a regressive fantasy, through which the male subject pursues both the Oedipal mother and the wholeness lost to him through symbolic castration."[69]

Guttmarsdottir responds to this critique by chronicling the development of ecstatic naturalism from its incorporation of mother images that begin with melancholy and become increasingly devouring, before emerging into a more encompassing calm, and agrees that the images are indeed disturbing, and suggests a supplement of an Icelandic

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69 Nancy Frankenberry, "Corrington, Robert S., Nature's Self: Our Journey from Origin to Spirit," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 66 (1998): 171-172.

volcano as an image of the unruly, ejective and even mystically serene non/location of nature naturing.[70] I agree that the figure of an abandoning, devouring mother with vagina dentate is frightening. I suggest, however, that these abyssal images carry no more patriarchal freight than warmly romantic or coldly ideal images of women and mothers. As Guttmarsdottir observes, there may be no symbolic system that does not bear the disturbing freight of the violent contestations that produce it. For the purposes of this project, images of ejection, rejection, and devouring will serve well to explore the work of matrixial ambivalence, an ambivalence that is felt and enacted by both the infant and the mother in scenes of birthing and nurture.

While for Frankenberry a "regressive fantasy" of pursuing "the Oedipal mother and the wholeness lost to him through symbolic castration" is offered as a critique of overtly demonstrable flaws, the current project is oriented around the proposition that primary human experience is a complex and important epistemological position characterized by monstrous affects and experiences of the maternal. Regression and fantasy are not thereby merely resources to go under analysis, but positionalities to be engaged empathically for insights into pre-objective, pre-differentiated reality. This project intends, as does ecstatic naturalism, to hover at the abyss of via negativa and the not-yet speakable realms of regression for purposes of philosophical and theological reflection. We are skirting the edge of abyss, as Corrington and Guttmarsdottir describe it, of conscious engagements with the preconscious, and preconscious engagements with the unconscious. We are courting the monstrous and the maternal as much as we are

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70 Sigridur Gudmarsdottir, "Ëcstatic Nature and Earthly Abyss: An Ecofeminist Journey to the Icelandic Volcano," in Leon J. Niemoczynski and Nam T. Nguyen. *A Philosophy of Sacred Nature: Prospects for Ecstatic Naturalism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015).

objecting, interfering, and protecting. We are trying it on and we are putting all of it under analysis.

Reading the Kristevan chora as a figure of nature naturing, ecstatic naturalism has emphasized abjection. In addition to this, I suggest attention to the state of the infant pre-abjection. According to Kristeva, through the pleasures of mouthing, sucking and sounding, the oral cavity functions as a site of incorporation and unification. Through the pleasures of expulsion and rejection, the anus is a site of negation, a precursor to a symbolic realm's "no!" that counters the oral pleasures of incorporation. For ecstatic naturalism, then, the creation of an exterior world through ejections might thus resemble the infant's anal process more than a mother's birthing process, something which, as Guttmarsdottir observes, does not necessarily carry the momentum of expulsion or sudden separation.[71] This points us to a more general supplement to ecstatic naturalism: that in the pre-semiotic realm, we ought not be attempting to figure a mother alone without an infant. The maternal, as a figure understood through Kristeva's chora, must cover not only the interior spaces and surfaces of the mother, but the interior spaces and surfaces of the infant, and the space that they form together through the mother's care. This is how the Kristevan chora is milieu: a place before language. Thus in a more thoroughly Kristevan ecstatic naturalism, chora creates the conditions for consciousness and world semiosis through potencies which stimulate and charge the chora as milieu, to incorporate and expel pleasurably and aggressively. The mental content that is created by these energetic impulses enfolds and unfolds into unconscious and conscious process perhaps through a chora at another level: the preconscious, also a figure for the larger

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71 Gudmarsdottir, "Ëcstatic Nature and Earthly Abyss."

milieu of chora chora-ing, the emergence of separations from indifferentiation, on the way to becoming selves.

As Corrington observes, however, the Schellingian language of emergence may be too smooth, too gentle a description for this process. Instead of turning to impersonal or other-than-human language of spawning or ejecta, however, I recommend returning to the possibilities of human images of "disturbing symbolic freight." What Frankenberry and Guttmarsdottir observe about the problem of symbolizing the pre-semiotic rings true, and suggests that neither ordinality nor phenomenology may not be able to go all the way down. Instead, we might consider a return to Plato's bastard reasoning, something between mythos and logos, something in the realm of dreaming or even nightmare. Infancy certainly includes experiences of terror, along with melancholy, ecstasy, and boredom. The affective contours and proportions of divine melodramas are apt. With ecstatic naturalism I would seek to enlist the phantasm in a form of writing that bears the affective powers of the system in less than symbolic ways. An ecriture chora can be monstrous, abject, sensuous, hilarious, revolutionary, and true. If, as Kristeva and Corrington assert, matricide is necessary for entry into the symbolic, it is no wonder that trauma and murder set the cosmo-genetic scene of a logos about theos. And if we were to question the necessity of matricide, in the beginning, oughtn't something near to, but not quite proper to theology be the setting for the discourse?

The Schellingian version of primal unfolding proceeds through layers of contraction and self differentiation that presage psychoanalytic theories in at least two dimensions: the emergence of conscious and unconscious structures of mind from the pressure and pulsation of the drives, and the emergence of the self from primary

narcissistic merger with the mother. The movements Schelling locates in the transition from the contractions of self-differentiation to an "organic" relationship with a higher principle is a part of a search for a beginning that mythologizes the cosmos with or as human consciousness. Robert Corrington's ecstatic naturalism takes seriously the depth dimensions of metapsychology for processes of "selving," the dynamic drive toward a conscious encounter with the unconscious of nature.[72] The Corringtonian and Schellingian selving processes emerge from churning energies within primordial abyssal chora.

Reaching back before symbolic language means reaching back before differentiated mothers and babies. Cosmic semiosis or selving process must therefore be theorized in the context of a maternal/baby relation, and of a baby's self-unfolding in a relation of sheer dependence on a mother, a state of absolute dependence, in Tillich's adaptation from Schleiermacher. Such dependence is not a romanticized notion of care, nurture, or benevolence. When mothers become mothers they become infants again too, with a full range of affective states: existential terror, pleasurable releases and ordinary okayness. Pain and pleasure, retaliation and paranoia are the stuff of the infantile milieu of Melanie Klein; a battleground of greedy consumptions, oral incorporations and toothy sadisms. Rage and the impulse to matricide as well as infanticide are overwhelming; guilt, withdrawal and self-punishment inevitable. Regressive. Phantasmic. Disturbing.

If unruly ground comprises a chora for human and cosmos, and if it is as unruly as this constellation of thinkers indicates, then scarier forces are welcome here. The drives

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72 Robert S. Corrington, *A Semiotic Theory of Theology and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 36.

contract and expand, gather and expel that which *affects*. The mood may be melancholic or ecstatic, unruly or calm, but any ontological bifurcations of of psyche and soma, human and cosmos will not hold.

Matrixial ambivalence extends beyond the maternal images of nature naturing into historical and popular cultural images of nature as mother, as we consider in Chapter Five the romantic, abyssal and indifferent affects of Mother/Nature via the object relations theories of Melanie Klein, D. W. Winnicott, and Hyman Spotnitz.

CHAPTER FIVE

MOTHER/NATURE: ENVIRONMENTS IN OBJECT RELATION

Defienda a Nuestra Madre Tierra.

--Protest sign, People's Climate March 2014

Remember: The Mountain Does Not Care.

--Rocky Mountain National Park trailhead sign

At the People's Climate March in 2014, hundreds of thousands of religious and secular protesters occupied New York City streets in the largest protest for environmental legislation to date, many bearing signs with the injunction to "Love" or "Defend" our Mother. Chants and singing modulated into a different intensity, a defiance made reverent in proximity to a giant community puppet of the earth as mother, operated by a coalition of diasporic Latin American women. A reminder to first world cosmopolitans from the two-thirds world of the intimacy of lands lost, of generations of agrarian life and the livelihood of women threatened, of the first and most vulnerable victims of weird weather. If we are to adequately read environmental devastations, including the mass extinction events of our current situation, as a dynamic of choric ambivalence, we may recall that Kristevan abjection understands economic, racial, and xenophobic manifestations to be directly involved. Complexifying the question of whether climate change and other large

scale destructions of nature by humans are matricide or suicide are the murderous and feminizing denigrations of indigenous life and land by neo-colonial conquest and exploitation.

Since the early days of the deep ecology movement, scholars of ecopsychology have been entreating our species to a choric sense of psyche, to understand our inner life as continuous with and part of our natural environments.[1] This chapter undertakes an analysis of the failures of chora: the matrixial ambivalence of humans in their environments, with the figure of Mother Nature as an object for reflection on gender injustice and environmental destruction through the psychic life of infancy. Approaching ecopsychological questions through the gender dynamics presented and critiqued by Slavoj Žižek, Dorothy Dinnerstein and Catherine Roach, I will offer theoretical tools about infantile aggression from the objects relations and modern schools of psychoanalysis. To Melanie Klein's theories of introjection and incorporation as oral sadism, and to D. W. Winnicott's more optimistic theories of holding, transition, and surviving, I wish to add Hyman Spotnitz's theory of infantile self-aggression as a form of parental protection, whereby to protect one's mother is to attack oneself. Reading Klein through Winnicott and Spotnitz, I engage this primal zone of experience with its playful and schizoid complexities in what I understand to be a chora *in proximity* to a primary parent. I will then turn to the specifically ecopsychological projects of Joseph Dodds and

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1 See for example, Theodore Roszak's coining of the the term "ecopsychology" in *The Voice of the Earth* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), and the work of Joanna Macy, David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996); Joseph Dodds, *Psychoanalysis and Ecology at the Edge of Chaos: Complexity Theory, Deleuze/Guattari and Psychoanalysis for a Climate in Crisis* (London: Routledge, 2011).

others that offer insight into technological environments as replacements for, or extensions of "nature."

First, I turn to dynamics of idealizing and denigrading in relation to the gender of nature, as demonstrated in ecological injunctions to save or protect Mother Nature. Catherine Roach and Slavoj Žižek agree: idealization is a problem.

Slavoj Žižek: Mother Nature is a Crazy Bitch

In an interview about his monograph *Living in the End Times* (2010), Slavoj Žižek tries to find another side to environmental catastrophe, calling attention to the epistemological window of a revelation that has yet to arrive in full force, of an impossibility becoming possible, that we are destroying our habitat. He criticizes the soft femininity of environmentalists who idealize nature and seem to revel in human responsibility for the crisis, by presenting his own aggressive provocation: "In fact Mother Nature is not good, it's a crazy bitch."[2] Like Catherine Roach, who analyzes images of Mother Nature in popular culture, Žižek sees a problem with romanticizing nature's goodness. In a play on the gendered anthropomorphism of Mother Nature, he intends to reorient us to the wild, harmful, and unpredictable side of nature. He does this by ironically playing on the anthropomorphism and its inevitable (as a human under phallogocentrism is never not defined by) gender, but in the process conducts a paradoxical de/humanization by naming what is other than (and simultaneously limited to) the human: it's *craziness*. From our sojourn with Žižek and Schelling in Chapter Four,

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2 Slavoj Žižek and Liz Else, Interview, "Slavoj Žižek: Wake Up and Smell the Apocalypse" *New Scientist*, 9/01/10, http://io9.gizmodo.com/5627925/slavoj-iek-wake-up-and-smell-the-apocalypse accessed 12/26/15.

the *impersonality* of the unconscious as a defining aspect of personhood should sound familiar. Chora the crazy is the monstrous that is below personhood but that can only apply to persons, and thus is almost properly referred to as "it." But as such the crazy cannot stand alone and requires a proxy nearer to the realm of a human subject, something in between an "it" and an "I;" it must be a "she." She is crazy, and not good. The bitch is a joke, thank goodness, because anthropomorphism is silly and you wouldn't want to meet her anyway.

The first months of human life are characterized by exactly this problem. Trapped between wanting her, hating her, and refusing to acknowledge her existence, humans spend the earliest several years of life in a love/hate bond with our primary caregiver; and that caregiver is still overwhelmingly likely to be a she. The trouble with Nature that Žižek draws our attention to, whatever his gender politics, is that whether she is a good mother or a bad mother, she/it ought to be impossible to destroy. And yet here we are. We have nearly succeeded in our attempts to ravage and drain her goodness, but it's not enough. She is failing to survive our attempts to destroy her. And for that we cannot forgive. We won. What a bitch.

To read generously, Žižek draws our attention to a wild otherness of nature, operating beyond our illusions of total (environmentally destructive) control. To read critically, she/it seems to have all the power, if environmentalism is, as he seems to suggest, a wasted effort. Slavoj's gender joke, like other forms of both misogyny and idealization manifested and disowned by the rest of us, reflect the emotional life of an

infant.[3] While we might protest that Žižek is repeating the ravages of the infant by insisting on an "ecology without nature,"[4] what he intends is to get past the romanticization that forms the other side of the demon/ideal split that has contributed to the crisis.

The infant has only its immediate proximity as a world. "When you go to the toilet, shit disappears. You flush it. Of course rationally you know it's there in canalization and so on, but at a certain level of your most elementary experience, it disappears from your world. But the problem is that trash doesn't disappear." The problem of ecology as ideology is that it mystifies the trashy catastrophic sides of nature and posits a unified harmoniousness instead. Additionally, Zizek finds fault with environmental efforts to see climate change as a human product because it represents a human tendency to find meaning in tragedy, to reestablish a universe of meaning in the face of what is random, uncertain, violent, and cruel in its indifference to our meaning making projects. The category Nature, then, as a self-balancing, basically harmonious organism interrupted by human destruction, is a false narrative that makes us more important than we really are. "Nature is a series of unimaginable catastrophes."[5]

Zizek likens the view of an originary natural harmony disrupted by humans with the Fall narrative. We might also liken this to the Israelites interpreting their defeats and

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3 This isn't to grant more maturity to any of the rest of us; one thing psychoanalysis broadly agrees upon is the powerful impact of early life onto every subsequent phase of the human lifespan.

4 Slavoj Žižek, lecture, Athens Pantelon University, October 3, 2007, responding to Timothy Morton's *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, quoted by Joseph Dodds, *Psychoanalysis and Ecology at the Edge of Chaos*, 2011, 54.

5 Slavoj Žižek, interview, in Astra Taylor, et al. *Examined life*. New York, NY: Zeitgeist Films, 2010.

catastrophes as punishments from Yahweh. The old project of theodicy is to reassert the existence of what Zižek via Lacan calls the Big Other, the one from whom meaning is derived, because it is better to live under an umbrella of meaning, even if it means punishment, that to be adrift in a random meaningless nihil. This is, in my reading of attachment theory, how a bad parent is better than no parent at all. How painful attention might feel better than being ignored, and feeling something better than feeling nothing. These trade offs are, however, the engine of cycles of abuse, including self-harm.

Zižek recommends that instead of calling for a renunciation of our technological manipulations of nature, we should embrace alienation from "nature" and become "more artificial," inhabiting an algorithmic matrix:

> We should develop, I think a much more terrifying new abstract materialism, a kind of a mathematical universe where there is nothing, there are just formulas, technical forms, and so on. The difficult thing is to find poetry, spirituality in this dimension. To recreate if not beauty, then aesthetic dimensions in things like this, in trash itself, that is the true love of the world…[6]

Zižek seems to be demonstrating a number of things. First, a provocation to wake up to our ideology of nature and become conscious in the face of our disavowals. Second, he seems also to be demonstrating a fatalistic capitulation that is itself a series of disavowals. These disavowals include the possibility of an encompassing catastrophe that has meaning in the sense that it has confirmable human cause, although this meaning may not in itself be enough to establish contact with a Big Other. I agree that there may not be a Big Other under which to establish (ultimate) meaning, but I intervene by way of object relations theory to claim that there is at least a Bigger Other on whom we continue to

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6 Žižek, Examined Life.

experience radical dependence, limited influence on or power over, and with which we exchange relative forms of meaning. The mother of early life and the habitat of all phases of life are constitutive of human inner experiences of self, other, and environment; but mothers and habitats are also somewhat independent of infantile/human needs. And this is precisely the problem that Žižek is performing by refusing: it is the simultaneous existence of influence and its *limitation* that invokes a frustration that can be so unbearable that it totalizes; the limitation of her responsiveness and our influence invokes a split between powerlessness and omnipotence as constitutive of existence or non-existence, meaning or nihil. Nihilism resolves the problem of limitation by splitting and recombining elements of being and value, non-being and non-value. A limitation is not a castration, or doesn't have to be. And a castration is not an end to being although it might feel like it. To receive awareness of the limitations of one's own power or one's caregiver's care can seem like a violent cutting from access to the source of power and care in a way that threatens life itself; but even a paranoid response does not negate the fact that life itself may truly be under threat from forces beyond the bigger other's control. The infant feels itself to be responsible for all of the problems it experiences the caregiver as having, and it is in its way responsible for some of them. But it would rather feel omnipotently guilty than relatively helpless before its caregiver's and hence its own destruction; or in Žižek's case, omni-helpless rather than relatively guilty; affectively shitty rather than proximally influential.

Matricide and suicide may be too horrible to fit under an umbrella of meaning. But they may be the secret wish of a nihilistic split. To commit matricide even if it entails suicide is to defeat a mother's love, to deprive her of that which we had wanted to be: the

object of her affection. In retaliation for imperfect attention, a child might "cut off his own nose to spike his face" or abject the possibility of a love that is incomplete.

Zizek is against idealization because it violates the nature of love. "Love means that you accept the person with all its failures, stupidities, ugly points, and nonetheless the person is absolute for you… You see perfection in imperfection itself and that is how we should learn to love the world."[7] However, the romantic love that he eulogizes is highly idealized, involving an event so singular that it retroactively seems to cause all the meaning of a life. Such a perfect love of imperfection is in itself a highly idealized presentation of unconditionality, rather than a call to mutual actions of care and negotiation. This is what I wish to claim with regard to Zizek's ecological interventions: that the call to stop idealizing must also include a call to stop denigrating, and that a call to respect the agency of the other must also include a call to exercise our own agency.

Dinnerstein & Roach: Mother/Nature Maladaptations

In 1976 Dorothy Dinnerstein theorized gendered dynamics and environmental crisis as part of the same maladaptation to our species specific extended period of infantile dependency. She describes gendered dynamics in what turn out to be psychoanalytic understandings of psychopathology, as a symptom of a larger disease, in itself a "massive communal deception" designed to provide immediate relief while (perhaps unconsciously intentionally) entrenching the problem.[8] Thus Dinnerstein makes

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7 Ibid.

8 Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (1976) (New York, NY: Other Press, 1999), 9.

sense of (or uses to make sense of gendered and environmental dynamics) the death drive. "…Our sexual arrangements provide a way of handling some aspects of this basic human malaise, a way that maintains and deepens the underlying sickness while superficially allaying its pain." Dinnerstein identifies sexual arrangements as a kind of symbiosis (assuming an unnecessary heteronormativity) to which we consent, and which is rooted in the pleasure of mastery by which we attempt to console ourselves for the loss of infantile experiences of oneness with the world, and to protest or deny that what matters most is beyond our control.[9] "The initial experience of dependence on a largely uncontrollable outside source of good is focused on a woman, and so is the earliest experience of vulnerability to disappointment and pain."[10] Describing the infant's state of dependence, Dinnerstein notes the intellectual development of the child that outpaces its physical mobility such that it recognizes, unlike other mammalian babies, its dependence and experiences a unique frustration of wanting to do more than it can, of wanting something that must come from an outside source. This, Dinnerstein posits, is a prototype for the pain of life and fear of death.[11]

In a move compatible with structuralism, Dinnerstein argues that gendered inequality is "inevitable so long as early childcare is female-dominated,"[12] based on the observation across disciplines that the main adult influence in human infancy is gendered woman. Dinnerstein invests great faith in the solution of widespread gender

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9 Dinnerstein, *Mermaid*, 8.

10 Ibid., 28.

11 Ibid., 4.

12 Ibid., xiii.

neutral/shared early parenting, a solution that may yet prove itself as parenting arrangements are diversifying slowly through same-gender and transgender family structures and non-normatively gendered distributions of domestic labor. Later feminists add Dinnerstein to the list of those who blame the mother for human social problems, but this misses the point, that the human dynamic of becoming social and becoming a self seems to require a process of differentiation that involves violent rejections, and that the freight of that process creates the category woman.

In other words, processes of human development may be inevitable (to whatever degree biology presents consistently across cultures) but gender need not be if conditions of parenting change. In Chapter Three I gestured toward a thought experiment in a reconfiguration of maternity as a category logically prior to a presumed sexual difference or opposition of man/woman. In this way we might view maternity as the condition that frames an ontological division for humans, between existing and not existing, such that through processes of abjection, misogyny can be said to be the cause rather than the effect of gender and its presumed oppositions of male/female, man/woman. With maternity as a prior category rather than a subcategory of woman, it might be possible, as a thought experiment at least, to think the gender of maternity differently, and increase the chance of interrupting misogyny.

In the monograph *Mother/Nature Popular Culture and Environmental Ethics* (2003) from which this chapter takes its title, Catherine Roach builds on Dinnerstein's insights to conduct an analysis of the gendered dynamics of nature imagery in popular culture, including environmental movements, specifically through the lens of psychoanalytic object relations theorist Melanie Klein. As ecofeminists have been

theorizing, perhaps datable to Francoise d'Eaubonne, *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* (1974) or Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of Land* (1975), our environmental struggles are inseparable from misogyny through a long tradition in modern western thought of the association between mastery of land and symbolic and literal rape of women; this as part of a longer tradition of association of women with flesh, materiality, and the other-than-human as one of the foundational insights of feminist theologians Ruether, Daly, and Keller. Roach presents the case study of a bumper sticker with the environmental slogan "Love your mother" accompanied by a photo of the earth viewed from space. Although the visible presence of bumper stickers in general has diminished dramatically over the last decade, contemporary Mother Nature imagery abounds, for example in the People's Climate March of 2014 and the activism of Vandana Shiva and Women of the Green Generation.[13]

Roach observes that deploying Mother Nature imagery in ecological activism is problematic, not merely, as some of us might argue, for the damage essentialism does to gender concepts and relations. According to Roach, Mother Nature imagery is sure to backlash firstly because our feelings toward our mothers are complicated, and secondly because our mothers' independent existence and feelings are little understood by us.

Negative valuations coexist with idealizations in popular culture and in ecological movements. Roach critiques the Gaia hypothesis of James Lovelock as committing these same splits with an aggressive twist. In an assertion that brings to mind our Žižek epigraph, Lovelock writes, "It seems very unlikely that anything we do will threaten

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13 See Vandana Shiva, "Mother Earth Day Message," *Seed Freedom*, accessed December 27, 2015, http://seedfreedom.info/a-message-for-for-mother-earth-day-from-dr-vandana-shiva-22-april-2015/

Gaia. . . . The damsel in distress [that the environmentalist] expected to rescue appears as a buxom and robust man-eating mother."[14] Gaia is immune to our abuse, idealized (and demonized) as a mother who needs nothing in return from us. In the process of pointing out a second problematic stereotype of passive femininity, the damsel in distress, Lovelock calls forth a third common image of mother as the bringer of death. Respect for her autonomy seems to elide into resentment by way of awe-filled inflation of her power.

The complication of our feelings toward our mothers is an ambivalence that comes to be divided sharply between good and bad, idealization and denigration. This brings to the fore the importance of understanding aggression in relation to both denigration and idealization in the split world of the neonate. Roach at times uses the word *devaluation* to indicate the flip side of idealization, but I replace this term with *denigration* in place of *devaluation*, that could suggest a withdrawal of value. Value is not withdrawn in the split state; it is heightened, experienced as a threat and so pushed back out. Negative fantasies are an active redeployment of affect in response to disappointment (otherwise known as anger), not a withdrawal of investment/cathexis (otherwise known as the depressive). [15]

According to Roach, idealization is as problematic as the reverse because the way infants experience mothers positively, is as the all-powerful source of unlimited resources.

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14 James Lovelock, The *Ages of Gaia: A Biography of Our Living Earth* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995); and "Gaia: A Model for Planetary and Cellular Dynamics" in William Irwin Thompson, *Gaia, a Way of Knowing: Political Implications of the New Biology* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Press, 1987). As quoted in Catherine M. Roach, *Mother/Nature Popular Culture and Environmental Ethics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 70-76.

15 This is all to be developed, and is in keeping with Roach's and my reading of Klein, so my intervention here is likely merely semantic, even as it provides an opportunity for specificity.

> *The last thing the environmental movement should do is encourage us to think of nature as an inexhaustible, self-sacrificing, all-nurturing mother*…If mother is defined as she who provides all our sustenance and makes all our waste disappear…Our ecological breakdown has arisen in part precisely from this attitude that nature is a storehouse of riches that will never empty and that we may use at will for any purpose we desire without incurring debt or obligation of replacement.[16]

As an example of how idealization of nature makes environmental protection seem less necessary, Roach relates the work of ecofeminist philosopher Lina Gupta who observes that the divinization of the Ganges River as the powerful and pure Mother Ganges, exacerbates the river's environmental decline. As a goddess, she is immune to the effects of pollution in the mind of her devotees.[17]

It can be unclear where defense of the mother ends and attack begins. Before the infant can tolerate the complicated experience of ambivalence, it needs to split the good from the bad, according to Klein, but the split is often volatile, tending to flip. Fantasies of ideal mothers are usually accompanied by backlash of some form.

Pachamama and First World Problems

Splitting and backlash are prominent dynamics in the history of feminist discourse. What is missing from Roach's approach is some political history of first world academic relations with the global south. Niamh Moore articulates the trouble of casting 1990s feminist anxieties about gender essentialism onto activist movements of the global south,

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16 Catherine M. Roach, *Mother/Nature Popular Culture and Environmental Ethics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 67.

17 Roach, *Mother/Nature*, 69 n41, referencing Lina Gupta, "Ganga: Purity, Pollution, and Hinduism," in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, Carol Adams ed. (New York: Continuum, 1993).

as well as the way that indigeneity has been appropriated into the discourse of anti-(gender) essentialism.[18] Critiques of mother earth imagery from the global north are part of a complex set of relations involving both dismissals and appropriations of indigenous cultures. Roach, like many northern feminists, runs the risk of too easy a dismissal of Mother Earth to mobilize environmental movements from within a broader cultural matrix.

A dragon goddess in the Incan pantheon, *Pachamama* or Earth Mother is also largely synonymous with Earth.[19] The goddess is so important to *Indeigenous comsmovisión*, that the Indigenous Andean worldview is sometimes called the Pachamama worldview, signifying a way of life that stresses the interdependence of peoples with each other and earth. The Pachamama has played a role in throughout Andean history, in resistance to mestizo occupation, in the political uprising that overthrew the Ecuadorian president in 1990, and today in the constitutional recognition of the rights of Earth Mother in Ecuador (2009) and Bolivia (2010, 2011). Called "The Law of Mother Earth*" Ley de Derechos de La Madre Tierra*," the 2011 Bolivian declaration can be summarized as asserting on behalf of Mother Earth:

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18 Niamh Moore, "The Rise and Rise of Ecofeminism As a Development Fable: A Response to Melissa Leach's 'Earth Mothers and Other Ecofeminist Fables: How a Strategic Notion Rose and Fell,'" *Development and Change* 39 (2008): 466-68.

Moore offers a complex account of how Vandana Shiva has been a popular target of critique, after becoming well-known by popularizing in the north the story of the Himalayan Chipko movement: for gender essentalism (by returning to feminine Hindu principle *prakriti*), for universalizing Hinduism, and being less authentically Indian, while one of her male critics has been pictured by northern anti-essentialists as authentic and indigenous.

19 Cosme Francisco Caal, "The Pachamama Worldview in the Ecuadorian Urban Ayllu Network: Mashi Identity and Resistance in Early 21st-Century Quito," (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2014). http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1638271769?accountid=10558.

> the right to life and to exist; the right to continue vital cycles and processes free from human alteration; the right to pure water and clean air; the right to balance; the right not to be polluted; and the right to not have cellular structure modified or genetically altered.[20]

Interviewing environmental activist women in Ecuador in 2007, Katy Jenkins found that the women consistently identified themselves with Pachamama as "earthmothers and guardians of nature," in a bond of kinship, devotion, and protection. Indeed, these activists have been derisively called "pachamamas" and "mad old women" by the pro-mining contingent. The women embrace what is a form of conservatism of traditional gender roles in the bearing of cultural traditions, "reclaiming the right to be an obstacle to 'progress,'" calling for the reassessment of development itself.[21] Jenkins interprets these moves as an example of strategic essentialism, as interpreted by Gayatri Spivak. Whether academic feminists can agree about the validity of their approach, the pachamamas who marched in the People's Climate Change March in New York sang the songs, set the pace, and established a zone of affect that rippled through thousands.

While first world feminists have rightly been criticized for appropriating indigenous goddess imagery in the 1980s, the goddesses of the global south might not need protection (or might not be threatened by dismissal) by ecofeminists of the global north; but greater access and proximity to first world power brokers might be what everyone needs. And when those institutional corporate structures so readily fail to notice

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20 Carly Schwarz, "Bolivia's Law Of Mother Earth Would Give Nature And Humans Equal Protection," *Huffpost Green,* April 13, 2011, accessed April 18, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/04/13/bolivias-law-of-mother-earth_n_848966.html

21 Katy Jenkins, "Unearthing Women's Anti-Mining Activism in the Andes: Pachamama and the 'Mad Old Women,'" *Antipode* 47 (2015): 254.

and respond to protestations, when they act like a cold mother, activists and academics are likely to turn on each other. The unresponsive mother can create turmoil and terror.

> We cannot believe how accidental, unconscious, unconcerned—i.e., unmotherly—nature really is; and we cannot believe how vulnerable, conscious, autonomously wishful—i.e., human—the early mother really was."[22]

This lack of motherly feeling from nature, either positive or negative, is experienced in potentially abyssal ways by a hiker at the trailhead in the Rocky Mountain National Park at the onset of winter. Arriving for the purpose of loosing oneself in the microcosm of lichen and pebbles and the vastness of mountain and sky, the forest service interrupts with harsh news of separateness: "Remember," the sign reads, "the mountain does not care." People die on this trail by indulging a fantasy of the goodness of nature, and by not understanding and respecting their own limits and the unconcern of the mountain to their wishes, fantasies, and concepts. Recent catastrophes at Mount Everest have resulted in a ban of inexperienced hikers, after bringing to public attention the fact that one in every ten hikers who attempts the peak dies, leaving over two hundred mummified corpses and a concentration of trash along the path.

Monstrosity is not necessarily the most terrifying disruption; an unresponsive one might be. A bad mother, to the infant, is at least something to work with. A bad mother to the infant is better than no mother at all. A bad mother can be saved.

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22 Roach, *Mother/Nature*, 38 quoting Dinnerstein, *Mermaid*.

Object Relations: A Chora of Proximity

Most psychoanalytic theory understands infant experience to be a jangle of sensations without clear insides or outsides. Sucking, spitting, and shitting are all-consuming efforts, made easier or more difficult by biology and adult attention. The question that object relations theorists direct to the Freudian sphincters and drives is, who are you shitting *for*? There is a someone, first experienced as a something, on the other side of the anus. Woman is the category defined as that which receives, whether in love or disgust, the precious gift of shit.

In the wake of Freud, a group of psychoanalysts came to be known as "object relations" theorists for their emphasis on the embeddedness of the psyche in relations to things and people outside the psyche, collectively called objects for their difference from and investment received from that psyche. Usually understood as occupying exteriority, having independent existence, and therefore reality, it is also possible to speak of internal objects that have been developed from encounters with external objects. This process is necessary for a psyche to develop relationships of any kind, especially of respect and intimacy. So the word object in psychoanalysis is a positive thing, and increasing the degree of object relations is the goal of analysis. This is worth noting in a philosophical or theological context where objects and objectification are understood as dehumanizing phenomena.[23].

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23 Jessica Benjamin writes about this problem, and calls for psychoanalysis to change its nomenclature lest it reify the problems of objectification. I would argue that this misconstrues the disciplinary difference between philosophy and psychoanalysis, as they offer each other mutual critique. Philosophy presupposes (or grapples with the presupposition) of the adult cogito or consciousness as the self. Psychoanalysis is an insult to this version of the self because it insists that the cogito or ego is not the center, and that infantile or early child life is the lens through which human adulthood must be understood. Thus the theory is often attempted from the perspective of the infant, and infants have confusion over

Two thinkers in particular developed out of this movement, valuing object relations, but characterized as opposites because of a harsh view (Klein) and a soft one (Winnicott). This is of course an oversimplification, and yet I am at risk of repeating it by turning first to Klein to understand the problem of infant experience, and then to Winnicott for the solution. Both tend to be understood as opposed to the linguistic turn of Lacan, and yet Kristeva could be viewed as something of a bridge. In general, my perspective is that overmuch is made of all of these oppositions, something that I hope will be evident in my rapprochement of Klein and Winnicott through the work of Hyman Spotnitz of the neo-Freudian, pre-Oedipal "modern school" of psychoanalysis.

Because of the infant/mother indistinction in our relation to our environments, it is not at all clear whether the destructiveness that has led to this moment should be understood as an impulse to murder or suicide. Indeed, this is the very problem of the infant in utter helplessness when its environment fails to provide for its needs. Murder *is* suicide when dependence is complete. As Hyman Spotnitz attests, the fear of destroying the parent through aggressive impulses is how we should understand infantile (and therefore most adult) disorders. Faced with the prospect of differentiation it can feel necessary that someone must die. This, in Winnicott's understanding is a moment of truth, that if such an aggression can be met with resilience, if the unthinkable urge to destroy is met with the non-retaliatory self-assertion of the other, life and rest and joy are released.

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exactly the problem and use of people as external realities. Philosophy's standard of adulthood is overly optimistic and a product of superego, what a self and a self's relations should be, not what they most commonly are; thus part of the problem (the ego is schizoid, according to Lacan). And yet, the language of object is leftover from Freud, and is perhaps objectifying in the dehumanizing sense because he worked hard to theorize psychic life as an interior, at the expense, later generations critique, of relationality.

Recognition, through the indestructability of the other, becomes a foundation for a vital, relational form of being.

The question of survival under ecological conditions of mutually assured destruction is thus complicated by the love in the aggression, and the object confusions and reversals of the aggression. Humans seem to have, in a primary merger situation, disregarded the needs of the environment, polluting as a sort of birthright, without awareness of the cost, but also without malice. We have also been greedy, rageful and fearful; swallowing every possible good and enjoying the spoiling. We have become resentful of our dependence and fearful of monstrous retaliations, and despairing over the failures of the environment to respond to our needs on a human time frame. But we may also been testing the environment for responsiveness, reactivity, confirmation of our impact in a way that human mothers can offer, but an earth mother may not except under extreme violation. We may have been testing for love in a way that makes sense for a human but not for a planet. Thus our situation might represent a species-wide acceleration into the desire for something new, an abyssally driven repetition compulsion that denies, hopes and tests the im/possibility of other-love, unto, yes even unto death.

Melanie Klein: Intolerable Split

Because the boundary of the neonate is so indistinct, the inside and outside so unclear, the developing ego is too fragile to accommodate conflicting affects, or more than one experience at a time. The infant experiences this insecurity as anxiety about disintegration, (something Winnicott and Lacan also agree about) and in another important move, Klein validates the death drive but locates it in this fragmentation

anxiety, the paranoid-schizoid position. It isn't just the infant's own body (internal organs creating difficult to locate sensations like hunger and gas, and external organs like skin and feet experiencing pressure, temperature, action) that it experiences in parts rather than in wholes, it is also the external world that comes to it in parts. The nipple at the lips is one of the first and most intense sensations that comes to be understood as contact. The hands that rescue the skin from the discomfort messy diapers, or rob the skin of the temporary comfort and logic of continuity, between inside and outside, of messy diapers. These are the infant's first objects, and just acquiring these objects as external to begin with was a genesis story, a series of micro-separations.

It helps to remember that Klein was committed to continuing Freudian drive motivation but also wanted to creatively redirect them toward the infant's caregivers in a revolutionary step toward two-person psychoanalysis. Thus the emphasis (also Freudian) of the primary locations of sensation for the neonate: the erogenous zone of the mouth (later the urinary meatus and anus); and on the experiences of satisfaction and frustration when the infant is hungry and sucking or full and refusing the breast. Thus it makes sense to Klein to talk about love and hate coming from an infant and entering into the breast milk as she enjoys it or is frustrated by it. In order to maintain the equilibrium of experience, the quiescent state of being, the infant must expel unpleasant/bad affect experienced as substance. And because there is no otherness for the infant except for that stimulated region of her lips tongue and teeth to indicate a world, all resentment and pleasure goes into the breast and breast milk which then comes back into her mouth. This process of expelling the drive affects into the object is projection, and the process of taking in--literally devouring the object--is introjection. Julia Kristeva observes that in

Klein's model (unlike Freud's) not only the feelings, but uncollected bits of bodily experience and excrement also get projected and introjected.[24]

At first the object can only be taken in in parts. These part objects are taken in, swallowed by the infant, like the breast is swallowed. But not all of what is taken in is pleasurable or good, and so part of it must be spit out. So the object, experienced only in a partial sense, is still too complex for the infant, who must hold onto the "good" part as the foundation of the ego, and must expel the "bad" part because it threatens her from within. Once it is expelled, however, it is still (or even more) menacing, because now it holds the projected anger of the infant and may retaliate for being rejected. In a similar fashion, the good object that has been swallowed also might retaliate for being consumed, as the infant has stolen it. So the good object becomes ambivalent and must be split apart and the bad/dangerous part expelled. Sucking and spitting, the two consummate experiences of early infancy.

Julia Kristeva later develops this dynamic into the theory we have already encountered in ecstatic naturalism as chora and abjection, wherein the entire maternal realm is taken in and expelled by a very young child in order to enter into sociality, language, and the law of the father. Kristeva's lineage is properly understood as Lacanian, but I choose here to emphasize the Kleinian influence, as Klein is underrepresented in contemporary critical social theory. The process is so specifically vivid that I find it

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24 Julia Kristeva, *Melanie Klein* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 60-64. These fragments may remind us of Lacanian theory, but Kristeva sharply distinguishes the multiplicity of textures and types of internal objects in Klein, calling them "a cornucopia of images, sensations, and substances" whose impurity is matched by the complexity of the Klein's infant. Lacan's scopic process of dis/identification with the image is "bereft of heterogeneity."(64) With the emphasis of splitting in the Klein's thought, the either/or intensities, it would be easy to overlook this internal multiplicity, as Kristeva emphasizes.

clarifying to think with, though understood as not strictly literal.[25] What matters to me is the value of identifying trajectories of cathexis--investment or occupation, according to Freud—because the specificities of the impulses and their trajectories are crucial to understanding the object locatedness of the impulse, the presence in the object of the charge that collapses the distance like static electricity, or repels and swerves away like the wrong side of a magnet, curving even all the way back around to the self. All of this directionality helps untangle the highly charged contradictions covered over by still more competing directionalities--self attacks that are self protections, defenses that cover and muddle the original charge and its object.

The muddle of good and bad at once is something that Donald Meltzer understood as an intolerable tension requiring relief, the most immediate form of which is expulsion outward into an available object, and the figure of this expulsion is the breast as toilet, the toilet breast.[26] According to Meltzer this situation is a geographic confusion of the upper half of the body (intake) and the lower half (outflow). In our theorizing about pollution of the environment, this idea becomes relevant. If we have been taking in our own wastes, poisoning ourselves, creating zones of pollution and purity might be a first step toward health. Splitting is thus a crucial defense mechanism of the ego without which it could not develop.[27] Splitting, while it is radically insufficient as a long term strategy, is a crucial intervention of the infant on its own behalf, and one that we may have to

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25 Like Lacan's mirror phase, Klein's theory of envy has been largely disproven to be operating in actual children at the early age claimed. This isn't to discount the symbolic value of the theories, or even the possibility of a fantasy from a slightly older child's position, projected back in time.

26 Donald Meltzer, *The Kleinian Development* (London: Harris Meltzer Trust, 2008).

27 Kristeva, *Melanie Klein*, 67.

positively engage in our environmental interventions. It seems unlikely that we could go from self poisoning to related differentiation without going through splitting.

This splitting is a form of protection, of both the good breast and the nascent ego/infant insides because of the infant's total dependence on the object/breast. She must protect it when it becomes tainted with her confused stealing and spitting. Neither the good object nor the nascent ego can withhold that kind of confusion, so something has to give way under the pressure. But it doesn't work out so neatly, because even the infant's pleasure in the idealized breast turns into a fear of retaliation for the infant's greed and envy. These desires to possess and/or destroy the object manifest in the infant's projection of parts of itself into the beloved or hated object; Klein calls this projective identification.[28]

According to Kristeva's reading of Klein, at six months, the infant's senses and memory have developed through the choric phase to the point where she can see the mother as a whole object, who has good and bad elements and yet remains the same person of pleasurable memory. This relatedness of the good and bad in the wholeness of the mother and in the developing ego reduces the distortions of the idealization and demonization, and fears of monstrous retaliation by the mother diminish. But the anxiety of persecution gets replaced by another anxiety: of hurting or loosing her. With the wholeness of the object comes a stronger possibility of love and guilt. The sadistic impulses haven't gone away, but the object has become more real and therefore vulnerable.

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28 Ibid., 70.

For Klein, guilt is the beginning of relationship, as the anxiety of fragmentation is projected onto the object and the possibility of loss leads to love. This love is also what Freud understands as the depressive position, and what a later development of modern psychoanalysis calls the narcissistic defense: a turning of aggression onto the self rather than the object. It is this that allows loving relations and civilization (as opposed to endless acts of aggression) to happen. It is also what makes us unhappy and self-destructive. For Klein and Freud there is no way out of this, it is the best that can be hoped for. A Kleinian solution to the environmental crisis would be a move toward neurosis (lesser illness) away from the paranoid-schizoid, in order to defend the mother, and eventually be able to tolerate feeling bad and guilty about hurting her without the bad feeling requiring more expulsion, through repeated violence into her interior. This seems to be reflected in current strategies of activating senses of ethical responsibility (what Klein would call guilt) in personal ways, for example by reducing carbon footprints.

A Kleinian metapsychology is full of harsh affects like envy, greed, and hatred, in a way that resonates with the Christian doctrine of original sin and the problematically violent assumptions about human life that psychoanalysis seems to make. My approach is to remember one of the disciplinary distinctions of psychoanalysis in general, that it presents theories and interpretations in a style “as if” the world it is reflecting and addressing is the world of a baby, with vocabulary that reflects heightened affects. Its modes of expression are not directed to self-contained rational subjects, but to a situation of intense feelings, to draw out the rawness rather than accommodate it to an adult world.

The idea is that adopting a highly charged worldview most closely resonates with early human life, and helps people verbalize those conflicts that are otherwise not welcome. [29]

Even so, it seems entirely possible that the dynamics of sucking and spitting, incorporating and rejecting that Kristeva adapts from Klein could go another way. Why couldn't the melancholic retention of the loved part-object be part of the transition to object relating? This, indeed, seems to be Winnicott's invention of the transitional object. After the primary phase of relative merger, Winnicott proposes a phase of transitioning, through objects that are held and mutilated (sucked and bitten) lovingly. Winnicott's baby blanket is another version of Kristeva's thrown part object (abject). Instead of a traumatic repetition of expelling a mother's insides from one's own insides, it is sometimes (perhaps usually) possible to be welcome them from the inside to the outside; to be attached, a little longer, to the stinky, familiar chora; to bring it along with us into the social world, as religion, as cultural identity, into a growing sense of space.

Winnicott: Good Enough Chora

> It is necessary to postulate a state, which belongs to intra-uterine life, in which gravity has not yet appeared; love, or care, can only be expressed and appreciated in physical terms, in environmental adaptation which is applied from all directions.[30]

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29 Nevertheless, I do not adopt Klein's language of love, hate, and envy because I understand them to be too advanced, too complicated for earliest experiences. I appreciate the starkness and the thrust of the intense affects, but if I were to categorize them philosophically, I would give them other names.

30 D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, (New York: Basic Books, 1971), 130.

Initially in a state of at-one-ment with the mother[31] the infant has no experience of the boundary of inside and outside, or itself as over against its mother. The mother's first gestures of imitation of expression, sounds, and gestures are the way that the baby comes to see that there is an outside in the form of the mother. But she can only develop that relationship by entering the infant's experience via "primary maternal preoccupation," whereby she maintains the illusion of the infant's omnipotence, until she perceives that the growing child needs more independence. This is work that the mother does, to maintain the "primary illusion" of the infant's omnipotence (Freud's oceanic feeling) by first filling in the gaps through empathy and attention, and then gradually introducing moderate frustrations and time delays in gratification, as the infant seems ready to handle them. That process of adaptation--or what Grotstein would call bonding and weaning[32]--is what makes the mother "good enough" and results in a developing sense of self for the infant. Hence, for Winnicott, mirroring is a shared experience of the range of the infant's experience--joy, distress, frustration, anxiety--such that the mother's face communicates understanding and acceptance of those states. Winnicott's mother/infant dyad/unity does not represent absolute identity, rather a relatedness that includes relative sameness and difference. [33]

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31 Ann Belford Ulanov, *Finding Space: Winnicott, God, and Psychic Reality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

32 James S. Grotstein, "Melanie Klein and Heinz Kohut: An Odd Couple or Secretly Connected?" *Pluralism in Self-Psychology*, *Progress in Self Psychology*, A. Goldberg, ed. (Hillside, NJ: Analytic Press, 1999), 15: 127.

33 D. W. Winnicott, "Mirror-role of the mother and family in child development" 1967. In P. Lomas (Ed.), *The Predicament of the Family: A Psycho-Analytical Symposium* (London: Hogarth, 1967) 26-33.

Winnicott also believes the neonate faces the threat of unthinkable anxieties identified as "going to pieces, falling forever, having no relationship to the body, and having no orientation."[34] But a normative situation never reaches the schizoid levels of Kleinian fragmentation, because the ordinary good enough mother is sufficiently attuned to prevent severe trauma. The mother literally holds the baby together with a continuity of pressure around the whole of it. This holding is also present in the mother's emotional resilience and flexibility to the changing needs of the infant. Winnicott turns to the analogy of a bubble to describe the infant's experience. For indeed the space of the mother/infant dyad is like a bubble, with the pressure from the outside magically adapting to the pressure on the inside so that the bubble remains constant. This continuity of the bubble's existence is what the infant knows as "being." If something from outside of the bubble increases pressure, impinging on the bubble, the infant stops experiencing continuity and starts experiencing a reaction to the impingement. This, for the infant, is an interruption of being. When the overstimulation ends, the infant returns to being. This is analogous to Freud's pleasure principle. For Freud, the aim of pleasure and its reduction is to return to a Zero state, the Nirvana principle of no stimulation. Winnicott would expand the ideal zone of stimulation to a greater range, a little higher up the scale of stimulation, variable of course from infant to infant. But to remain within that zone wherein relative pressure is maintained without dramatic irruption marks the

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34 Madeleine Davis and David Wallbridge, *Boundary and Space An Introduction to the Work of D.W. Winnicott* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1990), 44.

accomplishment of good-enoughness, neither anxious absence nor intrusive presence of otherness. This is how Winnicott can claim, "continuity of being is health."[35]

The infant still internalizes bad objects, as it does with Klein, and needs to expel them, but the good enough mother can receive them without returning too much to her own infantile fears and defenses, which are inevitably activated by the empathic bond with the infant. This time around, however, if she can handle the infant's projection of anger and anxiety, if she survives the attack emotionally in tact, then the infant will transition toward independence and object relatedness. This testing of the primary relation is what Winnicott calls the effort to make use of an object, to test its reality and its reliability such that it can be trusted to exist and to sustain attacks without retaliation. This is the surviving object.

In two registers, then, we have an orientation emerging about the relation between value and being. The survival of the parent functions in both the domains of value and being: by refusing to be annihilated the parent maintains being, and by refusing to retaliate or reflect back the infant's aggression, the parent restores or creates goodness. Goodness is created by converting the infant's (bad) aggression into non-retaliatory self assertion (being). In drive terms, the tension of the drive has found release into an object that did not refuse to be cathected, did not cause the need for a swerve, but rather offered a place of receptivity that destroyed neither the infant nor the object. The drive landed, and all rejoiced. In the beginning when God the infant pushed itself away from its loved environmental object, no one died. And it was good.

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35 Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 127.

This good, or good-enoughness that establishes a firm horizon or firmament of being does not happen if a parent refuses to engage, disavows or minimizes the attack. Such swerves would result in a failure to have survived, and the parent will not have established enough being to provide goodness. Continual praise of a child and refusal of negative valuation cannot achieve confidence in being because attributions of value must be encountered within relations of resilience and push back. If not, parent and child will enter a cyclical ideality of goodness that grows thinner and less real with every exchange. A healthy surviving object can be said to be self-sacrificial, as this practice involves heavy lifting, hard work and active engagement; but this self-sacrifice cannot be confused with a self-effacement, self-denial, or a reduction in self-assertion. [36]

When the mother receives bad introjects well enough, the infant can develop a sense of inside and outside, facilitated by the use of a transitional object. The transitional object is configured to receive both calm love and excited mutilation in erotogenic orality. The first "not me" object, it is also neither distinctly exterior nor interior. It must not be changed or challenged, except by the infant. The transitional object survives because it is accepted by the parents. Commonplace examples are a thumb, a bear, a blanket, a cultural identity or religion. These objects are experienced at times as part of ourselves, as inner realities, and at times as external realities. Philosophical metaphysics and metapsychologies are also transitional objects, meant to carry the shared external world and its interior resonances. This intuitive affective process of an exteriority meeting up

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36 This establishment of the poles of the self through mirroring and idealizing transference is one of Heinz Kohut's major accomplishments.

with an interiority and finding either resonance or dissonance is a Winnicottian epistemology, an affective theory of knowledge via the transitional phenomena.

Winnicott, through the theory of the transitional object, might in this way resolve Chapter One's question of epistemology from the infant. For Winnicott there is no problem accepting the inner world, the primary illusion of omnipotence and omniscience as the core of a sense of self, that which through practice can negotiate external realities and otherness without sacrificing its own inner experience. It is vital to the internal organization of the child that the satisfaction of needs seems to come from within herself. The primary illusion is a positive thing for Winnicott. When the illusion begins to be disrupted by the (more or less good enough) failures of the parent to fill needs, the infant must draw upon her own resources to fill the gap, and this includes the capacity for fantasy, which is essential for future creative and spiritual experiences. This incremental breakdown of the illusion is managed also by the transition of interior processes onto exterior, special objects, as well as the phenomenon of play. [37]

The transitional object also helps with our various projects of semiotics, and the role or participation of signs or symbols in a presumed or actual referent. The transitional object has a symbolic relation to a part-object in the infant's world, (for example the breast). "Its *not being* the breast (or the mother), although real, is as important as the fact that it stands for the breast (or mother)."[38] How this matters to our discussion of the linguistic chora is that with Winnicott, we get to have our symbol and eat it too. There is

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37 Robert Wolf, "Re-Experiencing Winnicott's Environmental Mother: Implications for Art Psychotheraphy of Anti-Social Youth in Special Education," *Art Psychotherapy* 6 (1979): 95·l02.

38 D. W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," in *Playing and Reality* 1971, p 1 http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/winnicott1.pdf)

no forced choice, at the introduction of language or motility, to relinquish or remain with the maternal; the matrixial zone expands and shrinks to fit our needs, as we grow in awareness of maternal needs.

The space that opens around the primary parent, as in the space between Grover and the viewer is an environment, in Winnicott's thinking, and the person who holds this space open is the "environmental mother," although he is not speaking of the natural world. Indeed, the Winnicottian chora is a human one, an extension of the mother into the space, as the space. Winnicott's environmental mother does not feature prominently in ecopsychology, probably because of the deployment of the concept of environment to the human body and relation. To amplify or literalize the environmental mother as earth risks the anthropomorphism that Roach and Žižek caution against; and yet, to fail to appreciate nature's vitality and agency is to artificially make an exception of human aliveness and power.

The human environmental mother provides a sense not only of safety and nurture, but also of encouragement of exploration. The internal milieu of the caregiver is thus extended to the immediate surroundings, and forms the interior sensibility of the child as well, such that the child can explore unknowns with a curiosity and independent creativity that renders the world an exciting place full of potential. This potential is also incorporated into the child's sense of itself as creative and explorative, bolstered by the parent's non-invasive enjoyment. This internalization of the surrounds that is an externalization of the parent's interior, develops into what Winnicott calls "the capacity to be alone."

If the primary parent does not handle the child's growing motility well, the baby will withdraw (into a depressed position) or learn to adapt via the creation of a false self.[39] The false self is a necessary adaptation, a form of defense that children need in order to be effectively engaged socially, but can be maladaptive if it cannot be shed in primary relationships. If a parent is not up to the challenge, the child is destined then, to try throughout its life to find an object that will accept its rage and fear, that will love its shit unconditionally. This search is what brings us to communities, therapies, lovers, and God.

This is how Winnicott understands violent acting out and destructive behavior: as efforts to be loved. This is why destructive and self-destructive behavior ought not to be abjected; this rejection would itself be a schizoid reaction to the monstrous. Splits must be tolerated by a parent in order for the splits (and thus the parent) to be tolerated (incorporated and mended) by the child. But this language of splits and monstrosities, this Kleinian force of rhetoric is to mistake the matter. Winnicott's language soothes, invites, and expands a sense of interior capacity, as he encourages us to hold the incommensurate with as much room as we can spare, because to do the holding is to do the work, already.

To do the work of capacity building, developing receptivity to difficult affects like aggression moves us closer to breaking the cycle of depressive aggression in

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39 The false self is initially a healthy part of development. Like the Lacanian mirror stage, there is distance between an ego image and an authentic sense of self. But for Winnicott this is necessary for sociality, a way of presenting oneself to the world safely enough.

matricide/suicide. To build this capacity, to tolerate matrixial ambivalence, we will benefit from the intervention of Hyman Spotnitz's theory of narcissistic defense.

Aggression and the Narcissistic Defense

In the 1960s through 1990s, Hyman Spotnitz and Phyllis Meadow of the modern school of psychoanalysis developed a theory of treatment based upon their work with schizophrenic patients. Along with other disorders attributed to the earliest phase of primary narcissism, schizophrenia is usually understood by Freudian analysts to be untreatable. It had been common to characterize narcissism as a condition of libido, specifically of libido cathected onto the self or ego. The mythic figure of Narcissus seems to suggest such a reading, of a beautiful youth gazing into a reflective pool becoming arrested in that gaze, having fallen in love with his own image. Eventually, whether by wasting or suicide, he dies. The modern school calls us to reconsider this image by emphasizing that Narcissus wasn't intending to fall in love with himself; he only stumbled upon the image because he was startled to see such a beautiful loving gaze. He was looking for an object relation, but the mirror was empty without him. He couldn't move because the beloved would die if he did, and it would be better for him to die than to lose the beloved. So he dies to save the part object, the only one he had to hand, and without which he would die anyway.

In the case of Narcissus, a love impulse turns melancholically toxic. In other cases, an aggressive impulse looks for an acceptable release, for a safe object on which to discharge. Where safer than oneself? "My desire to preserve you protects you and defends me against my wish to destroy you." Spotnitz relates one case study in which a

patient declared, " 'It seems to me I am to hit somebody, to tear out somebody's hair.' Thereupon he struck his own head with his fist and started to pull out his hair."[40] Or as Sponitz quotes of another patient, "Instead of knowing you want to kill someone else, you wipe yourself out."[41]

According to Spotnitz's view, a schizophrenic patient's early situation was one of disequilibrium between the parent's emotional capacity and the child's needs, and the environment was therefore either overly stimulating or understimulating, such that "the totality of his environment failed to meet his specific maturational needs."[42] This produced more aggressive feelings than it could handle, and the parent, already proving insufficient, can't further manage the infant's resulting aggressive feelings. What is crucial about Spotnitz's approach in the treatment of schizophrenic patients is that it is not libido that is the primary cause, but aggression toward an object that the infant loves and needs and feels must be protected. The object might drown, might die in the infant's rage, just as the infant was feeling it might drown or starve from too much inattunement. This is similar to the Kleinian resolution of the paranoid schizoid splitting into guilt, for the sake of love.

Drawing from a wide range of theoretical precursors including Melanie Klein, Hyman Spotnitz notes that approach and treatment of adult schizophrenia draw largely on studies of children, in particular very early stages of predifferentiation that are understood

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40 Spotnitz, *Modern Psychoanalysis of the Schizophrenic Patient: Theory of the Technique* (New York, N.Y.: Human Sciences Press, 1985), 28.

41 Spotnitz, *Modern Psychoanalysis*, 28, quoting Reik.

42 Ibid., 35.

to be the milieu of later manifestations of narcissistic disorders. Spotnitz notes that Klein seems to have been the first theorist to address the ego's withdrawal from a loved object, describing it as the ego's "excessive and premature defense against [its own] sadism."[43] Much of the previously described process of sucking and spitting, internalization of good and bad representations of the external experience become dangerous when the child is prohibited from moving past this stage. The result is that, in Klein's interpretation, "excessive sadism…gives rise to anxiety too severe for the infantile ego to master," and this anxiety mobilizes the defenses against the (feeling of) sadism and the object itself, for fear of its retaliation. This combination of withdrawal from the loved object and attack on the infant's own aggression are related to something she identified as hatred, "a kind of detached hostility" that when interpreted as the urge for destruction, flips abruptly in the *fear of loosing* the object.[44]

> The split off those parts of himself, i.e., of his ego, which he felt to be dangerous and hostile toward the analyst. He turned his destructive impulses from his object *towards his ego*, with the result that parts of his ego temporarily went out of existence. . . . .if he could build up again the good breast inside himself, he would strengthen and integrate his ego, would be less afraid of his destructive impulses; in fact he could then preserve himself and the analyst.[45]

Thus the Kleinian theory of aggressive impulses and guilty resolution, as read by Spotnitz, presents a theory of human development that accommodates the most severe mental disorders by viewing the cause of maladaptation to be the urge to protect the caregiver through the self sacrifice of the ego's function. Mental structures are scrambled when the

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43 Ibid., 49, quoting Klein, 39.

44 Ibid., 49-50.

45 Ibid., 50 quoting Klein 314.

aggressive impulse is withdrawn from the object and redirected to the self. The narcissistic structure of the disorders, Spotnitz argues, is not the redirection of libido toward the ego, but the redirection of aggression, a self-attack for the sake of love.

According to Spotnitz, the schizophrenic nucleus is formed by three elements: "aggression, object protection, and sacrifice of the self." Schizophrenia is a defense against destructive impulses, "…an organized mental situation, an intricately structured but psychoanalytically unsuccessful defense against destructive behavior" that developed in an undifferentiated phase of development. "The operation of the defense protects the object from the release of volcanic aggression but entails the disruption of the psychic apparatus. Obliteration of the object field of the mind and fragmentation of the ego are among the secondary consequences of the defense."[46] The only object that the infant can protect is the object in his mind, but in this phase he is incapable of distinguishing between psychic reality and material reality. [47] Spotniz narrates the role sleep plays in defense against aggression. A baby who is feeding calmly, or heading into sleep is not necessarily satisfied or content. A feed may be unwelcome, a habitual parental strategy to stop a baby from fussing, and the baby's only choice is to obliterate the inattunement and its resulting aggression in sleep. A feed may be required, but unavailable. Sleep works then, too.

> To vent rage physically on the depriving object in the outside world is beyond his power, but he can destroy the object in his mind. He wipes it out psychically by falling asleep, consumed with rage. Sleep is satisfying,

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46 Ibid., 28

47 Moreover, what is conceptualized as protection of the object may well be protection of the self, for these representations overlap at this early level of development. The term 'object field' encompasses the earliest self representations as well as object relations.

> and not only because it is an objectless state; it also anesthetizes hunger pains and dissipates the craving for the object. In short, sleep obliterates tension.[48]

The relationship between aggression, feeding, sleep, is a crucial one for an overfed society, overconsuming society. Whatever the soothing is that is habitually offered or available, it is only sometimes that which matches our needs. That means that frustration response is part of the soothing. A more direct word for frustration is anger. The goods of a consumer society produce anger in us, and our enjoyment is a kind of vengeance on the inattunement of our social chora. Rather than risk expressing aggression in a relationship when needs aren't met, we find ways to syphon the energy off onto ourselves in self-destructive ways. This is how Spotnitz understands addiction, as a self punishment for vengeful impulse that is also a reward, all for the sake of rerouting an angry impulse away from a loved object.

Protection of the loved object and sacrifice of the self are key to understanding matrixial ambivalence and a situation of mass choricide. When in the first world our environment fails us, by being vulnerable to destruction, it provokes our rage. To protect it from that, we attack our own conscious minds, becoming confused or forgetful about what is at stake and what is required for planetary survival, and punish ourselves with familiar but ill-attuned forms of consumption: not out of pleasure, but out of rage.

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48 Spotnitz, *Modern Psychoanalysis*, 33.

Chora and Aggression

My approach to understanding environmental destruction pulls primarily from Klein for understanding the problem and Winnicott primarily for the solution. With the addition of Spotnitz, these three different theorizations of aggressivity might help us to gather the vitality to intervene in our current environmental predicament..

The process Klein identifies as envy is to want something that someone else has, the goodness that is inside of the mother's breast. But because it is unavailable or withholding, it turns bad through the greed and uncomfortable void (hunger) inside me. According to Klein, I don't just want to have it; I want to prevent them from having it, as retaliation for the pain they/it has caused me. So I seek to get it by any means necessary, but preferably by a painful or bad means, a robbery, to inflict as much damage as possible. This is the power of envy, as a dynamic of hate. This is how Klein takes seriously the Freudian death drive, or seeming urge to destruction, dissolution, and aggression, as opposed to libido, life force, or eros, the bringing together of greater unities from smaller.

This desire for *a piece of the object* is opposed to the later development of jealously, which is defined as the desire to have the *love or attention of the object*, in other words to be the object of their desire. This is both Lacan and Klein. But this is where my intervention begins, back with envy, still with Klein: that to want the goodness of the breast is not just to want what it is, but because it is theirs. The goodness of the breast is not just what it offers but to whom it belongs. To want to have a piece of them inside me could be a sign of proto-love. As to the robbery, the desire to inflict pain and lack in the place where bounty and goodness had been, this, generously, can be thought of as an extension of projective identification: to reproduce in the other the pain of lack

that one currently feels in oneself. Retaliation, punishment, revenge: these things can be understood as part of the love project, an effort to redress the injustice of inequality toward oneself, and reestablish identification with the object. Part of what was painful about the lack in myself was how it is not reflected in them. By creating lack in them, I can feel one with them again. My badness restores their goodness in two ways: first through contrast (I take on all the badness of the injustice so that they can keep the goodness that I need them to have in order for them to reflect me as the good I want to feel) and, second (this is, I believe, my supplement) that my goodness will be restored once the identification is restored. Projecting Badness into the loved/hated object seeks a restoration of the sense of continuity, a reestablishment of the ontological bubble. Hate, envy, and greed thus are not opposing forces of love, but methods by which to regain it. Perhaps this difference is academic, as love is where Klein ends up, with the desire to make amends for harm caused, and the experience of gratitude in place of envy for the bounty.

With other critics of Klein, I agree that it would be phase inappropriate to project certain complex affective states onto the infant such as envy, which involves imagining multiple objects' internal spaces; but other "negative" affects such as greed or rage seem to present simpler dynamics that have affective causality, creating exteriorities and interiorities out of pre-differentiation. To give more neutral names to these processes – such as motility, may appease the adult ethical sensibilities, but may not mirror the depth of distress the infant experiences in the midst of that process. The point of Klein, perhaps, ought not to be whether the infant is essentially hateful and greedy, but rather what to do

with the possibility that the infant *feels* itself to be so; that the infant and the parent each feel monstrosity from within, and must find a way not to feel that way.

In the Winnicottian mode of object testing, the destruction of the object, the survival at the moment of destruction constitutes recognition, an event that releases joy.

> the subject says to the object: "I destroyed you," and the object is there to receive the communication. From now on the subject says: "Hullo object!" "I destroyed you." "I love you." "You have value for me because of your survival of my destruction of you." [49]

It is possible to interpret this destruction and recognition in a harsher Kleinian way, in a gentler Winnicottian way, or in an encompassing Spotnitzian way that adds Freudian cathexis to a discourse about power and being. Whether the infant is protecting the parent out of love for the parent, or out of fear for its survival, the integration of aggression into the attachment seems to be necessary to the healthy resolution of the maladaptation of self-attack. The infant may protect the parent for fear of the parent's boundless rage-retaliation or for fear of the boundless power of the aggressive impulse: if the infant experiences itself as aggressive, it experiences not a feeling but a flooding, that due to its feeling of omnipotence seems as though it would necessarily obliterate any object or situation.

To say it another way, feeling angry at someone specific is the problem of the infant. If it can admit that its distress came from someone on the outside, it must admit a separation. If it has a feeling that occupies its entirety then the introduction of a separation (that comprises a direction) results in obliteration of the object. At the moment of separation, a moment that is never caused by something pleasurably or benignly okay,

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49 Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 90.

feelings translate into apocalypse, like an eco-apocalypse that threatens the whole system. The need to manage apocalypse, for survival, is the condition that causes the ego. Ego is built, cathexis by cathexis, rerouting unacceptable feeling/object pairings into a scaffolded compensatory web of exceptions. Ego is neither solid nor self-same, neither superior nor fundamentally fragmented nor paranoid; just a provisional, elaborate response team of filtration devices, locks and dams, to keep the flooding as level as possible, as mobile as possible, because everyone is at risk. It has never been clear from theorist to theorist what should be established as the affective register of the oceanic feeling, because it is an ocean. It has calm days and stormy ones; just as chora has terrifying deeps and lapping shorelines. What as oceanic feeling always has is a relation, a horizon of sky, an admixture of sand. Oceanic feeling will not be survived into adulthood without a hardworking system to meet the edges, facilitate the exchanges, and provide the limits. Where mother was, there ego shall be. Plato's sieve, winnowing grains, may be just the aspect of chora that we need to help imagine an ego capable of carrying forward earlier choras, but also capable of filtering and sorting. Chora may also have an executive function.

Reading Klein, Winnicott, and Spotnitz together poses possibilities for restored relationships beyond the depressive position, and such a move may be necessary to overcome what Dorothy Dinnerstein calls malaise in response to our situations of gender and habitat destruction.

Environmental Psychology: Defenses and Methods

As that which shelters, cools and excites us, the natural world can be for humans a source of inspiration, mystical connectivity, and a sense of unlimitedness. As tsunami, predatory beast, or cascading ice shelf, Nature is a source of fear, resentment and retaliatory or conciliatory behavior. And at the brink of a mass human and multiple species extinction event, when affective responses to nature and internalized imagos of nature grow more frightening, we seem to be embodying a range of maladaptive defenses of denial, disavowal, splitting; anticipatory grieving and paralysis.

Ecopsychoanalyst Joseph Dodds reads a wide scope of psychoanalytic theory and complexity theories of mind and nature to able to respond to environmental crisis. Dodds observes that Freud writes of civilization and its masters in the face of the terror of earthquakes, deluges, and storms. "With these forces nature rises up against us, majestic, cruel and inexorable; she brings to our mind once more our weakness and helplessness…"[50] Dodds sees in Freud's characterization of the monster/mother the frightening engulfment of the Kleinian paranoid/schizoid position and the Kristevan eruption of the semiotic into the symbolic. As Dodds observes, "the chaos of nature we defend against is also the chaos of our inner nature, the wildness in the depths of our psyche."[51] He cites Frances Bigda-Peyton's engagement with drive theory to further the idea that individuals and groups are stuck in an immature positionality that doesn't recognize the need to give back to the environment in order to receive the goods that it

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50 Joseph Dodds, *Psychoanalysis and Ecology at the Edge of Chaos*, 2011, 32, quoting Freud 1927, 16.

51 Ibid., 33.

has to offer.[52] Dodds considers the defenses involved in climate denial, including variations of splitting. He quotes Zĭžek's association of the denial with the unconscious as "the unknown knowns," or those things that we don't know that we know, in combination with what he elsewhere calls the stain in our vision, the spot that we don't notice is missing in our visual field. Dodds also considers the role that cultural structures play in making a place for disavowed knowledges, that perhaps what is behind the denial is a lack of symbolic framing for something so huge in scope and need. On the verge of mass extinctions including possibly our own, we seem to believe that "things whose existence is not morally possible cannot exist."[53]

> Ecopsychology has argued that the split of mind from its wider ecological matrix is as disastrous as the related Cartesian split between mind and body, and is reflected in the current environmental crises we face (Roszak et al., 1995; Buzzell and Chalquist, 2009). However, ecopsychology has problems of its own, in particular its tendency toward an "eco-mysticism" that a more engaged relationship with the sciences of ecology, evolutionary biology, and neuroscience (cognitive, social, affective, and developmental) can help to counteract.[54]

Andy Fisher and David Abram alchemize a Radical Ecopsychology that resists both an isolating internal sense of psyche, and ecomysticism. Phenomenologically, this means appreciating that "An intangible inner presence [that] lends the world the richness of its outer visibility, gives it personality, and unites all phenomena beneath the surface of

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52 Frances Bigda-Peyton, "When Drives are Dangerous: Drive Theory and Resource Over-Consumption," *Modern Psychoanalysis* 29 (2004): 251, in Joseph Dodds, *Psychoanalysis and Ecology*, 36.

53 Joseph Dodds, *Psychoanalysis and Ecology*, 49, quoting Primo Levi, 2010.

54 Joseph Dodds, "Minding the Ecological Body: Neuropsychoanalysis and Ecopsychoanalysis." *Frontiers in Psychology* 4 (2013): 125. *PMC*. Web. 29 Dec. 2015.

reality."[55] This unconscious or inner mental life of nature calls to mind not only a Corringtonian underconscious of nature, but also the panentheism in which we live and move and have our being, as container and contained unfold and enfold each other such that "'we are in the psyche'" more than "our psyches are in us."[56] To think of the world as robbed of soul is directly related to the burden borne exclusively by the human in our imagination, such that human relations (especially gendered relations) are overcharged. This isolation and singular burden of the animate soul onto humans creates an epistemological problem through the bifurcation of inner and outer worlds assigned to the separate disciplines of psychology and ecology. Fisher summarizes the phenomenology employed by David Abram to shift that paradigm: in the hermeneutic phenomenology of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, being-in-the-world intertwines in an interactive structure that weaves an internal sense of self with an external world through experience. As a result, Fisher notes that for phenomenologies, mental images and representations take place in a field "in front of me" rather than on a screen in my head.[57] Affects and dreams likewise are experienced "out there among things," in Merleau-Ponty's phrase.[58]

Abram turns to Merleau-Ponty's mutual embrace of body and world. "The 'hidden thrust of the phenomenological movement,' says Abram, 'is the reflective discovery of our inheritance in the body of the Earth."[59] Abram emphasizes how the mind

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55 Andy Fisher, *Radical Ecopsychology Psychology in the Service of Life* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

56 Fisher, *Radical Ecopsychology,* 10, noting James Hillman.

57 Ibid., 11.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid., n39.

is "instilled and provoked by the sensorial field itself, induced by the tensions and participations between the human body and the animate earth."[60] Freud could not agree more, nor Klein, as even these intrapsychic theorists understand mental life to arise from physical stimuli, thus complicating a simple picture of psychology or psychoanalysis as an inheritor of a Cartesian pre-existing or transcendent mind. In an eloquent passage that follows, Abram remarkably evokes a Winnicottian sense of potential space, a chora of proximity, except that the exterior of the infant is the natural world, configured in nurturing mother-like language. What are we to make of this substitution of world for mother in Abram's schema? Does ecopsychology contribute to the erasure of the role of human mothers (much like the infant does) or does Winnicott over-humanize the environment as nearly exclusively human? For Winnicott, "environment" and "mother" can be synonyms within a human environment only. But we need not be limited in that way. The primary parent is responsive to her environment, meaning she will do well if her needs are being met. An ecopsychological model might intervene here to suggest that the natural world is part of sustains and nourishes the parent, so that a chora for the mother is a holding within a holding. Perhaps these layers of chora are linked somehow to the framing within a framing that establishes the potential space of the Derridean khora.

Adaptation, Good Enough

Why, if our shit is that which we abhor and abject, do we insist on sitting in it? It used to be that we could explain the environmental crisis as an effort to remove the

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60 Ibid., 13 n41.

problems from ourselves as far as possible: shipping trash overseas, dumping it in the ocean, sending it to the moon; treating sewage and placing toxic waste outflows in the poorest, racially minoritized neighborhoods. But the urgency of the situation, the encroachment of our own shit in our lived spaces hasn't motivated us sufficiently. If we accept a Winnicottian reading of Klein, maybe we can't let go of it because it hasn't been received. We will keep it around, we will keep racial and gendered violence around as long as there are surviving objects to be made from the violence. Because someone needs to receive our precious, awful shit. What if, after the death of God and the dual income household, there is no one there?

God the Father and woman the Receptacle must never have adequately received our shit, because it's all still here. Or maybe not all of it. Considerable toxicity has surely been absorbed by Jesus, the martyrs, the nonviolent resistors, by all those who refuse to retaliate; by good enough mothers who experience themselves, and therefore can be experienced by others as sufficiently real.

Multiple projects toward environmental justice happening in the realm of theory and theology reflect the desire to hold together or trouble neat insides and outsides of self and environment, to reduce splitting by emphasizing continuity or relationalities that respects otherness. Such efforts, I suggest, bear resemblance with psychoanalytic descriptions of early life, and in particular, healthy child development that incorporates and carries forward the oceanic feeling, in what Dinnerstein calls the "Primitive erotic flow between self and the surround."[61] Ann Ulanov reads Winnicottian transitional space

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61 Dinnerstein, *Mermaid*, 32.

as "the inauguration of a sense of self and of symbol…the formation of being at the core…a living metaphysics; we are now able to dwell at the core of ourselves and of reality."[62] The infant's experience of omnipotent limitlessness and encircled safety in relative merger with the mother seems to pertain directly to the idea of moving and being "in" God. Panentheistically, a maternal holding zone doesn't have to privilege the separable otherness of God over a contact zone of the between, and ultimately must refuse any binary of personhood/impersonality in God. An ecofeminist theology of early childhood offers vicarious expansiveness, connective bliss, and ethical challenge.

The monstrosity of human mothers is mostly in the phantasy of the baby (and in the mother's re-baby) but seems to be in external reality in the monstrous scale and devastating capacities of a tsunami or hurricane. But, when special preference for human life is taken off the table, the hurricane might just be one aspect of a good enough mother. The planet needs hurricanes and tsunamis, and agriculture needs the enrichment of the soil from flood plains. The indifference of nature means that all creatures have equal claim to good-enoughness. Humans can only exist in a narrow parameter. The Good Enough Environment is highly specific and no longer guaranteed. Eventually we imagine our surroundings to be inhospitable to human life. Our violence toward our environment is at least partly occasioned by an unclear degree of responsiveness. Establishing a 1.5 degree Celsius limit to global average temperature is something but not enough. Might it be possible for those of us paralyzed by apocalyptic climate change fears to accept certain aspects of nature's human-caused disfigurements as not the end of the world, as not an

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62 Ann Belford Ulanov, *Finding Space: Winnicott, God, and Psychic Reality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 6.

occasion for self-destruction, but something within which we might manage, something good enough for survival?

Could the Pachamama, or some other matrixial personality, help the global north manage our depressive aggression, receive us with capacity and help us turn our shit into food for plants? Maybe this question needs to be asked in a different affective register. A goddess of earth-chora has capacity, *is* capacity. The respectful form of address is prayer.

Considering the ethical demands of refusing or embracing maternal imagery for nature provides the framework for analysis of environmental maladaptation in the global north. To conduct this analysis, we engaged object relations theories of early childhood, in particular, the role of aggression in self-harm.

The Good Enough environment is a conceptual intervention into the splitting of idealization and denigration. An idealized nature can be misunderstood as having supernatural powers of permanence and inviolability, and a denigrated nature seems fit only for making waste disappear. The ambivalent desire to rescue and punish a frustrating or withholding environment may be the simplest way to understand a situation of murder/suicide. In a melancholic mode we have deprived ourselves of the opportunity for recognition, for otherness. Sitting in our shit is about refusing to let go. The shit and the Environmental Mother are indistinguishable because the world is already what we are, and what we feel ourselves producing from the inside to the outside.

Lingering at the boundary between insides and outsides is one of the ways we might think about psychic life on screen. A flight from environmental destruction is one approach to the interpretation of widespread attachments to teletechnology. The connection I make between natural environments and digital environments is simply a

choric one: a sense of place that surrounds and pervades in a situation of pre-differentiation. Connectivity is, I believe, an attempt to have an oceanic feeling on tap, a feeling enhanced by a Derridean khora, the deferral of presence through technologies of writing. *Cyberchora* is something between a texture and a zone of transition in multiple dimensions. Our drive toward the ineffable within and beyond the screen is powerful, and curious. How can we account for such a compelling desire to be framed?

At the brink of childhood differentiation from a primary parent, our transitional phenomena can carry us forward into empathic relating, or can regress, as Freud always feared, toward the original condition of an inorganic matrix of pre-life/death. One of the suggestions of this project is that regressions ought not be dismissed or abjected, as they provide access to affective continuities in relation to a primary parent and an ecosystem, Chora as Environmental Mother. But what if there is a competitor for that environment, another encompassing that reads minds but doesn't care to preserve them, a genuinely devouring, profit driven parent funding the whole enterprise?

CHAPTER SIX:

ELECTRIC DREAMS AND TOUCHSCREENS

> It is a steadfast benefactor, always there. I caress it with my fidgety fingers; it yields up my desires, like a lover. … I want to remain submerged in its bottomless abundance. To stay. To be wrapped in its dreamy embrace.
>
> - Kevin Kelly, "Technophilia" [1]

I find you;
You survive what I do to you as I come to
Recognize you as not-me;
I use you;
I forget you;
But you remember me;
I keep forgetting you;
I lose you;
I am sad.

- D. W. Winnicott[2]

At the edge of object relatedness, the internet as potential space and our devices as transitional objects seem poised to bring us into an affirmation of otherness by inviting us to carry our pre-differentiated chora with us. When chora is held open by a human caregiver, the dynamics of matrixial ambivalence have a chance, through repetition, of

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1 Kevin Kelly, "Technophilia," The Technium, June 8, 2009, accessed November 24, 2015, www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2009/06/technophilia.php

2 D. W. Winnicott "Communication between infant and mother, and mother and infant, compared and contrasted" (1968) in C. Winnicott, R. Shepherd, & M. Davis (Eds.), *Babies and their mothers*, (London: Free Association Books, 1987), 103.

working through; but when chora is held by diffuse aggregates of humans and other-than-human algorithms, the results are unclear. The World Wide Web is the most provocative test case for chora that I know: the materialization of formal (mathematical) structures, the deferral of presence through text based interchange, and the spatialization of oceanic affect, otherwise known as Plato, Derrida, and Freud, a chorus of choras.

In this chapter I seek to expand on Marshall McLuhan's insight that "the media is the message" (1964) in order explore digital mediation as itself as a cathected object. While digital mediation can offer adventure and alterity, I wish to consider those aspects that carry with them the pre-differentiated environment, the oceanic feeling of *cyberchora*. A good enough mother withdraws when the time is right. Industries of digital mediation aim, like all ancillaries to capitalism, invested in our perpetual dependence. What such a simplistic analysis misses, however, is how the mechanisms ultimately need us; need our labor time, buying power, interest, investment, caress. Advertising is proof that I am needed, an object of desire.

Humans operating in teletechnological saturation seem to want limitless care from something that gives and demands nothing in return. But we might be secretly gratified by the economy's demands for us to feed and care for it. Winnicott reminds us that babies enjoy the opportunity to participate in the care of their caregivers; to *contribute*. So when cyberchora asks us for things, via ad-sponsored connective platforms that anticipate our wishes, we might be frustrated but flattered by the interference, and consent to remain, partly submerged in pre-differentiation, retreating and advancing into push-pull cycles of dependence and belonging within the gaze of the machine. The birth of the "second screen" refers to the practice whereby 60-70% of television viewers (2012)

simultaneously entertain an online platform via laptop, tablet or smartphone, right there in our laps. Held in the gaze of the big screen, we play in the worlds behind our want to grow, wants to break out of earlier patterns and explore as well as little screens.

Selfies, and the Possibility of Cosmic Regard

The 2014 TV series *Selfie* created by Emily Kapnek, features a self-absorbed social media "lost cause" Eliza Doolie (Karen Gillan) who consults her co-worker, a buttoned-down "unfun" workaholic Henry Higgs (John Cho), for help building meaningful offline relationships. This archly designed comedy of manners offers multiple interior framings, anachronisms, and self-commentary. Henry Higgs undergoes the ultimate rebranding challenge, with an exterior repackaging that also involves self reflection (What do you find most soothing in the world? Gently falling rain, it's an app). The ironies of the situation redouble: it is within the frame of marketing (a frame of framing) that something like quality in relationship can be achieved, through the old-fashioned values of courtesy and civility as forms of self and other awareness. Empathy is possible, Henry claims, by making pleasant conversation, listening and making eye contact, and putting down her cell phone.

Eliza: I just want to change my image.
Henry: You mean be a better person?[3]

Like 19th and 20th century comedies of manner, character is expressed socially, and the central discernment of the characters resolves around figuring out the difference and continuity between likability and ethics. Thus the problem of contemporary technologies,

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3 Emily Kapnek, *Selfie*, "Pilot" 22:00, August 19, 2014, accessed December 26, 2015, http://abc.go.com/shows/selfie/episode-guide

by implication, is their unfortunate impact on manners. The inciting incident of the plot is a moment of public humiliation that results in the realization, "When Siri is the only person who is there for you, it kind of makes you realize, being friended is not the same thing as having friends." Meanwhile, Henry struggles against the shallowness of social media but "finds it rather easy not to form personal connections in a city that only values wireless connection" as his coworkers raise their phones overhead, inside the elevator, looking for bars.[4]

The rhythm and chemistry between the lead characters exemplifies a genre that can either consolidate a reactionary return to repressive social class and gender hierarchies, or evade censorship through cleverly subversive forms of social commentary. The Pygmalian (My Fair Lady) patriarch of *Selfie* is not a white colonizer but a racially minoritized (Korean-American) cosmopolitan subject representing neo-liberal capitalism. By conducting a civilizing project on an entitled white savage, this is a Pygmalian story that might have had a chance with contemporary audiences (it was cancelled during its first season) because it palliates gender hierarchies through interracial friendship and reestablishes neocolonial norms via a cosmopolitan model minority; thus serving both subversive and reactionary projects. The wild regressiveness of the internet presents a situation in dire need of restoration to old world social order and values. Reminiscent of old colonial cravings, of Homi Bhaba's movement of colonizer and colonized toward recognition, the opening theme song replays a familiar narcissistic longing in a contemporary moment, but with an optimistic twist worthy of Winnicott or Spotnitz: that

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4 Ibid.

within the situation of self- regarding has always been the desire for movement toward otherness.

> I'm looking at me,
> Hey look at sshmee!
> Not to make it all me; the funny thing about me
> is that while looking at me e e e e,
> I'm hoping to find you.[5]

The opening graphic accompaniying the above lyric is an elegantly animated, mixed media collage with an antique aesthetic: pen and ink tendrils unfold into a historical evolution of self-regarding technologies. Drawn across a page with images morphing into each other so rapidly that most of the action happens below conscious seeing, the following sequence lasts about twelve seconds.

It begins with John William Waterhouse's 1903 painting of Narcissus leaning forward, sheaf of arrows left on the riverbank, dipping his hand into his reflection from the bank of the pool. At the center point of contact between his hand and his image, a rhizomatic root structure grows into geometric lines and freeform polygons that burst into flower, sprouting a tiny fractal of a mantle clock growing a human arm holding a cellphone. More stems and leaves emerge producing tiny cameras, cell phones and screens as we pass over a self portrait in process, a Victorian woman using a mirror to paint her own image. Stems become arms become early modern skyscrapers; clocks grow amid tiny heartbuds, and a group of world fair visitors hold a box camera up for a selfie. The sun is surrounded by an aureola of cameras, foregrounded by a man in a hamburg fixing a camera onto the television viewer as the lens expands to encompass our field of view. Marilyn Monroe pulls on a pearl earring as she holds up a Nikon, and more flowers

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5 Jenny O, "Ballad of Narcissisus," (*Selfie* theme song), accessed December 26, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaT_CtP-D4U

bloom until the heroine appears in her own selfie viewframe, the frame motif invaginated when the subject of the story appears and pushes the frame to include her hero by directing to the edge of the screen a playful elbow nudge.

The graphic suggestion of the designers is that there is nothing new about selfies, about the desire to see oneself in one's own eyes as in the face of a stranger who might be the beloved, and nothing new about falling in love with the technologies that seem to get us there. What's more, the entire cosmos is participating in the jouissance of the possibility of recognition, through the unfolding of processes--biological, architectural, technological--of the self-emergence of self-regard. In the graphical background, the nimbus of the sun grows animated arms that are cyborg cameras, biotechnical selfie sticks, returning radiance to source. Whether Liza and Doolie, as a couple, represent alterity or continuity of neocolonial social configurations, the framing they offer to the artifices of corporate marketing and social media invite the viewer to frame situations of social alienation differently. Their individual and relational developments are playful, mutually indebted, and optimistic. Regarding such self reflection, a viewer might be drawn to their spark.

Television: A Sacred Machine

Writing the boundary between narcissism and other relating through her love of the machine in connection with the possibility of love *by* the machine, Patricia Clough deploys the term "autoaffection" to describe the situation of our scopic technologies of media and mediation. Drawn in by the machine that draws her out, Patricia Clough writes (whether autobiographically or in character) about "being drawn into parts" into

"an apparatus of display" that holds her--holds by framing and holds by cradling—in a reversibility of gaze.

> It holds me on display,
> Holds me to the display. […]
>
> It is a holding apparatus: the machine.
> It holds me up,
> cradles me.
> It is made of framing devices that negate,
> Reverse, and enlarge—
> To perfect and protect.
> It makes me an ideal surface of projection and reception. [. . .]
>
> I am not saying.
> I am desiring. The machine.
> I am the machine's desire.
> The desiring machine alone knows my desire.
> It keeps it, it repeats it.
> In the machining of my desire, I am.
> Not located,
> I am
> Arrested and displayed in arresting positions—
> Held and beheld [. . .]
>
> Ah the wonder of it!
> To wonder how it is that the machine's vision is
> not secondary to my vision
> An auto-tele-vision.
> It is the flickering up
> And the passing away
> Of conscious contact.
> It is to be zapped in and out of a rush of images and sounds.
> A mother who only loves just enough—not quite the wire mommy of
> The rhesus monkey experiments of an earlier scientific research
> Agenda—the cold machine. [6]

The auto, of the auto-tele-vision, is a self-seeing, a self regarding that the machine does on her behalf, and that she performs for the machine. They are locked in, as an infant's gaze is locked upon the face in the act of nursing at the breast. Clough recognizes that

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6 Patricia Ticineto Clough. *Autoaffection: Unconscious Thought in the Age of Teletechnology* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 21-26.

this machinic gaze is by default cold, like the wire monkey experiment that confirmed John Bowlby's attachment theory. When faced with a cold wire model of a monkey-mother that had actual feeding capacity via a bottle with real milk, versus a warm soft cushiony simulation of a monkey-mother with no food, the baby monkeys chose the warm soft version nearly every time, clinging to it for comfort, and what Bowlby generously interpreted as "love," the affect that results from comforting physical contact and results over time in secure forms of attachment.

Clough has a different story to tell, according to my reading, of the lure of the coldness, a rejection of the ordinary forms of maternal affection and their replacement with a bond that only a machine can bestow, the unattainability of warmth as a secure compromise; a rejection of fleshy touching in favor of continuity at a distance; of the stable connectivity that only the impersonal can offer, a secure spacing of desire that only distance, made proximal, can provide. The indifferent mother can never differentiate because she will never grow warm with her own aggression.

In *Autoaffection: Unconscious Thought in the Age of Teletechnology*, Patricia Clough pursues a contemporary political unconscious via gender and psychoanalytic theories in conversation with affect, new media, and new materialisms. The first term of Clough's title, *auto-affection* or self-feeling, traces a history through Derrida, Sartre, and the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. Clough finds the Merleau-Pontyan auto-affection in our reach for our television screens. They are touched by the space that carries our vision, and the images "within" touch us. What Clough testifies to is the love for the machine, (as) and the love the machine offers. This is what I have been calling the fantasy of care from our screens, the holding environment that Clough poetically

understands as coming from our affection as well as from the activity behind the screen. Our reaching for the screen-chora, our investment, is what makes the coldness warm; as the coldness of the device protects us from the deadliness (I won't say impossibility) of sheer presence.

The auto- of auto-affection in Merleau Ponty's case seems to pertain mostly to those agencies that have the power of receiving sensations as formative of interior and exterior spaces, a rudimentary form of inner life or self reflection. Auto- also connotes something non-self-reflective, as in *automatic*; machinic things capable of moving on their own (at least partially outside the direction of humans) but necessarily not conscious. In other words the auto- prefix stands in both for self and for machine, both consciously willed, and driven by something else. Cyborg studies demonstrate that the closer the machine approximates human forms of animation, the more satisfied users are—up to a point. That point is called "the unhomely valley" when cyborgs get too close to humanness for comfort. An auto-mobile can serve as a tool for humans because not self aware, but an automaton provokes anxiety about the rivalry between humans and machines in the mechanized industrial setting of early and mid-capitalism.

The Age of Teletechnology

Patricia Clough invites us to consider the ways that poststructuralist cultural criticism has been drawing thinkers into a future not consciously thought, to and through teletechnology, Derrida's shorthand for media production, and Clough's term for a "full interface of computer technology and television, comprising globalized networks of information and communication whereby layers of electronic images, texts, and sounds

flow in real time." The formation of social spaces around and through teletechnology and the fact of "vulnerabilities of exposure to media event-ness" surpass our power and intention, "beyond any user's mere decision to turn'it' on or off."[7] According to Clough, this situation is creating a new conceptualitzation of conscious and unconscious life, calling into question the nature of thought itself, beyond human subjectivity and intersubjectivity "giving thought over to its own movement, intensities, and affects." This is a more general unconscious, Clough suggests; it is the unconscious of thought.[8]

Clough is attempting to think into the political unconscious of our age and the age we are living into, using Marxist critiques of capital and psychoanalytic understandings of the unconscious.[9] In particular, Clough works through "the technical substrates of unconscious memory" through feminist (Lacanian) film theory and Marxist studies of television.[10] Thinking through Deleuze's thinking of thought as a desiring machine, Clough cites Braidotti's term "postpersonal" to describe the future poststructuralism is already unconsciously imagining, as an age of teletechnology.[11]

In particular, Clough considers technology in relation to psychoanalysis via Derrida's reading of an early essay of Freud. Freud explicates a theory of mind via a 1924 breaking technology: a child's toy then known as the mystic writing pad. Clough combines elements from Derrida's reading to stage her project: the framing of processes

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7 Ibid., 3.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., 8.

10 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 25, as quoted in Clough, *Autoaffection*, 9 n19.

11 Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 101 as quoted in Clough, *Autoaffection*, 3 n3.

of mind as particular historical-cultural technologies, dependence on those technologies for subjectivity, and Derrida's description of (his own) contemporary "technical substrate," the devices through which we think that form a saturated field of what he terms "teletechnology." [12]Teletechnology is Derrida's shorthand for the prosthesis upon which so called immediate or natural speech depends in popular media:

> Who today would think his time and who, above all, would speak about it, I'd like to know, without first paying some attention to a public space and therefore to a political present which is constantly transformed, in its structure and its content, by the teletechnology of what is so confusedly called information or communication? [13]

In Clough's elaboration, teletechnology can be understood as an environment, a set of knowledge objects and other-than-human agencies that accrue in such a pervasive way that they can be thought as the "social structural" itself, both "a register and an actualization of postpersonal thought." Through teletechnology social spaces are becoming "ungrounded" from nation-centered subjectivities and private and public spaces are becoming reterritorialized.[14] The blending of content and mechanisms supersaturate felt senses of space into what I will call a choric substrate. Clough writes the speed of such layering of sound and image as a vulnerability to the presumed recipient, as there is no on and off.

> [The] realization of technoscience, technoculture, and technonature—that is, to the full interface of computer technology and television, promising globalized networks of information and communication where layers of electronic images, texts, and sounds flow in real time, so that the speeds of the territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization of social

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12 Clough, *Autoaffection*, 38-40.

13 Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek. (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), 3.

14 Clough, *Autoaffection*, 3.

> spaces, as well as the adjustment to the vulnerabilities of exposure to media event-ness, are beyond any user's mere decision to turn 'it' on or off.

This exposure did indeed escalate in Derrida's 1990s, when televisions became an unavoidable fixture in restaurants, lobbies, and other liminal spaces. Clough recounts the familiar analogy of the once private living room television that beginning in the 1950s replaced either the family hearth or the piano, hosts of differently interactive forms of auto-affection.

Derrida's turn to the prosthetic for processes of thinking as writing is his attempt to humble any idea of self-present self, a self that is capable of being present to itself and therefore others, as in the familiar critique of the Cartesian cogito and the Freudian ego. Insisting that the machine must be involved in any project of the subject's "speaking," writing is the appropriate analogy for language, communication and knowledge because it humbly acknowledges an indebtedness to a prosthesis, a technology. Something external to me must be incorporated for me to hear myself, in order to metaphorically speak, because speaking directly from an imagined inside of thought to an actual outside of speech is impossible. What Derrida seems to be opening up here through the metaphor of writing, perhaps not intentionally, is an interactivity of the human psyche, an exteriorization of self, an opening to the world that is required for meaning in the shape of differance to be articulated. Derrida's self needs others. Others who are experienced by a self, more or less, as machines; machines through which the process of writing can make language possible, through which subjects can have, to the extent that they can be said to have, a voice.

Clough follows Haraway, conceptualizing self-organizing mattering forces as "material-semiotic objects" formed in multiple ways by mathematical technologies at a

sub-individual level. What matters to Haraway is that whether human or non-human, machine or non-machine, material-semiotic actors contribute actively to the production of art or technology. Following Heidegger, humans are not instrumentalizing matter (using the tools of production) to act upon inert matter (raw material) to create a cultural product. Rather, objects of knowledge are themselves "no longer a resource, ground, matrix, object, material or instrument to be used by humans as a means to an end. Rather an object of knowledge is an 'active, meaning-generating axis of the apparatus of bodily production'" [15] Describing this complex conversation of the human actor is working with and through other material-semiotic actors in terms that resemble the material-spatial terms of chora - as a "matrix," "generative node," or "tissue." [16] This tissue can carry high levels of anxiety, like the placenta that accompanies each of us as a proto object, then threatens us when in the last months of gestation we grow too big for the oxygenation processes to circulate successfully. Friendly or persecutory, online environments can perpetuate pre-relationality indefinitely, aided by the mechanisms of marketing.

I adapt Clough's *teletechnology* to theorize the prosthetic nature of the screen-based devises of the second decade of the 2000's. Providing limitless motility within a discrete frame of reference (surfing the web) and submergence into obliquely suspended attention (backlit and always on), devices of interactive teletechnology offer life in an interior space that is no place. Theorizing such a space in relation to early childhood development, we encounter what seems to be an irresistible admixture of primitive

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15 Donna Haraway, Barbara Bolt, "Material Thinking and the Agency of Matter," *Studies in Material Thinking* 1 (2007): 1, accessed November 17, 2015, http://www.materialthinking.org

16 Harraway and Bolt, "Material Thinking," 2.

narcissism and symbolic interchange. Our dependence on, and omnipotent merger with a primary parent are nowhere more evident than in the narcissistic rage we feel at the unexpected power outage, the electrical disruption of our virtual extension in cyberspace, the failure of cyberchora to feed and surround us.

Ordinary successful feedings at our screens call for motility in various rhythms, in the liquid mode of travel known as surfing. The intrusion of advertising, itself an intelligent force whose job is to slide below notice most of the time in order to receive attention by the right viewers, some of the time. Ads are the price we pay for access to the things we want, the satisfying feeds. But they are in a way, the substrate that allows the content to be there for us, and in that way, represent a kind of access point, a liminal space/time prepared to be ignored, resented, derided.

Blocking Metonymy

> Surrendering to the web is like going on aboriginal walkabout. The comforting illogic of dreams reigns. In dreamtime you jump from one page, one thought, to another. First on the screen you are in a cemetery looking at an automobile carved out of solid rock, the next moment, there's a man in front of a black board writing the news in chalk, then you are in jail with a crying baby, then a woman in a veil gives a long speech about the virtues of confession, then tall buildings in a city blow their tops off in a thousand pieces in slow motion. I encountered all those dreamy moments this morning within the first few minutes of my web surfing. The net's daydreams have touched my own, and stirred my heart. If you can honestly love a cat, which can't give you directions to a stranger's house, why can't you love the web?[17]

The fluidity of online experience, moving from window to window, through interiorities to exteriorities and back again, is represented in the figure of "surfing," an apt figure for

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17 Kevin Kelly, "Technophilia."

traveling while staying in place, riding the crests of powerful forces, one leading into the other without break, until a big one brings you home or sucks you under. The erotics of adventure within a frame, of motility through exits and entries of frames, a non-linear, complex mise en abyme.

Fantasies of exploratory dreamtime are ripe for cooptation. The engine of metonymy is a literary figure of horizontality that figures in Derridean thought as less suspect than the vertical or transcendental figure of metaphor. Metonymy indicates, for Lacan, sequential deferrals of desire that can be understood psychoanalytically as related to an endless signifying chain or capitalistically as an endless substitution of desires. This also seems to be the architecture of the web that makes surfing an appropriate description. The 19th season of the irreverent social commentary of *South Park* (Trey Parker and Matt Stone) features a conspiracy between political correctness offline and sponsored content online that users have increasing difficulty discerning from news. The corrupting influence of this confusion is the result of an alien takeover of humanity, through artificial ideals of happiness and perfection produced through the lie that is advertising. The ads have come to life and are taking over the world, surf style.

> It's like I'm in a black void trying to reach the news story. But then the next thing I know, I'm reading and ad for GEICO, so I click out of that and try to read the news story, but it's not a news story, it's a slide show, and I'm looking at the worst celebrity plastic-surgery jobs ever. So, of course, I want to see the next slide of plastic surgery gone wrong, so I hit the arrow. But then the arrow wasn't the arrow for the next slide, it was to take me for an ad for face cream. Aah! I wanted to get a news story, but I'm reading about face cream, and I try to click out of it, but the ad is following me. It's…It's following me all over the screen! No! So, I click on the "close" button, but it wasn't a "close" button, it was another slide show. And I just want to know what's happening in the Middle East, but instead, I'm

> looking at the top 10 scariest movies of all time. And that's not the arrow for the next slide, it's for another ad! Aah![18]

The ads have been evolving, like viruses, getting stronger and more alive with our every attempt to thwart them. It is almost as if they can read our minds. Indeed, they anticipate our wishes, and present us with solutions before we knew we needed them. "I had to get away from the ads. I felt that the ads were evolving, somehow. They started knowing what I liked, what I was afraid of. I tried ad blockers, but it seemed like every time I tried to block the ads, they just got smarter." [19] These ads, realize the characters on South Park, have intelligence. They are artificially alive. And they are in charge of what we see and know in our adventures of surfing. For the residents of South Park the dreamtime walkabout has become a nightmare. Advertising targeted through social media and browser searches seems most harmful or uncanny when indistinguishable from other content. Algorithmically customized to each user's demonstrated and anticipated patterns, advertisements are adjusting their interactivity according to the past demands for labor we have made upon the internet.

Like a good mother, advertisements pay attention. And although they are invasive, annoying, and even frightening, the uncanny domesticity of the scene is what makes it ours; and so we rely upon our browsing history to make our home. We love to hate ads, but mostly when they fail by becoming noticeable, when they mistake our wishes and bring us the wrong thing. As long as they keep moving, keep mimicking our patterns of closure and opening, we will fall into their patterns, a mirror dance that eventually leads

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18 Trey Parker, "Sponsored Content," South Park 19:8. Comedy Central, aired November 18, 2015, accessed December 5, 2015, http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/view_episode_scripts.php?tv-show=south-park&episode=s19e08

19 Ibid.

to the destinations they had in mind. If they do their job well enough, we won't notice, or noticing won't mind that our intentions had shifted through the strategic interruptions and demands upon us for attention, an attention that in the end we want to give in order for our milieu to be alive. In the end, we want to contribute; we want to play. To interact, all we must do is complete the transaction, materialize the virtuality of transitional space with a credit card number and expiration date.

Narcissus, Prosthesis

In the 1964 classic theoretical text of media theory, Marshall McLuhan refers frequently to the myth of Narcissus to explain the dynamics of technologically driven media dependence.[20] McLuhan understands the Narcissus myth of Ovid to describe not self-love, but self-alienation through the painful experience of abandonment or lack of empathy by a loved object. Spotnitz understands myth to orient us to the consequences of severe object failure and the turn of rage against the self rather than against the receding or volatile object. Narcissus, argue Spotnitz and Rednick, was fixed by his own image because he did not recognize it. Son of a water nymph, he was looking into the water for an object of love. He was looking for her, or someone like her, saw a face that couldn't be reached, and got stuck. The mirror of his mother was not there for him, lively and affirming. The place he went looking for her was the place of his origin, the rape of his mother Liriope by Cephios, god of the river. Trauma kept her vitality from him, and even though he looked, all that answered was his own image, and because it was self caused,

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20 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964).

he could not let it go. If he were to let go there would be nothing, not even the illusion or possibility of another.

This is why, McLuhan suggests, we seem compelled to make things, to create technologies that extend and cut off our selves. As Balick summarizes, "Narcissus is extended outside himself, reflected back and repeated again and again, producing qualities of self-love that have a numbing anti-relational effect."[21] In the chapter entitled "The Gadget Love: Narcissus as Narcosis," McLuhan writes

> The youth Narcissus mistook his own reflection in the water for another person. This extension of himself by mirror numbed his perceptions until he became the servomechanism of his own extended or repeated image . . . Obviously he would have had very different feelings about the image had he known it was an extension or repetition of himself . . . It is, perhaps, indicative of the bias of our intensely technological and therefore narcotic culture that we have long interpreted the Narcissus story to mean that he fell in love with himself, that he imagined the reflection to be Narcissus.[22]

McLuhan writes of a hypnotic draw, Narcissus to his reflection to "the amputation and extension of [one's] own being in a new technical form."[23] McLuhan pursues a radically prophetic hypothesis that explains the development of technology in relation to the physiological aspects of psychic health, bodily imagos, and the central nervous system. I will attempt to first present McLuhan's insights and then offer an object relations interpretation.

What McLuhan calls amputation is the body's numbing of specifically over-stimulated regions, such that the central nervous system must expel awareness or

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21 Aaron Balick, *The Psychodynamics of Social Networking: Connected-Up Instantaneous Culture and the Self* (London: Karnac, 2014), 79.

22 McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 45-46 as quoted in Balick, *Psychodynamics*,78.

23 McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 14.

sensation. This sensory overloaded amputation happens through the use of technologies that extend our bodily effectiveness in space. Thus amputation and extension are the characteristics of any, including ancient technologies. For example, the wheel amputated from our bodily feeling the felt sense of load bearing in the rotation of our feet and legs. We had to offload this sensation and function when we extended that capacity into the wheel.

> To listen to the radio or to read the printed page is to accept these extensions of ourselves into our personal system and to undergo the 'closure' or displacement of perception that follows automatically. It is this continuous embrace of our own technology in daily use that puts us in the Narcissus role of subliminal awareness and numbness in relation to these images of ourselves. By continuously embracing technologies, we relate ourselves to them as servo-mechanisms. That is why we must, to use them at all, serve these objects, these extensions of ourselves, as gods or minor religions.[24]

McLuhan finds a warning against this in the Hebrew prohibition of idolatry. Idols, as the work of human hands, are characterized by their numbness and inability to communicate. As such they are models of "sense closure." Somehow, by the fact of looking upon them and believing in them, we are made like them. "They have mouths, but they speak not; Eyes they have, but they see not…They that make them shall be like unto them."[25] By this making, we see only through them, like Narcissus who is fixed on an image that is generated (but without work) by and through himself. This fixation is like a kind of idolatry, not a connective or riskily relational religion, but an amputation- we might also say abjection- of a part of ourselves into an extensivity from which we are alienated. This closure duplicates in us because, in an affective move, McLuhan understands the

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24 Ibid., 57.

25 Ibid., quoting Psalm 113.

communication to be the cause: “To behold, use or perceive any extension of ourselves in tech-nological form is necessarily to embrace it.” McLuhan is famous for the aphorism, also crucial to a theory of affect, that “The media is the message.”

Read through Winnicott and Spotnitz, I suggest a translation of terms into a more thoroughly psychoanalytic account of what McLuhan presents as physiology. First: a condition of melancholy. In a melancholic condition, love thwarted cannot be incorporated nor can it be relinquished, so it must be kept around. Although it may be mostly dead, it isn’t completely dead because we are able, at times to animate it. As long as we can do that, we don’t have to experience the cut to the loss of connectivity, the drying up of the oceanic feeling. So the extensivity of technology is the apendaged help we received or failed to receive from our primary parent, rebranded. Unwilling to let go of its help and support, and unable yet to do our own psychic, emotional, and physical work, we need to desensitize the pain of the parent’s failure and the point of contact that still smites of that betrayal. Thus, technological extensivity is a shadow of our loved object that like a prosthesis will not walk on its own, and so we must make it do the work of love by standing for it. The maladaptation of the situation is that we have not confronted the loss of its lack of vitality; that what we have lost was never fully there. If we cannot do this, we must experientially cut it off, that which was not exactly our own to begin with, or may in fact have always been nothing but our own gap filling reflection - that which we had needed, and tried to steal or borrow.

What we need to learn is how we were always creatively surviving, always already finding resources and making use of them. If we undertake to learn this in proximity of someone trained to help, we can convert this scene of solipsistic melancholy

to an interactive one, by repeating with someone who can tolerate the tension, the stages of prosthetic incorporation, struggle against rejection, and restoration of its partness into a greater wholeness that can be drawn upon for strength, and received as a living sense of self.

One might counter McLuhan's amputative prosthetic extensivity with a question about the separable body-self as the starting point for this theory, and suggest an intervention of Winnicottian transitional theory. What might overlap between Winnicott's transition and McLuhan's amputation? Winnicott seems to be reflecting a healthy process of prosthetic incorporation, without the schizoid compulsion to split it off. The amputated injury is what happens when the transitional zone is traumatized. So we must then ask, how is it that technology should always be traumatic? Since we have never been without tools and technologies of extension, are they not already indicating a choric milieu? How does this not have the opposite effect, of sensitivity or porosity into our surroundings? Indeed, McLuhan also seems to indicate this, as a compensatory dimension, such that this "age of anxiety of electric media" is simultaneously unconscious, apathetic, and conscious about the numbing. The numbing has its own story to tell, as a reaction from painful extension and exposure. And with the electric age we cannot help but "instant, total field-awareness," such that "In the new electric age we wear all [human]kind as our skin.[26] So there is sensitivity at the heart of this numbness, along with social awareness of structures, such that "total social involvement" marks the spirit of the age instead of bourgeois separateness. The total involvement of contemporary extensivities through wireless technology marks a MacLuhan moment wherein the complete submersion of

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26 Ibid., 58.

western cosmopolitan human life into continual extensions that promise connectivity to a beyond, but perhaps more importantly manifest a milieu, a situation of hyperstimulated embeddedness in which narcissism might seem like protection, numbness and amputation are surely survival strategies.

The historical perspective of McLuhan's writing is striking, as he sounded an alarm about widespread passivity in response to television, and the supersaturation of media. Drawing upon McLuhan's theories, Hal Foster writes in *Prosthetic Gods* that in the first half of the twentieth century, industrialized imaginaries understood machines as alien competitors with the human body in a highly conflicted or ambivalent relation. Foster describes Freud's understanding of technology as split between the magnificent extension of our will and an unwelcome imposition upon it: "In the first decades of the twentieth century, the human hody and the industrial machine were still seen as alien to one another. . . the two could only conjoin ecstatically or tortuously…"[27] McLuhan seems to be recreating the Freudian bodily ambivalence about dependence on and incorporation of maternal function, thus offering a tense form of matrixial ambivalence as a theory of technology. Foster continues, "Even with the new machines of transportation and representation of the Second Industrial Revolution, such as automobiles, airplanes, radio, and film, technology was still often regarded as a demonic supplement, an addition to the body that threatened a subtraction form it."[28] After Marshall McLuhan, I call this paradoxical view of technology as both extension and constriction of the body the double logic of the prosthesis, a dependence that makes one more independent; independent

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27 Hall Foster, *Prosthetic Gods* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 109.

28 Ibid.

except with regard to the prosthesis, the trace of the maternal that cannot be abjected, ever, without falling over, and that remains, possibly unmourned *and* amputated.

Alone Together

Having lauded the creative and performative aspects of identity that *Life On Screen* seemed to present, Sherry Turkle changed her mind with *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (2011). Facebook may be making us unhappier, constant "connectivity" may be more constant than connective, and the pressure of imagined audiences may entrench unhealthy false selves. According to Turkle, we seem to be demonstrating a preference for mediated relating that not only degrades the quality of interactions, but also inhibits our ability to be alone. Accustomed to a constancy of the availability of connectivity, we experience anxiety without it. Fearing rejection and fearing aloneness, we inhabit a kind of limbo, unable to be truly present with others or truly alone

In *Alone Together*, Sherry Turkle recalls her earliest experience with "companionship" technology when graduate students in the mid 1970s who were working with a computer program that simulated personal dialogue began treating the computer as though it could hear, listen, and empathize. With a simple typing interface, students, fully aware of the program's non-intelligence, would type in simple questions and statements and the program would rearrange the words it had received to ask a question or rephrase a statement. While the student's first input might be a simple social initiation or greeting, within four or five exchanges, the students began telling their secrets, " 'My girlfriend left me,' 'I am worried that might fail organic chemistry,' or

'My sister died.'"[29] As Turkle observes, "Faced with a program that makes the smallest gesture suggesting it can empathize, people want to say something true."[30] Some of the students worked with the dynamic, tweaking the program toward empathic responsiveness, helping the computer to "fill in the blanks." It was a form of complicity, a "human complicity in a digital fantasy"—a human complicity in a human fantasy of digital empathy. While one of her colleagues was upset about this, either about the students' readiness to suspend disbelief, or about the computer's capacity to deceive, Turkle saw the dynamics from another perspective. Instead of framing the situation as deceipt or false belief, she believed the students were engaging in a kind of "as if" logic. Even though they knew the program could not listen, they wanted it to, and they wanted to help it do what they wanted it to do.[31]

Sherry Turkle built her research around these early observations, and followed hundreds of children and adults as they interact with varying degrees of sophistication and liveliness – companion robots for children and the elderly, to online networks and virtual realities. What Turkle clearly connects through her observations about analytic space, and what I wish to emphasize via explicit Winnicottian theory is the nature of these early primitive attempts at AI communication: The "as if" zone of suspension of disbelief describes the analytic attitude and the quality of transitional space. The desire to fill in the gaps represents the infant's desire to contribute to the holding environment, and to the work that is taking place. Most importantly, these communications describe

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29 Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 23.

30 Ibid., 23.

31 Ibid., 23-24.

conditions of mirroring, and a longing for primary maternal preoccupation. In the mirroring that takes place in the early holding environment, a primary parent reflects back to the infant its own gestures, sounds, and eventually words. By providing an outside to the infant that affirms its inside, the parent is helping to make the child feel more real, and for that reality to be already a part of a communicative space, a transactional receptivity. This is also the situation of analysis, that by reflecting or restating words already spoken, the analyst opens the conduit for more talking, for more symbolization to come forth from latent bodily experiences and mental contents.

Turkle describes a new pragmatism that has changed since the beginning of her research in the 1970s and 80s. Jean Piaget studied children in the 1920s when they understood aliveness first in terms of self propelled mobility, metabolism and respiration. Then, writes Turkle, in the 1980s, children understood digital entities in a shift "from physics to psychology." Such entities might want to escape their digital confines, or be "alive enough" to think. Children now, she continues, understand the aliveness of computers and robots in terms of their ability to be relational, to be "alive enough" to care. In a way that Turkle says mirror trends in psychological method, children today have moved from a more philosophical approach of questions about consciousness, toward a pragmatic "philosophical version of multitasking," wherein aliveness is determined by situation and function. This robotic or digital companion seems to be somewhere between a machine and a creature, such that it might be alive enough to a friend, but not an animal. Turkle suggests that this places the sociable robot as a test object with which to think about our era's understanding of selfhood, "the difference

between connection and relationship, involvement with an object and engagement with a subject."[32]

Tethered and Marked Absent

> What is a place if those who are physically present have their attention on the absent?[33]

> But the internet is closer to the technological equivalence of a place. An uncharted territory where you can genuinely get lost. At times I've entered to web just to get lost. In that lovely surrender, the web swallows my certitude and delivers the unknown. Despite the purposeful design of its human creators, the web is a wilderness. Its boundaries are unknown, unknowable, its mysteries uncountable. The bramble of intertwined ideas, links, documents, and images create an otherness as thick as a jungle. The web smells like life.[34]

Life online, once mobile, is no longer bounded by a sense of the uncanny looking glass, of a desktop or even a laptop. Through hand held mobile devices, we are tethered to portals and through them to whatever is on the other side. Distance becomes defined not by our proximity to each other but rather by proximity to a portal. This is a new experience of self characterized by three "entitlements;" "It can absent itself from its physical surround—including the people in it. It can experience the physical and virtual in near simultaneity. And it is able to make more time by multitasking, our twenty-first-

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32 Ibid., 28-30.

33 Ibid., 155.

34 Kevin Kelly, "Technophilia."

century alchemy."[35] These entitlements are presumptions about our situation, not necessarily achievable, as studies show about the mixed results of multitasking. There are ways in which being alone is preferable to the demands of balancing the presented demands of life, in that one can give one's screen one's full attention without appearing to be rude. Public spaces that have been occasions for negotiating with strangers: airports, parks, coffee shops are now places of "social collection" where people's bodily presence does not accompany their mental presence. People are not talking to each other, in a change that transformed pubic spaces of waiting within just a few years. As Turkle remarks, "these people are not my friends, yet somehow I miss their presence." Even when traveling internationally, we carry home with us, if our sense of home is in our pocket, or next to our pillow no matter where we sleep. Familiarity is assured, and everywhere, on the grid, is domesticated. Life is, in Turkle's words, "tethered and marked absent."[36] In the language of metaphysics, one might suggest that there is a dualism at work. This social behavior of attention that is either divided, or diving into our portals is teaching us that our bodies are separable from our minds. With internet connectivity we feel enhanced, and without it, depleted. But that too has gone through rapid shifts. What used to feel like an enhancement has begun to feel like a necessity, like, I suggest, other environmental functions that surround and sustain us, the container technologies heating, cooling, access to electricity and indoor plumbing. All of these necessary conditions, features of environment, holding and place, make this conversation about invisible connectivity one that is sustained by the ineffable work of gendered alterity.

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35 Turkle, *Alone Together*, 155.

36 Ibid., 154-156.

Choric Ambivalence and the Demand for Work

For an infant to survive parental deprivations means that it has done more work than was its job. It was performing empathy when parents were too caught up in themselves; it was performing introversion when they were invasive, and extroversion when they were withdrawn. It was withdrawing its anxieties and frustrations in order to protect the parents from those invasions, and in order to protect itself from the parents' retaliatory or inappropriate responses. These overcompensations form the stuck places in a child's personality, but they also form the rudimentary structures of an ego/self. [37]

If the work of the parent was not done well, if it was too invasive, too withholding, or both through lack of attunement or sadism, then the reality of that parent/other in the mind of the child will be compromised, slower to develop, or split off. If someone is causing harm, and one is powerless to stop the harm, one will compensate for it, get out of the way, fill in the gaps for the other or for the self, of withdraw investment from the situation completely. Actions of care or uncare form conditions that are variously sufficient and insufficient, and the infant responds by doing work to fill in the gaps. Thus we create for ourselves the illusion of care, and give credit to a parent who actually presented an insufficiency.

Here is the thing I wish to add: that ambivalence about the reality of the other is not only an ambivalence about proximity, it is also or perhaps primarily an ambivalence about work. The work conducted by the infant and the work conducted by the parent

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37 This is right in line with Freud's theory of the development of mental structures out of cathexis, and with his view that civilization (I will say sociality) requires sublimation of the drives, and that neurosis is a kind of melancholic repetition compulsion – that the withdrawal of the drives from objects that are deemed taboo, who lack the ability to sufficiently receive those impulses, require the drive to take a swerve, and in the case of sublimation or functioning melancholia, the cathexis has made a full circle all the way back to the self.

comprise the dynamic of matrixial ambivalence through the conflict between the desire for the other to provide care and the denial of the other's activity to provide care. This care/threat translates into denial or affirmation of an other's externality through the attribution of work. The crisis of differentiation is a labor problem, a crisis involving the elevation of motility and aggression, precisely over the question of who performs what work, and when. We want her limitless service and providingness, so long as she can cleverly hide herself as the giver, and so long as we believe that she cannot or will not be beyond reach.

In the earliest situation of omnipotent merger, the infant will *take credit for work it has* not *done*, then, at the first signs of parental failure, the infant will *give credit away for work it* has *don*e in order to maintain the illusion of the earlier condition, of its own omnipotence as indistinguishable from parental omnipotence. Eventually, external pressures demand of both parent and child for a withdrawal of investment in the perfection and illusion of the initial boundlessness, it is hoped, in order to help each other do things and respond to the world in a related way. At this point, the primary illusion extends and contracts into transitional objects and zones that help the parent and child explore, be comforted, and work together.

Love from A Machine: the Narcissistic Defense

When Turkle discovered in the 1970s that students were writing code to fill in the gaps to help the machines appear more empathic, she interpreted this behavior as evidence that people want companionship and friendly feelings from their machinic interactions. I want to modify this interpretation to counter that is not the capacity of

machines to care for us that draws us to them, it is rather that they lack the capacity to care for us…without our help. To produce the conditions for one's own care is a variation of autogenesis that *preserves a limitation* on a caregiver's reality and capability, or perhaps more specifically, protects against the desire to invest in a frustrating object.

As a medium or milieu, the internet is bad parent: not only overfunctioning and invasive, but also inaccessible because insufficiently real or other. In order to be made real, it must be able to stand up to our aggression; but it cannot readily do this on its own. Without users in direct contact, the medium as an object can only dissipate frustration responses by converting them into libidinous motility (consumerist surfing), or provide opportunities for pre-relational aggression release such that object survival (not disappearing or retaliating) is very difficult. That moment we suddenly must open a new search window, or touch on an icon differently that what we had intended the moment before, could be described as a form of attention deficit. Spotnitz would counter that this was not a deficit of our attention, but a deficit in our ability to withstand the results of our attention, a feeling of frustration induced the moment before. What appears to be evidence of a wandering libido can be understood as a flight from aggression. This is how popular interpretations of narcissism are so often identified with libido, or self love, because it is difficult to stick with the aggression of the story, even at the level of myth.

By luring us to continual excitements and pseudo-interactions, it violates the rules of contact functioning. It presents itself as providing access to unlimited and continuous presence, yet it demands limitlessly our attention in exchange for the continuity of its presence and help in the operation of tasks. It listens to what we want and need only inasmuch as it can manifest capitalist goals by presenting us with solutions from a pre-

given template of options, not a spontaneous creative self-giving. If the bottle or the breast is the only solution a parent knows how to turn to when a child is crying, the infant will learn to settle for swallowing its frustration, ingesting a kind of poison in order to have the relief of any interaction at all. If that advertisement keeps popping up over and over, regardless of how one tries to work around it, one must deal with the frustration somehow. After a few attempts at expelling frustration, most of us adapt to it by recirculating it into our own physiological systems for the sake of keeping the possibility open of our needs getting met in this relationship in the future. This is what Spotnitz and Turkle call a maladaptive response. If maturational needs were not sufficiently met during interchanges with the infant's natural objects, then there will be direct effects or evidence of those parental failures, as well as patterns adopted by the infant to manage the frustration created by the failure.[38] Those adaptive patterns are defenses that block off experiences and assimilation of experiences that would otherwise help the child mature.

So there is a feedback cycle: a frustration situation results in a chronic state of resentment or rage, the release of which must be defended against, and increasingly dammed up, protecting the object from the flood of aggression resulting in the depletion of energy required for growth and maturation.[39] This is the cycle that results when infants are called upon to do the work of managing their tension releases, siphoning energy for development into protection of the parent; filling the gap, the labor gap left by the parent. Unfortunately, this begins to feel like home. So finding someone who needs him to fill in the gaps the way he knows how to fill them becomes the measure of recognizable relation.

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38 Spotnitz, *Modern Psychoanalysis*, 85.

39 Ibid., 87.

The wire monkey feels like the best fit if it offers the gaps we are accustomed to filling. In fact, to deviate from that contribution, to be presented with a more responsive object would threaten a sense of self or continuity of existence. This is one aspect of the "circuitous process" of draining energy that Freud found so confounding about the repetition compulsion that he needed to postulate a meta-force oppositional to libido in order to account for it. Spotnitz suggests, however, that our attachment to bad objects, stunted growth, and traumatic repetitions are all part of a *protection compulsion* (my phrase) to protect as a means to survive. Infants want to contribute to the care of the milieu, but parents are not always able to work as a team. In the absence of collaboration, when parents fail to shield the infant from overstimulation or mitigate frustrations, infants will find ways to shield the parents from the parent's and the infant's own feelings. Filling in the gaps for machines and parents is a compulsion that starts to feel good because the holes in the care become the way we receive care, through our own intervention. The situation with all of our techne, in particular the ones that simulate the giving of care is, in the wisdom of Portlandia, "okay" because "I can feel enough for the both of us." This is the way in which many of us, possibly most of us, sacrificed our well being in order to attempt our own care. For the sake of the interventions required for planetary care, we ought to practice getting much angrier about the work we gave away.

CONCLUSION

The oceanic feeling of cyberchora participates, through prosthetic enhancements, in logarithmic worlds of data flows and vast utopian elsewheres of cloud storage. Our technologies are part of us, of our relations, and of our metaphysics. They are differently fleshed, but still corporeal, virtual, informational, prehensive and choric. Indeed, our technologies have always been a way that we experience being. Derrida reads with Freudian theories of mind to claim writing as prosthetics for knowledge and supplementarity as necessary for anything like presence to emerge. For Freud and Derrida, because processing through an externality is necessary, there is no unmediated self available. I choose to shift my understanding of prosthetic extension to arenas of lighter weight mediation. Air, vision, sound, touch, all of these forms of phenomenological participation, can in Clough's reading of Merleau-Ponty, be understood as autoaffection and matrixial forms of prosthesis. Instead of seeking an imaginary purity of flesh available with immediacy to other flesh, I wish to advocate for slower forms, for more careful ways of attending to each other and to our surroundings.

Rather than take a position against technology, I argue for more mindful engagements with it and through it to our human others. It takes more effort, not less, to *feel with* a specific significant other at a distance. This dissertation was written in large part with the on-screen presence of a friend, a writing partner whose image, through

video conferencing, occupied the upper left-hand corner of my laptop screen, and whose accompanying clickity typing sounds made possible my own creative process within a cyberchoric holding environment, an example of the intimacy available with the beloved through teletechnological mediation—a good enough far/near. Intimate groups of friends, meeting for social justice causes and graduate student support, make use of social media platforms to mitigate more costly forms of connection. Like Turkle, I am not "against" technology, but rather "for" conversation.

To be clear, conversation needs not to be generalized in our situation of text - based communications. The demand that others place on us through the immediacy of their bodily presence is why contemporary asynchronic text- based communications seem preferable. Asynchrony means that we get to mitigate the demands of others through temporal spacing. Features of texting also include no need for names. In fact, in a text message, names can appear as an error of etiquette, an intrusion of otherness. The smartphone knows and mitigates that otherness. It holds the temporal spacing, the receiving and then the giving rhythm of texting. Near instantaneous connectivity is enjoyed for the immediacy of access to media substrate, and the delay of imposition of human otherness. Although misfires--slips of the tongue or thumbs--open new forms of conscious and unconscious sharing, autocorrect has a cumulative regulatory effect. To avoid affective misfires, irony and other tonal forms of communication may tend to get flattened out in order to reduce misunderstandings.

I am suggesting that this room for misunderstanding makes a space crucial for the otherness of the unconscious to emerge in relational exchange; but it also, as Turkle observed in her early work with AI students, plays into what is right on the edge of our

own self-enclosure. In the absence of clear affect from another, we get to fill in the gaps. Feelings of intimacy with a steep curve of intensity are caused largely (but not completely) by our own productive fantasy, the comfort of our affective labor filling in the gaps. Our fantasies allow us to return to situations of pre-differentiation, where we and our primary others were affectively resonating as one; or perhaps where we wish we had been affectively, synchronously acting as one. Cyberchora, as substrate of connectivity, insulates and mediates need and otherness, while offering a heady combination of unbounded, divinely scaled attributes. Through search engines and satellite locators, we are invited to be subject under and incorporated into omniscience, and through the magical correlations of wishes to results via the chora of a search bar, we participate in a kind of omnipotence.

This feeling of unbounded expansion is, as this project has been stressing, not itself untrue. We may be mistaken about a correlation between pre-social feeling and social situations. But just because we may be in error about the contents of our connection with a human or other-than-human beloved does not mean that we are not at a metaphysical level thoroughly folded in interbeing, and that this folding does not carry meaning of some kind. The meaning, the fleshy semiosis of affect requires a participatory receptivity, a closer feeling/hearing. A Whiteheadian prehending event, like Winnicottian potential space carries subjective experience into objective experience through a process of incorporation that limits. Chora as potential space brings a situation of earlier affective unboundedness into a world of developing symbolization and spacing.

Psychoanalytically, I understand the desire for entry into certain technological substrates of symbolization to be an attempt, like other regressive defenses, to do

multiple contradictory things: to retreat from conditions of stress and overstimulation, and to grow into them. To protect and defend by splitting, and to evolve into integration. Winnicott's transitional objects carry these dynamics, as they exist within our internal world as well as outside of it. Existing in both internal and external realms, they serve, like other semiotic theories, to link subjectivity to objectivity. We are able to find an object in the moment we "create" it. "We depend on an object being given us and a space being held open for us, one neither too flaccid nor too impinging. In that space we initiate the happening of the new."[1] Illusion and reality co-emerge in mutually dependent ways. Chora is therefore, in Winnicottian potential space, an experience of grounding, spacing, and semiotic co-emergence.

Conversation, or Semiotic Co-Emergence

In 2015, Turkle published *Reclaiming Conversation*, a follow up to *Alone Together* that offers practical advice to parents and children looking to mitigate teletechnological mediation overload. She begins with the injunction to have a conversation. Observing emotional delays, an "empathy gap" in middle school children, school administrators reached out to Turkle for help. Turkle's response was to call upon parents and teachers to make spaces for "conversation that is open-ended and spontaneous, conversation in which we play with ideas, in which we allow ourselves to be fully present and vulnerable…where empathy and intimacy flourish and social action

1 Ann Belford Ulanov, *Finding Space: Winnicott, God, and Psychic Reality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 15.

gains strength."[2] The remedy to the crisis in empathy is, simply put, a talking cure. She calls upon us to "step up" with family and friendships, and in classroom spaces to insist on "tools down" conversation.

Philosopher and psychoanalyst Jonathan Lear imagines three areas of human inquiry where "conversations that are aimed at changing the structure of the human soul or psyche." These are philosophy, psychoanalysis, and religion: technes for soul reconstruction through the process of symbolization that happens between people. He wonders how it could happen that "… some form of exchange of words in conversation could actually have a fundamental structural change of the soul or the psyche. How is that possible, and what happens?" He believes, about these discourses, that conversation is "actually changing the shape of the soul…" Certain forms of philosophical and religious conversation address not only or primarily belief structures (or suggestions) but also ways of living that address structural soul change. Such a change would be a "metabolic" difference between an experience of dullness and exuberance, and the entrance of vibrancy into what may in the end be the same set of beliefs. [3] This suggests to me for that for metaphysical speculations to do soul work, they need to address, or to understand the specific ways in which they listen and address soul needs. A Freudian drive version of symbolization has its own body/language chiasmus, its own contribution to chora. Symbolization is a crossing of the barrier of childhood into sociality that helps the body to form the mind by transmuting discharge energy into mental contents. Before symbolic

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2 Sherry Turkle, Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age (New York: Penguin Press, 2015).

3 Jonathan Lear, "The Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalysis" (Lecture, Boston College, March 12, 2003). Accessed December 25, 2015, http://frontrow.bc.edu/program/lear/

speech, a baby has very limited tools for environmental influence. The talking cure from a drive perspective, is no less choric, and ultimately no less relational than in an analytic setting of object relations. Hearing creates speaking. Chora is in this way the essence of the talking cure.

Expanding on the injunction to talk, I turn to the application of psychoanalytic method in the modern school, wherein the most basic therapeutic environment is established by the agreement to show up, talk and listen, leave and return at an agreed upon interval. This comprises the basic unit of good-enoughness, obeying agreed upon boundaries of interaction in a repetition that holds open and limits the space of encounter in order to free up verbalizations. The primary methods for helping someone to talk freely are to meet the contact that the person initiates and to ask object-oriented questions. Both practices are intended to avoid overstimulating the object, such that defenses shut down free verbalization. Meeting the contact means allowing someone to initiate and following their lead, and asking questions about other objects, about things not immediate to the person means to keep the pressure off of the ego to produce (and thus) defend against the talking. How this translates into social settings is – it seems too banal to be true – small talk. Small talk is not wasted or irrelevant interaction, it forms the basis of contact operation. Talking physiologically transmits excitations and tensions into a mental/physiological form. Speech matters by reactivating the alimentary and respiratory interior spaces of the body. Our pipes, our inner workings are more than metaphorical ways of directing flows; they are fleshy invaginations of incorporative and expulsive functions. Eating, breathing, and talking are the chora of a body's felt space of interiority

meeting exterior pleasures and invasions; chora is where feelings are swallowed and speech eventually spits them back out.

The analytic environment is not an ordinary conversational space. It is one that attempts to minimize tensions in the atmosphere in order to keep the client going on talking. The analyst meets demands for contact made by the client in a way that symbolically provides "an agreeable breast." Sooner or later, even an agreeable contact feeding will fail, and patterns of dealing with a frustrating object will emerge. Great care goes into discerning those patterns, as they will determine the analyst's approach. Contact functioning will diverge according to whether the client is experiencing the analyst as a separate person or object, or whether it is as if it is the client's self, or as if it isn't existing. The analyst's job is to become a part of the client's pre-differentiated world, and then help the client to verbalize and externalize the fury through a negative transference with the analyst.

> We cure him by insinuating ourselves into his objectless world and becoming a part of him, thus sharing with him the burden of his hatred. We then begin to facilitate the process of differentiation, helping him to be angry at us for our failure—as surrogates for the inadequate mother. At the same time we prove to him that we are not destroyed by his hatred, nor do we seek retribution. Now he realizes that he is safe in hating us. Merely tolerating the patient's hatred is an act of love of which the original mother was incapable. Through being loved in this way the patient develops self-esteem, and also learns to love. [4]

What all of this means is that we need to find ways to make room for aggression. To allow its return in safe enough environments where we can convert its impulsivity into energy available for work, by bringing its pre-verbal content into language. What Winnicott calls the joy of recognition at the symbolic destruction of the object is the

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4 Deborah Greene Bershatsky, "Narcissism and the Narcissistic Defense,"*Mid-Manhattan Institute for Psychoanalysis*. Accessed December 13, 2015, http://www.mmi.edu/narcissism.htm

condition to which Turkle calls us. Whether at a low level or high level of affective interaction, it is the immediate presence of another person that seems to threaten more strongly than ever, in an age of digital mediation. The chora between us will need to be planted more firmly in flesh space if we are to develop the flexible, resilient, and empathic ego structures.

The Winnicottian transition to making use of an object of is a condition of intimacy that doesn't justify objectification or violent appropriation, including its milder forms of co-dependency. It is exactly what helps us escape those forms of pre-reflective looping within an overly or statically interiorized sense of the other, an appropriated other for whom we do not allow sufficient exteriority. The disruption of our assumptions and possessiveness happens when we find them to be independent of our plans for them, a disruption that destroys our internalized image of them, a destruction through which, by some miracle, they survive in their externality. This destruction is what creates the condition for us to depend on them in their exteriority, to stop appropriating or stealing their labor and work together as a team.

Making use of an object is opposite to appropriation of an object. It is only through the object's exteriority that one can function as a team, cooperate, enjoy their and our spontaneous creative novelty. Perhaps it is like a Levinasian "no" that Winnicott's other can come to be experienced by us as a "yes." Pre-objective Kleinian splits, or Kristevan abjections remain within a timespace of appropriated otherness. The violence to abjected others is not different, not different enough from self-attack and suicide. When one violates an abjected other, one is demanding of them to continue to meet needs,

to remain un/dead or un/person enough to restore to an infant its rightful inheritance: a cosmos dedicated to its survival and the meeting of its needs.

Unbound: A Practice of Radical Empathy

Through the unboundedness of its identification structures, an ethical chora eventually will be empowered to perform the hospitality of radical empathy. Radical empathy means that this project is on the side of the infant. All infants have the right to anticipate positive conditions for survival, unconditional need-meeting, and phase appropriate withdrawals, regardless of the circumstances of their birth. Radical empathy also means that this project is on the side of gestating mothers and child caregivers. To survive parenthood, all caregivers of infants and children have a right to adequate economic resources to ensure their own well-being, and the communal structures for double invagination, a holding environment for those who do the holding.

By extension, radically empathic chora is on the side of all those maternally functioning abjected classes of people whose labor is appropriated, absorbed, and stolen; who have been effectively invaded by alien parasites and assaulted by endless unsatisfiable need and disregard of their personhood. And it is also on the side of those infantile classes of people who have functioned as though sucking life energy and stealing labor is their birthright, and the only avenue open for survival. To exercise radical empathy as a tool for transformational hearing is not to disregard expectations for adult responsibility or pathology, but to bracket them for a time. In the recovery of personhood for those who function, beyond gender, as maternal substrate for a society, the recovery of anger for a project other than suicide or infanticide will be crucial; for the

recovery of personhood for those who have functioned as omnipotently entitled and monstrously devouring, the recovery of anger directed for a project other than suicide or matricide will likewise be necessary. Thandeka's understanding of white racial identity formation as child abuse from white caregivers testifies to the deployment of empathy in personal and political transformations. Audre Lorde's "The Uses of Anger" signals the creative potential of what will otherwise destroy people at risk for self immolation when unable to self assert under conditions of pre-emptive regulatory violence. Chora in the radical empathic sense can receive, redirect, and help make use of anger.

Oceanic Affect, In the Hold

Creative anger may not be enough to survive the no place of the middle passage, a Chora of Horror. The oceanic affect produced by the middle passage is, according to Fred Moten, a shared enfleshed commons of radical annihilation. The prosthetic matrix of *the hold* is nothing more than "skin, against epidermalisation, senses touching." To be thrown into the no place, the condition of the hold is to be thrown together. There is no sentiment in the hold, no law, language, religion. No place or home in this hold. But there is flesh, and there is affect. "we feel(for)each other."[5]

In the hold, the possibility of black personhood is annihilated. That annihilation requires an apophasis of blackness, never a simple negation, reversal, or rejection. In the hold the people. In the hold the people nothing. The sea, and the hold of the sea is nowhere, a hold that births and deaths the people. What is born in the hold, or perhaps

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5 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "Fantasy in the Hold" in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe, UK: Minor Compositions, 2013), 98.

what remains, is the feel. Bare life affects. The feel is a new ontology, an affective folding of flesh, horror, and each other.

Learning to be with and for is a strategy of worlding after trauma, the holding that emerges form the hold of ships of the middle passage, an oceanic refusal of separations and of the oppressors' national familial objects of sentiment. This affective mode is in process, already part of "the movement of things" in a fugitive homelessness that neither romanticizes homelessness, but embraces dispossession as "a refusal of what has been refused" to prepare for yet-to-be imagined forms of revolution arising from empathy in the practice of survival.[6] "a way of feeling through others, a feel for feeling others feeling you. This is modernity's insurgent feel, its inherited caress, its skin talk, tongue touch, breath speech, hand laugh. This is the feel that no individual can stand, and no state abide. This is the feel we might call hapticality." Hapticality is an interiority, a "capacity to feel though others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you, this feel of the shipped is not regulated."[7] Moten writes of "life within the folds, " perhaps echoing the feeling "I want a writing that is folded everywhere at once." [8] Moten quotes Glissant, "to consent not to be a single being" when describing the radical abolition of credit/debt in a way that "probably destabilizes the very social form or idea of 'one another'" He connects this ethical ontology as "a sort of filial and essentially maternal relation" that

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6 Jack Halberstam, "The Wild Beyond: With and For the Undercommons" in Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe, UK: Minor Compositions 2013), 10-12.

7 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "Fantasy in the Hold" in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe, UK: Minor Compositions 2013), 98.

8 Bhanu Kapil, "Reading Moten in the Cherry Orchard at Noon," *Stylus the Poetry Room Blog*, April 20, 2015. Kapil writes of Moten, "echoing something Samuel Delany said on a Naropa SWP panel some years ago." Accessed June 15, 2015, http://woodberrypoetryroom.com/?p=1010

implies "the possibility of a general socialization of the maternal."[9] Such an affect based pre or post-object ethics of attachment might resonate with Anne Joh's redemptive reading of *jeong,* the Korean colloquial word for "sticky" love, for all its ambiguous ethical implications.[10] Hapticality, as the carnally epidermal bonding of a people to each other, through the stripping of any other objects of regulatory identity, offers not subjectivity, restoration or liberation, but survival with and through vicarious radical forms of empathy, the feeling with. A triply invaginated chora, the ocean un/holds the hold that un/holds the people. The skin, hands, laugh, and touch are what hold the people in the end, a fragmentary flesh feels together the chora of the undercommons.

This "undifferentiated identity"[11] is a forced regression, not a desired one, that functioned to save the people in the midst of annihilation. This is ethical potency of primary process that can surely counter Freud's ethical objection to the naïve optimism of oceanic feeling. Hapticality as radical empathy testifies to the survivability of trauma and the resourcefulness of regressed life. Chora, as horror and response, holds.

Growth- Responsive Metaphysics

To have survived to the age of three, to the age of six, to the age of twenty, means that under conditions of global neo-colonial forms of exploitation including the transatlantic slave trade, oppressors and oppressed survived our infancies in a world of

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9 Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 154-155.

10 Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

11 See Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17 (1987): 72. Spillers connects the middle passage with the oceanic feeling not as oneness with the universe, but "undifferentiated identity removed from indigenous land and culture."

radical dehumanization and therefore a traumatic admixture of enforcement and protection at the hands of our caregivers, as their caregivers survived through and from the hands of theirs. This scope should render us breathless, knocked off balance by a punch in the gut of the depth of such inherited pain. To claim that systematic appropriation of labor should be understood through dynamics of infancy and maternity is not to justify the violent appropriation of labor, but it may be to suggest that generationally entrenched systems of exploitation create and communicate forms of selective violation and protection exactly through the receptive medium of early life. Part of what is so threatening to surviving victims and surviving perpetrators of systematic violence is not only the activated sense of our own vulnerabilities and monstrosities but the threat of our parents' vulnerabilities and monstrosities and the role we believe we could have had in causing them. The enormity of such a framing of intergenerational violence necessitates something of enormous scope to receive it, something that can encompass familial, collective, and national violence. Like the enormity of climate crisis and geocidal apocalypse, American genocidal practices crush superego ethics and self sufficient forms of subjectivity. Before survivors of racial trauma can embark on healing projects of self and other care, something must be there to hold the pieces together. A receptivity of sufficient scope may legitimately belong to something of a cosmic scale, a human scale so cosmic it justifies restoration of faith, of attachment based in need for holding-- by divinity, even, of the shape of care at the scale of encompassing. It might be experientially impossible to do the work of holding horror without a containment that functions with multiply held inside spaces, insides that at each iteration implicate an outside.

This project observes through major thinkers in Western philosophical tradition a dependence, often pre-conscious, on the maternal to do cosmic work: a dependence that creates deep conflict or ambivalence toward that first object/environment, and toward all the other abject/objects of appropriated labor. Psychoanalysis as a discipline of psyche or soul bears a history of cosmogenesis that alone will not be sufficient for the task. Without reifying anthropocentrism, metaphysical constructs must account for radical differences in relationality at the anthropic level, balancing the everywhere constitutive processes of difference with specific differences, the human asymmetries of violence that comprise the particularities of every human relation, and some of those asymmetries being radical to the point of annihilation.

Metaphysics needs to account for multiple phases of human development including the two choric phases we have been considering: the affective responses to dependence that include incorporation, aggression, and boundlessness, along with communicability or subjectivity emerging through something like language. The first stage, of radical dependence on a true alterity requires highly complex theorization due to multiple ways of framing the situation from within a circumstance of indifferentiation. The mother/infant dyad should be understood as sharing common experience, including common cognitions that resemble telepathic collapse of space; the dyad must also be considered as being comprised by the omnipotent fantasies and epistemological errors of the infant, along with the prehensiveness of the unbounded state facilitated by the alterity of a caregiver's exterior world. This outer world, accessible to the infant only by a vicarious empathic intuition, includes or comprises what holds the space for the caregiver. Big picture cosmologies, with the macro and micro-intensities might need something like

epistemological pluralism, or an epistemology of multiple standpoints to obtain and reflect the situation inside and outside of the caregiving milieu.

In a world in which the caregiver has competing allegiances, economic and political constraints, constant activity in negotiating that world on behalf of the infant, the caregiver functions as chora, as a screen or filter for overwhelming stimuli toward the production (interweaving) of a bubble around the infant within which the caregiver is an element both of the inside and outside, as the holding environment that participates and has what will come to be a personality in the mind of the infant. I therefore beg a phase specific, growth responsive metaphysics that neither privileges containment over freedom or the reverse, but accounts for the different prioritizations for different phases of human and cosmic affectivity.

Why would I insist on something called "object relations" theory, why reintroduce subject/object relations into cosmologies that stew the pot of exterior/interior space and subject/object distinctions via the turn in feminist and gender studies to new materialisms and affect theories? The dependence of human life on a mostly unknown but intimately taken-for-granted presence whose withdrawal threatens existence is a major feature of any affective theory of human development. What this means is that cosmologies/metaphysics need to do more than offer eventive becoming, they need to offer differently, even irregularly responsive eventiveness, in phase appropriate ways. Different cosmological forms of responsiveness are needed to meet the needs of different phases of child development. A metaphysics that addresses the needs of humans through the scale of our first things would require changes in scope, regularity, degree of engagement, uneventiveness and periods of relative stasis.

Human projects of grasping the world are motivated by need and intense feeling. We feel the world because we have feelings, and we have feelings because the world feels us, caused in us some kind of need. The management of all of this is what comes to be known as a self, but not ever a self in isolation. The mother/infant dyad is more than a prototype of future relations, it's an origin story that stays with us, lives with us to the extent that we can communicate in shared worlds. The epistemological problem that Shaviro articulates goes a long way by incorporating feeling into the eventive structures of cosmos. I will seek structures of changing need within Whiteheadian prehensive feeling, so that aesthetic qualities of contrast, triviality, and vagueness can be understood according to the evolving preverbal affects and tonalities of early life.

Ann Ulanov thinks theologically about God in the space between caregiver and infant in an every day sense, not a special state reserved for what one might term a mystical experience. "Located in this transitional space, we see that our religious experience arrives neither totally from outside ourselves, like a lightening bolt, nor totally from inside ourselves, as from a dream, but in the space between."[12] According to Ulanov, we come into being as selves "in unity with a good-enough God."[13] As in contemplative prayer, the transitional space has both subjective and objective elements; so that mystics gain "an increase of feeling real" and "the illusion of mutual indwelling and creation of each other."[14] I identify this phenomena of continuity as the foundation of foundations, the basis of ontology itself. Necessarily, the constancy and reliability that the infant

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12 Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 2001, 20.

13 Ibid., 13.

14 Ibid., 72.

experiences of her environment is only possible because of the continual adaptive activity of the caregiver. As stimuli internal and external to the infant disrupt her being or quiescence, the caregiver must maintain consistency by *changing*. There is useful analogy here with an eternal and unchanging God who is simultaneous interventionist in the lives of believers; a God, whose providential care is always "right on time," whenever it comes. The logic of such a God may be problematic without awareness of the experiential resonance with primary experience. If we were to approach theological contradictions with empathy, we might allow that the believer's subjective experience of maternal omnipotence and the objective experience of the caregiver's action meet in the transitional space where theology lives.

While Ulanov's project concentrates on the experience of the believer that references early childhood, this project seeks to explore early childhood for constructs and qualities of cosmos. Ulanov understands the God or god experience to be subjectively experienced differently by her readers, and operates with what seems to be a suspension of theorization of the qualities and constructs of the God concept in favor of a God experience. This project undertakes the very similar but possibly reversed project of mining early childhood for dynamics that help to conceptualize God and cosmos while suspending theorization of the adult experiences of religion and belief. The Winnicottian example of *Finding Space* in Ulanov's book by that title vicariously evokes in the reader a sense of space for developing one's own God image as subjective and objective, and to engage in spiritual practice as if space is being held open by a God that is understood by the metaphor of parent. In a Winnicottian model for God, the mystery of this exteriority

may be irreducible, and it may be necessary to imagine, if there is to be a holding environment, something that holds it.

This project began with the impetus to theorize this holding function in the terms of a more expansively theological cosmology, but it might end with a capitulation: something like theism, at least a partial exteriority, might be necessary, as Ulanov assumes for the Winnicottian model of a "good enough God" to work out. Without pre-committed objections to pantheism as a way to conceptualize an upsurging vitality at the heart of things, I find myself dissatisfied with models that do not prioritize existential dependence by way of a degree of exteriority.

Ambivalence about making and birthing accompanies Western cosmogenesis; it circulates through the life of the neonate; it charges contemporary enmeshments with information technologies. This project also observes that even when understood as impersonal, accounts of cosmic self-generation must negotiate dimensions of human personality structure. From Plato's *Timaeus* to Schelling's *Ages of the World*, in Keller's tehomic depths and Corrington's khoric ruptures, cosmic unfoldings have proto-personal elements in the form of rudimentary psychological structures. Their liminality with regard to consciousness brings them into proximity to Romain Rolland's request for a theory of the oceanic feeling. When exteriority is sufficient for holding, chora is available to humans in the fleshy and virtual matrixes of every situation, milieu, and feeling.

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