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**Disrupting Time: Somatechnics and the Opening of the Interval**

Journal:	<i>Australian Feminist Studies</i>
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Keywords:	Luce Irigaray, Somatechnics, Time, Interval, Eastern philosophy, Schopenhauer, Temporality
Abstract:	In thinking through the philosophical provocations that somatechnics brings, I suggest that we can better appreciate the urgency of feminist challenges to binary hierarchical logics undergirding Western metaphysics, and the opportunities this offers us to reimagine politics and reframe ethics that takes seriously 'the interrelationship between other, self, and world' (Pugliese and Stryker 2009, 2). This paper suggests that aspects of Luce Irigaray's philosophy can be productively read alongside the concept of somatechnics as described by Pugliese and Stryker (2009). I turn to Luce Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference and unpack her challenges to Western metaphysics as well as her proposals for a new relational non-hierarchical ontology, a new metaphysics that enables a reframing and revaluing of ethics. Reading Irigaray's work alongside this concept of somatechnics offers the opportunities to recognise, and delve deeper into, the philosophical and ontological challenges that Irigaray's work presents.

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**Abstract:**

In thinking through the philosophical provocations that *somatechnics* brings, I suggest that we can better appreciate the urgency of feminist challenges to binary hierarchical logics undergirding Western metaphysics, and the opportunities this offers us to reimagine politics and reframe ethics that takes seriously ‘the interrelationship between other, self, and world’ (Pugliese and Stryker 2009, 2). This paper suggests that aspects of Luce Irigaray’s philosophy can be productively read alongside the concept of *somatechnics* as described by Pugliese and Stryker (2009). I turn to Luce Irigaray’s philosophy of sexual difference and unpack her challenges to Western metaphysics as well as her proposals for a new relational non-hierarchical ontology, a new metaphysics that enables a reframing and revaluing of ethics. Reading Irigaray’s work alongside this concept of *somatechnics* offers the opportunities to recognise, and delve deeper into, the philosophical and ontological challenges that Irigaray’s work presents.

**Key Words:**

Somatechnics, Luce Irigaray, interval, Schopenhauer, Eastern philosophy, time, temporality

## Title: Disrupting Time: Somatechnics and the Opening of the Interval

In 'The somatechnics of race and whiteness' Joseph Pugliese and Susan Stryker offer some important insights into how we might understand the concept *somatechnics* (2009, 1). They suggest that the neologism *somatechnics* supplants 'the logic of the "and" in the phrase "embodiment and technology", that material corporeality (*soma*) is inextricably conjoined with the techniques and technologies (*technics*) through which bodies are formed and transformed' (Pugliese and Stryker 2009, 1). *Somatechnics*, according to Pugliese and Stryker's analysis, blurs the boundary 'between the human and the non-human, and the living and the inert' (2009, 2). This concept offers us a way to understand how embodiment cannot be reduced to the 'merely physical' and neither can it be 'dematerialised as a purely discursive phenomenon' (ibid). Importantly, Pugliese and Stryker point out that this blurring of boundaries, which the concept of *somatechnics* offers, requires a new metaphysics, 'a metaphysics not predicated on the subject/object split' (ibid). They highlight how this notion also gestures 'toward an ontological necessity, a general *somatechnic* imperative that governs the field of our collective being, from our primate past to post-human present: we have never existed except in relation to the *techné* of symbolic manipulation...' (ibid). Moreover, Pugliese and Stryker propose that *somatechnics* demands 'a re-evaluation and reframing of ethics – of the proper regard for the interrelationship between other, self, and world' (ibid). It is these philosophical provocations that Pugliese and Stryker highlight, provocations that challenge traditional Western metaphysics, logic and ethics, that this paper seeks to explore further. In doing so, I turn to Luce Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference and unpack her challenges to Western metaphysics as well as her proposals for a new relational non-hierarchal

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4 ontology, a new metaphysics that enables a reframing and revaluing of ethics. I think  
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6 these aspects of Irigaray's work can be productively read alongside the concept of  
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8 *somatechnics* as described by Pugliese and Stryker. In thinking through these  
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10 philosophical provocations, I suggest that we can better appreciate the urgency of the  
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12 feminist challenges to binary hierarchical logics undergirding Western metaphysics, and  
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14 the opportunities this offers us to reimagine politics and reframe ethics that takes seriously  
15  
16 'the interrelationship between other, self, and world' (Pugliese and Stryker 2009, 2).  
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18 Reading Irigaray's work alongside this concept of *somatechnics* offers the opportunities  
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20 to recognise, and delve deeper into, the philosophical and ontological challenges that  
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22 Irigaray's work presents. I say this following Ellen Mortensen's claims regarding the lack  
23  
24 of ontological questioning in feminist philosophy (Mortensen 2002, 71). Mortensen  
25  
26 argues that this lacuna is a direct consequence of the debates around essentialism  
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28 (between the 'so called essentialists and the constructionists' in the US during the 80s and  
29  
30 90s) which resulted in a general lack of ontological questioning in feminist philosophy,  
31  
32 with the exception of thinkers like Luce Irigaray, Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz  
33  
34 (Mortensen 2002, 71). And, while there has been a general increase in scholarship  
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36 regarding Irigaray's philosophical contexts and interlocutors, Irigaray's ontological  
37  
38 challenge, including her rethinking of the structures of existence and her conceptions of  
39  
40 materiality, embodiment and subjectivity, remains largely overlooked.<sup>1</sup> In this paper I  
41  
42 thus focus on Irigaray's critique of Western metaphysics and her re-imagining of  
43  
44 subjectivity and temporality—via her notion of the interval and her engagement with  
45  
46 Eastern philosophies—in the hope of opening up space for potential future engagements  
47  
48 between Irigaray's thinking and the *somatechnics* of life (and/or death). This paper  
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59 <sup>1</sup> See 'Introduction' in Roberts (2019) for a more thorough discussion of this problem.  
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3  
4 explores how an Irigarayan concept of subjectivity as *relational rhythmic becoming* poses  
5  
6 a challenge to traditional Western conceptions of subjectivity, as well as traditional  
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8 Western notions of time and space. Irigaray's refiguring of subjectivity as *relational*  
9  
10 *rhythmic becoming* challenges the binary logic of the subject/object split, it challenges  
11  
12 the conception of nature, of bodies, of *soma*, as passive and split from culture, from  
13  
14 *technê*, and can, I think, be read productively alongside a *somatechnics* that 'denotes the  
15  
16 way in which *sôma* and *technê* are inextricably intertwined and bound up in one another'  
17  
18 (Sampson 2013, 233). In this sense I am inspired by the links Kristin Sampson makes  
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20 between *somatechnics* and Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference. Sampson notes:  
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25 If sexual difference were thought of as a way of being in the world, a way of living,  
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27 this would then be something that permeates the living man and woman. It would  
28  
29 be something that fuses and intertwines notions such as nature and culture, body  
30  
31 and soul, sex and gender. In this sense such an understanding could function as a  
32  
33 critique towards these distinctions in a way reminiscent of the way a *somatechnics*  
34  
35 does. (Sampson 2013, 242)  
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39 One of Irigaray's main concerns is that Western metaphysics corresponds 'to an ill-  
40  
41 considered sacrifice of the body and of the universe to a coded and codeable knowledge  
42  
43 outside a present act, to a truth that is valid in all times and all places' (Irigaray 2002, 34).  
44  
45 This sacrifice of the body, and the relation of self with the world, is supported by the  
46  
47 binary logic of subject/object split which undergirds Western metaphysics. Irigaray's  
48  
49 concern with the sacrifice of bodies to a destructive phallogentric and patriarchal coded  
50  
51 knowledge (Western metaphysics) also resonates with an important point Holly Randell-  
52  
53 Moon and Ryan Tippet make regarding *somatechnics* (2016, vii). They suggest that  
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55 *somatechnics* demonstrates the centrality of the body to our experience of the world and  
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4 draws 'attention to the way bodies find expression through social techniques of  
5 manipulation', for example, 'as encompassing social conventions around dress and  
6  
7 behaviour for men and women' (2016, vii). They argue that without these social  
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9 techniques, undergirded by phallogentric and patriarchal coded knowledges, 'such bodies  
10  
11 would not be identifiable as male or female' (ibid). Following Sampson's suggestion  
12  
13 above, perhaps we can understand Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference as an  
14  
15 ontology that offers resources to challenge these restrictive social conventions of gender  
16  
17 through the recognition of the embodied and relational temporalities of 'the living man  
18  
19 and woman' which intertwine nature and culture, *soma* and *techne*, as well as time and  
20  
21 space (ibid). Pugliese and Stryker's suggestion that *somatechnics* requires a new  
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23 metaphysics as well as ethics seems to me to resonate with the links Sampson is making  
24  
25 here as well as echo Irigaray's earlier calls for a 'revolution in thought and ethics'  
26  
27 required for 'the work of sexual difference to take place' (Irigaray 1993, 6).  
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36 In the context of this special issue on the 'Somatechnics of life and death', we can, I think,  
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38 productively read these concerns with temporality, subjectivity, and space—our lived  
39  
40 past, present and futures—alongside an Irigarayan philosophy of sexual difference. Rosi  
41  
42 Braidotti and Catherine Malabou are scholars who have engaged in various ways and to  
43  
44 different degrees with the work of Luce Irigaray and I point briefly to their work here to  
45  
46 highlight the resonances between their work on subjectivity and *somatechnics* as  
47  
48 described above. Moreover, their work provides some context for understanding how we  
49  
50 might think of Irigaray's work on sexual difference in relation to *somatechnics* as well as  
51  
52 to give context to Irigaray's writing on time in the chapters 'Sexual Difference' (1993)  
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4 and 'The Time of Life' (2002) that I go on to discuss in this paper.<sup>2</sup> Braidotti's and  
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6 Malabou's work also highlights the importance for feminist philosophers to continue to  
7  
8 think through temporality and subjectivity both philosophically and politically.  
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13 Both Braidotti's and Malabou's thinking on subjectivity, inspired by Irigaray's  
14  
15 philosophy of sexual difference, views temporality as intimately connected to  
16  
17 embodiment in ways that fundamentally challenge traditional Western notions of the  
18  
19 rational individual subject (undergirded by the subject/object split of Western  
20  
21 metaphysics). Rosi Braidotti argues that feminist explorations of ontological questions  
22  
23 regarding time and space are embedded in a politics of location and cartographies of  
24  
25 power that view subjectivity as 'relational and outside-directed' and 'embedded and  
26  
27 embodied' (Braidotti 2009, 5). Braidotti writes:  
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32 A cartography is a theoretically based and politically informed reading of the  
33  
34 present. As such it responds to my two main requirements: namely, to account for  
35  
36 one's location in terms both of space (geo-political or ecological dimension) and  
37  
38 time (historical and genealogical dimension); and to provide alternative figurations  
39  
40 or schemes of representation for these locations, in terms of power as restrictive  
41  
42 (*postestas*) but also empowering or affirmative (*potentia*) [...] The definition of  
43  
44 his/her identity takes place in between nature/technology; male/female;  
45  
46 black/white; in the spaces that flow and connect such seeming binaries (Braidotti  
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48 2009, 6).  
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58 <sup>2</sup> Both these chapters were first published in French in 1989. 'Sexual Difference' is a chapter from  
59 *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993) and 'The Time of Life' was first translated into English in  
60 2002 and is included in *Between East and West: from singularity to community* (2002).

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4 Engaging directly with Irigaray's work on dialectics and, like Braidotti, interested in  
5 ontological questions and how to articulate new forms of subjectivity in time and space,  
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7 Catherine Malabou highlights how Irigaray thinks of subjectivity as a 'retroactive  
8  
9 intentionality' (Malabou and Ziarek, 2013, 18). Malabou writes that for Irigaray 'being  
10  
11 born has to be reconsidered not as immediate nature but as a "retroactive intentionality"  
12  
13 and temporality, that is, a condition that I can assume only retrospectively, from the  
14  
15 changing perspective of gendered, historical becoming' (2013, 18). This leads Malabou  
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17 to ask:  
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23 Can we then understand being born not as a fixed determination that needs to be  
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25 completely dissolved in culture but rather as an always already plastic condition,  
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27 that is, as a constant movement of both giving form to oneself and receiving it  
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29 from the other? (Malabou 2013, 18)  
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32 Both Braidotti and Malabou's work, although only briefly mentioned here, highlight the  
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34 ways in which *soma* and *technics* are intertwined in thinking through an Irigarayan  
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36 philosophy of sexual difference and can, I think, be read with the concept of *somatechnics*  
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38 in mind.  
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### 45 **The Interval of Sexual Difference**

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47 A central concept in Irigaray's philosophy that speaks to the concept of  
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49 *somatechnics* is the notion of the interval, closely intertwined with the concept of the  
50  
51 sensible-transcendental, and I turn for a moment to a chapter from *An Ethics of Sexual*  
52  
53 *Difference* entitled 'Sexual Difference' in order to explore these concepts further. It is in  
54  
55 the chapter 'Sexual Difference' that Irigaray uncovers the unacknowledged links between  
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4 Christian theology and Western metaphysics. Irigaray argues that the unacknowledged  
5 relationship between theology and philosophy ensures the feminine 'is experienced as  
6 space...while the masculine is experienced as time' (Irigaray 1993, 7). For Irigaray, this  
7 conception and construction of time and matter is gendered. The feminine is reduced to  
8 space, to the material, with no access to an appropriate autonomous subjectivity, to a  
9 gendered temporality with an appropriate past, present and future. The masculine,  
10 according to Irigaray's critique, is the 'Master of Time', however, due to the binary logic  
11 undergirding Western metaphysics, 'He' is split from, and has no relation to, his material  
12 body. Accordingly, Western metaphysics is thus unable to adequately conceive of nature,  
13 of bodies, as fluid, growing and in flux. This logic, this metaphysics, is problematic when  
14 conceiving of female bodies and especially maternal bodies. These conceptions of time,  
15 space and matter, for Irigaray, overlap with a binary hierarchical understanding of sexual  
16 difference currently actualised in our contemporary contexts. This is why Irigaray takes  
17 philosophy and ontological thinking seriously in her reimagining of sexual difference as  
18 non-binary and non-hierarchal. Irigaray goes on to argue that in order to refigure  
19 subjectivity we must, at the same time, refigure the current conceptions of matter (*soma*)  
20 and form (*techne*) in the Western tradition, or what she calls the sensible and  
21 transcendental. And, in doing so, we need to refigure the relation, the interval, the  
22 intermediary, between these two terms. Thus, as I see it, her work on desire and love as  
23 an intermediary, an interval, is an attempt at refiguring ontological conceptions of time  
24 and space, and as we will see, as intimately linked to the breath and the work of the  
25 Hegelian negative. This is why Irigaray's work on refiguring the interval of *space-time* is  
26 crucial to understanding her larger project. Moreover, it is in these moments that the  
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4 concept of *somatechnics* which aims at disrupting the binary logic of the ‘and’ can be  
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6 productively read alongside this notion of the interval in Irigaray’s work.  
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9 In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* Irigaray writes:

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11 The transition to a new age requires a change in our perception and conception of  
12  
13 *space-time*, the *inhabiting of spaces*, and of *containers*, or *envelopes* of identity.

14  
15 It assumes and entails an evolution of a transformation of forms, of the relations  
16  
17 of matter and form and of the interval between: the trilogy of the constitution of  
18  
19 place. Each age inscribes a limit to this trinitary configuration: *matter*, *form*,  
20  
21 *interval*, or *power [puissance]*, *act*, *intermediary-interval* (Irigaray 1993, 7-8).  
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25 She continues:

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27 *Desire* occupies or designates the place of the interval. Giving it a permanent  
28  
29 definition would amount to suppressing it as desire. [...] The transition to a new  
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31 age comes at the same time as a change in the economy of desire (Irigaray 1993,  
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33 8).  
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39 For Irigaray, not only must we change the metaphysical structures that construct the  
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41 feminine as reducible to the static fixed container/place/space for the masculine subject’s  
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43 projections, we must, crucially, at the same time recognise that this entails a new  
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45 articulation of the dynamic relationship between refigured conceptions of space and time,  
46  
47 and consequently, between masculine and feminine. Rebecca Hill articulates this point  
48  
49 well. She writes:  
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53 The interval, then, is fundamental to Irigaray’s project. In nonhierarchical sexual  
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55 difference, the interval is posited explicitly as the opening of thinking and life, while  
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57 in the monosexual economy of metaphysics, the interval is the secret lever of  
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4 differentiation that buries the material-feminine and elevates philosophy as  
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6 phallogentrism. It must be emphasized that the differentiating movement of the  
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8 interval is always understood by Irigaray as both spatial and temporal (Hill 2008,  
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11 120).

### 16 17 **The Time of Life**

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19 Keeping Irigaray's challenge to rethink the interval of *space-time* as a relation of sensible-  
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21 transcendental desire in mind, as well as the possible connections between a philosophy  
22  
23 of sexual difference and the notion of a *somatechnics* of life, I turn now to the first chapter  
24  
25 of Irigaray's short work *Between East and West: from singularity to community* entitled  
26  
27 'The Time of Life' (2002). In this chapter Irigaray poses a unique challenge to Western  
28  
29 metaphysics, Western constructions of time, and especially the idea of time and space as  
30  
31 binary opposites and ahistorical universal concepts. She asks how the theoretical  
32  
33 understanding and practical experience of time differs between Western philosophical  
34  
35 traditions and Eastern philosophical traditions, generally speaking. Irigaray engages with  
36  
37 the tradition of yoga in a novel way, certainly for a philosopher trained in Western  
38  
39 philosophy, because rather than remaining in theoretical, textual and academic mode  
40  
41 Irigaray's method is both a practical and theoretical engagement with the disciplines of  
42  
43 yoga. Indeed, as Sokthan Yeng notes, it is Irigaray's focus on yoga that distinguishes her  
44  
45 approach (Yeng 2014, 65). In 'The Time of Life' Irigaray is not proposing we turn to a  
46  
47 'pure' or 'original' Eastern understanding of time (for Irigaray, there is no such thing)  
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49 and neither is she idealising 'the East' as a single monolithic culture. Neither is this a text,  
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60 as Penelope Deutscher's reading suggests, simply about the politics of cultural difference

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4 (2002).<sup>3</sup> Certainly, when a European philosopher chooses to engage, positively or  
5 negatively, with so-called Eastern traditions we ought to recall and pay attention to the  
6 work of Edward Said and his important critique of how European thinkers, in constructing  
7 the imaginary of ‘the West’ necessarily construct ‘the East’ (and non-West) as negative  
8 Other in a binary logic that serves as a starting point for their analysis. Said calls this (on-  
9 going) process Orientalism. Said notes that his work ‘tries to show that European culture  
10 gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate  
11 and even underground self’ (Said 1978, 1).<sup>4</sup> Irigaray notices differences between  
12 traditions but does not accept these distinctions as clear cut or ontological, and certainly  
13 does not use this distinction as a starting point to elevate ‘the West’. The title of the book  
14 *Between East and West: from singularity to community* is a deliberate challenge to the  
15 constructed binary separation of East and West and it is clear Irigaray’s argument  
16 appreciates Said’s argument when she writes: ‘What I live and think today is woven  
17 between two traditions, provided that there really are two and that it is not rather a matter  
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42 <sup>3</sup> As I argue elsewhere (see ‘Introduction’ in Roberts 2019) Deutscher’s focus on the ‘impossibility’ of  
43 sexual difference hinders an appreciation of the ontological questioning in Irigaray’s work. See also  
44 Mookherjee, (2003, 43).

45 <sup>4</sup> Said writes:

46 The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and  
47 oldest colonies, the source of its civilisations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its  
48 deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe  
49 (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is  
50 merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture.  
51 Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of  
52 discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial  
53 bureaucracies and colonial styles [. . .] Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological  
54 and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident.’  
55 Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political  
56 theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between  
57 East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and  
58 political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, ‘mind,’ destiny, and so on. (Said  
59 1978, 1).  
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4 of a development of human consciousness, more or less present or forgotten' (Irigaray  
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6 2002, 10-11).<sup>5</sup>  
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11 In 'The Time of Life' Irigaray continues her project of challenging Western metaphysical  
12 notions of time and space and in this chapter Irigaray documents what she sees as  
13 similarities between her refiguring of Western conceptions of *space-time* (as intermediary  
14 or interval or love or desire) and how time is conceived in Eastern traditions. Irigaray  
15 finds similarities but never assumes sameness between her work on sexual difference and  
16 Eastern traditions, and neither does she argue that we must encompass all of the beliefs  
17 that are upheld in these Eastern traditions. Rather, we can read Irigaray's work here as  
18 part of a larger ontological argument. Irigaray wants to demonstrate—via a radically  
19 different methodological engagement with a radically different metaphysical system—  
20 how Western metaphysics is founded upon myth, disconnected from life (and bodies) and  
21 works to silence non-hierarchical sexual difference.<sup>6</sup> Thus, what makes Irigaray's project  
22 in *Between East and West* unique is the way in which she explores these different  
23 conceptions of *space-time*. As one will see throughout *Between East and West*, Irigaray  
24 describes her phenomenological engagement with the practice of yoga *alongside* her  
25 philosophical engagement with the major texts of the Indian traditions. Irigaray practices  
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47 <sup>5</sup> Irigaray spends a section in *Between East and West* detailing what she has learned and what she has not  
48 (yet) learned from practicing yoga and reading the important texts of the tradition. Irigaray writes:

49 If I have learned from my yoga teachers the importance of breathing in order to survive, to cure  
50 certain ills, and to attain detachment and autonomy, I have not received from them, neither male  
51 nor female, any information about a sexualization of breathing or of energy, about its usefulness in  
52 the respect of love of self or of other. I had to invent and pursue this course alone: by practice, by  
53 listening (to myself), by reading, by awakening myself, by creating links with the West, including  
54 to cure certain sufferings. *What I live and think today is woven between two traditions, provided*  
55 *that there really are two and that it is not rather a matter of a development of human*  
56 *consciousness, more or less present or forgotten* (Irigaray 2002, 10-11 my emphasis).

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58 <sup>6</sup> Irigaray's engagement is also an example of how to rethink and revalue ethics, how to approach the  
59 other 'as other' and, as I suggest, to rediscover and protect a space for silence. This is discussed in detail  
60 in the chapter 'Approaching the Other as Other' in *Between East and West* (2002).

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4 yoga *as well as* studying some of the foundational texts of Hinduism; The Upanishads  
5 and The Vedas. We can read Irigaray's daily practice of yoga and the importance she  
6 places on practice as an important aspect of understanding embodiment and subjectivity  
7 as the site in which nature and culture, body and mind, soma and techne are entangled,  
8 and not in straightforward ways. Irigaray's daily practice of yoga demonstrates a unique  
9 challenge to Western philosophical traditions and in the context of a special issue on the  
10 *somatechnics* of life provides an interesting perspective on rethinking corporeality as  
11 always already entangled with cultural techniques.  
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25 While at first glance one might think that the purpose of this initial chapter in *Between*  
26 *East and West* is to highlight problems with Schopenhauer's appeal to the Hindu tradition,  
27 Irigaray does this in order to create the spaces needed for an exploration of the  
28 conceptions and structures of *space and time* between the two traditions, and in doing so,  
29 challenges the Orientalist idea that there are really 'two'. Irigaray's aim here is to  
30 emphasise that her exploration is an embodied and philosophical engagement which I  
31 think can certainly be read alongside the central themes of *somatechnics*. In this sense,  
32 perhaps we can read Irigaray as performing a *somatechnics* of sexual difference and, in  
33 doing so, attempting to actualise an autonomous feminine subjectivity as *relational*  
34 *rhythmic becoming*. In her yogic practice Irigaray is demonstrating how an autonomous  
35 subjectivity works out her own non-sacrificial dialectical passage between body and  
36 mind, as well as refiguring the interval between without either term (or method of  
37 engagement) being appropriated or valued as the universal. Perhaps Irigaray's method  
38 here is somatechnical? Regardless of how we name it, recognising Irigaray's method is  
39 crucial here because as she points out, these traditions of India bring theory and practice  
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4 into relation with a temporal dimension that does not occur in recent Western traditions.  
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6 The philosophical traditions of India generally do not sacrifice practice for abstracted  
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8 theory, or sacrifice body to become spirit, in the way that modern Western metaphysics  
9  
10 does. Thus, it is not difficult to see moments of similarity between Irigaray's refiguration  
11  
12 space-time-desire and certain traditions of India. Irigaray notes:  
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16 According to this tradition no theory or practice is ever completed. Both are  
17  
18 always evolving. The task is to try to connect the here and now of today, this  
19  
20 present moment of our life, to the reality of yesterday and that of tomorrow. It is  
21  
22 not a question of uttering a truth valid once and for all (Irigaray 2002, 21).  
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27 This explanation has a direct link to Irigaray's work in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*  
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29 where she begins to articulate sexual difference as a refigured dialectic in four terms, and  
30  
31 importantly, calls into question Western metaphysical notions of space and time. In  
32  
33 Irigaray's articulation of Diotima's dialectic and the sensible transcendental she notes:  
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36 Diotima's dialectic is in at least *four terms*: the here, the two poles of the  
37  
38 encounter, and the beyond—but a beyond that never abolishes the here. And so  
39  
40 on, indefinitely. The mediator is never abolished in an infallible knowledge.  
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42 Everything is always in movement, in a state of becoming. And the mediator of  
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44 all this is, among other things, or exemplarily, love. Never fulfilled, always  
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46 becoming (Irigaray 1993, 21).  
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52 It is in Irigaray's reading of Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium* that the non-  
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54 sacrificial relation of love as interval or intermediary—that is foundational to a culture of  
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56 sexual difference—blossoms. This relation is never fulfilled and is always becoming. It  
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58 is a dialectic that refigures the temporalities of the present, the past and the future of each  
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4 subjectivity while at the same time articulating a non-sacrificial love relation between the  
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6 two. We could say it is a dialectic that brings the macro- and microcosm of each sexuate  
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8 subjectivity into relation.<sup>7</sup>  
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13 Thus, before turning to critique Schopenhauer's work in 'The Time of Life', Irigaray  
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15 explicitly positions and situates her project under the oracle of opening. In the opening  
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17 paragraph Irigaray notes:  
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20 I will situate these questions under the sign or the oracle of opening, thus of  
21  
22 egological nonclosure, of renunciation of narcissistic self-importance, the first  
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24 condition of listening and of speaking that the tradition of India taught me  
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27 (Irigaray 2002, 21).  
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31 Irigaray tells us here that it is the tradition of yoga that taught her that the first condition  
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33 of listening and of speaking is to overcome the narcissistic self-importance that reduces  
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35 all others to the One or Same. Irigaray is making it very clear from the opening pages of  
36  
37 *Between East and West* that it is this type of open non-appropriative phenomenological  
38  
39 engagement with the traditions of India that she hopes to stage. It is Irigaray's intention  
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41 to highlight how her personal experiences and phenomenological method of engagement  
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43 with the traditions of India is very different to Schopenhauer's. Irigaray suggests that  
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51 <sup>7</sup> As I argue elsewhere:

52 Sexuate difference is situated in "the here," the present, what actually exists in this moment: two sexuate  
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54 bodies with their own relations to genealogy and the beyond, which cannot be substituted for each other.  
55  
56 They are irreducible and transcendent to each other in this relation that is vertical and horizontal. In this  
57  
58 way, sexuate difference is universal (as it fundamentally rethinks the relation between universal and  
59  
60 particular), and consequently may provide a foundation for a global model of ethics that challenges existing  
gender and racial stereotypes. (Roberts, 2017)

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4 Schopenhauer's metaphysics can be defined as biological materialism (Irigaray 2002,  
5  
6 24). While biological materialism might seem to undermine a binary either/or logic  
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8 between nature and culture, for Irigaray it is problematic because it covers over the  
9  
10 possibility of recognising the dynamic interval of desire (and breath) that we need to  
11  
12 refigure between nature and culture, or body and mind, and importantly, time and space.  
13  
14 Again, we see links here with the ways in which Pugliese and Stryker use *somatechnics*  
15  
16 to conceive of embodiment as that which cannot be reduced to the 'merely physical' and  
17  
18 neither can it be 'dematerialised as a purely discursive phenomenon' (Pugliese and  
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20 Stryker 2009, 2).  
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27 Schopenhauer covers over the potential of an 'Irgarayan' interval, a space of silence, the  
28  
29 breath, from which a new ethical relational ontology may potentially evolve. Irigaray  
30  
31 argues that Schopenhauer does not recognise that within the Hindu traditions matter is  
32  
33 never separated from transcendence, body from spirit, nature from culture, practice from  
34  
35 theory, and time from space. Within Hindu traditions the body is always in relation to the  
36  
37 universal structures or, as Irigaray says, 'micro and macrocosm' (ibid). Schopenhauer's  
38  
39 misunderstanding occurs because he fails to appreciate this crucial aspect of the traditions  
40  
41 of India; body and mind are always in relation. As Irigaray goes on to suggest, in order  
42  
43 for us to have some chance of understanding another tradition we need to *listen to* (and  
44  
45 to *recognise* in the non-appropriative sense she articulates in *I Love To You*) the men and  
46  
47 women of this culture – i.e. 'practitioners of the Vedas, of yoga, of mantras, of the texts  
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49 or the art of India' (Irigaray 2002, 30). We must, as the title of one of the chapters of  
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51 *Between East and West* suggests, approach the other *as other*. What I think she means is  
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4 that yoga philosophy and thought cannot be understood outside of the context of bodily  
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6 practice. She writes:

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9 Indian culture does not separate theory and practice, notably in love. And we risk  
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11 interpreting very badly if we do not approach it with an appropriate practice. It  
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13 seems that this misunderstanding exists, for example, in the work of  
14  
15 Schopenhauer. He has retained certain elements of the Indian tradition, but has he  
16  
17 not perverted these in taking them out of their framework... (Irigaray 2002, 30).  
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22 I think the direct reference to love here is again evoking Irigaray's reading of Diotima in  
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24 Plato's discussions of love. Irigaray suggests Diotima's method miscarries when she  
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26 begins to speak of love in terms of causation. When Diotima reduces love to reproduction  
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28 in the second half of her speech, it loses the demonic intermediary character she had, in  
29  
30 the first half, demonstrated it to have. Irigaray suggests that this reduction of love to  
31  
32 reproduction may in fact be the foundational split in Western metaphysics, in which *time*  
33  
34 becomes conceived of as split from space, and enables a binary phallogentric logic that  
35  
36 founds Western metaphysics. Irigaray's point is that within Hindu traditions the  
37  
38 relationship between body and soul, practice and theory, is not structured in the same  
39  
40 way. Irigaray's engagement with notions of time in Hindu traditions consequently calls  
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42 into question the supposed universality of Western metaphysics. In her reading of  
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44 Diotima Irigaray notes that within Western traditions love as intermediary, as a sensible  
45  
46 transcendental, becomes replaced by the child and consequently, love becomes split  
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48 between the body and soul. We become, Irigaray suggests either 'lovers in body'  
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50 (mothers) or 'lovers in soul' (men) (1993, 27). The lovers in body or mothers become  
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52 reduced to a reproductive function with no access to autonomous subjectivity and the  
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4 lovers in soul consequently have no access to flesh except via the maternal-feminine. If  
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6 women become reduced to the mothering function then the excess erotic energy of  
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8 feminine pleasure is repressed, reducing women to reproductive objects. In her reading  
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10 of Diotima Irigaray describes how she views this process:  
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14       Instead of leaving the child to germinate or ripen in the milieu of love and  
15  
16       fecundity between man and woman, she seeks a cause for love in the animal  
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18       world: *procreation*. Diotima's method miscarries here. From this point on, she  
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20       leads love into a split between mortality and immortality, and love loses its  
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22       daimonic character. Is this the foundational act of meta-physics? There will be  
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24       lovers in body, lovers in soul. But the perpetual passage from mortal to immortal  
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26       that lovers confer on each other is blurred. Love has lost its divinity, its  
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28       mediumistic, alchemical qualities between couples of opposites. Since love is no  
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30       longer the intermediary, the child plays this role (Irigaray 1993, 27).  
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37       As I have suggested, it is Irigaray's own refiguring of Diotima's dialectic that figures the  
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39       relation of love as intermediary, as interval, that brings past and present, mortality and  
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41       immortality, sensible and transcendental, into a non-sacrificial relation. Recall that  
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43       Irigaray describes the temporal relation that occurs in this idea of love as a sensible  
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45       transcendental which, I suggest, evokes the concept of *somatechnics* outlined at the  
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47       beginning of this paper.  
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53       Irigaray argues in 'The Time of Life' that Schopenhauer reduces the (masculine) subject  
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55       to a biological system of reproduction. She suggests that according to Schopenhauer the  
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57       living present for the subject is understood to be a 'passively suffered temporality  
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4 between' birth and death (Irigaray 2002, 32). Schopenhauer's understanding of *time* as  
5 this passively suffered temporality between birth and death is at odds with the Indian  
6 traditions. Irigaray notes '[m]an is never at the centre there, but he is also not "less than,"  
7 "not as good as" some animal for example, as he would be according to Schopenhauer's  
8 statements' (Irigaray 2002, 31). So, while *he* is not the 'master of time' as traditional  
9 Western metaphysics holds, within the Hindu system(s) Irigaray argues the (masculine)  
10 subject still has a relation with time that cannot be reduced to a system of reproduction.  
11 Irigaray notes that with these Indian traditions 'man' has an active relation to temporality.  
12 She writes:  
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25 Man is, and inasmuch as he is, he must devote himself to being at the service of  
26 macro- or microcosmic temporality. The Vedas, the Upanishads, and yoga have  
27 for their principle function to assure the articulation between the instant and  
28 immortality or eternity (Irigaray 2002, 31).  
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34 Whereas Schopenhauer would have us believe that the masculine subject is passively  
35 suffering in the present, Irigaray points out that within Indian traditions the primary task  
36 of the gods and yogis is to 'articulate a continuity between the present and immortality or  
37 eternity' (Irigaray 2002: 32). Irigaray argues the gods and yogis of India are actively in  
38 the present; 'they start from it and look for the means to repair, to re-establish, a torn up  
39 cosmic time through the constitution of immortality or of eternity for the universe and  
40 oneself' (Irigaray 2002: 32). Crucially, this continuity of time is structured by *acts*,  
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52 What I wanted to signal is that the present, temporality, the relation between the  
53 instant and immortality or eternity is constituted by *acts*, and not only by words,  
54 logical and grammatical conventions... (Irigaray 2002, 32).  
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7 These *acts* that Irigaray is referring to here are rituals such as the practice of yoga and  
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9 yogic breathing, chanting mantras and meditation. In this sense, it is Irigaray's  
10  
11 engagement with the practice of yoga that is one way or one example of how we can  
12  
13 imagine bringing her notion of the sensible transcendental to fruition. In the daily physical  
14  
15 and spiritual practice of yoga and conscious breathing we can learn to rearticulate notions  
16  
17 of time, and bring instant and eternity together in the embodied practice of yoga: a  
18  
19 rhythmic subjectivity emerges. Irigaray suggests that what some Western perspectives  
20  
21 might interpret as ritualism in Eastern traditions is in fact, 'for these practitioners, the  
22  
23 accomplishment of acts, of gestures, appropriate for linking the body to the universe, the  
24  
25 instant to duration, etc.' (Irigaray 2002, 33). Thus, we see how in yoga the particular  
26  
27 singularity of an action of a person is metaphysical and ontological. It is also political and  
28  
29 has the potential to redefine the relation between the singular and the community as often  
30  
31 these acts are practiced together, such as chanting and prayer.<sup>8</sup>  
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39 Irigaray writes it is impossible using the Western phallogocentric logic that splits  
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41 metaphysics and philosophy from the body to engage in such a way that we can recognise  
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43 and appreciate these deeply philosophical and metaphysical aspects of yoga. A Western  
44  
45 conception of time that sacrifices the present act, the time of life, embodied life, is  
46  
47 connected to the silencing of non-hierarchical sexual difference. She writes:  
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50 We are unaccustomed to hearing this discourse concerning India because our  
51  
52 tradition, since the golden age of the Greeks in particular, has begun to break the  
53  
54 continuity between micro- and macrocosm [...] What we call metaphysics  
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58 <sup>8</sup> Elisha Foust takes up this point in her 2013 chapter 'Breathing the Political: A Meditation on  
59 the Preservation of Life in the Midst of War'.  
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4 corresponds, in its negative side, to an ill-considered sacrifice of the body and of  
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6 the universe to a coded and codeable knowledge outside a *present act*, to a truth  
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8 that is valid in all times and all places. (Irigaray 2002, 33-34).  
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13 Irigaray thus argues for a revolution to Western notions of time that will recognise the  
14  
15 reality of the living world as a dynamic and fluid ‘time of life’—a time of life that  
16  
17 recognises the cyclical, fluidity, and growth. An Irigarayan ‘time of life’ that can be read  
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19 alongside the notion of *somatechnics* to articulate a new metaphysics that nurtures and  
20  
21 supports a relational ontology which supplants ‘the logic of the “and”’ as well as blurring  
22  
23 the boundaries ‘between the human and the non-human, and the living and the inert’  
24  
25 (Pugliese and Stryker 2009, 1-2). Irigaray’s ‘time of life’ is a refigured space-time-desire  
26  
27 of the sensible transcendental that is evoked in her chapter ‘Sexual Difference’. The  
28  
29 relation between space-time is evoked as the interval, as desire, as love, as intermediary,  
30  
31 as breath, as the passage between. These conceptions all evoke the notion of subjectivity  
32  
33 as a *relational rhythmic becoming* and are intimately connected to the ontological changes  
34  
35 that Irigaray argues are required for sexual difference to come about. Irigaray argues we  
36  
37 have to challenge the current conception of time in Western traditions as it is insufficient  
38  
39 and, crucially, that it is based on the principles of non-contradiction. The principles of  
40  
41 noncontradiction are foundational to Western philosophy and it is these that need to be  
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43 challenged and replaced in accordance with our changing and dynamic reality. She writes:  
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50 The time of life has become a socio-logical temporality founded on a second (or  
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52 double) nature of man that has caused him to lose his relation to the living  
53  
54 world...What assures this torn and artificial temporality are logical structures  
55  
56 founded upon the principles of noncontradiction, that is to say upon the definition  
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4 of a second nature the poles of which are no longer day and night, the seasons, the  
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6 ages of life, but, at best, the oscillating from the true to the false, from a clear to  
7  
8 an obscure that are called spiritual, from a speculative day to its night (Irigaray  
9  
10 2002, 47).  
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16 We require a *somatechnics* of life that enables Braidotti's feminist figurations in which  
17  
18 definitions of identity take place in the intervals between 'nature/technology,  
19  
20 male/female; black/white; in the spaces that flow and connect such seeming binaries'  
21  
22 (Braidotti 2009, 6). Irigaray's refiguring of space-time-desire and sexuate subjectivity as  
23  
24 embodied *relational rhythmic becoming* can be understood in these terms. Irigaray's  
25  
26 philosophy intervenes in Western metaphysics in order to disrupt and to conceive of  
27  
28 ontology differently. Reading Irigaray's unique engagement with yogic philosophy and  
29  
30 practice alongside the concept of *somatechnics* opens productive space to think through  
31  
32 how the notion of *somatechnics* of life can open up Western metaphysics to recognise  
33  
34 that humans 'have never existed except in relation to the *techné* of symbolic  
35  
36 manipulation...' (Pugliese and Stryker 2009, 2).  
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