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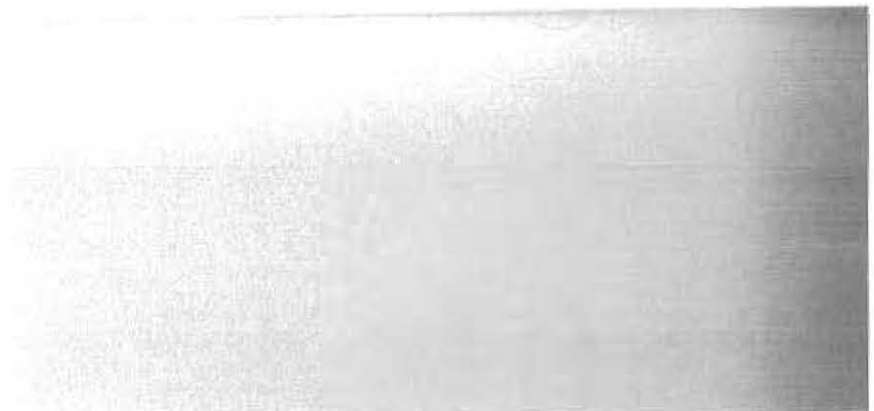
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## Unbearable Fire and Water:

The Search for the Spirit of Women in the Discussion of  
Paul Tillich's "Spiritual Presence" and  
Robert S. Corrington's "Spirit's Eros"

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*The bottom, the center, the most hidden, inner place, the heart of the crypt to which "God" alone descends when he has renounced modes and attributes. For this most secret virginity of the "soul" surrenders only to one who also freely offers the self in all its nakedness. This most private chamber opens only to one who is indebted to no possession for potency... But how to remember all this if the fire was so fierce, the current so strong as to remove all traces? If everything has become fire and water and nothing remains but a burning shimmer and flowing stream? If the breeze was so deep as to erase all memory of the path of touch that still guides us in our ecstatic transports? If nothing remains but/of an incandescent hearth that none can reach?*

Luce Irigaray<sup>1)</sup>

This is a story that I remember, the story I saw, dreamed, or the story I imagined. It doesn't matter. It never matters to me, or to a woman who knows how it was; her quick was burned, her slit was torn, her bone was clipped, once, or over and over. There are always cryptic stories in me, in her, that have been recessed in a den or a cave where I/she was relentlessly confined, shackled, strained. The story, however, has never vanished. The abyss of oblivion never works in that place. And there are paths, or cleavages, that intermittently open their gateways be they entrances/exits. How elusive they are, how shrouded they are: these indefinite passages are the path ways where I/she tell, edit, translate, interpret stories, and sometime, create, if I/she am evoked with an unbounded stories.

### 1. Unbearable Fire

There was a woman with torn and soiled cloth, bare feet, disheveled hair. Her eyes were tarnished with desolation. Sometimes, however, she shrieked with an impetuous rejoicing convulsively. Her vile and desperate wondering was insane, of course. There was, however, a momentary blaze in her half-laugh, half-cry which agitated and shattered rational boundaries. No definition, no clarity. Only sheer betweenness. Sometimes her stupor eroded and depleted her fathomless glare. But she always shed a spark of fire. Everything was red in this story. The subterranean heat of Summer flourished red flowers--wild roses, moss, canna, cockscomb. Everything was red like a flame. And she culminated her madness in a conflagration. Was it hysteria, or *hystera*, a forbidden place, the Platonic cave?

Why was she disdained and tormented? Did her astonishing indifference on the discrete edges confound the integral horizon? Did

1) Luce Irigaray. *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 196

her unwary wondering threaten binary compulsion between the rational and insane, the sacred and profane, and even perhaps between male and female? Did her hysteria provoke *hystera* for the woman who had lost (though she never had) her time and space in a presentational configuration--the androcentric and phallogentric speculation of woman? Did her uncanny ravage collide with the code of finitude imprinted by the godly/fatherly order, and trigger an unworldly elevation of a supernatural/unnatural realm even though it is only an elevation into a hollow? Why does she intrigue me with an irresistible flare that instigates my fire? What is the connection between her fire, which she carried forth and burned off, and my fire, which has not yet turned into ashes but is still hiding/repressing its kindling in a dormant volcano? If that connection exists, despite its ambiguity, that connection is probably the space where I talk with you, we talk with them, and we talk with ourselves. If that conjunction exists, and if I/we can talk, I/we would talk with fire that burns the configuration, speculation, determination, computation. Within that burning space, without traces of a contour and compulsion, fire, finally, meets with water, the deep ocean, or the abysmal chaos.

## 2. Unbearable Water

There was a woman who was being submerged herself into the deep ocean. Her stuporous body was plunging into the opaque water where light hardly reaches its radiance. Where did I see the woman? In my memory, in my dream, or in my subconscious? Who is she? Is she someone I know, someone I imagine? Or, is she I? Whoever she is, her dead body, if she was really dead as I had supposed, had a strange sheerness that luminesced peacefulness, immaculateness, and consolation without sound, energy, or color. She only reflected her

outer current that was intermittently encircling her body--the silver rays at the edge of the black hole of her horizon. In this unfathomable depth, time is devoured. Only an unremembered dream time that freely floats within/beyond time. No time line nor history exists reflecting her being. This silence, paralysis, and void are points of time that my/our voice(s) engulf into a gamut. In this cacophony, language shatters its signification, its grammar, its pronunciation, and its rhythm. But, in this abyss, there is the enormous fluidity of feeling, senses, intuition, and even abjections that goad my/our loss--the lost memories, words, and meanings. There is no split, thus, no betweenness nor oscillation but pure chaos, the inexhaustible potencies that attract my/our unborn ecstasy.

Those are my stories, my memories, my metaphors that I capture to envision the feminist spirit. Through the flame of fire, women's torment and desolation are disclosed in which some survive and some perish. Through the depth of water, women's silence and ambiguity resonate in which some emerge and some are still falling. Then, what is the feminist spirit? If I ask whether the fissure between fire and water can be connected, some external intermediary is demanded. But, if I ask whether fire and water can simultaneously exist in the same space/time, without canceling out one other, that signifies something internal evocation. These two different questions are suggested for the feminist searching of spirit while discussing spirit(s), divine spirit, nature's spirit, and the human spirit through Paul Tillich and "Ecstatic naturalism." From Tillich's perspective, using his term "Spiritual Presence," he stresses divine spirit to mean that, which grasps human spirit, has healing power and love that turn ambiguity of life in estrangement to unambiguous life in which human spirit cannot exist by itself. On the other hand, ecstatic naturalism, spirit is a field phenomenon that ambiguously exists

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between the structures of the potencies of nature, *nature naturing*, and the emerging orders of nature, *nature natured*, which is analogous with "ontological difference" that rejects/abjects a maternal ground of self to attain orders of the semiosis. On the one hand, there is spirit that falls from sky, and on the other hand, there is spirit that emerges from depth. In searching the notion of spirit for a feminist theology, each has its respective significance that exhibits its limitation and openness.

## I. Paul Tillich's "Spiritual Presence"

### 1. Finite/nonbeing

Tillich states that "nonbeing appears as the 'not yet' of being and as the 'no more' of being" which is finite.<sup>2)</sup> The finitude of human existence negates its finite element, which is the negation of nonbeing and the awareness of finitude of self by which anxiety is appeared. This anxiety provokes fear about "disintegrating and falling into nonbeing through existence disruption" and "destruction of the ontological structure."<sup>3)</sup> Here is a deep fissure between being and nonbeing--one infinite, the other finite, one divine, the other human. The chaotic formlessness, nothingness, and meaninglessness threaten ontological structure. Thus, the transcendency of infinity is necessary for human existence in order to "directs the mind to experience its own unlimited potentialities,"<sup>4)</sup> as life is the process of actualization from potentiality. There are, however, tensions between potentiality,

2) Mark Kline Taylor, ed. *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 157.

3) *Ibid.*, 160.

4) *Ibid.*, 157-8

which is residing in "dreaming innocence," the state of "Adam before the Fall," and self-actualization, which is processing in existential structure. This tension is analogous with "estrangement" which is symbolized as demonic powers that separate finite being from the infinite God. The human being, in its estrangement state is "sin" and the reunion of God is "reconciliation" that is possible only through love. For Tillich, God, the infinite power of being, the ground of being, is "being-itself" that infinitely transcends every finite being and gives finite being courage to transcend nonbeing.

So where can the woman be located in this scenario? Did she ever have her own space in this chasm of the finite and infinite? Her existence dwells in the "no more" of being, the "not yet" of being, itself, in the representation, speculation, and configuration of the male structure. Although human finitude negates its finite element, her existence is only plunged into "nonbeing," thus, there is no anxiety that represents her "ontological quality." She does not have her-self to be lost. She does not need to fear "falling into nonbeing," as she is already a nonbeing. She does not need to worry the "destruction of (her) ontological structure," as she never had her own ontological structure. It is she who threatens man, and her chaotic nothingness is where he suspects demonic power. She is depleted and strained by his fear of falling into nothingness, into woman, into *hystera*. So how can she transcend her nonbeing, and to where is she directed, if she cannot locate herself in this dis-placement of ontological structure but rather, is shackled in boundless chaos?

But, if life is the process of actualization from potentiality, and she never actualizes her-self, does that mean she is still existing in "dreaming innocence" that must be actualized? If she does not have her own ontological structure, based on actualization, but remains in the state of potentiality, where is her "estrangement" that separates

her from God, while there is no fissure between her nonbeing-self and the infinite? She is still waiting in/with God to spawn her "self," her life, her structure. Her place in boundless chaos, the infinite potentiality, precludes her from engaging the dynamics and tensions of polarity that embodies "human vitality." She has not yet realized polarity. She has only one direction from which to evolve so as not to fall back albeit of her unpredictable wondering into innumerable unknown paths. For her, this evolution is self-organization into a new being not transcendentalization. Courage for her is not the "self-affirmation" as nonbeing that makes it possible to transcend nonbeing to reconcile with "the power of being-itself." Rather, courage for her is a self-affirmation of spawning ground that is united in/with the power of ground. A "courage to be" for her, thus, is not "beyond the threat of nonbeing" but into the *jouissance* of creation, embodiment, incarnation.

But, woman still carries her fire that at times extinguishes her. She still stays in the betweenness with an echoing half cry half laugh. She is still despised in mimicry, in the finite reflection of the male infinite, in the not yet male, in the mirror structure. So she has deep anxiety! Her illusory "dialectical relationship" with the world gives her a false Aego-self" that never realizes a true "self-centered" since her ontological elements are all imitation.

What are the ontological elements? According to Tillich, they are "individualization and participation," "dynamics and form," "freedom and destiny." The self-centered individual participates in the open universe, into "another completely centered and completely individual self" by which communion is constituted.<sup>5)</sup> A "definite being" has a form that forms something. Dynamics is "the

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5) Taylor. 143-146.



potentiality of being" which occurs in encountering with nonbeing/chaos. The polarity of dynamics and form permits and enables self to transcend its nature, thus creating new meaningful contents, "a world beyond the given world." Freedom is the freedom of that being, a complete self, and destiny is what forms the self. Therefore, Amy destiny is the basis of my freedom; my freedom participates in shaping my destiny."<sup>6)</sup> These ontological elements in their tension provoke anxiety that constitutes finitude, that is, "the possibility of losing one's ontological structure" and "one's self."<sup>7)</sup>

Woman's finitude, however, has different ontological elements. She is not a definite being or self-centered being, and what forms her content is not her culture. If she has to lose her ontological structure, it would be a different fear because there is no real her-self to lose. Then, why anxiety? Her desolate betweenness or not-yetness has dialectical elements not in a fissure between the finite and infinite but in a split between authenticity and imitation. Her anxiety emerges from her betweenness in a junction with the compulsory world that confines her configuration into a mimic. She is oscillating at the edge of her chaotic potentiality and the resisting power of determined system. At her phase of transition, she, indeed, needs courage to be herself. Unfortunately, she has not yet found her becoming. She is wandering around a dry wilderness without knowing her transgression of reason, logic, or order. Thus, her madness is her torment, anguish, fury, a pit, but, perhaps, it is her freedom and destiny that burned off all given logic, traits, trajectory, devices. But if she does not want to die, she has to find a healing energy that enables her to transfigure her hysteria to *hystera*, the spawning ground of her

6) Ibid., 153

7) Ibid., 162.

becoming. In her wandering, in her search for her-self, what she needs is a spiritual blaze, spiritual ecstasy, spiritual connection, that makes it possible for her actually to see her recess, the hidden kindling, which was seemingly lost in amnesia.

## 2. Spiritual Presence/Love

For Tillich, the "Spiritual Presence" is for the transcendent unity of "unambiguous life" since, he argues, the "ambiguities of life are rooted in the separation and interplay of essential and existential elements of being."<sup>8)</sup> The reunion of these separated elements realizes ambiguous life to transcend to unambiguous life, but that is not possible by its own power. The divine Spirit has to break into the human spirit, since the human spirit needs to be grasped by something "ultimate and unconditional." The "transcendent union," thus, needs the Spiritual Presence which is the divine Spirit. When Spiritual Presence "grasps man," the creative power of the Spiritual Presence turns ambiguous life into unambiguous life, because the human spirit is ambiguous, whereas the divine Spirit creates unambiguous life. This state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence is "ecstasy," the liberation power that one sees "the impact of the Spiritual Presence in the light of eternity," "the ground of and aim of all being."<sup>9)</sup>

The transcendent union is encompassed within the human spirit as the ecstatic movement, faith and love. For Tillich, "faith is the state of being *grasped* by the transcendent unity of unambiguous life-it embodies love as the state of being *taken into* that transcendent unity."<sup>10)</sup> Love, therefore, drives one toward the reunion of the

8) Tillich, *Systematic Theology* Vol. III (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1963), 129

9) *Ibid.*, 119.

10) *Ibid.*, 129

separated which is effective in three life processes: "it unites in a center, it created the new, and it drives beyond everything given to its ground and aim."<sup>11)</sup> The desire for reunion with the whole and the desire for the "possibility of reaching unlimited abundance" is the root of love. At the same time, it is "the temptation of man who is a self and has a world."<sup>12)</sup> Through the participation of the centered whole of a being, the self is aware of the will to unite, the will to love. Love, without will to love, he says, can never penetrate the other person. The Spiritual Presence, thus, "elevating man through faith and love to the transcendent unity of unambiguous life, creates the New Being above the gap between essence and existence and, consequently, above the ambiguities of life."<sup>13)</sup> This elevation is integration to the divine center which is only possible through the impact of the divine power, the Spiritual Presence. Thus, "salvation means healing," and the total healing is "salvation beyond ambiguities and fragments."<sup>14)</sup> The answer for the ambiguities of life is, for Tillich, the Spiritual Presence and its transcending power, uniting healing, and communicating love.

Where can woman find a light that can guide her nocturnal wandering, when the solar system is not available to her and the moonlight is too vague as her compass, insofar as she does not recognize her lunar energy? Does this tragic roam represent her ambiguity? When is she separated from God, the male divinity, the male system, and when she is not yet united with her ground and aim, does she have to wait for something ultimate and unconditional

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11) Ibid., 134.

12) Tillich, *Systematic Theology* Vol. II (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 59.

13) Ibid., 138.

14) Ibid., 282.

that grasps her aching spirit and transcends her to day light, so she can be converted prior to going astray? In that way she is brought back to her configuration, to her duty to be a mimic, but only to be shackled into the labyrinth of her den again. When the transforming power is diving into her, grasps her, and sentences her to the unambiguous place, her trial becomes a mockery, the real tragedy of unambiguity. There, her false ecstasy becomes palatable sensuality under the male gaze rather than in the shadow of liberation. Her temptation is chastened in her gender, in her sexuality, in her body as sin, pollution, prohibition.

Woman's lack of ambiguity, thus, brings her more wounds. So where does she find her ecstasy, healing, and love? Could she make an epic in decoding her mirrored language by creating her own words, her own world? If God is on her side, could her emptiness be filled with divine spirit? Perhaps so, if God is really her ground of being. Nevertheless, she encounters spirit(s) in her betweenness, if she really touches her origin. Her betweenness in ambiguity could be a secret passage for a new becoming. Her wounds are her lunar energy ambiguously illuminating her split, her slit. When she embraces lunar energy in this betweenness, in between her essence and existence, in between her true centered self and her false forced self, there is a possibility of a solar eclipse. Her solidified scars emit the latent energy and free her from a heliotropic structure. Her lunar energy enables her to transgress her finitude, her wounds, and to touch her ground, the lost self. There, she encounters her aim, her *jouissance*, her love, her liberation. She could become a new being beyond ambiguity and lack of ambiguity, beyond estrangement and reunion, just by being herself. As her own self she would meet the other, be with the other, and love the other.

## II. Robert S. Corrington's "Spirit's Eros"

### 1. Ontological Difference/Ontological Wound

In ecstatic naturalism, a fissure between *nature naturing*, the domain of presemiotic rhythms, and *nature natured*, the domain of attained signs and interpretants, is the fundamental divide of nature. That is, the ontological difference is, according to ecstatic naturalism, analogous with the nature's fissure, as the self emerges into its autonomy by rejecting from the maternal ground. The ontological wound occurs in this "selving process" that denies the maternal and moves into the semiotic order system in which the self forms its autonomy. This ontological wound, according to Robert S. Corrington, points to "the stage of integral wholeness before the cut of the ontological difference," and to "the fissure of the self as it leaves the realm of 'dreaming innocence' for the realm of the world's codes and signs."<sup>15</sup> The transition from the potencies to order is, thus, the fundamental process of the self.

In this selving process, woman's ontological difference emerges in strange ways. It is also true for her, the conflict between her unborn true self in the maternal ground and her ejected false self into male semiosis continually creates deep wounds. Her ontological difference is indeed tragic as long as she stays in that betweenness. She has never been cut off from her umbilical cord, and the world is not ready to accept her sexuality, or not ready to give her a location where she can realize her sexuality without prohibition, shame, and/or even guilt. She is always a neonate who is still in the birthing process. Her whole world is set up in an incubator under male

<sup>15</sup> Robert S. Corrington. *Nature's Self: Our Journey from Origin to Spirit* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1996), 28

surveillance. She is an uncompleted and paradoxical infant whose sexuality is not defined with her sign system. Therefore, a problem lies in her opaque situation. If she is not utterly freed from her maternal womb, at the same time, she is unable to constitute her own autonomy yet, her world is so elusive and complex. The denial of maternal is not so clear for her insofar as she is the other that abjection is placed on as mother-matter. Her "lost object" is not so fearful for her since she is almost identical with the prohibited maternal body. Her undefined self is paradoxical betweenness, as the nourishing potentiality and the black hole, as the possible space and the deadly void.

With woman's indefinite and incomplete identity, her search for "integral wholeness" is a confusing process, if she is neither totally splintered from her spawning ground nor conjoined to the male world's codes and signs. Despite this confusion, she has to search for her-self that integrates her whole being with the world--not the same world but the new world, perhaps. Her transition from potency to order, thus, needs indefinite process freeing her from a male trajectory, because her ontological wound is not emerged from her own selving process, but rather, from her opaque identity and her uncertain subjectivity as the mirrored autonomy of the male sign system. For her integral autonomy, she needs to understand the world's sign system, otherwise she will drift the boundless mirror world or dream world without her own ontological place, language, signification.

In ecstatic naturalism, the ontological triad of "sign/object/interpretant" is significant to understand the self's positioning. Since the self is a sign, as Corrington argues, "most of these self-signs become or are interpretants" that "augment or diminish the antecedent sign" and become a new sign.<sup>16)</sup> The initial positioning

lies at the maternal ground, the prepositioned potencies of *nature naturing*, from which the self has been ejected by the "self-othering" of nature. By this self-othering logic of potency, the self gains ontological difference and ontological wound in the selving process: from the "original position" to "depositioning" and "repositioning." In the depositioning process, the self enters into the "universe of interpretants" by denying the "presemiotic womb" thus, transforming the lost object into interpretants. This brokenness from its whence is the locus of the "betweenness structure" and also of the "spirit-interpreter." There is the mood, however, which is melancholy, surrounding the autonomous self which points to "the sense of the loss of the maternal" and to "the despair that emerges over the manic plenitude of interpretants and their unpredictable and shifting configurations."<sup>17)</sup> If melancholy reminds one of the dimension of the lost object, love is another mood that points to "the return of the maternal on the edges of personal and social life" by gathering natural grace into "the heart of the ontological difference."<sup>18)</sup> Therefore, "the plenitude of the whither will become clarified only and when melancholy is transfigured into love."<sup>19)</sup> If the depositioning process shows the repression of the maternal, the self now turns into the transforming process, the repositioning, in which "the resistance of the same is itself transformed into the lure of the enriched world of meaning."<sup>20)</sup> Therefore, as Corrington expresses, "the 'purpose' of repositioning is to open the self to the elusive potencies of *nature naturing* that goad all actualities and

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16) Ibid., 27.

17) Ibid., 3, 43.

18) Ibid., 3, 4.

19) Ibid., 36.

20) Ibid., 51.

located possibilities into existence."<sup>21)</sup>

In this repositioning process the spirit emerges, which is "in and of" nature.

If woman is still in the presemiotic womb, her ontological difference is not yet actualized. The self-othering logic of potency is not applied for her becoming. Although the ejecting power of the potency pushes her into the world of semiosis, she does not encounter with the universe of interpretants, since she does not know how to decode the meaning of the male sign system, or she does not prepare to translate it into her sign system. Her depositioning process is so ambiguous, unless she grips the power of potency, her spawning place, her *hystera*. Is the fear of the maternal necessary for her? Is the lost object indispensable for her? Can she use her maternal ground as the source of unpredictable possibilities rather than as the catalyst for separation? Is her depositioning phase transition a cutting edge of estrangement rather than the reflection of creativity or novelty? What if she always carries chaotic ambiguity into her life that distracts the male order. Thus, in so doing, does she always unfold her own space in spite of her configuration? What if she is enabled to touch her nourishing ground and permeates the lost object without fear? Could the maternal ground provide her becoming? If that is possible, her depositioning process can lead her everywhere, to the undetermined space. She could be anything; female, some kind of mutation, an expanding aspect of the universe. She could have infinite degrees of freedom and infinite dimensions. Her evolving process does not have to be cut off from her chaos, her maternal water, from which she ceaselessly regains creative and turbulent energy. It is only a matter of speculation, whether she uses the male

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21) *Ibid.*, 41.



speculum or her own intuition and her deep sense of connection.

If a woman feels connection with water, she can swim into the deep wave, rather than be engulfed in it. If her depositioning is not completely separated from her original position, her repositioning is not utterly separated from her original position, since her transforming process needs both chaos and order. Her evolving process requires chaotic intermingling, ceaseless transformation, a disequilibrium of logic by which the enriched world of signification has a new becoming, a new form, a new life. This new creation is, however, neither totally separated from the male world nor a contradictory species from man's creation. Her world is different from his world, of course. Her self has a different structure from that of his. Nevertheless, her ontological status is the same as his, except for the fact that she really has her own autonomy. If she can feel her lunar power without tainted blame and abjection, the solar power is not in absolute opposition to her. In her universe, they are both luminous essences that complement each other. As long as she does not abandon her maternal ground from which she evolves, her world is infinite although her rhythm follows wax and wane. Within her dynamic movements, she can gain a healing energy that embraces her wounds and enables her to communicate with the other.

## 2. Spirit's Eros

Corrington indicates the significant point on spirit's eros: "spirit's erotics works to open the space of connectedness and to give the sign-using finite self the courage to enter into the fissures and breaks of *nature natures* that suggest the mysterious presence / absence of *nature naturing*."<sup>22)</sup> Then, what is the spirit in ecstatic naturalism? The spirit

22) Corrington, *Nature's Religion* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 154.

is a "field phenomenon," plurally located, and finite momentum within the spaces of betweenness. The spirit is one of nature's important momentums, which is understood to be as the "spirit-interpreter," that brings a deepening of semiotic meaning and enhances the human process. Therefore, ecstatic naturalism insists that the power of the spirit is necessary for the selving process in order to attain "self-understanding." The power of the spirit brings the self back toward the lost object by which "the spirit-interpreter becomes the encompassing maternal that provides the clearing within which lasting meanings may be secured against semiotic closure and entropy."<sup>23)</sup> With the spirit-interpreter, the self is aware of the openness that enables the self to face the abjected maternal. The spirit-interpreter also goes into the posttemporal. In that way, the lost object of the maternal is connected with the repositioning process.

If the melancholy corresponds to the lost object, ecstasy refers to the "momentum of self-transcendence" and moves forth into the "power of the not yet." In this transcendence, "the sign-using self becomes open to the deeper correlations between the original position of the lost object, mediated now through the depositioning of the unconscious, and consummated in the repositioning of codes and sign series."<sup>24)</sup> The movement of the lost object toward the not yet is made by the self-othering logic of the maternal. By this momentum of self-othering on the edge of melancholy, the spirit-interpreter appears. The momentum of the spirit moves from the posttemporal into the temporal within which meet with the pretemporal and coax it outward into the not yet. Therefore, as Corrington indicates, without the experience of melancholy, the self would have no chance of finding either the pretemporal or the

<sup>23)</sup> Corrington, *Nature's Self*, 59.

<sup>24)</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

posttemporal.”<sup>25)</sup> The nondestructive correlation in the nexus of meaning is possible for the sign-users by the spirit that works through its erotic field.

Is there a certain form of spirit for woman? If she is searching for the spirit, then where does she find it? If the spirit is momentum emerging in betweenness, her search for the spirit is hidden in herself, since her ontological difference between her unactualized infinite world and her determined finite world causes her ontological wound. It is true that she gains self-understanding through her wound, her recognition of fissure, her experience of the paradox. In her paradoxical rhythmic movements in between abysmal origin and ecstatic indefinite hope, strong energy emerges that I call the touching-spirit. Her wound is the locus where she realizes her hidden power with the help of the touching-spirit. Because her experiences of betweenness open her eyes, and thus, recognize others' wounds, at the same time, they give her courage to touch them. Her love for the others is strengthened by this hidden erotic power and enhanced to connect estrangement and reconciliation, to embrace ambiguity and signification, to intertwine chaos and order, to complete one and the other. Such love enables her to expand her universe not only into her infinite dimensions but also into the world of male semiosis by permeating and shaking its boundary. The touching-spirit encourages her to face her *hystera*. Yet, at the same time, it ejects her into the world of innumerable interpretants within which she can evolve into new becoming. Without this connecting process, she cannot actualize her potentiality and discover her centered self. Without the touching-spirit, her world will be lost in the mirrored world that confines her into an abysmal chaos representing

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25) *Ibid.*, 160.

receptacle, reproduction, mimicry.

This connection is exceedingly important in ecstatic naturalism, because it presents the power of love which heals the wound and brings the fissure of the ontological difference into the domain of meaning. Eros is the movement and transformation that "links the post-and pretemporal momentums of time to the asymmetrical unfolding of temporal order."<sup>26)</sup> With the erotic momentum of the spirit, the maternal becomes more than a spawning ground and the self finds the way to access to the lost object. The spirit's eros also brings the lost object into a different realm; from the abjected realm to the creative open space of meaning and power. By the power of spirit, the self also encounters the abysmal whence, at the same time, gains the healing power for the ontological wound by which it is enabled to move toward the posttemporal, since "the mobile field of spirit's erotics is posttemporal."<sup>27)</sup> The significance of the spirit's erotic movement is not only its connective power but also its unpredictable creativity. Corrington describes that "the spirit is akin to a strange attractor that moves an unstable system into a new and higher form of stability that cannot be predicted from within the traits of the system."<sup>28)</sup> The momentum of the spirit between the fissure of the orderly semiotic system and disorderly emerging new creative power provides the sign-using self the transforming and self-organizing power.

When woman discovers the touching-spirit, her cryptic energy can be awakened. By this awakening, she could realize her long dream. She finally comprehends the world, the world of mirror, where she has been deprived of her subjectivity, her identity, sexuality. She now

26) *Ibid.*, 93.

27) Corrington, *Nature's Religion*, 153.

28) Corrington, *Nature's Self*, 144.

does not have to condescend herself under the sign system of the male world, anymore. With the erotic power of the touching-spirit, she can decode the male sign system, the matrix of her definition. When she is freed from her definition, her indefinite nakedness is put into the immense phase space within which openness lures actualization to the hopeful possibility. After she touches her maternal ground, or after she discloses her nakedness, she has to move toward the new universe, the world of interpretants, the new signs. In this movement, the touching-spirit stretches her to the power of the not yet in the reachable distance.

Her cloistered blaze finally meets with the unfathomable water in this connecting process. This cryptic energy, drive, momentum, creates turbulence within which an unpredictable current is occurring. This turbulence has a strong power bereaving her mirage and dismembering her replicated self and the treacherous world. Her abejcted maternal that was hidden/confined in the deep *hystera* finally finds its exit toward light (not necessarily solar-light). The light to which she does not have to close her eyes or turn her back, because the light is emerged from her own world and brings her rapturous power. Under this light she does not fade away into the shadow of the same, since the light eventually reaches into her opaque water. The colorless water is not the dark and fearful recess anymore. The light traverses through the layers and layers of water so that each layer becomes a spectrum that radiates augmented colors. Her maternal water enhances her universe within which her fragmental self transforms her rigid definition into fluid possibilities, the boundless stream of turbulence, the space of unpredictable self-organization.

### III. The Beauty of Fire and Water

The woman/women in my story reveal(s) the ambiguous culture within which the history of woman is defined by the male speculation, the gaze of "narcissistic crisis," the reflection of the same.<sup>29)</sup> As Julia Kristeva argues, "the abject appears in order to uphold 'I' within the Other."<sup>30)</sup> Woman, therefore, has been repressed and restrained under the order of male structure as the abjected other. Abjection is placed on the maternal ground, the maternal body of female, by which denial and fear are imposed on woman's difference: her different sexuality, body, gender, sensitivity, language, and rhythm. Her history is, thus, interspersed with many tragic stories that exhibit her erased self. There is no trace of her own story, memory, or voice. Either she has been burned to the point of ashes or engulfed into amnesia. In those stories she, as the volume of "the woman," is always the nameless same, the reflection of the male, the receptacle of mimicry. Her universe has been a mirage in which she was confusing her dream with the real.

There are, however, some unexpected stories in which she becomes the trickster, witch, artist, or poet, who audaciously transgresses the defined boundary. Some are considered to be mad women who shatter the restriction and provoke strong abjection or fear, thus, bringing forth a calamity upon such self. For such a woman, although her trial is a real tragedy, she remains the reflection of the flame that radiates powerful energy. Her hysteria goads other women to be freed from a forbidden *hystera* into the radiant light, which is different from the solar light that blinds her eyes. Her agitation at the

29) Julia Kristeva. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982). 14

30) *Ibid.*, 15.

edge of the rational order of the male world is, however, the passage leading her to the exit, at the same time, to the entrance of her origin. Some encounter this unbounded powerful origin and are submerged into it as to touch its abysmal potentiality. This impulsive diving provides the woman with a precious gift, the gift of new becoming. Her new history begins from the inexhaustible potencies of origin toward the new universe that unveils open possibilities. There, she creates new signs, new significations for her universe. In this stretched connecting process, her self-organization occurs with the intertwining of the chaotic maternal and the world of interpretants. At this phase of transition, her indefinite, incomplete, fragmented self is incarnated into the world of new signs in which her universe continually expands with unpredictable, innumerable creations.

In her universe, she frequently encounters the power of love. By this power of love, she is no longer afraid of her fissure, her wound, her hidden lunar energy. Rather, in the heart of her universe, the ambivalent fire and water are reconciled and encompassed into her new self without opposing or canceling each other. This wisdom of correlation appears in her relationship to the other; the other woman/women, man/men. She radiates power by embracing the other, by which she is enabled to love the other, to communicate with the other, to become the other. This power brings her unique autonomy, her own ontological quality, that is different from man. She finds her *jouissance* without compulsion nor contour. She is opened to the touching-spirit that creates the strange attractor within which she rejoices the avatar of love. The kindling of her fire is finally burning alive and blazing with its beauty. Her colorful water is emitting beautiful radiance, a harmonious symphony. Her fire and water do not have to be the same. They have a different beauty and power, but they display unbounded fractal, the complex wholeness.

So, what is the feminist spirit? The touching-spirit that links "I" with "you," "I" with "the other." The power of love that enables me to tell my story, to listen to your story without abjection but with rapture.

*Now the abyss opens down into my own self, and I am no longer cut in two opposing directions of sheer elevation to the sky and sheer fall into the depths. I know, now, that both height and depth spawn--and slit--each other m(ide)nitely. And that the one is in the other, and the other in me, matters little, since it is in me that they are created in rapture*

Luce Irigaray<sup>31)</sup>

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31) Irigaray, 200



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