SYMBOLISING THE MATERNAL
A GENEALOGICAL STUDY OF MALTESE WOMEN EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to symbolise the maternal through an exploration of the associations of women teachers with mothering practices, focusing in particular on how these develop within a Maltese context. The main argument of the thesis is that as women's and especially Maltese women's subjectivities are identified through their various associations with the maternal, it is difficult, as it is ineffective to completely disregard such discourses in attempting to symbolise women. The research explores the ways women use their maternal positionings as women, and especially those as teachers to go beyond limited associations of the maternal.

The theoretical framework for this study is made up of some of the most important ideas of Luce Irigaray and Michel Foucault. Foucault's work on power and self-creation inspires the research but especially his method of genealogy that informs the analysis of the associations between teaching and mothering, as we know them in the present. The study also draws on Irigaray's critique of phallocentric social systems; her notion of establishing relations between women and maternal genealogies and above all her arguments for women's own symbolisation of themselves as subjects.

The thesis, however, is not entirely framed by what these theorists say. It is directed by the conversations with eleven women teachers about mothering and teaching. This is an original attempt to intertwine the theories of two well established authors with the ideas and philosophies of these women teachers aiming at symbolising these women as creators of their own knowledges as well as creators of their own selves.

The conversations are also powerful sources of subversive symbolisations of these women's links with the maternal. In a similar way, the women's understandings of mothering are originally and metaphorically used to discuss the research methodology issues. Furthermore, the presentation of these women's philosophies of education, re-think the maternal and conceptualise educational practices in diverse ways.

The research indicates that although women teachers are particularly limited in being recognised as maternal beings, the ways some of the participants in this study think and construct themselves as women, teachers and/or mothers go beyond such constraints. It is these women's creation of themselves differently which is particularly symbolised here, hoping that such representations inspire other women to do likewise.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCING THE WOMEN PARTICIPANTS IN THIS STUDY

ANTOINETTE is a retired teacher but kept on her teaching practice by volunteering to teach catechism classes of seven year-old boys at the parish were she lives. She has been married for 35 years and was a teacher for 10 years before she got married. After eighteen years she got back to teach as a part-time teacher and later as a full time teacher until her retirement in 1995. She is 67 and has two daughters.

BEN started teaching in 1975 and now is a subject co-ordinator of Italian at Ħamrun Boys' Lyceum. She also taught English, P.E and Spanish in different government schools and Italian at the Circolo Dante Alghieri. She bases her teaching on the love of students as well as on the passion for the subjects she teaches. She loves travelling and reading because she believes that these two activities "open up horizons in one's life." She is 47 and mother of Martina 16 and Andrea 11.

DENISE is 34 and teaches English at secondary school level and sociology at the University of Malta. She is the mother of Deborah, 4 months, and Rebecca, 8 years. She has been involved in several youth organisations and a founder member of Moviment Edukazzjoni Umana. She has studied at the University of Firenze, Italy for her Masters degree focusing her research on women's studies and adult education.

DORIS is 67 and mother of three grown up children. She started teaching primary schools children in public schools at 19 years of age. She resumed her teaching in a Girls' church school but has now retired. She is especially interested in painting and other arts and crafts and drama. During her teaching years she sought to integrate these interests in further developing her teaching methods.

SISTER KALCIDONIA is an Agostinian nun and a teacher. She joined the order in 1955 and has been a teacher at Saint Monica's school (the order's school) for 40 years. She has also taught catechism in different parishes. She is 63 and retired from teaching but still teaches catechism to young boys.

JOANNE is 34 and teaches Religious Studies at the University of Malta. She also taught this subject in public girls' secondary schools and in a post secondary school, where she was also a guidance teacher. She has recently legally separated from her husband and is currently reading for a doctorate at Sheffield University. Her other interests are poetry and writing children's literature. She is also a member of the women's study group at the University of Malta.

MARIA is 59 and is a lecturer in English at the University of Malta. She is married and the mother of three children. She writes in English and in Maltese. Her poems have been published in Australia and the UK as well as in French and Italian journals. She published her first own collection of poems in 1999 *Iżda Mhux Biss* and the second in November 2001 *Skond Eva*.

MARTINA is a mature student teacher studying education at the University of Malta. She is 37, has been married for 15 years and has 4 children between 4 and 11

years of age. English is her special subject and she hopes to become an English teacher soon. She had other work experiences as a bank employee before she had her first child. She is currently doing research about the experiences of mature students at the university as part of their degree course. She dedicates much of her time to reading besides taking care of her family.

NANCY is 64 and has a grown up daughter Maureen. Nancy has taught in government primary schools from 1955 until she got married in 1960. She had other work experiences abroad but after settling back in Malta, she continued to teach French privately to up to ordinary level standards. Her major interests now that she has retired are travelling.

RENEÈ is the Director of the Department for Women in Society. She has taught in several secondary schools and has teaching experience in primary schools as well. She has worked hard at a national level for equality between women and men in Malta and is still engaged in several activities and projects to implement the government's policy on gender mainstreaming in Malta. She is the mother of a teenage boy.

TANYA is 37 and lectures Maltese language and literature at the Department of Primary Education, University of Malta. She has had several teaching experiences at different public schools; she taught Maltese at girls' secondary schools and media education at post-secondary level. She is particularly interested in media education and is actively involved in producing educational programmes.

CHAPTER ONE

MATERNAL BECOMINGS

This study is about maternal becomings. It focuses on the way women teachers form themselves in relation to the maternal: how they are maternalised and maternalise their selves. This study is also concerned with the association between mothering and teaching and the formation of this relation within the particular Maltese socio-cultural context. Malta is a small, Mediterranean independent island state. Colonial links kept the Maltese close to developments in the Western world but did not prevent them from shaping a language and identity of their own. The historical and geographical situations of the island give shape to Maltese ways of living and to social discourses that rise out of and contribute to particular life forms at the same time. This study gives a critical account of the discourses that contribute to the emergence of the teacher as mother within this context. It explains how Maltese cultural, social and predominantly Catholic religious settings provide contextual grounds for women teachers' making of their own selves and in relation to the maternal. Furthermore, it refers to the culturally inscribed positions of the women teacher participants in this study, particularly those as teachers and mothers, in order to subvert confining essences of the mother and woman teacher. In doing so, this research provides abundant examples of self-creation for women, teachers, mothers and especially women teachers elsewhere. By symbolising the maternal, its patriarchal and/or traditional representations as well those alternative ones presented by the women participants in this study, I also hope to initiate links and establish relations between women.

Genealogy is an important keyword in this research. I use its different meanings that emerge from different Foucauldian and Irigarayan theoretical contexts to tell stories of how mothering and teaching become associated; how women teachers make use of power/knowledge networks to play and exceed patriarchal symbolisations of woman and mother. The ways women teachers participants in this study talk about themselves as women, mothers and teachers are taken as sources of subversive symbolisations of the feminine and the maternal. Their representations of their maternal becomings and/or their becomings related to the maternal are taken to be temporary events through which women could come together in recognising themselves as being different and their potential to become different. Symbolisations of the maternal in this way help to establish and support female genealogies. This study, above all, is concerned with processes of self-creation. The notion of philosophy as a practice of thinking differently that shapes and transforms one's ways of life is used to conceptualise these women's alternative maternal becomings and to symbolise them.

In Malta, existing symbolisations of the maternal including social, cultural iconic, mythical, religious, theoretical ones have powerful effects on the lives of women. These symbolisations are effective means of their subjectivisation, however this does not mean that women are not capable of making themselves different from conventional symbolisations. Maltese women, however, are rarely symbolised through these practices. This study uses the spaces and power of research to represent alternative becomings of women teachers as a challenge to conventional ways of being women, mothers and/or teachers. It recognises that since there are few symbolisations of the maternal by Maltese women that go beyond existing patriarchal ones, thinking and making one self differently demands greater

subversive efforts. This study, therefore uses the different representations of the feminine and the maternal by the women participants in this study, in politically strategic ways. Through their rethinking the maternal these women keep in touch with social systems that create them and give them power as maternal subjects. But at the same time they go beyond them by reconceptualising their maternal links and giving them other meanings.

This research also makes use of the popular association between teaching practices of women and mothering as a platform for the alternative symbolisations of the maternal. Again, in spite of its popularity, the links between mothering and teaching and its gendered significations has not been theorised in the Maltese context. This thesis therefore aims to make up for this lack of research, to provide spaces for women teachers to speak the maternal and to develop a body of knowledge of its own through its quest for women's subjugated knowledges. In sum this study develops in original ways by juxtaposing the ideas of Luce Irigaray, Michel Foucault and those of the eleven women participants in this study to

1) make a genealogical study of the associations between mothering and teaching
2) explore women's use of their culturally inscribed positions as teachers and mothers to subvert confining essences of the woman, mother and teacher
3) present women's alternative symbolisations of the maternal through representations of women's knowledge regarding the maternal itself; by discussing the practices by which women teachers take care of their own selves and create themselves in relation with others. It also takes up their knowledges and particularly their philosophies of education as sources of creation and symbolisations of their own selves.

Different Becomings

This research is therefore concerned with different becomings. It tells of different ways of becoming different women, teachers, mothers by being other than woman, teacher, mother. The research process itself incorporates different stories of its different becomings. It takes shape through what I consider to be a mothering process, engaging in different maternal becomings that touch the personal, social and intellectual developments of a number of women teachers intertwining with my own. My own stories of maternal becomings, particularly those that are in some way or another linked with this study recognise all the women I have drawn nourishment from throughout the way.

My mother is a teacher. I have always thought of her as my teacher and my mother. As a teacher I feel I become a mother every time I enter a new classroom or a new student comes into my room. I find myself making room for myself to become different a different teacher, a different mother every time. Some of the most influential teachers in my life have turned out to be my mothers. They were those that have loved me so much that they have given me chances to be like them, space to be different from them, and the continuous and motivating nourishment to grow and be able to change myself whenever I liked or felt the need. This research has made me realise how much my growing self has been an important part of their maternal becomings. It has also made me become more aware of the importance attached to maternal becomings in my country. Not that I had never noticed before. I have considered the catholic devotion of our Lady and her maternal status to be an asset to women. Even the maternal names of the Virgin Mary of the schools I attended and the songs we sang to her during school assemblies and the yearly processions of the village feast of Our Lady, I saw as expressing respect and prestige

to women. They have been above all, important symbolisations for my self-development as a women and teacher.

The mothering bit, having a child of one's own, I thought would come later. Surely because it is such a delicate task I needed to be prepared but most of all I needed time of my own to become what I wanted before. So I felt I should wait but the more I waited the more I saw my self change in the eyes of others. Many thought of me as an egoist, ambitious, care free, pleasure seeking individual and gradually a poor thing, a sad being lacking the maternal experiences of having a child of my own. I began to see the symbolisations of the maternal as presented to me at school, at home, in church and in feasts in a different light. Were these the advantages of the symbolisations of the maternal that I had thought women benefit from? Obligations to do what and when socially expected? Mothers stating that they are servants and letting others do with them as they wish? Enduring the pain, sacrifice and self-renunciation as symbolised through the many Catholic images of the Virgin Mary.

The biological clock ticks. I become a mother of my own child. I couldn't accept that mothering is all sacrifice; that mothers are means to the only end of raising their children. I could say no. The women participants I have been conversing with, told me that maternal expectations are really difficult to resist. I found this for myself. I experienced feelings of guilt whenever I wanted something of my own and anger when I came across people who saw me as a reproductive gadget. I noticed that some of them didn't think of my body as my own. It didn't even occur to them that I had rights even though I was carrying another human being. They took liberties to judge and regulate what I did and the way I mothered my child. I saw how the needs of the

child or rather, what others thought were the needs of the child overcame my own maternal needs and my desires to become other than maternal.

During the conversations with the eleven women participants in this study I encountered similar frustrations and ambiguous feelings. But I also was empowered by the women teachers' stories of resistance and their accounts of their alternative ways of being mothers or non-mothers. I thought I'd follow these. These are the ways by which I choose to symbolise these particular women. Philosophy and research provided me with excellent spaces for becoming other than a mother but the women I met gave the best examples of how they think and make themselves differently. Moreover I began to see their particular ways of thinking about teaching as sources for different symbolisations of themselves. I thought of their philosophies of education as ways of mothering; of caring and creating their own selves.

Being a Woman/ Mother in Malta

Being a woman in Malta has strong resonance of the maternal. The potential to have children, whether one has them or not weighs heavily on the lives of women and the way they choose to construct their own selves. Popularly, women are considered to reach their utmost when they mother and they derive social prestige and status through their mothering. Those whose mothering does not only involve giving birth to their own children and raising them, still follow certain established cultural ways of being woman: being caring and generously dedicated to the well being of others. Stefanie Anzinger (1994) in her detailed sociological study of the options and restrictions of Maltese women describes motherhood as the very essence of an ideal Maltese femininity. This ideal takes form through limited symbolisations of the maternal; mostly those transmitted by the Catholic Church, which has very strong

roots in Malta. The strong Marian Maltese culture encourages women to follow the Virgin Mary as an example. Like her, women are expected to be pure, obedient and willing to sacrifice their own selves for the sake of others. Anzinger explains that Maltese women themselves "still put emphasis on the feminine role and also appeal to every other girl and woman to act according to this role" (Anzinger 1994:53-54). Women themselves regulate the behaviour and self construction of other women through their mothering roles which include also the teaching of the young and "inexperienced" women what is acceptable or not. As mothers and teachers therefore women act as agents of social control.

There are other ways through which Maltese women regulate the ways other women form their own selves. Gossip is one very effective means by which women's selves are regulated. Malta is only 316 square kilometres in area and is densely populated; there are around 365,600 (in 1993) inhabitants on the island. It is very easy to get to know people and things about them because word gets around quickly. It is particularly important that women are seen as respectable good women, loyal wives and perfect mothers. The representation of their selves by other women, other than this, affects the whole lives of the whole family involved but especially that of the mother. When the mother is seen as "bad", gossip works to induce shame and feelings of guilt but it particularly aims to induce women into what is considered to be the ideal type of feminine identity. Sibyl O'Reilly Mizzi (1994) through her several research projects concerned with the importance of women in Maltese society, concludes that

> Maltese women are bound by the convergence of three ideas: the role model for women set by the Catholic Church, the code of honour and shame, and the myth of the sacred woman. (O'Reilly Mizzi 1994:374)

These have early derivations from the times of the Neolithic temples and the remains of fertility goddesses that symbolise the mother as sacred. She continues to explain that

> Gossip becomes an important weapon in the hands of women. They can make and break reputation and influence another's position in the community. Time and again I have been told that the reason that women didn't have friends outside the family was because they feared being talked about and they worried about gossip. There was general agreement that if they greeted everyone in a friendly way and yet refrained from becoming intimate with anyone, that they were safe from adverse comment. (O'Reilly Mizzi 1994:379)

Gossip, on the other hand works to establish intimate and close relationships between mothers and daughters. The geographical size of the island presents extremely favourable conditions for mothers and daughters to keep intimate relationships even after the daughter marries and sets up a home of her own. Some daughters keep their genealogical ties alive by choosing to live in the same town or village as their mothers. Living close to one's mother is especially ideal for the daughter who wishes to go back to work after having a child. Childcare facilities in Malta are very poor especially those concerning babies and very young children (see Chapter Five). The grandmother, who provides this care, allows the daughter to go on with her work, without becoming subject to other women's gossip. Mothers are especially judged as being bad when they choose to go back to work when their child is very young. The Church is the main propagator of this view symbolising the mother who chooses to stay at home rather than go to work as the good mother. The Church therefore, rather than giving value to the enrichment of the different aspects of women's selves as free individuals, continues to emphasise their conventional maternal roles and obligations to stay at home and educate their children. The patriarchal control of women comes through the local church's symbolisations of their maternal selves as dependent on the provisions of their husbands and the state. Archbishop Joseph Mercieca recently stated that:

> A society that wants to invest in a secure future works to ensure enough opportunities for work and adequate social services, so that the family has a good enough financial income and the mother does not need to go to work especially when her children are very young and she rightly feels that she has to give all her time to her family.
> In these cases, the mother would be giving an invaluable contribution to society, especially that concerning the education and upbringing of children. This work is adorned with highest dignity, like any other work. I repeat that like and equal to any other kind of work, the work of the mother with her family should be given the best possible social recognition, and if possible also a just remuneration from the state. (Mercieca 1999:14)

Such representations reflect limitations in women's lives and control their potential for autonomy in creating their own selves. They contribute to inducing guilt and marginalise women who assert themselves as women, independent sexual beings independent of the child and or the father and who want to construct themselves away from maternity or from its patriarchal representations.

Other Maternal Symbolisations in Malta

In Malta symbolisations of the maternal other than those ordained by the Catholic Church have strong associations with the religious and the sacred. I am referring to the extraordinary pre-historic symbolisations of the feminine particularly those related to the various Neolithic temples found on the island. The richness and abundance of these images and figures are as rich and abundant as the maternal characteristics that they intend to symbolise. Their popular interpretations give strong impressions of the analogous relationship between woman and mother but they can also be seen as remarkable sources for alternative symbolisations of the feminine.

Veronica Veen (1992) in her archaeological study of the prehistoric Goddesses of Malta interprets the various symbolisations of the feminine as going beyond strict maternal ones. She explains that the most well known is the fertility goddess, the

earth goddess, thought of as the most feminine through her association with birth, growth, abundance and prosperity. However there are other representations of the feminine that aim to represent feminine cyclical worlds and their powers and abilities of transformation. She mentions representations of the maiden heavenly goddess sharing what are usually considered as masculine traits of self-sufficiency and the oracle symbolisation of the old wise woman. Veen also remarks that such representations might have been created by women themselves in particular matriarchal societies. However, what is of most interest to this study is her explanations of how these alternative models of the feminine affect women's thinking of them selves in alternative ways. She particularly refers and regards the Giant Goddess Ġgantija in the neighbour island of Gozo as a symbolisation of the feminine that resists the narrow Maltese ideal of the married mother with children.

> Up to recently, women's stories could be heard on Gozo about an energetic giantess, who built the gigantic temple of Ġgantija and carried a huge stone from ta' Ċenċ across the island to Qala. It is still standing there as the last remnant of a Neolithic goddess-temple. In 1987, one of the women of the village told me the latter story
> *When I was a little girl I used to hear them say, that this Stone was brought by a woman on her head from outside [the village], from far away, and she put it over there, on that place. She was very strong. She used to eat a lot of beans and these used to make her strong. This woman…I used to hear them say this. And I am 80 years old.*
> When I asked her what the giantess looked like, she described without any hesitation the clothing of her mother at the time she told her the story. This is a striking example of identification, entirely in line of the evident female self esteem that these Maltese women radiate. During my long and intensive research into the women's telling tradition, taking this story with its variants and versions as a case study, I could conclude that the women in Gozo with their down to earth, chthonic giantess, still had a valuable complement on all that chastity and heavenliness, embodied by the holy Mary, the omnipresent, but super-prefect and unattainable saint of Malta. (Veen 1992: 57)

The interpretations of these symbolisations is subject to controversial debate and disagreements amongst archaeologists. There are those who interpret them as symbol of the strength and power of an early male ordered culture. However the interpretations of Veen quoted above show that alternative thinking by women that

go beyond their maternal roles do exist even though these are rarely publicly expressed and recognised.

Rose Lapira (1995) and Isabelle Borg (1995) speak about difficulties Maltese women artists face in representing women in other than the usual conventional images. Rose Lapira comments:

> It is rare to come across work which is informed by a critique which is different from men's. Most women artists see themselves and other women through men's eyes. A 'Maternity' by a woman artist is either apparently similarly inspired as a man's, or else goes to the other extreme by being sweet, charming, sentimental, etc., all qualities which are expected of female art by a male audience. (Lapira1995:8)

She continues to observe that many women artists adhere to what is expected of female art by male audiences, in an attempt to be accepted as artists. Isabelle Borg (1995) also talks about the lack of subversive images produced by women artists. She notices the "heavy ambiguous symbolism of woman as mother or nation that does not give space for the viewer to hunt for alternative meanings" (Borg 1995:16). In Maltese culture, as in art, symbolisations of fertility overshadow alternative representations of women's sexuality, their joys of the erotic and their celebrations of their desires.

Being a Teacher

Considering the highly positive values attached to the maternal, it is not advantageous for Maltese women to make a radical and complete break with the highly patriarchal cultural symbolisations of femininity and mothering. This would render them without any position from which they could enter power networks and effect the changes they could benefit from. If they chose to distance themselves from that which is socially recognised, their alternative symbolisations of mothering would not have enough voice, not even a credible one to attract a proper audience.

Clearly such a strategy has its drawbacks. I think that the reason, for example, why feminism in Malta has never had a direct impact on the advancement and emancipation of women. It is striking that the strong feminist developments taking place in Italy, a very close Mediterranean country have had a negligible effect on Maltese women. Maltese women easily get to know what other women in other Western countries do and think. Their attitudes and values, like those of the Maltese in general have become more secular (Tabone 1997) but, as Stefanie Anzinger (1994) explains, the emancipation of Maltese women has developed alongside the teachings of the Catholic Church rather than against them. The model of distinct femininity, particularly the symbolisations of the maternal provided by the Church, is closely adhered to so that the identification and legitimations that women acquire through them are maintained.

> Women are provided with prestige and appreciation for their culturally and religiously bound role. This explains the importance of the role of the mother despite the changes in behaviour patterns and the alteration of role patterns. Obviously the wife and the mother is seen as having higher status than in other Western societies. It can be claimed therefore that there is a certain possibility that women themselves hold on to the role patterns given by the Church and also support the Marian ideal, since it legitimises and offers them advantages for their traditional female role. "Motherhood" and "distinct femininity" are accepted up to today by Maltese women not only because of religious values but also because of their reciprocity with cultural patterns and social advantages thus offered. (Anzinger 1994:56-57)

As some of the woman participants believe, becoming a teacher provides a woman with excellent opportunities to become a mother and at the same time become other than a mother. The maternal associations with teaching and caring for students, the relatively small number of working hours actually spent at school make it possible for the woman to extend home to work and vice versa. This makes it easier for women teachers' decision to return to the workplace after having a child to be socially accepted. Statistics indicate the extent to which the maternal connotations of teachings inflict upon taking up a teaching career. In fact, at the tertiary level of

education the majority of students taking education and teaching are females. There are also marked differences between the number of female and male teachers in different levels of education (Central Office of Statistics 1999). The fact that women make up the teaching staff at pre-primary and primary levels continues to point at the maternal associations of a woman teacher's work, as caring for the young.

In studying the experience of married women teachers in schools, Diane Azzopardi and Ingrid Bray (1997) argue that the reasons why these women choose teaching as a career, are not only practical ones that take account of the convenient working hours. Their research conclusions agree with Charles Farrugia (1986) that married women teachers view their work as a vocation and it is their commitment to teaching that attracts them back to schools, after their children reach school age. These women claim to get job satisfaction through their contact with children but they also feel that teaching makes them feel competent. At the same time, these Maltese studies like others elsewhere (Acker 1989, Weiler 1988), point to the discriminations that women teachers face because of marriage bars and of their "choice" to take a career break. They are not only discriminated against in terms of promotion (Miceli 1994; Abela & Galea Scannura 1999). The maternal connotations they bring into their work contribute to their professional devaluation so they are more likely to be symbolised as reproducers rather than producers of knowledge.

Within this context the maternal positionings of women teachers are hardly considered to be potentially powerful ones. However if one reads their maternal associations with teaching as keys to move outside the home, to become financially independent, improving their possibilities to explore different worlds, get in touch with different thoughts and knowledges, the potential for them to go beyond imposed

limits is highlighted. Through their teaching women teachers are also involved in other processes of becoming besides their own. What is particular in studying women teachers as mothers is not only the way they are made and make themselves subjects through social discourses but also because they are implicated in shaping the self-formation of others. Their positions as insiders/outsiders in educational systems are specific because they can challenge patriarchal boundaries from inside and outside: both at once. Teachers here are seen as important social reproducers but they can also be influential agents of social change.

This research is not directly concerned with how Maltese women bring about social change. It recognises their potential to do so through their intimate contacts with children and throughout the thesis one finds several references to the thoughts and ways of how women teacher participants do this. However, this research focuses more on these women teachers' potential to become different. It aims in particular to symbolise women through their ability to change and recreate themselves by using strong existing powerful maternal networks.

The maternal connotations of teaching place Maltese women teachers in highly ambiguous positions of power. They juggle their lives to move in parallel with the socially acceptable but at the same time they try to find openings which would help them go beyond it as discreetly as possible. Maltese women teachers can portray themselves as conventional good women and good mothers; caring, obedient, willing to sacrifice their lives in educating others. The social prestige they get through their teaching, caring and mothering aspects of their profession works upon the existing symbolisations of the maternal. In turn they use their positions of power to make something different of their lives. Therefore, they play with the limits of what is

acceptable and create their own freedoms to make their own selves through positions socially conceded to them.

Adapting Theoretical Frameworks

Official statements of the Maltese government's perspective on gender issues make it clear that it is committed to bring about gender equality. In 1991 the equality of rights of men and women was constitutionalised to protect against sex based discrimination, allowing special measures for the acceleration of this equality:

> The State shall promote the equal right of men and women to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights and for this purpose shall take appropriate measures to legitimate all forms of discrimination between the sexes by any person, organisation or enterprise; the state shall in particular aim at ensuring that women workers enjoy equal rights and the same wages as men. (Commission for the Advancement of Women 1995:26)

The Commission for the Advancement of Women was established earlier, in 1989 to act as an advisory body for the effective implementation of the Government's policies and programmes regarding gender equality. The Department of Women in Society directed by Reneè Laiviera, one of the participants in this study is particularly committed to implement the principle of equality between men and women. The Department is engaged in various activities related to gender mainstreaming in Malta (see also Chapter Five). These include: establishing and upgrading gender focal points to ameliorate gender equality in Government departments and entities; sensitising public service officials and employees for the integration of gender perspective in all programmes, policies and projects and "the collection, collation, analysis and publication of data and statistics broken down by sex on gender equality initiatives and service delivery" (Department for Women in Society 2000:5-8). There have been other significant changes in civil law concerning women particularly the 1993 family law amendments that place equal rights and

responsibilities on the husband and wife. The paternal authority and power over family matters is not officially recognised anymore and women as wives and mothers are envisaged as equal partners, rather than subordinate ones.

The National Report on Women in Malta (1995) mentions various other achievements in relation to the political commitment to equality between women and men. What is especially relevant to this study is that in 1981 the marriage bar was removed and women were officially allowed to continue their working lives after getting married. However those who had already been barred out of work had to restart their careers from the lowest grades when they re-entered the civil service. Since the 1980s, there has been an increased effort to equalise women's access to all levels of education. Studies of the various aspects of Maltese women's lives point to education as the main contributor of change (Miceli 1994, Anzinger 1994). In the nineties the percentage of women graduating from University was 47%; a marked increase from the 25% female students graduating in 1980. As the Report explains, increasing the number of women studying at the tertiary level is aimed at improving women situations especially in relation to their decision-making positions. There have been marked improvements in women's status as leaders holding positions of responsibility and taking up professions which previously were the domain of men (lawyers, notaries, medical doctors and architects). However as the report states:

> perceptions that women are not competent in politics and lack leadership, managerial skills and experience are also factors which keep women out of decision making positions. (Commission for the Advancement of Women National Report 1995:12)

Godfrey Baldacchino's (1998) observations, that most of the Maltese women's work is still an extension of what they do at home, support the report's claims. He explains that although there is a trend towards moving away from those jobs that are

considered as typically feminine, the majority of women workers in Malta conform to the traditional image of the woman worker. Baldacchino describes this as either one which possesses no skill (such as the factory girl working on the sewing machine) or ones in which a job is considered as a vocation and remains associated with the dedication and sacrifice related to the maternal instinct (such as teachers and nurses). It is worth noting that the majority of women enrolling at University chose an education course to become teachers. Even so within educational spheres women find it hard to get to leadership positions. As Mary Darmanin (1991) points out, despite the high female percentage in teaching, there is a lower presence of females in administration. Because of a seniority system of promotion, women's interruption of their careers for marriage and child rearing places them in highly disadvantaged positions to be fairly considered for decision-making positions.

Limited perceptions of women as maternal beings weigh heavily on the decisions that women take with respect to their place of work. Women focus on child bearing and nurturing irrespective of their level of education (Baldacchino 1997; Borg & Spiteri 1994). These views are supported by Frances Camilleri's claims that "official statistics in Malta reveal an intermittent female employment profile represented by a sharp peak of full-time economic activity in the twenty to twenty four age group, followed by a trough during the years of childbearing and nurturing" (Camilleri 2001:15). In her other, deeper study of women's choice of part-time wok over full time one, Frances Camilleri (1997) notices that women do not speak of the situations and/ or social and cultural factors that influence their decision to take up a part-time job. Rather they represent it as their choice. As Frances Camilleri explains their

> voluntaristic approach to their economic behaviour tends to down play the many external forces that may have compelled them to work reduced hours, such as lack of child care and the persistent division of domestic labour in the home. (Camilleri 2000:15)

This may well be another example of the Maltese general attitude to ask no or only few questions (Boissevain et al 1990). It may be read as a sign of political apathy of the Maltese with regards to issues that would normally lead to public debate and a symptomatic silence of their rich colonial heritage of dependency and adaptation. However one cannot monolithically interpret women's statements of choice to concentrate on child rearing for some years as a sign of their submission. The situations in which they find themselves including lack of child care are serious forms of constraint yet one can interpret their statements of choice as a sign of their adaptation to their situation. Adaptation may again bring to one's mind a sense of the limitations and restraints that these women experience but alternatively it points to their agencies and their capabilities to metamorphosise according to circumstances. As Frances Camilleri (2001) points out, there are no studies that explore in detail how women adapt to their choice to be housewives and mothers. But one can imagine that they derive a sense of autonomy which may be different from that conventionally associated with having a job and financial independence. Women in Malta are well known for their strong role in managing family life and they are able to make themselves indispensable when it comes to running the home (O'Reilly Mizzi 1994). One can also interpret their choice to stay at home as a choice for another form of freedom; the freedom of experiencing something different; of becoming somebody different for a number of years; ignoring altogether the predominantly masculine values of the work place.

From the statements quoted above, it is clear that women in Malta are officially represented through discourses of equality. Yet the social, cultural and religious symbolisations of women give strong emphasis to their sexual difference particularly marked by their maternal connotations. These Maltese representations and conditions

of mothering especially influence Maltese women's constructions of their own selves.

Maltese women are aware of the impact of mothering on their lives. This is the main reason why many women have decided to decrease the number of children that they have and others of higher educational attainment leave mothering to a later stage in their lives. However they do not consider it advantageous to renounce mothering and seek to make use of the power and status that maternal social positionings offer them. Because of this, thinking of the way women change their lives and emancipate themselves has to take note of and include mothering rather than envisage it only as the cause of their submission. Feminist thought about mothering, either that which envisages mothering as hindering women's emancipatory march towards autonomy or else that which considers the maternal as a way to assert women's differences (Everingham 1994, Grimshaw 1986) can inform thinking about how oppressive ideologies of mothering can be challenged within the Maltese context. Feminist descriptions and explanations of how mothering is used by patriarchy to control women are very useful to raise awareness of women experiences of exploitation and devaluation. Other works that celebrate the maternal can also be used to highlight those positions of power, and imagine potential ones women can make use of, to create and symbolise themselves differently. Considering the Maltese socio-cultural context described above, the maternal is not to be devalued nor celebrated but taken up as a place of enunciation. Women and in particular women teachers can use their maternal positions to individuate themselves but at the same time be critical of social limits imposed on them through maternal associations.

Envisaged in this way the particular Maltese contexts of the maternal work well with the feminist poststructuralist theories that I have taken up as a framework for this research. Feminist poststructuralist views (Weedon 1999, Lather 1991, Hekman 1996, Everingham 1994) criticise general emancipatory visions that assume that all women are the same. The difference between women is considered to be a crucial point in researching and theorising about women. Women's different experiences can be sources that establish links between women and by getting to know them one can pinpoint what is common between them. But women's experiences do not have meanings unless they are contextualised (Scott 1992) and contextualisation, in turn, is one of the factors that highlights their differences. Taking note of the context is therefore particularly relevant to explain why and how different subjective constructions come about and gives meaning to the different strategies women in their differing circumstances adopt to move on with their lives.

In this study my main concern is to represent Maltese women as a different group of women who live within a particular socio-cultural context. The representation of this context is affected by the particular experiences that I have as a Maltese woman. But this research is also keen to represent the particular ways by which women teachers of various ages perceive mothering and teaching. The differences that mark these women's selves do not only rise out of particular age groups or their families' social backgrounds. They are also individual differences in the way they are able to make themselves.

This research is poststructuralist in that it does not attempt to make general claims about the emancipation of women, or force particular versions of emancipation onto the situation of Maltese women. In this study I have referred to a number of foreign

theories and drawn on their ideas to discuss the particular perceptions of the maternal and teaching of the Maltese women teachers. The particular Maltese socio-cultural context and my ways of perceiving it have attracted me to these theories as I shall explain in the next section. This, again, does not mean that I entered the research without frames of thought. I was particularly concerned with not symbolising Maltese women teachers as an oppressed group. I saw their powerful positions as teachers related to knowledge could well make them the "specific intellectuals" that Foucault (1980a:126) talks about. Furthermore I considered that the representation of power as solely belonging to the oppressors, provides too negative and debilitating an image for persons concerned with the empowerment of the oppressed. If women are continuously symbolised as oppressed, dependent and subjugated they reinforce patriarchal symbolisations of themselves as such.

Within such frames of thought, I consider the ideas, perspectives and theories of Irigaray and Foucault, important in developing this research. As I shall explain in more detail in the next sections I draw on their common and divergent views to research women teachers' subjective formations.

Why Foucault?

Foucault's work has been subject to controversial debate between feminists (Hekman 1996, Ramazanoglu 1993, Diamond & Quinby 1988). There have been those who see that it has no value whatsoever for a feminist emancipatory struggle. They claim it emphasises too much the effects of technologies of domination, portraying the self as a passive helpless object, subject to various disciplinary acts (Harstock 1990). Other feminist critics (Butler 1990, Sawicki 1991) see its limitations but ironically, in a Foucauldian fashion seek to go beyond it by imagining and thinking differently.

These feminists generally recognise that "Foucault's work is not the work of a ladies' man" (Morris 1988) but see it worthwhile to locate those strategies and methodologies that resonate with their own aims and proceed to transform them to satisfy their own needs.

This research has much in common with the last group. It uses the openings that his approaches provide, to outline and imagine and create emancipatory strategies that might be relevant to certain situations, locations and women. Foucault's genealogical methods are particularly enlightening in the sense that they explore the historical and social constitution of subjects. Since they work on the idea of power as a network one can engage in rather than possess, they allow for accounts of the empowerment of the subject as well its repressed state. Genealogy contextualises the historical and social aspects of the constitution of the self and therefore provides fertile grounds for an analysis of subjectivities that particularly accounts for the potential women have to affirm their subjective experiences and actively transform themselves by going beyond oppressive social structures. Genealogy makes use of historical documents but it equally makes use of the imagination to tell stories where direct and detailed documentation is lacking. In this way, it is politically engaged in raising awareness of the subjugation of certain knowledges and tries to bring such knowledges to the forefront by representing them as resources for thinking subversively as well as creating alternatives.

Foucault sees his work as constituted by strong fictional elements. These might not be regarded as relevant to feminist projects of enhancing women's lives. But, as I shall explain in the next section, within an Irigarayan theoretical context, such imaginings are rendered politically useful and extremely effective.

Furthermore, Foucault's genealogy is a tool that I found particularly useful in envisaging possibilities of going beyond limits imposed by history. Genealogy recognises the contingency of our social and historical circumstances. However, it opens a way forward for us to go beyond them by working by ourselves on ourselves (Foucault 1984b). The way individuals work by themselves on themselves is explored in detail by Foucault in his last two volumes of the *History of Sexuality* (Foucault 1990b, 1992). In what is popularly referred to as his later ethical stage, Foucault is concerned with practices of freedom through which subjects transform themselves. The representation of the self as actively and continuously changing through plays of power is highly relevant to my aims described above, namely those that seek to symbolise women through their active ways of making themselves differently. The Greek practices of the self that Foucault outlines in his later works are not to be naively taken up by women in the present. They provide a background for a different thinking of ethics; that which exceeds moral codes and regulations and focuses on self-creation. And this can generate alternative visions of becoming subjects. Yet Foucault's descriptions of practices of freedom although acknowledging their social make up remain very much concerned with the individual and his practice. Grimshaw (1993) makes this point in her discussion of Foucault's practices of the self. She is particularly concerned with Foucault's relativistic pathways in envisaging practices of the self as an aesthetic stylisation of one's life, without paying much attention to the fine line that distinguishes between what is beneficial for the individual or not. She asks, for example, whether the anorexic's attempt to control her life through a particular lifestyle is in fact really empowering for her. Grimshaw also questions the self-centred individualistic form of ethics and aesthetitization of one self on the grounds that Foucault does not explain how these individualistic modes of being relate to other persons' ways of freely creating their own selves.

Such a criticism is highly relevant to this study which aims at establishing relations between women. This again is another reason why I take up Irigaray's perspectives in conjunction with Foucault's in forming a theoretical framework for this study. Her work points to the importance of creating ethical relations established through closeness and proximity in shaping one's subjectivity (Irigaray 1993a.1993b). There are other shortcomings of Foucault's accounts of the practices of the self. As Jean Grimshaw (1993) points out one has to reflect on the aims of these practices of the self and ask where they lead to. Terms such as "practices of the self" like the term "growth" in education seem to have automatic approval, but one has to be critical of the direction and type of growth that such practices bring about. This again raises questions, also raised by Grimshaw as to who decides what is beneficial or not for the development of oneself.

It is clear that this study is concerned with identifying the limits, social and cultural contexts impose on self-creation and explaining how particular symbolisations of women position them as maternal beings. It is through a critical outlook of such a context and its effect on women's lives that this study interprets certain practices of the self as practices of freedom. This study is not concerned with identifying good or bad maternal selves; neither is it interested in identifying maternal practices as good or bad practices in the formation of oneself. Women and in particular Maltese women are necessarily bound to the maternal even if they rule maternity out of their lives. Within these circumstances, what are identified as practices of freedom are those practices of subversion that make use of what is established within a community to their own advantage. Moreover, one may envisage practices of the care of the self as egoistic and inimical to certain feminist ethical practices where the concern and care for others symbolise women's ways of being. It is my view, that

such feminist outlooks run the risk of essentialising women into conventional images of carers of others and reinforce patriarchal obligations of women to sacrifice their own selves. It is therefore imperative that women are also symbolised as carers of their own selves. This, however, does not mean that women are not to be identified through the close relationships they have with each other and with others. The symbolisations of women through their mutual connectedness with others need to take note also of their individual ways of establishing such relations. The individual ways of making themselves, including those that stem out of close relations with others are also to be recognised because these help women to differentiate themselves from each other and from their maternal roles as Irigaray explains.

Why Irigaray?

Irigaray is critical of patriarchal workings of social systems that create problems for women in constructing their own subjectivities. Through her analysis of psychoanalytic and philosophical discourses she explains how these work to leave women in a state of dereliction. In this sense her critique goes along with feminist criticisms of Foucault's accounts of predominantly male ethical practices. His genealogies do not take sexual differences seriously; a matter which Irigaray considers essential if the Enlightenment tradition in assuming the male subject, a neutral subject, is to be subverted so that women are to speak as women. It may be the case that his neglect of feminine self-constructions is a product of the Western male centred traditions of thought that he explored (Spargo 1999:53). His indication that "it was an ethics thought, written and taught by men and addressed to men" (Foucault 1992:22), continues to support Irigaray's arguments that women do not participate in symbolising themselves socially.

Irigaray explains that because conceptions of the subject are constructed in male terms the female subject is always conceptualised with reference and in comparison to the male which is socially, psychoanalytically and philosophically considered as the norm and above all that which is compared to it. Psychoanalysis for example, conventionally defines women as lack by establishing the phallus, a masculine social representation of the masculine, as a universal signifier. In metaphysics, the notion of being, is essentially, being a male subject. Woman is devalued by the very representation of her as that which is not male; she is represented as devalued. Women are also generally conceived through male systems of thought. Social epistemological systems negate women's possibilities to represent their own selves and create their own subjectivities. According to Irigaray, in order for women to do this they need to create a language of their own as well as their own particular ways of knowing. She also emphasises the need for women to represent themselves socially and subvert the universal, monolithic dimensions of social symbolisations of themselves as mothers. This point leads to her other psychoanalytic explanations of how women are unable to individualise and differentiate themselves from each other because they are bound within rigid and limited maternal symbolisations.

I consider Irigaray's critical analysis of patriarchal systems of thought to be relevant to a Maltese cultural context. Her critique is also concerned with the power of man-made symbolisations of the Catholic Church which give prominence to male genealogies and envisage men as the rightful leaders. This brings to mind the relationships between the Church and women. Maltese women have an active part within Maltese Catholic communities in towns and villages yet their part is always determined by male leaders; God, the Pope, the archbishops and the parish priests. The Church tries to justify placing women at a lower level in its hierarchy by

depicting women as making and having made important contributions to its development. The Catholic Church scrupulously adheres to the images of Christ and his twelve male apostles in explaining why women are more appropriately to be conceived as "disciples" doing their "equally" important work by making use of their natural docile qualities. Women are to be faithful followers and reproducers of Catholic religious thoughts by emulating the obedient motherly and pure qualities of the Virgin Mary (Mercieca & Cauchi 2000).

As I explained above, religious symbolisations of the maternal in Malta have a strong hold on women. They contribute to the conflation of woman with mother that Irigaray considers as one of the reasons why women find it difficult to differentiate and make themselves subjects. Still, one has to raise questions about how women construct themselves as subjects in ways other than those ordained by male symbolic systems. And these are relevant to both Irigarayan ideas and the Maltese socio-cultural contexts described so far. If the symbolic order is as pervasive as Irigaray describes it and if Maltese women are seen as social subjects only when they conform to prevalent social images, how can they be able to make themselves differently?

I have already argued that it is not beneficial for Maltese women to lose their maternal associations. In this respect it is more effective for them to work with existing masculine symbolisations and try to subvert them. If as Irigaray explains, our subjective creations are dependent on our entry into a symbolic order, which is predominantly masculine, women need to work around and within the particular social positions conceded to them.

In this way women's positions as mothers and their association with teaching need not necessarily be positions of subjugation. Women can make use of these spaces to subvert stereotypical conceptualisations of woman mother and teacher. Taking up the feminine and maternal role deliberately with the aim of challenging it is very similar to what Irigaray describes as "mimetic strategy". It is these subversions which I consider to be ethical practices of freedom; practices by which women engage in processes of self-creation.

The works of Irigaray do symbolise women and the maternal in different ways through her ecriturè feminine and heavily theoretical writings. These can have an effect on the way her women readers make themselves. However it is also important to contribute to the development of her works and her ideas by exploring the ways women who are not well established authors construct their subjectivities in alternative ways.

The subjectivities of the women in this study are conceived as being able to fluctuate and change according to contexts and with different experiences of women concerned. The maternal envisaged as an ever-changing process is also envisaged as symbolising their fluid subjective formations. In this way the experiences of mothering and teaching provide rich grounds for creating oneself differently as much as flexible bodily shapes of the mother allow for continuous change. The aspect of teaching continues to add to the aspect of change and self creation emphasised in this thesis as it is envisaged as an encounter through which the persons involved are able to construct themselves differently. However, the association between mothering and teaching has been perceived in other ways as described in the next section.

Feminists, Mothering and Teaching

Feminists' analyses of the teacher-mother association include a critique of patriarchal discourse that functions to limit and devalue women teachers. Many consider prevalent discourses of teacher as mother, stereotypical and essentialist, because they conflate women with mothering therefore limiting women's actions and their possibilities of moving beyond this patriarchal cultural representation. These feminists have also taken the reproducing connotations of teacher as mother as a metaphor of women teachers' reproducing functions of the patriarchal power networks through their teaching. What is particularly interesting in these feminist interpretations of mothering is the marking of the shift in emphasis from the biological to the social make up of mothering.

Megan Boler (1999:42) for example argues how the social construction of women as irrational subjects instils dominant values in a subtle and effective way. The disciplinary mechanism that Megan Boler outlines here is similar to Foucault's in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1991a). Women's disciplining and policing are not authoritarian and overtly coercive. Their teaching and maternal connotations make them perfect subjects to control social behaviour. This mechanism works through what Boler refers to as "pedagogy of love."

These feminist criticisms make women aware of the workings of patriarchy but they leave women teachers in a no-win situation. To speak of teaching as mothering is to essentialise women's subjectivities but not to speak about mothering in teaching at all is to erase that which socially symbolises them and which has historically and socially constructed their subjectivities. Furthermore such attitudes silence women's own representation of themselves as mothers and teachers.

Jo-Anne Dillabough (1999) makes a similar argument in her analyses of rational and instrumental conceptions of the professional teacher. She argues that teacher-mother discourse marginalises women teachers by associating them with emotional, caring characteristics. In this case women's identification of their motherly role, serves as a justification for their inferior status in the teaching profession and also for their exploitation. However as Jo-Anne Dillabough argues substituting mothering with dominant masculine forms of "competence" is also a form of domination. Emphasising their "rational" capabilities would still pertain to that gendered dualism that constructed them in the first place.

This however does not imply that alternative women teachers' representations of themselves are untainted by patriarchy. These interpretations open up the question I mentioned earlier, about whether it is possible to construct different subjectivities without moving out of those discourses that shape them. One has to ask as well if it is beneficial for women teachers to reject all maternal associations in their work. One has to note that erasing and silencing the maternal aspects of teaching, would be in line with the Western social science depreciation of mothering and female subjugation of female representation of teaching and the maternal (Boulous Walker 1998:11-15). The use of the maternal as a hidden support to patriarchal systems of thought would not be recognised.

Petra Munro (1998:13) points out that "discourses of teaching as mothering" represent teaching by women as instinctual, "natural" actions and therefore hide women teachers' intellectual and political potential for social change. However as Munro explains, women's resistance to the discourse of teaching as women's true profession does not necessarily take place through an opposition of this discourse.

The women teachers in Petra Munro's study engage in this discourse and use it to affirm their own agency. In their narratives of their entry into the profession they resist the idea that teaching is natural to women. Their claim that teaching was the only profession open to them emphasises the effects of this social discourse to justify their choice and resists the idea that teaching is natural to women. What Petra Munro is stating here is that appropriating dominant discourses is not necessarily a symbol of women's domination and passivity. It can be a strategic move to assert their own actions in the construction of their own subjectivities.

Kathleen Casey (1990), in her article "Teacher as Mother, Curriculum Theorising in the life Histories of Contemporary Women Teachers", presents examples of how women teachers give different meanings to the maternal associations with their teaching practices. She especially focuses on the way these women deconstruct masculinist definitions of care and resist patriarchal expectations of their function in educational systems. Her intent is to deconstruct the fixed categorical notions of the maternal and present them as multiple and highly complex power/knowledge relationships.

Mothering therefore presents a highly ambivalent context from which women teacher's lives are explored. These studies although referring to different contexts and persons go along with my argument so far that women teachers should not be reduced to their motherly roles. Still, they can make use of maternal symbolisations to individuate and differentiate themselves. Earlier on I argued that disconnecting from mothering is hardly a strategic move in a Maltese cultural context that appreciates the mother and where women are socially esteemed through their association with mothering. Similarly, in rethinking women teachers' subjectivities, it

is not strategically feasible to break teaching from mothering. Such strategies remain couched within the language of reproduction and conserve the devaluation of mothering and all that is associated with it. In these cases a deconstructive practice that re-conceptualises the teacher-mother association itself, would be more effective. It would envisage women as active agents in constructing their own life styles; a representation that does not preclude them from being knowers. This strategy necessitates a research methodology that takes women's knowledge seriously and uses it as a source for subversion of otherwise limiting maternal and teaching practices.

More about the Research

The conceptual frameworks and socio-cultural contexts described above, which I continue to discuss in detail in Chapters Two and Three have strong implications for the development of the research. Nevertheless, the several conversations I had with the eleven research participants instigated me to explore new pathways in terms of content as well as research methodology. The women's deep knowledges about teaching, education, mothering and their lives in general and their extraordinary particular ways of conceiving these knowledges, strongly motivated me to further explore issues of self-creation, social symbolisations and subversions which were already prominent themes of my reading of the Irigarayan and Foucauldian theoretical frameworks.

This describes my attempt to develop the research in an original way through the combination of the ideas of Luce Irigaray and Michel Foucault with the knowledge of the eleven women participants in this study. This process can be understood more clearly as a continuous spinning together of different threads aimed at producing new

knowledges. I started off intertwining my personal motivations, experiences and thoughts with the perspectives of Irigaray and Foucault. As I state in the next chapter, I am aware of the differences and contrasts of the theoretical positions of these two theorists but I have used each to build upon the other to inform this particular research process. At certain points during the research, women teachers' stories, ideas and challenges are brought in so that their contributions are also responsible for the direction and extent of the spinning.

The story of the formation of the teacher-mother associations in Chapter Three depicts the limits that Maltese women teachers encounter in making themselves in their own ways. However, it shares the Foucauldian genealogical aims of exposing the association as contingent and fabricated so that the possibilities of subversion of the constraining images of the women, mothers and/or teachers are highlighted. The conversations I had with these women were particularly influential in changing the aims and directions of the research process along these lines. Their particular willingness and even desire to talk about other own selves as well as their desire for their knowledges to stand out as their own made me focus more on them as individuals with their own particular ways of resisting social limitations. In Chapter Four, I shall discuss in detail, the methodological principles informing the conversation research methods. One of the most important aims of the research in fact, is to present these women teachers as significant persons and active participants in the production of knowledge.

Initially eight women teachers were contacted by phone or in person to be participants in the research and all of them accepted (see earlier section, *Introducing Women Participants in this Study*). I knew all the women I contacted, but the depth

of my relation with each woman varied. The women were also chosen to vary in age and experience in order to provide a good perspective of the different as well as common experiences and understandings of mothering and teaching. Their ages ranged from their early thirties to their late sixties. Their teaching experiences varied in terms of the historical periods and contexts of their teaching years and the age and gender of the pupils they taught. There were other reasons for contacting specific women. One of the women was chosen because of her particular experiences of poetry writing and another one for her involvement in the advancement of women in Malta. Some others were included because I knew they had particular stories as teachers and mothers to tell and others because I knew of their strength of character and ability to change themselves in especially adverse circumstances.

On reflecting on the conversations with the first group of women, I became more aware of their different life styles, personalities and experiences that developed every encounter in a singular way. Questions for my second meeting with them were all the more open ended and were mostly guided by what they said during our first conversations. However, I realised that this group was fairly homogeneous in that all the women that I talked to had children of their own. The second group therefore consisted of three women, who were, at the time we met, single and/or did not have children. Most of the questions for the first encounter remained the same and the same procedure was followed in preparing for the second encounter i.e. the guiding questions were based on their particular interests and situations so that every encounter with each woman was particular in form and content.

Our first conversations focused around a few open-ended questions emerging from the theoretical contexts that I had explored at that point in time. I asked them to tell

their stories as teachers, what it means for them to be teachers, what are their ideas about teaching. Other questions were asked according to their answers and to the outcome of our conversations; sometimes these women asked me the same questions themselves and others posed questions about the research. The questions were asked in a different order and different manner depending on how women chose to reply. When women talked of themselves as mothers I took the opportunity to ask questions about what they understand by a mother and the relationship between mothering and teaching. In other situations when mothering themes did not come up I took some of their remarks about their relationship with their pupils and/or their thoughts about education in general to introduce the idea myself.

For my second encounter I thought of different points for discussion for each woman. I came up with these questions after having re-read and analysed their responses during our first meeting. This time the questions were all the more open ended and focused more on practices of their own selves. The women's responses were influential in changing the focus of some of the research aims and direction of research process. In fact they redirected my theoretical investigations and concerns with processes of different becomings and self-creation as I state in Chapter Four.

I took up most (especially those of group one) of the women's concerns about the use of time at home and at work to deepen the conversations into their actual practices in making time for themselves as teachers, women and mothers. Many women of both groups were critical of school time organisation and educational systematisation. Their accounts of struggles with time directed my interest in exploring how time features in their self-creation, how it makes them as well as how they make themselves in relation to it. Their preoccupation with this theme directed the

discussion during the second encounter on the use of time in schools and classrooms; the strategies they adopt to challenge the rigid, time-tabling systems; and how this affects their ideas of teaching and thinking about themselves as teachers. This was linked with their use of time at home and the practices they see as important for their own self-development.

Through their individual accounts of their life stories as teachers, the participants described their agencies in different ways. The agencies they revealed were not only directed towards social change and the transformation of their own students. Their stories were also very much concerned with how these relations affected them. They projected ideas of how teaching could be a source of growth and transformation of their own selves. The different ways of conceptualising their teaching and relationships with their students were taken as sources for further reading and discussion in the thesis. This outcome directed my focus to their particular ways of expressing their philosophies of education as practices of their self-creation as teacher mother woman.

Other common and individual attitudes and understandings of their selves as women but especially their views on mothering were taken up and developed and presented as alternative symbolisations of women/mother that challenge Maltese conventional ones. In these cases some participants' stories about mothering deconstructed conventional ideas of the mother so that they highlighted aspects of my theoretical frameworks, especially Irigaray's and Foucault's claims to the possibilities of subverting confining discourses. A large number of participants talked about their difficult experiences of mothering and/or about the hugely demanding mothering practices. They challenged discourses that present motherhood as a state that every

woman should hope for. Other women recounted their feelings about not having children, and how social pressures to do so, prevent them and other women from realising themselves away from mothering. Most of the women were especially critical of the "maternal instinct" insisting that mothering is something someone learns and accustoms themselves to rather than a "natural practice".

Generally, in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, women's positions as mothers and teachers are strategically used as fertile grounds for thinking themselves differently. The chapters in fact are aimed to proliferate meanings of what it means to be a woman, mother and teacher by using the women participants' own conceptions of their selves and their ways of life. Chapter Six is particularly concerned with how these women make themselves through practices of the self but importance is given to practices by which women create themselves in relation to others. It also highlights the need to recognise relations between women as important factors that contribute to their self-creation. The theme of self-creation is especially important in Chapter Seven. The whole chapter in fact is based on the idea of symbolising these women and their maternal links through their particular interpretations and ideas of education. Their philosophies of education in this way are thought of as contributing to their becoming beyond that expected of them.

The research methodology that rises out of these reflections is not only concerned with analysing the workings of socio-cultural discourses and with women's ways of exceeding these through their self creative practices. My intention in Chapter Four is to discuss methodological issues and research processes through the imagery of mothering so as to rethink the maternal and the research process at the same time. This methodology keeps in line with the general strategy explored in the thesis which

is to make use of the popular and conventional images of the feminine and the maternal to deconstruct them.

I use the image of the maternal and its association with processes of creation and processes of becoming to outline a research methodology that rises out of a poststructuralist framework. This considers the research process as periods of time and space through which participants make themselves in relation to others. In this case the issue of self-creation, just as the mothering theme, is explored in two interconnected planes: mothering/self-creation as research themes as well as themes for conceptualising the research process.

In conclusion, the research is conceived as a process of becoming, a process of self creation; a technology by which we give birth to ourselves in relation to others. I consider that those involved in this research practice are more involved in the technology of the self (Foucault 1988) than in the technology of domination. The women teachers and I are involved in a process of self-formation through our contacts with each other's different thinking.

Mothering the research process involves enhancing processes of self-creation by bringing together the participants so as to further growth and transformation processes. The direction and the outcome and shape of the growth processes however remains something of a surprise so that research processes are full of expectation and change (Foucault 1991b). Above all, conceiving the research process in this way has much in common with what Rosi Braidotti refers to as a feminist genealogy:

> a discursive and political exercise in cross generational female bonding which also highlights the aesthetic dimension of the thinking process, that is the fact that ideas are beautiful events, capable of moving us across time and space. (Braidotti 1994:207)

CHAPTER TWO

FOUCAULT AND IRIGARAY WEAVING FRAMEWORKS

The aim of this chapter is to analyse in detail some issues and theoretical visions of Irigaray and Foucault. In Chapter One I gave a detailed explanation as to why I have chosen the perspectives of these theorists to inform the research process and analysis and readings of the conversations. Here I shall give a short critical account of the aspects of their work relevant to this study.

It is not my intention to make a full comparative study of Foucault and Irigaray. I shall identify the diversities in their thoughts and use them to build upon each other to form a theoretical context for an analysis of the way women teachers are constructed and construct themselves as maternal subjects. I shall begin with an analysis of Foucault's and Irigaray's relation to the Enlightenment and how they both seek in different ways to go beyond its limits. I shall consider their particular views on the 'rational subject' produced by the Enlightenment as points from which their genealogies emerge. This therefore leads me to identify their perspectives on the formation of the subject and related notions of power and discourses. In doing this I shall also focus on overlaps in their work, which have led me to work with Irigaray and Foucault to come up with this theoretical context for this research in the first place.

Foucault and the Enlightenment

In one of his later essays, "What is Enlightenment?" Foucault (1984a) takes up Kant's question from an essay which bears the same title "What is Enlightenment?",

to mark and trace the legacy of this body of modern thought to the Western world. Foucault in fact, points out that Kant's reflections on the Enlightenment are the mark of a new way of thinking that characterises modern thought. Foucault states that Kant's concern with the present and his reflection on the way human beings relate to it is particular. Kant, like the human beings he envisages, is not an unattached spectator but a person engaging himself with what is happening around him; involving himself and developing his thought with the changing context. This is the hallmark of the Enlightenment, which can be considered as a rite of passage to maturity. According to Foucault, Kant's method of reflection and analysis of history is also particular in that it does not "seek to define the teleology of time and the point toward which history of humanity is moving" but

> situates contemporary reality with respect to the overall movement and its basic directions. But at the same time, it shows how, at this very moment, each individual is responsible in a certain way for that overall process. (Foucault 1984a:38)

What Kant is emphasising here is people's active engagement through the exercise of critical reflection. This practice gives them freedom, which is grounded within a context that continues to oblige people to obey social rules and regulations. As Foucault continues to explain

> Kant does not ask that people practise a blind and foolish obedience, but that they adapt the use they make of reason to these determined circumstances and reason must then be subjected to the particular ends in view. Thus, there cannot be, here, any free use of reason. (Foucault1984a:36)

This 'attitude' or 'ethos' (Foucault 1984a:39) incorporates the way we think, behave, feel and act and, according to Foucault, even though we consider ourselves as having moved beyond the Enlightenment, we are still its inheritors. We are concerned with identifying our limits (1984a:47) and struggling to free ourselves. Although it is hard to constitute ourselves as mature beings we still strive towards this goal and to transgress limits that we ourselves recognise through critical reflection: "this task

requires work on our limits, that is, a patient labour giving form to our impatience for liberty" (Foucault1984a:50).

The task of philosophy therefore, remains that of critical reflection on the limits that impinge on us. The boundaries created by the Enlightenment are to be challenged and transgressed so that we re-conceptualise ourselves. In this manner our link with the Enlightenment is sustained. This is one way of explaining Foucault's complex relation to the Enlightenment. As he explains it is not a matter of being for or against it because we are rooted in "a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era." (Foucault 1984a:42)

Inspired by Kant's understanding of the Enlightenment ethos, Foucault captures its intended spirit by moving beyond Kant. Foucault's continuation of the critique of the Enlightenment does not follow Kant's question "What is man?" Human beings cease to be autonomous in the liberal humanist sense of the word. To Foucault, they are products of discourse but powerful enough to engage with it and create themselves within social conditions as well as transgress them. Another point where Foucault departs from Kant, is when he takes up Nietzsche's genealogical approach to study the way modern subjects have been constituted (Mahon 1992:181). This turn towards Nietzsche is a strategy to break away from Kant's understanding of history, where the rational subject is its creator; his actions directed towards progress.

This does not mean that Foucault is doing away with the notion of the subject but he is re-conceptualising it as being made and at the same time making history. Foucault wants to identify the conditions through which the subject is made and makes himself. He also wants to show the contingency of discursive formations of the

subject; to bring into question unified and universal suppositions of rationality and portray them as particular products of a particular era and socio-historical contexts. Rationalisation can take many forms and its processes of formation are as plural and diverse as the socio-historical contexts containing them. In this way, one can conclude that Foucault's legacy with the Enlightenment ethos is his problematisation of the Enlightenment legacy itself. He shakes up what it assumes to be whole and universal to identify the many diverse forms of rationality, including those that have been subjugated through some dominant discourse of science. Foucault is interested in Kant's thoughts about the Enlightenment because they give an indication of what the Enlightenment means at a certain point in time for particular groups of people engaged with particular social and cultural practices (Dean 1994:56).

The emphasis on the contingency of the Enlightenment ethos, and related subjective formations sheds light on Irigaray's relation to the Enlightenment, her understanding of the subject and her plea for the social symbolisation of women. Irigaray is interested in the politics of the Enlightenment that universalises a particular masculine form of rationality and subjectivity. Her critique of the rational modern and masculinised subject is based on an understanding of the subject as an Enlightenment product and is directed towards its assumed universality and the consequent marginalisation if not annihilation of feminine subjectivity. Irigaray unmasks the covert masculine form of universality. However, this does not mean that the notions of the subject created by the Enlightenment cannot be conceived in other than universal dimensions. As Irigaray explains, it is not easy to completely break up pre-dominant universal forms of reasoning and being because anything which is brought in comparison to this universal intelligible form is also made by it even though it seems opposed to it. The dominant discourses and symbolics around which

Western culture is built are that of men so women are left in a state of dereliction. If women have not socially and publicly participated in setting up these symbolics and discourses, they have to refer to these legitimate forms to speak, even though their intent is subversive. Women are actually double bound; for if they follow legitimate social practices they would act as reproducers of the same dominant social systems that devalue them. On the other hand they cannot completely ignore them. Otherwise they and their modes of thinking are considered as irrational by the phallocentric standards of rationality. Irigaray's aim therefore, is to open up and sexually differentiate the highly monosexual cultural discourses which make the feminine subject. To do this she deconstructs universal man made definitions of the feminine and argues for the social symbolisation of women in women's own terms. However her statements regarding the articulation of the feminine have been the main sources of her critics' accusations of essentialism, which they perceive to be shadows of patriarchal definitions of the feminine. (Moi 1985). In the following section I shall draw upon her ties with the Enlightenment ethos, to explain her insistence on the recognition of sexual difference and her critics' frequent misunderstandings and dismissal of Irigarayan perspectives as being essentialist. In doing so, I shall also make comparisons between her and Foucault's relation to Enlightenment.

Irigaray, Foucault and Feminine Subjectivity

If Irigaray has anything in common with Foucault it is her complex relation to the Enlightenment. They both reject, but at the same time retain, strands of the Enlightenment ethos if only to criticise them and recognise their effects on the present. Their links with the Enlightenment can be understood more clearly when one considers their similar perspectives that critiques of discourses cannot take place from outside the discourses themselves. Neither can subjects be understood as

disaffected from the discourses that give them shape. In similar ways, Irigaray and Foucault struggle with the limits created by the Enlightenment but cannot easily shake them off. They engage with them in their own particular ways and devise different strategies to transgress them.

Foucault's main approach in analysing the ways certain forms of rationality have created the modern subject is his genealogical approach, which I shall deal with in depth later on. This approach does away with the need for ontological theories of the self and understands the subject as historically constructed by discourses. Irigaray, after analysing the controlling effects of philosophical and psychoanalytic discourses of rationality on feminine subjectivities, has other strategies in mind, such as mimesis. She also argues for the necessity of maternal genealogies, i.e. the importance of strengthening relations between women, in the construction of feminine subjectivities.

As I explained above, Irigaray's position in relation to the Enlightenment is grounded in her reading of the modern subject as male and the universal forms of rationality as male-defined. Yet in many ways, in her writings one can sense some resonance with Enlightenment values such as that of autonomy and its relation to subjective formations. This is not to say that Irigaray follows liberal ideas of a subject free from the play of power. Like Foucault she cannot dismiss discourses that have been essential to the creation of the modern subject and which still have a profound influence on our present modes of thinking. As Foucault explains, it is necessary to see clearly

> what links us to our modernity and at the same time appear modified to us. This experience that permits us to single out certain mechanisms (for example, imprisonment, penalisation etc.) and at the same time to separate ourselves from them by perceiving them in a totally different form...(Foucault 1991b:38)

However, Irigaray is not so much concerned with specifying the cultural and social practices or institutions that shape us, as Foucault is. Her critical focus is more directed on philosophical and psychological discourses that shape the modern rational subject. Irigaray also sees these discourses as mechanisms that construct the feminine subject. Yet, she does not say much about the specific social practices, for example education, the family, etc. and the way that they work. Although Irigaray realises the profound effects these have on everyday lives, she "limits" her critical analysis to an erudite investigation of Western systems of thought and predominantly male philosophy.

In this way Foucault's genealogical approach combines well with Irigaray's critique of patriarchy, for anyone interested in analysing the limits of man-made feminine subjectivities. Irigaray gives a thorough analysis of the philosophical strategies deployed in subjecting the feminine but through a Foucauldian genealogical approach one could identify the specific forms of these subjections in various times and spaces.

Foucault's genealogy, however is not to be unproblematically taken up and applied to trace the descent of the modern feminine subject. If we take up Foucault's suggestion and identify *his* links with modernity, it is clear that his genealogies of subject are genealogies of the male subject. His studies consider the subject as if it were one. This is the major problem that many feminists have with Foucault's lack of concern for the specific formation of the feminine subject (Bartky 1988, Harstock 1990, Grimshaw 1993) and also with the Enlightenment's creation of a seemingly neutral subject which they recognise as male. In spite of his rejection of totalitarian and universalising systems of knowledge and power Foucault falls into the trap of

assuming the subject as male and including it unproblematically in his theories; even though he recognises that the ethical formation of oneself was male and man-made.

> women were generally subjected (excepting the liberty they would be granted by a status like that of courtesan) to extremely strict constraints, and yet this ethics was not addressed to women; it was not their duties, or obligations, that were recalled, justified or spelled out. It was an ethics for men: an ethics thought, written and taught by men, and addressed to men- to free men obviously. A male ethics, consequently, in which women figured only as objects….). (Foucault 1992:22)

Here Foucault is highlighting the masculine and patriarchal bias of ethical systems such as those developed by the Greeks. His observations focus on how this particular society encourages subjects to be active and capable of moderation and self mastery, in fashioning oneself as a respectable citizen (Foucault 1992, 1990b). Clearly, in such a state, women who are thought to 'naturally' lack the virile abilities of self-control could never be identified as subjects. In this description women are very much like the women that Irigaray describes; objects in a world of men amongst themselves. Irigaray's work points out that such patriarchal arrangements are very much alive in the contemporary Western world and its central aim is to recognise women as subjects (Whitford 1991). Nevertheless, both Irigaray's and Foucault's understandings of the workings of social systems recognise that a certain kind of subjectivity, defined as masculine, is made universal. They both point to the theoretical socio-cultural historical tendencies of the West to either assimilate the feminine subject into a neutralised male unitary humanist subject or to consider the feminine subject as particular and deficient. According to Irigaray, dominating phallocentric constructed conceptions and symbolisations of the male rational subjects leave women without a language of their own to conceive themselves as subjects. Irigaray therefore argues for an alternative differential way of thinking the subject. However, as I explain in a later section, her fluid conceptualisations of subjectivity, as opposed to more solid, unchanging and unitary ones, are still

criticised as remaining strongly aligned with stereotypes of the feminine self. And this shares the binary oppositional thinking of phallocentrism that devalues the feminine.

Irigaray and Other Feminists

Irigaray like other feminists is critical of the epistemological frameworks that legitimate such representations. Moira Gatens (1991) explains how sexually different subjectivities are constructed along philosophies that function to limit women to their natural reproductive roles:

> Superficially, conceptions of human nature from the seventeenth century assume a unitary and universal subject. However, an analysis of the paths followed by modern philosophy shows the construction of at least two kinds of human subjects. The apparently sexually neutral human subject turns out to be implicitly a male subject whose neutrality is conceptually dependent on the 'shadow' conception of the female subject. Briefly, we can list some features of these subjects here. The male subject is constructed as self -contained and as an owner of his person and his capacities, one who relates to other men as free competitors with whom he shares certain politico-economic rights. While he has rights to privacy and self-improvement he relates to women as though they were a natural resource and complement to himself. The female subject is constructed as prone to disorder and passion, as economically and politically dependent on men, and these constructions are justified by reference to women's nature. She makes no sense by herself and her subjectivity assumes a lack which males complete. She is indistinguishable from wife/mother. (Gatens 1991:5)

As Gatens explains, such ideas serve to nourish symbolisations of the male subjects as rational and consequently women as irrational. Considering this situation, it is quite understandable that feminists raise objections to systems of thought such as those of the Enlightenment. They cannot automatically apply its values and principles to women's constructions of their subjectivities. Women, as Irigaray argues, need not speak the same language as men and apply the same principles of rationality to attain subject status.

However, as Ann Brooks (1997) explains, second wave feminists, seeking to acquire knowledge and use it for their own transformations and liberation, have retained their inheritance of the emancipatory aims of the Enlightenment tradition. Borrowing the Enlightenment's epistemological frameworks for their own subjective constructions they, however, tainted their thinking with totalitarian attitudes of patriarchal systems of thought that they themselves were criticising. As Linda Nicholson (1990) remarks these feminist theories remained on the meta-theoretical level when talking about women, ignoring the social, cultural and historical differences between them.

One of the reasons why certain feminists retain such close links with Enlightenment rationality is that since women have been considered as incapable of being autonomous and rational, it was very tempting to argue for their inclusion and prove themselves worthy of it. This line of argument has been taken up by advocates of equality between men and women and has been pitted against that of feminists who claim that women are different so that women are obliged to choose between thinking of themselves as either equal or different.

Feminism's ambiguous ties with the Enlightenment are particularly evident in feminist debates about the relationships between postmodernism and feminism. Many feminists recognise that much feminist thought and practice have marginalised other women who did not exactly fit their prescribed models or did not subscribe to general emancipatory procedures as Enlightenment philosophy. At the same time feminist articulations of sexual differences, despite similar general and universalising tendencies do challenge the assumed neutrality of predominantly masculinist epistemology of the Enlightenment. There are feminists who argue to maintain at least some of Enlightenment's values and foundations. They are suspicious of the

political effectiveness of feminism if the unified notion of the social subject "woman" is abandoned. Consider for example Nancy Harstock's objections to postmodern proclamations that the subject is dead:

> why is it that just at the moment when many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than as objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic? Just when we are forming our own theories about the world, uncertainty merges about whether the world can be theorised...I contend that these intellectual moves are no accident (but no conspiracy either). (Harstock 1990:163-164)

Seyla Benhabib (1995) is also concerned with feminist trends that hold on to strong versions of the death of man, the death of history and the death of metaphysics. She states that

> The strong version of the Death of the Subject thesis is not compatibile with the goals of feminism. Surely, a subjectivity that would not be structured by language by narrative and by the symbolic codes of narrative available in a culture is unthinkable. (Benhabib 1995:21)

It is interesting to compare these views with those of Irigaray especially because their feminism is constructed on similar preoccupations, namely that women have not yet attained their own subjectivity and therefore it is essential for feminism to strive towards this goal. Irigaray would agree with Benhabib in pointing to the importance of language and cultural symbolics in the making of feminine subjectivity. However, Irigaray's preoccupation is that women's subjectivities are designed upon male defined knowledge and systems of meaning which is to say that women have not yet acceded to their own subjectivities- those formed in women's own terms. Therefore she does not see how the same concepts that have denied women the possibility of forming their own subjectivity could be used for this same aim. Irigaray takes up a different strategy, which does not necessarily entail the dismissal of subjectivity and its agency but neither does it support philosophies of subjectivities that define women as lacking certain qualities. Rather she attacks the foundational metanarratives of modernity as the prime sources of the death of the

feminine subject and argues for a re-conceptualisation of a social order and a re-creation of discourse that allows women to speak. In this view the project of feminism is that of challenging phallocentricism which does not necessarily reside only in systems of thought sympathetic to the Enlightenment tradition. Feminism has to be critical of postmodernist stances in that they can also be grounded on predominant masculinised worldviews or devise strategies that negate women the possibility of distinguishing themselves as such (Braidotti1991:105).

In this respect I agree with Foucault in arguing that it is not a question of being "for" or "against" the Enlightenment. The way to proceed with creating ourselves as subjects, which is the main common preoccupation with all the feminists mentioned above, is to analyse "ourselves as beings who are historically determined, to a certain extent, by the Enlightenment" (Foucault 1984a:43). It is not a question of extracting and preserving the essential aspects present in the Enlightenment in creating subjectivities. Rather one has to identify "what is or is no longer indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects." (Foucault 1984a:43)

The Essential Question of Women

It seems to me, therefore that the debate around whether feminism dies with the death of the subject can be resolved by realising that, as Margaret Whitford rightly points out, "the subject is a concept that has a history" (Whitford 1991:43). One can understand the death of the subject as the death of a particular subject that has been created at a certain point in time and therefore conceptions of it are changeable. In this way as Rosi Braidotti (1991) argues, the pronouncement of the death of the subject is an exciting time because it allows more space for the creation of the feminine self in women's own terms. And one of the fundamental steps towards such

subjective creations is challenging taken for granted understandings of the subject and identifying the way language and socio-cultural norms function to support it.

So although Irigaray realises the importance of language and cultural symbolics in women's constructions of their own selves as Seyla Benhabib does, she does not think that this can be done by referring to the same patriarchal symbolics that deny and exclude women. The incorporation or addition of women's ways of thinking into this discourse does not do justice to women's historical exclusion from social symbolisation. The only identification that women get from a masculinised cultural imaginary is of an "incomplete and uncompletable" being (Irigaray 1985a:165). Because the laws of language and the conceptions of truths and values structuring the social order are alien to women they have suffered and are suffering sexual social injustice. The aim therefore is to think of the feminine subject in radically different terms, independent of the phallocentric order and this requires a re-organisation of sexual, linguistic and socio-symbolic systems (Grosz 1989:110). The feminine subject is to be "conceived" (Irigaray 1985a:160) in radically different ways:

> To claim that the feminine can be expressed in the form of a concept is to allow oneself to be caught up again in a system of "masculine" representations, in which are trapped in a system of meaning which serves the auto-affection of the (masculine) subject. If it is really a matter of calling "femininity" into question, there is still no need to elaborate another "concept" - unless a woman is renouncing her sex and wants to speak like men. For the elaboration of a theory of woman, men, I think, suffice. In a woman ('s) language, the concept as such would have no place. (Irigaray 1985b:122-3)

Just as Foucault does not ask the question "What is man?", Irigaray turns away from the question "What is woman?" (Irigaray 1985b:122) because according to her this type of question pertains to the dominant conceptual and meaning system defined by men. She also comes close to Foucault in that she seeks the limits of the humanist conceptualisation of the subject, a rational and politically liberal being in control of his actions. In both their cases "the critique of the subject is not a negation or

repudiation of the subject, but rather a way of interrogating its construction as a pregiven or foundationalist premise" (Butler 1995:42).

The important question here is whether it is possible to conceptualise women independently of male discourses since these predominant discursive systems constitute feminine subjectivity itself. This leaves Irigaray like other feminists debating the notion of the subject, in a no-win situation. To define femininity is to be caught up within phallocratic discourse; not to define it leaves women with no means of articulating femininity. Irigaray, in fact describes women as being elsewhere (1985b:121). Because of this situation it even becomes difficult to understand what phallocratic discourse is. In her answer to one of the questions put to her during a seminar at Toulouse, Irigaray understands the interviewer's remarks that she does not understand what masculine discourse means. She replies

> Of course not, since there is no other. The problem is that of a possible alterity in masculine discourse - or in relation to masculine discourse. (Irigaray 1985b:140)

The neutralising practices that disguise the male subject as universal have seeped in through modern ways of thinking so that now it has become virtually impossible to distinguish it as man-made. According to Irigaray this happens because masculine discourse allows no other ways of thinking. Irigaray therefore defines women's subjectivity beyond the linguistic, social and thinking order, which is alien and hostile to the creation of feminine subjectivity. This point has caused a lot of confusing interpretations of Irigaray's position with regards to understanding feminine subjectivity.

Some critics, because of Irigaray's insistence on conceiving of a different feminine subjectivity that is still associated with feminine biological characteristics have

classified her as an essentialist (Moi 1985). For example her thinking and representation of women with reference of the two lips, which I will discuss in Chapter 4, has been subject to controversial debate about the essentialism of her theories (Whitford 1991:171-173). Her way of representing sexual differences is considered by some, as a reinforcement of the binary division that relegate women to the insignificant side of the binary.

Diana Fuss (1990) explains that Irigaray makes use of these "essentialist" traits for strategic purposes - " to elaborate and to work with a notion of essence that is not, in essence, ahistorical, apolitical, empiricist or simply reductive" (Fuss 1990:55). According to Diana Fuss, Irigaray takes up the female body as a site for contestation of masculine discourse, because historically the female body itself has been considered by philosophy as the essence or no-essence of woman.

> I would go so far as to say that the dominant line of patriarchal thought since Aristotle is built on this central contradiction: woman has an essence and it is matter; or, put slightly differently, it is the essence of woman to have no essence. To the extent that Irigaray reopens the question of essence and woman's access to it, essentialism represents not a trap she falls into but rather a key strategy she puts into play, not a dangerous oversight but rather a lever of displacement. (Fuss 1990:72)

Irigaray's strategy is to use the feminine positioning by phallocentric discourse against the discourse itself - it is not a matter of creating an opposing discourse but reformulating it so that alternative systems of meaning, values and thinking enable women to give birth to themselves and their femininity. Irigaray uses the feminine morphology of the two lips to initiate an understanding of the identity of woman as multiple. So she makes use of the "natural" characteristics assigned to her to create a new conceptualisation of identity - one which is not singular and absolute but fluid and changeable.

At this point it is important to mention that in challenging the assumed universality of male subjectivity Irigaray does not do away with the idea of universality completely. As Naomi Schor (1995) explains, the fact that certain feminists have criticised the idea of the universal, does not mean that they are against the universal as such but against the way it has been structured by exclusions.

Irigaray is one of these feminists who wants to deconstruct the universal, i.e. the idea that there is one universal human nature and that it is rational (Schor 1995:15). She wants to uncover its partiality to re-conceptualise it to include sexual differences. Naomi Schor continues to explain that Irigaray's universalism is different from the universal as established by the Enlightenment; her critique of the latter is done with the intent to re-invent the universal. Irigaray in her work recognises that the universal is a social construction that changes throughout history. As she explains in her paper "The Universal as Mediation":

> Philosophy's job is to work on the universal. But what is there to be done with the universal? Now and always it needs to be thought about. It changes from century to century and the status of the universal is to be a mediation. Now, quite apart from the fact that the universal changes according to the economy of an era, this mediation has never in fact occurred since there has been no thinking about those two halves of the world men and women. (Irigaray 1993b:147)

Irigaray argues that the phallocentric representations of human nature can be challenged by recognising sexually different ways of being and thinking. This does not necessarily entail the establishment of a new feminine foundation that replaces the phallocentric one but a transformation and total re-conceptualisation of the existent universal.

In spite of this, Irigaray has to refer to the "essentialised" feminine subject created by the Enlightenment to go beyond it. It is not strategically feasible to ignore the representations of "the feminine" as they have infiltrated women's own self-

constructions. Therefore Irigaray continues to work on these existing representations with the aim of reconceptualising the feminine subject and considering it as the source of challenge to the universal man made forms of rationality rather than its source of sustenance. Irigaray wants to affirm difference because according to her it has been subjugated for so long. However her aims of affirmation cannot take place outside the sea that she is in. Therefore what she does is to analyse philosophical thought and work her way through it to establish difference within this sea of sameness through mimetic strategies.

Mimesis, Power and Discourses

One of the problems of Irigaray's analysis of the discourses that inhibit women from making themselves subjects is that she only mentions patriarchal discourses as their main sources of oppression. Judith Butler also criticises Irigaray's reading of patriarchy as a global monolithic system of domination. She argues that Irigaray fails to identify specific ways in which gender oppression works as a "kind of epistemological imperialism". Butler argues that one cannot consider different cultural gender operations as mere examples of a general form of phallocentrism. She states that

> The effort to *include* "Other" cultures as variegated amplifications of a global phallogocentrism constitutes an appropriative act that risks a repetition of the self-aggrandizing gesture of phallogocentrism, colonising under the sign of the same those differences that might otherwise call that totalizing concept into question. (Butler 1990:13)

She claims that women's oppression cannot be considered as if it were one. By perceiving masculinist discourse as the only discourse that oppresses women, one remains linked to essentialising woman as one. Furthermore disregarding the power networks related to culture, class, race, age and sexual preferences as contributing to

the particular formations of women's selves disregards the social contexts that shape women's selves in multiple ways.

> Feminist critique ought to explore the totalising claims of masculinist signifying economy, but also remain self critical with respect to totalising gestures of feminism. The effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms. (Butler 1990:13)

Still, Irigaray insists on affirming the differences between feminine and masculine poles. For her this is important "to affirm a social, economic, cultural religious ideological reality, which underlies everything" (Irigaray 1980:160).

Irigaray is frequently criticised because like other French feminists she does not give particular attention to differences between women. Irigaray is more concerned with an explanation of how patriarchy works to prevent differentiation. Her perspectives, analysis and strategies rest on the premise that phallocentrism does not allow for differences - not even sexual differences are possible within this economy of the Same. In one of her interviews "The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine" (Irigaray 1985b:68-85) as well as in most of her writings Irigaray shows how Western systems of thought, psychoanalysis and philosophy in particular essentialise woman. These forms of discourse might seem separated from our everyday lives but according to Irigaray these are examples of cultural and social symbolics pertaining to a masculine imaginary and affect the processes of how women form their subjectivities. Actually Irigaray thinks that women are not subjects at all because their imaginary is overshadowed by the effects of a prevalent patriarchal social symbolisation. Irigaray explains that women are constructed as the same in existing social systems. The limiting patriarchal symbolisations of their feminine selves as mothers prevent them from differentiating themselves from each other.

Nevertheless, Irigaray's work lacks explanations as to the particular social, cultural and historical ways in which women become undifferentiatedly symbolised through their maternal connotations. One also has to analyse the different concepts, ideas and practices of maternity which emerge through particular historical and socio-cultural circumstances. As I shall explain in a later section, it is Foucault's genealogical studies that follow this method of analysis, which I shall also be taking up in Chapter Three to identify the particular discourses that shape the teacher as mother within a Maltese socio-cultural context.

This is another reason why Foucault's methods are taken up here. Even though his work is not concerned with the specific disciplinary procedures of women's subjection, his analysis of the way power is networked into micro spheres of lives and its relation to the sexed body, can be inspiring to trace the different discourses that regulate femininity and motherhood. As Sawicki explains

> His analytic of power/knowledge could be used to further feminist explorations into the dynamics of patriarchal power at the most intimate levels of experience in the institutions of marriage, motherhood and compulsory heterosexuality and in the everyday rituals and regimens that govern women's relationships to themselves and their bodies. (Sawicki 1996:161)

There are therefore considerable differences between Irigaray's perception of how power works to subjugate women and the way Foucault sees power as always circulating so that every person has the possibility of moving beyond subjugated positions. Foucault's description of women's relation to power however comes close to Irigaray's understanding of women's oppressive situations when in one of his latest interviews (Foucault 1984d) he states that it is possible that power circulations become blocked especially where women are concerned.

> Now there are effectively states of domination. In many cases the relations of power are fixed in such a way that they are perpetually asymmetrical and the margin of liberty extremely limited. To take an example, very paradigmatic to be sure: in the traditional conjugal relation in the society of the eighteenth and

> nineteenth centuries, we cannot say that there was only male power; the woman herself could do a lot of things: be unfaithful to him, extract money from him, refuse him sexually. She was however subject to a state of domination, to the extent that her resistances were no more than a certain number of tricks which never bought about a reversal of the situation. In these cases of domination - economic, social, institutional or sexual - the problem is in fact to find out where resistance is going to organise. (Foucault 1984d:12)

Irigaray's work is concerned with showing how these blockages of power come about for example, by showing that woman is taken as a matrix for the production of knowledge and therefore rendered powerless. However like Foucault she thinks that closed relations of power can be mobilised. Furthermore, like Foucault, she outlines various tactics by which these dominant relations of power can be resisted. One of her main strategies is deconstructing woman's essentialised position and her constant deferral of the pinning down of woman.

In other words if women are the matrices of male knowledge production, this knowledge/power relation can be subverted and their position becomes a matrix for transformation (Foucault 1990a:99). Foucault also points to the instability of discourse so that within it one can always find

> a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power, it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (Foucault 1990a:101)

This is also Irigaray's position in that she thinks it is possible to thwart prevalent forms of discourses. Her proposed mimesis is in fact an example of the thwarting of discourse where women use the position assigned to them by patriarchal discourses for their own self-formation, to disrupt the systematic phallocentric discursive mechanism and move beyond it to envisage alternative ways of self creation.

> To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself - inasmuch as she is on the side of the "perceptible," of matter- to "ideas," in particular to ideas about herself that are

> elaborated in/by masculine logic, but so as to make "visible," by an effect of playful repetition, what is supposed to remain invisible. The cover up of a possible operation of the feminine language. It also means "to unveil" the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply reabsorbed by this function. (Irigaray 1985b:76)

One can explain in more detail how and why women are to take up these mimetic strategies by referring to their representations as sexually different maternal beings. One of the fundamental characteristics that differentiate women from men is their ability to give birth. Christine Battersby explains

> that the dominant metaphysics of the west has been developed from the point of view of an identity that cannot give birth, so that birthing is treated as a deviation of the normal models of identity - not as integral to thinking identity itself. (Battersby 1998:4)

Christine Battersby acknowledges many feminists including Irigaray are uncomfortable with identifying women with mothering. However there are certain differences between Irigaray's reservations about women's associations with maternity and other feminists who totally reject women's identification with their reproductive and caring practices. Everingham explains that many of the second wave feminists particularly those of the 1960s and the 1970s saw mothering as preventing women from achieving equality with men and greater autonomy. Later on in the seventies, other feminists highlighted the male bias in prevalent social values of autonomy that championed individualism and devalued connectedness traditionally associated with femininity and maternity. It is within this context that one has to understand for example the aims of Sara Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking* (1990). However as Grimshaw (1986) points out the maternal virtues that Ruddick presents as rising out of the relationship between mothers and their children are not entirely so. Mothering carries with it a cultural baggage, which infiltrates the very private lives of women and relationships with their children to regulate women's behaviour in general and that of future citizens.

The dilemma which Irigaray has to confront and which is particularly relevant to Maltese women whose self-constructions are intimately related to mothering, is summarised by Christine Everingham:

> How can the fundamental contribution that women as women make to society be specified without tying women's identity to some essentialist notion of what it means to be a woman? Any fixed formulation of women's nature has the potential to undermine women's efforts to achieve some measure of personal autonomy. Yet to ignore women's specific experience as woman, and their contribution to society as mothers inhibits our understanding of nurturing activities and the possible development of a social system grounded in an ethics of care. (Everingham 1994:4)

Irigaray refers to several problems that mothering poses to women's construction of their subjectivities. She acknowledges how their representation as nature excludes them from the symbolic order that legitimates them as subjects. She also acknowledges that discourses about women and mothering are regulated by men. However her recognition of the limits does not lead her to abandon women's relations to the maternal. Basically her objection is to the fact that the maternal is the only state with which women are associated and that there are fixed definitions of what the maternal means. This study follows her mimetic strategies in that it considers women's ways of relating to the maternal that can be used as sources for representing femininity and the maternal in alternative ways.

To sum up therefore, it is important to recognise as Butler does that Irigaray's analyses of phallocentrism do not delve into the power-knowledge relations at the micro-level and that her account remains generic. Both Irigaray's analyses and tactical suggestions are addressed to overcome the "overall strategy" of phallocentrism and the power structure of this from of discourse. Yet women do exercise their own mimetic strategies and these can be identified in their daily plays with power, as I will describe in Chapters Five and Six. One has to take into account as well, that Foucault comes close to Irigaray in arguing that overall strategies are to

be taken into account and are needed for political action. But he believes that in analysing power/knowledge relations, one has to start from "local centres" and the micro relations between persons such as that between confessors and penitents.

This point brings me to a discussion about the kind of analysis that is to be taken up to counteract the effects of the exclusion of women from history. This issue is very much linked with that of generalising claims about women and the problem of essentialist representations of femininity.

Global and Local Histories

The question therefore is whether it is more effective to take note of and make use of grand or local narratives in thinking about social positions of women. In her answer to Seyla Benhabib and Judith Butler's debate about the political effectiveness and correctness in using grand or small narratives, Nancy Fraser (1995) distinguishes between the grand narrative which is metaphysically grounded and the large scale narrative in feminist theorising. Talking essentially and therefore metaphysically about the subject in history has the effect of excluding others who do not fit the category of the subject such as women who are not white, heterosexual, middle class etc. Nancy Fraser argues that such grand narratives that are grounded in such a philosophy are not useful to feminism. She proposes that feminism can make use of large scale narratives which are fallible and non foundational. These "big" histories, allow for narratives of male dominance on a large scale and draw on similarities as well as differences in gender power relations according to time, place and context without having to retain metaphysics to understand the workings of patriarchy.

> This distinction permits feminists to reject meta-narratives but still affirm historiography that discerns broad patterns of gender relations over large stretches of time. It thereby helps secure one of the intellectual tools we need to understand a phenomenon as large and complex as male dominance. Moreover,

> because our view allows both for large historical narrative and for smaller local narrative, it permits each to counteract the distorting tendencies of the other: local genealogizing narratives correct the tendency of large scale accounts to congeal into "quasi-metanarratives", while larger contextualising accounts help prevent local narratives from devolving into simple demonstrations of "difference." (Fraser 1995:62)

Irigaray's reading of patriarchy is as a product of history but one that has stretched over a long period of time and a wide context. She also seeks to understand how this has influenced our mode of thinking and reveals how it works in subjecting the feminine.

Irigaray is therefore more interested in exploring these large scale narratives rather than dealing with narratives which are more local to see how patriarchy works in particular situations and contexts. As I pointed out in the previous section, Irigaray is frequently accused of neglecting differences between women, because of her large scale narrative interest. However her proposal for maternal genealogies is exactly aimed towards recognising and creating differences in thinking about women, which have been subjugated by Western systems of thought. I shall explain later on that her proposals for maternal genealogies are general and she leaves it open to different women and their particular situations to create them. Her proposals therefore point to the need to work on both levels: the global and the local. At the same time her suggestions, although pertaining to "universal" dimensions, are neither closed nor prescriptive, but open to interpretation. Unlike patriarchal discourses that hold on to rigid and solid universality, the universality she works with is fluid enough to change forms and leave spaces for women to create their own subjectivities in their own terms.

The relation between global working of social systems on a larger scale and localised particular networking of power is outlined by Foucault in his understanding of the

parallel association between macro- and micro- operations of power strategies. Foucault explains that one must not think of the micro-and macro levels as if they were discontinuous and different levels. These work in relation to one another so that micro-practices serve as support to an overall strategy. Foucault gives the example of the family as a micro-unit that has served macro strategies such as the Malthusian control of birth rate and medicalisation of sex. As he explains,

> There is no discontinuity between them, as if one were dealing with two different levels (one microscopic and the other macroscopic); but neither is their homogeneity (as if the one were only an enlarged projection or miniaturisation of the other); rather, one must conceive of the double conditioning of a strategy by the specificity of possible tactics, and of the tactics by the strategic envelope that makes them work. (Foucault 1990a:99-100)

The feminist genealogy proposed in this thesis, draws on the Foucauldian relation between the macro and micro worlds. Such an analysis also takes into account feminist preoccupations about the articulation of the subjecthood of women but at the same time it addresses their different becomings. A feminist genealogy therefore makes general claims about women. However, as Nancy Fraser (1995) suggests, such claims are to be analysed in a genealogical fashion, taking account of the cultural, social and historical specific context through which they are bred.

Foucault's Genealogical Approach

As I explained earlier on, Foucault is not concerned with universal, true and/or fixed definitions of man but with how different subjectivities are shaped within particular contexts. Rather than asking "What is man?" he traces the way he has been formed. The main intention is not to recover and preserve memories and stories from the past. As genealogy starts from an "analysis from a question posed in the present" (Foucault 1990c:262), its political aims are more concerned with understanding contemporary modes of living.

What is relevant to this research is his focus on the specificity of the constitution of the subject and also the importance of the context in which subjective formations are temporarily grounded. Through his genealogical approach Foucault creates stories of how we have become the way we are focusing mainly on the particularities of the contexts in which this shaping took and takes place. Genealogy is therefore a critical history of the present; "an analysis of descent" (Foucault 1984b:83) and is not grounded on some metaphysical theories that claim or at least attempt to know the essence of human beings. The main aim of the genealogical approach is to critically analyse the processes of our subjective formations and not to find their origins as if they have an essence; an underlying, "succession" (Foucault 1984b:78). It sees these formations as contingent upon socio-historical contexts and particular formations of power/knowledge discourse relations.

This is one of the three main differences between doing genealogy and taking up traditional history as outlined by Foucault in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (Foucault1984b). Genealogy does not perceive identities as singular, unified and unchanging but as products of time, history and culture. The use of this historical analysis is also dissociative because, as Foucault explains, it aims to reveal the distinct and multiple elements (Foucault 1984b:94) that mobilise and fragment identities. This means that the historical approach followed does not make a synthesis of the progressions of identity formation dismissing events and knowledges that do not fit the linear representation of events necessitated by an evolutionary account. It rather follows those knowledges that have been discarded and disqualified by a history that seeks to represent continuity of events rather than their ramifications.

Events, therefore, are understood as emerging in particular times and places. Genealogy understood as tracking an emergence, does not consider the emergence as the end of the historical quest but triggers off the search for other concepts that emerged in different times and places. For example, the establishment of punishment cannot always be interpreted as a way to set an example. Foucault explains that if one continues to search in different contexts one finds that "punishment has been subjected to a variety of needs- revenge, excluding an aggressor, compensating a victim, creating a fear" (Foucault 1984b:83). These events however are not to be understood from an objective space, as traditional history purports to do. The genealogist does not need to have a God's eye view of the world or remove herself from the context which she is engaged in. What she does is question its apparent solidity and the constant way we understand our selves and the world. The scope of genealogy goes beyond that of finding the truth, questioning that which we have come to hold as the truth through a detailed analysis of its process of constitution- an analysis of the constitution of human beings through power and knowledge.

> The role of genealogy is to record its history: the history of morals, ideals, metaphysical concepts, the history of the concept of liberty or of the ascetic of life; as they stand for the emergence of different interpretations, they must be made to appear as events on the stage of historical process. (Foucault 1984b:86)

Therefore the genealogist needs the same raw materials of the historian- archives, chronicles, journals, diaries, memoirs and official records. Also Prado (1995) explains

> Genealogy even needs the historians' grand narratives, because without them it would have no counterpoint. Without those epics claiming to depict underlying continuities, genealogy would have no marginal and neglected items to notice and use in building alternative accounts. (Prado1995:40)

The part of the genealogical process, where data and information are collected and examined, is more of the archaeological kind. The genealogist makes further use of the examination of knowledge as she seeks to trace the way discourses affect our

present lives. One can therefore see genealogy as extending the archaeological method in that the latter is more of a snapshot of discourse whilst genealogy traces the process of the working of discourse (Wickam & Kendall 1999:31). This analysis of the movement of discourses has a profound effect on our understanding why certain things take the shape they have. Foucault also considers this an experience; it is not just a matter of knowing something that leaves you detached and unchanged. Genealogy

> makes use of true documents, but in such a way as to furnish not just the evidence of truth but also an experience that might permit an alteration, a transformation, of the relationship we have with ourselves and our cultural universe: in a word with our knowledge.(Foucault 1991b:37)

One final aspect of a Foucauldian genealogy which I think can be used in parallel with Irigaray's political commitment to acknowledge women's knowledge, is his claim that genealogy allows for the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (Foucault 1980b:81). These are

> a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated; naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. (Foucault 1980b:82)

Foucault considers these disqualified knowledges as being sources of challenge to grand narratives. These little narratives or knowledges that have been considered non-scientific and therefore illegitimate have the power to subvert centralising and totalising discourses and disrupt our present ways of thinking.

Difficulties however start emerging if these knowledges that have been marginalised are not produced or not documented. Irigaray's account of the subjugation of the maternal and its relation to the hindrance of such knowledge production can be taken as one possible way of understanding the cultural and social positioning of women and the need for symbolising the maternal.

Irigaray's Maternal Genealogies- Creating Differences Between Women

According to Irigaray one of the pervasive effects of phallocentric systems of thought is the silencing of women. Following Irigaray, Michelle Boulous Walker (1998) explains that women have been silenced when denied their role as philosophical subjects. But the strategies involved in the exclusion and silencing of women are more complex than just not giving the space for women to speak. Woman is metaphorically represented as the place of philosophy and the receptacle of speech by referring to her maternal dimension.

This is in fact Irigaray's line of argument in her analysis of Plato's parable of the cave in *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Irigaray 1985a). Her analysis is intended to show how the universal symbolisation of woman as mother nourishes philosophical growth but she is never recognised as a participant in such a growth. By making use of phallocratic representations of the maternal and taking the womb as the universal essence of the maternal, woman features as an essential factor of the philosopher's journey to truth. But because she is metaphorised as the cave from which men seeking enlightenment are to detach themselves, she can never be conceived as an active subject. This is the phallocratic philosophical strategy that places the maternal as the matrix that makes men's constructions of systems of thought and knowledge possible. In this way Plato's theories of knowledge and education do not only represent a strategic control on what counts as knowledge. These essential forms of the maternal supplement and support the acquisition of knowledge. They are the unacknowledged foundations of epistemological, political and educational projects.

In Chapter One I referred to women teachers' maternal roles both outside and inside the school that contribute to their devaluation in highly hierarchical systems of

knowledge and education. In Chapter Seven, I continue to focus on the way women's knowledge is subjugated and how women teacher's knowledge is rarely recognised as philosophy of education. In that chapter I also explain that this has to do with the fact that the maternal engulfs woman herself so that woman and mother are synonymous. Women are silenced because philosophers, psychoanalysts and other theorists have spoken for and about them. They have rendered them "objects of their various speculations, a source of metaphors and images, a motivation for intellectual production denied access in their own terms to a speaking position, the position of the I, the position of the theoretical production" (Grosz 1989:128).

This is not the only example of women's confinement to an oppressive and reproductive function by Western systems of thought. Irigaray explains that the conflation of Woman and Mother by this symbolic order is in fact creating 'indifference' between women. Since metaphysical signifiers are male, women lack the means to symbolise themselves, becoming objects of male speculation. Their maternal practices conform to systematic constraints and their self-formations depend upon singular patriarchal maternal identifications. Furthermore, because the sole social position conceded to them by patriarchy is maternal, they become rivals for this space.

Irigaray also looks at psychoanalysis to explain the lack of individuation between women. According to psychoanalytic perspectives, girls do not experience difference from the mother as boys do so that their selves remain merged (Whitford 1991:81). Because women are unable to differentiate themselves from one another their relationships are fused rather than individuated. This merging of selves and fusing of relationships that leave women undifferentiated from each other are also the product

of a system of thought that takes the phallus as the organiser of the world. This patriarchal absolute signifier not only defines woman as lack but leaves the relationships between mothers and daughters unsymbolised. As Margaret Whitford explains, the lack of symbolisation of this relationship "means that there is an absence of linguistic, social, semiotic, structural, cultural, iconic, theoretical, mythical, religious or any other representations of that relationship" (Whitford 1991:76).

At this point it might seem strange for the reader that Irigaray proposes maternal genealogies as a way by which women can diversify themselves. By taking up yet again a mimetic strategy, Irigaray does not renounce the maternal as one of the factors that sexually differentiate women from men. Rather she takes up this role deliberately and subverts it, to proliferate spaces for the creation of different feminine selves. Her proposal for maternal genealogies emerges from this tactic and its scope is to challenge the association of women with a sole maternal function. When she argues that relationships between women have to be symbolised she is not proposing a model on which women's subjectivities are to be shaped, rather a strategy to proliferate meanings of "woman" and "mother". This form of deconstruction of the conventional view of the mother and woman opens up spaces for the feminine imaginary. The aim, contrary to what some critics believe, is not to impose a constricting definition of woman but rather to create a space in which women in all their multiplicity can become i.e. accede to subjectivity. After all, women cannot accede to their subjectivity by following metaphysical principles that reduces everything to the same. In her paper "Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother" Irigaray argues that

> We also need to find rediscover, invent the words, the sentences that speak of the most ancient and most current relationships we know- the relationship to

> the mother's body, to our body- sentences that translate the bond between our body, her body, the body of our daughter. We need to discover a language that is not a substitute for the experience of corps-a-corps as the paternal language but which accompanies that bodily experience, clothing it in words that do not erase the body but speak the body. (Irigaray 1993b:18-19)

The main problem here is how this can be done considering her account of the pervasiveness of the patriarchal order. But Irigaray continues to explain that

> Because we have been exiled into the house of our husbands, it is easy to forget the special quality of the female genealogy; we might even come to deny it. Let us try to situate ourselves within that female genealogy so that we can win and hold on to our identity. Let us not forget, moreover that we already have history, that certain women despite all the cultural obstacles, have made their mark upon history and all too often have been forgotten by us. (Irigaray 1993b:19)

As I argued above, Irigaray's position here is similar to that of Foucault in that, although she understands the subject as historically and culturally constructed, they both think it possible that human beings can subvert the discourse which creates them.

Some feminists such as Seyla Benhabib however do not subscribe to the argument put forward by Judith Butler, that reading the subject as socially constructed does not necessarily imply that it is socially determined. Seyla Benhabib considers this as an inconsistent and unintelligible view of agency and subjectivity and asks

> If these agents retain capacities for resistance, resignification and for 'subverting gender codes' in Butler's language, from where do these derive? What are the sources of spontaneity, creativity and resistance in agents? (Benhabib 1994:5)

Both Irigaray and Foucault would answer that subjects are able to take the same positions within the networks of power as sources for their resistance and creativity. They both think that it is not possible to step outside discourses and social orders through which gender codes are formed.

However Irigaray's and Foucault's accounts of how these subjects are formed by discursive practices and power relations are different and focus on different aspects that pertain to their political and academic agenda. I have already mentioned that Foucault takes a genealogical approach to study the way the subject has been constituted and that this genealogical approach does not only perceive the subject as a passive product of discourse but one which engages in "games of truth". In his later studies Foucault continues to move along this direction and seeks to find out the ways in which the person engages in the act of self-creation. Foucault in *The Use of Pleasure* (1992) as well as in *The Care of the Self* (1990b) focuses on the Greek and Roman contexts in which these practices took place and how these were adapted to a universalised form through Christianity. Irigaray would object, like other feminists (and as Foucault himself recognises) that these ethical practices are masculine and believes that women have to find the means to create themselves. In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993a) she attempts to express female imaginaries but to do so she needs to play with the language available to her. This explains the new style by which she attempts to represent feminine identity in radically alternative ways. In this book as Margaret Whitford explains, Irigaray speaks of

> the threshold, espacement, mucosity, the passage between, the angel, air, singing and dancing are not in any sense a new synthetic a priori. They are a language, a way of talking about women which should keep open rather than close shut, and above all, allow women to be mobile, alive and turning on their own axis. (Whitford 1991:159)

One may argue that this playing with language and forms of truth may appeal only to academic women who are familiar with such texts. The issue which is highly relevant to this research, is whether women in their everyday lives and through their life experiences can subvert the subjective forms they have been limited to. How do they use the discourses and practices available to them to re-conceive of themselves as women as well as mothers? How do they engage in real life practices and how

does this contribute to the creation of their own selves? What are the new conceptions of woman and mother that are created? What spaces do they make use of to do this? And how can these articulations be socially symbolised ?

Juxtaposing Irigaray and Foucault

I started this chapter by pointing out the different perspectives that Foucault and Irigaray have on the Enlightenment. Although they are both concerned with critically analysing this ethos, their critique emerges out of different political interests. I have also pointed out that their views, political strategies and research methods can be used in parallel for an analysis of gender power relations especially those associated with the maternal characteristics and symbolisations of women. Foucault does not give a specific outline of the feminine subjective formations. Yet his genealogical approach can be very useful to feminist research. It is not simply a means of informing oneself of the ways the feminine subject is formed. It questions the conventional characteristics that are assigned to woman and why her subjugation to a passive and reproductive role essentialises her as an inherently nurturing and emotional subject.

Another Foucauldian characteristic of the genealogical approach is that it does not remain under the authority of totalitarian theories and regimes of truth. Genealogy therefore escapes what these knowledge systems consider to be valid and in doing so it takes note of those knowledges that have not been considered worthwhile. This is another aspect that is particularly useful to a feminist genealogy because it uses these popular knowledges and the subjugated knowledges of women to challenge the totalitarianism of dominant theories.

Irigaray's analysis of phallocentric systems of thought aims to show that the universality claimed by such theories is in fact tailor-made by men to suit their interests in keeping the feminine subjugated and in a non-speaking position. Irigaray's erudite analysis and criticism of these systems of knowledge is useful in understanding how these theories work and contribute to the formation of the specific genealogical story of the association between women, mothering and teaching. Irigaray explains that metaphorisations of the mother by phallocentric theories therefore not only essentialise women but leave them unable to speak as women. This explanation, as I pointed out in Chapter One, is relevant to understanding the lack of writings by women in Malta expressing their subjugated knowledges and particularly why there are so few writings of the dissenting knowledges of women teachers also those concerning the maternal aspects of their work.

Yet Irigaray's explanations do not only address the effects of totalitarian phallocentricism on the lives of women and the lack of symbolisation practices. Her writings are useful in feminist politics because she argues for the subversion of phallocentric systems of knowledge. Irigaray in fact suggests and practises mimetic strategies throughout her texts which is a tactic by which she deconstructs phallocratic representations of woman and reconstructs her identity as multiple and fluid. She does both these at the same time by assuming the feminine role assigned to her deliberately and moving beyond it. In this way she displaces the discourses that have constructed her but uses them to proliferate meanings of the feminine. As Elizabeth Grosz remarks, Irigaray's writings "indirectly provide a way of understanding women, women's place in culture and women's future possibilities in terms different from prevailing patriarchal depictions" (Grosz 1989:1).

However Irigaray's texts remain very much linked to what might be considered as the "theoretical" and academic realm. Her "feminine ecriture" style is surely not familiar for those women who want to acquaint themselves and communicate with her. Irigaray experiments with alternative modes of expressions and articulations of feminine subjectivity, which is understandably necessary considering the lack of social symbolisation of women and their relationships. However Irigaray's playing with words are detached from tangible lives of most women.

It is my view that it would be more politically effective to look at women's everyday lives, their stories, their perspectives on the woman and the mother and use their knowledge as a challenge to the dominant views that limit their beings. Moreover this could be a way women symbolise themselves socially. One could argue that women's symbolisation of their own selves does not necessarily imply that they are doing it in their own terms. But because there is no untainted space from which women can speak, it is also important to know how they are implicated in power/knowledge relations and how in their relation to prevalent discourse they are able to create their own selves. The genealogy of women teachers as mothers, in the next chapter will explain how their social positions are implicated in reproducing the interests of dominant groups. Yet their own stories and philosophies can be an enriching source of subversion. Also the proliferation of these stories and the presentation of their knowledges as in Chapter Six and Seven, can be effective as means of socially symbolising women in alternative ways. These alternative symbolisations can establish links between women in making them conscious of their subjugated states as well as the commonalties and differences of their oppression. These are all ways that encourage women to create their selves alternatively. It is clear that women do not always manage to do so. However their

stories and experiences of oppression can be taken up as starting points of what can be done and they also can be used to challenge ideas and perspectives that dismiss the fact that oppression still exists in its various forms.

It is also my view that a feminist genealogy has to take note of the totalitarian way in which phallocentrism works as well as the specific forms it might take. This is not to say that the particular and the general views are separate from each other but the Irigarayan general views of masculine systems of thought provide useful insights for an analysis of the particular historical, cultural and social conditions of the way women are considered as subordinated subjects. A feminist genealogy informed by Irigarayan critique seeks in particular to show how the maternal positioning in patriarchal cultures is parasitically exploited for the constitution of men's subjectivities and that this social function accredited to them works in a way to annihilate their subjectivity.

I also think that a feminist genealogy should not stop at giving an account of this subjugation but should also investigate how women have made and are making use of this position and how they circulate power to make themselves. In this study I find it important to refer to women speaking as women through their social positioning as mothers and teachers especially because as I fully explained in Chapter One, Maltese women are strongly associated with such functions. Their speaking, the mode as well as what they say, is a source for marking out the diversities between women. Maternal genealogies will therefore not only be concerned with the differentiation between woman and mother. This is an important generic strategy that rises out of the conventional essentialising of woman as mother. Equally important is the

research into how different women individuate themselves according to their particular experiences and understanding of cultural contexts and social practices.

However, before going into this, I shall use the juxtaposed ideas of Foucault and Irigaray in this chapter to delve more deeply into how the association between mothering and teaching came about, referring in particular to the various discourses and power networks in Maltese social contexts.

CHAPTER THREE

TEACHERS AS MOTHERS

The aim of this genealogical study of the teacher as mother in Malta is to narrate a story of the formation of this association and the power knowledge relations sustaining it. It especially focuses on how the teacher and specifically the woman teacher is implicated in the subtle control of the population especially by assigning her fixed maternal characteristics. The mother is also imbued with the role of teaching her children. At the same time her teaching practices are regulated by discourses of "experts" in health, medical, educational and religious fields.

This study deals with the issue of how the maternal aspect of teaching as well as the teaching connotations of mothering, are utilised in various ways but at the same time rendered invisible in dominant discourses. The teacher as mother is a popular idea and it is generally taken for granted in Malta. However after an extensive period of research at the libraries I have found no writings that directly refer to the teacher as the mother. This greatly contrasts with the response of the research participants during the conversations about the same subject. Few of them questioned the chosen theme of the teacher as mother and none of them objected to it as outdated or not relevant to their teaching experiences. They also indicated that at some point in their lives, they have either come across the association or they themselves experienced the maternal aspect of teaching. While I was researching documents relevant to my exploration of the social construction of the teacher as mother in Malta, and started to formulate my stories, I began to wonder whether the teacher participants I had encountered during individual conversations had their own stories about how this idea originated. During group conversations with these women teachers, I brought up

the issue as "From where did the relation between the teacher and mother come from?" or "Where and how did they come across it?" A large part of the group agreed that "It is something natural; inborn." "Something that one feels." "It is instinctive." Only when the conversation continued to develop and one younger participant commented that the caring aspect of teaching enhanced this relation to the maternal, that comments and questions as to the social obligations for mothers and teachers to care started to crop up.

I therefore became more convinced of my objective to inquire as to how and why the teacher as mother was created, what were the different and prevalent discourses that contributed to its formation and how this affects the lives of women teachers even today. This study shares the genealogical aim of making this familiar "essentialised" idea of the teacher/mother strange. As I explained in the previous chapter, a genealogical analysis can be enlightening when exploring the social and cultural aspects that contextualise our lives and how these are fabricated and interwoven into our daily lives. This is the main of this chapter. However I do not intend to stop at a genealogical analysis as Foucault does. Many of his critics argue about the possible uses of genealogy and many of them have engaged in such studies (Sawicki 1991, Simons 1996, Mayo 2000). However there are few who have taken genealogy further i.e. used its method of outlining the social make-up of ideas and practices to question them and attempt to subvert them (Weiler & Middleton 1999, Butler 1990). I believe that such approaches make Foucauldian analysis a more worthwhile activity for feminists in that it can include "visions" of possibilities of change. Foucault's and Irigaray 's studies indicate that the way we are, has always been, to a certain extent, determined by networks of powers and discourses. But this is not a story of

wholesale determinism or liberation since we, as social actors have to some degree engaged in the production of the powers and discourses which complexly shape us.

In searching for texts to contribute to my narratives of the descent of the mother teacher, I came to a better understanding of Foucault's genealogical approach and his comments on this method of inquiry as an experience.

> The investigation makes use of true documents, but in such a way as to furnish not just the evidence of truth but also an experience that might permit an alteration, a transformation, of the relationship we have with ourselves, our cultural universe: in a word with our knowledge. (Foucault 1991b:37)

Genealogy relies on historical data and facts but the aim is not that of a conventional history which aims to give a story of progress and development of some idea or practice. Genealogy is more fluid and takes note of the various discourses and conditions out of which the teacher and the mother could be easily associated. This story is not interested to point out causal relationships. In other words it does not give a definite explanation of what made the teacher-mother relation possible. Rather it hints at the possible spaces that made this formation possible. Genealogy therefore demands an active reading of the texts; one which is open to interpretation and the creation of further and different stories by different readers. Foucault explains that genealogies can have different aims and he identifies three possible domains

> First, an historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, an historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, an historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents. (Foucault 1983b: 237)

In this genealogy I hope to touch on these three domains. I am mostly concerned with the ethical dimension and the way women teachers are constituted and constitute themselves as mothers through recognition of their moral obligations and acts of self-formation. Yet teaching is complexly related to the body of knowledge

about the human being as subject (Foucault 1970); education bases its practice on knowledge of the human sciences. Furthermore its power to control and discipline others (Foucault 1991a) is legitimated by such knowledge and in turn supported by practices by which individuals (teachers, pupils, parents and educational experts and administrators) constitute themselves as moral subjects of their own actions.

Colonial Periods Colonial Powers

In researching documents and formulating the genealogy I had to narrow my research focus to a particular period. The time limits dictated by my short visits to Malta and the time consuming task of reading as much of the literature available as possible, even though marginally related to the teacher as mother, made me concentrate on the discourses and notions emerging from the beginning of the 19th century up to this day. The period discussed was inspired by Foucault's *History of Sexuality* that discusses the alleged repression of sexuality during the 19th century that made the creation of discourses and truths about the same subject possible (Foucault 1990a). But perhaps more importantly, 19th century Malta was chosen, because Malta became a British colony in the year 1800 after the Maltese revolution against the French in 1798. Therefore an analysis of relations of power, knowledge and gender have to be read within a larger context of colonial power and influences especially those concerning educational provision and its underlying ethos.

Maltese people sought the protection of Britain, under the impression that they would not be as oppressed as they were under previous rulers and they would be able to retain political rights to run their own country. However Britain considered Malta a fortress colony and therefore too important to let the Maltese participate in the administrative affairs of the island. The British controlled the Maltese in other ways

namely by "treating the Maltese not as people but as native inhabitants of the fortress"; as Englishman's inferior (Frendo 1991:5), and at times even by making plans for mass emigration to control the increasing population. One must say that these controls did not hinder forces of Maltese nationalism (Mallia-Milanes 1988:14). Still, British rule became more authoritarian and intrusive.

Undoubtedly one of the mechanisms deployed by the British to control the Maltese was education and schooling. In writing a genealogy of the teacher as mother therefore one has to take into account the particular colonial context in which the educational system took shape and became what it is today. Up to this day our educational system is very much influenced by educational practices abroad and British ones in particular. In the beginning of the 19th century, the organisation of schooling and the discourses pertaining to education that emerged in the UK infiltrated into Malta in various ways. During this period a new educational discourse aimed at controlling the urban poor emerged in the UK. This discourse was geared towards the normalisation and systemisation of an "informal, unregulated, nomadic" education considered as morally dangerous. Dave Jones (1990) explains that in the U.K., from the beginning of the 19th century there was a growing "concern about the moral and intellectual condition of the urban poor" and agreement "that cheap education represented a solution to this problem." Jones explains that " it is this concern that mobilises a strategy of schooling to regulate the nomadic, dissolute, degenerate and marginal population of the urban slum" (Jones 1990: 57-58).

However this taming and disciplining of the masses in Malta has to be read in the context of colonial power as well. The British interest in schooling Maltese people came later on during their rule. As Philip Altbach (1971) observes, educational

facilities within colonies were generally and largely neglected, and limited educational opportunities hindered modernisation in these countries. The lack of education of the Maltese served British colonial purposes quite well in keeping power over them without spending money. Clearly the British were not interested in an education that would ameliorate the lives of the Maltese but rather to ensure their control. The reasons why the British started to take some interest in popular education was to replace the Italian language and culture prevalent amongst the Maltese professional classes at that time, with English ones. To do this the British Governor of Malta, Sir Thomas Maitland, was "exhorted to support and encourage the establishment of public schools on the economic lines lately introduced in the United Kingdom" (Zammit Mangion 1992:17). All the same, the British did not consider it necessary to supply adequate funds for the opening of schools so that popular education, in the beginning of the 19th century, was run by a non governmental philanthropic Normal School Society. During the first decades of British colonisation, the colonisers did not manage to anglicise the Maltese especially due to the exclusion of the upper classes from administrative affairs. Consequently they refused to co-operate with their rulers and support British attempts to replace Italian with English as a requisite for government employment, as an educational medium in schools and at University and especially as the official language of the courts of law. Italian language and culture was supported by the Maltese professional classes and the clergy to retain influence on the population and keep Protestantism away from the people. Hence the British interest in "educating" the masses and convincing them to learn their own native tongue resided in disestablishing Italian and the control these professional classes had on the people. These British tactics were also aimed at keeping at bay local politicians who might have harboured ideas of unifying Malta and Italy. In sum the education of the masses

therefore was introduced, to a certain extent as in the UK, to regulate the lower classes. Such a regulation not only had to do with instilling good moral behaviour but with educating more people for emigration and control overpopulation on the island. In this way the teacher in Malta was also implicated in the manoeuvres for population control on the island.

One has to mention the low social class origins of the teacher and how these again were used to bring power knowledge relations into play. The British sought to limit the powerful influence of the upper educated classes by limiting the importance of the Italian language. They convinced the Maltese that learning English and Maltese would be to their own advantage. This move was accompanied by introducing clientalism; they rewarded and favoured co-operating Maltese, supporting the upward social mobility of English speaking civil servants (Hull 1993). Considering such political tactics it made more sense that teachers had working class backgrounds. As Hull remarks, for example, Savona was appointed Director of Education in 1880 because being "the child of a poor Valletta family, Savona was typical of that class of Maltese which the British Government was now anxious to encourage" (Hull 1993:32).

This is a clear example of how education and especially teachers through their social and pedagogic status are vehicles that bring power into play. By the early twentieth century "a new middle class of educated Maltese, acclimatised to the British style, came to accept British rule and developed pronounced British loyalties. These were relied upon to carry out 'acceptable policies' and most administrative posts in the civil service were entrusted to them" (Cassar 1988:121). The question remains how

the maternal characteristics of the teacher were involved in these power networks and the maintenance of social order.

A Little Memoir of the Life of a Good and Pious Woman Educator

> Retaining her confidence in God, she modestly took up (1st November 1857) the new and delicate position, which she retained until her death. She always remained faithful and careful to promptly follow the directions of her superiors. She was careful not to betray her conscience that obliged her to promote the material as well as the spiritual needs of her female students; making use of her own position not so much for personal gain but more as a means by which she could do good to others.
> And she managed to do this in a marvellous way. A proof of this is the constant excellent results of her labours. And this could clearly be observed mostly in the annual examinations. These always satisfied the requirements set down by the regulations. These classes were many times greatly admired by various famous people that visited the school in different times and they always remained impressed by the effortless (easy) and quick way through which the students of her classes, were especially prompt to resolve extremely difficult arithmetic problems. There were a lot of these famous people, of whom I only dare mention Mr. Tuffnell, Archbishop Errington, Rev.Wenham, Col.Lefroy, Lord Harrowby, Lord Carlile, Lord Carnavaron, Lord Sandon, Earl Fortescue and Lord Ducie.
> Whenever the school was visited, at the times of Governor Sir W. Reid and of his successor Sir Gaspare, by men as distinct as the famous persons mentioned above, the headteacher was highly praised for her ability in directing the school even though she didn't boast of this.
> Maybe others would have greatly glorified themselves. She was completely against such vanity. She took pleasure only in the good things that her classes obtained; but she did not boast of this. She kept herself humble and modest; devoid of any artificiality. She only praised God and made use of the good that she produced to encourage herself to find ways to double her efforts and obtain better results. (Pullicino 1871a: 5-7)

This is a description of Emmanuela Azzopardi, the head-teacher of the primary school in Valletta in the second half of the 19th century. The first lines give the impression that the author is speaking of a nun whose humble and obedient qualities make her a fine exemplar. It appears in a memoir written by the Director of Education at that time, Canon Paolo Pullicino which, I have found to be one of the best sources for the genealogy of the teacher mother. As I have mentioned above I found it extremely difficult to find sources that talk about the teacher as mother in a direct way. I will interpret these textual silences later on. At this point it is important

to state that this memoir was written with a clear objective: that of instilling an example to women teachers and to women student teachers of the Infant Primary schools of Malta and Gozo. The fact that no similar memoirs were written for male teachers makes one think of the gender differences in the preparation and expectations of teachers or else the need to regulate women teachers in a different way. The style of this memoir is completely different from the numerous writings of Pullicino regarding the organisation of the schools, the methods of instruction and the duties and obligations of teachers. This writing is more of the biographical type taking the form of a life history. Obviously Emmanuela Azzopardi had no say in what was written about her life at home and at school since this memoir was in fact written a few months after she died. But it is easy for one to assume, considering the type of discipline she was subjected to, that she would not have objected, at least publicly, to what was written about her. This memoir shows a mode of disciplining women teachers, which is not coercive. It is more a technology of the self where women teachers are expected "to perfect themselves and make themselves of more value to the noble mission that they have consecrated themselves to" (Pullicino 1871a:1).

This memoir is also useful to trace the rudiments of modern schooling in Malta and the formation of the image of the good teacher as a model of moral behaviour to her teaching assistants as well as pupils. The importance given to processes of making and regulating the teacher functioned as a way to normalise family life especially that of the lower classes which was believed to lack the moral "qualifications" to do so (Jones 1990). The teacher at this point comes to be perceived as a model substitute parent. It is here that the maternal characteristics of the woman teacher are exploited and that the link between the mother and teacher is mostly evident. Her subtle

gentleness, love and caring together with her moral excellence, virtuosity and asexuality, which are also the qualities that this memoir highlights, are actually the prevalent qualities of the mother in the Victorian era (Thurer 1994:182-287). These maternal characteristics were gradually transferred to the woman teacher when the socialisation of children was taken over by public institutions.

The fact that this memoir was written by a man who was picked by the Governor in 1849 and was a priest directs one's attention to the way various discourses, governmental and religious, worked together to produce the morally good teacher. Above all, it sheds light on the Maltese socio-cultural context and the way certain men were chosen to dominate the public domain. Such power networks reflect the kind of sources, official documents, pamphlets, memoirs, etc. available for historical accounts. Ronald Sultana (2001) in researching technical education in Malta, observes that generally these sources are written by those who see, analyse and interpret events " from the top" and as he argues,

> In the 19th century, seeing events 'from the top', also meant privileging the male voice, so that history of technical education is predominantly a history of male education. As in many areas of life, women remain hidden from 'his/tory' either because the home was considered to be their proper place... (Sultana 2001: 67-68)

There are other power networks that ensured that men remained at the top were the administration of education on the islands was concerned. One has to mention that it was in the interest of the British not to oppose Maltese people where religion was concerned. The choice of a priest to formalise, manage and reform primary education was a tactful attempt to employ educational changes in line with the UK without any cause for concern that the public and especially the clergy would object to possible Protestant roots. Paolo Pullicino was the embodiment of the alliances of the two powers and his educational thought and practices brought together these discourses

in the game of population control. He also marks the way governmental and religious discourses control the educational sphere in Malta up to this day. As Joseph Zammit Mangion comments, Pullicino "must be credited with the foundation of a truly 'national system of education on modern lines' and "the Education Department as we know it today" as well as bringing "to education in Malta an uncommon body of educational theory and lore...." (Zammit Mangion 1992 :21).

Pullicino made use of different strategies to regularise and manage schools. He chose the physical settings of the schools, organised pupils into classes, and issued detailed timetables for every class including specifications of content, exercises and books to be used during the lessons (Pullicino 1871b). Order in Primary Schools was his prime motive. Even the word "method" to him was synonymous with order.

> 1. The word method. Greek in origin, generally means direction and order: applicable and indeed greatly necessary to all things
> 2. When used in teaching it signifies order of ideas and words: as well as control of behaviour and work in a manner desirable in school. (Pullicino 1858)

Teachers were very much the products of this disciplinary mechanism just as their pupils were. They were controlled through the time-tabled efficient use of time but also through prescribed teaching methods. Such measures, as Foucault observes, induced teaching with an "obligatory rhythm, imposed from the outside; it assures the elaboration of the act itself; it controls its development and is staged from the inside" (Foucault 1991a: 152).

Pullicino regularly issued rules of conduct. As an Inspector he had the power to observe and control teachers through inspections and pupil examinations. But maybe the most influential way in which Pullicino ensured that his ideas were adhered to and made functional was through his appointment as a Professor of primary school

pedagogy and the opening of a Training School for assistant teachers. Pullicino's establishment of training schools was done on the lines of Sir James Kay Shuttleworth in the U.K., of whom Pullicino was great a follower (Zammit Mangion 1992 :21).

Shuttleworth was the Secretary to the Privy Council who, through the establishment of specific training schools in the 1840s in the UK, contributed to the formation of the teacher as an ethical model to the urban classes. As Jones remarks his training approach consisted in technologies of the transformation of the teachers' selves, men's or women's, into modest, humble persons who forget themselves in the service of others (Jones 1990:62-63).

Pullicino's memoir shows an enactment of Shuttleworth's ideal teacher who is moral, virtuous, humble, modest and tame. This dedication to one particular woman teacher, is clearly directed to set an exemplary behaviour by other women teachers. Pullicino's description of the ideal woman teacher in fact, emphasises her subordination to her superiors, praising her for the reproduction of instructions and regulations set by Pullicino himself. However such qualities and attitudes, as I will argue again later on, were not only expected of women. The teacher's readiness to obey, which is mentioned in Pullicino's memoir, also features as one of Shuttleworth's general prerogatives in teachers' training and self-formation. Furthermore the importance given to teachers' obedience and compliance to established rules and methods of teaching rather than their knowledge of subjects is common to both Pullicino's as well as Shuttleworth's ideal of the teacher. In the next section, I shall explain how women become the prime vehicles of pastoral power and how they gradually substituted the predominantly masculine authoritarian teaching

styles when they increasingly took up men's places in schools. At this point one can also say that with the feminisation of teaching men also became feminised. As one of the women participants observes, in Chapter Five, many of her male teacher colleagues do have qualities which are stereotypically associated with women and their maternal connotations.

To go back to Pullicino's memoir, it is very clear that such maternal characteristics are particularly expected of women teachers. Emmanuela Azzopardi did not only epitomise Pullicino's vision of the perfect teacher but also that of the perfect woman and mother. The hierarchical arrangement of the relationship between Pullicino the director and inspector, Azzopardi the teacher and her pupils is parallel to the familial relations between father, mother and children. This once again, recalls the image of the Victorian family and that of the mother as the teacher of virtue of her children. Pullicino's description of Emmanuela Azzopardi as the teacher of virtue of her pupils, therefore does not only stem from the religious background and his priesthood. As I explained earlier, in the late 19th century the mother was the secular version of the Virgin Mary. She was put on a pedestal, considered the angel of the house because of her important social role of teaching virtue to her children (Thurer 1994). Emmanuela Azzopardi's characteristics, at least those mentioned by Pullicino's and the general image of the good teacher that discourse of teacher training promoted are remarkably close to the ideal Victorian mother.

Another extremely important point to be highlighted in tracing how the teacher and mother roles overlapped, was that the teacher was expected to compensate for the lack of moral education from parents. The teacher was actually encouraged to take the place of the parent when necessary. Pullicino's description of the way Azzopardi

did this job shows that the teaching gradually diffused into the territory of parenting especially where working class "wild" children were concerned.

> She gave a lot of thought to moral education. She used to try and educate her students in religious practices. These should not only be studied in School during Catechism but also practised by doing religious duties. And she attended to this in a serious manner and made her students account for their religious practices. Teachers who wish that their School is not only a means of instruction but a strong foundation for the best moral education should do the same thing. She did not say that parents should provide for this. In the case of public elementary schools, mostly attended by daughters of working class persons, they should provide for all the needs of these girls; whose religious education is greatly neglected if not opposed by the parents themselves. The School therefore should compensate for this lack. Otherwise those instructresses who do not provide for this produce badly and half educated students from their schools. (Pullicino 1871a:11)

Teacher in Place of Parents

> The teachers represent so many pater familias who have many and varied responsibilities attached to their calling. Let us analyse the school. I do not mean the building of course but the combination of teachers and learners. You have the Headteacher who may be looked up to as the father or mother as the case may be, if it is a Boys' or a Girls' school, then there are the Class teachers who are like so many big brothers and sisters and then the children who are the younger daughters of a family that is made up from the greater part of the inhabitants of a town or village. One can easily say whether a family is ruled - by selfishness or by mutual love. (*The Teacher* March 1920: 5)

This is an excerpt from one of the main articles of the first issue of *The Teacher* the magazine of the Malta Union of Teachers issued in March 1920. Here the idea of the school as a family and the headteacher as the mother or father is again strongly emphasised. The family analogy is also extended further to describe the optimal relations of brotherly love and support that should exist between union members themselves. In the following issue, the metaphor of the family is used again to describe the relations between the Commission set by the Government and the teachers of the Union. The commission is interestingly compared to the stepmother who treats her sons differently from her husband's son. The latter is the Union who is refused the "banquet" of representation and participation in the talks with the Commission.

Yet the idea of the teacher taking the place of parents, this time with the parents' consent becomes evident in the dramatisation of the parent taking his child to school and leaving him to the entrusted care of the teacher: "Here is my son, I put him to your care" (*The Teacher* April 1920:2). The teacher's gentleness and total sacrifice is again dwelled upon. In fact the author LJD emphasises the teacher's job as "holy and unselfish" following Froebel's motto "Let us live for our children." The education promoted in this magazine is as morally conscious as that of Pullicino some fifty years before. But the appeal of the sentimental and emotional relation of the teacher with her pupils is developed into a more pronounced pedagogy of Love.

> Yes, the infant teacher loves her charges; her heart throbs quicker when all those eager little faces are trustingly upturned to hers; when those little bright eyes, kindling with fun and mischief, look on her fearlessly and lovingly; she forgets her age, her rank her superiority... entwining herself around their little heart strings and obtaining from them through love what she would never obtain through fear- the formation of the hearts and minds. (Busuttil 1920:5)

Carmel Cassar (1988) quoting Bowen Jones comments on the substantial increase of women teachers in Maltese schools by the year 1921. He states that the increase to 559 in 1921 from 50 in 1911 and 22 in 1901 occurred because the teaching profession provided "security and status to women" (Cassar 1988:97). Throughout the 19th century the main job done by Maltese women was that of spinners and weavers in their homes (Camilleri 1997:4-5). When migration from the countryside to the city was taking place due to an increasingly industrial economy brought about by colonial rule, the teaching job was one of the few spaces that women with a certain degree of educational background were likely to become engaged in and remain within the socially acceptable realm.

Another interpretation of the engagement of women in teaching, which moves away from the conventional explanations through prevalent historical data is that of the employment of women in teaching needed in the activation of pastoral power.

Women are considered to be the prime agents of pastoral power because their emotional appeal is a highly effective way to make the individual internalise control. One may argue as in fact Megan Boler (1999:42) does that the employment of women in this strategic control of the population and her role to induce self control in children may seem to contradict the prevalent social image of the woman as a highly emotional and irrational being. Yet, as Megan Boler herself points out, the emotional appeal of the woman teacher is purveyed in a controlled way. And it is also ensured that women teachers through rigorous disciplinary and training programmes are inculcated with the rules of obedience and self-control (Boler 1999:49).

As I explained earlier, however, self-restraint and unconditional obedience are not only expected of women teachers. In one of the leading teachers' magazine in Malta appear a number of articles aimed at inculcating such attitudes in both men and women teachers. The following long excerpt from *The Teacher* describes the reasons given to teachers as to why they should obey their superiors. This article is also intended for young teachers, making them aware of the national importance of their work. Teaching is presented as a job that preserves "the welfare and glory of our dearly beloved Malta, which forms such a very important atom of the vast and mighty British Empire" (Arena 1929a:15). Malta itself is popularly considered through the national anthem and the writings of Dun Karm, an ideal mother. However this mother-nation is the fixed and unchanging product of a patriarchal society and culture (Grima 2000) which supports itself through the maternal associated aspects of love and total sacrifice demanded of the teacher.

> Yourself being a promising young teacher, I am sure you honestly do your best to please as much as possible your superiors in the performance of your duties and this is as it should be. But why should you do so? Should you do it *merely* for any selfish aim of yours, for example to shine and therefore ambitiously

> expecting to get a promotion? Of course, a wish to improve one's own position is not bad in itself but a teacher worthy of the name, a teacher who is constantly a good worker, under whatever circumstances he finds himself, is one who does his duty as best as he can firstly and chiefly for the love he bears towards the children under his care. (Arena 1929a:15)

The strategic application of pedagogy of love reaches its full circle. It starts out as a method of teaching and as an advice to teachers towards the gentle manner as the most effective way of disciplining the class (Arena1929b:6-7). But it also serves the double function of regulating teachers' behaviour in line with that desired by the more powerful people. This strategy reaches its desired state when teachers learn that they are no more than automatons in the hands of the government.

> The teacher- what is he? He has been a silent labourer, an unobtrusive and neglected being. He can, however be that no more. He is no longer a private individual labouring to earn a scanty living wage. He is not free to live or die at pleasure. He is a unit of an organised body; he has his superiors and his inferiors; he has to observe departmental regulations and to respect authority. (A.G.1922:7)

Furthermore the pedagogy of love in establishing relations with children in class is also recommended in the ultimate scope of getting close to parents.

> This *savoir faire* is a tactful way of developing relations not only with your class but also with regard to your relations with your children's parents. Once you have succeeded in acquiring your pupil's love you will certainly succeed in keeping satisfactory relationship with their parents which good relationship will certainly be most advantageous to you in your work as a teacher. (Arena1929a:15)

There are several reasons why the relation between the teacher and the parent is considered to be important. One can say that such a close relationship would make it easier for the teacher to monitor what happens at home and give the necessary support to families to lead a better life. The need for the teacher to be in contact with her community so that together the school doctor, the district medical officer, the optician, the dentist and the health visitor see to the physical welfare of the children appears also during the 1950s (Debono 1950). At this time the more established teacher training in Malta emphasised the personality traits of the woman teacher that

make them capable of rendering good social service. The boundaries of teaching go beyond the classroom as the woman teacher is given the licence to search and enter into the family. Her love for children is a good qualification for her to enter inconspicuously into the most private aspects of family life. She becomes a good and efficient link within the family-surveillance group such as those mentioned by Debono: the Labour Officer, the police, the parish priest and organisations such as St. Vincent de Paul and Catholic action concerned with deviant behaviour of children. In this way the teacher also gains a prestigious place in the parish.

Feminised Methods - The Uses of the Mother

Madeleine Grumet (1988) in her explanation of the uses of mothering in schooling in the Western world, argues that the 19th century pompous celebrations of the qualities of mothering similar to those expected of the teacher are no more than rhetorical practices intended for regulation. She explains that women were considered to be ideal candidates for teaching jobs because being single, they would be satisfied with half a salary and this would make the universalisation of education cheaper. However one of her main arguments is that the feminisation of teaching, particularly in America, is a tactic to regulate women as well as children's upbringing. Up to this day its association with " the cult of maternal nurturance" did not really bring in the intimate relations between mother and child to school settings (Grumet 1988:56). She observes that

> The middle class woman was simultaneously displaced from her position as an active self-reliant participant in a self-sufficient household and employed as a low salaried, temporary pedagogue. She was hired to proclaim and maintain order and the innocence of that vanished household in the face of industrial urbanisation and the centralisation of authority in the state.
> The common school movement and the feminisation of teaching colluded in support of a program of centralised education that exploits the status and integrity of the family to strip it of its authority and deliver its children to the state. (Grumet 1988:39)

As Madeleine Grumet continues to argue, even if teaching became a feminine job, women teachers rarely made their ideas and experiences of their work public. This can be read as a tactful exclusion of women teachers from an educational system that contradictorily rests upon their constant nurturing and caring qualities. Moreover, volumes of rules, regulations, established teaching practices and norms for acceptable behaviour are proliferated to limit the spaces of development of women teachers. Educational systems which are mainly geared to regulate children to the workplace and to the status quo are the very systems which attempt also to silence women's speaking on teaching and on the maternal attributes they could bring into their teaching. Grumet here is referring to an American context. As I pointed out earlier the feminisation of teaching in Malta came much later in the 20th century than that in the American context in Madeleine Grumet's study. However Paolo Pullicino's memoir highlights the feminine and maternal qualities of the teacher and similarly aligns them to the most important quality of the teacher: self-restraint.

In the previous discussion of the "Little Memoir" I mentioned that the traits of the perfect teacher laid down by Pullicino were influenced by the prevalent discourses of his day. She was to be generous and able to forget her interests for the sake of others. Selflessness, sacrifice, self-control and a constant humble lifestyle were also important prerequisites. Her virtuous way of living became the means to inculcate discipline in schools. Rather than adopting an authoritarian style to instil discipline in a forceful and or painful way, the compassionate teacher herself became a subtle educational model to the young (Pullicino 1858:13-15). But Pullicino's writings on the pedagogies of teaching are most telling of the way the motherly qualities of the teacher were controlled and how they inhibited the development of the woman teacher away from that which was acceptable. One of the attributes present in

Pullicino's description of the ideal teacher is the typical "flexibility" expected of the mother to adapt to the child's needs. Emmanuela Azzopardi is mostly skilled in forgetting herself and varying the methods of instructions according to the various abilities of her children according to the teachings of Pullicino himself.

Yet the most baffling statements by Pullicino are his insistence on the fact that she managed to be a perfect instructress because she did not have a very good literary education. He admits that this may seem to be a paradox but he assures his women teacher readers that his experience has proved him right and that the teacher who has a good literary education, "despises and does not stand the pressure and the boredom of the humble exercise of such teaching" (Pullicino 1871a). Teaching in Pullicino's terms was more a moralised ascetic practice. The teacher had to exercise extreme self-discipline whilst her required flexibility is to work only to the advantage of the children. The teacher's need for self-fulfilment or pleasure in her work is considered dangerous and the mothering aspects of teaching are deprived of any sense of self-realisation of the woman apart from the prescribed maternal functions. The teacher cannot go beyond her limited world through an engagement in literary pursuits or in some way or another engage in an "autonomous" formation of her own self. She is also the mother who reproduces dutiful daughters through confessional practices and regulation of what they read.

The education of women into fixed domesticated roles continues to be one of the important aspects of the socialisation and education of women and girls in the 20th century. Magazine articles and governmental statements in the first half of the 20th century emphasise the education of mothers and mothercraft in schools as well as in women's Training Colleges. Mothercraft is promoted to construct the ideal " mothers

of the future, who, after all, are the chief health makers of the nation" (Seekings 1934:4). These lessons considered as " the art of living" inculcate women into a strict regime of hygiene and cleanliness. They also recommend a particular way of life for the mother who breastfeeds (which is strikingly similar to that advised today in antenatal and breast feeding classes.) Breastfeeding is considered an art and a skill, and requires the mother to take care of herself. This care of the self, however is encouraged for the sake of the child to have a good start in life. In Malta in the 1920s, the Women's Night School, for example was established aiming to educate the mother. These classes were scattered in most villages over the island and functioned around the underlying principle that by "educating the mother we shall be furthering the education of the child" (Government Report 1920-21:111).

All this demonstrates the contradictory notions of the idea of the mother that work together to establish control over her way of life. As Madeleine Grumet (1988) argues, the need for such control marks the power that women as mothers and educators have over the way future generations are formed. This is why women, identified as maternal subjects are also subjects of surveillance. As Cathy Urwin (1985:194-195) observes, the construction of motherhood is supported on one hand by an appeal to the mother as a natural teacher and on the other an emphasis on the need of the mother to be taught and trained.

Teaching the Mother and the Teacher.

Teaching and mothering also became associated through the increasing scientification of mothering, which coincided with the increasing significance of psychology in educational spheres between 1900 and the 1940s. During this period maternal instincts and all that was associated with the natural qualities of the mother

were considered insufficient to raising a child. Child rearing was envisaged as a technical skill based on the latest scientific knowledge and discoveries of child psychology. Shari Thurer (1994: 234) describes this move as a professionalisation of mothering giving it the status of a career. However women's confidence in their abilities to mother properly dwindled and they became more dependent on the teachings of experts. In parallel, if before the maternal qualities of the teacher sufficed to control the young, now the increasing scientific approach to child rearing practices emphasised a more rigorous, systematic knowledge of the deeper mental phenomena of the child. This psychological focus on child development and the consequent proliferation of expert teachings about the child directed at mothers as well as teachers is well documented in Malta.

The increase in magazine and newspaper articles as well as pamphlets and books regarding child rearing is easily noted during the early twentieth century. One main example is the newspaper column "Għan-Nisa" ("For Women") that appeared regularly in Agostino Levanzin's "In-Naħla" ("The Bee"), written by his wife Luċija Levanzin Inglott. Her writings addressed at "women who are forgotten by everyone" (Levanzin Inglott 1908a:13) are aimed to open their eyes for their advancement. In her first article however she stresses the need for remaining exemplary mothers and wives and for keeping informed of the latest developments and knowledge (Levanzin Inglott 1908a). Her articles are clearly aimed at giving women advice about the care of the body and the house, food, clothes, child rearing practices and especially their relations with their husband. The style is generally a didactic one and although she finds the space to mention famous foreign women known for their intelligence and success, the aim is certainly not for women to subvert social expectations but to teach them knowledge designed by experts. Sometimes her articles did not appear for

weeks and as she explains to her readers she chose not to write "to make space for the writings of able men such as Mr. Tagliaferro and Mr Vassall" (Levanzin Inglott 1908c). These writings concerned the "Education of Children", written by persons from "The Pro Infantia Society" which at that time was organising a campaign to teach parents how to raise their children (Levanzin Inglott 1908b). The Pro-Infantia society founded by Albertu Cesareo consisted of a group of influential members of society such as doctors, priests and lawyers and other wise and good men concerned with the well-being of children. The society organised open meetings for parents but the main target was the mother. In the preface of his book Eduardo Vella (Vella E.L. 1906), one of the members of the society puts the blame for the increasing death of newly born babies on their mothers and their lack of childcare know-how. The book's prescriptive tone is typical of discourses that aim to regulate mothering practices and control family life and legitimates its authority on the subject through references to the scientific knowledge of foreign doctors, Italian, English and French.

Along with the creation of the "scientific mum", came the "new teacher". The "new teacher" must first study the child according to psychological teachings and then is supposed to formulate her teaching methodology accordingly. There were however methods which were considered better than others. The methods of discovery, learning by doing and play methods took over from lecturing modes of teaching as the latter were considered as inscripting the child's *tabula rasa* mind. However, the necessities of classification and order became more pronounced and legitimate because the teacher now had scientific truth.

The need for psychological knowledge is expressed by E.B. Vella, a man pioneer in the work of education in Malta, who studied education in England and was involved

in the programme to overcome illiteracy and entrusted with the teaching of English to prospective teachers.

> As one could see, then, the study of psychology is a necessity and an indispensability in the scientific equipment of a good teacher. Indeed what philosophy is to the priest and physics to the doctor, psychology is to the teacher.....
> ....psychology is then what gives interest to and makes the brain work in the study of methods; psychology is what infuses life in the otherwise monotonous notes; *in fine*, psychology is what makes a new teacher (Vella E.B. 1928:13).

This psychological slant to teaching methods remains a prominent component in teacher training courses up to this day. This knowledge is strategically used to control and classify children, exerting force over the formation of a desired social order. However these power/knowledge-related networks are not static so their loci change and teachers themselves become subject to psychological testing.

This move is similar to that outlined by Foucault in his fist volume of the *History of Sexuality*. Foucault argues that during the 19th century the mother, father, educator and doctor were the controlling agents that problematised the child's sexuality. However this knowledge/power relationship was reversed when the sexuality of adults themselves was questioned (Foucault 1990a:99). This power/knowledge transformation can be observed also in the changing relationship between the child, the teacher, the parent and the teacher trainer. The agents of pastoral care in Malta, the parent and the teacher are held responsible for the observation and well being of the child.

The teacher acts in place of the parent, and more specifically the gentle maternal ways of the woman teacher for the subtle production of an adult who is morally sound. The vast publications of psychological knowledge of the experts used to inform both the teacher and the mother about "normal child development", produce

specific norms and deviations and hence a rigid organisation of the social order. The recent regulations for the entry into University teacher training, established by the participants of the Tomorrow's Teachers Project also give considerable importance to the psychological aspects of teaching in the formal B.Ed (Hons.) curriculum. Yet one observes an interesting shift in the use of the knowledge of psychology in the trend towards psychological testing of student teachers themselves. In fact this document recommends a unit for psychological testing that controls entry into the profession through the scrutiny of personal qualities and the identification of "symptoms of personality disorders and psychological maladjustment" (Tomorrow's Teachers Project 1998:4).

The report by one particular working group points out that this form of testing "gives credit to the very important and very complex role of teacher's personality." It also recommends that " the criteria against which it works are strictly set and adhered to" and that they "would be called to give advice and guidance in situations were students in our Faculty are suspected of having psychological difficulties" (Tomorrow's Teachers Project 1998:5). These developments show similar variations of the power/knowledge network, where the teacher herself becomes the subject of direct psychological scrutiny.

The Teacher and the Mother: Religious Influences and Discourses

The training of teachers in Malta during the 1950s was also under direct religious influences. This happened when the Society of the Sacred Heart proposed to build a Training college at tal-Virtu and be entrusted with the task of teacher training. The college was officially opened on the 4th May 1954. The aim of setting up such an institution was to keep education in touch with the latest advancements. However,

the influence of the religious orders on the training of male and female teachers is of special interest when tracing out other discourses that contributed to the association between the mother and the teacher. The name of this college for the training of women teachers itself gives an indication of the ethos of the college - one that was inspired by the Virgin Mary specifically, *Mater Admirabilis*.

One of the teacher participants in the research who attended the college herself explained that the title was given to a painting of the Virgin Mary done by one of the sisters of the Sacred Heart. The Pope's exclamation that the painting was admirable led to the sisters naming the painting *Mater Admirabilis*, the name also given to the teacher training college in Malta where the painting was transferred. Yet the writings of the sisters as well as the women teacher trainees in the magazine *The Link* indicate that the thought behind the training of the educated woman teacher revolved around her being a caring and exemplary human being. She was to be a mother who is worthy of admiration just as the Virgin Mary, Mother of God is the most admirable of mothers.

The image of the teacher as a mother was especially imparted by the sisters themselves. They were considered as "mothers" in the religious sense of the term but their motherly roles and characteristics were extended to their teaching ones. As mothers they resembled the Virgin Mary who is the mother of all, they gave their whole selves to the service of others especially to the teaching of their students. This is the admirable model, which the Maltese teachers at the college came across and sought to imitate

> All her dynamic energy was spent in the service of others, in whom she saw Our Lord Himself. Nothing was too small to care about, nothing too difficult to tackle, and the more unpleasant a task was, the more she felt it was hers by

> right. Everyone went to her with their difficulties, for it was such an obvious joy to her to render a service. (*The Link* Summer 1954:49)

The Catholic Church has its own visions as to what education is and how it should be and who should educate. Pope Pius XI in his encyclical letter "Divini ilius magistri" published in 1929 gathers his thoughts on the Catholic Church's legitimate place in the education of the young. It recognises the educational role of the family yet it considers it an imperfect institution when compared to the state and the church. Clearly the church's education is considered perfect in both its method and content due to it being consecrated by Christ himself to teach. But ironically the church also justifies its right to educate by considering itself the supernatural mother of Christians: "the supernatural maternity of the Church, the Immaculate Bride of Christ, reproduces, nourishes and educates the souls into the divine life of grace, through her sacraments and her teachings" (Pope Pius XI 1929:7).

This legitimation of the Church as the teacher through her other role of the wife of Christ and the mother of Christians, assumes a natural link between the mother and the teacher. It propagates amongst Christian women teachers the belief that their task is a divine vocation that resembles that of the mother Church imparting the teachings of Christ the father. Through hidden messages it is made clear that although women, through their maternal capacities, are naturally suited to teaching, they must learn the supernatural teachings and law of the Father to reproduce them effectively in society. The mother is the link between the natural, supernatural and the social yet she belongs to none of these male-defined worlds.

Irigaray's explanation of how women, in spite of their creative nature, are never allowed the time and place to create themselves as subjects is relevant to women's roles as mothers and teachers given to them by the Catholic church.

> The problem is that when the father refuses to allow the mother her power of giving birth and seeks to be the sole creator, then according to our culture he superimposes upon our ancient world of flesh and blood a universe of language and symbols that has no roots in the flesh and drills a hole through the female womb and through the place of female identity. A stake, an axis is thus driven into the earth in order to mark out the boundaries of the sacred place in many patriarchal traditions. It defines a meeting place for men that is based upon an immolation. Women will in the end be allowed to enter that space, provided that they do so as non participants. (Irigaray 1993b:16)

Such homogenous, fixed patriarchal functions of the mother and their associations with those of the teacher are more pronounced in the other encyclical letter of Pope John XXIII "Mater et Magistra"(1961) ("Mother and Teacher"). The Church is once again metaphorised as the teacher and mother through the work left to her by God namely "to bear children, to teach and guide them, and with motherly love show them the right way" (John XXIII 1961:1). The hierarchical familial relationships between the father, the mother and the children in this description are strikingly similar to the familial hierarchical arrangements within the educational system I described in the section, "Teachers in Place of Parents", earlier in this chapter. The image of the mother is once again used to "soften" the authority of the father and render his laws more acceptable and accessible to Christians. The pedagogy of love once again is the effective tactic to render them docile and assenting to Christian doctrine "whose light is the truth, justice its objective and the power that moves it, Love" (Pope John XXIII 1961:52).

Genealogy as Point of Departure

In the beginning of this chapter I mentioned my initial difficulties in coming across documents that talk directly about the relation between the mother and the teacher. Its formation remains within the discrete implications of social, governmental, religious and educational discourses. It is something which is read between the lines,

yet these hidden messages have penetrated the minds of teachers and mothers up to this day.

This genealogical study may give the impression that women have nothing to do with these popular identifications between the teacher and the mother. As I pointed out in the first chapter, the symbolisations of the maternal by women themselves are few as are the historical sources written by women. In Malta the Marian cult has a strong hold on social perspectives on women and on the way they fashion their lifestyles and subjectivities. The roles, norms and values associated with mothering, stereotypically shape them into particular feminine caring and educational roles that demand total self sacrifice for the sake of others. However women in Malta have gained social prestige, status and power through their maternal roles both in the home, in the school and within the community. As Stefanie Anzinger (1994) explains

> In a society like Malta this female domestic role (although it undergoes a devaluation in the process of social change) is still of importance for the social life and the social structure and women have to be taken seriously as centres and organisers of social systems. Although women in Malta are restricted by their role patterns, adherence to this feminine role patterns offers ways of exercising social control and influence. (Anzinger 1994:128)

This study recognises Maltese women's use of power and prevalent, dominant discourses to their own advantage and social recognition. Taking up the roles of the mother and teacher which are acceptable to a patriarchal society and culture does not mean that their workings within such culture are totally confined to these discursive boundaries and are not and cannot be subverted. Neither does it mean that patriarchal identifications of the mother and the teacher limit the understandings and meanings of mothering and teaching. What is certain is that such knowledge and social symbolisations remain subjugated, especially because Maltese women have not written about their socially inscribed roles and, more importantly, they have not used

their knowledge as mothers and teachers as a means of symbolising themselves socially.

In this case, my genealogical study couldn't refer to these subjugated knowledges. This study has been able to highlight the social necessities of constantly monitoring and regulating mothers and teachers through a complex association of fixed defined roles. It subtly accentuates the social fear of women teachers and mothers escaping disciplinary practices. The normalisation of mothering and teaching by women is taken seriously and subjected to various controls because their practices are considered vital for social systemisation. This regulation hints at the powerful positions of Maltese women as mothers and teachers. A series of discourses have been created around the teacher and the mother with the aim of controlling their work and using them in ways which are said to promote social and national development. Yet, direct talk about the powerful positions of women teachers is avoided as well as women's talk of their teaching maternal selves. To my mind this social silence constitutes another effective mode of control of these women. As Adrienne Rich (1986) points out the maternal is a site of contradiction; of power and vulnerability.

Women teachers function as a fulcrum for the efficient functioning of social systems yet they remain outside the social world. This is particularly true of educational systems. Maternal teaching ensures the working of the system to reproduce good citizens. Women teachers themselves have been subjectivised as maternal beings within this educational domain. However they have not affirmed themselves as social subjects because they rarely have spoken of their roles, their experiences of teaching and articulated their own particular knowledge. In Irigarayan terms, rather than

taking the place of enunciation i.e. "the position of the speaking subject in the discourse or statement", (Whitford 1990:42) they have relied on a monosexual structuration of subjectivity through which they remain "the content of the statement", énoncé, and not speaking subjects. This does not mean that any attempts at creating themselves and their own symbolics do not draw on prevalent discourses. The langue, which "is the corpus of language available to the speaker" is and can be used in particular ways (langage) by women teachers (Whitford 1991:42).

It is my intention to use this genealogy as a strategic starting point for researching the way women make their own selves through their maternal positionings. I believe that women teachers have created this knowledge, but they either do not articulate it or else it is not written down or made public to be socially recognised. This thesis therefore seeks to fill this gap and represent women teachers through their ideas about mothering and teaching and their practices of self-creation. This subscribes to another aim of the Foucauldian genealogical approach namely "the insurrections of subjugated knowledges" (Foucault 1980b:8). My intention is to extend this aim by using these knowledges to symbolise women teachers and their maternal connections. Irigaray considers such symbolisations of women as ways in which women make themselves subjects. However before going into the ways the women participants in the study do this in Chapter Five, I turn to discuss some important methodological issues that have arisen throughout a number of conversations with eleven Maltese women teachers.

CHAPTER FOUR

MOTHERING THE RESEARCH PROCESS

In the previous chapters I discuss the various contexts that give shape to this study. I give an idea of the Maltese social, educational and cultural contexts and then build up a theoretical framework out of the ideas of Irigaray and Foucault for the development of the research. In Chapter Three, I make a genealogical analysis of the ways by which the idea of the woman teacher as mother has developed. In that chapter I mostly focus on the way social and cultural discourses, particularly Maltese ones, fix the woman, mother and/or teacher into prescribed functions. Women, mothers and/or teachers are represented as agents of social control sometimes even determined subjects existing for the reproductive purposes of strong networks of powerful patriarchal discourses.

Such a picture emerges through the historical literature that I managed to find about the lives of teachers and those of women teachers in particular. The lack of written sources by Maltese women/teachers about their perspectives and experiences of mothering and teaching gives an indication of the extent to which they are controlled. The genealogical study indicates the power of practices of social symbolisation, that have strong holds on the way subjects are perceived and imagined and how the story lines of their subjective constructions are woven. However as I argued at the end of the previous chapter, this does not mean that women did not and do not struggle to create their selves beyond what social discourses ordain.

By imagining for example, what Emmanuela Azzopardi actually thought of the educational processes that she as a head teacher was engaged in, one could easily

produce a different image of the woman teacher from that which Paolo Pullicino was so keen to make public. This way of thinking made me become all the more intrigued by what women teachers think about themselves and how they construct themselves in relation to their perspectives about mothering and education. I also noticed that women's philosophies of education, as I argue in Chapter Seven are rarely presented and identified as such. Therefore, symbolising women teachers through their thinking about the maternal and its relatedness to educational process is, to my mind, an approach by which women could be socially recognised as subjects but at the same time their thinking might also move them away from what is socially acceptable: "the familiar".

Throughout the research process, I make use of conversational spaces available, to engage the women participants in symbolising practices of their own selves. This is one of the aims of taking up conversations with a number of women teachers. Conversations open spaces for the construction of alternative stories and for the articulation of their knowledges, which have generally remained subjugated and unvoiced. These women have chosen to represent themselves by the ways they talked about themselves, their ways of life and their teaching. In this thesis, I have particularly chosen to represent these women through their knowledges, mainly those that subvert the patriarchal and limiting expectations of them as women. This emphasises the responsibilities of the researcher in representing the participants and their knowledges.

This chapter focuses mainly on this theme and issues related to it before actually going on with the presentation of these women's perspectives and their social symbolisation through their knowledges. Here I deal with a number of questions

regarding the way knowledge is constructed and shaped during the research process. What are the values and principles that frame the research methodology? How do I claim to represent these women? How did the research process develop? What were the relationships between the participants and myself? How did power shift throughout our encounters? What kinds of knowledges formed and in what ways are these knowledges valid?

As I explained in Chapter One the main principles, values and visions for the development of this research are shaped through spiralling some of the ideas of Irigaray and Foucault. However during the conversations important strands of thought by the women participants themselves emerged. These were included and considered imperative for the way the research has progressed. I do not claim that the research was collaborative in the sense that these women were consciously and intentionally involved in changing research directions or rethinking research aims. Their involvement and active participation in the conversations brought in many of the advantages of collaborative research (Griffiths 2000). The quality of the knowledge produced was certainly much richer through their different and changing perspectives. The methodological principle to encourage the women's participation in research was mostly followed because of its ethical underpinnings; mainly that concerning the subjective creation of oneself. The research method employed therefore does not stick to the question-answer format of the typical interview. It builds upon it to develop alongside conversational and collaborative research approaches. These methods in their particular ways are all aimed towards enhancing participation of the persons engaged in the research.

Doing research "with" others coincided with my political and ethical intentions to symbolise women as knowing subjects. As I pointed out before, their knowledges, especially their philosophies of education, frequently remain "hidden" within their schools. Sometimes they do not even make it outside the classroom. Others do not take shape at all. The conversational process of this research make it possible for these women to tell their own stories, stories of their lives as teachers, as students, as mothers or non-mothers, stories of the way their knowledges have grown and transformed. These are presented to engage readers, particularly women/teachers, hoping that they engage with the text and use it to start conversations of their own. The symbolisation process in this way is also kept going through the relationships between women that hopefully will be established. These frameworks, as I explained in detail in Chapter Two are suggestive of an emancipatory vision of human beings that take control of their subjective formations. However I also follow the poststructuralist stance that their capacity for self-creation is not omnipotent. Their self-determination resides in their desire to make social links with the context in which they live and different groups of people they feel are worth having conversations with. They also form their individual selves through engagements with existing social symbolisations of women, mothers and educators. The relations they form with other women in their lives, are also considered to be influential to their particular ways of forming and representing their own selves, as I explain more fully in Chapter Six.

The story shaped from historical documents, in Chapter Three is mainly a story of oppression and of subjection, where women teachers' selves are always seen as being constructed by some external force. I believe that one can make strategic use of stories of power forces that determine and oppress women. The word "stories" here

is not intended to render women's experiences of oppression insignificant or fictive. I believe that these stories as well as similar ones told by women to account for their experiences of oppression, are of most use in raising awareness about the reality of women's lives. Genealogical stories have the particular aim of conscientising people of such situations and extending this to our modes of living in the present day. In this case, they have particularly made me reflect on how the stories of women and teachers are told today and even question whether they are told at all. Still, I do believe that we, as women, mothers and teachers, can to a certain extent, be authors of our stories as well as the authors of our lives. The stories told in this thesis, therefore, focus on the way women make their way and form their very own paths through their constant engagement with the world around them. I would like to symbolise these women through their active stories keeping in mind that having the opportunity to tell one's story can open up possibilities of interpreting the story in alternative ways.

These are the positive pathways of a genealogical study that I shall follow from here. I take up Foucault's interest in analysing the ways human beings make themselves subjects by playing into networks of power and knowledge. I also follow Irigaray's move from a critique of phallocentrism to the more practical project of the symbolisation of women, to work on a feminist poststructuralist principle that women's experiences can be given shape by speaking and interpreting them (Maynard 1994, Hekman 1990, Weedon 1987, Weiler & Middleton 1999). As I argued in the previous chapters, one can never step out of the zones of discursive impacts on our life. When women teachers are associated with the maternal in everyday life it is very hard to break such cultural formations. Sometimes it is not even always in their interest to do so. In my view it is more fruitful to enter,

conscientised, into power-knowledge networks and play with symbols that are important for the construction of oneself. These women's ways of conceiving the maternal and the associations it has with their work as teachers and as women are able to exceed patriarchal discursive effects. I therefore read their ability to go beyond what they are through a feminist lens and consider it as emancipatory for them, other women and also possibly contributing to social change.

This is the mimetic strategy that I follow in Chapters Five, Six and Seven where I strategically make use of women participants' perspectives and subjugated knowledges to challenge common and dominant frames of thought. The maternal is of special concern to me as I explained in the introduction. And it is through such maternal becomings that I would like to position my, and women teacher participants' acts of subversion. The subversive as well as constructive ways of thinking and their ability to live within social and cultural orders pushing their boundaries at the same time, is the main source of inspiration in developing the coming chapters. It is also their modes of deconstructing the term mothering as well as proliferating its meanings, which inspire this chapter.

In this chapter I shall discuss the methodological issues briefly mentioned above by metaphorising the maternal. This complements the general aim of the thesis to open up new meanings of the maternal and associate it with processes of self-creation through social symbolisation. I see the research as a series of events where subjectivities are formed in conjugation with the production of knowledge. I choose to present it in terms of "mothering the research process", keeping in mind the social and cultural context of the research. Here I am not only referring to the Maltese context. If in the latter context only certain images and symbolisations of the

maternal prevail, the same happens in the traditional academic context of philosophical production, as I explain more fully in Chapter Seven where I refer to Irigaray's critique of Plato's parable of the cave and philosophy in general. There are a number of feminist studies that have sought to bring about the otherwise generally disregarded maternal associations with the production and acquisition of knowledge (Ruddick 1990, Everingham 1994). However none of them take up maternal metaphors to discuss research methods and methodologies. Again, like Irigaray (see Chapter Two) I run the risk of treading on essentialist notions of mothering in speaking of mothering the research process. However here I associate mothering with particular ways of doing the research and use this association subversively to counteract the disassociation of the maternal from active ways of knowledge production.

The Author as Mother

The idea of conceiving of the research process through the metaphor of mothering, is aimed at working on the limits of our conceptions of mothering as well as raising issues regarding the position and function of the researcher. The metaphor of mothering the research itself directs our attention to the creative capacities to think and imagine mothering in a different fashion. Through this metaphor the mother may be symbolised and thought of exclusively in terms of her reproductive capacities. Yet underlying this is the recognition (symbolised or unsymbolised) of the creative dimension of the mother which, as Irigaray points out, has been denied to her. Symbolising the mother as an author, a subject capable of creation shares the political aims of feminism; that of the empowerment of women by symbolising them as active agents who are also capable of creating change for the better.

Thinking of authors of texts or research work however is problematic to some poststructuralists such as Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes or Jacques Derrida. Foucault for example concludes his paper "What is an Author" (Foucault 1984c) by the statement that it does not matter who is speaking. This is clearly incompatible with the feminist aim of voicing women's experiences as part of their subjective formations. The problem that appears here in many ways, raises a similar debate regarding the death of the subject which I discussed in Chapter Two. Just as it is suspicious to some feminists to have the subject declared dead when women were just gaining their subjectivity, it is also problematic that the author "must assume the role of the dead man in the game of writing" (Foucault 1984c:103) when women managed to create spaces of their own to voice what they want to say. Again one must keep in mind that the notion of the author is a product of a system of thought that is built around concepts of the subject as a creator, generally a male, whose rationality is also male-defined and whose subjectivity precedes anything that he does. This contrasts with the Foucauldian poststructuralist stance that the subject is made through the actual doing.

Foucault in his writing "What is an Author" shows his concern with the representation of the author as the sole creator of the text. The problem according to him is that the author generally is thought to have a natural and intimate relation with the text as if he gave birth to his thoughts by faithfully reproducing them in his text. Barthes has similar concerns with the idea of the author. His references to the common parallelisms between the author and the birthing maternal function, are more obvious than Foucault's. However Roland Barthes chooses to refer to the father as the person who symbolically nourishes the text:

> The author, when believed in is always conceived of **as past of** his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into before and after. The author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks and suffers lives for it, is in the same relation of attendance to his work as a father to his child. In complete contrast, the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as its predicate; there is no other time than that of enunciation and every text is written here and now. (Barthes in Grosz 1995:13)

Barthes is clearly against thinking of the author as the father however his reference to the traditional symbolisation of the father as the creator of the text hints at the phallocratic assumptions underlying the idea of the author. It also points at how the mother is not socially symbolised through acts of cultural creation and especially as a knowing subject, even though the idea of nourishment implicates her in the production of knowledge. As I pointed out in Chapter Two the mother is seen as the matrix for the production of knowledge, never herself a producer. In that chapter I also argued that taking up phallocratic systems of thought as blueprints for action will not do much to transform the situation of women. In other words, women need not share the same understandings and meanings of creation rising from phallocratic thinking, as I shall explain later on.

In this respect, I do agree with Barthes that the author does not precede the text; that he is born through it. Such a poststructuralist perspective sees the subject as being formed and socially recognised through his or her deeds. This contrasts with the notion of the author as the father of the text that relies on humanist conceptions of the subject having a "unique, fixed and coherent" essence (Weedon 1987:32). The subjectivity of the author here is conceived as autonomous, rational. He is knowledgeable; having a complete authority over the texts he produces and exercises control over the meanings generated by his texts. On the other hand, there is the

poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity, which is transformed through particular historical and social circumstances. Within this paradigm, authors' subjectivities are subject to change throughout their periods of writings, they are perceived differently by different readers and in different socio-historical circumstances; their texts are open to be interpreted differently.

This idea of authors born with their text; of subjects who form themselves through their deeds, at the same time gives strong emphasis to the agency of subjects. The authors are still implicated in processes of transformation of their own and their readers' selves, which is after all one of the main aims of many feminists. As I mentioned previously, the authors' capacities for agency and transformation are not formed and recognised in a social vacuum. The women participants, for example, are recognised as authors of their own texts within this particular research context. At the same time, I become recognised as a researcher through my acts that follow certain principles, values acceptable to the academic community and to the participants in the research. The ways in which researchers are considered as such are very similar to the processes through which the mother is recognised through her maternal deeds. Her actions have ties with what is considered to be maternal at a particular point in time and place, even if what she thinks or does subverts these expectations.

This idea of the author is compatible with the theoretical frameworks of this study, that include the vision of the human subject as one of becoming. The researcher becomes one through an engagement with the particular context including other people as well as power situations or positions that either empower or disempower her. The instability of such interactions and their unpredictable outcomes could also be associated with the diverse maternal experiences, including that of sustaining the

growth of a child. Such unstable interactions dissolve the fixed meanings of the maternal as they do with the identity of the researcher as stable and constant in fixing research directions. In Chapter Two I adopt the idea of the subject as fluid, continually changing, always in processes of becoming. On similar lines, the notion of author here is to be rethought rather than abandoned. I suggest that the notion of the author is to be reconceptualised as fluid, wavering around conceptual planes, being able also to transgress their boundaries. The becoming of an author's self, in this way has much in common with the unstable, unexpected, creative and transformative potentials of maternal becomings. My argument is that the death of the author as pronounced by Foucault, Barthes and Derrida need not imply the end of subjective claims with regards to written texts. It is the way the author is to be conceived just as the way the subject is to be conceptualised that makes the difference.

Foucault, in his "What is an Author?" continues to argue that the author is a product of a particular point in time, of certain discourses that propped up the author to ensure their legitimation. In the genealogical study of the mother as teacher I explained how in many ways the same can be said about the mother and/or the teacher as mother as the guardians of truth. In many ways her function is that of the author who, through his established name and status in society ensures that he or she is followed and that certain modes of being are internalised. It is this unchallenged and taken for granted status of the author that Foucault critiques in this paper. What Foucault is objecting to is the authoritarian use of the name of the author to discourage challenges to what is for grantedly considered as true by the simple presence of the text and/ or the identification of the author.

> We are used to thinking that the author is so different from all other men, and so transcendent with regard to all languages that, as soon, as he speaks, meaning begins to proliferate indefinitely.
> The truth is quite the contrary: The author is not an indefinite source of significations which fill a work; the author does not precede the works; he is a certain functional principle by which in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction..... The author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear proliferation of meaning. (Foucault 1984c:118-119)

Foucault's aim is to promote the proliferation of interpretations and encourage further readings which are prohibited through the authoritarian image of the father of the text. Ladwig and Gore (1994) explain that Foucault's challenging question "what matter who is speaking" shifts the analytical focus away from the works of any particular individual within the book and towards the discursive threads that can be seen to connect them" (Ladwig and Gore 1994: 227-228). This research recognises the importance of specifying the discourses that give shape to this research, as Ladwig and Gore point out. However, it is also aimed at highlighting the subjective creations within such discursive frameworks. I see authors and the social discourses around which they live in intimate relations. I also think that authors' functions are different because of the different discourses that surround them. Within a Maltese cultural context, where women are rarely symbolised through their work, as I explained in Chapter One, it is important to focus also on what they say. It is also important to publicly recognise them as "authors" of their work because understanding them as authors involves also understanding the contextual discourses that assist and/or mostly prevent them being recognised as knowledgeable subjects.

As I mentioned earlier, I do not wish to do away with the idea of the author even if as Elizabeth Grosz (1995) remarks, the death of the author brings about the birth of the readers. What I propose is to conceive of the author in a different way. A subject

with a "maternal" function to encourage the cultivation and generation of other texts; whose writing is open and fluid enough to allow different and interactive readings to take place.

Foucault objects that this is easier said than done because as it is traditionally perceived, the function of the author discourages open readings of the text. Sometimes, as he observes from his own experiences as author, the work is not read at all once he has established himself. This again points out that Foucault's intentions in discussing the death of the author are strategic. In "An Aesthetics of Existence" (Foucault 1996b) the suggestion of not using the author's name is a very playful one (considering that the readers know him as the author and that he uses his name as an author to suggest it). It is a practice aimed against fixed assumptions that form around the author's work which will affect and constrict his identity as an author. In this respect I take Foucault's comments to be critical of the way the author's self is seen as fixed and unchangeable. Here I understand the author's subjectivity through the maternal metaphor of the fluid and changeable. I see the author as a subject who is recognised by what she does even though the meanings of her actions acquire meaning through particular contexts. The image of the changing mother, before, during and after the birth of her child challenges the definite and fixed ways with which we look at a particular author. Furthermore, it is not only the interactions between the mother and child that sustain the maternal metaphorisation of the author-reader relations. It is particularly through the maternal capacity of the author to allow spaces for further growth that I would like to conceive the function of the author.

I am arguing therefore that a woman can claim subjectivity with regards to her act of writing or speaking the text. However this subjectivity is subversive to a fixed

authorial one when is presented as something that is transformable and conducive to proliferation of other different texts. I agree with Elizabeth Grosz (1995) that the author's sex is not automatically reflected in the text or the research. However, it can feature as part of the textual construction if the author wants it to. This research is formed around feminist methodologies, which consider the experiences of women as important sources of knowledge creation. At the same time, issues related to the particular experiences of women as maternal subjects are given prime consideration. The attitude and conceptions of both the researcher and the participants concerning the positionings of women in general and the creations of themselves, play a crucial part in its development.

Research Expectations

In this section I would like to build on the metaphorisation of the author as the mother, especially the metaphors of creation and proliferation, to challenge the common authorial conceptions that the researcher is the sole and independent creator of the knowledge produced. In doing so I tread upon one important factor of the research experience which Morwenna Griffiths (1998) terms as "living with uncertainty" in research. This question is not separate from the plays of power that take place throughout the research process, as I shall explain.

Mothering the research process does not mean that the researcher ought to relinquish her responsibilities in carrying out the research. To be the author of the research can mean something different: that the researcher's function as the mother is the generator of creative processes which she has some but not complete power over. It is inconceivable for the mother to know exactly the way in which her child will develop and grow. Although she has a significant impact on the upbringing there are

other contexts and influences that escape her. This also points to the difficulties in pinpointing exactly what mothering means because it has different meanings with changing situations and changing individuals. Research experiences are elusive and volatile in similar ways. The idea of research made up of fluid processes full of expectation and change is well expressed by Foucault in his experiences of research and/or writing.

> I'm perfectly aware of having continuously made shifts both in the things that have interested me and in what I have already thought. In addition the books I write constitute an experience for me that I'd like to be as rich as possible. An experience is something you come out of changed. If I had to write a book to communicate what I have already thought, I'd never have the courage to begin it. I write precisely because I don't know yet what to think about a subject that attracts my interest. In doing so the book transforms me, changes what I think. (Foucault 1991b:27)

I have explained that my aim of engaging in this research project is mainly the symbolisation of women but how I have actually done this, has been subject to radical changes of my initial perspectives as outlined in Chapter One. Taking up conversations as a research method was intended to create spaces for women to establish relations with each other but this also turned out to be one of the major sources of change in the direction of this research. Since the conversations were left as open as possible, the participants brought in other issues related to the theme which I never imagined. What the women said during our conversations were very much the sources of unexpected turns both in the areas that I always thought I would discuss and how to discuss them.

The aim of developing conversations out of brief initial interviews as a method for this research shares the epistemological principle that knowledge is produced in relation to significant others rather than through them or for them (Griffiths 1998b). What the researcher as mother does, is create the space however temporary, and

actively engages with the participants in a series of knowledge producing and hopefully transformative experiences. This does not mean that I see conversations as ideal speech situations, which are free from the exercises of power. Neither does the conversational format automatically imply that they are in some way geared for consensual agreements and conclusions. I envisage conversations as providing spaces for mutual challenging and questioning and for proliferating differences. They nourish and stimulate different thinking. And this is what as a feminist working with Foucauldian and Irigarayan ideas, I think philosophy is all about. Maxine Greene and Morwenna Griffiths (forthcoming) describe such feminist philosophical practices as "ways of re-thinking the usual." Foucault sees it in a similar way. He explains that "there are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all" (Foucault 1992:8).

This thinking differently that Michel Foucault, Maxine Greene and Morwenna Griffiths (Greene & Griffiths forthcoming) in spite of their different research orientations advocate, implies challenging the consensus, that which establishes itself as the usual. It also implies that those doing and thinking differently are using the power available to them to resist certain conventional forms of knowledge.

This applies also to rethinking "the usual" concerning conversations. One may assume that conversational consensus is a product of the exercise of power. However consensus is no more a product of power relations than the differences that emerge from such encounters. It is through an open play of power that such differences, aimed for during these research conversations can be produced. Foucault states that this entails "a way of acting upon acting subjects". As a researcher I "conduct" the

research. I act upon the participants' actions, through maintaining open conversational spaces. Yet as Foucault in the paper "The Subject and Power" continues to explain:

> a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: "that the other (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognised and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible interventions may open up. (Foucault 1983a:220)

Keeping this in mind I tried to direct the research into the unexpected by giving the participants enough space to go beyond my particular interests as a researcher. I encouraged them to ask questions and discuss issues, which were relevant to them or make important statements. For example, even though many of them saw the association between women and teaching as taken for granted, they did ask why I had taken it up. They questioned why I was so much interested in the mothering and teaching and particularly why I was only meeting women teachers. They also commented on my conventional assumptions that only women mother, as outlined in Chapter Five.

Involving them in the conversations seemed to be a fair way of trying at least to minimise the unequal relationships between the researcher and the researched. In spite of my democratic intentions, many of the participants in this research found the conversational arrangements uncomfortable. Some of them, like Maria, immediately took hold of the situation to turn to the question-answer format, which for them seemed so straightforward and "it would help me get what I wanted to know." Such a situation gives an example of the ambivalent workings of relations of power that I mentioned above and comment on in a later section. For now I would like to dwell a bit on the concept of the researcher as the sole creator of knowledge. Many of the

women participants conceive of the researcher in this way. For them my sole interest is the acquisition of knowledge from them as sources. This once again led many of the participants to doubt whether they would have something relevant to say to me; whether they would be prepared and whether they would say something "wrong" assuming that I knew many things since I was doing a PhD in a foreign country. This attitude points to their view that, the position of the researcher is one of authority and highlights the traditional assumptions of the opposing and distant positions between the knower and the known.

When I insisted on adopting conversations as a way of communicating, other participants on the other hand started to doubt whether I really knew what I was doing and what I wanted from my research. This gave me strong messages that I did not fit their idea of the researcher who asks questions and expects a related answer. I therefore explained why I preferred the conversations method for research. But even then when we got into the conversation, they would stop to ask whether we were going too much off the point or if the conversational development as a group got them too far away from what I was expecting them to say. On the other hand, there was one particular participant who, after being given my written interpretations of her comments during our conversations, wrote back to me to explain that her "'contribution' has been put into an inaccurate perspective." She pointed out that some of my descriptions of her actions "may be understood to insinuate some ulterior motive" and asked me "to either rewrite the enclosed section… or to delete any reference to my interview altogether" (Reneé Letter14/11/2001).

Maternal Power

The account above is indicative of the plays of power going on between the participants and I during our conversational encounters. Research is what Foucault calls "a major mechanism of power". It produces "effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge- methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation" (Foucault 1980b:102); apparata of control that I as a researcher "put into circulation." Yet my Foucauldian conception of power as circulating chain-like reactions of which human beings are catalysts, points to the function of both the researcher and the participants as "vehicles of power" (Foucault1980b:98). In this way, power is not something that people have or do not have; it is not something that the strong person passes on to the weaker one in a relation. The circulating workings of power make it possible for persons to get actively involved in the power relationships. In this way the power demarcations between the researcher and the researched can break down. Still, persons can never opt out of the power networks but if they "choose" not to engage in them actively, these power circulations can become blocked. In this way I see the function of the researcher as a catalyst of power networks who is also concerned with eliminating dominating situations taking place during the knowledge production processes of research.

This particular view of power raises important points in discussing my ways of engaging with the participants. For example, the fact that the participants questioned my modes of doing research when it did not fit their preconceptions, is an ambivalent indication that they used their power positions in the power networks that circulate throughout the research process. I am describing it as ambivalent because some of the participants' demands for specific questions might seem to go against their

opportunities to speak freely. It might be argued that their statements about the role of the researcher could be viewed as attempts to reveal their understanding of the researcher's power and authority in the production of knowledge. They could be interpreted as attempts to undermine this power, by speaking about "the inadequacy" of the research method, or as in Reneè's case, by instructing me to re-write the section of the thesis regarding her work, which I did. Whatever the plays of power a number of participants did view themselves as the conventional researched who passively respond to the researcher's questions and or interests. Furthermore, I am not claiming here that the conversations were so open-ended as to let the participants choose thè area of study. In this sense I very much see myself as the author of the research, acknowledging that my interests both in the mothering theme as well as the conversational methodology rose out of my personal, social, cultural and academic experiences. Being conscious of this powerful position as a researcher and generator of the conversations I wanted to counteract this by giving women as much open space as possible for articulating their views and giving them opportunities to react to what was written about them. My recognition that power is inevitable, intensifies my commitment to open up spaces where this power is exercised with "a minimum of domination" (Foucault 1984d:18).

My intentions are not emancipatory in that I do not see myself "converting" the "original" views of these women. I do not see myself "liberating" them out of conceptions which, I believe are oppressive. The conversational acts are intended for all of us to exchange different views, or the different articulations of the same view. As I said in the previous section my encounters with these women changed me and my research plans. However the ethical principles that guide my epistemological pursuits were and remain feminist. The principles of equity and reflexivity have had

a great impact on the actual proceedings of the research and the extent to which the participants could exercise their power. The feminist methodology that I adopt through choosing conversations is mainly geared towards the participants' constructions of themselves as knowers. It is also aimed at them being able to exercise their power in as unobstructed a way as possible throughout our research relationships. It goes without saying that by doing this I would be constructing myself as a knower as well, engaging in methods that are considered legitimate within poststructuralist and feminist frameworks. Considering all this, I would not permit the participants to limit their opportunities to talk openly about certain issues out of fear of the way I would use their statements as a source of critique. In such cases I made it a point to explain that I was looking at different views about mothering and teaching and the conversational format would allow them more space to explain and defend and most importantly, situate their perspectives. Conversations would allow more opportunities for debate and for mutual understanding or at least mutual recognition of the differing positions that would establish relationships between us.

In this sense I can consider myself as mothering the research process. I started our conversations by asking them to tell their stories as teachers and therefore gave them also the power to give form to their experiences (Grumet 1988). The questions I asked to keep the conversations going were very open-ended, again allowing the participants possibilities to evade the question or diverge in different directions. I considered these as "answers", opening new pathways to keep the conversation going. I also mothered the research through my emancipatory endeavours to conscientise the participants about positions of power that they can hold in respect to the production of knowledge. I do not claim to empower them in terms of giving

them a voice. I see their positions as teachers and mothers as already empowered; their voices have powerful potentials. What I claim to do is to envisage these women and attempt to make them envisage themselves as having epistemic authority (Skeggs 1997) and symbolise them as such. In other words, the maternal power of giving birth to local subjugated knowledges is shared between the researcher and the participants. I see this as part of mothering the research process that involves taking care of others; and as I elaborate in Chapter Six the taking care of others involves also taking care of oneself and both are related to processes of self-creation.

Taking Care of Others …

The images of the good researcher taking care of others are frequently propped up against the bad, domineering authoritarian researcher that takes note only of her own interests and her own visions. These images are as opposing as those of good and bad mothers and are tied up with certain values and ethical principles that are drawn up by social groups in particular times and places. Ethical guidelines about how the researcher ought to behave are discursively formed just as directions for maternal ways of being are. Although their presentation may be different such guidelines have much in common with the experts' recommendations on the best childcare. The importance given to the relations between individuals that arise from such comparisons is linked to other ethical questions regarding the function of such guidelines and how it is decided what are the acceptable modes of doing research.

Here I am not stating that ethical guidelines should not be set up but that ethical decisions that are taken during the research process are to be taken according to the particular circumstances that gave rise to certain situations as well as the whole framework of the research. This is another "research expectation" and an example of

Morwenna Griffiths' (1998) "living with uncertainty" in research. Morwenna Griffiths refers to the ethical guidelines drawn up by established research bodies such as those issued by the British Educational Research Association and explains that these principles and guidelines themselves are subject to revision. Her work and research on social justice exemplifies her rethinking and refinement of broad notions such as that of social justice. What she terms as a working definition of social justice is both applicable to the formation of the aims of the research and the actual proceedings of the research, which is of particular interest to me here. Certain principles, such as the continuous and unstable quest for knowledge, the commitment to reduce dominating relations and especially "the importance attached to collaboration and working with others and the need to work within, against and through existing power differentials" (Griffiths 1998:135), are open enough to be followed and interpreted according to the particularities of the research situations. Throughout my research, I adopt Morwenna Griffiths' underpinnings of a social justice approach to research. These emphasise the respect and appreciation for individual persons, they see these persons as socially constructed and thus being able to engage in power relations and find different ways to form their own selves.

These are the perspectives around which I as a researcher hope to have cared for my participants. I see the research process itself as an opportunity for these women to engage in the care and creation of their own selves especially through representations of themselves as maternal subjects and also as knowledge producers. Still, I see the researcher as mothering the research process mainly through her responsibility for creating spaces in which others represent and construct themselves through the research events.

Particular care and protection was given to these women. I have respected their privacy when asked and even when it was not, I have contacted certain participants again to confirm their consent to use their subversive articulations especially those about mothering. Considering the small communities that these women live in and their positions as teachers and mothers, I thought it very important that these women are given the opportunity to rethink what they said. Conversational situations may lead women to say certain things that they had not intended to say. The protection and care given to the participants in terms of confidentiality coincided with the care in giving them the space to express their feelings and emotions. The relationship that developed with certain women involved my reciprocal sharing of my experiences, perspectives and sometimes even my most personal thoughts and feelings. During these moments I was very much an insider so that I felt I was very much trusted. These situations gave me more reason to be careful with the presentation of their knowledges and to ask again whether they wanted to change anything that maybe was said on the spur of the moment.

I have given particular importance to this point because nearly all the participants gave their consent for their proper names to be used throughout the thesis. I consider using the names of the participants as an important political strategy. It is a way of symbolising them as individual women who constructed a name of their own. They are subjects who have experienced the maternal in different ways, sometimes even ambivalently. Their wish to have their names mentioned also highlights these women's desire to be recognised as individuals who have their own ways of viewing education and their own methods of teaching. They would like to be presented as knowing subjects recognising the power they exercise through such positionings. Their philosophies emerge as their own particular and preferred ways of living,

which they would like to share with me, the other participants and any other reader. And as I argue in Chapter Six and Seven, these may or may not be taken as models for others to follow but they are intended to invite interested others to join in the conversations.

Throughout the conversations I thought it important to keep an eye on the confessional aspect of my encounters with these women. Foucault's account of confessional practices and how they work to constrain and discipline individuals made me more conscious of the negative uses of these women's disclosures. Foucault (1990a) explains that although confessional acts are presented as liberating, they are in fact one of the micro-practices of control. He also describes these acts as rising out of an invasive obsession to tell the truth about oneself. They are also so discrete that the subject is frequently unaware of its disciplining effects. Many participants seemed to find the conversations therapeutic in the sense that they have found listeners and opportunities to get certain things off their chests. This continued to highlight the confessional dangers of this research method. As Foucault explains, the power in this case shifts heavily on to the person doing the listening as she is the one that gains most knowledge:

> the one who listens and says nothing not the one who knows and answers, but... the one who questions and is not supposed to know. (Foucault 1990a:62)

The conversational format used intends to limit my function of the listener described by Foucault and involve the participants in questioning and listening acts. However, since the knowledge gained by me as a listening researcher is made public, the responsibility of whether the unfolding of the power/knowledge networks becomes detrimental to these women remains my own. I thought this as one of the risks I had to take since it outweighed the dangers of keeping silent about their lives and not presenting them as producers of knowledge. To keep the risks low as much as

possible I discussed my interpretations of their talk with the women and included their reactions to the way their knowledges were presented.

Nevertheless, there are clearly ambivalent power relations in the acts of listening and being listened to. As the conversations with the individual women progressed I sensed their desire to be listened to, something which has much in common with their wish to be named and recognised as individuals, mentioned earlier. Finding persons to talk to was also one of my initial research concerns and at the end of the research process communicating the ideas and thoughts to other readers becomes almost a necessity. It shows my wishes for a feeling of accomplishment. These feelings that rise out of conversational encounters reflect a politics of voice. But according to Carla Kaplan such a politics is not only concerned with the search for a voice but the search "for a listener capable of hearing that voice and responding appropriately to it". (Kaplan 1996:15) She describes this desire as an "erotics of talk":

> An erotics of talk might be understood as wish, fulfilment fantasy; a desire to be reassured that exchange between people is still possible, that we are not merely alone, speaking to ourselves, talking into the empty wind of a word from which meaningful and satisfying interrelationships have been eradicated. (Kaplan 1996:15)

By the term erotics of talk, Kaplan describes a desire for an ideal speech situation. However conversational encounters never quite develop in "pure" conditions of intimacy reciprocity, equality and respect for differences. And this is particularly so when women are involved in such conversations. Some feminists such as Nancy Fraser, Iris Marion Young and Seyla Benhabib (Benhabib & Cornell 1994) for example, are critical of Habermas' desire for ideal speech situations geared towards universal consensual agreement based on the force of the better argument. They see such utopian conditions as falling short of being egalitarian because they remain

insensitive to the different power positions from which women participate in cultural conversations. Alison Assiter (2000) explains that ideally, a community that creates knowledge should do so through a rational evaluative search for the truth, which is free from power plays of social status. However, as she continues to argue, philosophy itself has taught us how power and status are intertwined with the subjective rational male production of the so-called objective knowledge. Recognising those who have been left at the margins as important knowledge producers contributes to the rethinking of established knowledge and also the modes of its production. This is why keeping the conversations going and listening to what the others are saying are ideal projections of the relation between persons in knowledge producing situations. As Carla Kaplan concludes, listening to others can be effective when every person is given the respect to participate in conversations in a meaningful way (Kaplan 1996:10).

Irigaray's arguments for the symbolisation of women and the maternal also share this concern with creating optimum ethical conditions for an ideal epistemic community. Irigaray believes that women need not distance themselves from being recognised as material and embodied subjects to be recognised as knowing subjects. This is despite the fact that, as I explained in Chapter Two the maternal associations of women have contributed to their devaluation and marginalisation as knowing subjects. In that chapter, I mentioned that Irigaray's studies show how such patriarchal representations of women have differentiated and devalued them from men through sexual biological and anatomical symbolisations. Yet women have these differences to work on. They can deconstruct and reconstruct these symbolisations so that they do not remain within such a devalued natural realm. Irigaray explains that

> Women cannot be liberated from reality other than a sexual one because this is the starting point from which they are exploited. Therefore one isn't able to renounce difference. That would be a false utopia. (Irigaray 1980:155)

Irigaray devises effective strategies that reflect women's embodiment but at the same time make these representations relevant to their quest for participation in the cultural conversations.

> All that which is valorised is connected to a masculine sexual morphology. So then, let us discover our own morphology and realise that our own vision of the world and our own fashion of creating and building, is not, and is not able to be the same as that of men. Biology, anatomy have always made us the reproducers. The question to ask oneself is "What can women in their difference produce? - Produce not in the sense of capitalist production." There is something else on the imaginary level, on the symbolic and beyond all consideration of reproduction. (Irigaray 1980:155)

Furthermore, Irigaray argues that changes in conversational modes are necessary for women to be recognised as subjects in social exchange and not only as objects of exchange. Again in Chapter Two, I referred to Irigaray's suggestion that women should create a language of their own to be recognised as subjects who speak. To this line of thought she adds her presentation of an alternative system of exchange; a different basis for a social organisation figured by her image of the two lips (Irigaray 1985b). Whitford (1991) interprets the image as symbolising contiguity: that which associates, combines and touches rather than substitutes, replaces and separates. This is another representation of an imaginary ideal speech situation, which hopes to counteract the exclusionary practices of a patriarchal order. Such exchanges are to be particularly engaged by women in establishing relations between themselves. Irigaray comments on the way patriarchy has established separation between women when conflating womanhood with motherhood. This forces women to struggle against each other for maternal recognition. The two lips therefore also figure the close relationships that can be possible between women. They also represent, as Whitford explains, an "interchange' which is also similar to that between lovers. The

lips come together, they touch each other, they make contact but they are also separate and different. They are symbolic of a different interchange of love

> When you say I love you- staying right here, close to you, close to me- you're saying I love myself. You don't need to wait for it to be given back; neither do I. We don't owe each other anything. That 'I love you' is neither gift nor debt. You 'give' me nothing when you touch yourself, touch me, when you touch yourself again through me. (Irigaray 1985b: 206)

Such visions that aim to project particular values in the production of knowledge are highly relevant to the methodology employed in this research where women's participation in conversation is encouraged. I have explained how the conversations taking place during this research process were nowhere near the ideal speech situations, particularly because of fluctuating power relations. However, underlying them was the desire of at least initiating relations between women and making sure that every one of us was respected as a knowing subject. There might have been many disagreements between us, but our differences were meaningful in a way that they contributed to transforming our selves. In Chapters Six and Seven I discuss the erotic aspect of relationships between women to focus on the uses of such relationships for the care and development of women's selves. The conversations were in similar ways sources for the care of our different selves. They were also opportunities for us to recognise our similarities through our maternal identifications as well as through our teaching. Yet our coming together was only momentary. Our expressions of our differences, most of them rising from their particular experiences as mothers, teachers and women, distanced us from each other. However, their differences did not stop them from caring for their own selves. Some of the participants commented on how meetings with other women helped them come to terms with certain situations in their lives or how hearing others made them see things and even their selves in different ways.

... and of oneself throughout the Research process

Frequently feminist research practices give a lot of importance to the care of others but rarely raise issues about the care of the researcher's self. This lack mainly comes through sensitivity and awareness of the researcher's power in directing the research. As I argued above, power need not be interpreted as a negative force but one has to be conscious of the researcher's position to block the flow of power network. The altruistic talk of giving voice and empowering others aims to counteract the authorial presence of the researcher. Because of this the researcher's talk of the care of herself as a researcher is rare just as much as mothers are discouraged, in various ways to express their own needs, interests and pleasures.

As I continue to argue in the last two chapters, mothers are expected to forget themselves. In chapter Six in particular, I also challenge the sacrificial symbolisation of the maternal by showing how these women engage in various practices of the care of their selves. The experiences of mothering a baby have made me value such practices more than I ever did. I have come to consider researching, writing, thinking as my own ways of caring for my self and creating myself beyond my mothering functions.

In a way these practices correspond to Foucault's description of the Greeks' education of oneself especially "the improvement, the perfecting of the soul that one seeks in philosophy" (Foucault 1990b:55) as one way of cultivating oneself. Taking care of oneself involves the acquisition of knowledge useful for a career and reputation as Epictetus describes it. And although there are many painful moments in this process there are as many others of pleasure. I consider the experiences of

expecting, the uncertainty, the curiosity and the excitement in formulating new and different ways of thinking as ways in which I care for myself.

Caring for myself has especially come through speaking with others. I have found in many of the participants, ideal listeners in the terms explained above. I found that I was respected and being taken seriously enough to be challenged. As I explained earlier in Chapter One, as well as in the section "Research Expectations" of this chapter, the women's comments about the research itself, but especially their knowledge related to teaching and mothering, opened up new avenues of exploration for me. They were extremely influential in changing the aims and directions of the research along the way.

The pleasure derived from this is similar to that described by Irigaray which" consists in moving, being moved, endlessly. Always in motion: openness is never spent or sated" (Irigaray 1985b:100). This is the pleasure of recognising the participants' different meanings of mothering and teaching and making them sources of my own transformations as a researcher, woman mother and/or teacher. The pleasure of meeting and getting to know different women was what guided me in choosing who to converse with. I chose to speak to women I knew and wanted to develop meaningful relationships with. Others I knew more deeply and considered to have played a significant part in my maternal becomings. There were others so different and initially so distant and unreachable that I considered meeting them a challenge and a way to enrich myself from their wisdom.

Who is the Mother of the Story?

Throughout this chapter I discussed some of the main ethical principles that guide this research process. I have been particularly concerned with balancing unequal and dominating power relationships regarding the production of knowledge. My intentions to symbolise women as maternal beings through their constructed knowledges, as I have shown, involve a constant play with different power networks. The representation of knowledge construction within a conversational context and through relations created between women is the methodological issue that interests me here. My particular epistemological underpinnings to this research are those of proliferating ideas by speaking with and bringing together different women with different ideas. As I explained these conversational arrangements for the production of knowledge are not specifically geared towards achieving consensus. The differing conflicting views and ambivalent positions that emerge from such conversations are valued especially because they can be viewed as subversive sources to definite and conclusive knowledges.

Therefore I do not seek the best interpretation of the knowledge produced, during the conversations. As I argued before I do not see the participants' talk as a clear, real, exact copy of what is happening in their lives. Their experiences as told during the conversations are knowledge constructions rising out of the meanings they give to these experiences within particular contexts. However the question remains as to who has the right to have the final say on the way the knowledges and the conversations are represented here. In other words, who is the mother of the research story told?

I have already stated that the women participants had a great impact on the research process. The research started out through my interests in mothering and teaching and was given shape by personal socio-cultural theoretical frameworks. However the reflections and discussions on the meetings I have had with these women either individually or as a group have made me rethink the initial designs and aims of the research itself. In this sense my interpretation of the whole research process was affected by their own views related to mothering and teaching. The question however remains as to the actual presentation of what they stated during the conversations, which is always subject to my interpretations and aims as the researcher.

A number of researchers raise the issue of interpretation when discussing their methodology and many of them have devised their particular ways to either present the authentic version or give the participants say regarding the researcher's interpretation. Katherine Borland (1991) for example experienced this interpretative conflict with her grandmother. Going along with the ethic of researcher's accountability, Borland send a copy of her interpretation of the story her grandmother had told her during one of her research visits. However her grandmother's response is one of disappointment when she discovers that what her granddaughter wrote had completely different underlying intentions from her own. " The story is no longer my story" she wrote to Borland "the skeleton remains but it has become your story" (Borland 1991:70).

It is clear here, that the researcher's theoretical framing has remained a constant underlying factor in the interpretation of the story. The stories and knowledges of the participants were ultimately made to fit the boxes of the researcher's paradigms and satisfy her aims. Maggie MacLure and Ian Stronach (1997) attempt to go beyond the

limits imposed by the researcher's interpretation through a number of strategies. They were two researchers giving two different interpretations of the same story told by Jack the headmaster. They got other people to comment upon their stories and finally they had Jack rescuing his life from the text. The question regarding domination and interpretation crops up again when Jack is give the opportunity to comment on their interpretations. His feelings are very much like Borland's grandmother. He states that he feels like a guinea pig placed in two boxes.

In this study I encountered similar issues of interpretation. Earlier on I described how one of the women participants used her power positioning as a participant to control my writings about her and my impressions on aspects of her work that involve Maltese women. In Chapter Five as in this chapter, I sought to include much of Reneè's comments about her work and quote as much as possible her own reactions to my interpretations of her work especially that concerning child care in Malta. However I included other women's views and experiences, including my own about this issue to open up the conversation to the readers as much as possible.

Moreover I did this because I believe that, simply taking the participants' stories as the only authentic copy of what is happening in reality and attempting to reduce the presence of the researcher as much as possible is not a solution. First, this objectifies the researcher as just a device for collecting data and consequently reinforces the false notion that the researcher is capable of a neutral objective view from nowhere. Related to this is the second objection to an understanding of representation that relies on the legitimation and validation of the knowledge production on how close it is to the "real" world. Masking the presence and ideas of the researcher involves an epistemological perspective, which is different from my feminist poststructuralist

understanding of knowledge as the product of particular situated perspectives. Knowledge is constructed and invented through particular positions and engagements with other people. The ethical commitment of the researcher lies in thinking about how different knowledges are constructed from our particular frameworks of understanding. As Lather comments

> In poststructuralist terms, the "crisis of representation" is not the end of representation, but the end of pure presence. Derrida's point regarding the "inescapability of representation shifts responsibility on representing things in themselves to representing the web of "structure, sign and play" of social relations. It is not a matter of looking harder or more closely, but of seeing what frames our seeing- spaces of constructed visibility and incitements to see which constitute power/knowledge. (Lather 1994:38)

The researcher, within this methodological context, is the mother of the story as she has the responsibility of positioning the knowledges constructed during the research process. It is particularly important that she explains the frameworks that were shaped and have given shape to the research so that the meanings and interpretations that emerge are understood as particular to its aims. Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1983) propose "making the researcher and her consciousness the central focus of the research" (Stanley 1996:46). In this chapter I explain the terms by which I mother the research process. However I consider this more an indication of my partiality than my centrality. This has very much in common with Haraway's idea of situated knowledges and her epistemological conviction that our perspectives are always partial and limited (Haraway 1988). As researcher I have tried to be accountable for the way I see and interpret teaching and the maternal. But I have tried to see mothering, teaching and their relation in different and multiple ways especially through my encounters with these women.

The conversational arrangements of this study are geared towards the proliferation of ideas, creating spaces and different ways of seeing and understanding. This does not

make the research process clean of the "technologies of power" by which individuals attempt to regulate each other. It recognises mothering the research process as getting involved in acts of representation and interpretation, in acts of creation of knowledge and of our own selves. I see this research as involved also with "technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things" and "technologies of sign systems which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols or signification" (Foucault 1988:18) beyond domination. Seen in this way, representation by the researcher becomes a matter of giving shape, of transgressing and even of transforming but the way these are done are influenced by the participants themselves.

Representing and interpreting are actions through which the researcher forms herself. The knowledge produced through the writing up mostly reflects her self. However it is clear that the women I write about are not limited to my representations of them. But their participation in this research process has also involved them in processes of self-formation. The research process can also be seen as technologies of the self through which we give birth to ourselves as mothers, teachers, researchers, participants and especially knowledge producers through active interactions. Mothering the research process particularly means to me, being involved in processes

> which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls and thoughts, conduct, and a way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality. (Foucault 1988:18)

CHAPTER FIVE

RETHINKING THE MATERNAL

In the genealogical study of the Maltese teacher as mother in Chapter Three, the maternal features as a virtuous mode of being. The typical demands, either explicit or covert, of sacrifice and loss of self from the woman teacher for the sake of the children under her care are similar to the social expectations of the mother. The teacher's and/or mother's characteristics of self-control and gentle firmness are effectively made use of to discipline and control dutiful citizens.

Throughout that chapter, I have also depicted these characteristics of the teacher-mother as products of various discursive practices that intertwine and play with dominant socio-cultural symbolics of the woman to process and normalise the teacher as maternal being. It is my view that the relatedness between the teacher and the mother is part of a power/knowledge network that reinforces surveillance over processes of normalisation and child development. The relation ensures an interlocking between the maternal and educational functions of women in the sense that the woman teacher is at her best seen as a mother while at the same time the mother has the important task is that of teaching her young in a caring way. Within such a patriarchal milieu, the socially acceptable way to speak of the mother and/or the woman teacher remains within these parameters.

I believe that it is important to recognise the techniques of power and domination and identify the patriarchal plays when contextualising maternal associations with the teacher. This is my main story in chapter three. The methodology I used in this chapter, to analyse the creation of the teacher-mother, reflects my choice of

Irigarayan and especially Foucauldian theoretical frameworks that start off with locating subjectivisation, and in this case maternal subjectivisation within cultural and specifically educational and patriarchal discourses. In Chapter Two I pointed out that Foucault's work is principally directed towards the task of telling the story of the different ways human beings become subjects. Ann Brooks (1997) remarks, he was especially concerned with deconstructing the self-determining subject of the Enlightenment. However, in that chapter I also argued that this deconstruction takes place from within discourses of the Enlightenment; i.e. deconstructive practices cannot be conceived without some degree of belief in the self determination of the subject, at least that which motivates human beings in tracking networks of domination. This deconstructive framework is also present in Irigaray's work. She rejects the idea of the subject as singular and unified and develops her work to "unveil" the masculine make-up of discourses that rigidly define woman solely as maternal being. An approach that is common to both Irigaray and Foucault is that they go beyond identifying dominating discourses. What I consider their double dimensional thinking that takes note of and combines technologies of domination of the self with those of production and creation of a "new" subject, has been particularly useful in forming a theoretical framework for this study.

The deconstructive mood in this chapter becomes more directed towards the possibilities of creating the maternal self differently. It aims to disrupt the conventional expectations of the mother and/ or women teachers by referring to their alternative understandings and articulations of the maternal. It rethinks the maternal by presenting it as other than a natural relationship between mother and child; by focusing on problems of the mother-daughter relations in particular. The teaching connotations of mothering and the maternal aspects of teaching are sources that

disrupt images of the woman, the teacher and the mother, as a obedient, modest caring being whose interests in knowledge and the world are limited. My main focus here is to show how these women negotiate their social positions and create possibilities without renouncing either their maternal and teaching selves and/or go completely against social expectations of the mother.

Speaking of the Mother

As I explained in Chapters One and Four, throughout the research process I became more aware of the women's numerous and different strategies of subversion. During the conversations, most of them commented on the different aspects of their work as teachers and/or mothers that constrain them. But they also presented themselves as subjects who are able to use their situations in their own self-creations as educators. They show that they are able to subversively use conventional discourses that appear to trap them to renovate their own selves beyond the patriarchal parameters.

Initially the women participants I encountered for conversations tried to conform to these parameters. And this is very understandable considering the social and public dimensions of our conversations and the eventual publication of the research. I would not have expected any one of the participants to go against the grain and say for example that she was not concerned for her children or her pupils. I expected stories of self-sacrifice and unconditional love. One may argue that this continues to point to the successful and effective functioning of discursive practices to keep women teachers and mothers within fixed boundaries of the school and home. It seems to me that becoming aware of the way these discursive practices and dominant systems of power work does little to change our needs to appear "normal". This reflection applies to myself as well. During our meetings I never gave the impression

that my views about mothering and or the maternal aspects of teaching were in some way unconventional, despite my awareness through readings and research into discursive formations of the maternal. It was not until later when the participants and I got to know each other that I "dared" to ask some questions that indicated my disapproval of the way women (including myself) are bound to the maternal and made liable to exploitation. Then they also aired their questions related to their mother-teacher functions and their challenges to the confines of motherhood.

The question "What is a mother?" or "What does a mother mean to you?" was not intended to elicit an unconventional radical response from the participants. It was rather aimed at capturing the effects of hegemonising the mother. I considered it a straightforward question that would not require much for the participants to answer nor demand a great deal of thought. Everybody knows what a mother is. She is generally taken for granted. Yet most of the participants' responses were unexpected in that they all hesitated or remarked that this question was very difficult- too difficult in fact, without having some time to think about it.

> Simone- What does it mean to you to be a mother?
> Martina- (looks at me - laughs) What a loaded question!

> Simone- What does it mean being a mother?
> Reneè- Ahh!
> Repeats - What is a mother?
> Emmmm….. you know I become emotional when I think of it…
> (We had to stop the conversation)

> Simone- What do you understand by the word "mother'?
> Tanya - What a difficult question!

> Simone to Ben -We were talking about the fact that you are a mother influences your teaching. But what do you understand by being a mother….

> (her nine year old son is listening, sitting near us at the kitchen table
> a long silence…)

the boy exclaims " A big responsibility!"

> Ben - A big responsibility my son has just said. It is a job you are never prepared for. You get a lot of satisfaction out of it... that for example your son comes home from school and says " Hi Ben!" and I say " Hi Andrea!' and he hugs me and kisses me and jumps around me... that is a great satisfaction.

My immediate reaction to such a response was that they were continuing to be careful about the way they would be represented in the study or the way I would interpret their definitions and the impressions they'd give of themselves. Steph Lawler (2000) in her recent study about the meaning and constructions of the self as mother points to the difficulties the women in her study encountered in articulating their dissenting views about mothering. Lawler understandably asks "for how could one oppose the notion of 'good mothering'? It would be like arguing against virtue" (Lawler 2000:169). In this situation, Lawler concludes that "maternal resistance" is blocked.

Lawler's comments however made me reflect and raise questions about why some of the participants in this study chose to remain silent. It was certainly not the case that they lacked understanding of what the mother is. Why did my inquiry into the definition of the mother beget such a silent response? Was this a way of mobilising maternal resistance?

These questions entailed a different reading of their texts and seeing their modes of resistance to conventional views of mothering which do not take a revolutionary tone or what Foucault terms as a "great Refusal" (Foucault 1990a: 96). As I argued in the first chapter, such grand resistive practices are undesirable for women whose power positionings are complexly ambivalent and whose social recognition is still clutched to the maternal realm. This also calls for a different understanding of resistance to

dominant power, one which Francoise Proust (2000) describes as manifest in "eclipses and brief flashes" (Proust 2000:19).

The participants' momentary silences in the conversation are not a direct articulation of their understandings, meanings and/ or their resistance to rigid maternal identities. They are considered as resistive moments that say so much about the way they envisage the maternal mainly as something that is fluid and cannot be captured in rigid definitions. Their silences simultaneously adhere to and escape conventional maternal expectations. These unstable maternal positionings open up an array of possibilities for alternative articulations of the maternal selves; of opportunities to symbolise themselves in different ways. Silences therefore are themselves opportunities through which these women construct themselves differently. Irigaray's comments on the value of silent spaces allowed by the one who is listening is relevant to the creation of silences in my conversation with these women. They challenged and overcame my initial tendency to fashion and formulate responses for the participants.

> I am listening to you, as to another that transcends me requires a transition to a new dimension. I am listening to you: I perceive what you are saying. I am attentive to it, I am attempting to understand and hear your intention. Which does not mean I comprehend you, I know you so I don't need to listen to you and I can even plan a future for you. No I am listening to you as someone and something I do not know yet, on the basis of a freedom and an openness put aside for this moment. I am listening to you I encourage something unexpected to emerge, some becoming, some growth, some new dawn, perhaps. (Irigaray 1996:117)

In Chapter Four I spoke about the power dimensions of listening and being listened to. I also explained in more detail the necessity of doing both and to have a conversation where both participants are taken seriously. Here, emerges the related importance of listening to each other's silences. Having one's silences listened to makes conversations go on and relationships between participants develop more

deeply. The participants' silences interpreted as leading to moments of growth and to creations of new meanings and unexpected turns in the research process.

Above all, some of the women's refusal to define the mother is an indication that the mother is not that easily defined. Definitions of the mother maybe lacking but not in a Lacanian sense, that sees woman as biologically lacking (Irigaray 1985a:51). The mother by such phallocratic definitions is simplified into the Other which is not. Still, living as m/other, even in relation to masculine discourses can take so many forms. One can say that because the mother proliferates and takes so many forms that it is impossible to pin her down in words. The women's silences and resistances to definitions of the mother therefore can be interpreted as modes of rethinking mothering. They open up avenues of becoming other than conforming to what a mother is expected to be. In this case, these women's power is present in their absent talk. Their lack of speech however does not necessarily amount to not speaking of the mother. This would as Irigaray points out, leave women without formulating their own ways of symbolising themselves as mothers in their own terms.

Some of the women, initially kept silent and refused to define the mother. This constitutes an act of resistance in itself. However their silences opened my readings of their alternative ways of conceiving the maternal. In this chapter I interpret these as deconstructions of the mother and/or the teacher as mother. I see them as the women's resistive moments and subversions of patriarchal discourses of the maternal. Throughout the conversations women's subversive voices may have appeared to be subtle and low. It is my aim here to amplify them (Griffiths 1998:126) and make them more explicit hoping that my readings do not hinder other readers from engaging in their own interpretations of the women's texts I selected.

Disrupting Maternal Instincts

> Denise - I don't really believe in the maternal instinct maybe because my first story with Tina was very difficult. I can start when she was born. No, before she was born while I was in labour. At one point I said to myself how dreadful; I wish I could turn things back and forget all this maternal experience (she laughed). I told my husband " Wouldn't it be better to go home and forget everything." I was joking but only half joking.(she laughs).
> Then when she was born I was ecstatic in the sense that she is my daughter and I am her mother. That was a very happy moment. Then they took her to clean her up and do some tests. When they brought her back I started to look at her - and at some moment she was not my daughter as I felt she was after she was born. "How did you get into my life? I am here in hospital because of you. I don't know how to take care of you. I don't even know how to hold you and what to do with you." I had these feelings of uncertainty. "I'd rather not be a mother; I was happy as I was before, thank you very much.

That a mother feels close to her child is assumed to be the most natural thing in the world. Yet strangely enough one of the things inculcated in the minds of women is the importance of establishing a very close relationship to the child just as soon as she is born. One could not help but ask if this relationship comes naturally then why all the emphasis on the issue? Why are mothers socialised into the benefits of bonding. If they are able to deliver love naturally then why insist on the necessity of nurturing contact with the child?

Conveying the naturalness of the mother-child relationship and at the same time appealing to the mother to learn from her child's own needs may seem to convey mixed messages. As seen in this excerpt from a book written for new mothers, nurturing is presented as second nature to women even though the process is to be learnt.

> Your joy in mothering grows as you experience the quick strong feeling of affection so natural between a nursing mother and her baby; as you develop your understanding of your baby's needs and gain confidence in your own ability to satisfy them; and as you see the happy dividends from the good relationship as the baby grows. (Leche League 1997:14)

Christine Everingham (1994) explains that mother's learning experiences of nurturing are not considered as socialisation processes. Just as motherly love is assumed to come naturally so is maternal nurturing. Moreover this is expected to take place within "separate" and private spaces.

It is within this discursive context that I would like to interpret Denise's account above. Denise is critical of the way motherly love is presented. Her confession of the way she felt after the birth of her daughter disrupts the assumption that this love is conceived naturally with her child. As she later explains it is a relationship like every other and one has to work at it. It is never natural. Yet Denise's disruption of the assumed maternal instincts is also critical of woman's socialisation into naturalised mothering. Her statements can also be read as resistive attempts to the conventional social placing of maternal relationships entirely within the "personal" which removes the maternal from the realms of the social. So here Denise is as much against the oppressive networks of maternal obligations that come through socially induced feelings of guilt as against the fact that accounts of mothering are left within the subjugated personal realm. In fact what can be read as a confessional of her maternal dereliction is more of a statement of her efforts in need of social recognition. This is a maternal desire which is rarely taken note of.

One may also counter argue that statements such as Denise's will inevitably provoke systems of knowledge that tend to redirect the mother onto the right maternal path; something which Denise has herself experienced through her meetings with a psychologist. However here she chooses to tell her story for different reasons. She makes use of the spaces of conversational research to denote her rethinking of the

notion of mothering away from the natural. She also shows a strong commitment towards the social recognition of the maternal itself.

This simultaneous move away and towards the maternal is practised by most of the other women participants in the research, as instances and stories recounted in other sections in this chapter will show. In the first chapter I argued that Maltese women do not stand to gain social status or prestige from an outright rejection of the maternal. A reworking, recreation and negotiation of the many fragments of their maternal selves is what these women are aiming at. Following Denise's stories and the stories of other women it became all the more clear that their disruptions of the maternal are not its rejection. During the group conversation I presented them with Simone's de Beauviour's view that mothering is a form of slavery. The women especially those that have children denied this categorically even though they recognised and talked about the hardships of mothering.

> Antoinette - Slavery? No. There are other things that compensate. Even when you look at the children…and see them grow… and you talk to them…
>
> Ben- There is nothing more beautiful than becoming a mother. When you give birth you will know. It is a sensation that men can never experience. A tremendous feeling which I can't even explain- something that you have created- it is a remarkable sensation.

Not all women however share Ben's feelings. I have quoted Denise's expressions of uncertainty and sadness that overwhelmed her just after her child was born. The maternal thought in terms of giving birth to a child and raising him or her, can also be troublesome to those who do not. Still, the stereotypical vision of the woman who automatically bonds with her child, or the woman who automatically desires one, influences women's speech about the maternal. The thoughts of the maternal by women teacher participants who chose not to have children or wish to do so and/or for some reason or other do not show that they are very much affected by

conventional views of mothering. At the same time, they recognise that maternal stereotypes can be very harmful and struggle to rethink mothering in their own ways. Throughout our initial conversations, these women, including myself before I had a child, have adopted particular strategic ways of reasoning so that our particular relations with the maternal become acceptable to us as well as those around us. I recognise this acceptance/rejection of mothering in my particular ways of reasoning and explaining my choice to delay childbearing. This double ambivalent stance towards mothering is combined with the contradictory feelings of keeping maternal issues private or making them public. In analysing my conversations with Joanne I realised that I was using the meeting as a public platform to let others know about my attitudes regards mothering. I aired my perspective that proper mothering involves close and continuous contact with the child; since I didn't have the time and was not prepared to do this then I chose to postpone having a baby. This was as close, as I could get, to what is socially acceptable within the context I was living in.

Other women's presentations of their views related to mothering fluctuate between describing it as a matter of choice, as a biological and natural event that is beyond their control, or as something that was not meant to happen to them. They do this to avoid social stigma and gain the understanding of those around them as to why they are not mothers: "Now they know that having a child doesn't depend on me", states Joanne. Sister Kalcidonia's commitment to religious vows and vocation, on the other hand, are posited as higher and stronger than her desires to become a mother; "it is the strong vocation that I had that made me opt for a different life."

Nevertheless, even though these women try to justify the fact that they do not have a child, they do not shy away from maternal associations. They turn to their

relationships with their pupils to construct themselves as maternal beings. Sister Kalcidonia, for example, sees her maternal actions as more effective when teaching in a class. This is not only because she can reach and care for a larger number of pupils simultaneously, just as the Founder of her Order Maria Theresa Spinelli did, but also because she sees herself in partnership with the mothers of the children in her class. In spite of her being a nun, or maybe because of this choice and the fact that she followed the mothering and teaching steps of Maria Theresa Spinelli, she finds that her thoughts are on the same wavelength as other mothers. She feels pleased to contribute to their children when they cannot.

Joanne's tactics in making herself maternal are quite different and become all the more interestingly complex when she explains her commitment to socially symbolise the maternal through her teaching. She recognises the problem that socially the maternal is only recognised according to certain social prescriptions of reproductivity rather than creativity. To disrupt this view of the maternal she presents God as a maternal being by referring to the Aramaic feminine denotation of God.

> Joanne -The original writers of the Bible used the feminine verb when referring to God but the translators changed them to the masculine. Even characteristics of God were more feminine but these aspects were not symbolised... they remained hidden...
> In fact, I would like to change the current topic 'Fatherhood of God' because I know that if I change the wording then the teachers will change their lessons. The woman is also a creator. God is as caring as a mother and takes care of every detail in our lives. Society has created God as a masculine entity.

Joanne's underlying line of thought is very similar to that of Irigaray's claim that cultural representations tend to leave the maternal feminine unsymbolised. Joanne's commitment to placing the maternal feminine within the social order adheres to conventional views of the maternal but at the same time these views are dissolved through her unconventional associations of the maternal with God. This strategy corresponds to Irigaray's displacement of the conventional associations of the body

with the feminine and the natural onto the symbolic realm. In one of her best known lectures "Body to Body in Relation to the Mother", Irigaray (1993b) does this by playing with the cultural Catholic representation of God the Father as the body in the Eucharist ritual. As she states in the introduction to the collection of lectures, the representation of God as a man oppresses women in that they do not partake of the divine and of kinship.

> 'This is my body,. this is my blood,' according to the rite that celebrates the sharing of food and that has been ours for centuries, perhaps we might remind him that he would not be there if our body and our blood had not given him life, love and spirit. And that he is also serving us up, we women mothers, on his communion plate. But this is something that must not be known. That is why women cannot celebrate the Eucharist....If they were to do so, something of the truth that is hidden in the communion rite would be brutally unmasked. At the same moment the human race would be absolved of a great offense. If woman were to celebrate Eucharist with her mother, giving her a share of the fruits of the earth blessed by them both, she might be freed from all hatred or ingratitude toward her maternal genealogy, and be hallowed in her identity as a woman. (Irigaray 1993b:21)

Irigaray takes the idea of the sacrificed body of Christ and couples it with that of the mother. In reality, it is the mother that gives her body and her blood to create a new life. And her coupling of the symbolic ritual of the Eucharist places the maternal within the symbolic but displaces the symbol of Father as the sole creator. Joanne's tactic is similar in that she proposes a feminine God that has been socially subjugated and symbolised as masculine. It is the caring qualities of the mother that she wants to make more socially recognisable and she does this by placing them in parallel with that which already is; i.e. God the Father.

In this case, both Joanne's and Irigaray's strategies aim to make the maternal known. However according to Irigaray this awareness will not be effective if the problematic relations between mother and daughter and between women themselves are not addressed.

Relating to the Mother

Some of the women teachers' disruptions of the socially acceptable maternal and especially of the way the mother is supposed to relate to her children come through their experiences as daughters. I have referred to Denise's trouble with the representation of the naturalised maternal relationship with her child. I have presented her thoughts about her feelings towards her daughter as an alternative way through which such a relationship can be conceived. In this section I shall continue on the disruptions of the images of the all loving and caring mother by referring to the problematic mother-daughter relations described by some of the women. I shall refer to these to look critically at Irigaray's plea for establishing good relationships between the daughter and the mother and between women themselves. According to Irigaray, this can be done, by challenging patriarchal symbolisations of the maternal. Disrupting, rethinking and resisting the patriarchal-made mother are conducive to establishing such relationships between women. This would enable them to have cultural points of references and identifications, which go beyond patriarchal definitions of the maternal. Yet this is not enough. The good relationships between women themselves have to be socially represented as well.

Irigaray talks about and explains in detail throughout her various writings why women's relationships with each other are not always as good as they should be. Irigaray observes that this is a symptom that extends to relationships between women which are generally symbolised as negative and unfruitful. One may argue that good relationships between women and/or mother and daughters do exist and that an analysis of such relationship or even their symbolisation could strengthen maternal genealogies. However as I pointed out at the beginning of this section, here I would like to focus on some of the women's accounts of the problematic relations between

them and their mothers. This could disrupt the conventional taken for granted perceptions of natural relationships between mothers and daughters. Nancy's account for example shows their conflict and struggle for space and freedom, even if it was concentrated around running a home.

> Nancy- We used to live with my mother (when she was married and after having lived for some years abroad) and she had a very old house. And you know two women trying to run one home - with your mother in one house after you have spent so much time alone in your own house.... She was also getting old and I felt she was becoming a bit selfish ... sort of this is my house and I do what I like...

Nancy's account also exemplifies some of Irigaray's explanations that the relations between the mother and the daughter are not good because of the exclusive maternal identifications, that make them compete for the same maternal space and do not permit them to relate as women.

In Chapter Two I explained that Irigaray's analysis of these relationships are based on psychoanalytic accounts of the identification of the daughter with the mother. Since the mother is the primary source of identification for her daughter the way the mother is perceived is crucial to the self-development of the daughter. Drucilla Cornell follows the same line of thought and explains that

> This is all operating within a cultural backdrop in which the mother is the abjected other. And so that daughter is forced to identify with her, not as a strong feminine other, but as the one who has to obliterate her own person. (Cornell 1998:183)

The disruptions of the conventional ways maternal relationships are conceived are therefore necessary to create feminine selves that are not rigidly and exclusively maternal. As I pointed out earlier, Irigaray also proposes the representation of good relationships with the mother as an effective social symbolic for the construction of relationships between women. I agree with her that bad relationships can stem from denigratory representations of the mother-daughter relations and that they are due to

limited identifications of women with the maternal. However here I want to question Irigaray's insistence on the representations of the good relationships between women to compensate for the popular presentations and views of the hostility between them.

In "je tu nous" (Irigaray 1993c:47-49) her suggestions as to how good relationships are to be developed focus only on the representation of the positive, non-conflicting ones. She suggests for example that Christian women should publicly display images of the loving relationship between Mary and her mother Anne. She goes on to point towards the need for women to have some common ground and a common language between them. She explains

> In concrete terms, that means that the mother-woman should speak to the daughter woman, use feminine grammatical forms, talk about things that concern the two of them, talk about herself and ask her daughter to do the same, bring up her genealogy, especially the relation to her mother, tell her daughter about women currently involved in public life, or historical or mythological women, ask her daughter to tell her about her girlfriends and so on. (Irigaray 1993c:50)

Does this mean that the negative relations are to be left hidden and the stories of the bad relationships with the mother, of some of these women participants are to remain subjugated? Are the good relationships between the mother and daughter the only effective relationships that are to be represented? What are the dangers of representing these women's negative experiences with their mothers as examples of maternal disruptions?

Certainly identifications through denigratory versions of the mother daughter relations are not effective social symbolics for the construction of relationships between women. Yet it seems to me that some of Irigaray's suggestions are couched within the demands of the conventional maternal unconditional love. I have explained earlier on that it is not possible or effective to completely cut the bonds

with such maternal discourses. My point here is that Irigaray's notion of the mother-daughter relationship as well as that between women is strictly bound to a consensual relationship. Mother-daughter connections generally include their highly ambivalent feelings towards each other and as Maxine Greene's reflects on her relations with her late daughter, these included "the contradictions of motherhood, the hopes, guilt, disappointments, memories of lovers' quarrels with her, impossibility of real understanding" (Greene& Griffiths forthcoming:10). My view is that these stories of conflict should be part of the social symbolisation of the maternal especially because they pinpoint the difficulties of such relationships. They do not only symbolise differences between women but they show that even women involved in close relationships as those between mother and daughter can construct themselves differently in relation to each other and to the maternal. It is important also, that such stories help to identify sources of conflict, so that women deal with them in a concrete way.

Tanya's story of her cold relationship with her mother includes an explanation that refers to the lack of a common language through which they could relate in a more positive way. At the same time she posits a solution when she recognises that it is not always her mother who has to accommodate to her needs. In other words their mother-daughter relations improved when their roles were inverted even though temporarily. Furthermore this flexibility in their own conventional expectations makes their own selves more fluid with respect to the maternal.

> Tanya - I do not have a comfortable relation with my mum. My mother is a cold person. Maybe there were personal reasons that made her that way and my relationship with her changed as time went by. But it changed because I became an adult and I started to change my approach and accommodate her. My mother remained the same; it was my approach that changed and softened and I say let me try this way and that way.
> I would like to be a mother to be different and have a good relationship with my children. And being a mother would mean sharing and sharing experiences-

> that is how I like it to be. I realise that mothering has the egoistic drive. As if my child was a pet or a toy and I dress her up or I make her live those experiences I didn't have. You have to make decisions all the time for this child. But I know that if my mother was cold I will tend to be her opposite... outright... because I know how much I wished to be able to discuss things with my mother and there wasn't the language between us.

The distancing of the mother from the exclusive maternal function is a positive aspect in the formation of the relationship of other participants with their mothers. When they see their mothers as women who have other interests and pleasures besides maternal ones, their relationships are more of the woman-woman kind and their formation of their own selves is not necessarily restricted to the maternal.

> Joanne- One other thing, my mother and I were always close we were always like friends to each other. I used to get home and she used to tell me about her day at school, the problems and how she solved them. And I used to do the same.
> Besides being a teacher, my mother used to get involved in a number of committees and we used to talk about them as well. She continued to study for a BA in theology and she used to tell me what they had been discussing during the course.

> Martina - My mother always worked and had other interests outside the home and I think that because she worked we had more opportunities to learn and become independent. I have this model and without even knowing I find myself walking in her footsteps.

Ambivalently, it is the mother's move away from constricting maternal interests that makes the daughter see the world and initiate her attraction to it. The teaching dimension of the relationship still partakes of maternal love but at the same time it mobilises maternal selves away from the stereotypical so that these women do not remain captive to it.

This points to the complexities of the processes by which women construct themselves as maternal subjects and their attempts to create their own selves differently. They struggle to maintain themselves as fluid as possible and be able to

recognise and touch upon contrasting facets of maternal experiences- and when necessary even distance themselves from maternal connotations as their stories as teachers show.

Teacher Stories

> Femininity fades away before maternity, is absorbed into maternity
>
> Irigaray (1985a:74) *Speculum of the Other Woman*

In Chapter Three my discussion focused on how the association between the maternal and teaching restricted women's possibilities to move outside these functions. In the previous sections of this chapter I have sought to present women's ways of dealing with these restrictions and particularly their relations with their children/mothers which simultaneously incorporate and surpass the maternal. I argued that the mother's interests beyond the child and the relationship she has with her stimulate fruitful development of one's own self and the formation of the child's self in a creative rather than a reproductive fashion.

This principle is clearly opposed to that propagated by Canon Pullicino, in the 19th century. He believed that a small body of knowledge is required of the women teachers, mostly concerning school regulations and established methods. This would keep them modest and humble. Other interests and especially fascination with academic knowledge would only make them vain and capricious. Such regulation of the teacher could also serve the other purpose of limiting the interests and knowledge ventures of future citizens so that their control comes easier. Furthermore, the belief that maternal attitudes and aspects of teaching come naturally to women placed women teachers in a lower status when compared to men. But the main aim of coupling teaching with mothering, restricting women teachers' interests to the child,

and urging them to abandon completely their quest for other kinds of knowledge, ensures the control of their teaching and above all the formation of these women teachers' selves. In later chapters, women teacher participants give their own accounts of how they are controlled in schools. However, Paolo Pullicino's presentation of the contrasting identities of the good and the bad women teachers, through Emmanuela's biographical account give a good background to the shaping of the women teachers' stories in this study.

> She won't be taken as a model by those women teachers who want to show off or else those who take up teaching with the intention of gaining something and not with the aim of doing a holy mission. Likewise she will not be a model to those who do not know what education is worth and whose work is limited to giving instruction. But these three kinds of women teachers are not the sort of teachers needed to raise poor and growing up children. The teacher that instructs and does not educate does a useless and frequently harmful job. People are to be good and not scholarly; it is no use having them learned if they are not good.
> Often when learning is not accompanied by kindness it will be out to evil ends. Kindness generally means having your heart open and doing good to others, keeping your own dignity and doing fruitful work. This is generally given by education and cannot be achieved by instruction alone. Instruction on its own makes men word-mongers but education makes them workers. The women teachers who look at teaching as a way of making money are prostituting this holy mission to make better men. And such mercenaries can achieve material results but not those that have a good moral effect that demand sacrifice and selflessness. And finally the teacher who teaches in an arrogant way makes those who are under her care, vain and arrogant and her work so trivially pursued, useless. Modesty therefore, selflessness and good judgement about what education is really about. These are three important characteristics that have made Azzopardi a good teacher and as she is a good example all female teachers should imitate her, if they want to do justice to their profession. (Pullicino 1871a:10)

Pullicino's use of the memoir that tells the story of Emmanuela, brings out interesting comparisons with the way feminists have made use of the narrative methodology to account for and raise issues around women teachers' lives. Pullicino does not let Emmanuela speak, he speaks for her after her death. Feminists are more concerned with women's construction of their own stories, the meanings they weave into them and as Weiler argues:

> feminist scholarship has been concerned with recovering what has been lost with telling stories. In fact, feminist scholarship has been largely defined by its political stance- its attempt to know the world differently, to recover what has been hidden and lost, in order to contribute to the building of a more just world for women and men. (Weiler & Middleton 1999:4)

I have made use of Pullicino's account of Emmanuela's life as one way of recovering, however partially, her lost story and at least imagine indirectly how it must have been for this particular woman to resist his authoritarian control over her school. However the simple reproduction of women teachers' stories and experiences, including those of the participants in this study can have little or no more value than Pullicino's modelling intentions for telling the story. It is not therefore my aim to tell the stories again but to use them, to let women speak of their choice of teaching as a career and to try to give meaning to their choices including those that concern their mode of recounting their stories. In doing so, the ways in which these women negotiate their maternal teaching associations in their lives continue to emerge.

If Pullicino's story of Emmanuela is that of a teacher who is more concerned with caring and obedience than with the scholarly aspect of teaching, these women present their scholarly interests and pursuits as the main inspiration for taking up and maintaining their teaching career. The stories of the women in this study resist the idea that the teacher can be a good teacher without having a sound knowledge of the subject she is teaching. They are not against the knowledge of teaching methods and strive to develop their pedagogies in innovative ways, as I shall point out in the last chapter. Nevertheless, the fact that when asked to tell their stories as teachers, most of them told stories of their interest in content knowledge and of their desire to deepen their explorations of particular subjects shows an interest in teaching which does not necessarily have maternal origins. Some of them do not even mention the children as one of the reasons for taking up teaching; at least not until later on when

they explain their desire to share the pleasures of knowledge with other persons and therefore with their pupils.

> Ben - When I started studying at University I wanted to become a legal procurator but my father thought that it would be difficult for me to get a job after I finished studying. So he was paying and I loved Italian and I always wanted to do something and perfect my hold on the language. I did a BA course and then I sort of had to do a postgraduate course to become a teacher. I was chosen to do the course by an interview. At the time they only chose twelve women to do the course and I managed to get in due to the high marks I got during my BA course.
>
> Again to be honest there weren't a lot of openings for young women at the time. I have to say there wasn't much that one could do at the time when we finished University in the seventies.
>
> Maria - I was very good in all subjects except maths... and geography. But it involved a lot of words so I did manage to pass exams. But English literature I really loved it since I was a small child It gives me such pleasure. Then after my O levels I sort of did want to continue studying. My father sent me to Perugia; Universita' Per Stranieri and I came back to Malta wanting to go to University. There I became all the more fascinated with literature. When I was in my third year the external examiner liked my writing and my exam papers and he suggested that I apply to go to Cambridge. I tried and got in. When I got back I didn't have to choose. Literature decided for me. I was fortunate enough that I loved a subject which society accepted as something that could be taught in schools.

There are other ways in which these women teachers resist the common associations between their stories of teachers with the typical maternal attitudes of losing oneself for the sake of others. Their statements against the social expectations for them to nurture and care come through their " confessions" that teaching was not their first or favourite job option. Others did talk about their choice to become teachers but most of them made it a point to emphasise the circumstances around which their choice was made and that they didn't have much of a choice.

> Joanne - I didn't want to become a teacher. When I was doing sixth form I chose accountancy. But during the summer work phase I didn't like the job of an accountant dealing with numbers. It was boring. I repeated the first year and changed subjects. At this time I was against becoming a teacher and I wanted to do law... but again I noticed it was not my kind of thing.. I don't like arguing and you have to do it as a lawyer. It happened that my sister was sitting for a German exam and I helped her and she did well; so the choice sort of came on its own.

> Antoinette - I had to become a teacher because there weren't many options for me at the time. It was either a secretary or a teacher and I preferred to become a teacher.
>
> Nancy - I never wanted to become a teacher I wanted to be a doctor but at the time you had to pay to do the course and my mum couldn't afford it. And anyway, she always wanted me to be a teacher and she insisted that I go to College, which I did.

These stories narrate the women's active participation in their own becoming but the agencies they reveal are of different form, from the usual positive modes of striving to become what they wished. They are active in struggling with social determination and closure of the maternal aspects of teaching. These women were not only conscious of functions attributed to them by society they also actively use this research space to question the taken for granted assumptions that limit their possibilities. Petra Munro explains that in renouncing their agency in becoming teachers they use the same social discourse that expects them to enter caring professions to emphasise their agency.

> From my perspective actively choosing to become teachers would have been tantamount to submitting to the essentialised gender norms embedded in the discourse of teaching as women's true profession. (Munro 1998:113)

Men as Maternal Teachers

Women teachers in this study also deconstruct the notion of women teachers as mothers by positing the idea that men and/or male teachers can also be "mothers" especially through their caring capabilities. They either do this by presenting caring as a natural characteristic that is present in men but repressed by culture or else by emphasising the social construction of the caring mother and teacher, arguing that men can also be socially induced to care. Many teachers' accounts in fact, include both nature and nurture explanations of the maternal even though these have been posited in an opposing and conflicting background. These women teachers take

different and ambivalent positions in this dichotomous relationship. The nature argument as well as the nurture one are made use of in different circumstances and sometimes simultaneously in noticeably strategic ways to overcome the typical associations of the maternal with women and/ or women teachers only.

> Nancy - They (children) are with you for a long time. I mean even ducks - somebody who is with them, takes care of them and nourishes them; they think she is their mother and walks after him....even if he is male (they all laugh).

Maria is another woman participant in this study who questioned my choice of having conversations with women teachers about mothering, stating that men mother as well; hinting at my "unfeminist" assumption that only women can mother and the dangerous implications that only women should care and sacrifice and love. Her argument is built on the human being's universal ability to care in a motherly way.

> Maria - I think that every human being has the mothering instinct; you don't need to be a woman, all right? I think that every person has what Orientals see as the yin and the yang.... I mean I don't think that the mothering instinct is felt only by women teachers.

Maria in fact sees herself as a caring person who shows her love and care by hugging her students. She is alarmed when other teachers warn her against touching the students - just in case somebody accuses her of sexual harassment. No wonder, she continues to argue, that men find it difficult to express their caring attitudes. Social attitudes have made it impossible for them to show that they care; considering also, as Maria remarks that they will easily be labelled as gay and 'sissy'.

Ben explicitly challenges views that characteristics of the mother such as those of care, love and sacrifice are to be perceived as pertaining to the feminine domain. She constructs her arguments on the idea that men's nature does not preclude them from feeling and caring but at the same time brings forth the notion that men's attitudes can be nurtured to care.

> Martina - I think it is (women are associated with the maternal) the caring aspect. Even though children don't want to learn…
>
> Doris - And she suffers when they are not learning.. she feels…
>
> Tanya -Just like a mother she cares even though they are difficult…
>
> Ben - So does the father; can't he feel the same things as well?

The arguments that men and/ or male teachers do and can engage in caring practices if they are given the space or if encouraged show that they give importance to the notion of equality between the sexes at least regarding the responsibilities of child rearing. Lynne Segal (1990) explains that in the late seventies the idea of the father involved in childcare that started out in the fifties and sixties became more concerned with pinpointing the similarities between the ways mothers and fathers take care of their children. Ben has this ideal yet at the same time she knows, as she says from her experience that only a few men have been socially conditioned to mother.

> Ben - Let's say if the time comes when the father takes up the role and spends more time with children he will feel the same things… he cares. The problem is that we have always done this job and everyone expects us to do it. When you don't there is always somebody who looks down on you and tells you that you are exaggerating. As if men have a role and women a different one. It is as if we can only live in this way, we can't integrate…

Other participants engaging in the same conversations also comment on the social construction and situatedness of their own perspectives regarding mothering. As women who are today in their sixties, they argue that the marriage bar was influential on the way they saw and see themselves as wholly responsible for the education of children. Another participant points to the difference between Ben's and some of the other women's husbands and hers.

> Antoinette - You are saying this because your husband is a teacher; my husband is not into education and not at all familiar with schooling. I had to take care of my children because he saw his job as that of earning money for the family; something which I couldn't do at the time. Their education was also my responsibility.

This point yet again underlines the issue that caring maternal aspects of their work are not naturally connected to the fact that they are women. They deconstruct the natural associations of their work just like some of the teachers in Kathleen Casey's study (1990) namely by showing that relations between sexuality and reproduction, reproduction and nurture are not natural or essential. They highlight the social construction of the maternal aspect making it possible for them not to be solely bound to their maternal roles. One of the ways in which they relieve themselves of their maternal bonds is by extending them to men. And sometimes it is easier to make this point by presenting men as having the natural potential to mother.

The discourse is again reversed to the social influences on the maternal capacities of men if this does not suit the particular conditions and realities experienced by one woman. Antoinette's remarks are a case in point. Ben can easily extend maternal qualities to her husband because he is a teacher and ironically because teaching is considered to be women's work due to its relatedness to caring. The fact that male teachers are in contact with children provided Ben with the tools to deconstruct the caring relatedness to women teachers. Antoinette on the other hand is convinced of the nurture thesis but somewhat sceptical of generalisations that all men can be socially induced to mother. Still most of the women realise and admit that the social demands on them as women to mother are different from those directed at men and that, although they believe that chores are to be shared, most of these responsibilities are taken care of by themselves.

In sum these women's deconstructions of the mother come through women speaking as women who are expected to "mother" in a "normal" and socially acceptable ways and also through their particular relationships with others. This understanding of

deconstruction follows that of Irigaray rather than that of Derrida, in that women deconstruct from within their cultural and historical positions as maternal subjects. Margaret Whitford (1991) explains that Derrida's incorporation of femininity in differing his outlook, is different from women's differing perspectives of the mother simply because men are not constructed as maternal subjects as women are. Thus Irigaray's claim that speaking like a woman is not the same as being a woman i.e. socialised as such. Deconstruction here is practised by women, constructed as sexually different beings also through their maternal connotations. This strategy is one of the ways by which women socially symbolise their maternity in different language initiating the process of creating their own selves in their own ways. The way these women disrupt the phallocratic discourse about the mother is particular because they are doing it from within; they are resisting the same discourse that constructs them as maternal beings.

Crossing the Boundaries of Teaching and Mothering

In the previous section I pointed out the situatedness of women's conceptions of mothering within the nature/nurture dichotomy. I have argued that their thoughts adhere to understandings of mothering either as a natural or nurtured activity and that these seemingly contradictory fluctuations within this division are strategic. The women in this study do not hesitate to assert their positions as maternal beings and construct their particular selves as women teachers around this notion. The nature /nurture dichotomy provides them with opportunities to go beyond fixed ideas and expectations of the maternal; they use this conventional division to suit their own constructions of their maternal selves. A similar kind of play with dichotomous discourses is used by these women to cross the traditional boundaries between the private and public domains and move away from the strict division between the

maternal/ private and teaching/public. Feminism is very much concerned with the exclusion of women from the public realm and their relegation to the private and the domestic. Feminists of a liberal approach argue for the integration of women into the public sphere, the domain of man (Hekman 1990:139). But this concern with the absence of women from the "public" has evolved into a feminist response that does not involve the dichotomous private/public thinking. They recognise the infusion of these two spheres because women and feminists themselves have made personal and domestic issues public (Griffiths 1995:14). The women in this study have, in their own ways, broken down distinctions between public and private spaces as I shall explain later on.

However, in Chapter Three I have described how the maternal infiltrates the public sphere also because, the private personal aspects of maternal teaching are too important not to be politicised by the state and the Church. I pointed out, also that the maternal qualities of the teacher warrant her entering private homes to exercise social control individually. It is a form of pastoral power that works by integrating the public with the private and as Foucault (1983a: 213-214) points out, is "both an individualising and a totalizing form of power..... a tricky combination in the same political structures of individualisation techniques, and of totalization procedures." I have shown that one important manifestation of this power network is the structuring of the teacher as mother and the relation between her educational and maternal roles. A series of obligations are impinged upon both the teacher and the mother. Teaching is extended to mothering while mothering incorporates the social and public duty of educating the young. These intertwined social obligations between mothering and teaching are powerful strategies that do not give the time and space for women to go beyond these functions. As I will argue later on and as participants themselves point

out, mothering and teaching are both time consuming activities that leave little time for one self. Furthermore there is the risk of envisaging the school as Carolyn Steedman (1992) in fact does, as an extension of the home so that it becomes difficult to see how the overlapping of teaching and mothering, contributes to their rethinking of the maternal. It may seem that their fluctuations between home and school do little to help women escape maternal and educational fixtures.

In spite of this, many of these women teachers, especially those who have experienced the marriage bar and returned to school well after raising their children, still consider teaching as a gateway beyond the home, a move into the public realm. These women are especially hesitant to completely cut bonds with the "private" realm which is traditionally considered to be "their own". So they use the very same extensions and intersections of maternal and educational obligations as sources for alternative ways of being the socially expected teacher and/or mother. They bring down barriers between private and public by their movements to and from the home and the school. They do not differentiate private mothering from public teaching. This blurring of clear cut and closed spaces in which to act opens up these spaces and provides the impetus to be different from what the mother and teacher is expected to be and to be concerned about.

Moving out of the Home

In the first chapter I gave an account of some of the Maltese socio-cultural factors that play an important part in the constitution of the mother. The Maltese mother is encouraged by the Church "to stay at home" and look after her children on a full time basis. At times the Church explicitly condemns women who "abandon" their young children to go out to work, interpreting their choice as one rising out of greed and

selfishness. This discourse is sometimes also supported by gossip, which strongly affects the mother's reputation within the neighbourhood or immediate community. Moreover, the lack of childcare provisions provided by the state discourages women from returning to work. Although Maltese women live close to their mothers and can benefit from their child caring offers, returning to work can still involve some sort of dependence on their families.

Reneè, the Director of the Department for Women in Society, is currently working to improve "the conditions of work that should provide opportunities for women who want to participate in the labour market" (Reneè letter 14/11/2001). This is also one of the objectives of the Department under her care that aims to implement the Government's policy on gender issues. She is involved in promoting the principle of equality between women and men in all spheres of life and encouraging effective co-responsibility of women and men in public life as well as within the family. Her experiences as a Maltese woman, mother and teacher make her particularly motivated "to work for the creation of the necessary circumstances to enable women to assume positions of leadership and responsibility at all levels in Malta's development process and at all levels of management" (Women in Society Annual Report 2000:1). She is aware that "women are not a homogeneous group" and therefore different measures are needed so that the above objectives are met.

> Reneè - We are talking about flexible working hours so that the employer becomes conscious of it and those people with family responsibilities. We are working so that these people, parents especially, can work for a reduced number of hours but retain the privileges and benefits of a full time worker on a prorata basis. This is certainly going to affect women with small children. There are many of them who cannot afford to go without a salary but they do not have somebody to take care of their children. In this way they can find a balance because they can still be at home when the children come home from school, in the afternoon and they can look after their families. We are hoping that this will help women not to lose their seniority.

Reneè's commitment to provide friendly conditions for women to move out of home is important, considering a Catholic context where women are encouraged to be full time mothers. These "family friendly measures" include maternity leave, adoption leave, special leave for marriage and bereavement; unpaid parental leave for one year a career break of three years which may be taken by either parents and responsibility leave to take care of dependent members of the family. Reduced working hours are also available for those who wish to look after their children under 8 years of age. Persons who opt for a reduced timetable are entitled to salary and allowances on a pro rata basis and the seniority, opportunities of training should not be affected by this option. These measures are directed towards attracting women to move out of home and give them opportunities for advancing their career.

However such measures are not enough to help women take up full employment when they wish. The provision of adequate childcare facilities has to be improved so as to facilitate women's move from home. Recently, the Child Care Task Force, set up in January 2001 and made up of several social partners presented its report and proposals regarding professionally run child care facilities for parents of children aged up to three who wish to work to the Government (The Sunday Times 20/1/2002:4). The report recommends that the government should be able to regulate these services and safeguard the rights of Maltese children and the introduction of tax incentives to support families who require assistance to make use of these facilities.

Some of the participants in this study are greatly aware of the lack of adequate childcare provisions. They argue that more has to be done so that women are encouraged to take up their full time job or even a job on a reduced hour basis when

their children are very young or pre-nursery age. Denise, Tanya and Martina agree that child care provisions are very poor and that this effects the extent to which women's lives are bound to the maternal

> Tanya - Child care facilities! Oh they need to be a lot better and cater for women's needs. We have to work at this because it really puts women down. They lose heart at doing things they always wanted to do besides being mothers.
>
> Martina - If it were not for my family who supported me with babysitting I don't know what I would have done. It is so expensive and the hours are short from nine to noon. At the time I had two children I was working in a bank and like other women I considered working part-time. Then I found out that I had to work Saturdays. Now how is it possible to work Saturdays when you have to think of who will take care of your children. So I felt they were telling me to resign. I had to resign.
>
> Denise - I think that working reduced hours answers the needs of only some women. I think that more than trying to find one system that is suitable for all women we need different solutions so that women have opportunities to choose and see what works best for them.

The measures mentioned earlier, especially that of reduced hour work can help women justify their choice to work outside the home without disrupting conventional demands of the mother to be at home when children are at home. Since teaching hours coincide with children's schools hours, being teachers has helped other participants whose children have grown up to justify moving out of the home and into the school in similar ways. Some of these participants prefer to work within "the mother at home" discourse and present teaching as an ideal job for women because they are always at home at the same time as their children.

> Doris - I wanted to become a teacher because I knew that I wanted to get married and have children. I always want to have time for my children and look after them myself and I think teaching helps you do both i.e. teach and be with your children as well.

The choice of a career on these grounds certainly does confirm restricted career choice and the social pressures on women to mother in limited ways. However, the

following reasons for going back to school show that teaching does open up spaces they greatly desire to enrich their own lives and be more than just mothers.

> Antoinette - My mother never wanted me to move away from my home village to get educated because she used to think that I would go off the tracks. But my older sister told her " I am not earning any money by staying at home and being a seamstress." So my mother sent me to a Church school and I used to go to private lessons as well. I did well and went to College to study to become a teacher and this opened up a new world for me.
> Later on when my children had grown up and there was no reason for me to stay at home any more. And I felt so lonely. So I left home and as soon as I left home I felt I regained my soul.
>
> Doris - When I left home to go to College to study to become a teacher my life changed completely. I was not mummy's girl anymore. I was independent and I had a new life. I had a room of my own and was with other people.
>
> Nancy - When I became a teacher I felt I could go out more. I was only allowed to go to Church; that was my outing. But during lunch break I used to go out for a drink with other teachers. I also had a salary of my own so I felt I could do a lot of things.
>
> Nancy - Teaching has also given me the opportunity to travel. I love to travel to see other countries and do a lot of reading about them before I do.
>
> Ben - I feel that teaching made me search for new knowledge and I wanted to know more about and research the subject I taught.

These women do not hesitate to make the most of their positions as teachers to justify going back to work without appearing to be abandoning their families. The idea of the maternal teacher certainly provides them with the image of the good mother in spite of working away from home. They remain the responsible mothers who take care of and put the needs of their children first. Although the excerpts above show that teaching is considered to be an extremely enriching activity that gives them the chance to explore other worlds they state that they do it for the sake of others. Sometimes their understanding of teaching as a vocation is that of a missionary call to do "good" to other people and help them live better lives.

> Doris - As a teacher I feel I can do a lot of good things and not only for children. There was a couple I remember. They had a little girl and they were separated. I thought of them as my children. I used to tell them " Nobody's perfect. Try to accept his/her mistakes and defects." Once I remember they were in the same room at school on Parents' Day and I tried to bring them

> together. But you do not succeed every time. But a good word can do a lot of good.
>
> Antoinette - But I also wished to leave home to earn money for my family. I also decided to teach to do some social good and be of service to society.

Their teaching careers are used to boost their social images as mothers. The knowledge and experience they gain by being with other children and keeping up with what goes on in schools is considered to put their mothering skills on a higher level. Martina for example strongly argues that her taking up a teaching career and entering University to get an education degree is in fact benefiting her children. She argues in this way to compensate for the pressures from friends, neighbours and other family members who criticise her career choice.

> Martina - If something goes wrong that is the first thing that they accuse you of: "She works or she is doing a University course and then she is not capable." But, then I ask myself if I were at home all the time could certain things have been prevented? So the way I look at a mother is why shouldn't I have a career?
>
> I know also that I have certain information and knowledge because I am a teacher so I am giving them things that other people aren't, or maybe they are giving them. Today there are different ways to educate your children- it depends on the way the mother wants her children to be educated. If she is afraid she does not give them their independence she is hindering them from maturing, from growing up, from being practical. That is how I see it.

Such justifications for returning to school, however, function through a degradation of other women either those that are full time mothers, those mothers who do not have the formal experience and training in the education of children and others working in places other than the school. It is important to note that these women teachers' resistance to social obligations to stay at home springs from their particular socially constructed positions as teachers and mothers. It is fabricated within their context and circumstances and is ambivalently made use of to reinforce the connections between the mother and the teacher. These participants however refuse to strictly adhere to conventional moulds by being both. Teaching in fact becomes an

asset for the symbolisation of their maternal selves. They do not completely abandon traditional expectations of the mother but continue to build upon them by bringing the teaching factor into the maternal equation.

The women's attempts to move out of their homes do not indicate dissatisfaction with their relatedness to the domestic territory. They do not renounce it. The home is considered by most Maltese women to be a "place of their own" where they construct their feminine selves in particular through the management of their own household. Sometimes, as this excerpt from a published biographical account of Maria Calleya, a Gozitan teacher shows, not having the time to take care of one's own home is disappointing. It is even considered to be a lack of freedom for the woman even though confinement to the home and domestic chores is, on the other hand, to be avoided.

> And anyway, I hated my weekends, doing schoolwork, because I always liked my house to be a little smart. On weekends in Gozo, it's a must: even the girls who work in factories, just all of us do a little housecleaning from top to bottom; I hated the fact that I couldn't do that, although my mother you had to be sure- was keeping the house quite decently..... I missed the fact that I couldn't take up the stair carpets and give them a good sunshine and a good beating in the sunshine. That I was missing- being a woman, sort of...
> (Maria Calleya from Galley 1994:129-130)

These seemingly ambivalent and contradictory desires are not resolved by choosing the home rather than the school or vice versa but by taking up the relatedness between mothering and teaching and bringing the school to the home.

> Maria - During that time I used to invite certain students home. I used to really like their company. Because I spent so much time with my own children at home before I went back to teach. I was so frustrated that I could work with my mind that I went from one extreme to another and I brought students home. And my children were jealous- they felt that I loved my students more than I loved them.
>
> Joanne - I am very much influenced by my mother who is also a teacher. Her career was long from 16 to 61. She always taught... what a long career. She influenced me a lot because she took teaching seriously and liked to bring

> school home. She used to worry about her students even when at home; she used to phone them up, go and see them in hospital, be part of their lives. She used to bring students home as well; giving lessons in the kitchen.
>
> Doris - And when I used to come home it was as if I brought school home and I discussed things with my family and talked about my pupils even with my children.

Breaking down the barriers between home and school gives these women more space to manoeuvre the power networks that shape their selves. This way of infusing the public with the private gives them more space to construct their maternal selves differently. Many other participants share Martina's views presented earlier, that being a teacher makes you a better mother but others, especially those that are mothers, also believe that being a mother makes you a better teacher. The mothering experience for them, is their asset that contributes greatly to the teaching profession and to the making of themselves teachers.

Some researchers have argued that the relationship between mothering and teaching has presented women teachers as unskilled and unprofessional (Katz 1980). But these women, and not only those who have children of their own, resist this discourse by taking mothering as a way of marking their own teaching styles and an inspiration to the development of their philosophies of education. I consider this as one of the key and particular resistive strategies adopted by these women teachers for the social symbolisation of their own selves and shall discuss this theme fully in Chapter Seven. Their philosophies of education are, as expected, intimately attached to the caring aspects of their work. But before actually dealing with the symbolisation of the maternal through the presentation of their own knowledge, it is important to explore their ethics of caring and how this is intimately related to the creation of their own selves.

CHAPTER SIX

CARING FOR THE SELF

Caring is synonymous with mothering. As women are conventionally considered to be maternal beings it is assumed that caring for others comes naturally to them. Being caring therefore is one "essential" characteristic of feminine and maternal selves, the acceptable way to behave as woman and mother. As some feminists argue (Nicholson, Stack, Kerber in Larrabee 1993), highlighting associations between women, caring and mothering reproduce socially imposed limits on women's subjectivities. However as I argued earlier on, not speaking about what is conventionally and traditionally associated with women and in this case mothering and caring, is not an effective strategy to resist these associations. It is quite difficult for women to negate essentialized fragments of their selves and many continue to wish to mother even though they are aware of the difficulties that mothering brings into their lives. Many of the women in this study including myself, realise that their mothering selves are socially constructed. Yet this does not automatically and easily make us abandon that which has become an integral part of ourselves and that through which our social relations are maintained. Within such a context, strategic subversions of mothering and caring activities can be ways in which women represent themselves differently.

In Chapter One and Three I have explained in detail why and how the associations between caring, mothering and femininity work and in the interests of whom. There is also the risk of women becoming essentialised if they stick to the usual association of their feminine selves with caring. This is a similar situation to that which Irigaray finds herself in when she argues for the recognition of sexual difference as I

explained in Chapter Two. However as I explained in that chapter, the representation of sexual difference need not share the essentialising features of phallocratic discourses especially if the representations of woman challenge the limitations and rigidity to which woman is bound. It makes sense therefore that when representing women it is not sufficient to merely highlight that which has been socially imposed on them. Even though these characteristics have become their very own; being stuck in typical traditional caring roles does not mobilise phallocratic discourses. Mimetic strategies, as proposed by Irigaray are more likely to go beyond phallocratic designations of women; they do not only copy but exceed them at the same time.

In the previous chapter I have shown how women participants' rethinking of the maternal can be considered as having strategic potential. I have given examples of how these women attempt to work within the notions of maternal caring so that they distinguish themselves socially as caring subjects and at the same time rework these social expectations of the maternal.

This chapter maintains this subversive tone. It aims to explore in more detail women's ways of subverting social expectations of caring that close down possibilities for them to create themselves differently. I argue that they do not renounce caring responsibilities, just as they do not move away from maternal associations. The ways they practise caring are part of their being; of being sexually different. They are, to borrow a Foucauldian term, practices of the self which consist of ways they construct themselves in relation to the world around them. These practices, as Foucault himself explains and as I have shown in Chapter Three, can be the products of coercive subjectivisation. In this chapter however I intend to focus on practices of caring which are also practices that renew the self. Rather than dutifully

following social rules, these are practices which individuals construct for themselves. These practices are not free from the influences of subjectifying discourses but they show how women find the time and space to recreate these caring practices and therefore their own selves in different ways.

In this way, the practices of caring discussed in this chapter symbolise these women teachers as subjects that are able to renew themselves by using the power available to them through their social positionings as women, teachers and mothers. The very same practices of caring engaged in and explained by some of the women participants are envisaged as practices of the self that entail a reworking of that which contributes to their social make up. This reworking in turn is itself considered a practice of caring. The subversive potential of these caring practices are also taken as sources of social symbolisation that further contribute to these women's subjective becomings. Here I shall focus on how women struggle with time to make space of their own, how they seek to enhance relationships, particularly those between mother and daughter and how they seek to develop themselves through various practices which I consider to be practices of the care of the self.

An Alternative Ethics of Care

Foucault's later works on the ethics of the self, is concerned with the ethical conduct of individuals and acceptable ways of behaving socially. But rather than dealing with qualities and actions exercised by individuals according to absolute moral truths established by institutions, he concentrates on Greek and Roman practices of the self that individuals take up to transform themselves. Foucault calls these practices, practices of freedom as they conceptualise and represent individuals as being able to free themselves from the constraints of social and governmental discourses. His

philosophy does away with the belief in large scale narratives and universal notions of reason and autonomy and gives examples of ethical practices of the self, in which the individual constructs herself through a critical interrogation of that which has been rendered universal and his relation to it. Lois McNay (1992) explains that Foucault's understanding of the individual's practices of self government describes them as actively engaged with discourse and power networks. It also presents "the individual's ability to resist power through the very techniques by which he or she is governed" (Mc Nay 1992:68).

According to Lois McNay such a philosophy can be useful to feminists who wish to address the way women exercise their freedom within networks of power. Since the main aim of this thesis is to symbolise women as continually changing subjects, such perspectives provide a good framework for an analysis of how women in this study practise caring for example. Social discourses that establish what caring is or what is the right way to care are extremely powerful in that they work around the very actions through which women are considered feminine. But practices of caring by women, which do not automatically follow the established understanding and ways of caring, can be recognised as practices of the self. Practices by which individuals make themselves subjects in different ways. Foucault explains that his work is concerned with finding out how the subject constitutes himself in this manner

> I am interested, in fact, in the way in which the subject constitutes himself in an active fashion, by practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group. (Foucault 1984d:11)

Such a framework does not only provide a background for an analysis of women's techniques of the self but also the way such techniques are employed by different women and also by the same women at different times of their lives. It coincides

with one of the main aims of this thesis: to symbolise women as mothers and teachers, as active beings who engage with their social context to make themselves subjects.

In Chapter one I referred to Jean Grimshaw's (1993) criticism of Foucault's practices of the self which are predominately man made and masculine. Some of the practices engaged in by the women participants and described in this chapter can also be considered as male practices of the self. But women have been able to work upon them and make them their own. Denise's spiritual quests, as I shall explain in a later section, for example are an adaptation of a Jesuit practice of reflecting on one's deeds throughout the day. Furthermore what is particular to many of these women's practices is the fact that they are also related to caring for others, something which is conventionally associated with the feminine self. However the way women conceptualise "caring", as I shall observe in the following sections, goes beyond the forgetting and losing of one's own self. Caring for others is so intimately related to caring for oneself that I consider them as practices of the self. Several participants for example, see caring for others through mothering and teaching acts as ways of caring for their own selves.

Therefore, these practices are the practices of individual women who chose to relate to particular others in a caring way. This understanding of practices of caring for others as practices of caring of the self, goes beyond the binaries that distinguish caring and relatedness from that which pertains to the autonomous. It also goes beyond the notion of caring as total giving, the total sacrifice demanded by conventional assumptions of feminine caring for others. Moreover such perceptions go beyond the conventional binaries of the mother/teacher as the carer and the child

as the cared for. Although practices of caring are to be symbolised and given social value, one cannot simply give importance to such practices without challenging the conceptual framework within which caring is understood.

The following sections of this chapter aim to do this. They are mostly concerned with how women construct their own selves in relation to caring. They focus on ethical practices that exceed social expectations of caring and yet, do not abandon caring activities completely. I believe that an understanding of caring that focuses on the caregiver or as Wanda Boyer (2000) puts it that takes "care for the caregiver" is an interesting point of departure that frees women from obligations of self renunciation. Sometimes the contrast between the one-caring and the one cared for (Noddings 1984) has to be strategically blurred for women to deliberately practise freedom. This is an example of an ethical practice which is intimately linked with the processes of freeing oneself, taking care of oneself and consequently making oneself sometimes even as a work of art, as Foucault sees it.

I think that these ethical practices, especially because they are concerned with an alternative social formation of oneself, can also be considered as modes of socially symbolising women in ways that go beyond conventional femininity. The practice of social symbolisation itself, as Irigaray conceives it, in turn is conducive to an alternative ethics, an ethics of sexual difference. Ethics or ethical practices have either been conceived in neutral, asexual terms or in ways that denigrate women as non-social subjects. This is particularly so because, as Jean Grimshaw (1986) explains female ethics have been especially related to caring and mothering activities and women's confinement to the home. This sexual division of labour has greatly effected the lives of women and as Grimshaw (1986:224) suggests one needs to

analyse the ways certain notions of caring can be used to further oppress women. It is therefore important to re-conceptualise caring in a way that women's practices of caring are not the cause of their subordination.

In this chapter I shall deal with the ways in which some of the women participants care and consider them as subversive symbolisation of acts of caring. I especially focus on their emphasis on the care of their own selves and take it as one of the most important ideas that can help in transforming the idea of caring. Caring ceases to be something done to others but an activity done in relation to others, involving also caring for one's own self. I shall mention caring practices that involve the formation of relationships between women but I also recognise that teaching can also form particular bonds between women. Being teachers, they can inspire others the care of the self of individual others, particularly their students, to engage in practices of the care of the self. This is another aspect that relates to Foucault's care of the self; in that the making of the self generally takes place in the presence of a spiritual guidance. In this sense teachers can be important "models" for the re-generation and self-creation of others as well as sources for re-generating relationships between women which Irigaray considers important also for the self formation of women.

The notions of caring that will be discussed here are not intended to fix women into rigid patterns of caring. The women's practices of caring described are not be taken as a blueprint for future actions by women. The subversion of caring that the women participants in this research and I choose to present here is not intended to become a rule for others either. It is a mode of representing caring in different ways so that other women and readers might be able to relate to it and rethink their own caring practices and caring selves.

The Obligation to Care

As I mentioned above, caring is considered to come naturally to women. It is even sometimes experienced as a natural need to take care of others. Different women participants resist the natural dimensions associated with their caring in various ways.

Antoinette adopts the strategy of presenting the care she gave her children as something that she chose to do; something through which she could assert herself. She describes it as a practice that gave her the freedom to organise her life and manage her home in her own way.

> Antoinette - I chose to care for my children until they were old enough to take care of themselves. I could have gone back to work and other people that I met told me that I should have; I had spent so many years studying. But it was my decision and I wanted to do what I wanted and what suited me. When I then decided that it was better for me to go back to school then that is what I did.

Ben on the other hand refuses to identify herself exclusively through caring. She chooses to become a mother and care for her children but not at the expense of losing herself completely in such tasks. She struggles to have a life that she can call her own.

> Ben - They tell you that when you have a baby your life changes completely ... I used to go against that idea. Your life does change. You care very much for him or her. But I never accepted it completely and never will hopefully. It is not possible that you have nothing else left in your life... No!

Denise subverts the talk about women's natural urge to care by presenting her ways of caring and relating to others as an obligation. The fact that she speaks of caring for her family as an obligation continues to accentuate her subversive intent to denaturalise her caring practices.

> Denise- Now I am finding that relationship time is duty time. I go to school so the fact that I come home, I prepare a meal and then spend some time playing with Rebecca; and after that speak to Joseph to see why he is sad- to me these are all a list of chores.

I don't like feeling this way but it is true.

This mode of reasoning does not show Denise abandoning her caring role. She can consider herself within the social norm. As a mother she fulfils the obligations that engender her. She remarks that mothering has made her feel more feminine because she has to take care of Tina who is dependent on her. Her playing with the social rules that make her care by exposing them as such, that is as social rules, emphasises her constructed self and at the same time it hints at the possibility of constructing herself differently if she liked. One may argue that it is difficult for a mother not to present herself as caring as the people around her expect her to be. Yet Denise's presentation of herself as a person obliged to care is just as socially risky.

Her subversive intentions here become clearer when she explains that she is not in favour of women's abdication of caring. During our conversation I expressed my discomfort at being aware that I am socialised into a caring role and that this is networked into a power game that devalues me and takes me for granted. However she insists that "the solution is not that we become uncaring." She points out that generally " weaker others" such as the sick or children end up being neglected.

> Denise - I cannot argue that because I am or can be exploited I stop caring for others. I have to take care of myself but not at the expense of others who generally are weaker than myself.

This is a clear example of how the subversion of conventional social caring can take place from within a position of caring. In this case, the context within which caring practices take place is questioned and criticised and caring is denaturalised, so that taking up caring as a way of socially symbolising oneself can also be a way of constructing oneself differently.

The Other Side of Caring

Denise's understanding of caring shows that women can distinguish themselves by their caring for others without essentialising themselves into patriarchal expectations of caring. Such talk about practices of caring has subversive potential that challenges grand narratives that establish universal blueprints of caring by women. Social discourses oblige women to sacrifice themselves in dedication to their children. Teachers sometimes share the same fate as Emmanuela Azzopardi who was thought of as a woman who spent her whole life focused around the needs of the children she was made responsible for. As Carolyn Steedman (1985) remarks, one doesn't need to have children to be a mother. The teaching job demands a similar renunciation of the self and this limits processes of becoming woman and teacher. As I will explain later, with reference to Irigaray, it is the maternal attributes that reinforce processes that desubjectivise her.

Other women participants, like Denise, challenge assumptions about caring. They do not only question the natural associations with caring but they also re-conceptualise caring as a way in which they can make themselves subjects. Here the relations with others are seen as symbiotic relations. They do not only care for others for the sake of helping others to develop but to benefit their own selves. They "use" others and draw on others' selves to make their own selves. Women's construction of themselves cannot be solely bound to taking care of the development of the selves of others.

Noddings (1984) in her book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* takes up a similar position when she argues that the discussion on caring has to go beyond thinking on "the actualisation of the other". She explains that her outlook of caring takes note of " what goes on in the one caring" and her aim is to

study caring in depth, which means that she "looks beyond observable action to acts of commitment, those acts that are seen only by the individual subject performing them" (Noddings 1984:10). She is therefore concerned with problems of "entrusting care, monitoring caretaking and assigning it" (Noddings 1984:12). She conceives caring as relational ethics: the interaction between the person who cares, the mother and/or teacher and the person who is cared for, the child and/or student who responds to the caring. However it seems to me that within Noddings' frame of thought, the person who is identified as the one caring remains within the fixed position of the person taking care of others. Nel Noddings gives examples of situations where the one caring becomes the one cared for and vice versa. Yet when she mentions these instances she gives indications that this should not be the case or that she disapproves especially because these situations are related to harm done to the person who is supposed to be cared for. For example, she considers the need of caring by the one who is supposed to care as a dangerous situation for the cared for as the former might become resentful (Noddings 1984:48). There is even the possibility that the one who is supposed to be cared for is obliged to act as the cared for when in reality he is doing without the caring from the one caring. Noddings (1984:74) also reflects on the reciprocity of the caring relation when she points out that the cared for shapes the caring done by the one caring. Nevertheless the caring done is always unidirectional in that caring is primarily directed to others and never towards one self.

Some of the women in this research go beyond Noddings' concepts of caring in that they see caring for others as a source of caring for oneself. Tanya, for example, explains how she uses her caring relationship with others to create herself. She explains that her students do see her as a caregiver and their mother. They expect her to give them what they need, so in this sense the giving is directed to one side: that of

the students. This giving, although considered to be unidirectional, gives a lot of satisfaction to the one caring as Tanya and other participants readily point out. They also confess to doing it out of their own need to get this satisfaction.

> Sister Kalcidonia - I feel satisfied because I say to myself I didn't strive and work for nothing. The children learned a lot. And their parents thank me for it as well. They know it is hard work, so they thank me.
>
> Doris - I like it because I feel I am valued and respected they come up to me after so many years and they say "Hi Miss, do you remember me?" I feel good that they do and that I sort of had an impact on their lives…
> Even parents come to say thank you. One mother thanked me for believing that her child could make it. I explained that her child needed to get out of her shell and express herself. So I felt glad that I did something for her.
>
> Nancy- I met a young girl who was a student of mine and she told me " Because of you I have a well paid job. I owe you so much."

As teachers they get gratification from parents who are thankful for the way they care about their children's educational progress and development of self. They also yearn for social recognition and status and they resign from their caring jobs if they feel they are not socially appreciated.

> Reneè - I decided to work as a part-time teacher. But I felt so degraded; I was a qualified teacher and I was considered as unqualified; even my work conditions were poor so I didn't even stay a month; I left and looked for a job that had nothing to do with teaching.

Sometimes they think of their caring practices as ensuring their popularity and social recognition which in turn, consolidate the making of their own selves as important persons within the community. They strive to build themselves as exemplary models both for their pupils and their parents. They aim to better the lives of others but in doing so they continuously reassess and invent themselves to guide others.

Maternal relations are also interpreted differently from the relations between the one caring and the cared for, by these women. They see mothering as a way of caring for themselves and sometimes even imagine themselves differently as Tanya explains

> Tanya - I would like to have children and care for them. Being a mother I sum it up in one word: sharing. And sharing experiences. That is what I want. Sometimes it is an egoistic drive. Through the child I want to live the experiences which I didn't have.
>
> Simone - So what exactly is the egoistic bit?
>
> Tanya - I don't like to do it. But I want to construct that person as my own. Making choices for him or her. Because you are making him or her through the decisions you make for him or her all the time.... I am also constructing them on my experiences.

Tanya continues to challenge Noddings' dichotomy of the cared for and the one caring in other ways. Tanya expresses her relationships with her students as a kind of love relationship that goes beyond the mother-daughter love; one that even borders on an erotic relationship. This can also be considered as a subversion of conventional notions of caring and I will return to this point in Chapter Seven where I discuss women's thinking of pedagogical relations as a way of symbolising the maternal. Here I would like to focus on her comments that are directly related to the way she constructs herself through her interaction with others. In fact, during our conversation she states:

> Tanya - I live through people. I live through my relationship with them continuously. It is like having an umbilical cord - to metaphorise and the things you consider important for your own being you take them from another person.
>
> Simone - Yes even the research process I see it as built in this way.... I think that I mother it but actually the other participants sustain it as much as I do...
>
> Tanya - Yes, that's it - it is a process; that certain people attract us. We feel we have to discover them, others we get to know up to a certain level. We are continuously selecting criteria. There are people that you care for whom you need as models. You take the risk of becoming their photocopy.... I had my favourite teachers but they also had their favourite pet students. So it is a two way process. My favourite teacher and my pet student. It is a process by which we make ourselves.

In other words, Tanya conceives herself and other women as subjects who establish caring relationships with others. But they do so not only out of their natural, altruistic need to care nor because of their social conditioning of their conscience that obliges

them to devote their time and energy to others. They care to make their own selves and take care of their own selves.

Caring for Their Selves

Earlier on I referred to Foucault's understanding of what constitutes a practice of the self and argued that women's practices of caring can be also envisaged as ethical practices by which they care and make themselves subjects. This practice is "an exercise of the self on the self, by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain to a certain mode of being" (Foucault 1996a:433). It is a particular way of practising freedom, a form of cultivation of the self and as Foucault describes it, "an art of existence" (Foucault 1990b.44). Foucault (1988) also refers to the practices of the self as technologies of the self and, as he explains, the creation of the self is not entirely free from other types of technologies, which he identifies as technologies of production, technologies of sign systems and technologies of power.

> As a context there are four major types of these "technologies" each a matrix of practical reason: (1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts and conduct, and a way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection , or immortality. (Foucault 1988:18)

The ways through which women participants play with socially accepted notions of caring are involved in all the types of technologies that Foucault describes above. Women are subjected to technologies of power that regulate their mothering and teaching. However they are able to use this power to change situations, to transform the meanings of things and actions and symbolise their own selves in different ways to create themselves differently. As I explained in the previous section, some of the

women participants have extended the meaning of caring in their lives to include caring for themselves and interactions with others that enrich the process of self-formation. Martina, Ben and Nancy attempt to break down the barriers between caring for the self and caring for others when they argue that one cannot take care of others without taking care of oneself.

> Martina - It is so important to take care of oneself. Otherwise how can you take of others who need you?
>
> Ben - I am making time. If I need to have a body massage, I go. If I need to go to the hairdresser's, I go. Because if then if you don't take care of yourself you end up not being able to take care of others. You have to take care of that.
>
> Nancy- It is important to find time for oneself. You have to organise your time and then I don't really give much importance to housework. I need to rest and take care of myself also because I have think of others around me as well.

Taking care of oneself as a requisite for the proper care of others is a strategic subversive practice that goes against the Christian moral that one has to forget one self for the sake of others. The women speaking above adhere to the belief that there is no greater love than that of the person who gives him/herself totally to others. They seek to dedicate themselves to others and sometimes hold the Christian demands for the renunciation of the self. Foucault, in his brief account of the genealogy of the care of the self explains how this practice, was condemned by Christianity:

> caring for the self was, at a certain moment, gladly denounced as being a kind of self love, a kind of egoism or individual interest in contradiction to the care one must show others or to the necessary sacrifice of the self. (Foucault 1984d: 4-5)

These women adhere to the Christian value of taking care of others yet they do it in a subtle subversive way. Theirs is a mimetic practice because they do not dismiss the principle but reformulate it in a way that includes the importance of caring for themselves. In other words, such practice is complexly subversive in that it includes the care of their selves as an essential part of the regulation that obliges them to care

for others in the maximum way possible. As I mentioned previously, Foucault considers an ethical practice as an endeavour towards autonomy. He explains that from Antiquity to Christianity there has been a move towards the subordination of the individual's moral conduct to an externally contrived set of principles. However these women's autonomy is not simply expressed by their refusal. One cannot state that they do not follow them, yet at the same time they do not strictly conform to these principles. They interpret them so that they are more relevant to their lives and the ways they wish to construct their selves. Foucault explains that

> these practices are nevertheless not something the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group. (Foucault 1984d:11)

This idea runs parallel to that of Irigaray when she talks about women's quest for subjectivity and the making of her own self. She states that woman cannot distance herself much from the cultural context that shapes her so that the creation of herself outside patriarchal discourse is very difficult:

> If my woman's nature was considered as living matter at the service of the other's desire and of reproduction, I could not experience it as " for me" and assume its becoming spiritual through dialectic of "me" and assume its becoming spiritual through a dialectic of in-self and for-self...[...]
> But I belong to a cultural tradition. My relation to the world to others and to myself is shaped by it. I had to, I still have to, effect a gesture that is at least double: deconstruct the basic elements of the culture which alienate me and discover the symbolic norms which can at the same time preserve the singularity of my nature and allow me to elaborate its culture. (Irigaray 2000a:148)

Aesthetic Caring

Self-creation therefore has to take place in relation to existing social and cultural norms. Yet the possibility of exceeding social expectations and generate different meanings of mothering and caring is an important aspect in the making oneself subject. Within a Foucauldian frame of thought this can be considered a search for a way of living, an aesthetic of existence (Foucault 1996b). Practices of the self are

techniques through which a person stylises her life in an artistic manner; taking care of oneself involves the recreation of oneself. It is a question of

> Knowing how to govern one's life in order to give it the beautiful form possible (in the eyes of others, of oneself, and of future generations for whom one could serve as an example)[....] the formation and development of a practice of self whose objective was to constitute oneself as the worker of the beauty of one's own life. (Foucault1996a:458)

However one can argue that the re-creation of oneself has its limits especially because it takes place within a conventional cultural context. This is not only a problem of persons not being able to free themselves completely from social and cultural traditions that have given them shape in the first place. To imagine themselves in a different manner they still have to keep in touch with others; taking care that they make sense to others if the desired effects of change in social meanings are to be reached. As Honi Fern Haber asks

> How radical can a work of art be and still be understood? Isn't it the case that the self doing the creating is already created, already a self not of the self's own making?

She continues to explain

> Self-creations have to be read, and those readings are filtered through the leveling effect of language, or the normalising effect of power. As soon as one acts, the act is no longer one own but is out there in the public realm, at the mercy of readings (and subject to misreadings) and available to power stratagems. (Fern Haber 1996:146)

This argument can be applied to Foucault's own ideas about the aesthetics of existence. The aesthetical caring that Foucault mentions in his later works is completely different, for example, from the aesthetical caring which is proposed by Noddings (1984). Noddings applies the term aesthetical caring, to caring about things and ideas and contrasts this with caring for people. She also speaks about her concern for substituting the ethical care for others by an extreme interest in the aesthetic in the sense that the person becomes more committed to an object or an idea than to persons. She points out though that the receptivity exercised in the

creative arts resembles that of an act of caring. But this is as far as her notion of aesthetical caring goes. According to her it is an individualistic enterprise which generally (as portrayed by her examples of people finding ideas and things more responsive than humans they should care for) (Noddings 1984: 22-23), takes place at the expense of, or in place of, caring for others.

Foucault on the other hand, considers the aesthetic care of the self as a social practice that cannot be exercised in solitude. It is "a true social practice" (Foucault 1990b:51). Foucault explains that the aesthetic experience of caring for oneself is formed through a relation with knowledge, a collection of rules and a mode of relation between the individual and himself. Foucault's aesthetic formation of oneself may lend itself to an emancipatory endeavour of self and social transformation of women's actions. Individual women may actively challenge social obligations to care. Still the idea of stylising oneself as a work of art is frequently perceived as an elitist practice which may not be relevant to every body. In this sense the critique of Foucault's aesthetic stylisation of the self is similar to criticisms of écriture féminine that also aesthetise problems concerning women which may be distant from the real life experiences of women (McNay 1992:180). In Chapter Two, I remarked that Irigaray's re-symbolisations of the feminine may not be directly related to the particular social circumstances lived by different women. It is therefore more effective to present examples of women's concrete ways of caring for the self. Symbolising women participants through their very own practices of the self can bridge the distances between women that elitist aesthetic forms tend to create. They also make it easier for women readers to identify with representations of practices that these women have invented for themselves.

I have already given examples of the way women participants rethink conventional conceptions of caring including the caring of their own selves. Their speech takes on emancipatory endeavours to change the way caring is conceived and how this shapes the way they are perceived and constructed as maternal and teaching subjects. The descriptions of their modes of caring for themselves in the following sections are also politically intended to be sources for initiating relations and conversations between women. But before discussing how these women care for themselves and how this caring enhances their relations with other women it is perhaps important to dwell a little bit on the problems that arise in women's practice of the care for the self.

Time of One's Own

When discussing the cultivation of the self, Foucault points out that time and its organisation is one of the "big problems" in cultivating the self. The problem is that exercises in cultivating oneself take time and one has to decide how and when they are practised (Foucault 1990b:50). The question of time is highly relevant for women's practice of the care of the self since women struggle to make time for themselves is also determined by the time required by others. Many of the women participants, especially those who take up maternal roles in caring for other people, children, colleagues, members of the family comment on how it is easy for them to forget to take care of herself because other people take priority. Their maternal qualities are once again related to losing their selves, especially due to not having the time to think about the enrichment of their own lives:

> Doris - First you think of your child, then your husband and then maybe you have the time to think of yourself.
>
> Antoinette - You tend to forget that you exist as you become so preoccupied with others. I would have liked to do something different besides taking care of them all. Something which I feel I have given time for myself.

Irigaray similarly describes how the woman annihilates herself into the exclusive caring of others:

> She would have to give up her sensibility, the singularity of her desire, in order to enter into the immediately universal of her family duty. Woman would be wife and mother without desire. Pure obligation dissociates her from her affect. (Irigaray1993a:117)

The maternal attribute to woman, continues Irigaray, condemns her to the task of reproduction. She is a maternal machine designed to have babies, populate the home, but also keep it clean and supplied with food (Irigaray 1984:146). She is also seen as "useful for reproducing the infrastructure of the social order" (Irigaray 1993a:126) so that she is not allowed to speak as a social subject. The woman exists therefore "for the other".... She "does not have an affect of her own but one that is for the other and in exile from her for her self" (Irigaray 1993:146).

In a social context that allows women no "access to mind, or consciousness of self and for self. Offering them only death and violence as their part" (Irigaray 1993a:126), women are not considered to be ethical beings. They have no time or space for ethical practices just as women according to Greek ethics were only regarded as objects and therefore not ethical subjects (Foucault 1990b:22). However, women can become subjects if they transform the vision they have of themselves especially that which is exclusively tied to caring for others. Foucault would agree with Irigaray that "this change in perspective is precisely, a matter of ethics" (Irigaray 1993a:117). An ethics of sexual difference would come about if the biased ethical imperative that objectifies women as reproducing objects is changed.

The subversive articulations of the notion of caring, by the women participants in this study, constitute a challenge and can contribute to an alteration of patriarchal ethics that condemns women to the care of others. The idea of caring for oneself is

useful in deconstructing the expectation of the mother and the teacher especially that which reduces her to the exclusive care of others and the consequential loss of self and total sacrifice. These women have transformed the obligation to renounce themselves into practices of care for themselves and making themselves. They make different uses of time in different contexts. They also conceptualise it in strategic ways so as to forge their own modes of resisting time impositions. In Chapter Seven I shall talk about women's talk of time in the classroom and at school and how their critique of the regimental and disciplinary use of time becomes the mark of their pedagogical thinking. In this chapter I am concerned with their "personal" use of time "outside the school" even though the practices of the self performed during this time contribute to their ethos; their lifestyles as women teachers and/or mothers.

Most of these women's use of time is presented as carefully planned so as to be the different persons they are required to be and if possible leave some time for the further cultivation of their selves.

> Martina - I have to really think ahead. I plan because I have to find time for myself. Sometimes I realise how much time I need to take care of myself; sometimes I even find it difficult to find time to wash my hair and take care of myself in that way.
> This is the proper time for myself. The time I plan to study is different. I have to plan because others depend on me.
>
> Reneé - You need to use your time in a more structured way- you have a certain amount of time and you have to use that time in an efficient and useful way. Try to get as much as possible from that time. Even with your children... you can spend the whole day with them and not speak to them. So when you set a few hours to be with them and talk to them. Still, having time of one's own is difficult.

They insist on the difficulty of finding such time, yet they realise how this affects their life and their connections with others. The women's comments above parallel Irigaray's insistence on the necessities of organising their time to be able to have time of their own.

> Ethically we have to give ourselves time. Without forgetting to plan. Giving ourselves time to plan on abjuring our deadly polemics so that we have time for living and living together. (Irigaray 1993a:120)

That these women are very much concerned with time and its organisation was particularly evident when I came to negotiate time with them for the conversations, as part of this research process. Ironically my success in gaining access to these women's ways of dealing with the time factor needed some negotiations of time. In setting the date and time for our encounters I had to be flexible enough to accommodate their time consuming responsibilities as mothers and teachers and also respect their time for their own person. Time was a significant aspect of the actual happening of the conversations themselves. Most of them chose to invite me to their homes so as to keep up with their own chores; watch over supper cooking, minding their own children fit in our conversations between other social activities, or even during a lunch breaks.

As I mentioned above these women's relation with time is not a simple and straightforward one. The way they live and conceive it depends upon the circumstances and contexts they are in so that their subjectivities are networked in relation to it. Time is an essential part of their creations and transformations. This points to the subjective dimension of time. The times in their diaries indicate a linear progression of time yet how they order it is very much part of the making of their own subjects. Women organise time as much as they are organised by it; the way they create time of their own constitutes their own temporal subjectivities.

Time therefore is not experienced in a universal and transcendental way; "it is a historical and discursive construct" (Mahon 1992:73) or as Elizabeth Grosz points out, time "is not a neutral medium which in matter and life are framed" but "a

dynamic force in their framing" (Grosz 1999:3). The linear conception of time is a historical construct that shows the attempt of human beings to come to terms with their selves, to order lives in relation to others. This in itself is a practice of the self. It is the subjects' relation to fleeting time that can open up their conceptualisation of the modern, rational, immovable and unchangeable solid subjects. The instability of time helps them imagine unstable subjects that can take different and contrasting positions. It opens up possibilities of making themselves differently through time.

Autonomous Practices

The subjective dimension of time can therefore be a mark of the women participants' autonomy and their agency. When these women make time for themselves, they do not only exercise their autonomy because they plan and organise time according to their needs and desires. They also engage in a number of practices, which are themselves geared towards the making of their autonomous active selves. The practice of autonomy, as Tanya believes, involves the person's readiness to change.

> Tanya - You have to prepare yourself to adapt and change yourself in close relation with your living context. For me it is a continuous metamorphosis. It doesn't stop. I can even say that you go on changing even when you die. But life is change, transformation- you have to be able to transform and adapt all the time.
> Simone, I believe so much in change that if it doesn't happen I make it happen. …I make it happen by trying out different things, By experimenting, by roping in other sources…This is also my secret in teaching- adaptation and change and I try to convey this message to my students. I had to adapt to and try to change a lot of circumstances in my life. And this is one good thing I see in myself.
> I try to ask different things of my students so as to instil in them the wish and the readiness to be innovative.

The activities mentioned by other women, are mostly ones from which they derive pleasure and/or relaxation. At the same time like Tanya, they are sources of change in their lives. Some of these women actively push themselves towards different forms of being than their usual maternal self-sacrificing self. This is not to say that

they are searching for an authentic feminine being that has been suppressed by patriarchal formulations of being mother. The practices of freedom as I explained above are products of women's own ways of engaging with their cultural contexts and the discourses that shape them as mothers.

Earlier on I argued that women encounter a lot of problems in exercising their freedom. I have referred to their related problems of lack of time but there other issues regarding the ways they exercise their freedom and what practices of autonomy they engage in, that need to be raised here. These questions again revolve around issues of social symbolisation particularly the predominant symbolisation of an autonomous self as a rigidly male-defined and self-contained entity. If these notions of the autonomous self are taken up from a culture that, as Irigaray remarks, is a culture made up of masculine symbolics are these women simply taking up practices of autonomy that are generally practised by men? Does adopting these existing practices of freedom constitute acts of freedom? This is an important issue that reminds one of the problems of merely taking up the practices of freedom suggested by Foucault in his later work. I have referred to Jean Grimshaw's objections to Foucauldian practices of freedom in Chapter One. There is yet another important question that Jean Grimshaw asks regarding the practices of freedom proposed by Foucault; that is when and how these practices are considered to be liberating and when not? To exemplify her argument she refers to the female body builder whose image transgresses the conventional feminine self. Her practice of making herself differently is as I explained above not entirely free from cultural practices but as Jean Grimshaw observes there certainly are significant gender differences in such practices (Grimshaw 1993:67). The question of how practices of

the self are a mark of sexual difference is particularly relevant in discussing the practices engaged by the women participants in this study, as I shall explain below.

Foucault describes a number of practices of the self but as he points out they are all exclusive to free men. Foucault for example refers to Seneca's insistence on taking care of one's own body and soul by making oneself "vacant for himself" (Foucault 1990b:46); he refers to practising introspection for the knowledge of oneself (Foucault 1990b:58,61) and the spiritual care of the soul especially through the guidance of a teacher or master. Then there is the emphasis on the care of the body through physical exercise and medical attention; and to the need of conversations with friends as well as educating oneself (Foucault 1990b:55-56).

The practices of the self, mentioned by the women participants in this study are also various. They refer to practices that focus on altering the body and its appearance; practices of introspection aimed at bettering oneself and one's relation to others; arrangements that seek the company and conversation with others, sometimes also seeking the inspiration of a model person and practices of writing, even poems. In the final sections of this chapter I shall describe and discuss these practices in more depth. However my brief account points to the similarity between some of the practices exercised by these women and those that Foucault mentions with reference to the ancient Greeks. The difference is that Foucault was more intrigued with the genealogy of the subject; which is assumed to be a male subject and here I am concerned with the genealogy of the feminine subject and how the process of making oneself different can vary from that practised by males.

Again the same problem arises out of the observed similarities between these practices. If the practices of these women teachers are so similar to the male practices of the self and particularly those discussed in the *Care of the Self* (Foucault1990b), it might be argued that women's ethic of caring for oneself is still fixed within a patriarchal ethics. It can be easily concluded that these women tend to follow masculine ethics in their becoming autonomous.

Irigaray's work is particularly enlightening as to the way male practices of the self are different from those that constitute a feminine self. Irigaray's position is clear enough from her writings as to the patriarchal production of the knowledge that takes place through a parasitic relation with the maternal subject. I have referred to Plato's parable of the cave and Irigaray's deconstruction of the parable to explain in detail how and why this occurs. Here Grosz's explanation of the production of the male world and the male self summarises the problematic:

> The production of a (male) world - the construction of an "artificial" or cultural environment, the production of an intelligible universe, religion, philosophy, the creation of true knowledges and valid practices of and in that universe- is implicated in the systematic and violent erasure of the contributions of women, femininity, and the maternal. This erasure is the foundation or ground on which a thoroughly masculine universe is built. (Grosz 1995:121)

The problem therefore is that men build their own identity at the expense of that of women. This understanding of a male ethical practice of freedom of the self, which takes place without taking account of the presence of the other is similarly conveyed by Foucault when he describes Greek sexual ethics in *The Use of Pleasure:*

> The Greek ethics of pleasure is linked to a virile society, to dissymmetry, exclusion of the other, an obsession with penetration, and a kind of threat of being dispossessed of your own energy and so on. (Foucault 1983b:233)

Foucault asks "Are we able to have an ethics of acts and their pleasures which would be able to take account of the pleasure of the other?" (Foucault 1983b:233).

Relational Identities

Irigaray shows similar concern with how individual practices of the self can affect others and how they can be related to others. In an interview (Irigaray & Bungaro 1997) she talks about the importance of the cultivation of the self, of taking care of oneself in the process of becoming autonomous. Gaining autonomy is enlikened to the act of taking breath. In taking breath for the first time the person becomes autonomous because she is no longer dependent on her mother. This point seems to contradictorily point to cutting bonds with the mother. Yet this is different from disavowing the maternal. Irigaray herself insists on the separation of the mother from her daughter and considers this as the first step towards becoming women in women's own terms. She also speaks about the need for women to differentiate themselves from exclusively maternal functions because this prevents them from having proper relationships with each other as differentiated persons. The autonomy acquired from differentiating themselves from the maternal is ambivalently directed towards establishing better relations between women. In this way the identities of women are relational, but not in the sense that they are entirely concerned with the needs of others. Their identities are relational and they show a concern with others but they are also concerned with the formation of oneself at the same time. Irigaray's understanding of a relational identity specifies a feminine ethical practice involving continuous change and involving the care of the self as well as the care of others and their relationships with them.

> Relational identity goes counter to this solipsistic, neuter, auto-logical ideal. It contests the cleavages, sensible/intelligible, concrete/abstract, matter/form, living/dead. It also refuses the opposition between being and becoming, and the fact that the plural of the one would be the multiple before being two. Relational identity considers the concrete identity, which is always identity in relation. As such it is always metastable becoming. What I try to think is the articulation between the constant transformation required by a living connection to nature and a return to self, which permits a being- and a remaining-self in the process of becoming. I find this place of articulation in the belonging of a gender and in the faithfulness to the fulfilment of this

> symbolic mediation between oneself and others, one's subjectivity and the world. (de Lauretis 1987:2)

According to this group it is not sufficient to have time and a room of one's own if one does not have meaningful feminine practices of the self to refer to. As the women of the collective maintain

> The room of one's own must be understood differently then, as a symbolic placement, a space-time furnished with female gendered references, where one goes for meaningful preparation before work and confirmation after. (Milan Women's Bookstore Collective 1990:26)

Women's genealogy is also enhanced by creating an environment where relationships between women are easily cultivated. The Collective terms such relationships "affidamento", entrustment when women are entrusted to the care of another. Such a relationship, as the women of the group themselves point out, may give an indication of the relationship between an adult and a child or that between a child and her mother. Such relationships imply a rigid demarcation between the one caring and the cared for, giving the impression that the women being cared for are totally dependent on the other who takes the role of the mother. The "affidamento" relationships established between adult women therefore share many of the problems of the mother-daughter relationship particularly those related to the fact that only one of the persons is involved in teaching the other the practices of the self. However according to the group that women can act as "models" for other women is an important strategic measure that compensates for the lack of women's social symbolisation of practices of the self. Women can be sources of strength and inspiration to one another

The discussions about practices of the self of the women participants in the coming sections have similar aims to the ones mentioned above. The descriptions are aimed at symbolising and making known practices of the self engaged in by these women. I

have chosen practices that involve women in relation to each other and in particular relations between mother and daughter. In this sense these practices are relational. But they are also relational in the sense that they are formed in relation to existing male ethical social practices. Although some of the women's practices have much in common with male practices of freedom as described by Foucault; they are conceived differently by the women participants themselves. In discussing them I shall acknowledge their relation to a patriarchal cultural context. However I will focus on the meaning women give to these practices and how they redefine them.

In particular, I borrow Irigaray's parallelism between the mother daughter relations and those between women to make the point that the practices of the self of Denise and Maria can serve to extend relations between women. The practices described here can serve as "models" of processes of becoming for other women. This does not mean that other women do not have their own practices of the self. The "modelling" in this case is seen as a way of communicating with others. I also consider these practices social symbolics rather than social blueprints for the practice of freedom.

Religious Practices and Spiritual Quests

One of the ways that women care for their own selves is through religious practices. Many Maltese women in particular are known to take up these practices as part of their every day lives as I pointed in Chapter One. Again many of the practices they engage in, like Denise's practice which I will discuss here, are ones that have been established by men for men; rituals that symbolise a particular religious order. However this does not mean that these religious practices are to be avoided and in fact Denise does not abandon them. She re-formulates them according to her own particular needs as woman, mother and teacher.

This revisiting of religious practices of life is something which Irigaray does and speaks about in relation to her book *The Breath of Women* (Irigaray & Bungaro 2000). She talks about the way she takes up many features of the life of Jesus and how she re-interprets them so that they become relevant to constructing herself in alliance and with respect for nature and living places. Although, as she remarks, Jesus' relation with God the father reinforces the patriarchal cult and especially the father-son genealogy, this does not mean that women should completely neglect existing religious traditions. One can establish one's particular spiritual quest by taking up practices and reinterpreting them to give form to one's life. Irigaray, for example, takes the teachings of Jesus as an inspiration to her work on differences and the communication between them. She also considers his ways of sharing of his own life similar to motherly acts of relating to others. As she explains "A woman practises quasi-unconsciously this sharing of one's own life, one's breath, one's felicity, for instance, during pregnancy and maternity" (Irigaray 2000:180).

Irigaray is very critical of existing religious practices. She observes that religion is another cultural tradition that deprives women from becoming subjects. This is especially so because God is always a "he" so that women's relationships with the divine are always thought of in relation to a masculine ideal. In an interview with Chiara Valentini, "Historical Perspectives" Irigaray explains that

> in our culture the masculine genealogical dimension monopolises the divine dimension. Patriarchy even erased the divinity of love between mothers and daughters, love whose traces we find in the couples Demeter - Kore and Anne-Mary, for example. (Irigaray 2000:65)

She states that women need to represent their relations in religious spheres as well as symbolising them in history and philosophy.

Many women teachers in this study talk about establishing relations with their daughters/ children whom they teach through religious practices and with reference to religious themes and/or images. It is fairly common for Maltese schools especially secondary girls' schools, to be dedicated to the Virgin Mary, who becomes an ideal model for girls. Sometimes the Virgin Mary is taken as a model of submission to the will of the Father and to patriarchal law. But many women teachers do try to subvert this model of subjugation. Nancy speaks, for example, of the importance she places on the image of the Madonna in the Annunciation scene. It is very clear that this image represents her total submission, but Nancy prefers to represent Mary with a book in her hands and focus on the fact that knowledge is an important quest in her life. As she tells her students Mary's saying 'yes' is not as submissive as interpretations of the bible represent it to be. It is an informed decision.

Other participants do speak of other instances where religious themes and scenes become sources for establishing relations between women. Sister Kalcidonia talks about how she includes images from the bible of relationships between women during her teaching. As she explains she uses images of Mary and Elizabeth to give her students a sense of the good relationships that can exist between women and between mothers and daughters. Sister Kalcidonia has particularly close relationships with the Catholic religion since she is an Agostinian nun. Her story of the way she chose this way of life includes accounts of how her practices of teaching and living in general have been inspired by the practices of the founders of the same religious order that she is part of. Her life story refers to two important role models, Saint Rita and Madre Maria Theresa Spinelli and how their ways and philosophies of life as educated women, mothers, teachers and nuns run parallel to her own.

> Sister Kalcidonia - I was always devoted to Saint Rita; that is why I joined this order; they refer to us as the sisters of Saint Rita in fact. I wanted to marry and

> have children I love children. Saint Rita had a child of her own before she became a nun.
>
> I became a nun though and I also chose this congregation of nuns because it is a congregation of teachers and the order has schools of its own. Our Founder Maria Theresa Spinelli in 1821 opened a school in Frasinone. She saw a lot of poor children who led a wretched life and decided to open a school to teach them and their parents. She rented a house and four other friends of her joined her to teach children. After some time even their parents started to attend the school. She was offered the chance to open the school as part of the Augustinian convent in Frosinone but other schools opened in different parts of Italy and also in Malta. Up to this day our order follows her teachings. I am particularly inspired by the fact that she never gave up in spite of her difficult and trouble life. I am also particularly impressed by her extraordinary love for the children she taught and the people in the community. As this book explains her philosophy of teaching focused on the teachers' capacity to love:
>
> > It (teaching) meant a unity of intentions through a reciprocal love. The school was their own field of work, to sow the good seed for the future world. To wait and to procrastinate meant betraying their own vacation and still more, deceiving future generations, a multitude of children. (Bea 1984:68)

Sister Kalcidonia's account gives an excellent example of the rare instances where the socially symbolised serves to establish feminine genealogies. Sister Kalcidonia does not only form her way of life on the rules of the religious order but makes them relevant to her own life through the thoughts and concrete practices of Maria Theresa Spinelli. This however does not mean that the practices of the founder did not conform to typical expectations of her as a woman at that time. She particularly adhered to the idea of total self-sacrifice which the Augustinian religious order is committed to up to this day. Yet Spinelli's way of life is subversive in that she managed to go beyond the mere expectations of woman to be only a mother and an obedient wife. She ventured outside the home and extended her philosophy of love into the community she lived in. Furthermore by having her practices of the self, her practices of teaching and her ways of relating to other women well known and symbolised she serves as a point of reference to women like Sister Kalcidonia.

Practices of the self that are related to religious practices as I stated above are inevitably practices which are predominately man made or have close relations with masculine religious orders as the schools of Maria Theresa Spinelli and the Augustinian sisters do. Denise's spiritual quest gives an example of how women work on these man made practices of the self to suit their own lives, needs and desires. Her practice of the way she cares for herself has close relations with religious practices of introspection as she explains but she sees it mainly as a practice of renewing her self. Moreover her practice of the self is similar to Foucault's description of Seneca's account of the self-examination that takes place at the end of the day. Foucault states that,

> Seneca means to "scrutinise" the entire day that has just unfolded (the verb excutere, "to shake out", "to knock so as to make the dust fall," is used to denote the scrutiny by which one locates the errors in an account); he intends to "inspect" it, to "re-measure" the acts that were committed, the words that were spoken (remetiri, as one might do after a piece of work is finished, to see if it is up to standards set for it). The subject's relation to himself in this examination is not established so much in the form of a judicial relationship in which the accused faces the judge; it is more like an act of inspection in which the inspector aims to evaluate apiece of work, an accomplished task. (Foucault 1990b:61)

Denise explains that she adopted this habit of introspecting her deeds at the end of the day from a Christian religious practice by St Ignatius. She is conscious that this kind of spirituality is practised by a male religious order, the Jesuits and is intended as a thank you prayer to God. But she considers it more as a psychological help that makes her keep aware of the positive aspects of life and work on her positive qualities

> Denise - The practice is a simple one. You thank god for those good things that happened to you during the day. It is so easy to forget the small but beautiful and important things; if you don't leave sometime to think about them; that you are healthy, that somebody offered you a lift, that you have been complimented. Things that if you don't give yourself the space and time to think about them they are lost. And thinking about small things in life can be very energising.

The next step in this introspective practice is thinking about the ways that God is part of one's life, which Denise interprets as thinking about the times when she made a good effort and how she made herself feel positive. So as she says

> Denise - This practice is not meant to put yourself down and torment yourself on the wrongs that you have done. It is just to be more accepting, I think that you see yourself as a human being. The attitude is not to be castigating but just to help yourself, not to become conceited. I find it a useful exercise and it helps me a lot.

This practice is aimed at engaging oneself in a process of making oneself better just as one thinks about something which she is producing and tries to make it all the more perfect. The modes and levels of perfection are themselves established by the cultural context but it is the individual herself that decides how to form her self. This practice does have aspects of a confessional practice aimed at self regulation. Yet I consider it more to be a practice of freedom because it is Denise herself who redefines the practice in her own way and also the things she chooses to think about and work on. She reformulates it so that it is not as judgmental as the religious practice of the Jesuits is and not as regulative and pertaining to a male virile society as Foucault's descriptions of the practices of the self are. Denise in fact uses this exercise as an opportunity to relate to her daughter and establish the time and space to communicate with her. She makes time to speak to her daughter so that their love is consolidated.

As Irigaray explains this love does not only pertain to mothers and daughters: "such a love is possible only among women who are able to talk to each other" (Irigaray 1993a:104). Irigaray also explains that women should not stick to fixed maternal and filial roles. Furthermore "women must love one another both as mothers, with maternal love and as daughters with filial love. *Both of them*" (Irigaray 1993a:105). Yet Denise's role here is clearly that of the mother and of a teacher, that passes on

practices of self regulation to her daughter even though she allows her daughter choose the aspects she wants to thinks about. She lets her daughter know of this practice and encourages her to do it so that she brings in new qualities and characteristics in her life. At the same time Denise insists that the aim of the exercise is not to instil guilt but " to get in touch with oneself", to work on oneself and develop in ways that she chooses. Denise also finds that the fact that they engage themselves in this practice together give them opportunities to get to know each other in a close way as well as learn from each others ways of caring for their selves.

Maria's Poetry - Becoming Woman "But Not Only"

Another practice of the self that is effectively related to social symbolisation and to creating links between women is that of writing. The woman writer who manages to get her work published in Malta is a rarity. Throughout the last decades only a few women writers of novels and poetry emerged, Maria one of the participants in this research being one of them. Maria considers her writing is a way of reinventing herself. I consider it as an extraordinary way by which women can be socially symbolised without being essentialised into fixed ways of being woman mother and teacher. Maria's poetry is also particularly relevant to this research because she directly talks about the mother daughter relation. Her work is also committed to symbolising it by referring to her personal relations with one of her daughters as well as including her daughter's drawings of the themes and images emerging from her writing.

However one may envisage problems in taking up a woman writer as an example of a practice of subjective becoming in an age when the author is considered to be dead. I already explored this theme in Chapter Four when I presented the research process

as being mothered. In that chapter I have explained that the notion of mothering practices of writing involves more than just writing the texts and regulating the ways they are read and interpreted in an authorial way. Furthermore, considering the lack of opportunities for Maltese women to symbolise themselves culturally, the notion of the death of the author only makes sense when the author has been alive. It is therefore politically strategic to take Maria's symbolisation of her self as the author of her literature as a model for further symbolisation of women at the cultural sphere. At the same time however Maria's way of symbolising her own self is open to the interpretations of her readers. In this sense she mothers her text as she creates it and allows space for other interpretations to take shape.

One has to mention again that proponents of the death of the author, such as Barthes, Derrida and Foucault argue that the author cannot be considered to be represented by her texts as there is no direct link between the author and the text. However ironically the very same notion of the death of the author does not impede them from being recognised as social subjects. The subjectivity of the authors mentioned here is ambivalently constructed through the notion of the death of the author. This point therefore demonstrates that it is the kind of subjectivity that the author proposes that makes the difference. It is clear from the conversations with Maria and from her poetry that the subjectivity symbolised is of a fluid and unstable self. Moreover, her writing represents femininity in an open way.

I believe it is important that Maria is represented as the author of her texts even if the conception of her authorial status is a different one. It is necessary that she is socially symbolised as a Maltese woman writer. Maria's representations of woman are fluid enough to change shape and this allows the active readings of the texts by her readers

and especially other women like myself, to further rethink representations of women and become subjects of their own making. Bernard Micallef in his preface to Maria's first published book, *But Not Only* explains that it is necessary for women to hold on to representations of women through conventional language to be able to surpass the fixed identities. He explains that Maria's poetry is able to artistically deviate from the restricting image of the woman prescribed by social and cultural institutions by referring to this same limiting representation. In this sense Maria's poetry is involved in mimesis as conceived by Irigaray. Maria reproduces images of the conventional woman only to go beyond them. Bernard Micallef points out that in Maria's poetry there is

> a tension between socially acceptable discourse that forms ordinary femininity and the feminine figure freed from restricted language by means of poetic indefiniteness. (Micallef 1999:vii)

For example one of Maria's favourite images of woman is that of the mother but the mother in her poetry is an active one; an agent of her own life.

I let her grow slowly
In the womb of my dreams;
and I was afraid that it dies
if I try to give birth to her.
But it grew and got full
and proliferated so much -
so much-
I couldn't keep hold of her
And finally I gave birth to her and laid her slowly
In the crib of hope.
Komunjoni (Communion)

Even when, as a mother and a woman, she is depicted as oppressed, her voicing of this oppression is a sign of her activity. Sometimes her strategic subversions of the woman as mother make use of the conventional assumptions related to maternal love to represent values that oppose patriarchal ones. In this way she tactfully makes patriarchal imposed characteristics of woman a source of critique of the same patriarchy.

Don't you know that weaved
were our first roots?
And that you, in vain, criticised me
excluded me through the years
with the excuse of the rib?
Don't you know, that anyway
all the same, it was from me
that the apple got picked?

Now that you suffocated my fruit
Cut down my trees
And stifled the rivers of the waters of life,
so that you could proudly ride me
and burden and impregnate me
with stones and wealth
that are only worth death,

why do you want to continue to want
to bury with the plants
the hope of the only union
that could liberate us all?
Gaea

Maria's poetry is not only a source of subversion of the constrained and unacknowledged motherly roles. Her work itself can be thought of as a practice of the care of the self. The title of her poetry book *But Not Only* tells of the process of renovation that Maria goes through. At the same time the proliferation of her images of woman are also presented in relation to others especially her daughter. Her work shows a commitment to socially symbolise the mother daughter relation but she does this in a way that goes beyond the conventional images of the mother as the guide of her daughter. She presents herself as the vulnerable mother desperately in need of the love of her daughter and in this sense she highlights the typical of the mother who has diminished herself through her motherly actions to help her child become autonomous.

The poem shown below however does present their relationship as a potentially reciprocal one since she as a mother recognises her daughter as greater than herself and therefore she feels she can learn from the way she makes herself.

How small I feel near to you,
my little one,
when you, every time you
with those eyes
wide, wide
you promise me that you never, never, never
but *never* leave me -

how small I feel near you.
Although I know that it would vanish
With your youth, your idea.
Lil Francesca (To Francesca)

CHAPTER SEVEN

SYMBOLISING THE MATERNAL

The main aim of this research is to study the relation between teaching and mothering, how Maltese women educators are implicated within such a relation and particularly the many ways such a relationship is, and can be, symbolised. In the third chapter I genealogically analyse the association between teaching and mothering, outlining the patriarchal and phallocentric formations of the ideas that constrain the mother, teacher and/or maternal teacher within strict definitions. It is the intent of this study to play with fixed maternal symbolics to create new ideas and perspectives about mothering and teaching and also the relation between them. Throughout the last two chapters I have mostly used the participants' knowledge to go beyond phallocentric maternal symbolisations. I have sought to bring forth the subjugated knowledges of these women teachers not only with respect to what it means to mother but also how this is related to their educational activities. If in Chapter Five I rethink the maternal by referring to the way women play with the images of the mother and the teacher, in Chapter Six I focus more on the pedagogical connectedness between caring, teaching and mothering. I do this to highlight the need for and the importance of the care of the self by the teacher/ mother. The idea of the care of the self is also used subversively and posited against maternal obligations to forget oneself in the exclusive care of others. I take up women teachers' ways of caring for themselves as practices of the self by which they can be recognised as social subjects. In both chapters I have taken these subversive tones as possible sources of these women's social symbolisation keeping in touch with, and at the same

time aiming to challenge and resist, conventional views and expectations of women to teach and mother in particularly limited ways.

When bringing these ideas together I have noticed that I have become increasingly concerned with these women's knowledge creations especially those concerned with education. I have come to recognise them as mothering their own knowledge constructions in a way similar to my understanding of mothering the research process. These women themselves have shown me their ways of knowing, to borrow Mary Belenky's phrase. Their knowledges rise out of their particular engagement with experiences in schools and classrooms, with their readings, especially those concerned with educational theory, as well as through conversations I have had with them throughout these last three years. Their experiences are also considered within social and historical contexts outlined in previous chapters. I have shown that their positions as mothers and teachers are intimately linked with knowledge in various ways. Yet teachers are rarely seen as persons who create their knowledges and personal philosophies of education. This occurs for different reasons but what I am mostly interested in here is why women teachers' philosophies of education remain unheard. Throughout this study I interpret it as a problem of social symbolisation and one which is also related to these women's association with the maternal.

The aim of this chapter therefore consolidates the aims of the whole thesis in that it seeks to symbolise women through their knowledges and especially their knowledges about education. I consider their links with education and knowledge as maternal not only due to their reproductive roles as persons who pass on existing and established knowledge but also as creators of modes of learning that hope to generate new knowledges and aid people to construct themselves differently. Here I seek to build

my writing around their knowledge creations, by emulating their productive and nourishing perspectives and represent these women's knowledge in parallel with maternal metaphors and/or similes that relate to the maternal. At other times in discussing their knowledges, I bring in other associations with the maternal that are in tune with the subversive aims described above. Through such a representation I hope to counteract those discourses that dissociate maternity from knowledge production. In this way this chapter is therefore also engaged in a different social symbolisation of their relation to maternity. Such a representation of these women through their philosophies of education is not only subversive of conventional identifications; it is also constructive in that their knowledges suggest alternative ways of understanding and/or going about educational issues.

Before proceeding to the actual social symbolisation of these women through their own knowledge I shall discuss several issues and problems that are related to the presentation of these particular knowledges as women's philosophies of education. I have already discussed some of the problems related to the poststructuralist stance on constructions of selves as subjects through writing in Chapter Four. Here I follow the same idea of the author's position as a maternal one concerned with the creation and proliferation of different readings, meanings and knowledges. In that chapter I also discussed issues regarding the use of conversations in constructing knowledge. Here I shall try as I have already done throughout the chapters to keep the conversation going between what these women say and what established philosophers and educators have written. This is intended to further open up conversations with the readers who in turn, I hope, will be stimulated enough to generate and regenerate their own knowledges.

Moreover this chapter is directed towards establishing links between women. Throughout this research process I have come across several instances when women teachers speak their own knowledge and their own relation, realising that there are some similarities between them and the conditions in which they construct their own knowledge. One of the things that these Maltese women share is their being socially associated with the maternal. Also the fact that these women participants are teachers and have attained a certain level of education affects their vision of mothering. At the same time their different positionings in terms of age, class and experiences within Maltese educational systems give rise to particular maternal connotations. In this way I think that the production of their knowledge as maternal subjects is unique and particular as their own relations with the maternal. In other words their maternal positionings are their common ground even though these may vary and the meanings of the maternal itself are fluid and continually changing.

Women's maternal positionings have been used to disavow and exclude them from philosophy and subjugate them to lower hierarchies in educational systems. The following presentations of their knowledges are not aimed at simply restoring what has been lost. They are seen as knowledge products of subjugations and can contribute to new ways of conceptualising education and knowledge itself. In this sense a feminist standpoint epistemology frames the way their knowledge is conceived. Yet my understanding of maternal subjectivities as fluid, mobilising and proliferating different meanings and understandings opens up the standpoint position to a poststructuralist one (Hutchings 1999). This means that although I do consider that their knowledge is generated from the standpoint of their experience as women and especially as maternal subjects, I realise that their standpoints are always different because their subject situations are continually changing. This subjective

instability runs parallel to a discursively constructed nature of their knowledge whose meaning is unstable and open to deconstruction and subject to power networks in its legitimations. In this case I see their philosophies of education as generating and procreating differences especially when they are made subject to conversational arrangements such as those outlined in Chapter Four. I do believe that if educational philosophies are to be effective they have to be geared towards creating different understandings of educational processes. Philosophies of education are to be created and recreated according to the teacher, the children involved, the relationships between them and the world that takes shape within particular social, cultural and institutional contexts. Teaching in this sense can be re-conceptualised as maternal through its connotations with nourishing, generating and creating different selves and different knowledges.

Representing Knowledge and the Maternal

One of the first lessons in philosophy of education that I was taught as a student teacher and that I have discussed with my own education students is Plato's parable of the cave. I considered the parable as an excellent metaphorisation of the individual journey in the acquisition of knowledge as well as the skills in its acquisition. I felt it instilled in me the desire for knowledge and especially an interest in the way one can search for it, which I consider as the common ground between the teacher and the researcher and/or philosopher. When I became intrigued with women's contributions in this journey it seemed to me that women as maternal beings were represented as reproducers or facilitators of knowledge - never as creators of their own knowledge in their own right. Irigaray's reading of the parable in *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Irigaray 1985a) sensitised me to the patriarchal pathways of the journey towards knowledge, legitimised through the denigration of the maternal. Irigaray explains that the maternal is represented through the images of dark walls of the underground

cave and the passive and immobile and confused and unclear state of the persons living in it. The only position that the maternal has with the acquisition of knowledge is a fixed, dark silent one from which those captivated around it strive to escape. The maternal position is an ambivalent one. It is placed at the centre of our attention in the beginning of the parable only to be marginalised and denigrated. Yet the marginalisation of the maternal itself is the mark of its importance in such a journey. If it were not for its metaphorical representation as the dark underworld there would be no other contrasting places of light where knowledge could be discovered. As Michelle Boulous Walker (1998) points out this is another way that Western thought silences the maternal. The process of subjugation of women's voicing of the maternal is more complex than merely not allowing women to speak and to present patriarchal images of the maternal as universal essences. Metaphorising her as "a foundation or stepping stone" for man's quest for knowledge is another insidious strategy that effectively uses and silences the maternal at the same time. Walker explains that this interpretation of the way women's voices are silenced and how this is related to the quest for knowledge is similar to Irigaray's ideas about women's place in relation to philosophy. Irigaray does not simply envisage women as outside philosophy. Woman is an important constructive space for knowledge creation, so that

> the opposition outside is far too simplistic to describe woman's relation to philosophy as she simultaneously occupies both an exterior position outside philosophy (in that she is to a large extent excluded from its institutional practice) and an interior position inside philosophy (by metaphorically constituting its empty/silent interiority). (Boulous Walker 1998:12)

Plato's proposition of moving away from maternal dwellings for the acquisition of knowledge runs parallel to Lacan's cutting of the bonds with the mother as a necessary move towards the symbolic order. In a similar way the maternal does not partake of the symbolic order but it is an essential factor in the process towards being part of it even though it is only through her passive presence.

This parasitic relationship with the maternal is quite similar to the way the teacher as mother is used for an effective running of the educational system. I explained this more fully in Chapter Three. Feminists analysing the relevance of the maternal in the lives of teachers (Steedman1985, Dillabough 1999, Walkerdine & Lucey 1989, Casey 1990, Boler 1999) have also commented on how the woman teacher as mother is an excellent source for the self-regulation of individuals including herself. From these accounts it is clear that the connotations of the maternal with teaching are phallocratically appropriated for the functional ends of educational systems, just like Plato's representation of the maternal becomes a resource for constructing his universal epistemology. The association of mothering with women teachers is a living representation of Plato's metaphorisations of the maternal and the way knowledge is acquired through her passive presence.

This points to the power of systems of representations and specifically how patriarchal modes of symbolisation confine women to dark "primordial" spaces which are considered unqualified to be part of the symbolic order. Irigaray describes the effective legitimisation of patriarchal forms of knowledge through dominating symbolising systems, which take place through the maternal functions but leave no space for the maternal production of knowledge, in this way:

> Projections of symbols for men's bodies, raised high enough so that they show over the top of the little wall so as to dominate and sublimate it- though the wall has been raised in the cave artificially- would, theoretically, be the only representation of truth for the prisoners because they provide, in addition, the echo of the words pronounced by the same men. The echo is possible because of the reflecting property, the so called virginity and muteness of that back of the matrix/ womb which a man, an obstetrician, turned around, backward and upside down in order to make it into a stage, the chamber, the stronghold of representation. (Irigaray1985a: 263)

Women's Knowledge as Philosophy

It is the concern of Irigaray and of feminism in general to transform women into creators and generators of knowledge. Women have been considered reproducers of knowledge, also because of their taken for granted teaching and mothering roles. One can start to counteract such symbolisations by representing women as active agents of knowledge creation not resources or screens for objective claims to knowledge (Hutchings 1999:10).

Women's interests and perspectives have not simply been excluded from an area of knowledge recognised as philosophy. As subjects they have been delegitimated as philosophers. This happens when philosophy's mode of reasoning is represented as universal and neutral retaining its masculine bias covert. As Margaret Whitford (1992) explains, such a position does not only function to exclude women's ideas by making them unrepresentable as philosophical. It also renders the female and/or feminist philosopher a contradiction in terms. The traditional criteria that establish what counts as philosophy, as Margaret Whitford continues to explain, cannot include feminist thinking as philosophy.

> However, those of us who have always been fascinated by philosophical questions do not accept that the narrow parameters of the professional philosophers set the boundaries of what counts as philosophy, whose definition has in any case been a matter for dispute among philosophers themselves. The feminist philosopher may have been defined a theoretical impossibility, but she obstinately insists on existing. *Eppur si mouve.* (Whitford 1992: 111-112)

Such women and/or feminists establish their own spaces for doing philosophy, challenging the principles that define what counts as philosophy. They realise that a simple inclusion of their views does not suffice to challenge the order that established boundaries to this field of knowledge. In other words, it is not sufficient for them to stay at the margins and do their own philosophies without connecting to

the mainstream even if only to challenge it. Women/ feminists doing philosophy of education encounter similar problems to other feminists in all disciplines. Mary Leach (1991) gives an overview of the small number of women participating in philosophy of education conferences in the US and attributes this to a male dominated canon. Even though the number of feminists and women philosophers of education has increased over the years they still struggle to make their particular modes of doing research accepted. The patriarchal principles that define the field, which Leach identifies as demanding clarity, logically ordered discourse and well-constructed arguments are not the only hostilities encountered by women doing philosophy of education. This does not imply that women are not capable of being clear and making good logical arguments but that women attempting to do philosophy in different ways are not recognised as philosophers. On the other hand, due to their philosophical interests these women do not readily find a home elsewhere. Morwenna Griffiths and Margaret Whitford (1996:i) point out that "women doing feminist philosophy do not find a natural home either in philosophy departments (suspicious of feminism) nor in Women's Studies Departments (suspicious of philosophy)." The same can be said about women trying to do philosophy of education. This happens because generally, as Morwenna Griffiths (1997) explains, philosophers of education and teachers are distrustful of each other's ways of understanding. Yet, Maxine Greene and Morwenna Griffiths (forthcoming) remark that the fact that feminist educational philosophy remains an untidy disciplinary division is an asset since ideas easily infiltrate different academic as well as non academic spaces.

What is interesting in this debate is the recurring of the metaphor of the home and the extent to which finding a home is important for the constitution of these women's

selves. Irigaray uses the metaphor of the home to argue for women's place of their own. As she puts it, this is a necessary step so as not to remain exiled in the house of our husbands (Irigaray 1993b:19). Mary Leach is in agreement with Irigaray and gives further reasons for seeking "a place distant from the mainstream to form independent judgements about their own positions in the systems within which they have been trained." She continues to argue for the setting up of a home where persons are understood as being culturally constituted as different.

> It would be a home in which personal voices, the "I" with particular feelings and experiences would be as welcome, indeed understood as a necessary part of the "I" who will "argue this or that- a home where everyone is present as a visible "I" who does not merely point disembodied to the world out there, but rather engages in shared conversations about the known world fully acknowledging each other's partial viewpoint. (Leach 1991:291)

What is highlighted here, is not the replacement of a masculine dominated philosophy with a feminine one but a disruption and modification of phallocratic laws that legitimise foundational philosophical discourse. It is clear that a place to call home is needed for the identification of their difference from such foundationalism. Rules for living in such a home are considered to be necessary but it is also agreed that they are subject to revision brought about by leaving the doors open to other ideas and encouraging nomadic ventures.

Feminist philosophers agree that a radical rethinking of the traditional tenets that define philosophy is necessary. Feminists such as Irigaray, counteract the power of philosophy to generalise and eradicate sexual difference by symbolising these women's knowledge as women's. Yet, not all feminist philosophers agree on the representations of themselves as feminist and/or identifying their knowledge as women's philosophy. Recognising the high correlation between knowledge, and the power acquired through social positionings including sexed ones, certain feminists object to identifying women's philosophy as such, arguing that this can encourage

ghettoisation of feminist philosophy which may reinforce the legitimation and domination of one mode of philosophy over another (Mann 1999).

One also has to point out that their philosophy does not automatically challenge phallocratic tendencies and be automatically exempt from phallocratic law that just by being produced by women. Moreover there is the problem that choosing to do philosophy in separate spaces may leave male defined philosophy quarters untouched by the disruption of feminist philosophies. I believe that since phallocentrism and traditional philosophies work on neutralising differences and especially hiding sexual differences in relationship to knowledge production, attempts to keep such differences covert would only reinforce phallocratic systems of power. The need for symbolising women as sexually different especially in relation to knowledge would aid awareness of how their knowledges have been subjugated and at the same time recognise them as different and possible sources of challenge to mainstream forms of thought. This does not mean that women always have to start from outside what is happening in the mainstream. They need to be aware and constantly in touch and involved in debates that take place in the spheres that legitimise certain discourses, if they want to be effective. At the same time they need to distance themselves at least partially from the mainstream and maintain a constant critical outlook on the discourses produced. The separate space, a place where women/philosophers/ feminists could call "home" is also needed for women to work on their relationships with each other. In the previous chapter I argued for the need for women to establish a genealogical connectedness. I referred to the way The Milan Women's Bookstore Collective worked to establish relationships between women. A space where women philosophers and feminists could meet need not share the same principles of that group, especially because as I argued previously, the relationships established are too

close to mother-daughter, teacher-pupil ones. It could be a place where women meet to make conversation, agree and disagree, but most importantly establish the links that institutions, disciplines and social organisations have made it difficult for them to establish.

This moving to and fro from the centre to the margins is a tactic, which is more effective than simply building boundaries at the margins. It is a political strategy that ensures communication with the mainstream, using marginal positions to resist foundationalism, and at the same time to encourage communication between women themselves. In both spheres women/ feminists can be committed to recognising differences. As Leach's quote above explains it is the recognition of differences that enhances conversational encounters which may be fruitful enough to yield new knowledges. Such knowledge producing conversations as I explained when discussing conversations as a research method, are power networked so that not all participants have the same or equal positions of power. This is another important point in justifying the need to recognise women's philosophy as such. The symbolisation of women as sexually different in relation to knowledge production rises out of a particular context of struggles of power/knowledge. It is my view that since phallocentric thought aims to hide sexual difference and the different power positionings it can bring about, attempts to keep these differences covert would only reinforce dominating relations.

Women's philosophies outlined in this chapter are therefore recognised as philosophies of women that reflect their particular feminine experiences especially maternal ones. I have noticed that their modes of understanding and expressing educational and pedagogical issues also rise out of their maternal connotations from

which they simultaneously attempt to break away. Their philosophies are also feminist in that they challenge mainstream currents of thought in philosophy of education as well as those regarding the practical concerns of the school. Above all their knowledges are thought of as philosophies in that they reflect particular and individual ways of life. Their particular reflections on themselves and reconceptualisations of what they do is "philosophy in activity" (Foucault 1990c). Their knowledges are philosophy as Foucault describes it, also because they are

> The movement by which, not without effort and uncertainty, dreams and illusions, one detaches oneself from what is accepted as true and seeks other rules- that is philosophy. The displacement and transformation of frameworks of thinking, the changing of received values and all the work that has been done to think otherwise, to do something else, to become other than what one is - that too is philosophy. (Foucault 1990c:330)

Questions of Time

Questions of time are closely related to constructions of subjectivity. In Chapter Six I have described some of the women's participants' struggle with time. I have also attempted to represent the making of oneself as a teacher, mother and/or woman as continuously changing and this shows particular understandings of the relation between time and subjective becomings. The self is not in this case presented as a spectator of time, but made through moments of time where the past and future collide. As Lloyd (1993:114-115) explains, this conception of time is related to a Heideggerian understanding of being. It invokes a sense of agency in forming the present through a preservation of the past, as well being as open to the future. In the previous chapter I briefly referred to the participants' ability to engage with time to practise and make their selves up in a different fashion. In this section of this chapter I continue to represent women's subjectivities as teachers with maternal links and their relation to time. Here, however, their interrelation with time as mothers and teachers becomes a source for conceiving of educational processes differently from

what conventionally occurs in schools. These women's conceptions and practices of time do occur in schools, but they largely remain unsymbolised and subjugated. As I shall demonstrate later on, these represent these women's struggle for their ideas to be accepted and recognised. Furthermore, conceptualising one's own ways and principles of teaching through an understanding of time has rarely been done. This is what mainly justifies my representations of these women's particular angles of looking at educational processes as their philosophies of education. They are modes by which they construct themselves differently as different subjects.

Elizabeth Grosz (1995) in her book *Space, Time and Perversion* explains that representations of subjects are correlated with particular representations of time and space. She states that the changes in the ways space and time are conceived in the history of science, maths and philosophy, have great effects on the way ontology is understood. As I have shown in the genealogical study of the teacher as mother in Chapter Three, the images and expectations of the mother and/or teacher change throughout the years. However in this chapter I am more interested in how women's ways of relating to time can be used to socially symbolise themselves as sexed subjects and also in ways that build upon their links with teaching and the maternal.

Here I continue to follow Elizabeth Grosz's theory that builds upon the work of the French theorists Kristeva and Irigaray in seeking to re-conceive sexual difference. Grosz argues that representations of sexed bodies necessitate different time-space frameworks. This, however, is more easily said than done because conceptions of time that take over our conceptions of being are male-defined. The dominant ways through which masculine ways of understanding, speaking, constructing and representing oneself are reinforced by the masculine hold on conceptions of time.

Grosz continues to argue that conceptions of time and space reflect the philosophy of the rational self knowing subject which

> confirmed the fundamental masculinity of the knower, and left little or no room for female self representations, and the creation of maps and models of space and time based on projections of women's experiences. It is not clear that women conceive of space or time in the same way as men, whether their experiences are neutrally presented within dominant mathematical and physics models, and what the space-time framework appropriate to women or to the two sexes may be. One thing remains clear: in order to reconceive bodies, and to understand the kinds of active interrelations possible between (lived) representations of the body and theoretical representations of space and time, the bodies of each sex need to be accorded the possibility of a different space-time framework. (Grosz 1995:100)

In the *Ethics of Sexual Difference* Irigaray (1993a) describes how the appropriation of time by the masculine subject is harmonious with man becoming the subject and the guardian of discourse. Time is in fact synonymous with masculinity itself. Femininity is space but woman has no space for herself; she is always a space for man to grow in or else as shown in the parable of the cave, it is a space he has to abandon in his quest for knowledge. This point, as I have shown previously, has reverberations with the subjugation of the maternal not only through conceptions of the woman/mother as a provider of space but also through the limits masculine discourses set on the possibilities of her becoming different, also maternally different.

> If traditionally, and as a mother, woman represents *place* for man, such a limit means that she becomes *a thing*, with some possibility of change from one historical period to another. She finds herself delineated as a thing. Moreover the maternal-feminine also serves as an *envelope*, a *container*, the starting point from which man limits his things. (Irigaray1993a:10)

That certain social discourses are aimed to limit, organise and discipline women, or to borrow Irigaray's metaphor of patriarchal discourses as the confinement of women into preordained houses can be exemplified by the scientific organisation of the maternal images of the pregnant woman. These images are generally portrayed through a linear conceptualisation of time to present the development of the child

and the growth of the maternal body. The progressive representation of development and growth through time gives fixed images of how the mother and the child should be. These snapshots represent them as being spectators of time defined according to a scientific definition of who they are and how they are to be socially regarded. The child for example gains the status of the foetus when three months old. One also has to note that the duration of the gestation period is subject to extrapolation controlled by scientific measurements. In this sense this maternal time becomes all the more experienced in preconceived and standardised segments of time.

In this section I wish to build upon this representation of phallocentric organised maternal times and intervals and parallel them to the understandings and organisations of teaching periods. This idea was conceived during one of the conversations with Denise. As we were talking I could not help but think about the analogy between maternal and teaching time especially due to Denise's critique of institutional arrangements of time in schools. I am therefore building upon teaching/maternal connections to critique organisations of time in Maltese educational systems and to propose new ways of thinking teaching through time. Both critique and proposals rise out of the conversations I had with Denise and Ben. I am therefore proposing these alternative ways of thinking time as these women's own constructed knowledge about education; aimed at changing our conceptions of time in schools and becoming sensitive to different becomings through different understanding and use of time.

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1991a) focuses on the use of time as a disciplinary technology in the production of selves. Foucault explains that the regulation of time runs alongside the regulation of individuals and their subjective

constructions. Not only are individuals controlled inside schools for the sake of keeping order and managing daily activities and instilling authoritative images of the teacher in pupils' minds. Such institutional time arrangements regimentalise students and pave the way for their later conformation to work schedules. (Mallia J. & Mallia M. 1997, Sultana 1997).

The first examples of the compartmentalisation of subjects into specific time slots in Malta are found in Pullicino's documentation of his organisation of time in schools and his letters to teachers that demand strict adherence to his carefully drawn timetables. As I pointed out in Chapter Three his writings give a clear indication of the early elements of modern schooling in Malta. They are also symptomatic of his principle of scholarly law and order and his philosophy of education that privileges orderly teaching and learning as well as the regulation of behaviour of both teachers and pupils.

The school timetables that he issued are impressively similar to those that Primary teachers follow daily today. Time is devoted to similar subjects. Even the time of day and the order in which subjects are tackled is impressively similar. Pullicino's system of control of time is an efficient way to control teachers, what they do in classrooms and also how they do it. One can safely say that his demands on teachers to keep detailed records of their daily activities, the amount of syllabus covered as well as the attendance of students are remnants of today's policing strategies that ensure smooth functioning of educational system along rigid similar rules. Nowadays the Education Officer assumes this controlling job. The Education Officer, generally a he, acts like God himself who establishes a rhythm and organises time. He is "the subject, the master of time the axis of the world's ordering" (Irigaray 1993a:7). Ben

remarks on her encounters with the Education Officer and her experience of similar authoritarian and oppressive tactics during many of his visits aimed to control her teaching to the very detail.

> Ben - His control of us through rigid compartmentalisation of time is becoming extreme. Lately he insisted that we take note of the minutes dedicated to particular activities during the lesson. And he gives us clear instructions about the time limits- for example for six minutes you have to do something and for ten minutes another. But the latest is the rate of our reading during the listening comprehension test. He insists that we read between 120 and 150 words per minute.
>
> You cannot grade your relationships you have with human beings into rigid blocks of time. As if we are dealing with something static- these students are so different that you need to find a modus vivendi with them- surely not in minutes.
>
> He measures. He tries to measure everything in an exact way. In a scientific way but you cannot do these things when you are teaching especially if you are teaching language and literature.

The maternalisation of teaching is allowed and encouraged only if it aids such processes of regimentation and dolcification of bodies both of students and teachers. As Denise remarks the relation between mothering and teaching in schools is nowhere near the generation of the intimate links between a child and her mother. Grumet (1988) makes a similar point and remarks that the conflict between the images of the maternal teacher and her role of dolcification creates distrust and suspicion between parents and teachers.

> ... the feminisation of teaching and the cult of maternal nurturance did little to introduce the atmosphere of the home or the integrity and specificity of the mother/child relationship to the schools. Dominated by the kits and dittos, increasingly mechanised and impersonal, most of our classrooms cannot sustain human relationships of sufficient intimacy to support the risks, the trust, and the expression that learning requires.
> Furthermore, the gender contradictions, the simultaneous assertion and denial of femininity, have served to estrange teachers of children from the mothers of those children. Instead of being allies, mothers and teachers distrust each other. Bearing credentials of a profession that claimed colours of motherhood and then systematically delivered the children over to the language, rules and relations of the patriarchy, teachers feel uneasy, mothers suspicious. (Grumet 1988:56)

Denise's comments about her role as a teacher at home and at school similarly remark on the extent to which teaching in schools is regulated. In fact, she considers herself as a better teacher with her own daughter than with her pupils at school. This does not only rise out of her feelings of uneasiness in teaching particular groups of pupils within the same time frame, something that as Madeleine Grumet (1988) explains comes around through female teachers' compliance with the rationalisation and bureaucratisation of an industrialised culture. Denise finds that she is not allowed to develop the close and individual relations necessary for the success of both her pupils' development and her own professional growth, self and social esteem, because of time restrictions.

Denise's relation with time especially in school is not an easy one. Her critique of the school and class organisation of time and systemisation of the learning process are mixed with concerns about herself not fitting into this system and also about her inconsistency in disciplining some of her students. Her comments about the way pupils in schools learn that they are failures, run parallel to her own identification of failure in becoming the controlling teacher that the system expects her to be. She is aware of her great difficulties in resisting becoming a controlled and controlling teacher subject to and of regulation devices.

Yet Denise's ways of conceptualising the time frameworks of the teaching and learning processes go beyond the rigid arrangements of the educational institution. What distinguishes her philosophy of education is her concern with conceptualising time differently. Her ideas can also be used to symbolise herself as a maternal subject in that they retain the characteristics of giving time to the growth of others. The particular rhythms that she painfully perseveres to establish with her pupils,

disrupt regulating ones and this marks her ways of teaching. Her teaching style is created through the time she gives to her students individually and as a group. And this in return is what recognises her and other teachers as social agents. And even though her time consuming dedication is often exploited as other participants also note, she is well aware, that the time they invest in relationship building can become part of her formation of herself.

Denise sees teaching as an activity which is basically that of repeating the same explanations over and over again. I got the impression that such a vision is too mechanical, orderly and regulating; very much like Paolo Pullicino intended it to be. However what Denise had in mind was a nourishing sort of repetition: one which would allow pupils to grasp concepts at their own pace and in different manners. Such a method would allow teachers and pupils understanding of each other to grow as their understanding of the subject matter evolved. In this respect Denise's emphasis on the repetition of teaching moments for successful learning shares Nietszche's and Bergson's conceptions of and on the use of time. Genevive Lloyd (1993:108-109) explains that Bergson's understanding of time as unrepeatable and the Nietzsechean circular one of eternal recurrence, may appear to be completely opposed to each other. Yet Lloyd reads them as congruent since they both focus on a sense of movement, that privileges the idea of becoming rather than being. Denise, as I argued above, sees teaching as an activity of repetition and therefore a circular one as Nietzsche sees it. However at the same time, the repetition she endorses is unrepeatable since she seeks different ways to teach the same things.

In educational systems such as those in Malta, where the principle of teaching and learning is banking knowledge in the minds of children and racing against time in the

banking of as much knowledge as possible, Denise's idea of repetition may seem a "loss of time". Sometimes, topics are covered for the sake of being covered as this secures the reputation of the teacher. Such coping strategies keep up with the pressures of some parents and Education Officers demanding coverage of a never-ending syllabus. It stands to reason that the way that teachers try to make an effective use of time is to cover each topic once. Therefore, Denise's critique of this use of teaching time is an ethical one (Lloyd 1993:109), as it makes statements on the morality of such actions in two ways. First, it challenges the idea that the teacher is a permanent subject who sees time whizzing by. Instead it encourages the teacher's self-formation through a circular engagement with time. The teacher forms herself as a teacher by repeating acts of teaching over and over again. The idea of giving time to children to form their own selves through acts of repetition, resonates the idea of recurrence of time. They are formed through repetitive acts.

At the same time such repetitive actions point to what Genevive Lloyd also considers as the unrepeatability of time. And this raises a second moral question to the act of repetition in teaching. Repetition can be justified as an acceptable teaching mode if both the teacher and the student recognise what they have learnt from previous sessions. And in this sense teaching acts are unrepeatable. The teacher and the students are both different beings and at the same time becoming different through recurring acts of teaching and learning which, although recurring and repeating, are all the time different from each other.

Such interpretations of the ethical use of time, concerned with the creation of the self go along with Lloyd's understanding of Bergson's and Nietszche's as supporting becoming rather than being. Furthermore Denise's philosophy of education shows

that, for her, teaching is not only something to be done and finished but also is a set of activities that involve a series of continuous becomings. As she remarks she perceives such continuous changes happening to her pupils/daughter as well as herself.

> Denise - I think that if you teach according to the rhythm of the person it is far better than working against it. Starting from the interests of children does not necessarily mean that you are going to end up in a blind alley. In life things are related to each other and you find streets and you open them together and you discover other important things and you feel that you have changed and learnt a lot.

The Pleasures of Teaching

Pleasure is not generally associated with what happens inside the school. And when it is, it is exercised in extreme control as teaching and learning times are. Rigid school timetables regulate pleasure impulses in short compartments of time between heavily loaded formal lessons. Currently attempts are made to integrate such pleasure experiences during proper lessons. Still, generally pleasure is thought of and offered as a reward for hard work or to instil discipline. Furthermore, even though the pleasures of learning are sometimes encouraged, the association of pleasure with the teacher and expressions of such pleasures remains very much unheard of. The solemn image of Emmanuela Azzopardi as a virtuous woman and the responsible teacher whose only pleasure resides in pleasing her superiors haunts the teacher of today. Nancy recounts her very first lesson as a teacher not to express her pleasure

> Nancy - When I entered my classroom and saw all the children I was to teach and they all stood up and said "Good morning teacher." I just couldn't stop laughing the whole thing seemed so funny. My head looked at me sternly and after we got out of the class she told me, "Don't laugh in front of the children or you won't be able to discipline them." That I still remember clearly. It was my first lesson as a teacher.

One can imagine different reasons for the regulation of experiences of pleasures of the teacher. Such control reflects Freud's basic idea of his pleasure principle: that instinctive pleasures and desires for pleasure are to be controlled and sacrificed for

the common good to ensure an orderly civilisation. Foucault documents the regulation of such pleasures especially those related to sexual activity and the importance given to self-restraint. He goes back as far as the Classical Greek culture of the fourth century BC to show that our present concern with regulating pleasures has come a long way. Foucault's documentation of the moderation of pleasures always refers to the teachings of some of the influential teachers and philosophers at that time: Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, Demosthenes. These teachers' life styles were also examples of how the restraint of excessive pleasures would give one a standing in society. The teacher nowadays is still considered to be the model of how pleasures are regulated and the school ensures the learning of the subordination of happiness in preparation for the work place (Bronski 1998:21).

Attitudes towards the experience of pleasure are also sexed. Freud's pleasure principles argue for the need to structure human lives through the constraint of pleasure and especially sexual pleasure but as Foucault (Foucault (1992:253) explains, the restraint of pleasure becomes more emphasised where women are concerned. Women's pursuits of pleasures are more restricted due to their automatic associations with maternity and the belief that their sexual acts are to be intended for reproductive rather than pleasurable purposes. Bronski explains that

> The patriarchal character of most Western social organisations has ensured men greater permission to seek and experience sexual freedom. Because the bearing and raising of children defined woman, sexual reproduction was securely separated from non-reproductive sexual pleasure. This separation led to a social structure in which women's capacity for sexual pleasure was denied, vilified and punished. Women were then divided into two groups: "good" women whose sexuality was inactive or used only for reproduction, and "bad" women whose capacity for sexual expression and pleasure made them seductive, predatory and dangerous. The constructions of the "virgin" and the "whore" run through Western culture from the Virgin Mary and Lithe to such recent incarnations as pre-divorce Princess Diana and the ironically named Madonna. (Bronski 1998:17-18)

The mother is allowed no pleasure without responsibility. The responsibility of the teacher to maternally care for her pupils similarly allows her no space for experiences of pleasure. Furthermore as I commented in Chapter Three, one of the most prominent characteristic of the maternal teacher is her virtuosity and asexuality.

Some of the participants' descriptions of their experiences of teaching resist such restrictive measures in talking about their pleasures. Some of their expressions of such pleasures hint at the links they make with sexual pleasures. Their language at times includes sexual and erotic connotations especially, as I shall explain further in the following section, in their descriptions of their relationships with their students. Here I shall focus on the way they talk about the pleasures of teaching to go beyond restrictive maternal and reproductive associations. They speak of such pleasures not only to disassociate themselves from maternal functions but also to break the maternal free from restrictive asexual definitions. Their conceptualisations of processes of teaching even take up the language of lovers and have connotations with sexual pleasures.

Reneè, for example speaks of her attempt to get to know her students in a way that reminds one of the efforts a person makes to get to know a person she likes intimately or the efforts lovers make in keeping their relationship going in a meaningful way:

> Reneè - I think that it is very important that you get to know the children. In the beginning of the school year I made great efforts to get to know them and know the name of each boy. For me calling him by his name tells him that I am aware of him, that I am interested in him. I wanted to send this message " I would like to know you as a person" I would like to follow you as an individual. I trust you as much as you trust me. There is no sense in teaching you if I don't show any interest in you that I don't give you time and give time for our relationship to grow.

Sister Kalcidonia speaks of her possessive love for her students

> Sister Kalcidonia - I am sixty-one and I told them (the other sisters in the convent) I am going to teach this year since God kept me well and healthy. I have this great desire to teach children and help them. And I love it. I also love them and I show them and I tell them " I love you!" They are mine I don't like it when some other teacher gets their attention or tries to correct them.

Maria on the other hand comments on the importance of spontaneity in educational encounters. Like Ben and Denise (see section *Questions of Time* in this chapter) she is critical of the regulation of time in schools which reduces such pleasures and the fruitfulness of encounters whose erotic implications are expressed in this way:

> Maria - When somebody asks a question and for example it is a language question and you are doing literature you cannot tell him or her, "We cannot deal with this now." You cannot ignore their desires. If they are aroused for knowledge you cannot kill their excitement by telling them "Sorry this is not in the programme or in the notes or in the lesson plan.

The above expressions of experiences of pleasure in school are particularly subversive in that they go against current trends in feminism that seek to restrain articulations and expressions of pleasure out of fear of increased sexual related violence. Lynne Segal (1994) explains how the politicisation of women's pleasure by the early women's liberation movement as a social symbol of women's autonomy and their right to selfhood has now faded completely. Pleasure and specifically sexual pleasure are all the more considered as products of women's submission to the dominant male order. Segal comments that feminists have been rendered silent about their pleasures and especially sexual ones, due to men's sexual abuse of women and the commodification of women's sexuality (Segal 1994:xiii). In this way women have been double bound into not speaking of themselves as sexual beings with their own pleasures, due to counter effects of their symbolisations as beings of pleasure.

One of the factors that contribute to such a situation is a misunderstanding of women and their pleasures by phallocentric systems of thought. Irigaray, for example,

comments on Lacan's limited understanding of women's pleasure, which he unconsciously symbolises through Bernini's statue of Saint Theresa.

> In Rome? So far away? To look? At a statue? Of a saint? Sculpted by a man? What pleasure are we talking about? Whose pleasure? (Irigaray 1985b:91)

Her ironic questioning of Lacan's symbolisation is indicative of the way women's experience of pleasure or lack of it is perceived. The pleasure conceded to a woman is represented as saintly; pleasures that are side effects of a life of restraint and obedience. Such pleasures, as, for example those represented in the life story of Emmanuela Azzopardi come through pleasing God and pleasing others. Furthermore women can never experience the pleasure of symbolising their own pleasures in their own ways; they are denied the pleasures of representations.

Earlier on, in this thesis I referred to Irigaray's interpretations of the ways women are denied social symbolisation. She explains that the phallus is the prime symbol of a social order. It is important here to mention that it also the measure and ideal symbolic of pleasure. Pleasure in phallocentric terms is unique and its universal tendencies do not allow other conceptions of pleasure. This is why Irigaray presents women's pleasure as diversified and multiple, to contrast the symbolisation of singular phallocratic pleasure. As Susan Rubin Suleiman explains, an alternative symbolisation of pleasure is

> not based on the gaze that objectifies but on touch that unites, not on the stiffness of strictly localised, free-standing forms but on the melting together of diffuse, multiple, functionally non differentiated elements. (Suleiman 1985:13)

Such expressions of pleasures are therefore directly related to freedom; to desire and to experience pleasure other than that ordained by phallic aims to attain authority and mastery. In consequence, expressions of pleasures such as those of some of the women participants represented here, are not only subversively diverse but can also

be considered as sources for the constitution of women's selves in ways beyond cultural regulations.

Maria's talk of the pleasures of teaching and learning is the main strand of her philosophy of education. Her thoughts about education are subversive of the authoritarian dimensions of the system and the teaching methods that still prevail in our schools. She speaks of alternative ways of thinking and working as a teacher and these also constitute a critique of the phallocentric discourses of pleasure which regulate processes of becoming experienced by both teachers and students. Maria insists on speaking about her pleasures of teaching and these reflect her concern with the increasing lack of space for experiences of pleasure:

> Maria - I am a bit afraid of the way we think in this century ... mostly because we are getting rid of every source of pleasure.

Restrictive educational aims and teaching methods that dominate schools, according to her, are the main culprits of limiting students' experiences of pleasure. Such limitations make students desire them more intensely. Maria continues to explain that pressures of a continuous educational rat race during the week are transformed into frenetic searches for extreme pleasure, which can be dangerous. Maria comments that the rationality of the whole educational system is progress and this is sought at the cost of everything: our quality of life and the devaluation of the spiritual aspects of life. Maria continues her critique of the Maltese educational system by making metaphoric parallels between the system's killing of the pleasures of learning and the elimination of the possibilities to experience the pleasures of food. The system's way of force feeding the students with selected knowledges that contribute to progress contrast with her recommended diet of knowledges such as theatre, art and literature that promote the development of creative healthy minds.

> Maria - I am not a teacher to force-feed them information or make them regurgitate what I think. I am there to show them my love for my area of knowledge and the pleasures I get from it. Even from my job- that I love to help them bring forth their particularities levelled out by educational processes that promote uniformity. No wonder they seek extreme forms of pleasures. All the week is crammed with study, all study, pressures from study and exam worry, and they get tired. When the weekend comes they then cram as much pleasure as they can - they take Ecstasy to combat their tiredness so that they are able to enjoy themselves. Because they are young and they have a right to have pleasure.

Knowledge becomes the food of her love for the students. She also believes in a kind of feeding that promotes independence and expression of oneself as a subject. She considers her teaching as "tempting the taste buds for the search of different tastes." And as she explains she does this by showing the pleasures she derives from her knowledge engagements. Here she represents herself as a "female lover of knowledge" (Irigaray 1993c: 95).

> Maria - I love to discover, to search I am a curious person so I love all forms of knowledge. I want to initiate others to my pleasures. Literature is my favourite subject; it stimulated my curiosity. It still does... but I remember when I got fascinated by language and the energy it has. It attracted my spirit. I also find pleasure in sharing with others the pleasures that I experience. So teaching was a logical step. I mean they pay you for getting so much pleasure!

The Erotics of Teaching.

In speaking of the pleasures of her engagements with knowledge and other persons, Maria also talks of the erotics of teaching and learning processes. Her passionate relations that she has with her students are parallel to her passion for talk and reflect her yearnings for conversation. In Chapter Four I mentioned some of the women participants' desires to be heard and named and that according to Carla Kaplan (1996) one can make parallels between the search for the ideal listener and the ideal lover. Maria's desire to have social conversation has erotic implications in this sense, as I explained fully in that chapter. Maria, however, also feels that the erotic metaphorisations of conversational encounters including those between the teacher

and the student are to be represented more openly. She thinks that articulating relations through erotic and symbolic metaphors is powerful and empowering as "they are the most passionate and people can relate to them easily." They attract other people's interests and imagination so that ideas are more deeply felt and the exchange is more complete.

Audre Lorde (1984) in her essay "The Uses of the Erotic" also speaks of the spiritual, political and empowering uses of the erotic. Audre Lorde explains that the general understanding of the erotic is limited and oppressive just as the conventional meanings of pleasure are. Women's relations to the erotic have similarly been most affected by such closed definitions. Since the erotic is frequently confused with the pornographic, women have tended to leave the power and strength of their capacity for eroticism, for true feeling, unexplored. Audre Lorde gives the erotic a different dimension. She describes it as a deep feeling of self respect and "an internal sense of satisfaction" (Lorde 1984:107) and states that a recognition of such a dimension completely transforms one's life in quality as well as the person's expectations of life and from oneself. Maria, for example, as I will show later on, sees the power of the erotic in stimulating creativity especially through encounters with others as Lorde sees it:

> The erotic for me functions for me in several ways, and the first is in providing the power which comes from sharing deeply any pursuit with another person. The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, phsycological, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference. (Lorde 1984:109)

Audre Lorde compares the erotic to a kernel of colour. When released from constrained places, the colours flow into one's life so that it is completely changed. Life becomes coloured through an awareness of feelings in life as well as through

recognition of such power. The erotic, as Lorde presents it, is a way of taking care of one self - a practice that creates the self as Foucault describes it. Foucault documents the increasing importance given to ascetic practices that are considered important for the care and construction of oneself as subject. Audre Lorde objects to practices of severe abstinence as she feels it encourages self-denial and oppression. Asceticism for her is not self-discipline but self-abnegation. The erotic is a process for taking care and making oneself subject; an empowering practice by which one recognises the possibilities of self and social transformation. This is why, Lorde explains, the erotic is feared:

> For once we begin to feel deeply all the aspects of our lives, we begin to demand from ourselves and from our life pursuits that they feel in accordance with that joy which we know ourselves to be capable of. Our erotic knowledge empowers us, becomes a lens through which we scrutinise all aspects of our existence, forcing us to evaluate those aspects honestly in terms of their relative meaning within our lives. And this is a grave responsibility, projected from within each of us, not to settle for the convenient, the shoddy, the conventionally expected, nor the merely safe. (Lorde 1984: 109)

Some of the women participants in this study conceive of their teaching as erotic in a similar sense. They are aware of the dangers of working within a system, which encourages students as well as teachers to look at profits and results before emotional, psychic and other human needs. In different ways these women have a passionate relationship with their work; their search for excellence gives them deep enjoyment and a sense of satisfaction. They give importance to the capacity of feeling even if the system dictates otherwise. In previous sections and chapters I have referred to these women's struggles against instrumentalising tendencies. However, struggles occur also within themselves as they are aware that not recognising what is profitable to their students may be damaging to them just as much as ignoring their spiritual needs. Reneé, for example, talks of her everyday struggle with such a dilemma, shared by many of the other teacher participants

> Reneé- I always suffered from this conflict. I didn't consider myself as a teacher of a subject. I am an educator. I was torn between covering the syllabus and tackling my students' problems as they arise. How much time should I concede them to talk about themselves? It is extremely important that such time is given. You cannot always wait for the life skills teachers to come in. Somebody says something and you hear somebody's story. Can I tell them to stop? But I have to continue this lesson. I always felt I am failing in one way or another.

Given such a context the insistence of certain participants, like Maria and Tanya (in the next section) on identifying their particular encounters with their students as erotic is suggestive of their ways of making a difference within the system. Maria explains that she finds it is important that she celebrates the erotic, as, according to her, eroticism is a source of creation and creativity. And with the erotic comes the meeting of different minds and of different minds and different contexts.

> Maria - I celebrate the erotic because I believe it is creativity: the same that you find in human life and vegetal life you find in patterns of thought. I can draw on the sexual discourses in the bible. The talk about the seeds that either falls on the soil or on the rocks is sexual but we can apply it to educational processes - you have somebody who either, learnt and flourished or he didn't. But I believe that everybody can flourish. Every fruit has its seed and continues to grow...
>
> There are patterns of communication, which are more fruitful than others, but there is always some form of communication and this encourages fruits to grow. You never know where the seeds may be fruitful; where you are going to find fruitful sources of communication. You may encounter some idea in some readings which you think, is rubbish but still the idea germinates further; though you may encounter pellicles whose knowledge is not recognised and valued yet they teach you so much.

In Chapter Five I referred to another way in which Maria conceives the educational encounter as erotic. In that chapter Maria feels that touch should be encouraged to strengthen teacher-student relationships as well as the students' feelings of self worth. As Maria herself observes such tactile practices which would be most welcome by Irigaray as political and symbolic acts do have problematic side effects relating to the eroticisation of women students. Adrienne Rich (1978) speaks of the fact that it is not unusual for these women to be treated as sexual objects and thought of as

incapable of using their minds and therefore they are not pushed and encouraged to make the best of their educational experiences. Rich's observations raise questions regarding the effects of manifestations of love between teacher and student that Maria considers as useful in the development of one self. Rich would agree with Maria that

> The undermining of self, of woman's sense of her right to occupy space and walk freely in the world, is deeply relevant to education. The capacity to think independently, to take intellectual risks, to assert ourselves mentally, is inseparable from our physical way of being in the world, our feelings of personal integrity. Rich (1978: 242)

Ambivalently, it is because the physical being in the world is an integral part of conceptualising oneself, the physical aspects related to the construction of oneself, such as practices of touch between teacher and student need to be carefully thought about. Teacher-student relationships are not equal relationships even if teachers like Maria, struggle to make them so. One therefore needs to be constantly aware of the way the love between teacher and student is expressed because they can symbolise the domination of the teacher and instigate feelings of humiliation in the students.

In a previous section I talked about the fear of certain feminists of talking about their sexual pleasures due to increased instances of sexual violence, mistakenly seen as effects of women's representation of their pleasures. A similar fear in this case of student objectification, may develop here in speaking of the erotic in teaching and learning experiences. The situation here is very close to that described by Hammond (1997), in her genealogical study of black female sexuality. Hammond explains that black women choose to remain silent about their sexuality to resist the cultural and historical characterisations of themselves as sexually promiscuous, immoral, impure beings. This fear of the violence that can be generated through such representations however as Hammond argues is one way of silencing black women. Although they

have adopted this silence to resist over-sexualised representation of themselves, this fear is in itself a form of control of what and how women are allowed to speak of themselves. It is clear that the context that Hammond is referring to is prevalently a racial and a colonised one. However the fear of being presented and treated as sexualised objects is also related to question of speaking the erotics of teaching. The representations of teaching through erotic metaphorisations may also contribute to discrediting women as knowledge producers so that their knowledge continues to be subjugated. This is the choice that, as Rich explains, teachers have to make especially when their students are women:

> In teaching women, we have two choices: to lend our weight to the forces that indoctrinate women to passivity, self depreciation, and a sense of powerlessness, in which case the issue of taking women students seriously is a moot one; or to consider what we have to work against, as well as with ourselves, in our students, in the content of the curriculum, in the structure of the institution, in society at large. (Rich1978:240)

One can, as certain feminists such as Audre Lorde do, conceive of the erotic in a different sense which emphasises the joys and pleasures of sharing with others, which goes beyond or does not solely involve the body. Such alternative ways of thinking the erotic highlight the positive aspects of the symbolisations of teaching-learning relationships in erotic terms. Tanya's references to the erotic for example are like Maria's, related to the relationships that develop between her and her students. Her ideas about her relations with women students in particular reveal how she is particularly committed to establishing relations between women in ways which are very similar to those discussed in the previous chapter. Her idea of modelling ways of life by emulating other women is very close to the idea of the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective. Yet, the erotic dimension of the love between women, as Tanya conceives it, shares the political convictions of lesbian feminism aimed at challenging the patriarchal obstacles to women's genealogies as I explain in the next section.

Relationships Between Women

Some of the participants' understandings of the relationships they have with their students, their mother-daughter relationships and the erotic metaphorisations of the love and bonds that develop between women as I stated above, can all be considered as ways in which women's genealogies can be symbolised. Their representations of such relationships constitute a challenge to a culture which gives importance only the relationships and links of men amongst themselves. As I explained in Chapter Six, relationships between women can also be seen as ways in which women care for themselves especially because the links developed between them can give them the power to be free from patriarchal regulations of their self construction. Irigaray explains that since Western culture has marginalised the feminine and subjugated the representations between women, it is important to build up reciprocal relationships between women. According to her transforming mother/daughter relationships can instigate changes in relationships between women in general

> That is an indispensable precondition for our emancipation from the authority of fathers. In our societies, the mother/daughter, daughter/mother relationship constitutes a highly explosive nucleus. Thinking it, changing it, is equivalent to shaking the foundations of the patriarchal order. (Irigaray 1991b:50)

In Chapter Six the subjective creation of oneself through a relation with a meaningful other, a teacher or the mother is seen as a practice for the care of oneself. In that chapter I also considered the ways in which some of the participants nourish their relationships with their daughters and/or other women as ways of caring for oneself. The creation of their own selves does not occur in isolation: it also flourishes from consolidations of mother-daughter relationships and acknowledges the mother as the teacher of her daughter's way of life. The mother also teaches her daughter freedom when she exceeds social expectations of being woman teacher and/or mother. Drucilla Cornell speaks of her paradoxical experiences of mothering in this way:

> the biggest demand your daughter puts on you is to be free and to be able to represent your freedom to her, so that the mother is no longer the site of everything that has to be abjected in the name of achieving individuation and personhood, but instead can represent not a role model - that is a trivial word - but can represent her own struggle for freedom and can make that something tangible in the relationship between the two. (Cornell 1998:174)

In this section I take up these ideas again to reflect further on teacher-student relationships and mother-daughter relationships. Denise in particular sees her relationship with her daughter as a source for conceptualising student-teacher relationships in ways different from conventional ones prevalent in schools. As I pointed out previously it is also the free use of time, unconstrained by regulative timetables that make teaching-learning relationships between them fruitful and enjoyable. Taking the mother-daughter relation as a symbolic for her expression of pedagogical concerns is very close to Irigaray's insistence on creating links between women through a representation of the maternal as a symbol of connectedness; enhancement of relationship with others and the diversification of oneself through such connections.

Tanya's thinking about teacher-student relationships, especially when she refers to her relations with female students brings in alternative meanings to these relationships. Tanya's representations of such relationships share many of the erotic metaphorisations outlined in the previous section. Yet they also partake of feminist lesbian subversive strategies that seek to promote relations between women and symbolise love between women in an open way. This symbolic love between women has been kept hidden and as Rich explains,

> Whatever is unnamed, undepicted in images, whatever is omitted from biography, censored in collections of letters, whatever is misnamed as something else, made difficult-to-come-by, whatever is buried in the memory by the collapse of meaning under an inadequate or lying language- this will become, not merely unspoken, but unspeakable. (Rich 1976:199)

Rich here is specifically referring to the annihilation of lesbianism from history and culture because it has been left unspoken. However the implications of this silencing do not affect lesbians only - they affect all women, as they are also discouraged to speak of their relationships with each other. In fact lesbian politics is not only directed at women who have sexual relationships (Weedon 1999). It has broader and different implications for different women who are committed to supporting each other. The lesbian can be taken as symbolic of women's relationships and of love between women. This symbolisation is subversive in the feminist sense because it expresses that which has been marginalised. It therefore is a symbolic refusal to comply with the conventional behaviour of women and also to define oneself in relation to men. "The lesbian in us" as Rich terms it, is therefore the desire to have strong bonds with other women and the political commitment to symbolise such connectedness with other women. According to Rich, "it was a sense of desiring oneself; above all, of choosing oneself" (Rich 1976:200).

But it is also a desire to share. Earlier I explained that the erotic according to Audre Lorde is not confined to the body; it is the joy of sharing that Tanya sees as important in establishing love relationships between women. Tanya's representation of student-teacher and mother-daughter relationships as woman-woman relationships, refers also to a lesbian subversive desire to relate meaningfully with each other in terms which challenge conventional relations.

> Tanya - Yes, they do see me as their mother sometimes. I am their caregiver and they know that I give them so much attention. But that also transforms itself in a particular kind of love. They see me as a person who they admire but there is also something erotic if not sexual going on...
>
> So you see the bond between the mother and the daughter can become translated or transformed into something different... It can cross the border for the simple reason that you have the package that offers you everything. The woman teacher is the person who does not intimidate you; she wishes you well as your mother she takes care of you. She is older than you, so she offers

> security and you can tell her your secrets. But them there is the physical attraction that goes on - she is not your mother so one can cross the border of a simple mother-daughter relationship.
>
> The motivating factor that contributes to the bonding between women is that they don't feel threatened ... and I do understand this.. it is not simply a sexual matter at the same time the need for a model is a passport for developing such a relation in a deep and meaningful way.

Tanya's idea of modelling oneself through relationships with other significant women highlights the complex power networks underlying the links between these women in teaching-learning situations. She refers to such relationships as unthreatening but this does not make them void of power. The idea of establishing these relationships is aimed at giving power to women to be able to challenge patriarchal practices. Yet power also circulates among women themselves and the woman, the teacher who is responsible of modelling uses such power to enhance her students potential for constructing themselves differently.

> Tanya - I believe so much in transformation, the need for updating one's skills and metamorphosise into something different. There is no end to such process. I quarrel with my students because they feel I expect too much from them when I expect something different; when I ask of them to be innovative.

This reflects her philosophy of education. For her education involves the ability to change and for her such potential can be learnt through meeting people who are different and particularly those that open up spaces for change. As she says "the different people I meet that make me what I am."

SOME CONCLUSIONS

MOVEMENTS AND OSCILLATIONS

Maternal practices are ambivalent and highly volatile practices. They can be extremely oppressive to women but it is socially recognised that they are powerful enough to be controlled and regulated. Still, women and particularly the women participants in this research are actively engaged in maternal power networks by their attempts to subvert fixed maternal expectations. Teaching, being linked to maternal practices is another important practice of these women's challenges. Although women teachers are frequently devalued through their maternal connotations, their positions in schools and classroom can be influential in changing perspectives.

This study is not directly concerned with how teachers can utilise their positions as teachers to bring about social change. The philosophies of education of the participants show that their teaching is committed to social change in different ways. This study aims to bring about a change in social perspectives about women, mothering and teaching, by exploring the relation between them and presenting the participants' understandings of them. These are considered as ways of symbolising the maternal that go beyond established fixed ways of perceiving the woman, the teacher and the mother. I argued that in Malta there are few social symbolisations of the way women challenge their taken for granted maternal roles and this might give the impression that Maltese women do little to disrupt the conventional. Yet this does not mean that women do not do this every day in their own way. As Reneè in one of her letters stated

> Reneè - On a personal level, I have been disrupting the conventional culture for the last 25 years. Suffice it to mention the fact that I continued with my career in spite of all odds on my return to Malta, as a 26 year-old married woman.

> Again I postponed child bearing and when in 1984 I did have a son I found balance between my professional and my private life without any disruption.

This swaying between disruption and non-disruption of their usual lives is common to all women participants. They do not renounce mothering but mothering and mothering in the usual way is not enough for them. There is a kind of oscillation to and from the maternal. They go along with what is expected of them as women and make use of their maternal connotations to establish their selves at home, in school, within the community and in society. Yet they manage to mobilise rigid maternal practices and move beyond the maternal at the same time. They see themselves as good mothers and good teachers by being more than just mothers and teachers.

These women's fluctuations towards and away from the maternal and from what is socially expected of them, their movements from home to school, their resistances and conformities in their talk are all present in this thesis. The account of the Maltese socio-cultural factors that influence the relationship between womanhood, mothering and teaching and especially the genealogical study that traces the aspects that in different ways contribute to this relationship, focus more on social regulation and control on women. However, throughout this thesis, I sought to symbolise the maternal in a different way from the consistent images of the woman giving herself to her children either in class or at home. I wanted to symbolise women to be other than mothers. Yet as I argued at the beginning, considering that in Malta a woman "naturally" carries a maternal baggage it is difficult and not effective to go beyond the maternal without addressing it. Throughout the research, therefore I had contradictory feelings of wanting to symbolise the maternal and not symbolise it.

I chose to adopt subversive mimetic strategies that play with the usual understandings of the maternal. Teaching is itself a clear example of the desire to be

a mother and other than a mother. These teachers speak of their love for children, as well as about their love of knowledge. They talk about their need to have someone to take care of and the need to take care of oneself. The wish to move away from home, to open up spaces but, at the same time make up homely spaces elsewhere. The need for planning and order in one's life to be able to go beyond what is dictated, imposed and restrictive. The wish to establish close contacts with an/other woman/women and at the same time be different. They show that they need to be recognised as mothers and daughters but above all they want to be considered women.

Such oscillations between openness and control, between stories of subjection and subjectivisation and self-creation emerge from the theoretical framework of this research. I have explained in detail in Chapter Two how this study is built around the ideas, methods and strategies of Irigaray and Foucault. These two philosophers might appear to have little in common and in fact there are no studies that use them together to framework their research with women. Above all, in reading some of their most important works I realised that their work is similar in that they are both interested in starting with identifying socio-cultural limits to move beyond them. Foucault's works are concerned with how human beings are subjected to discipline and control as Irigaray's analyses are focused on the objectification of woman. Yet they both search for the various ways by which human beings make themselves subjects through their own practices of freedom. Throughout the research I have followed these parallel yet different threads in their work. I made use of their theories and methods to reflect on the issues raised by the participants but I have also used the participants' talk to go beyond them. In this way I have attempted to construct the research through an original strategy that intertwines the work of the

two established authors with those of women to establish them as producers of knowledge.

As a conclusion for this study I shall keep to the theme of movement and oscillations. I shall symbolise the maternal by referring again to the consistent fluctuations of some women teachers away and towards the maternal; their positions as women teachers and mothers as powerful; loving and knowledgeable at the same time, their contrasting views on the relationships between women; their ambivalent feelings towards their mothers and daughters and their struggles in thinking how such relationships could be better. These symbolisations touch on some of the important points in this thesis as they are taken out of conversations I had with some women participants regarding my interpretations of our previous conversations. Again the way the conversations are used here make me very much the mother of the research process in that they are in line with the main aims of this thesis. Yet I have tried not to draw lines to take these conversations further. I have also found that these women have taken something for themselves out of these conversations and they have continued to develop their own knowledges in the meantime. Therefore, these "conclusions" continue to symbolise the maternal but rather than being aimed to solve contradictions and level out fluctuations, they are intended to agitate thinking and generate further discussion.

Maternal Changes

At the beginning of this thesis I argued that being and becoming woman is highly related to the maternal even if one wants to move beyond the maternal. Throughout the thesis it becomes clear that what characterises being a woman is the instability of always becoming. The fluctuating movements towards and away from the maternal

symbolise the struggle of women to free themselves from these oppressions. Woman can be symbolised as such - as going through consistent changes and welcoming these changes because without them she stops becoming other than she is. These women's reflections capture their different ways of becoming women in relation to the maternal:

> Denise - You have to work hard at being a woman and being a mother. The fact that they involve a lot of changes is difficult. And there are only a few things that are not dependent on our social environment. What I mean is that for example that everybody assumes that because you are a woman you automatically fit into being a mother when you have a child. The fact that you have to adapt to such different lifestyles from the one that you are used to is a very, very deep hardship and the fact that society doesn't recognise this and does very little about it is extremely unfair and unjust.

> Tanya - My situation may be a bit different because I am not a mother. I am 37 and I was subject to media images of the woman having a different role. I remember that a mascara advert that presents a very feminine woman driving a car, being invited for dinner and being dressed up for it because she is wearing mascara is very influential. Mascara in fact is part of who I am. I do not go out without mascara. I grew up thinking of a woman not only as a mother. And this effected my lifestyle, my relationships in my life. Today that I am more mature and I wish to become a mother even though a single parent; this also goes beyond the usual conventions. I think that all these cycles in a woman are there and she is very much in control. She can orchestrate these cycles in the way she likes. So there is no need to kill the maternal. A woman can achieve fulfilment when and how she desires.

> Irigaray - Our urgent task is to refuse to submit to a desubjectivised social role, the role of the mother, which is dictated by an order subject to the division of labour- he produces, she reproduces- that walls us up in the ghetto of a single function. When did society ever ask fathers to choose between being men and being citizens? We do not have to give up being women to be mothers. (Irigaray 1993b:18)

Martina feels that women have more opportunities to do other things beside mother. The fact that she is managing to do a study for an education degree full time and take care of her four children is an example of this. This however, involves a constant struggle with many pressures of time, finance, child care provision and her own guilt feelings. She is aware that many women do not have the same child care support that

she gets from her husband. Yet she explains that the greatest struggle is with herself; to get rid of her attitude that she should do everything at home and to feeling guilty of making use of the opportunities to do other things in life

> Martina - I have been bred into this attitude ever since I was young. I grew up with the attitude that the mother is everything and that she should do everything without asking for help. My mother used to work besides taking care of us and because of this I felt she was more than a mother. Anyway she was a better mother. So I took up the opportunities available and become a teacher. Yet again I feel very attached to my children I find it hard to give it up. I still want to be there. I don't mind sharing but I don't want to give up the role of mothering to my husband.

Power/Love

Martina admits that it is the power that she experiences as a mother that does not make her want to share mothering her children with somebody else. She also attributes it to the deep maternal love that she feels towards her children but she admits that this is intertwined with desire for power. Being a teacher also shares this love/power relationship. It is generally assumed that wanting to become a teacher is a vocation, and in particular for women, includes the natural urges of love for children. Yet there is also the power of shaping their lives, of opening spaces for them, that attracts women to this profession. I argued that this power of love has often been used to control social behaviours of the population but I also pointed out that women teachers have used it to extend their powers beyond the home. They attempt to bring the maternal into the school and challenge conventional schooling practices.

> The relationship between power and freedom's refusal to submit cannot therefore be separated. The crucial problem of power is not that of voluntary servitude (how could we seek to be slaves?) At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an agonism- of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face to face confrontation which paralyses both sides than a permanent provocation. (Foucault 1983a:222)

Women as teachers and mothers in this sense, are involved in circulating power relations. The mothering aspect of their lives includes a constant struggle with submissive forces. At the same time, it is a source of constant "provocation" to exceed oneself and the limitations of the workplace. The maternal love of the teacher knows self-sacrifice but it also knows of self-love through becoming in relation to others, of caring for oneself also through such relationships. This is the power to take care of oneself, the freedom to engage in the ethical practices to cultivate and transform oneself in relation to others and at the same time be responsible for the other.

> Sister Kalcidonia - Why shouldn't women think about themselves as well? If you do not take care of yourself surely you are not able to take care of somebody else. You have to have certain qualities your self to help other persons develop certain qualities and care for their selves. You cannot give things to somebody which you do not have. You need to take care of your self also in terms of knowledge extend your knowledge. Otherwise you cannot grow your self and guide others to do the same.

Still, as Irigaray indicates there is the need to nourish one's own self. But how this is done involves a lot of oscillations between what is socially expected of oneself and the desire to love oneself, which is socially considered to be a taboo.

> Irigaray - *Love of self.* I am supposed to relate to my self, but how? The I is supposed to relate to the self, but how? By what mediation? What means? What instrument? And what are the two terms: The subject of love and the loved self?
>
> *Love of self* creates a particular movement, a kind of play between active and passive, in which, between me and me, there takes this double relationship, neither active nor truly passive [...]
>
> *Love of self.* How can I love myself? Who is who in this love. I relate to myself, I affect myself, I am affected by myself. That which affects me is an attribute of mine... (Irigaray 1993a: 59-60)

Desire/Knowledge

Irigaray continues to explain that women's love of self is closely related to love of others.

> Woman is loved/loves herself through the children she *gives birth to*. That she brings *out*. (Irigaray 1993a: 63)

The participants' love of self, as I have shown through several examples, takes place through the children they "bring out" through their teaching. Giving birth to somebody includes the power to be involved in the self-formation of others. This love of self that comes through mothering and teaching is also coupled with the desire for knowledge and the joys and pleasure of imparting it to their students. It includes the joys of building relationships with students, of getting to know them closely. It also involves the desire for knowledge, which is also a desire for power to create oneself and establish one self as a knowledgeable person. Simultaneously it is the desire to go beyond oneself: the wish to extend oneself.

> Ethos also implies a relationship with others, insofar as the care of the self enables one to occupy his rightful position in the city, the community or interpersonal relationships, whether as a magistrate or a friend. And the care of the self also implies a relationship with the other insofar as proper care of the self requires listening to the lessons of the master. One needs a guide, a counsellor, a friend someone who will be truthful to you. (Foucault 1996a:437)

Power, self- creation, and knowledge are linked through a desire for transformation of their own selves, having important figures to emulate as well as being models for others. The women participants have given many examples when they acted as significant models for others through their teaching and maternal practices. But as I explained, women have often been represented as knowledge reproducers, rarely as knowledge producers. In this way they have rarely been presented as persons "who could be admired and put forward as an example", as "someone who practised freedom in a certain way" (Foucault1996a:436).

In this research, the symbolisation of women as creators of their own philosophies of education is particularly aimed to do this. The representation of women as creators of themselves and creators of knowledge keeps them related to maternal creation but as

Maria puts it "But not only." Maria's particular understanding of knowledge goes beyond the maternal. It partakes of pleasure and the erotic which represents her desire for freedom, continuous change and exploration. It is also a wish to relate to others to the world around her without losing a sense of who she is, which Maria expresses in this way:

Of my country I am,
I am of my friends, my relatives,
I am your daughter
and above all your mother,

Your wife, above all, I know…
I am also for you
and with you - also
but not only

Because I am woman, yes
and no, and in spite of that I don't exactly know
what it means. So now
has come the time for me to know

Let me keep you in me
during the search, and if
you cannot help
don't bother me

Somewhere inside me I know,
because she wants to liberate herself, there is
I as well for me. As well,
although not only.

Keep me in you
as I spread myself in me
and if you cannot understand
do not let me down

If I am belittled now
How can I ever free myself
How can I find myself
Explained as the whole woman

That I know and that I want to be
For you as well
For myself as well
As well… but not only
But Not Only

Establishing Female Genealogies

The moves between wanting to create oneself and developing relationships with others is clearly very much related. In this thesis these movements have emerged as very important aspects in these women's creation of themselves as subjects. In fact, the aim of symbolising the maternal through these women's ways of conceiving themselves as women, mothers and teachers is mainly that of creating links between women. If these women are presented through their subversive practices of mothering, their practices of the care of their selves and through their philosophies of education this is done to start conversations with other women who come across this study. I also hope that this research creates spaces for women to meet different women and in doing so they continue to create themselves in different ways.

Throughout this thesis I have given examples of how women as teachers and mothers make themselves in relation to important women in their lives. Such practices are thought of as practices of the care for the self even if these relations are troublesome and conflicting. I also argued that one has to take note of the sources of conflict in women's relationships with other women. It is not enough to symbolise women's relationships in exclusively positive terms. There are ambivalent, fluctuating movements in wanting to be like others/ like their mothers and in their perspective on relationships between women. These women participants in fact tell stories of incompatibilities and affinities with other women.

> Tanya - There is an oscillating factor in relation to the mother in that we struggle so much to be like her and not be like her. There is this sort of love hate/relationship.
>
> Martina - I see the troublesome relations I had with my mother before she died when I was 19. I realise that they are very similar to the kind of relation I have with my daughter. She is always attacking, attacking. I tell her something she answers back and I think this is a kind of relationship we ought to have as mother and daughter. Still I know that we have something that links us and

bonds us to each other. I feel that I sometimes need to tell her "But you know that I love you?"

Denise - Yes, my mother thinks of me too much as her daughter. She doesn't see me as an adult woman and she doesn't relate to me as an adult- we relate to each other as women. I would like it if my mother gives me permission to call her "Helen" rather than "Mamà". And this is something that I would like to do with Rebecca when/if she becomes a mother or even earlier. I would like to tell her " You can call me Denise!" Not that I wouldn't be there for her but I would like her to be in control of the relationships that develop between us as well. She doesn't remain the dependent party in the relationship. I want to be an adult with my mother not her daughter anymore.

Therefore, most of the women participants agree that relationships between women can be better. However, they are critical of the fact that they are symbolised exclusively in negative terms. They also see the danger of representing bad relationships between women in stereotypical symbolisations; the wicked step mother, the strict female boss or head, the competitive colleague. They believe that one can easily find examples of such stereotypes but they believe that conflicting relationships cannot fit stereotypes. As these women explain, one has to look at relationships that work to learn from them.

Denise - I try to understand the conflicts that I have with my mother. I realise that it is mainly because we are of two different generations and have completely different ideas of how woman should be. I think that this conflict does not fit into the usual myths and stereotypes of mother/daughter relations. I have a particular conflict with my mother -she tries hard to make me the kind of woman she wants me to be and she thinks that she has to do this for my own good. Obviously I have other ideas of what is good for me and I struggle for my freedom.

Tanya - I think that between women there is not a sense of camaraderie as there is between men. But I think that this is mostly because loving relationships between women are taboo; they are thought of as gay relationships. Relationships between women are prohibited.
I want to say that I feel that I always feel better speaking with a woman - I do not feel encroached.

Martina- I think that there is a competitive element between women- but it is because women have less opportunities than men. So they have to compete more and with each other. At the same time I feel that I have quite good relationships with other women and I feel more at ease when I speak to them.

Some of these women even propose strategies that help develop relationships with other women in more positive terms.

> Denise - One has to refuse to live by certain negative images of women's relationships that have an effect on the way relationships develop. I feel quite funny because I hear other women speak negatively about relationships between women that they don't get along well. And I don't experience it at all. And I feel a bit strange about it- am I missing something? It makes me think whether there is more of the myth in what people are saying than the truth.

Denise feels that one should resist stereotypes and these make us perceive relationships between women in a bad light from the start. She admits that however she has no solution to ameliorating relations with her mother. Ideally, she says, "I could sit down with her and talk things out" but again she is very much afraid she hurts her.

Sister Kalcidonia's experience of living in a convent with different women being close to them and for long periods of time can also be enlightening.

> Sister Kalcidonia - We come from different places, we have different education, we were not brought up in the same way and I sometimes ask myself, "How do we live here all together?" I think that one factor that helps is the fact that we have a common aim in our religious lives- we also have our founder Maria Theresa Spinelli who has an impact on our life together. Yet there is something else that helps us live together. It is not that we do not have conflicts: we are different, we have our particular ways of thinking but we respect each other and love each other at the same time. We frequently say amongst ourselves if there is not something that hold us together here what makes us stay together. And I think that there is one answer for that - It is love and accepting the others including their differences ourselves what is it that makes us.

In conclusion, relationships between women have their own individual stories. Yet these stories give different understandings and perspectives on the problems of such relationships which might be relevant to different women and in different circumstances. One therefore cannot give definitions of what female genealogies are and how they should be developed. Irigaray in fact doesn't give one definite

description of such definitions. As Luisa Muraro observes, Irigaray's discussion of this theme is related to the practice of oral, non-academic teaching. "Irigaray's principal political practice is teaching and I think that female genealogies are the most successful fruits of this practice" (Muraro 1994 :320).

Muraro here is referring to Irigaray's involvement in women's politics and political organisations. Yet her reflections on how Irigaray's commitment in developing relationships between women is connected with her teaching activities resonates with the teaching practices of many of the teacher participants in this study. Sister Kalcidonia's experiences at school. Sister Kalcidonia gives examples how schools can be important spaces were maternal genealogies can be developed and how the particular philosophies of education are transmitted as well as others are allowed to grow.

> Sister Kalcidonia - We also try to establish good relationships with those teachers that teach in our schools. They tell us that they find lots of love here and they find it easy to have good relationships between them and help each other. Sandra for example a student teacher did her teaching practice with us and throughout that period she got acquainted with the principles and values that guide our schools. She told me "I feel that you have helped me so much to develop myself as a teacher. I took up many of your teaching practices but them I felt I had enough spaces to develop others that were my own.

It is important that certain principles and values are passed on from one generation and another of teachers. However spaces for development are important because these recognise the change of times. These spaces for change are to be created especially because through them differences between women, their different education, their different styles and their different knowledges emerge.

In conclusion, the symbolisation of the maternal in this thesis hopes to have created spaces for the representation of women and the generation of their differences. The

women represented here have similar experiences of teaching and mothering, but these same practices are sources for their different self-creations. Moreover their maternal links might seem to group them within limited sites of action yet they are capable to go beyond this limited grouping. Through the symbolisation of women in this way therefore, I hope to create opportunities of encounter and connection between women as well as encourage processes of self re-creation.

APPENDIX

TELLING STORIES OF CONVERSATIONS WITH WOMEN PARTICIPANTS

My research engagements with the women participants mainly took place through conversational forms. I met each participant separately at least twice during the research period but I also organised meetings with some of the participants as a group.

I started off the research by having separate meetings with eight women teachers: Doris, Ben, Nancy, Antoinette, Maria, Martina, Denise and Renee, all who have children of their own. The conversations developed along a few open-ended questions intended to stimulate discussion. The ways the conversations progressed were particular to each woman as every one of them focused her talk on issues that pertained to her experiences as a woman, mother and teacher. However I noticed that the conversations were at the same time relatively homogeneous in that all women have children of their own. I therefore contacted three other women teacher participants: Tanya, Joanne and Sister Kalcidonia and had individual conversations with them on issues similar to those discussed with the previous eight. Again, the concerns of each participant during the conversations varied.

Nevertheless, similar issues and problems kept coming up during each individual conversation even if the women's outlooks were particular. I saw this as an opportunity for women to get together and discuss some of the important issues that emerged during our first conversations. Other conversations were held with Nancy, Doris, Ben, Antoinette, Sister Kalcidonia, Joanne and Martina as a group. Our discussion focused on issues and concerns that were common to us all but again our different outlooks continued to emerge.

The group conversations were therefore built upon an analysis of what was said during our first individual meetings, seeking to bring out further ideas and explore them more deeply. The women by now had come to know me better but the group conversational arrangements made them feel more open to join in the discussion without expecting me to lead it. The women participants themselves expressed their joy at having had the opportunities to meet other women, tell their own stories, listen to the stories of others, raise arguments and be able to agree and/or disagree and at times, even be controversial.

A few months after these group conversations took place and after having continued to analyse the transcripts of individual and group conversations, I arranged for separate meetings with each woman once again. This time our talk was entirely focused on the very particular ideas and interests of each woman. In fact, I set up different guiding questions for each conversation with each participant. Again the dynamics of the conversations were different in that the women had more space to talk about themselves and tell of their own ways of caring for their selves and others. They also had ample time to articulate their own philosophies of education.

The processes of thinking about and interpreting the participants' views as well as writing up the first rough drafts of the thesis made me become intrigued with what the participants thought of my views and I felt the need to meet the women again to discuss these. I decided again for the group meetings so women could feel more at ease to air their dissenting views. However not all the women participants were able to join the group conversations. I therefore met some of the participants individually again to discuss my representations of their knowledges. In one case it was not possible to meet the participant in person. I therefore sent a copy of the draft write-up of the sections where she was concerned and she wrote her feedback in a letter.

In sum, as I argued earlier I do not claim to have set the ideal arrangements for ideal speech situations. I have sought to create opportunities so that as women we could speak to each other and allow for an exchange of words, of passions and desires, of joys and pleasures and sometimes even allow for an exchange of positions as subjects and objects of research.

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