

Framing the work of history as a project of 'recovery' seems, through its emphasis on the extraction of discrete and lost objects, located on the terrain of Socratic inquiry.

In attempting to "undo" our Socratic stance and approach the Dionysian, we ask, rather than 'recovering,' what would it mean to birth history? To strip out all abstraction and consider, very materially and earnestly, giving birth to history in its gory/glory, its promise and pain, pleasure and danger?

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche writes that "for the genuine poet, metaphor is no rhetorical figure, but an image which takes the place of something else, something he can really see before him as a substitute for a concept" (43). Nietzsche here invites us to inhabit the foundational metaphor of his text: birth. For he chooses birth, not death or suicide, for his title, and his text is suffused with vivid invocations of birth - "womb" (61, 86, 87), "foetation" (67), "maieutic" (75), among others - that not only "take the place" of the concept of tragedy's origins, but attempt to take us to that place, bring us into birth-as-tragedy. Nietzsche describes how Demeter desires to give birth to Dionysos again and again (52). Yet the drives also make births. "the continuous evolution of art is bound up with the duality of the Apolline and the Dionysiac in much the same way as reproduction depends on there being two sexes which coexist in a state of perpetual conflict interrupted only occasionally by periods of reconciliation" (14). Dionysos and Apollo "exist side by side, mostly in open conflict stimulating and provoking one another to give birth to ever-new more vigorous offspring" (14). Attic tragedy is one offspring, the product of their "mysterious marriage after a long preceding struggle," which "was crowned with such a child - who is both Antigone and Cassandra in one" (28).

Apollo and Dionysos are siblings (104) who, through the generativity of their conflict, are constantly birthing art, or music, or tragedy. This duality both creates and dissolves the boundary between state (e.g. pregnant-person OR fetus) and process. They are neither solely being born nor giving birth. This constitution and dissolution of boundaries in birth is, moreover, constituted by their relationship; as the "transfiguring genius of the *principium individuationis*" (Apollo) and as the one who breaks "the spell of individuation [laying open the path] to the Mothers of Being, to the innermost core of things" (Dionysos), the brothers are birth (76). For birth, the making of two from one, is at once an individuation and a dissolution. Obliterating the singularity of subjectivity via the womb, birth issues forth a new 'I'; in issuing forth a new 'I,' birth obliterates the singularity of subjectivity.

Perhaps unwittingly, Nietzsche makes difficult the attribution of the Apolline or Dionysiac to either gender; constitution and dissolution are equally integral in the process (and state) of birth. Nietzsche's foundational metaphor, then, suggests a bidirectionality between birth and the Dionysiac, which "consumes this entire world of appearances, thereby allowing us to sense, behind that world and through its destruction, a supreme, artistic, primal joy in the womb of the Primordial Unity" (105). As a process between these two forces, birth is detached from stable categorizations of gender, which are themselves called into question; these categorizations, one might argue, confine birth's possibility in a narrow Socratic vision. Rather, the temporal and

spatial dissolutions of birth resists the universalizing essentialisms, for instance, that the sign of 'woman' has been prone to -- what Nietzsche calls in "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" the "hardening and congealing of a metaphor." Detaching birth and gender might be a way to bracket the charge of misogyny (one of what DGB calls "dis-eases") without re-fetishizing woman through valorization of the feminine (which it can be argued Irigaray does in her persuasive critique that Nietzsche erases and replaces mother with the male god in "When the Gods are Born").

Perhaps we can end by considering Mary Toft, who in 1726 caused a sensation when she claimed to have given birth to a series of rabbits, offering demonstrations that befuddled laypersons and doctors alike.



Under the threat of a painful examination, Toft eventually admitted that she had inserted dead rabbits into herself and pretended to go into labor. Even if we consider the possible financial reasons shaping Toft's performance, there's something here in her uncanny imagining and monstrous mimesis (to read Irigaray back into this without claiming the maternal feminine) of birth. Toft both imitates and subverts conventional understandings of birth, simultaneously

unraveling and reconstituting our conceptions of birth. Too often histories fall into one of these categories: the criticism (dissolution) or the classic history (constitution), which builds out of a framework that already exists without questioning it. According to Nietzsche, neither can produce good art on its own. And in history, choosing one over the other runs a risk of returning marginal gains; criticism takes away without proposing alternatives, classic history risks rehashing old tropes in running new evidence through known machinery. So we ask, what does the 'machinery' of birth do for history?