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Girls gone bad: An essay on “Existence” in Chytilová's Daisies

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Abstract
This essay re-examines the subversive potential of Vera Chytilová’s film Daisies and elaborates on its possibilities for exploring (feminine) existence as difference in relation to work, (re)production, and consumption. Drawing on the work of Luce Irigaray and critical fem(me)inity studies, it theorizes fem(me)nine existence as multiple and ambiguous, and explores its possible materialization through a poetic “re-representation” of the film. Through the ambiguous becoming of the film’s protagonists, the Maries, the tension between the “undoing” patriarchal of orders of exchange and their tenacity is discussed in relation to the emergence of non-patriarchal forms of organizing. The essay contributes to organizational research on difference by introducing a critical fem(me)nine lens and by directing attention towards the struggle between existing only for and through an Other – and not existing at all. This allows for an examination of the disruptive potential of difference while further accounting for possible tensions with regards to its materialization. It is argued that fem(me) theorizations of film can be useful for exploring such matters differently as they open up ways to playfully and creative accentuate ambiguity and multiplicity rather than reducing “it” to sameness.
In Věra Chytilová’s Daisies (Sedmikrásky, 1966), we first meet the Maries sunbathing on a dock (Figure 1).

Marie I: *Everything is going bad in this world.*

Marie II: *What do you mean “everything”*?

Marie I: *Well, everything.*

Marie II: *In this world…*

Marie I: *You know what? If everything is going bad…*

Marie II: *…Ah…?*

Marie I: *…we are going…*

Marie II: *…bad…*

Marie I: *…as…*

Marie II: *…well…*

Marie I: *Right!*

**KEYWORDS**
difference, existence, fem(me)nine, film, Irigaray

1 | PRELUDE

In Věra Chytilová’s *Daisies* (Sedmikrásky, 1966), we first meet the Maries sunbathing on a dock (Figure 1).
Marie II: Do you mind?

Marie: No, I don't!

Their decision to “go bad” is followed by a slap and a change of direction. The Maries reappear amid a meadow dressed in daisies, no longer in thrall to an invincible Other. Moving freely though color rather than as black and white marionettes, they destructively play with feminine existence outside of patriarchal orders.

What will become of them now?

2 | INTRODUCTION

Though Chytilová’s Daisies now is considered a defining work of the Czech New Wave, it was originally banned for not conforming to the sociopolitical and esthetic ideals of the Communist state (Gray, 2016; Newland, 2017). Chytilová herself argued that the film was an attempt to criticize – rather than celebrate – the idle attitudes of her young protagonists (the Maries) but leftist contemporaries such as Jean-Luc Godard were appalled by the joyous representation of excess and waste (Bass, 2013; Soukup, 1998). These two disparate readings of the film, as either critical or celebratory, can be understood as grounded in a struggle over determining the moral meaning of the Maries’ behaviors. This originates from a stance where one assumes that they are acting up against and in relation to an Other – may that Other be one of enjoyment or not – rather than simply existing in and for themselves.

More recently, Daisies has been interpreted as a feminist expression and focus has been placed on how the Maries subvert patriarchal orders by “rewriting” their gendered selves (see Lim, 2001) through transgressive expressions of femininity (e.g., Bass, 2013; Newland, 2017; Parvulescu, 2006). Instead of focusing on what they represent morally, socially, and politically, these readings have explored their oscillation between subject positions and ideals, and how they thereby “trouble” orders grounded on demarcation (Stephenson, 2018). It has been noted that this polyvocality, reinforced by the film’s Dadaistic style, makes it difficult to reduce it to a stance either for or against rules and reason (Lim, 2001; Soukup, 1998). Instead, the film comes into being as an excessive form of existence: a slippery treat that through fragments, flowers, disruptions, and butterflies allows us to explore the Maries as difference. What can we then learn from two girls2 who have “gone bad”? And how do they materialize in relation to a capitalist, accumulative Other?

Building on these questions, this essay re-examines the subversive potential of Chytilová’s Daisies and elaborates on its possibilities for exploring (feminine) existence as difference in relation to work, (re)production, and consumption. It departs from Irigaray’s (1985a, 1985b) theorization of the (im)possibility of the feminine, and its relation to an Other, and builds on work of critical fem(me)ninity studies (e.g., Dahl, 2011, 2012; Hoskin, 2019; Hoskin & Taylor, 2019) to theorize fem(me)nine existence as multiple and ambiguous, rather than premised on absence or lack. The possible materialization of such difference is then explored through a poetic “re-representation” (Glesne, 1997) of Chytilová’s film, to further accentuate the ambiguity and multiplicity of the expression, and to highlight the struggle between existing only for and through an Other – and not existing at all. It is argued that the Maries’ escapades can be seen as a “feminist politics of undoing” (Halberstam, 2011) as the girls materialize both as an alternative form of existence – as well as a form of resistance – that does not simply challenge the place of signifiers, subject positions, and expressions of desire but rather their ontological organizing. Through their sultry eyes and insatiable appetite (for chicken and annihilation), they, instead, form a volatile threat that cannot be easily inscribed with the production of value, signs, and sexuality – a materialization of difference itself.

The essay contributes to organizational research on difference by offering a fem(me) theorization (Hoskin, 2017, 2019) of existence, and by examining its possible materialization within organizing structures based on categorizations (see Höpfl, 2007; Knights, 2015; Knights & Kerfoot, 2004; Phillips et al., 2014) such as subject/object, virgin/whore, inside/outside, and production/reproduction. By focusing on what fem(me)ninity “makes possible” (Dahl, 2011;
McCann, 2018), the essay builds on organizational scholars who have engaged with Irigaray’s work on (feminine) difference in a performative way (e.g., Fotaki et al., 2014; Harding et al., 2013; Vachhani, 2012, 2019) and elaborates on the tension between the “undoing” patriarchal of orders of exchange and their tenacity. This allows for a further examination of the disruptive potential of difference (e.g., Gilmore et al., 2019; Pullen & Rhodes, 2015b; Pullen, 2018; Tyler, 2019) while also directing attention towards the difficulties of “not-existing” according to an Other. It is argued that fem(me) theorizations of film (e.g., Hoskin & Taylor, 2019) can be useful for exploring such matters differently as they open up ways to playfully and creative accentuate ambiguity and multiplicity rather than reducing “it” to sameness. The essay can thus be read as a celebratory expression of a bad that does not stand in relation to good; for girls which are not one.

3 | EXPLORING EXISTENCE THROUGH FEM(ME)NINITY AS DIFFERENCE

This essay was birthed through cinematic fascination and grew as a mesh of fem(me)nine theory, organizational scholarship, and work on film. What follows is thus not a tight-knitted problematization leading up to a lack but a play with difference and its implications for understanding work, (re)production, and consumption. That is, to explore “that” which cannot be expressed within what we tend to “repeat, represent, and reproduce” as given (Irigaray, 1985a), and which often dictates our imaginaries and practices of organizing (also Höpfl, 2007; Knights, 2015; Knights & Kerfoot, 2004; Phillips et al., 2014; Pullen & Rhodes, 2015a, 2015b). More than anything, it is an attempt to “think” difference outside of categorizations such as identity, opposition, analogy, and resemblance – all premised upon demarcation (Grosz, 1994), while further acknowledging the organizing structures and processes which may impede its materialization.

Irigaray is a foremother of work on (feminine) difference. She has, for long, problematized the socio-symbolic erasure of women within culture, language, and philosophy and further explored the possibilities of speaking “(as) woman.” That is, from the perspective of difference itself. For Irigaray, “woman” is an ontological multiplicity impossible to encapsulate representationally: an abhorrent flow that threatens the solid orders that contribute to exclusion and sameness. Her writings have, however, been the subject of much debate. Most typically, as noted by Whitford (1991), various attempts to determine the meaning of her work have led some to consider her an essentialist. To interpret Irigaray as such can, however, be seen as reading her through the socio-symbolic order that she sets out to problematize. That is, to reduce any attempt to speak “(as) women” to something which must be understood through “man.” This implies a literal reading where the signification of words such as woman/women/feminine is determined a priori (also Fotaki et al., 2014), which reinforces a signifying link between materializations of sex, expressions of gender, and sexual identity where the heterosexual, cis man is regarded as the norm. With that, women are conflated with the socio-symbolic category of “Woman” and marked by a lack of both sexual specificity and subjectivity.

For Irigaray, this tendency is understood as part of specul(a)rization: a patriarchal process of organizing where women are circulated as objects, signs, or commodities. Instead of allowing for an exchange amongst equals, women only function as a means of demarcation that contributes to the (re)production of the same. Writing through Carroll’s Alice, Irigaray thus notes that woman is either without a “self” or has multiple “selves” appropriated “by them [men], for them, according to their [men’s] needs and desires” (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 17, emphasis in original). As existence is then granted through a representational, socio-symbolic Other that continuously denies difference, she cannot exist for “herself.” Thus, contrary to an essentialist position – a description of what “Woman” is – Irigaray’s feminine can be understood as an (im)possible site of becoming marked by its absence in culture, language, and philosophy. She is impossible to think or express through specular systems, though it is this “(im)possibility” that makes her a possible expression of difference itself. Speaking “(as) woman” is then seen as a form of resistance towards how a woman “appears in, and is symbolized by, the western cultural imaginary” (Whitford, 1991, p. 60), which thereby “troubles” neutralized, phallogocentric orders grounded in demarcation, mirroring, and sameness.
While most often grounded in embodied and subjective experiences (e.g., Blair & Hoskin, 2015), similar lines of thought are unfolding within critical fem(me)inity or fem(me) studies (see Dahl, 2011, 2012; Hoskin, 2017, 2019; McCann, 2018). By problematizing the reduction, and associated devaluation, of femininity to a reflection of a patriarchal desire, gaze, and order, scholars have argued for the importance of approaching femininity outside of specular images. This by further problematizing the organizing structures and processes that minimizes (feminine) difference by disciplining bodies through categories such race, gender, class, sexuality, and ideals related to beauty and normative ableness (Hoskin & Hirschfeld, 2018). From this perspective, fem(me)inity, or fem(me), is not a category that stands in relation to, and thereby comes to exist through man or the masculine (e.g., expressions of butch) but a stance in and for herself – as an adjective, a verb, a noun, an embodiment, an erotic, a theory, and a politics all at once (Hoskin, 2017). Through difference, she bursts out of normative confines premised upon demarcation (Hoskin, 2019; Hoskin & Hirschfeld, 2018), she “steals the show (she is the show) of difference, but she cannot be fixed as a certain effect ‘in itself’” (Duggan & McHugh, 1996, p. 154, emphasis in original).

It is thus important to note that the fem(me) – much like Deleuze and Guattari’s “girl” – does not necessarily signify a “woman,” but encapsulates an array of expressions that play with the bounds of patriarchal femininity (“Woman”). As Hoskin (2017) notes, fem(me)s include, though are not limited to, “sassy queer men; unapologetically sexual straight women; trans women; crip-bodied femmes who refuse to be desexualized or degendered; and femmes of color who refuse to approximate white beauty norms” (99). What brings these expressions and embodiments together is their play with ambiguity that challenges the naturalized ideals of patriarchal femininity and the binary categories that support its materialization (Dahl, 2012; Hoskin & Taylor, 2019). It is thus not a matter of what she is but rather what she does (McCann, 2018) and makes possible (Dahl, 2011) personally, performatively, politically, and materially. That is, how she materializes as difference by refusing to be reduced to a surface mirroring man or a materialization of biological essence.

Building on the work on Halberstam’s (2011), Hoskin and Taylor (2019) thereby argue that fem(me)inity is a form of resistance that materializes through its own “failure” to perform according to idealized forms of existence (also McCann, 2018). As such, fem(me) comes into being as an alternative “figuration” that both constitutes (exists) and transgresses (resists) its own representation (Dahl, 2011). Both Irigaray’s feminine and fem(me)inity can then be understood as means that ontologically “trouble” categorizations rather than simply challenging them in an antagonistic manner.3 Reading these ways of “speaking” alongside each other allows for the formation of a productive assemblage (McCann, 2018) between the personal and the political, as well as the embodied and the ontological, and a theorization of (feminine) existence as difference. In what follows, the possible materialization of such will be explored further through a poetic “re-representation” (Glesne, 1997) of Chytilová’s Daisies.

A PLAY WITH CHYTILOVÁ’S CINEMATIC EXPRESSION

Film can, arguably, support the examination of the performative possibilities (and failures) of difference in a viable analytical time frame, while also accentuating expressions of ambiguity and multiplicity. While film has not yet been used to explore difference from an organizational perspective, scholars have employed it as a means for analyzing gender and gendering within organizing structures and processes (e.g., Bell & Sinclair, 2016; Panayiotou, 2010, 2015). More generally, film is seen as both reflecting and contributing to the (re)production of ideologies and inequalities through narrow, gendered representations, and spectator positions (Doane et al., 1984; Mulvey & Backman Rogers, 2015) which often has been problematized and analyzed using semiotic and psychoanalytic means (Smelik, 2016). It has, however, been noted that such approaches possibly reduce ambiguity, uncertainty, and thus difference as they are premised upon representational categories of recognition (Huygens, 2007).

Alternative means for exploring difference cinematically is thus needed, and some have argued that a focus on camera and editing techniques, disruptions in image and speech, and distortions of time-space could accentuate and enable its expression when both producing and analyzing film (e.g., Bainbridge 2008; Bolton, 2011; Halberstam, 2011).
Building on this, the following "re-representation" of Daisies re-examines the film's subversive potential using deconstruction and disconnection (Huygens, 2007) instead of directing attention to symbolism and matters such as plot structure, character development, the meaning of behavior, and reductive gazes and/or angles. It thereby seeks to embody fem(me)ninity as an expression that is not restricted to phallogocentric and "rational" forms of knowledge-production (Irigaray, 1985b) while further exploring its performative potential. This aligns with Hoskin and Taylor's (2019) and Halberstam's (2011) use of cultural expressions, art, and aesthetics to express how queering – or rather in this case, fem(me)-nizing – can be used for examining the "undoing" of patriarchal orders of exchange and that which possibly impedes its unfolding.

4.1 | Summary of Daisies

Though Daisies is rather "plot-less," it feels necessary to provide a summary of the film and its expression. As outlined in the prelude, the film begins with Marie I and Marie II sunbathing on a dock, while contemplating their inability to "do" anything in the world they inhabit. We are introduced to them without history or "proper name" (Irigaray, 1985b), and thus arguably without an Oedipalized historical lineage (Halberstam, 2011). They are not sisters, mothers, or wives, and their ties to others remain unaccounted for. The lack of own names can be understood as both an "archetypal dismissal" of the reduction of women to interchangeable objects (Newland, 2017) and a flirtation with the two Marys of Christianity: the virgin and the whore that together become one (Parvulescu, 2006). Obviously troubled, yet in a seemingly detached manner, the girls decide to "go bad" (or in some translations "spoiled") as they believe the world to be bad too. Marie II then slaps Marie I and they reappear in a meadow full of daisies, leaving the spectator to interpret what "being bad" might entail. We go on to follow the Maries through a series of seemingly purposeless escapades marked by frantic play, idleness, and joyous consumption without exchange. An almost machinic desire for something unspoken is, however, driving them forward, as they eagerly devour everything that comes their way while exploring "what matters" (Stephenson, 2018). While doing so, they oscillate between conforming to gendered orders in an exaggerated manner, being completely oblivious to any idealized expectations, and desperately seeking to exist for the same Other they simultaneously reject.

While Daisies begins with the Maries "going bad" and ends with them attempting to undo what they have become, the film is constructed around several cyclical elements (both within scenes and throughout the film) that resist a "straight" notion of temporality. That is, one grounded in a heteropatriarchal idea of "succession, progress, and development" (Halberstam, 2011). The Maries can thus be seen as failing to conform to the subject position of "Woman" and her assigned (re)productive role within capitalist, accumulative relations. For instance, on more than one occasion they are wined and dined by elderly men (e.g., 00.06.32/00.24.09). In these encounters, the protagonists mock the men rather than mirror them, going on to dispose of their hosts rather than reciprocating by offering themselves sexually. They also play with the possibilities of "undoing" their selves altogether by, for example, violently cutting each other up into pieces only to continue interacting with one another as animated fragments (00.52.58) (also Lim 2001).

Both in between and within scenes, the frame is filled with flashing images of close-ups of padlocked doors, flowers, butterflies, lichen, and still images of body parts and faces. Many of these objects also appear throughout the film in various settings, making it difficult to determine any clear meaning, chain of signification, or "role" as others to subjects. As noted by Thomas (2012, p. 254), "Like Dada art, the film [Daisies] dispenses with Cartesian logic by stringing together in a non sequitur fashion random and mutually disconnected scenes." This is reinforced by camera and editing techniques, such as animation, use of colored filters, and cross-cuts in between scenes, which playfully animate the expression while leaving the spectator suspended somewhere in between fantasy and reality (Soukup, 1998). The Maries' broken, open-ended, and often intertextual dialog also lends itself more to poetic speculation than sensemaking. For example, (00.50.05):
Marie I: Nobody is paying any attention to us! What if we are lacking something? People don’t realize it is freezing in the morning.

Marie II: What are you thinking about?

Marie I: See how you look.

Combined, these elements contribute to a fragmented and hurried spectator experience where the scenes, images, and dialogs do not “connect” linearly, but rather through deconstruction and disconnection (Huygens, 2007) which, much like the Maries themselves, fails to conform to a unified (feminine) whole. Without such ground, it becomes difficult to read the Maries’ behavior as a stance for or against a capitalist, accumulative Other. If we instead allow them to exist as multiple and ambiguous they could, however, give rise to non-patriarchal organizational imaginaries that do not function by means of “representation and recognition” (sameness) (Huygens, 2007), but through ambiguity and uncertainty (difference) (Bainbridge, 2008). What then, can we learn from them “going bad”? And how can we explore their possible materialization?

4.2 | Methodological notes on approaching Daisies differently

To explore Daisies along these lines, four scenes were chosen, read through a fem(me)nine lens, and then “re-represented” poetically (Glesne, 1997) to write the Maries “out” of categories and chains to unity (Irigaray, 1985a). This to grant them an “un-compromising and unapologetically all encompassing” existence (see Hoskin & Hirschfeld, 2018) and thus the possibility to speak “(as) woman”. A poetic “re-representation” can, arguably, support this as it emerges from an experimentation with words, style, montage, form, and expression (Glesne, 1997; Leavy, 2010), and in this case moving image. It is then not confined to representing or interpreting the “object” of analysis but seeks to engage with it to promote openness, reflection, and affectivity amongst readers. As such, the following account seeks to accentuate “that” which cannot be fully encapsulated representationally in Daisies, though is made possible through Chytilová’s use of Dadaistic camera- and editing techniques. Rather than being a blueprint for understanding difference (Grosz, 1994), it is a fem(me) play that provokes rather than explains, and that refuses to be reduced to an either/or stance (Duggan and McGlynn, 1996). It can thus be understood as both an analytic engagement with and a poetic performance of Chytilová’s work.

A poetic, dislocated style of writing was chosen to extend the “terrain of what can be expressed” (Burke, 1981, p. 303) to avoid the construction of categories, fixed subject positions, and ideals (also Fotaki et al., 2014; Vachhani, 2012, 2019). This approach follows scholars who have noted how poetic inquiry (Glesne, 1997; van Amsterdam & van Eck, 2019; Wu, 2020; Zhang, 2020) or writing differently (e.g., Gilmore et al., 2019; Katila, 2019; Pullen, 2018; Vachhani, 2019) can be used for “troubling” orders grounded in demarcation, mirroring and sameness, as well as knowledge production premised upon the exclusion of difference (Beavan, 2019; Fotaki et al., 2014; Höpfl, 2000; Phillips et al., 2014; Pullen & Rhodes, 2015b). This further aligns with Irigary’s broader philosophical project, and her critique against phallogocentric forms of “rational” knowledge-production, while also echoing Dadaism playful resistance to esthetic conformity (Thomas, 2012).

The “re-representation” emerged through a discursive, material, and affective immersion with Chytilová’s cinematic expression, and was constructed through a play with notes taken while watching the film (e.g., on behaviors, images, camera angles, changes in colors, sounds, patterns of speech as well as disruptions) as well as parts of the Maries’ dialog (throughout marked in italics). Irigaray’s (1985a, 1985b) work on the feminine, as well as Dahl’s (2011, 2012) and Hoskin’s (2019; also, Hoskin & Hirschfeld, 2018; Hoskin & Taylor, 2019) theorizations of fem(me)ninity, were used as means for exploring (feminine) difference intertextually when analyzing the film and writing the account. Close attention was paid to contradictions and disruptions in the Maries’ speech and behaviors, as well as their material play...
with boundaries. For instance, in the way they pull apart and put together various substances with their mouths and/or hands, thereby distorting their characteristics, forms, and bounds (e.g., 01.03.11), and thus subject-object and inside-outside dichotomies. Their interplay with themselves, each other, and others was also taken into account as their ambiguity troubles strict demarcations between self-other, and therefore the possibility of mirroring and recognition. This is, for example, evident in scenes where they struggle with being recognized as subjects or an other-to-man (e.g., 00:49:17).

5 | EXPRESSING DAISIES

In summary, the following poetic “re-representation” explores the possible materialization of (feminine) existence as difference in relation to work, (re)production and consumption. The “re-represented” scenes are not mirroring key moments in Daisies but rather serve as fragments where the Maries fail to conform to the role of “Woman” by not posing as other-to-man. As a materialization of difference, this failure is at once an existence and a form of resistance – a non-existence as “Woman.” The fragments do not fully encapsulate the multiplicity expressed in each scene, nor how the scenes are at times impossible to fully dis-entangle from one another. As such, they are examples that fail to be illustrative in and of themselves. Together they could, however, allow us to “think” about fem(me)nine existence as a specter that haunts Daisies, an excess expressed through the Maries’ ambiguous becoming.

5.1 | Reversing

After deciding to "go bad," the Maries embark on a series of mischievous yet playful escapades. Driven by an insatiable hunger, they seek out grandiose feasts and ways to matter while turning men into objects to ridicule and collect. Since they do not ‘mind’ the volatility of life, they continuously play with the boundaries between the fragment-whole while reversing and challenging orders and systems of exchange. In one scene, the Maries find themselves amid a Charleston dance performance (Figure 2).

Entering a space intended to be a stage for performers, the girls smile under the bright spotlight. A hapless waiter tries to seat them and take their order: an attempt to install them as guests within a fine collective practice. They refuse and pull out their own bottles and glasses. This, however, does not inhibit them from demanding service. “Open

Figure 2 [00.19.59]
our bottles, bring us straws," they signal with puppy-like eyes and eager hands. The waiter complies, and with that, he exposes the impotence of an order that controls through surfaces. Indeed, while seated, the Maries look like consumers though no commodities have been circulated. A simulacrum of exchange, marked by fissures of difference. They enjoy, for themselves.

Though there is an absence of speech, we see them whispering, giggling, and commenting on their surroundings expressively. What position are they speaking from? And are they participating in the economy (of signs)? Are our ears "so formless, so clogged with meaning(s)" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 113) that we cannot hear them?

They could not care less about any "one" else.

Beginning to appear drunk, they turn whimsical, almost melting over partial walls and pillars painted white. Touching others through bubbles of Urquell with their hands and through saliva on glasses. They know no bounds. Their material surroundings do not limit their becoming. Unapologetically, they overflow.

The staff begin to look worried. The Charleston performers fall out of step. They cannot enact their roles when surrounded by disturbances. They fail to materialize as man-"Woman" and thus to adhere to the idealized matrimony of dance.

The faces of the other guests are tainted by distaste, fascination, and amusement. To embody a position of "I," the audience need their others too, their Maries. Once the process of specula(riza)tion is broken, the same crumbles. How do they exist when not supporting the given?

An invisible crowd goes wild as the girls escalate their antics.

Who are "they"? Those who cheer, clap, whistle without being seen. Those whose gazes are unable to fixate the Maries "...according to their needs and desires" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 17, emphasis in original).

The girls end up being dragged out by their seemingly dislocated limbs. Are they not supposed to enjoy such an establishment in such a way? Perhaps they are not supposed to be the show (Duggan & McHugh, 1996).

Whether it is as destructive consumers (subject) or performers (object of consumption), the Maries can primarily be seen as engaging in exchange with each other, which implies that they are not mirroring man. As Irigaray (1985b, p. 177, emphasis in original) reminds us, "Commodities, women, are a mirror of value of and for man. To serve as such, they give up their bodies to men as the supporting material of specularization, of speculation." As made evident through the Maries becoming during the Charleston performance they do, however, refuse to engage with the established orders. They do not purchase anything but still demand service, they enjoy but not in the way one is supposed to (i.e., as passive spectators), and they are not concerned with any spatial- or social constraints whatsoever. They thereby deconstruct and reverse the logic of the specular setting, not by simply posing as man (i.e., by occupying an alternative subject position to "Woman") but by shifting the grounds of rules and reason altogether. Perhaps, they are not even engaging with each other, but as a form of difference that materializes through a capitalist, accumulative Other? A materialization that "troubles" the supposed performance of an elite sociality premised on demarcation! Without the binary categorization of subject/object there can be no unequal circulation of signs or commodities. With that, the phallogocentric logic caves in for fem(me)nine difference, and the fragility of the establishment is exposed.

No "one" is for sale. No "one" is being consumed. No "one" is exploited.

A new world in the making?

The Maries show that there are other ways to matter, though not under this Other.

They burst out of the confines of "Woman," only to remain blurred (Dahl, 2011).

5.2 | Cracking

When the Maries are not out and about, they reside in an ever-changing room. A home for ambiguity of sorts, bursting with colors. Fluid walls, at times full of blooming flowers, at times full of men reduced to numbers in rows. Here, they burn and fragment: object-selves and others, gherkins, sausages and eggs. A nameless man calls on the telephone: now he knows what love is. Another man stops by, he cannot stop thinking about her (Figure 3).
Marie II: That is what I don't understand. Why do they say "I love you?" Do you understand?

Irigaray (1985b, p. 206) insists "...'I love you' is addressed by convention or habit to an enigma—an other."

An expression left hanging, awaiting response, a confirmation that you are someone to me. That "I," therefore, exist.

Irigaray (1985b, p. 208) continues "...No more. No exuberance. No turbulence. Otherwise you'll smash everything. The ice, the mirror. Their Earth, their mother."

Marie II: Why don't they say "egg" for example?

Marie I: What a good idea! Give me one.

Smash!

An exaggerated expression of surprise spreads over her face as the egg dissolves in a bathtub filled with a mixture of milk, water, and salt. How does chalazas come to matter when yolks dissolve? The shell was already broken in an interaction between the Maries, and with that their Earth too.

Marie I: So, what is supposed to matter?

Marie II: Do you really think it matters?

Unlike a paper-sandwich, a paper-man is not worthy of consumption, instead "he" is pushed under the surface by a slender finger.

When the Maries descend into the bathtub, it is both as subjects of and objects in their ritualistic play. Unlike the paper-man, they stay intact rather than dissolve. Fire, smoke, and ooze draw one's thoughts to witchery. Yet, they are
simply there. Two girls exploring “existence” at home while lapping fluids like kittens. No conventions or habits. Slices of bread turned into mush in mouths. Giggles.

Marie I: How do you know it is us? How do you know you exist?

Marie II: Because of you!

Marie I: Of course! Otherwise it would be difficult to prove. You are not registered here, you do not work. There is no proof that you exist.

Irigaray (1985a, p. 168) responds, “…the Existence with which it masks itself is no Existence”

Not for her at least.

Another type of becoming is needed. Not premised upon demarcation, but on the confusion of the bounds of identity and existence. A failure which fragments the “edges of the proper self” (Hoskin & Taylor, 2019, p. 289)?

The Maries materialize as difference as they come into being without addresses or occupations, the prime markers of a “specular” capitalist class. They do not even have names of their own, nor are they given a history or roles to play. They have no ties, they are not sisters, mothers, or wives. Yet, they do not seem to be stripped of a specificity or subjectivity from an outside or Other – made absent, silenced, and unable to speak. Rather, they play with the bounds of existence as their bodies devour and digest. Through these acts, they are not made absent but everything in their way is. Suddenly, the world is lacking “something” it just had – may it be a pilsner, a gherkin, a paper-man. That world is now (in) the Maries.

In the following scenes, the girls seem less satisfied with being recognized by each other. How can they be invisible when they have their “entire life ahead of them”, they ask? This recognition of “lack” could reflect a longing for leaving a material trace, to mirror themselves in “something” outside of their perceived selves. Or perhaps, they just want to be recognized for their (re)productive expressions which, indeed, not follow the typical inscriptions of a capitalist, accumulative Other. For they do create and play, but do they make value? Do they exist when a gardener whose work they (ambiguously) envy does not react to their bird-like calls? When a shoal of biking men dressed in shades of gray ride right past them despite their appealing youth? By denying their Other, they seem to have become invisible as others (Thomas, 2012).

The Maries fortunes are shown to turn around as they discover themselves in traces of chewed up husks and kernels of stolen corn. Materialized through their own waste, they march forward while chanting “we exist, we exist, we exist.”

5.3 | Feasting

Though they had agreed to stop roaming wild in the midst of a dreamy dismembering, the Maries end up shoving themselves in a dumbwaiter driven by their hunger for “something.” What they are not (yet) is clearly not enough (Figure 4).

They reappear in a banquet hall. Abundance and giggles.

Seemingly in awe of the excess which is not being offered to them, they begin to tamper with the boundaries of their presence.

Marie II: What are you drinking?

Marie I: Wine! What are you licking off your finger?
The Maries initially do act with care, almost as if they know that this is not an existence for them. Slowly, they taste, smell, and slurp their way through the table. “Be careful, so no one notices!” Marie II proclaims while immersing her entire hand in a plated course. To consume and to enjoy is to balance out the abundance produced through systems of exchange. To be recognized as a worthy contributor to the social. A commodity cannot do that. A commodity waits to be consumed or assists in the consumption of others. That the Maries now act with care implies that they have begun to see themselves through lack. As other-to-man, their subjective position has shifted and they now try to remain absent.

A broken glass further reminds them of their material inscription. The first crack in a series of destruction, “…all glass is fragile in her hands” (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 20, emphasis in original) is echoed through Alice. Grays go vibrant as the(ir) feast escalates.

The Maries end up morphing their own boundaries as objects dissolve both within their digestive tracts and through their limbs. Legs of roasted birds ripped off and devoured. Eager fingers turning perfectly formed tartars into a meat-yolk-salt-mash. With eyes cream-covered, “Johnnie” is poured through lips and throat. In comparison to the lovers dialing in to confess their love, they know his name.

Self becoming other, becoming subject, becoming object, and all the sudden the outside is not only “inside” but also outside of itself too.

Things and more things are touching (themselves) in multiplicity.

The Maries leave their mark by eating away, and when they cannot eat anymore they continue to destroy by other means: draping, kicking, posing, and stripping. They stack chairs onto plates on the table to reach the chandelier that lights up the hall, now swinging as they move their lips without sound. A loss of speech? Can we still not hear them?

Just as during the Charleston performance, it becomes impossible for the Maries to contain themselves within social and spatial bounds. They no longer have to exist only as a supposed absence, that is, as beings making traces already dictated by the same. Instead, they become visible, not despite, but because of their lack of specificity. A materialization of difference itself.

What follows is only excess that slips through cracks of destruction. Why contribute in a typical (re)productive manner when there is already material abundance? They redistribute and reorganize. They devour and destroy. Would such plentiful festivities be any less wasteful if there were many (states)men feasting? It is as if what matters is not what is extracted from the Earth, but how it was distributed and amongst whom. Sometimes irony expresses itself differently too.

What would become of the Maries now?

Figure 4 [01.07.33]
5.4 | Existing

All must end (Figure 5).

The chandelier is too fragile. The crystal-covered branches give in to their bodies and the Maries end up in water. On the brink of drowning, the feast serves as a reminder of the limits of the Maries’ creative and destructive play. When in relation to a capitalist, accumulative Other, they will always materialize as potential for “something.” Outside of the same relation they fail to exist.

Help!

While struggling to stay afloat they realize it is because they have gone bad.

“We do not want to be bad!” they pant.

Tied together by newspaper and thread, Marie and Marie attempt to mend that which has been scattered. Repetitively they chant, or rather whisper, while tending to their mess.

They will be good and happy.

Everything will be clean.

To tidy up and be nice. To work hard.

Parts of plates and bowls, stems, and feet of glass over stained linen. Still, only fragments, though indeed ones that allow you to imagine the whole. Food-substances previously marked by delineation reassembled. Mushy, moist from floor to plate, from plate to pile.

Irigaray (1985b, p. 113) asks: A “triumph of rationality”?

The exclusion of fluidity.

Conflation between the clean-being and their-being. Recognized and materialized, no longer bad but molded into an ideal form. By existing as such, they undo their difference, their possibility to “traverse a diverse landscape” (Hoskin & Hirschfeld, 2018, p. 85) and thereby surrender to categorization.
Marie II: *We have worked hard right?*

Marie I: *Yes! We put everything right again!*

They lay down on the table as if they are about to be served.

Ready to be capitalized upon. Virgin or whore, take your pick.

A clock starts to tick.

### GIRLS GONE BAD

The role of “Woman” as other-to-man is embedded in, and neutralized through, categorizations such as subject/object, virgin/whore, inside/outside, and production/reproduction. This supports the organization of the social, and matters related to work, (re)production and consumption, as forms of exchange are framed according to a logic that reinforces exploitation of women and other(s)-to-man (Irigaray, 1985a, 1985b). For example, “productive work” is premised upon the idea that some selves, more or less willingly, sell their work to others, and this is made possible through the reduction of others (e.g., objects or others’ bodies) into tools. Also, as spatial arrangements produce confined spaces for such productive work, it necessarily entails that practices enacted in alternative spaces are “non-productive” (or rather, reproductive) (see Federici, 2012). These practices do not contribute to the production of value, as they are materially mirrored as the negative, other, or “lack” of that which is valorized – capitalist accumulation. The same can be said for consumption: some buy and some are bought, which means that some decide what or who is equivalent to what or who, which is reinforced through the construction of abstract markets and monetary systems. All of these are only imaginable, and made “real,” through systems premised upon demarcation.

In her search for (feminine) difference, Irigaray seeks to problematize this specular tendency by writing women “out” of representational categories and the chains of unity that ties them to the construct of “Woman” (Irigaray, 1985a). This can be seen as an attempt to foster alternative organizational imaginaries and practices through the birth of an alternative subject position (Whitford, 1991). When expressed and embodied on her own terms, she holds the productive potential to “trouble” phallogocentric orders grounded on demarcation, mirroring, and sameness. A fem(me) reading of the Maries “going bad” accentuates this line of thought as their ambiguous becoming then exposes the fragility of the given (both socially and materially). As a materialization of difference, they allow for an “undoing” (Halberstam, 2011) of patriarchal forms of organizing though without necessarily occupying the identity of the “antagonist,” which would be yet another other-to-man. What can we then learn from the Maries’ refusal to conform? And from their failure to enact patriarchal femininity according to heteronormative and capitalist norms of “advancement and accumulation” (see Halberstam, 2011)?

Though the Maries’ ambiguous becoming is indeed one of waste and consumption, they are seemingly not doing it for the sake of (re)production of the same alone. That is, to support the circulation of objects, signs, or commodities. They do not seem to have any intention of contributing (to the production of value or rationality) either productively or reproductively. Instead, they are simply just being, enjoying, and playing outside of that existence which stands in relation to an accumulative, capitalist Other. At times, they do this by being “absent” (not premised upon demarcation but rather lack of “existence” itself), and at other times as a fleeting materialization of the in-between, the ambiguous, and the composite that exposes the fragility of the Law (Kristeva, 1982). This can be understood as a re-signification of femininity (McCann, 2018) grounded in the Maries’ oscillation between subject positions and their engagement with disruptive and non-productive practices that do not conform to the norms.

The girls are not only “slipping in between” orders (see Deleuze & Guattari, 2004), but morphing them like bodily fluids morph the supposed boundaries of bodies. As such, they challenge the reduction, and associated devaluation, of femininity as a reflection of a patriarchal desire, gaze, and order (Hoskin, 2017, 2019) by re-positioning themselves as a form of multiplicity that does not bend for structures of masculinity. They exist for themselves and each other, though not for an Other. Unable to be reduced to “one,” they cannot be circulated as signs and they thereby strip
"man" of his productive potential and means of exploitation. Without his other, exchange emerges “without identifiable terms, without accounts, without end…” (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 197) in an open-ended relationality amongst equals. Each time the Maries become anew, as fragments of fem(me)ninity. Not for exchange, not for the same: organizing made different.

To turn like a fem(me) (Dahl, 2012) – or to “go bad” like the Maries – could thus be a performative move towards forms of organizing that “trouble” capitalist orders premised on exchange over engagement, identity over relationality, and man over others. One should, however, also note that the Maries’ looks, and especially their whiteness and thinness, most certainly allow them to act out in ways that other bodies cannot. As the policing of bodies indeed varies (Blair & Hoskin, 2015; Hoskin, 2019), it is important to further discuss contradictions and tensions (e.g., those related to recognition and agency) that are birthed through the enactment of fem(me)nine multiplicity, and to work towards shattering the idealization of the “reproductive, white, respectable, heterosexual approximation to womanhood that nobody embodies” (Dahl, 2012, p. 61, emphasis added). For it is, indeed, so that the representational category and embodiment of “the white woman” is offered her status, recognition, and respect “in relation to those excluded from the sacred domestic and its “protections” – the slave, the mammy, the whore, the jezebel, the wage slave, the servant, the hussy, the dyke, the welfare queen.” (Duggan & McHugh, 1996, p. 157).

By also writing through Irigaray, Dahl (2017) further explores the possibility for fem(me) relationalities and the desire for sisterhood, belonging, and identification without categories. For her, vulnerability is key for the creation of opening “in and between (femme) bodies of flesh and knowledge” (49) that does not lend itself to demarcation (also Tyler, 2019; Vachhani & Pullen, 2019). This entails a politics of difference that is not only embodied and relational, but possibly without a clear trajectory or ideal. A making of ties in and between bodies, subjectivities, and expression that are constantly in movement. A beginning of a different, gendered sociopolitical, and organizational order where one does not exist by or for others but, together-with. The line between advocating for difference and falling back into mirroring is, however, fragile, and this continues to haunt attempts to enact non-patriarchal forms of organizing. Further ontological interrogation of the very extent our cultures, politics, and relations are premised upon differentiation, and thus the valorization of sameness, is still needed within organizational research.

For there is, indeed, a tension with regards to feminist politics of difference and recognition that possibly could hinder the “undoing” of patriarchal systems of exchange. That is, to express and/or materialize difference but still seek recognition from the same Other, and through categorizations which always exclude. Here, Chytilová might have one final lesson in store for us. As “re-presented” above, Daisies ends with the Maires frantically tidying up the mess they have created. They no longer want to be bad, they want to be “good and happy,” work hard, and be recognized as such. They cannot handle losing their existence as subjects (also Thomas, 2012). In the end, they do not dare to fail and end up (re)producing for the (states)men. They even serve themselves. A reversal of their “undoing”, a fall back into the circulation of sameness. To “dis-order” this would require an acceptance of how more relational and generous forms of organizing (e.g., Hancock, 2008; Knights, 2015; Pullen & Rhodes, 2014, 2015a; Vachhani & Pullen, 2019) are necessarily marked by volatility, fluidity, and a lack of selves as “we” know “them.” For difference to fully materialize, those (of us) with privilege must allow our existence to shatter too.

7 | CONCLUDING NOTES ON EXPRESSING FEM(ME)NINE DIFFERENCE

While organizational scholarship has made advances in terms of exploring difference (e.g., Knights, 2015; Linstead & Pullen, 2006; Phillips et al., 2014; Thanem, 2006; Tyler, 2019) and the feminine (Pullen & Rhodes, 2015b; Vachhani, 2012, 2014, 2019), further methodological advances are arguably needed that could allow difference (as multiple and ambiguous) to be taken as an inception in research. That is, how could “it” come into being without us reading it in relation to the same? I do not know the answer to this, and it is arguably easier to theorize ontological difference than to support its materialization. Though it is perhaps how we tend to read organizational phenomena that is problematic, as the social may be materializing differently already, though we are too used to seeing through the same
Alternative expressions to text could, however, move our imaginaries and allow for a further exploration of the possibilities of “undoing” orders that contribute to demarcation, exploitation, and exclusion (also Halberstam, 2011; Hoskin & Taylor, 2019). That is, not necessarily through different representations or possibilities for identification and/or forms of spectatorship, but also as a means of expressing difference itself.

While the disruptive potential of difference has been noted by organizational scholars in both writing (Gilmore et al., 2019; Pullen, 2018; Pullen & Rhodes, 2015b) and practice (Tyler, 2019), fem(me) theorizations of film arguably holds a distinct potential for examining this further, as they open up for possibilities of reworking material boundaries through deconstructed and disconnected representations, and immaterial ones through affect (see Bainbridge, 2008). Hopefully, this “re-representation” of Daisies can serve as an example of this, as it offers an exploration of fem(me)nine difference that is not premised upon signifiers, subject positions, and expressions of desire that stand in relation to an accumulative, capitalist Other. That is, without determining the behaviors of the Maries as “one” stance in relation to certain rules and reason as that, again, would reduce difference into orders of sameness – even when conducted following a feminist (antagonist) ethos. By instead allowing them to exist as multiple and ambiguous, they form a productive assemblage (McCann, 2018) between the personal and the political, as well as the embodied and the ontological, that may differ for each person who engages with the film. Just as Irigaray (1985b) wrote about Alice; they remain without proper names, as uncapitalized remainders (of excess). An opening towards an (im)possible politics of difference, or at least a reminder of what is yet to exist?

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ENDNOTES

1 Other is here understood as a representational, socio-symbolic order that allows a subject to understand itself as “I” (and thereby “exist”). Theoretically, and historically, such order has been premised upon the masculine as norm and the exclusion of a feminine existence. She is yet to exist (Irigaray, 1985a).

2 Not girl as in “female child” but rather as a minor position within major orders (e.g., Linstead & Thanem, 2007; Pullen et al., 2017). The girl is ambiguity: a possible site of both sexual and economic reproduction, yet still open to the possibility of difference in itself (Grosz, 1994). As noted by Deleuze and Guattari (2004, p. 305) “…girls do not belong to an age, group, sex, order, or kingdom: they slip in everywhere, between orders, acts, ages, sexes: they produce n molecular sexes on the line of flight in relation to the dualism machines they cross right through.”

3 The understanding of the fem(me) as an expression that differs from patriarchal femininity could also allow for a productive problematization of the essentialist claims made regarding Irigaray’s work. As a literal reading, this draws a reflective link-age between the surface (adornments, words) and an essentialist “inner” (sex) without taking any of the possible tensions of fem(me)nine into consideration (see Dahl, 2011). Fem(me) responds to Irigaray’s call for a feminine that is not other-to-man, and Irigaray allows the fem(me) to exist not as surface, but as process that challenges specular orders by failing to mirror man, by granting her a sociopolitical space.
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