In Kant’s account of the sublime, human beings are separated from nature by an abyssal cleft. Kant’s approach reflects a deep-rooted pattern in western thought, according to which that which makes us constitutively human is our ability to separate ourselves from or overcome material nature, including the material dimensions of our own existence.

In this paper, Jones will counter Kant with Irigaray’s account of human beings as constitutively sexuate. Such an account demands that our relations to material nature are thoroughly re-framed: active matter is seen as generative and sustaining for example, rather than threatening and disruptive, as on Kant’s model. However, Kant’s sublime also offers the possibility of transcendence as well as a space of existential and imaginative risk: what happens to such risky possibilities when we re-think materiality along Irigarayan lines? Are human beings safely re-immersed within the material world, in ways that risk repeating the very phantasies of maternal dwelling that Irigaray critiques? Or is active matter - as Irigaray conceives it - capable of sheltering difference in ways that open new possibilities for immanent transcendence and risky becoming?

Rachel Jones is a senior lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Dundee, where she also teaches on the postgraduate course ‘Women, Culture and Society’. She has recently published a book on Irigaray (Polity 2011), and her current work is on birth, death and the sublime in Irigaray, Lyotard, Nancy and Cavarero.

WELCOME!

Christina research seminar pays tribute to Gender Studies, and the history of Queen Christina’s name connected to this field of studies at the University of Helsinki.

The seminar is open to everybody with an interest in research questions related to gender studies. The Seminar is chaired by prof. Tuija Pulkkinen.