

Medusa (Re)CUT:
CUT and Cixous as Contemporary Écriture Féminine

By

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Abstract:

The following is an analysis of Emmanuelle Marie's 2003 play CUT as it intersects the theories of Hélène Cixous' "écriture féminine" primarily expressed through her essays "The Laugh of the Medusa" and "Sorties." This paper will additionally present an overview to feminine writing along with a defence of Cixous and all feminine texts against their historical critiques. The first chapter is a theoretical overview of Cixous' theory of écriture féminine and its approach to subjectivity, language, and corporeality; this first chapter will also address the objections of essentialism, utopianism, and dualism with which Cixous has been historically charged, defending the status of the written text in contemporary feminist drama. Chapter two is a textual analysis, seeking to observe instances and approaches to feminine writing in Marie's textual strategies, focusing on the possibilities of subversive language that CUT offers. The third chapter focuses on the body, revisiting the location of the body in feminine writing and as it explored within CUT again pertaining to Cixous' theories. In addressing both the written text and its corporeality through the locus of CUT, this research seeks to find location for Marie's play in the landscape of contemporary feminine writing and theatre, maintaining the status of the written text while interrogating the psycho-social representations of feminine subjectivity in contemporary feminist theatre.

Preface:

This thesis is an original work by Tonya Rae Chrystian. No part of this thesis has been previously published.

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Medusa¹ (Re)CUT:
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1

Introduction

“The Cixousian body presents itself as the locus of incessant movement. And when the reader tries to grasp it in hopes of finding a stable ground or centre, she instead finds more metaphors.”

- Barbara Freeman

“Nearly the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is at once the effect, the support, and one of the privileged alibis.”

- Hélène Cixous

The intention of this research is to intersect the French play *CUT*, written by French-born dramaturge Emmanuelle Marie, with Hélène Cixous’ philosophy of *écriture féminine*; to analyze a contemporary and provoking feminist play, but also to expand the contexts in which feminine writing can be perceived, understood, and expressed in contemporary feminist drama. This research will approach its subjects through the matrices of text, body, and signification, exploring the connections and interactions between the text of *CUT* and Cixous’ theories of feminine writing. In May of 2003 a peculiar play debuted in Paris at the Théâtre du Rond-Point, opening on the scene of a *femme de toilette* [a bathroom attendant] guarding her tip jar while musing about the particularities of female micturition; a curious beginning:

¹ From Hélène Cixous’ “The Laugh of the Medusa,” 1976.

La Dame 1 : Il ne faut pas avoir honte de pisser. Le bon Dieu nous a faits comme ça, tous pissants et toutes pissantes. La créature, ça pisser, ça fait du bruit : je vous reconnais rien qu'au bruit que vous faites. Je me dis : Tiens, ça c'est la musique de la petite du bar, vive comme la jeunesse, et pressée parce qu'il y a du boulot, tiens celle-là c'est la patronne qui, avec l'âge, a appris à prendre son temps, parce que c'est important ces petits moments de calme, de solitude et parce qu'aussi c'est la patronne... (*Un temps*) (Marie 2003 ; 71).

Woman 1: *You shouldn't be ashamed to piss. The good Lord made us like that, every man and every woman pisses. Animals, they piss, and it makes a sound: I recognize you by nothing other than the sound of your piss. I say to myself: there, that is music of the cutie who works at the bar, alive like her youth, and in a rush because there is much work to do, that one there is the sound of the landlady who, with age, has learned to take her time, because these small moments of calm, of solitude, are important, and also because she's the landlady...(a pause)* (Marie 2003; 71).²

The play and production in question is entitled *CUT* by Boulogne-Sur-Mer dramaturge Emmanuelle Marie that first appeared in publication in an edition of the Paris-based theatre journal *L'avant-scène théâtre* in June of 2003. *CUT* began its formation in 2001 with the co-collaborative support of the *Compagnie des Docks*, which Marie co-founded with her creative partner Jacques Descorde, and *les Passerelles* of Montreuil-sur-Mer with various sources of cultural funding. After an initial staged reading at the Théâtre de l'Essaïon, *CUT* made its way to the Parisian stage at the aforementioned Théâtre du Rond-Point with the *Mise-en-scène* of Jacques Descorde, starring Anna Andréotti, Carole Thibault, and Emmanuelle Marie herself cast in the role of *La Dame 2* – one of the three females that comprise the chorus of women around which this play is

² All translations throughout are mine unless otherwise noted. In translating Marie's work I did not seek to impose the regulations of English grammar, but rather sought to maintain the spirit of Marie's linguistic, grammatical, and structural transgressions along with the rhythm of her diction.

centred. This production would go on to tour throughout Avignon, Valenciennes, Hénin-Beaumont, Lomme, and finally end its journey with a final production at La Verrière in Lille. Marie's other theatrical works include *Ecce Homo* (1996), *Blanc* (2004), and *Kidâme* (2005), as well as a novel entitled *Le paradis des tortues* (2000) and several novellas published predominantly between 2000-2003. Unfortunately, Marie would not be with us for very long: born in 1965 Marie passed away after a long battle with an unnamed illness in 2007 at the young age of 42. In honor of her death, *CUT* was again produced for a second time in 2009 at the Théâtre du Rond-Point, again with the mise-en-scène of Descorde and the acting talent of Andréotti, Thibault, and new-comer Lara Suyeux re-cast in the role previously played by Marie.

CUT goes on to skip through the realms of the sexual, the psychological, the material, the emotional, and the biological, situating itself at a very busy crossroads. The playwriting passes through territories of female experiences such as peeing outside, peeking at your labia in a mirror, climaxing in English class, turning out the lights for sex, buying expensive lingerie to impress flighty Italian lovers, abnegation, gardening, the soul, faking orgasms, genitals, death, God, masturbation, etc., all of which take place in an underground Parisian women's bathroom; another odd choice for such a potent feminist play that closely examines the lived experience of contemporary women. "*CUT* est effectivement structurée comme un découpage cinématographique. La pièce présente des parts de vie de femmes. On passe de l'une à l'autre. D'une chose à une autre" [*CUT is essentially structured like a cinematographic decoupage. The play presents parts of the life of women. We pass from one to the other. From one thing to another*] (Marie 2003; 102) or as one reviewer stated "c'est toujours

un texte singulier, qui parle crûment de sexe et de sexualité, et n'est jamais obscene" (Dumas 2009) [*it is always a singular text, which speaks bluntly about sex and sexuality, and is never obscene*] (Dumas 2009).

CUT is unequivocally and undeniably thrusting itself into the landscape of feminist discourse by not only interrogating the existing psycho-social systems (a quintessential feminist practice if ever there was one), but also by seeking new locations and interpretations of existing feminist discourses, sometimes painting them in a less than favourable, albeit humorous, light. As Marie says herself of *CUT*: "homme, femme, à un moment nous ne vivons pas la même chose à cause d'une différence morphologique. Mais attention mon texte n'est pas un texte sociologique, ni érotique, ni pornographique, il se contente de dire simplement comment on vit avec « ça », avec cette différence" (Marie 2003; 103) [*man, woman, at one point we are not living the same thing because of a morphological difference. But be careful, my text is not sociological, erotic, or pornographic, it is enough to say how we live with "it," with this difference*] (Marie 2003; 103), pointing to the fact that her text does not contain answers to the divide the separates woman from man, but rather that she is looking at contextualizing and finding new relationships to this difference and its affects without establishing an essential location or label for this play. However, this discourse is only the surface of *CUT* because at the centre of this storm Emmanuelle Marie places the female body. Wherever the female body encounters language – producing it, inhabiting it, destabilizing it – we are compelled to view the forthcoming implications through the theoretical lens of *écriture féminine*. Feminine writing is an intersection of the body, language, and speech, where all three forces become the locus through which

new feminist discourses and knowledges that focus on the psychic experience of justice and freedom, over material concerns, are produced. Marie pushes feminist discourses (language) into unapologetic contact with female morphology (the body) in the medium of drama (speech), emerging with a feminist discourse framed in Hélène Cixous' (non)definition of *écriture féminine*, thus *CUT* and the poetic politics of feminine writing become the nexus of this feminist research.

The first chapter of this research addresses *écriture féminine* as a theory in and of itself; exploring its parts and inner workings, its conflicts and collisions, as they devise alternate subjectivities through writing, poetic criticism, and the textuality of the body. Chapter one connects with the historical objections and controversies of Cixous' poetic politics, refuting the accusation of essentialism and universalization that has stalked Cixous' theories across the decades. This first chapter will also consider contemporaneous contextualizations of feminine writing and why it remains a valuable species in our present feminist landscape. The second chapter is primarily a linguistic analysis, taking a targeted look at the elements of feminine writing and representation embraced in *CUT*. This second chapter observes the instances of Marie's linguistic strategies in *CUT* that alter meaning, signification and language, undoing fixity and dualism. The final chapter is a focus on tissues, on the body; it is a discussion of textual corporeality and the body's location in the signifying process with reference to both text and production. The last chapter returns to Cixous' work regarding the specificity of the body, both within the context of *écriture féminine* and the genre of theatre itself. This final chapter also features an examination of the corporeal presence and

implications Emmanuelle Marie activates in *CUT*, exploring the interplay between body, language, and text in the theatre.

To take up a Cixousian analysis is to dwell at the edges of things – at the edge of language, at the edge of meaning, at the edge of ideological location. Often times Cixous takes dualities and intentionally sinks the boundaries that divide them, making difference and openness to the other not just a possibility, but an inevitability, without ever offering a map, let alone a final destination; “the search for modes of expression that would permit the articulation of a different and liberating relationship between self and other, between self and world remains a pivotal element of Cixous’ oeuvre and is consistently evident across the wide generic and formal range of her writing” (Dobson 45). Cixous shoots at very narrow targets between deconstruction and appropriation, but her aim is sharp, and through her metaphors and written works she repeatedly achieves very sensitive representations of the sexual and cultural other: “but what strikes me is the infinite richness of their individual constitutions: you can’t talk about a female sexuality, uniform, homogenous, classifiable into codes – any more than you can talk about one unconscious resembling another. Women’s imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible” (Cixous 1976; 876).

CUT is a provoking option for this research because this play is often overlooked in favour of Marie’s other major work *Blanc*, but that is not to say *CUT* does not demonstrate equal skill, intentionality, or craft, but rather that it has a certain malleable or experimental quality, stirring multiplicity and surprise through any

attempts at its analysis. To date *CUT* has not generated any formal publications, nor has it attained much in the way of archived productions – add to these factors the untimely death of the playwright in 2007 and the intrigue surrounding *CUT* becomes gravitational. However, over and above its mysterious allure, *CUT* is a powerful contemporary feminist play that inhabits psychic space, materiality, and representations of the feminine subject, all with a heavy investment in the status of the written text. Furthermore *CUT* is set entirely in a woman's bathroom, undoing the hygienic and linguistic policing to which female bodies are so often subject, and is an excellent example of the life-giving destabilization feminine writing achieves while interrogating the social location of women's bodies, political experiences, and subjectivities.

Objects in Motion

“Writing: a way of leaving no space for death, of pushing back forgetfulness, of never letting oneself be surprised by the abyss. Of never becoming resigned, consoled; never turning over in bed to face the wall and drift asleep again as if nothing had happened, as if nothing could happen.”

- Hélène Cixous

It is perhaps anachronistic to speak about Hélène Cixous’ manifesto of *écriture féminine* in our contemporary theatrical landscape, that “the Laugh of the Medusa,” first published in 1976, has been all but retired to the pile of historical feminist ideologies, no longer an obviously relevant genre of writing as we trudge onward through alternative post-modern and post-dramatic landscapes. The sounding call to “write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it” (Cixous 1976; 876) is a fading voice on a distant horizon, and the stronghold *écriture féminine* once held in the psycho-ideological battle of what constitutes ‘woman’ has weakened in favour of other discourses. However, Hélène Cixous’ poetic politics remain foregrounded in the haunted search for new meaning and difference in contemporary feminist drama as the morphological specificity of the feminine body continues to permeate the dramatic text. The dance between body and language, deconstruction and metaphysics, the Imaginary and the Symbolic, continues to a familiar, never-ending tune as the processes and forms of feminine writing produce an unrelenting linguistic procession determined to push back the singularities of masculine law, as Susan Sellers summates:

Cixous sees the type of textual composition woven from the multiple and heterogeneous possibilities generated by the writing process as challenging the rules of (linear) logic, objective meaning, and the single, self-referential viewpoint decreed by masculine law. She believes (feminine) writing has the potential to undermine and present another alternative to this law, and the hierarchy of linguistic, social and political relations the law creates (Sellers 1991; 143-144).

The influence of sexuality on textuality remains a powerful foundation for feminist revolt culture as the body continues to be a colliding place between text and sex, pushing feminist discourse outside the realm of hierarchical oppositions into the realm of difference and *other* signification, birthing alternate ways to represent the female unconscious, especially through drama and theatre; “the enactment of such a non-dualistic textual practice is one of Cixous’ major contributions to feminist theory, and it is perhaps in this that the subversiveness of her project resides” (Freeman 79). For feminist writers of these subversive female-sexed texts, the implications of *écriture féminine* on the political potential of female self-knowledge remain critically relevant as the transformational powers of *écriture féminine* have yet to be settled. *Écriture féminine* steps back from material concerns, neither dismissing, nor dissociating from them altogether, as Cixous’ critics will suggest, but instead giving focus to the realm of psychic oppression, which, for Cixous, is rooted in language and the unconscious. In effect the initial objective of “écriture” was to rupture patriarchal power structures and allow women’s entry into history through language. With Cixous’ sight set on a reformed psychic location for women, Cixous calls for a reconnection to the body’s feminine drives and libidinal energies, transforming writing into a biological and psychic process simultaneously, which in turn produces a new and necessary language

that precedes all political, material and cultural concerns; in short it is fair to say that for Cixous the poetic is prior to the political. In order for women's social location to be challenged the language used to understand and express feminine subjectivity must first be reclaimed from the linearity of masculine reason which has appropriated the ways in which 'woman' may be understood and expressed. Thus feminine writing becomes a complex act of psychic energy, biological processes, and social resistance:

by this, Cixous means that writing should subvert the accepted conventions of narrative, should 'fly' above them, stealing fragments of discourse and putting them to scandalous uses. She advocates a writing that is excessive, slippery, difficult, that reproduces the pleasure of song, reintroduces the materiality of the voice, and re-explores the body. 'The body' is not, here, intended as the grounding of an 'obvious' identity for women, but rather, once more as the return of the repressed (Shiach 117).

These points regarding the poetic manifesto and political motive of *écriture féminine* shall be explored in depth in relation to *CUT*. In an online dramaturgical publication for théâtre du Rond-Point - the theatre where *CUT* was first produced - Marie echoes resonances of Hélène Cixous' manifesto of feminine writing as she speaks about writing's capacities to oscillate between body and language, giving us our first clue into understanding the mysterious and quirky multiplicities of *CUT*:

J'écris debout. J'écris couchée. Même couchée j'écris. J'écris comme d'autres dissèquent les vivants ou les morts, tout dépend du sujet. Parfois c'est moi-même allongée, dans ma main droite un scalpel tenu haut, et tout à coup j'abats mon bras, je tranche dans le vif mes maux propres : viscères, cervelle...à moi tout ça, à d'autres aussi, existants, inventés, peu importe. Juste il faut les avoir bien accrochées, et pas peur de ses ombres, de ses obscurités. L'écriture est un vice, un sacerdoce aussi, c'est le sachet plastique qu'on vous donne avant de montrer dans le

ferry, quitte à se dégueuler dessus, n'en plus pouvoir et de ce qu'on a écrit, s'effarer, faisons donc un voyage, cessons donc d'hésiter ! (Marie 2009).

I write upright. I write laying down. Even laying down I write. I write like others dissect the living or the dead, everything depends on the subject. Sometimes it's me sprawled out, in my right hand is a scalpel held high and suddenly I plunge my hand down, cutting into the heart of my own troubles: viscera, cranium...to myself all of them, to others as well, true, invented, whatever. You have to have to them all in their place, unafraid of their shadows, of their obscurities. Writing is a vice, a priesthood as well, it's like the plastic bag they give you before boarding the ferry, even if you puke on top of it, collapse from what has been written, so make the journey, stop hesitating! (Marie 2009)

We see above that Marie speaks about writing as the experience of cutting into the body, triggering sensations that in turn trigger more writing and more sensations; for her, writing is the first move towards corporeal stirrings. Although she does not implicate a need to isolate the two, Marie also acknowledges that feminine writing produces both truths and fictions, and her final thoughts turn towards the social functions of writing as a necessary vice or impulse, as a priesthood, as a religion (read: spiritual access path), and finally, as a receptacle, a purgation, as an act that both exhausts and restores the body - all of which paint *écriture féminine* as one of the most potent ways to interrogate the tensions between the social location of women and the expression of the female unconscious through the matrices of body, text, and speech. "Even if all the texts are permeated by fictions, and fiction multiplied by n , in the end the fictional does not dominate, any more than what one calls the narrative, the romance, the theatrical, the autobiographical dominates" (Derrida quid in Lie 47). Creating images and ideas that inspire revolt against the invisible and material forces

of patriarchal language, feminine writing has a deep resonance within the physical form of theatre as the meeting place of body, text, and speech, thus the psycholinguistic framework of *écriture féminine* becomes foregrounded in this research as we contextualize and examine *CUT* as a feminist literary work, as a *pièce de théâtre*, and as a genre. However, before moving deeply into the analysis of *CUT* this chapter will address the historical objections to *écriture féminine* as a feminist theory, speaking to the location of feminine writing in our contemporary, post third-wave feminist landscape.

A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there's no other way. There's no room for her if she's not a he. If she's a her-she, it's in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the 'truth' with laughter (Cixous 1976; 888).

Feminist drama, including *CUT*, maintains an imperative to inhabit territories outside phallographic ideology, rejecting definitions that locate feminist drama in any existing patriarchal sign system, after all "[Cixous'] whole theoretical project can in one sense be summed up as the effort to undo this logocentric ideology: to proclaim woman as the source of life, power and energy and to hail the advent of a new, feminine language that ceaselessly subverts these patriarchal binary schemes where logocentrism colludes with phallogentrism in an effort to oppress and silence women" (Moi 25).

Feminist drama is a staging place of alternate language and body expressions and therefore it is vital to acknowledge some of the historical objections and criticisms

to Cixous' proposed genre of *écriture féminine*, namely those made on the grounds of essentialism, inherent contradictions, isolation from oppressive material realities, and the polemics of the maternal metaphor. "[...] *Feminité* and *écriture féminine* are problematic as well as powerful concepts. They have been criticized as idealist and essentialist, bound up in the very system they claim to undermine; they have been attacked as theoretically fuzzy and as fatal to constructive political action" (Jones 12), but yet we must consider that poetic and psychic liberation are vital, essential elements of materiality and political action, as Elizabeth Grosz reminds us that materiality alone is not sufficient in the struggle for recognition, sexual difference, and otherness:

the concept does not accompany revolutionary or radical change (change must be accomplished in its own terms in the field or territory in which it functions) but renders it possible by adding incorporeals, immaterials to the force or weight of materiality. Materiality does not contain this incorporeal, which lines its surfaces and facets, but they (matter plus the incorporeal) are its virtualities or the possibility of becoming-other (Grosz 2012; 15).

The most recurring, and possibly the most contentious of these objections, is that Cixous is speaking of a universal female body that serves as the origin of language – a body that is an essential biological entity prior to and independent from social forces, providing an anatomically pre-determined destiny. The particular accusation of essentialism against Cixous is based on the notion that she locates the body outside language, a claim she neither suggests nor supports, as “for Cixous, the feminine body exists neither prior to language nor in some essential form” (Freeman 75). Cixous maintains the body neither originates nor separates from writing and language, but

instead argues that language and the body are simultaneously present, the one constantly displacing the other. “Rather than insisting, as her critics would have it, that the body is *prior* to writing, Cixous suggests that the body is already in operation *within it*” (Freeman 76, emphasis the author’s) and “it is important to emphasize that once language and the body are understood as correlative and mutually substitutable terms, neither can be used as a privileged site because each *displaces* the other” (Freeman 76, emphasis the author’s). It cannot be said that Cixous is advocating for a fixed, essential female body that is distilled from the forces of language as, for Cixous, the two are bound together by mutual destiny and therefore cannot be unwound or isolated as implicated in the following passage:

To write. An act which will not only “realize” the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal; it will tear her away from the superegoized structure in which she has always occupied the place reserved for the guilty (guilty of everything, guilty at every turn: for having desires, for not having any; for being too frigid, for being “too hot;” for not being both at once; for being too motherly and not enough; for having children and for not having any; for nursing and for not nursing...) – tear her away by means of this research, this job of analysis and illumination, this emancipation of the marvellous text of her self that she must urgently learn to speak (Cixous 1976; 880).

Cixous does not speak of a universal female body that generates language, but of a subversive interplay between the forces of body and text, which exist simultaneously. Cixous desires further for writing to escape from its dependence on a deathly system of presence and lack in exchange for an infinite fluxus of referentiality where meaning

escapes fixity, language separates from the hierarchy of binary oppositions, and the psychic experience of justice, presence, and otherness is expressed through writing as the feminine body connects to its libidinal drives and articulations.

[...] Writing is precisely working (in) the in-between, inspecting the process of the same and of the other without which nothing can live, undoing the work of death – to admit this is first to want the two, as well as both, the ensemble of one and the other, not fixed in sequences of struggle and expulsion or some other form of death and infinitely dynamized by an incessant process of exchange from one subject to another (Cixous 1976; 883).

The above passage firmly put to rest any contestation that Cixous is an essentialist on the level of the body since “undoing the work of death” becomes the detangling of the body from an endless flow of hierarchical binary oppositions that define the mind and the body, freeing it from fixity and its counterpart essentialism. Barbara Freeman powerfully and succinctly defends Cixous against any further essentialist accusation, highlighting that the accusation itself originates from a patriarchal system of criticism and a dependency on Cartesian Dualism, that the body and the mind are not divisible entities:

What Cixous’ critics share is the belief that, irrespective of whether she advocates it, such a thing as a ‘direct relationship to the body’ is itself possible, that is, that the body has a referential status which exists independently of language or questions of the text. This view, strikingly congruent with patriarchal ways of conceptualizing the mind, the body, and the relation between the two, retains a dualistic mode of positioning what it takes as two separate realms – in this case the linguistic and the anatomical – a move which ultimately allows for sexual difference to be conceived in oppositional and hence hierarchal terms (Freeman 74).

Furthermore, Freeman states that “[...] whenever and wherever the mind is thought to function without recourse to the body (and vice versa), there is at work an unspoken logic or cultural thinking that, by aligning bodies with women and minds with men, asserts the superiority of the mental to the corporeal and in doing so elevated masculinity (and the mind) over femininity (and the body)” (Freeman 74).

It is, however, worthy of pause to understand further how Cixous imbricates writing and the body. Like other theorists who historically fall under the label of French Feminism Cixous implicates that women’s bodies, including the perceptions and expressions of their bodies, have been stolen and appropriated by the phallographic ideology that drives masculine logic, meaning there exists a masculine determination from which ‘woman’ must first detach herself. “[Cixous] urges women to break with these restrictive definitions, and to express our discoveries in writing,” (Sellers 1991; 139) to leave behind the notion of ‘woman’ as submissive victim, as the opposite or lack of conventional ‘man,’ as the object of male desire, or as a silent, non-producer of language and texts, as she consistently challenges us to write the body and “ [...] argues that language is itself a body function” (Sellers 1991; 139). Therefore it can be said that Cixous connects writing to both the biological processes of the body as well as the unconscious forces of gestation and eroticism accessible within the feminine imaginary, creating an intricate weave of body, text, language, and biology that is interdependent and rhizomatic, not chronological or hierarchical as her critics suggest;

speaking and writing involve the translation of thought through a complex network of chemical messages, nerve impulses and muscle movements, and Cixous suggests that

this physiological activity, together with the ongoing body functions of breathing, pulse, the momentum of body drives, stress and hormonal changes, influence our use of language (Sellers 1991; 139).³

An important analogy that will aid in the understanding of Cixous' theory of body-text writing is Julia Kristeva's development of the semiotic chora, which will also prove useful in addressing the charge of essentialism against *écriture féminine*. The semiotic chora, a notoriously challenging, abstract concept, is taken from *La Révolution du langage poétique*, published in 1974, and is conceived of as a pre-verbal semiotic space governed by the subject's relationship to the maternal body, lingering just below the surface of language and meaning. The semiotic chora is the nebulous summation of drives and psychic energies that flow through a being before it is moulded into a subject by the forces of society and family, producing sounds, murmurings, stirrings, ruptures, articulations, and fragmentations within non-symbolic language. These pre-linguistic semiotic forces do not dissipate in the face of masculine language, rather they can become a motivation for disruption, spontaneity, and disturbance that challenge the language determined and controlled by the patriarchal law of the symbolic, as is the will of *écriture féminine*. The semiotic chora is not overtaken once social and familial forces form the subject, but rather the chora retains its unpredictable energies and spontaneous drives, constantly duelling and challenging the linearity and organization of the language of father; it is a matter of engaging the energies of the

³ It is important to note that by this connection to the body Cixous does not mean men, nor male-identified writers, cannot produce a feminine text, but rather that those in possession of a female body have privileged access to the feminine drives of which she speaks. Cixous goes on to cite male writers Jean Genet and James Joyce as producers of *écriture féminine* alongside writers such as Marguerite Duras, Clarice Lispector, and Chantal Chawaf; the subject of Cixous and the body is revisited in chapter 4.

chora with the morphological experience of the body to produce feminine writing. “Although our theoretical description of the chora is itself part of the discourse of representation that offers it as evidence, the chora, as rupture and articulations (rhythm), precedes evidence, verisimilitude, spatiality, and temporality. Our discourse – all discourse – moves with and against the chora in the sense that it simultaneously depends upon and refuses it” (Kristeva 26).

The semiotic chora is allied to the psychic realm of chaotic impulses and libidinal forces that comprise the feminine imaginary, to what Cixous speaks of as the dark continent from which *écriture féminine* originates “because poetry involves gaining strength through the unconscious and because the unconscious, that other limitless country, is the place where the repressed manage to survive: women, or as Huffman would say, fairies” (Cixous 1976; 880). The semiotic chora is first and foremost governed by a subject’s relationship with the body of its mother, implanting within every subject an irreducible feminine economy that is connected to the maternal metaphor and gestational power Cixous calls on when feminine writing is created. Therefore, “the mother’s body is [...] what mediates the symbolic law organizing social relations and becomes the ordering principle of the semiotic chora, which is on the path to destruction, aggressivity, and death” (Kristeva 27-28), meaning that the pre-Oedipal energies and drives as oriented to the maternal body form part of the foundation of the feminine unconscious. Although the chora is subject to regulation and impositions by its maternal governance, the psychic charges and articulations that emerge are disrupting, simultaneously interacting with and moving away from symbolic law, disturbing the linear flow of masculine language and meaning

repeatedly: “though deprived of unity, identity, or deity the chora is nevertheless subject to a regulating process which is different from that of symbolic law, but nevertheless effectuates discontinuities by temporarily articulating them and then starting over, again and again (Kristeva 26). As a result, the semiotic chora is a process of linguistic becoming, a force that cannot by nature create essentializations or permanencies, as it is in a constant state of simultaneous destruction and recreation. The concept of the semiotic chora is a vital through-line to the power of *écriture féminine* as it produces another vantage point for access and understanding of the feminine unconscious because it undoes essentializations through spontaneity, it destroys and creates new linguistic codes through its drives, and it is governed by the maternal body which forms a foundational part of the maternal energy that produces feminine writing; “only if the unconscious has a chance to influence our thinking is it possible to change history” (Lie 49).

The irreducible semiotic chora creates the potential for resistance and difference to be accessed by feminine writers who desire to motivate language and meaning through forces other than masculine symbolic law, creating a non-reciprocal emergence of articulations and stirrings that precede masculine language and therefore contain the infinite subversion and difference that Cixous is seeking through writing. As a final conclusion in the manner let us say that the semiotic chora is an important tool in the understanding and perception of the power and (dis)organisation of the feminine unconscious and is thus

discrete quantities of energy [that] move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the

various constraints imposed on this body – always already involved in a semiotic process – by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are ‘energy’ charges as well as ‘psychical’ marks, articulate what we call a chora: a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated (Kristeva 25).

Another common objection to the theoretical writings of Cixous regards the apparent contradictions within the theory itself, claiming that “her style is often intensely metaphorical, poetic and explicitly anti-theoretical, and her central images create a dense web of signifiers that offer no obvious edge to seize hold of for the analytically minded critic” (Moi 23), that “Cixous believes neither in theory nor analysis” (Moi 23), and that “[her] theory is riddled with contradictions: every time a Derridean idea is evoked, it is opposed and undercut by a vision of woman’s writing steeped in the very metaphysics of presence she claims she is out to unmask” (Moi 30). The main contradiction in question here is Cixous’ insistence on escaping from the masculine/feminine binary while allegedly using the very same binary to inscribe the primary metaphor of *écriture féminine* as the means to escape from patriarchal systems of writing; often this objection is ravelled with an accusation of naivety and utopianism. Here it must be pointed out that Cixous makes it very clear that her proposition of the “masculine” and the “feminine” exist independently and distinctly from any concept of the differentiation between genders (Aneja 100), and that she is working with difference, not opposition, she is working with an “other bisexuality” as Anu Aneja argues in Cixous’ favour:

[...] Cixous speaks of a bisexuality available to men and women alike, not a classic neutralization of genders, but an “other bisexuality” which works with differences, rather than oppositions. For

historical and cultural reasons, however, it is women who are seen as benefitting more from this bisexuality, since they are not subjected to the culturally induced fear of castration in the way that men are. Thus it is that Cixous can say: “d’une certaine façon, ‘la femme est bisexuelle,’” (Rire 46) a statement that has caused obvious discomfort amongst those most suspicious of gendered differentiation in Cixous’ discourse (Aneja 100).

As for Cixous’ alleged inability to prescriptively define *écriture féminine*, she addresses this issue herself: “it is impossible to *define* a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded – which doesn’t mean that it doesn’t exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system; it does and will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination” (Cixous 1976; 883, emphasis the author’s), making its lack of definition its strength. As will be explored further in this research, to observe *écriture féminine* is not to observe a singular event or linear happening, but rather it is a path to non-reciprocal understanding and simultaneous variations of temporary meanings; *écriture féminine* is never fixed in place as to do so is to submit to masculine-sanctioned symbolic law; “her texts use spectacular metaphors and neologisms which seem to have their origin in her dreams and the unconscious and thereby make room for the reader’s imagination” (Lie 47). For a closing thought on this objection of obscurity, Cixous acknowledges that the Imaginary is capable of absorbing incongruities and inconsistencies since it is a realm of chaos, a point of disorder, from which feminine language emerges as a source of subversive power in the Symbolic, free from any Oedipal anxiety as demonstrated below where those who give into the spontaneity of the feminine imaginary become the “sowers of disorder,” disrupting signification, and

have nothing to gain by pledging themselves to be the opposite of man, “to pledge allegiance to the negative,” calling for a non-reciprocal emergence of feminine subjectivity:

Here we encounter the inevitable man-with-rock, standing erect in his old Freudian realm, in the way that, to take the figure back to the point where linguistics is conceptualizing it “anew,” Lacan preserves it in the sanctuary of the phallus (\emptyset) “sheltered” from *castration’s* lack! Their “symbolic” exists, it holds power – we, the sowers of disorder, know it only too well. But we are in no way obliged to deposit our lives in their banks of lack, to consider the constitution of the subject in terms of a drama manglingly restaged, to reinstate again and again the religion of the father. Because we don’t want that. We don’t fawn around the supreme hole. We have no womanly reason to pledge allegiance to the negative (Cixous 1976; 884).

The final objection to the theoretical underpinnings of *écriture féminine* that shall be addressed in this chapter is that of the maternal metaphor and its potential allegiance to the compulsory institution of motherhood and pregnancy, an institution that prominent feminist theorists, such as Simone de Beauvoir and Ann Rosalind Jones, abhor; “I myself feel highly flattered by Cixous’ praise for the nurturant perceptions of women, but when she speaks of a drive toward gestation, I begin to hear echoes of the coercive glorification of motherhood that has plagued women for centuries” (Jones 14). Of course, it would be an over-simplification to assume these objections are based on any literal interpretation of Cixous’ metaphor, but rather it is best to assume these objections stem from a place that questions the validity of metaphor, maternal in nature or otherwise, as an emancipatory device. For example, Stanton states “that Cixous upholds metaphor as desirable and efficacious presupposes faith in its capacity to transform existing meanings, ultimately, the system of significance” (Stanton 49),

demonstrating an anxiety towards one of Cixous' primary literary devices as posited in her manifesto of feminine writing. Regarding the maternal, Cixous says "it is necessary and sufficient that the best of herself be given to woman by another woman for her to be able to love herself and return in love the body that was "born" to her. Touch me, caress me, you the living no-name, give me myself as myself" (Cixous 1976; 881-882) and that "[...] in women there is always more or less the mother who makes everything alright, who nourishes, and who stands up against separation; a force that will not be cut off but will knock the wind out of the codes" (Cixous 1976; 881-882), identifying the maternal as a force of continuity and passionate stirrings in the unconscious. Cixous does not speak of literal gestation, but of the capacity for gestation and growth to motivate the corresponding psychic impulses, leaving the material conditions and choice of motherhood to be addressed elsewhere.

Cixous' critics further insinuate that she aims "to break with the symbolic father" but her maternal metaphor "paradoxically reaffirms the phallosophy of presence which the maternal feminine is designed to efface" (Stanton 51), meaning that the metaphorical body of the mother denotes a corresponding ontological mother/motherhood that would inherently "be caught up in the structures of phallogopresence" (Stanton 49), and that presence is an impossibility as it is endlessly deferred in the chain of signification according to Derridean deconstruction. To these objections it can be said that they underestimate the transformation of Cixous' feminist appropriation of Derrida *combined* with her rigorous investment in presence. On the point of presence according to Derrida, Cixous departs radically, fusing deconstruction

with presence as explained in this summary by Linda Walsh, which shall be quoted at length:

Cixous does not so much break with as fly in the face of Derridean deconstruction on this point. She very consciously over-writes the absent [...] which makes possible “phallophilosophy;” that is, Cixous’ maternal *presence* is flagrant: her manoeuvre is offensive, not defensive (or simply ignorant). Cixous seeks to (re-)write the maternal as activity, as a presence that undoes the logic (the presence) of the Same, which can *only* be phallic. [...] To break radically from the law of the father necessitates, furthermore, breaking with those breaks which recuperate the scene of killing the father. And we cannot, as Stanton does, continue to call upon the word of the father, however congenial a father he (Derrida, for example) might be, in order to critique attempts to go beyond, fly and steal, speak otherwise (Walsh 161, emphasis the author’s).

The above passage demonstrates Cixous’ sensibility to her concept of *féminité* and her metaphor of the maternal body as a motivation for language and self-knowledge. Cixous posits the search for an “otherness” that is independent of any hierarchal, oppositional binary of *same-other* already inscribed in patriarchal discourse; Cixous calls for an other “otherness,” one that severs all ties to Oedipal discourse and is driven by a libidinal economy. “By metaphorically shifting the originary connection to the maternal body in a boundless symbolic future, not through substitution or deconstruction, but through remembrance and love, Cixous’ maternal, as metaphoric absolute supremacy and presence, thus re-establishes the severed maternal bond as a newly disembodied and symbolic connection based now on desire rather than need” (Walsh 137), effectively side-stepping the short-comings of metaphor and deconstruction with a revolutionary third option that will bring women “to their senses and to their meaning in history” (Cixous 1976; 876), or re-inscribe

women in history as producers of language and culture through an awakening for otherness in signification.

As has been demonstrated, the main objections to the theoretical writings of Cixous often emerge from a failure to consider *écriture féminine* as a project informed throughout Cixous' *entire* body of writing – theoretical, poetic, fictional, and dramatic. Objections on the grounds of essentialism come when Cixous' works are held in isolation, as singularities, sequestered from their relationship to the body. Cixous is not too far removed from material reality to have any impact on the cultural condition of women because, despite giving emphasis to poetry before politics, Cixous lights for us a path: starting in the chaos of the feminine Imaginary, governed by a feminine libidinal economy, sharing space and place with the feminine body, to enter into the Symbolic. In the space of the Symbolic, women disrupt, disturb, and “sow the seeds of chaos” in patriarchal discourse through reconfiguring the relationship of text and speech, confronting the Levinas/Blanchot binary of “parole/écriture” or Maurice Merleau-Ponty's, “parole parlée” and “parole parlante”. Cixous carves out a place for *écriture féminine* in the spirit of Derrida's primacy of writing over speech (*Of Grammatology*) to offensively encounter hegemony outside hegemony's own ways of knowing and categorizing. Cixous has produced a path into writing with significant implications for feminist resistance, as shall be examined in the contemporary work of Emmanuelle Marie's aforementioned play *CUT* that splices language and the body together, creating multiple discourses and interventions implicated in feminist revolt – all in the women's toilets.

Now that we have addressed the principals of feminine writing and their most prominent objections, the final problem to discuss is the question of anachronism and relevancy – does *écriture féminine* remain relevant within the feminisms and advocacies of today's post-third-wave landscape? What is the social location and impact of feminine writing in our contemporary feminist culture? Why *écriture féminine*? Why now? These questions, often encountered when working with feminist theories deemed to be past their shelf-date, firstly demand interpolation of feminist theory and feminist *écritures* into linear, historical timelines that determine a theory's pertinence based on where it falls in relation to the current age, as though feminist philosophies were concerned with such matters as masculine historicist time. The attempt to relegate a theory to the past can become an ideologically delegitimizing tactic, but as Michael Rothberg points out that “although forms of anachronism constitute different types of ‘error’ when perceived from a historicist perspective, they can also be powerfully subversive and demystifying in the ways that they expose the ideological assumptions of historicist categorization” (Rothberg 25). Perhaps the question of anachronism is a failure to acknowledge the ongoing and infinite procession of *écriture féminine* and the alternate subjectivities it produces, further, the question of shelf-life may also be insidiously imbedded in discourses that seek to identify and prescribe feminism as “over.”

Écriture féminine as such is not a body of work in the feminine, but a method of bracketing women's writing to address the ongoing need for a radical break in the understanding of who and what a feminist subject is. A revamped *écriture féminine* in the 21st century expands the parameters of feminist subjectivity to envelope

intersectionalism, alterity, and post-colonial subjectivities - all of which form part of the nebula of contemporary, third-wave feminism. As the primary philosophical principal behind *écriture féminine* is constant motion, *écriture féminine* undoes the legacy of meta-narrativity to which most theorists and activists have become wary - once you observe the tactics and happenings of feminine writing, the resulting meanings and metaphors have already shape shifted, in an infinite process of production, creativity, and insurgence. Although feminist discourses and analysis have undeniably chosen divergent paths since Cixous' inception of *écriture féminine*, it is still an informative and transformative tool in the on-going quest to demolish the codes of masculine language. As a final thought on this matter, Elizabeth Grosz, in reference to the needs of contemporary feminism, recalls Cixous and her exploration of feminine subjectivity back to the centre of feminist cultural production and feminist historical consciousness in her insistence that chemical and biological phenomena share space with difference and emergence:

in other words, feminism needs to direct itself to questions of complexity, emergence, and difference that the study of subjectivity shares with the study of chemical and biological phenomena. We need to understand in more explicit terms how newness and change are generated, and what mechanisms are available below or above the level of the social to explain the unpredictability of social and political change. (Grosz 2012; 21)

Écriture féminine viewed as a psychoanalytical practice and as a critical methodology is an opportunity to activate the feminist emancipatory energies of the present, identifying their imbrication and relationship to past movements and structures. This activation of *écriture féminine* in the present engages current political

feminist projects by moving away from the psychic experiences and political structures which originate from the masculine symbolic. Feminine writing is not a destination, it is not a policy or law or set of material conditions, it is a psychic experience of liberation produced through the matrices of text and body, it is an eternal reminder that reason only forms one part of consciousness. Cixous, aware of this convergence between the past and present, and of the oscillation between reason, materiality, and concerns surrounding the formation of feminine subjectivity, stated early on that “the future must no longer be determined by the past. I do not deny that the effects of the past are still with us. But I refuse to strengthen them by repeating them, to confer upon them an immovability the equivalent of destiny, to confuse the biological and the cultural. Anticipation is imperative” (Cixous 1976; 875), planting the idea that progress and liberation in subjectivity is not a port of arrival, nor a static location, but a process of becoming motivated by an eternal desire to separate from the historical discourses of masculine oppression. Should there remain any doubt regarding the relevancy of feminine writing let us leave with the parting words of M.F. Simone Roberts:

If one shared goal of feminisms is the establishment of feminine/female subjectivities in a feminine symbolic order as nexuses of cultural agency, and not merely as an ideal ephemera in the marginal meta-territories of theory and literature, than the *écritures* produced by feminine writing subjects (men and women) need to be taught, read and published as legitimate, textual practices and as critical methodologies (Roberts 52).

In conclusion *écriture féminine* is not an essentialist theory reliant on an origin body or identity, but a way of speaking to the connective tissues of body, desire, and language, where one is not given privilege or primacy over another. *Écriture féminine* is

not contradictory or confused, instead its subversive power is reliant on its fluidity and nebulous impulses to which women have privileged, but not exclusive access; this is why *écriture féminine* can never be prescriptively defined and shall remain so. “Do women write in this swervy way? Yes. Is this women’s writing? Not only” (Roberts 51). *Écriture féminine* is constant motion, an unpredictable orbit that expresses non-reciprocal identities and alternate subjectivity, “what swervy, or feminine, or feminist, or experimental writing – and especially writing that has all these qualities – have in common is that they deliberately pose a challenge, a counter-proposition to one or more orthodoxies of form or gender normativity, or patriarchy, or tradition, or aesthetic decorum” (Roberts 51). Cixous offers up an alternative to death in the symbolic, she gives us a chance to de-colonize language and express feminine subjectivity otherwise, to bring back to writing a resuscitating otherness. However, there shall always remain the challenge of observing feminine writing, which returns us to Marie’s *CUT* and its location amongst contemporary feminisms. *CUT*, as I shall argue, is a contemporary piece of feminine writing, pushing back against any notion of anachronism or shelf-life that may have befallen Cixous’ theories of poetic politics; having an analysis of a contemporary piece of feminine theatrical writing can reveal the import and necessity of understanding the role unconscious desires play in a literary and political landscape that rejects master narratives and essentialisms, that no longer situates feminist discourse as a universal given or common goal. This research is looking to explore how feminine writing can be observed, but also how it can’t be contained, and how intersectionality and feminine writing interact within language and textual bodies in the genre of drama, which brings forth speech, bodies,

and the physical form of the theatre in addition to text – everything including the bathroom sink.

Linguistic Matters

“Feminine language must, by its very nature, work on life passionately, scientifically, poetically, politically in order to make it invulnerable.”

– Chantal Chawaf

“Words have the power to deny destruction and our writing must prove this. We need languages that regenerate us, warm us, give birth to us, that lead us to act and not to flee.”

– Chantal Chawaf

One of the most meticulous undertakings in French feminism is uncovering the ‘nature’ of *écriture féminine* and its ephemeral, notional properties that prevent it from being held or enclosed so as to maintain its *other* otherness, its critical distance from the dominant linguistic system that is patriarchal language and speech. *Écriture féminine* is a language perpetually in a process of becoming, maintaining a fluidity, a semi-solid state like “‘flowing thinking’ rather than ‘thought’” (DeFromont qtd in Williams 64). To observe *écriture féminine* is to observe something in motion. Feminine writing, in particular as it is defined by Cixous, weaves its subversive linguistic politics through the language of the father, identifying and exposing the fissures between the social location of women and the expression of the female unconscious as it forages the journey from the feminine imaginary to the political implications of symbolic existence. “For Cixous, the heart of *écriture féminine* is a relinquishing of the (masculine) self, and an acceptance and inclusion of the other in ways which will necessarily call into question the prevailing ideology and its mode of perception and expression, and hence create a new ‘order’ to replace the patriarchal and capitalist hegemony” (Sellers 1991;

139); to seek both a feminine language and a feminine reading of language is not to seek a definition, but to seek an experience of the life-giving processes of feminine textuality. Contemporary contexts and experiences of Cixous' poetic politics remain necessarily impactful and relevant, especially as it pertains to contemporary feminist drama, as will be discussed below.

In her play *CUT* Emmanuelle Marie returns *écriture féminine* to the foreground of contemporary feminist writing, using it to disrupt, disturb, and fragment patriarchal discourse by unapologetically affirming the female body, putting language and the body into direct interplay. Marie finds routes to restore *écriture féminine* within the landscape of contemporary drama and feminist discourse. This chapter is an analysis of the observable modes and devices of feminine writing engaged by Emmanuelle Marie in *CUT* to disturb and transform contemporary dominant discourses of the social location, sexuality, and subjectivity of women by contributing to the body of feminine writing in the theatre. This chapter will focus primarily on language, expression, and psycho-social location while the next chapter will focus more intently on the intersection of the linguistic with the anatomical and the morphological, not to reduce or isolate the body, but to attempt to observe *écriture féminine's* elements in isolation so a feminine reading can be achieved as Susan Sellers describes below:

The best way to describe a 'feminine' reading is to say that it implies 'opening' the self to what it is the text is saying, even if this is puzzling or painful or problematic. It entails reading to see how a text is made, by exploring all the various resources for meaning a writer has at their disposal; the writer's intended meaning, as well as the 'other' meanings that contradict, complement, unsettle or dislodge this meaning" (Sellers 1998; 192).

For a linguistic analysis of *CUT* through the context of *écriture féminine* to embark I first wish to consider the overall structure, temporality, and title of the play. *CUT* does not subscribe to a linear narrative, temporality, or formal structure as the scenes, although placed in an intentional order, are connected through fluidity more so than narrativity or causation, effectively disidentifying with the any imposed preconceptions of structural congruity or parallelism. Marie further demonstrates this disidentification through her choice to embrace two seemingly opposing structural forms, namely that of the cinematic decoupage and the women's chorus,:

au départ de la pièce, il y a cette vision d'une foule de femmes d'âges très différentes les uns des autres. La forme cinématographique s'est imposée à moi, et en même temps le chœur restait présent. Il y avait bien là un chœur de femmes. L'une d'entre elles sortait du group, venait témoigner face au public, quasiment à l'avant-scène, le chœur à l'arrière plan « nourrissant » pour ainsi dire son monologue. La femme retournait ensuite dans le chœur, une autre en sortait, etc. Pas de discussion, il y avait là un dispositif permettant un jeu de va-et-vient (Marie 2003; 103)

[at the beginning of the play there is a vision of a crowd of women, all different ages amongst them. The cinematic form imposed itself on me, and at the same time the chorus remained present. A chorus of women was there, present. One of them emerged from the group, coming forward to give witness in the face of the public, almost fully downstage, with the chorus in the background "feeding" the monologue so to speak. The woman then went back to the chorus, another came forward, etc. No discussion, there was a convention of back-and-forth] (Marie 2003; 103).

The title "CUT" opens the play with multifarious meanings and curiosities. "CUT" has contiguity across English and French as the term employed to signal the end of a filming sequence, but also implies a severing, an ending, or a division; "en dehors

de sa sonorité que j'aime bien, *CUT* veut dire couper, séparer. Or le mot sexe vient de *sexus*, mais viendrait aussi de *secare* qui veut également dire en latin...séparer. Je trouvais que c'était amusant d'avoir le fond et la forme réunis dans un même titre !" (Marie 2003 ; 103) [*over and above its sonority, CUT can mean to cut up, to separate. Furthermore the word sex comes from sexus, but it also comes from secare, which can also mean in Latin...to separate. I find this amusing to have the basis and the form reunited in one title!*] (Marie 2003 ; 103), highlighting the title's *double entendre* by referring to the action of dividing the two sexes, but also by referring to the form and tonalities of cinema and film-making which comprise Marie's surprising and discordant structure which departs from the canonized structural conventions of linear narrative and well-made plays.

The less ordered and centralized nature of female sexuality is said to correspond to less rigid structures. There is thus a privileging of disorder at various levels: the feminine text will avoid the pattern of opening, development, climax and subsidence into the calm of closure, which parallels masculine sexuality, and tends to proceed by association rather than logic or chronology (Holmes 225).

Écriture féminine destabilizes the masculine constructs of time and gives rise to new temporalities such as those presented in *CUT* which do not respect the parameters of well-written plays, narrative plots, or even daresay the recognizable formality of genre. Time is inconsequential as the time that passes within *CUT* may represent the expansion of a moment or the life-span of 100 years, there is no fixity or orientation as the play touches on all stages of the life of women - from birth, to childhood, to puberty, to love, to motherhood, to loss, and eventually death, but in no committed sequential

order of events. *CUT* flows from bathroom habits, to English acquisition lessons, to orgasms, to gardening, to sexual anxiety, etc., without investing in rigidity or formality – the women’s discourse is never restrained by linearity and is always free to wander at will. The transitions between sections can be interpreted as abrupt or organic, if there are to be transitions at all, and *CUT*’s fluid structure meanders through multiple territories of feminist discursivity, the most prominent of which is the body’s relationship to language, playing with fragmentation, voice, and syntax. “Cixous sees the type of textual composition woven from the multiple and heterogeneous possibilities generated by the writing process as challenging the rules of (linear) logic, objective meaning, and the single, self-referential viewpoint decreed by masculine law” (Sellers 1991; 143-144).

La Dame 3: [...] TROU...NOIR et qu’on n’en parle jamais...TROU...NOIR...non vraiment « ça » est...je ne sais quoi TROU...NOIR...tiens ob...servons la nature...TROU...NOIR...par exemple moi...qui...a...dore jar...diner (Marie 2003; 82).

Woman 3: [...] *BLACK...HOLE and the things of which we never speak...BLACK...HOLE...no really “it” is...I don’t know what BLACK...HOLE...look here, ob...serve nature...BLACK...HOLE...for example myself...who...a...dores gar...dening* (Marie 2003; 82).

This above text is not only an example of a potential place for a transition but is also a resistance to the signifying process. The words “TROU NOIR” appear to fragment and interrupt one woman’s hesitancy to speak the language describing her sex, but that language itself is broken into fragments, cracks and fissures, opening up to new meanings and possibilities that transcend their apparent failure. Furthermore, the intrusion of the “TROU NOIR” [*“BLACK HOLE”*] image in addition to the word

fragments, e.g. “ob...servons,” [“ob...serve”] are indicative of the way Marie dismantles received language, vacating its imposed meanings whilst returning to a high-spirited and often humorous *ménage à trois* between subject, desire, and language. Throughout *CUT* Marie persistently makes attempts on the life of restrictive linguistic code between self and language, returning to the body as a source of knowledge such as in this passage which plays on both the imagery of the feminine imaginary and the Lacanian mirror phase as a derivative of the Freudian Oedipal process, challenging the phenomenon that “we have turned away from our bodies. Shamefully we have been taught to be unaware of them, to lash them with stupid modesty; we’ve been tricked into a fool’s bargain: each one is to love the other sex” (Cixous 1989; 113).

La Dame 3: [...] Les choses sont déjà difficiles lorsque, petite fille, on essaie simplement de voir ce qui nous appartient là...Bien caché entre les plis. Il faut être acrobate. Ou se servir d’un miroir. Je n’étais pas acrobate...Et même, on ne perçoit pas tout de son propre sexe, puisqu’il semble se continuer à l’intérieur, de soi, à l’intérieur de soi (Marie 2003; 73).

Woman 3: [...] *things are already difficult when as a little girl, we simply try to see what we have down there...well hidden between the folds. We have to be acrobats. Or make good use of a mirror. I was not an acrobat...even then, one cannot fully perceive their own sex, since it seems to continue into the interior, of themself, into the inner self (Marie 2003; 73).*

Here Marie has created the image of a woman looking at her genitals in a mirror, but what this particular woman sees is not only the imprint of her physical, external body but also the impression of an uncharted internal space, that continues, potentially infinitely, into the interior of her body, creating a visual link between the woman’s external, physical sexuality and the internal imaginary, driven by libidinal

energy, female morphology, and presence. This image is a direct affront and challenge to the Lacanian Mirror phase, the language of the patriarchal symbolic against which *écriture féminine* has pitted itself, and is a commentary that becomes permeated throughout *CUT*. By playing with the visual imagery of the mirror phase Marie subverts it into one which no longer creates lack, longing, or submission to the phallus, but interpolates it into a feminine language governed by the libidinal economy of the feminine body, free from the constrictions of masculine law and a deep cut to the binaries of oedipal psychoanalysis as mandated by Cixous herself:

If woman has always functioned 'within' the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this 'within,' to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of (Cixous 1976; 887).

Within *CUT* there is no attempt to replace an established ideological order with new ideologies, nor is there an adherence to existing master narratives of female essence, instead the language of *CUT* inhabits existing discourses – including those that are perceivably banal, prescribed, or cliché – to nuance the language used to express them, creating rifts and other disruptions in their unity. Marie reminds her audience of the constant need to start and restart, to propagate a continual cycle of inhabiting language, breaking it down, and (re)building it back up as “a feminine text cannot be more than subversive: if it writes itself it is in volcanic heaving of the old ‘real’ property crust” (Cixous 1989; 116), even if this results in something counterintuitive or contradictory, because, after all, the feminine imaginary is capable

of absorbing chaos and incongruity. This perennial nature of Marie's language results in an overall revalorizing of the female body seen throughout the many *découpages* of *CUT*, diverting existent dominant discourses from their fixed signification with interruptions and vagueness. For example, even as the female speaking voice featured below attempts to erase her body through obscure language Marie finds a way to interrupt and reinscribe this anxiety within a physical space without end, giving room for new, unexpected and infinite meanings to enter into the word "ça"⁴ ["it"] so that it may signify a singular literal meaning, but also multifarious other meanings and images. The hole is not the empty darkness of lack, but a vaginal receptacle of possibility, growth, and transformation.

La Dame 3: Je trouve d'ailleurs que les animaux font moins d'histoires avec « ça ».

« Ça » leur semble si naturel.

Le Chœur Des Dames 1 ET 2 : Trou.

La Dame 3 : « Ça », ils se le lèchent comme ensuite ils se lèchent la patte ou le museau.

La Dame 1 : Trou.

La Dame 2 : Trou.

La Dame 1 : Trou.

La Dame 3 : « Ça » ne les font pas un cas de « ça ».

Le Chœur Des Dames 1 ET 2 : Trou. (Marie 2003; 79-80)

⁴ "le Ça" is furthermore the French translation for the "Id," or Sigmund Freud's concept of the pleasure principle which is governed by the impulse for self-gratification. Although this contiguity is lost in translation, it is possible that Marie's play on the word "ça" is further invoking the illogical, irrational, and fantastical elements that comprise the psychic content of the primitive instincts of the body, interpolating them into an economy of the feminine libido governed by the image of the vagina, diverting female desire and language away from phallogocriticism.

Woman 3: *Besides, I find that animals make less fuss about "it." "It" seems natural to them.*

Woman 1 and 2: *Hole.*

Woman 3: *"It," they lick it just like they lick their paw or muzzle.*

Woman 1: *Hole.*

Woman 2: *Hole.*

Woman 1: *Hole.*

Woman 3: *"It" doesn't make a big deal about "it."*

Woman 1 and 2: *Hole (Marie 2003; 79-80)*

As previously mentioned, *CUT* begins with a very curious homage to the urinating habits of human beings. Under further scrutiny this comedic introduction dedicated to urination is the first image of subversion to appear in what is, as we shall come to discover, a very heterogeneous mosaic of resistant feminine language. *CUT* begins with a declamatory statement, a necessary fact regarding the functionality of the male body: "n'attendez pas des hommes qu'ils s'assoient pour pisser. Les hommes ne s'assoient pas pour pisser. Ils pissent debout, contre les murs" [*do not expect men to piss seated. Men do not sit to piss. They piss standing, against the wall*] (Marie 2003; 69), opening this play with a firm declamation of the primacy and necessity of the masculine body and its physicality. For Marie, to be 'man' is to piss standing upright against the wall, establishing a physiological model toward which the female body is traditionally contrasted. Marie then immediately affirms this physiological binary by referring directly to the urinating habits of women: "chez moi les femmes pissent assises. C'est ainsi qu'elles pissent" [*in my house women piss sitting down. That is how they piss*] (Marie 2003; 69). Simply put, the first few sentences of *CUT* seemingly

establish a firm and non-negotiable difference between gendered bodies with women as those who must sit, and men as those who must, by nature, stand for relief. This binary reinstates the traditional division of the sexes as active/passive, standing/sitting, etc., clearly establishing “a male privilege, which can be seen in the opposition by which it sustains itself, between *activity* and *passivity*. Traditionally, the question of sexual difference is coupled with the same opposition: activity/passivity” (Cixous 1991; 91). However, this binary is but one example of Marie’s tendency throughout *CUT* to establish a duality, identifying existing masculine perceptions before interrogating and disintegrating them through feminine language - lining up her target before firing.

As regards submissivity Cixous says “in excess, it is partly bound up with death. But there is a non-closure that is not submission but confidence and comprehension; that is not an opportunity for destruction but for wonderful expansion” (Cixous 1991; 106), illuminating the potential for submission to become a point of critical departure as Marie cleverly demonstrates. This introduction to and confrontation of the *status quaestionis* is the starting point from which Marie continues, in elaborate depth for several pages, with a multifarious nuancing of the female urinating body; “this Other writing is feminine not only because it inscribes what would otherwise be appropriated or repressed by (masculine) culture, but also because it involves the positive (re)valuing of *women’s* differences” (Sellers 1991; 133).

Conceptual and linguistic binaries are not a new problem to post-structural linguistic feminism, but rather they are creatures that continually reinforce

themselves, breaking language, textuality, and bodies into endless couplets of oppositional existence, requiring continual weeding and dispersal. The concept of 'woman' is a haunted one as "the dualism of Western thought designates 'woman' as the opposite of 'man' and, in so doing, evacuates the subject of 'woman' of any meaning in her own right. If we follow this thought through, 'woman,' as a concept defined by the lack of male attributes, exists only to re-emphasize what 'man' has: 'woman' is an empty space in which to re-write 'man'" (Brook 16). Marie's standing/sitting binary highlights this very oppositionality in both linguistic and physical terms. However, rather than dwelling in a stasis within a system that reinforces woman as submissive lack, as that which man is not, she embraces the need "to develop new conceptual systems which defeat the history of binary two by twos which are really a disguise of the monolithic (masculine) One" (Brook 16).

Upon establishing the conventional and hierarchal sitting/standing, active/passive, dominant/submissive contrast between the bodies of man and woman, Marie immediately progresses to undermine it with absurdity, plurality, and nuance. Firstly, by choosing such a banal premise on which to base a division of genders, Marie exposes the unsettling quality of gendered binaries, painting them as fallacies of logic dependent on inconsequential premises such as whether one stands or sits to relieve oneself. If it seems negligible to divide men and women into a hierarchy of standing versus sitting on a toilet, any other basis for division is rendered equally irrelevant as the exiguous core, the hollow centre, of all binaries is exposed, including the monolithic dominant/submissive one. By beginning within a binary and occupying a space of submission Marie addresses the continual, hardy existence of such a mentality,

identifying the need to continue the work of the feminine, adopting a contemporary approach of flippant triviality bordering on mockery before a transformation of meaning even takes place, demonstrated in Marie's commentary on her choice of locale and subject of female urination:

Je me suis dit qu'il fallait que je trouve un lieu où les femmes se retrouvent. Il fallait aussi que ce lieu ait à voir avec la morphologie même des femmes, avec leur chair ; j'ai choisi des toilettes pour dames ! Ça peut paraître trivial, mais on est tout de suite placé dans la réalité. Parler de la façon dont les femmes urinent était important, car cela commence bien ainsi : les hommes pissent debout, les femmes assises...Alors oui, c'est trivial, mais cela indique bien quel registre on va se trouver, de quoi on va parler...En même temps ce lieu (les toilettes) est un lieu emblématique de la libération de la parole, et du corps. Un corps montré tel qu'il est, sans érotisme aucun. Et dans les toilettes pour dames les hommes sont absents (mais toujours présents dans l'évocation !). Je voulais vraiment que cela se passe entre femmes seules. Un chœur de dames (Marie 2003; 104).

I told myself that it was necessary to find a place where women find themselves. It was also necessary that this place had to do with women's morphology, with their flesh; I chose the women's toilets! It may seem trivial, but we are right away situated in reality. To speak of the way women urinate was important, since it starts so well: men piss upright, women piss seated...Therefore, yes...it's trivial, but this indicates in which register we are going to find ourselves, of what we are going to speak...at the same time this place (the toilets) is an emblematic place for the liberation of speech, of the body. A body shown as it is, without any sexualisation. And in the women's toilets men are absent (but always present through evocation!) I truly wanted for this to happen only between women. A chorus of women (Marie 2003; 104).

Marie's next move is to divert the female body away from the oppositional dualism of active/passive, sitting/standing inherited from masculine language into a

more plural space by immediately expanding and challenging the ability of the female body: “il arrive cependant qu’elles pissent accroupies, lorsqu’en pleine nature elles doivent se soulager. Et quoiqu’on dise, elles pourraient aussi bien pisser debout et proprement” (Marie 2003; 69) [*“it happens sometimes that women manage to piss squatted, because in nature they have to relieve themselves. And despite what anyone says women can also piss properly standing up”*] (Marie 2003; 69), introducing a physical and psychic adaptability of the female body as one which can piss sitting, crouching, *or*, despite what anyone says, standing upright – all with her particular brand of subversion that dispossesses any dominant narrative of its seriousness or magnitude. “One must not wage war on man. That is his way of attaining value. Deny in order to affirm. Kill to love. One must simply deflate his values with the needle of ridicule” (Leclerc 79). In addition to the multiple physical possibilities of the female body to which Marie introduces her audience, she also portrays the position of sitting as a single choice amongst many, but a choice that psychically decolonizes the mind-body from one which is conditioned to choose the position of submission, into one that chooses to sit because sitting is a bridge to calmness, to daydreams, to introspection, undoing biological determinism and pre-determination where “urinal bliss” becomes a pleasurable act of social and physical release.

La Dame 2 : Il m’arrive parfois de profiter de ce moment c’est vrai, pour rêver un peu en attendant que ça finisse. Peut-être la position assise des femmes pendant la miction permet un certain abandon, quelques secondes. Tout se pose. Le corps repose, tassement de colonne vertébrale, ensommeillement du monde, tout à la contemplation de la porte fermée, du rien suprême, une sorte de grâce d’urinoir (Marie 2003; 70).

***Woman 2:** sometimes I benefit from this moment, it's true, to dream a little while waiting for it to finish. Maybe it's the seated position women assume during micturition that allows for a certain abandon, just a few seconds. Everything relaxes. The body relaxes, the spine settles, the world becomes sleepy, everything is concentrated on the closed door, nothing supreme, just a sort of urinal bliss (Marie 2003; 70)*

“Cixous adopts various strategies to subvert the certainties of a discourse that she perceives as resolutely patriarchal: she takes some representations literally and pushes them to uncomfortable conclusions, she refuses other representations entirely, still others she simply ridicules” (Shiach 113); this tendency to push representations to uncomfortable levels is adopted by Marie as she continues to explore the image of the female urinating body. Marie goes on to give an elaborate deconstruction, a play-by-play of the choreography the women perform before using the toilet, raising the simple act of using the toilet from the level of perceived vulgarity to the level of the musical and the whimsical, serving to dismantle any anxiety of disgust or shame:

La Dame 1: Quand les femmes pissent, elles baissent culottes et pantalons jusqu'aux genoux, remontent les jupes afin de ne pas souiller l'habit et voilà. Les fermetures éclairs sifflent, les doublures couinent, la soie s'ébroue ou la toile chuinte, s'ouvrant sur le monde...Et moi j'entends la musique, la musique des femmes qui pissent... (Marie 2003; 69-70).

***Woman 1:** When women piss they lower their undies and trousers all the way to their knees, lifting up their skirts so as not to dirty them, and voilà. The zippers whistle, the linings squeal, the fabric hisses...and I hear the music, the music of women pissing...”]* (Marie 2003; 69-70).

The above passage claims the female body and its fluids back from the brink of social erasure. This choreography of undressing, underscored by the sound of rustling clothing and women peeing, playfully disengages from existing predeterminations of what is proper or worthy of attention by subverting expectations and exposing the previously hidden taboo rituals of women, revalorizing the female body in a way that is not imbricated in the male gaze by moving away from the notion that female bodies, vaginas, and bodily noises are disgusting or unworthy of representation, and by relating to the female body and female nudity in a non-sexualized context. Shortly after this small speech by the established *femme de toilette*, the other women have a brief exchange that further affirms their connection between the sublime and the functions of their bodies, pushing the function of peeing into the realm of the divine, a realm it has rarely, if ever, been located. “The subversive impact of ‘*écriture féminine*’ would thus arise out of its affirmation of traditionally devalued terms, rather than through an escaping out of what some other feminist critics might view as a feminine mythology” (Aneja 103).

La Dame 3 : ...Lorsqu'on vient s'oublier enfin, il me semble qu'on est comme aux anges.

La Dame 2 : Lâché prise du corps, retombée de cerveau...

La Dame 3 : ...Petit Bouddha souriant...

La Dame 2 : ...La grâce je vous dis, la grâce. Plombée sur le siège, on est en suspension...

La Dame 3 : ...Comme des anges, je vous dis...immatérielles...

La Dame 1 : (*après un silence*) Et pourtant on pisse. (Marie 2003; 70)

Woman 3: *...Just as you manage to forget yourself at last, it feels as though you are amongst angels.*

Woman 2: *Relinquishing of the body, emptying of the mind...*

Woman 3: *...Little smiling Buddha...*

Woman 2: *...The grace I tell you, the grace. Anchored to the toilet seat, you are in total suspension... (Marie 2003; 70)*

One of the most potent collisions between feminine eroticism and language within *CUT* is Marie's exploration of masturbation and language acquisition; "the erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire" (Lorde 278). In *écriture féminine* the erotic is an essential power that motivates language and returns feeling into the pornographic, that is to say into the sexual structures that favour the sexual power of men, thereby subverting and reclaiming language based on new expressions of feminine sexuality. "This practice, extraordinarily rich and inventive, in particular as concerns masturbation, is prolonged or accompanied by a production of forms, a veritable aesthetic activity, each stage of rapture inscribing a resonant vision, a composition, something beautiful" (Cixous 1976; 876). Marie explores masturbation and diction in the context of a foreign language acquisition class, using feminine eroticism to disengage from the male gaze, and write feminine subjectivities driven by desire into dominant language. As Audre Lorde judiciously observed:

There are many kinds of power, used and unused, acknowledged or otherwise. The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling. In order to perpetuate itself, every

oppression must corrupt or distort those various sources of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change. For women, this has meant a suppression of the erotic as a considered source of power and information within our lives (Lorde 277).

The implication of the erotic and language in *CUT* is two-fold, firstly it returns language through sexuality, and secondly it generates otherness and alternative expressions of self-knowledge through the forces of desire as it forages new connections between the social, the sexual, and the corporeal – all of which are mediated by the unconscious (Shiach 117). This new way of representing materiality and sexuality is best exemplified by the representation of the woman daydreaming of a mystic return to nature before orgasming in the midst of an English language class. Marie vacates punctuality, giving into a flow of erotic language that rushes forward against all attempts to be persuaded off course, including by the foreign language exercise at hand. The excerpt presented below exemplifies a return to the interior self, to the feminine imaginary, to orient the feminine unconscious away from dominant language and into a place of self-exploration, expressing the pleasures of feminine eroticism within a libidinal economy.

Le Chœur des Dames 1 et 3: *What do you see in picture four? In picture four, I see a boy.*

La Dame 2: Tandis qu'à l'automatisme succède l'ennui et à l'ennui la nébuleuse de la rêverie, bientôt, le centre de votre nébuleuse se métamorphose: il devient vous. Il est vous maintenant.

Le Chœur des Dames 1 et 3: *What do you see in picture four? In picture four, I see a...*

La Dame 2: ...Peu à peu, votre voix cesse de résonner avec celle du troupeau. Tandis que vous êtes loin du troupeau. Tandis que vous êtes dans votre ailleurs, loin, loin du troupeau...

Le Chœur des Dames 1 et 3: ...*What do you see in picture five? In picture five, I see a...*

La Dame 2: ...Vous regardez maintenant les arbres verts, d'un vert très tendre, qui semblent vous faire signe, à vous, qui mimez les mots en regardant les arbres par la vitre de la salle de classe et le printemps qui se fiche bien des mots.

Le Chœur des Dames 1 et 3: *What do you see in picture six? In picture six, I see a girl.*

La Dame 2: Votre esprit chevauche maintenant le printemps cherche l'humus la fraîcheur des sous-bois les parfums mêlés l'odeur légère de la menthe celle piquante de l'ail sauvage qui embaument le parc alentour surgissant des herbes folles aux pieds des arbres sous les mousses (Marie 2003; 76).

Woman 1 and 3: What do you see in picture four? In picture four, I see a boy.

Woman 2: *While automatism becomes boredom and boredom nebulous reverie, suddenly, the centre of your nebula metamorphoses: it becomes you. It is you now.*

Woman 1 and 3: What do you see in picture four? In picture four, I see a...

Woman 2: *...bit by bit, your voice stops resonating with the voice of the herd. While you are far from the herd. While you are in your elsewhere, far, far from the herd...*

Woman 1 and 3: ...What do you see in picture five? In picture five, I see a...

Woman 2: *...Now you are watching green trees, a very gentle green that seems to be giving you a sign, a sign to you, that imitates the words while watching the trees through the classroom window and the spring that gets stuck inside the words.*

Woman 1 and 3: What do you see in picture six? In picture six, I see a girl.

Woman 2: *Now your spirit overlaps the spring searching humus the freshness of petrichor mixed perfumes light odours of spiced spearmint of wild garlic that embalms the surrounding park surging forward the crazed herbs at the feet of the trees under the mosses (Marie 2003; 76).*

This above passage demonstrates a detachment from linear dialogue and fixed syntax as the given questions and answers have less and less correlation between them – the questions and their corresponding replies seem to be drifting away from each

other. As the teaching voice presses the woman to speak aloud in a foreign language, the woman departs further into introspection as she observes nature and connects it to her internal state of reverie, never offering a direct answer. The English language and its foreignness sits uneasy with the woman because it is being imposed, it is coming from outside herself, much like the dominant language of patriarchy and imperialism is imposed and acquired. As a result the woman's replies come to her in her mother tongue, cutting across dominant language, traveling upwards and outwards, away from the imposed linguistic exercise. As the woman looks out the window she brings into proximity the detail of nature, the smell of forest humus, the tender green of trees, the sight of spearmint and wild garlic, departing into an internal feminine space, speaking otherwise in a voice different from the dominant one, which for Marie is a multisensory expression of the natural world. The next passage which follows shortly after is a powerful surge of the erotic within this internal space as the woman's gaze is turned inward to explore herself, giving rise to a pounding rush of language that completely wards off and effaces the foreign one. "Almost everything is yet to be written [...] about their sexuality, that is, its infinite and mobile complexity, about their eroticization, sudden turn-ons of a certain miniscule-immense area of their bodies; not about destiny but about the adventure of such and such a drive, about trips, crossings, trudges, abrupt and gradual awakenings, discoveries of a zone at one time timorous and soon to be forth-right" (Cixous 1976; 885). Demonstrated by the chorus as they abandon the foreign language and take up the language of the masturbating woman's erotic energy, Marie folds the biological process of masturbating, writing, and speaking into one;

“même les yeux fermés c’est blanc” [*even with your eyes closed it’s white*] (Marie 2003; 76).

Le Chœur des Dames 1 et 3: *What do you see in picture ten? In picture ten, I see a cloud...*

La Dame 2: Maintenant rien ne retient la main votre main votre main droite adroite qui monte remonte sous la table de la salle de classe le long de votre cuisse jusqu’au sexe là en haut il y a le sexe aux bords convexes et votre main s’attarde une simple pression à cet endroit vous fait dire que cet endroit est bon il suffit de froter là le clitoris pour voir les prémices d’un plaisir jusque-là inconnu qu’on vous avait caché et tandis que la brume du nuage devient plus épaisse et plus blanche encore il émane d’entre vos cuisses une chaleur nouvelle si forte et si étonnante pour un si haut nuage que vos cuisses justement se mettent à trembler.

Le Chœur des Dames: Maintenant le nuage que vous êtes est emporté poussé par un vent violent venu du tréfonds du cerveau et du long de l’épine dorsale et du bas-ventre il arrive sans prévenir: il éblouit. Et ça devient tout blanc autour, faut dire ça, ça devient tout blanc.

La Dame 2: Même les yeux fermés c’est blanc (Marie 2003; 77).

Woman 1 and 3: *What do you see in picture ten? In picture ten, I see a cloud...*

Woman 2: *Now nothing holds back your hand the hand your hand your skilful right hand that goes up goes back up under the classroom table the length of your thigh just to your sex there up high there is the convex edges of your sex and your hand applies a small pressure at this spot that makes you say that this spot is good it suffices to rub there the clitoris to see the beginnings of pleasure just there that you didn’t know you had hidden and while the cloud of fog becomes still thicker and whiter it emanates from between your thighs a new warmth so strong and so unexpected for such a high cloud that your thighs start to tremble.*

Woman 1, 2, and 3: *Now the cloud that you are is carried away pushed by a violent wind from deep within your brain and the length of your dorsal spine to your lower diaphragm it comes without warning: it explodes. And all around you it becomes white, it must be said, it all becomes white.*

Woman 2: Even with your eyes closed it's white (Marie 2003; 77).

These passages quoted at length from this section demonstrate an intimate relationship between textuality and sexuality where a physical erotic experience gives way to a language that notably and intentionally departs from an imposed dominant linguistic structure, including the imposed restrictions of regular punctuation that can limit expression and hints toward the orality of these passages (an écriture that becomes speech), an erotic that yields to pleasure. After the orgasm the women never return to the English lesson, but the play continues onward in French, their own and preferred language. The eroticism of this moment returns feeling and feminine language to the forefront, banishing the language of the father and the pornographic. As Lorde argues, re-establishing feminine eroticism as a source of linguistic and social otherness moves women away from the stronghold of the male gaze that constructs female eroticism as a fulfillment of male desire through the pornographic, towards a construct of female eroticism as a positive emotional experience, or the opposite of the pornographic (masculine), making the female orgasm in this passage a time of creative signification through both corporeal and textual matrices:

The erotic has often been misnamed by men and used against women. It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, the plasticized sensation. For this reason, we have often turned away from the exploration and consideration of the erotic as a source of power and information, confusing it with its opposite, the pornographic. But pornography is a direct denial of the power of the erotic, for it represents the suppression of true feeling. Pornography emphasizes sensation without feeling (Lorde 278).

As previously mentioned *CUT* refuses to follow any perceived “normal” lines of logic, it denounces fixity with its structure and its language, often turning back onto itself, offering up apparent contradictions and oscillations. Throughout the course of the loose narrative the women experience both moments of great confidence, and, often placed adjacently or imbroglied, moments of great insecurity. “Cixous urges recognition of the multiple nature of the self which can never simplify itself to conform to the illusion of its unified mirror image. She calls for new forms of definition which do not depend on mastery, which accept ‘chaos,’ and value and celebrate difference” (Sellers 1998; 3). One such moment occurs immediately after the orgasm previously discussed in which the women resist accepting that they were in fact masturbating. However, in their attempts to deny their sexual explorations by deciding who did or did not say “masturbation,” the word itself is repeated nine times within a few lines, forcing the word and the implications of its act into the direct foreground, rather than covering it up.

La Dame 3: (*à la Dame 2*) Vous avez dit... (*Un temps.*) Masturbation?...

La Dame 2: (*à la Dame 3*)... Masturbation...Mais j'ai pas dit... masturbation...Je l'ai dit? Je crois que je l'ai dit...Mais elle l'a dit aussi! (*Désignant la Dame 1.*)

La Dame 1: Ah oui? Je l'ai dit?

La Dame 2: (*à la Dame 1*) Ah pardonnez-moi mais il me semble bien que...que...vous avez dit Masturbation...vous avez même dit: Masturbation comme ça. Vous l'avez dit comme ça: MAS-TUR-BA-TION...vous avez dit ça comme ça...

La Dame 1: (*après un temps*)...Si vous l'dites... (*En chantonnant.*) Masturbation Masturbation Maastuurbaationonononononon...

Silence (Marie 2003; 78).

Woman 3: (to Woman 2) *Did you say...(pause) Masturbation?...*

Woman 2: (to Woman 3)...*Masturbation...But I didn't say...masturbation....Did I say it? I believe I said it...But she said it too!* (Indicating Woman 1.)

Woman 1: *Oh yeah? I said it?*

Woman 2: (to Woman 1) *Oh excuse me but it very well seems that...that...you said*

Masturbation...you even said: Masturbation like that. You said it like that: MAS-TUR-BA-TION...you said it like that...

Woman 1: (after a time)...*If you say so...(singing) Masturbation Masturbation*

Maastuurbaationononononon...

Silence (Marie 2003; 78).

Marie capitalizes on this discourse of passivity and hesitancy to subvert and expand the conceptual borders of “masturbation,” especially in the last incantation of the word that explodes as song: “masturbation masturbation maastuurbaationononononon,” paralleling *écriture féminine*’s emphasis on song, rhythm, incantation, and silence. “Ce qui comptait avant tout, c’était l’oreille, la rythmique. Plus encore, il arrive même un moment où la parole ne suffit plus. C’est la raison pour laquelle j’aime aussi travailler sur les silences. Dans *CUT*, quelques silences seulement sont notés, mais désormais j’entends bien tous les indiquer, comme dans une partition musicale” (Marie 2003; 104) [“What mattered the most was the ear, the rhythm. Furthermore, there comes a moment when speech no longer suffices. That’s the reason why I also love to work on the silences. In *CUT*, only some silences are noted, while others I take the time to clearly indicate, like a musical score”] (Marie 2003; 104).

Just previous to this erotic moment the act of female masturbation and its relationship to language and speech was possessed, embraced, and used to positively revalorize the female body, but immediately after this the women are hesitant to lay claim to the word that encompasses the act. The word “masturbation” is passed around amongst the women, each paradoxically speaking the word aloud in their denial at having ever spoken the word aloud, until at last the cry of “maastuurbaationononononon” breaks through, a sign the word and its conceptual meanings cannot be contained within confined syntax and pronunciation, perhaps cause for the hesitation to subscribe to it in the first place. The process of withdrawing from the masculine-inscribed containment of the word “masturbation” only to sing it aloud afterwards is an important procedure in feminine expansion as Cixous reminds us “her libido will produce far more radical effects of political and social change than some might like to think” (Cixous 1976; 882), abandoning the notion of female masturbation as a taboo ineffective political force; Cixous speaks of female masturbation in a metaphorical sense and Marie represents this metaphor literally – women masturbate and the language “comes”.

A different example of this resistance to syntactic closure that in turn becomes a conceptual expansion and a reinforcement of the mind-body imbrication can be found in the (non) language the women use to attempt to describe their genitals, replacing anatomical names like “vagina,” “vulva,” or “labia” with the word “ça” or “it.” Marie, like before, acknowledges that this avoidance concomitantly emerges from a place of shame or insecurity, as this particular moment is about one woman’s humiliation at allowing a man (read: the male gaze) to see her nether regions in full view. However,

also like before, Marie repeats the word “ça” so many times within the course of one speech that what seems at first to be a point of erasure comes back with ten-fold strength as a force of non-linear teleology. As “ça” is repeated multiple times its meanings and implications overcome the social expressions of female genitals and surpass their anatomical or morphological specificity as body organs, giving them an emotional texture that potentially transcends any social-biological constructs as the word “ça” can imply infinite intellections and imaginings.

La Dame 3: *Toujours. (Un temps.) Je ne supporterais pas qu’il voie « ça ». (Un temps.) Ça me gênerait terriblement. (Un temps.) D’ailleurs, il n’a jamais vu « ça ». (Un temps.) L’idée même qu’il puisse voir « ça » un jour m’est tout à fait insupportable. (Un temps.) Il y a une explication à ça : c’est tout simplement que je ne trouve pas « ça » beau. Voilà. Et donc je préfère qu’il ne voie pas « ça ». (Un temps.) Je serais terriblement gênée s’il voyait ça. (Un temps.) Et pourquoi, je vous le demande, pourquoi? (Un temps.) C’est tout simplement que je ne trouve rien d’esthétique à « ça ». (Un temps.) Ne nous leurrions pas : il y a une raison à ce que « ça » soit si bien caché. Et ce depuis des siècles. Et des siècles...Et des siècles. (Silence.) Tenez, un robinet gracieux et érectile, des couilles rebondies, aux statues d’Hermès, du discobole, de l’Apollon du temple de Zeus. Pas même une fente, un triangle, encore moins un poil sculpté, pour figurer la...ça de la femme (Marie 2003; 78).*

Woman 3: *Every time. (Pause.) I cannot stand that he sees “it.” (Pause.) It bothers me terribly. (Pause.) Besides, he’s never seen “it” before. (Pause.) Even the idea that he could see “it” one day is completely unacceptable. (Pause.) There is an explanation to it: it’s simply that I don’t find “it” pretty. There you have it. And therefore I prefer that he does not see “it.” (Pause.) I would be terribly bothered if he saw it. (Pause.) And why, I ask you, why? (Pause.) It’s simply because I don’t find anything aesthetic about “it.” (Pause.) Let’s not kid ourselves: there is a reason that “it” is so well hidden. And for centuries. Centuries...upon centuries. (Silence.) Take for example, a gracious*

and erectile tap, plump balls, on the statues of Hermes, the Discus Thrower, Apollo at the temple of Zeus. Not even a slot, a triangle, or even sculpted hair, to indicate the...it of the woman (Marie 2003; 78).

As we can see, the choice of a syntactically open, non-specific referent creates a space for revalorization, even in the midst of a discourse that perpetuates erasure of the specificity of the body; “the text foregrounds the difficulty of articulating what has always been excluded from representation” (Holmes 227). By implicating “ça” and all its expanding, multiple meanings, Marie is able to challenge the domination of masculine language that makes speaking of the female body extremely difficult as the language used to do so is already entangled in the patriarchal symbolic: “to speak of sexual intercourse in a woman’s voice poses similar problems, for the available words equate the male role with conquest and possession, the female with passivity and self-abandonment” (Holmes 227). For Marie, the “ça” takes on multiple roles, acknowledging the fine thread on which masculine psycho-linguistic domination rests for on the one hand the language of the female body might be easily erased within a phallographic Symbolic, but on the other it can so easily be reclaimed, re-configured, and returned by something as powerful as feeling, writing, and speaking the word many times in succession, resisting absence and absorption. “Ça,” as it appears in this passage, is serving a two-fold purpose: one the one hand “ça” is being used to highlight an historical absence from language, art, and visual representation, but it also simultaneously resists these absences by putting “ça” into central focus through repetition, bringing the missing image of the female sex organs back into the centre of discourse, and making “ça” a simultaneous combination of presence and absence.

Towards the end of this sequence Marie changes course and undoes the language of submission through fragmentation and interruption, chipping away at the foundations of syntax as words and phrases only ever come in parts with spaces between their beginning and end, changing speakers halfway through their pronunciation. For example, *La Dame 3* continues to be troubled by “ça” while the women who flank her open sonorous spaces of meaning, playing with rhythms and words so that they lose their negative connotation, detaching from the anxiety of *La Dame 3* and floating out into the unknown. “Through the same opening that is her danger, she comes out of herself to go to the other, a traveller in unexplored places; she does not refuse, she approaches, not to do away with the space between, but to see it, to experience what she is not, what she is, what she can be” (Cixous 1989; 106).

La Dame 3: Mais pas ça. « Ça » n’est pas ma préoccupation principale et « ça » ne l’a jamais été. [...] Enfin, vous comprendrez que je n’aie rien à faire avec « ça ». Mais d’où vient l’intérêt pour cette pornographie?

La Dame 2 : Trou-

La Dame 1 : -blé.

La Dame 3 : Car en dehors d’un intérêt purement physiologique et médical...

La Dame 2 : Trou-

La Dame 1 : -é.

La Dame 3 : « Ça » n’a aucun intérêt!

La Dame 2 : Tou-

La Dame 1 : -ché.

La Dame 3 : Enfin, un trou, ce n’est rien qu’un trou! Et un trou c’est bien un vide!

La Dame 1 : Cou-

La Dame 2 : -lé.

La Dame 3 : Et un vide, n'est-ce pas rien du tout!

La Dame 1 : Trou-

La Dame 2 : -noir.

La Dame 3 : Non vraiment, je me demande ce qu'ont toutes ces bonnes femmes à parler si impudemment de...ça! (Marie 2003; 80-81).

Woman 3: But not that. "It" is not my main concern and "it" never will be. [...] In the end, you understand that I have nothing to do with "it." Where does the interest in this pornography come from?

Woman 2: Trou-

Woman 1: -bled.

Woman 3: Because outside a purely physiological and medical interest...

Woman 2: Hol-

Woman 1: -ey

Woman 3: "It" has no interest!

Woman 2: Tou-

Woman 1: -ched

Woman 3: In the end, it's a hole, it's nothing but a hole! It's an empty hole!

Woman 1: flow-

Woman 2: -y

Woman 3: It's emptiness, that's all it is!

Woman 1: Black-

Woman 2: -hole

Woman 3: No really, I wonder why good women speak so impudently about...it! (Marie 80-81).

The harder *La Dame 3* attempts to convince her audience that "ça" is not a point worth consideration or interest the farther the other women interrupt her, breaking apart the signifying process with equally fragmented language such as "trou/blé" and

“cou/lé” to create disorder that usurps meaning, linear temporality, and expected chronologies. “What I say has at least two sides and two aims: to break up, to destroy; and to foresee the unforeseeable, to project” (Cixous 1976; 875).

To conclude it is hopefully evident by this point that the linguistic powers and images at play in *CUT* disturb and interrupt any linearities of phallographic ideology. By revalorizing the taboo, breaking down meaning-making processes, and connecting feminine language to the erotic, a divergent, non-binary alterity develops in which the female mind-body is not fixed, but able to identify and escape linguistic barriers connected to outside social realities and hierarchies. Cixous’ politics of *écriture féminine* intersect the morphological with the linguistic and the political, fragmenting and disrupting speech, not so that it becomes weaker or vanishes, but to open spaces in-between, fissures for new understandings and new knowledge. Marie adopts a Cixousian approach to writing and language in rhythm, form and content with a deep understanding and contemporary take on the necessities of feminine language. Presented in this chapter is only a small taste of all the possibilities contained within Marie’s *CUT* as one of the “thinkers, artists, creators of new values, ‘philosophers’ of the mad Nietzschean sort, inventors and destroyers of concepts, of forms, the changes of life cannot but be agitated by singularities – complementary or contradictory” (Cixous 1991; 97), reminding the feminine subject that the desire to push back the law of the father and its deathly language that is the stronghold of masculine psycho-dominance is what spirited *écriture féminine* into existence and maintains its mandate in our contemporary feminine landscape.

Tissues

The wager is that all the effects of subjectivity, all the significant facets and complexities of subjects, can be as adequately explained using the subject's corporeality as a framework as it would be using the consciousness or the unconscious.

- Elizabeth Grosz

Comment, femme, peut-on aller au théâtre? Sauf s'y trouver en complicité avec le sadisme dont les femmes y sont l'objet. À se voir invitée à prendre dans la structure familiale-patriarcale, que le théâtre reproduit à l'infini, la place de la victime.

- Hélène Cixous

As we have explored thus far, *écriture féminine* is an intricate weave of corporeality, language, and the feminine unconscious where no one entity holds primacy or exists in isolation, the weave is as infinite as it is integral. One of the more ambitious, less studied facets of Hélène Cixous' theories of *écriture féminine* is the contentious and unique relationship feminine writing has with the theatre; "Cixous regards theatre as the ideal site for explorations of the relationship between writing, identity and the other, but few links have been forged between her theories of a feminine writing and her work in the theatre" (Dobson 22). The transposition of *écriture féminine* onto both the physical form and the process of writing for the theatre engages some very complex affairs regarding the ontological and phenomenological status of the body, the mind/body bifurcation, the representation of the feminine subject, and the location of the written text, rendering any inspection of *écriture féminine* incomplete without an in-depth, concentrated look at the function of the body and corporeality in performative modalities and Cixous' particular relationship to the

theatre; “the objective of the inversion attempted here is to displace the centrality of the mind, the psyche, interior, or consciousness (and the even the unconscious) in conceptions of the subject through a reconfiguration of the body” (Grosz vii), suggesting that the location of the body in theatre is not necessarily fixed or determined when feminine writing is present.

Emmanuelle Marie’s *CUT*, as I have contended throughout this research, is a contemporary dramatic text that is part of the formative experience and renewing pattern of *écriture féminine* which seeks out alternate narratives, representations, and expressions of feminine subjectivity –the bare necessities of theatre according to Cixous; “if I go to the theatre now, it must be a political gesture, with a view to changing, with the help of other women, its means of production and expression” (Cixous 1984; 547).⁵ In this final chapter I shall examine the unique implications of feminine writing for the theatre, including the body-text matrices presented within *CUT* and its observable corporeality, expressions of feminine subjectivity, feminine spatiality, and feminine temporality. The goal is to understand further the corporeal processes of *écriture féminine* as they challenge the bifurcation of mind/body that has governed the sexes since its inception where the mind (men) is taken as the superior origin of knowledge, and the body (women) is a corruptible and mechanistic inferiority; “Descartes in short, succeeded in linking the mind/body opposition to the foundations of knowledge itself, a link which places the mind in a position of hierarchal

⁵ Hélène Cixous is an established playwright in her own right with works such as *La Pupille* (1971), *Portrait de Dora* (1975), and *La Prise de l’école de madhubai* (1984), as well as her major works as principal playwright for the Théâtre du Soleil and Ariane Mnouchkine since 1985, including *Tambours sur la digue* (1999) and *Les Naufragés du fol espoir* (2010); while this research is focused on her theoretical works it is still important to note Cixous’ established career as a writer for the theatre.

superiority over and above nature, including the nature of the body” (Grosz 1994; 6). Therefore, pushing back against Cartesian dualism and its ties to the foundations of knowledge is incurred through the corporeal interplay with language and the unconscious in *écriture féminine*, returning the body to knowledge and ultimately to expressive power.

What is the body? What are its boundaries? As a preliminary to this chapter’s analysis we must first consider the body for a moment before we advance any feminist theory with which the body is involved. The body is an entity irreducible to the parameters of natural sciences, physicality, or kinesthetics; its status is neither object, nor subject, and, as Elizabeth Grosz attests, “the body is a most peculiar ‘thing,’ for it’s never quite reducible to being merely a thing; nor does it ever quite manage to rise above the status of thing. Thus it is both a thing and a non-thing, an object able to take itself and others as subjects, a unique kind of object not reducible to other objects” (Grosz 1994; xi). The body can absorb, relay, and distort information channelled from both an outer reality and an inner realm as it is neither passive nor dominant, but yet the body is subject to certain limitations – it cannot leap tall buildings, it cannot shape-shift; “the body is constrained by its biological limits – limits, incidentally, whose framework or ‘stretchability’ we cannot yet know, we cannot presume, even if we must presume *some* limits” (Grosz 1994; 187), making the body a complex matrix of physicalities, morphologies, psychic spaces, and subjectivity:

Human bodies, indeed all animate bodies, stretch and extend the notion of physicality that dominates the physical sciences, for animate bodies are objects necessarily different from other objects; they are materialities that are uncontainable in physicalist terms alone. If bodies are objects or things, they are like no others, for they are the centers of perspective, insight,

reflection, desire, agency. They require quite different intellectual models than those that have been used thus far to represent and understand them (Grosz 1994; xi).

Let us take the above concepts of the body as our starting point for a clearer understanding of how the body can(not) be defined, how the body produces otherness, and why the body cannot be displaced in the creation of alternate subjectivity and narratives;

[...] Cixous argues that language is itself a body function. Speaking and writing involve the translation of thought through complex networks of chemical messages, nerve impulses and muscle movements, [she] suggests that this physiological activity, together with the ongoing body functions of breathing, pulse, the momentum of the body drives, stress and hormonal changes, influence our use of language” (Sellers 1991; 139).

If we accept the notion that the body is an entity that resists reduction, we must also accept that the body is an entity that resists essentialization, thereby assigning the body an immense capacity for resistance to masculine oppression through representations and expressions. However, what we must also contend with is that the culturally mandated assumptions of the relationship between the sexes largely inform the way the sexed body is perceived, located, and expressed. As any feminist theory of the body will attest, devaluing the feminine body has historically gone hand in hand with the oppression of women, making the body a critical and complicated site to create resistance through alternate expressions and understandings. As Grosz said earlier, bodies “require quite different intellectual models than those that have been used thus far to represent and understand them” (Grosz 1994; xi), and to this call for intellectual otherness I wish to return with *écriture féminine* within the context of the

theatre as Cixous maintains the theatre is a medium for 'woman' to arrive through feminine text and representation:

Cixous insists that a female subject represented in the theatre as plural and in process could not be reduced to a fixed and marginalised symbol of alterity. The use of the theatre as potential space for the creation of a female Imaginary, would allow women to see and be seen, to listen and to be heard, not to be alienated from the representation or text that is displayed as woman (Dobson 20).

Let us turn our focus to the status and intervention of the body as it pertains to Cixous, *écriture féminine*, and the form of writing in the theatre. Firstly, we must acknowledge that the interrelationship between the body and *écriture féminine* is built upon shifting grounds, on a different kind of tectonic drift, where the body and language are constantly pushing against each other, interplaying, interacting, displacing one another, and it is therefore ultimately impossible to identify where the boundaries of the psychic drives end and where the biological processes of the body begin in the production of desires, drives, and impulses because they, like so much else, are in constant motion; this is an unknowable variable we must accept. However, what matters is that for Cixous the two entities – the body and psyche – mandate writing as a biological process interconnected with the drives of the feminine Imaginary, searching for resonance between them rather than dissonance. Cixous continues to insist the bifurcation of the mind and body is not only false, but that it also has the potential to be dangerous, and thus she does not offer the means nor the necessity to distinguish between the two forces. What is also important to know is that for Cixous the body is irreducibly wound with the impulses and drives of the feminine imaginary, producing them, interacting with them, and expressing them: “by writing herself, woman will

return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display – the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time” (Cixous 1979; 880).

As a reminder, Hélène Cixous asserts there is no essential feminine body or ‘woman’ in her theories of feminine writing, only an interplay between the entities of body, agency, desires, and the unconscious; through this concoction Cixous has also established the imbrication of the body and mind into one being, into one indivisible whole, through which feminine subjectivity is expressed. As concerns the case of the theatre, the body, as well as feminine writing, both become the mediums in which alternate subjectivities are expressed and dramatized; “theatre necessarily articulates the relationship between body, voice, and text: revealing the potential of expressing the corporeality of a text and the textuality of the body” (Dobson 22), and “the theatrical space offers the female speaking desiring subject a stage on which to defy reified representations of gender, and to undermine the masculine scopic economy” (Dobson 22), that is to say the male gaze as it constructs and perpetuates the image and socio-psychic location of ‘woman.’ Therefore with these observations in mind we shall continue with the question of the body, theatre, and Cixous as it becomes apparent that these three bedfellows are involved in a significant way;

It will be a text, a body decoding and naming itself in one long, slow push; the song of women being brought into the world, of the infinite patience of a woman expecting Woman. All it requires is one woman who stays beyond the bounds of prohibition, experiencing herself as many, the totality of those she has been, could have been or wants to be, moving ever more slowly, more quickly than herself, anticipating herself (Cixous 1984; 547-548).

However, there are again objections with which we must contest. Pertaining to French Feminist theories allied to the realm of sexual difference a few prominent critiques emerge which interrogate the body's status as a discursive object and as a transparent medium. For example, in her book *Volatile Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz posits that "these [French] Feminists [...] do not evoke a precultural, presocial, or prelinguistic 'pure' body but a body as social and discursive object, a body bound up in the order of desire, signification, and power" (Grosz 1994; 19), that "[the body's] corporeality must be reduced to a predictable, knowable transparency; its constitutive role in forming thoughts, feelings, emotions, and psychic representations must be ignored, as must its role as the threshold between the social and the natural" (Grosz 1994; 10), and finally that:

As such, [the body] is a 2-way conduit: on one hand it is a circuit for the transmission of information from outside the organism conveyed through the sensory apparatus; on the other hand, it is a vehicle for the expression of an otherwise sealed and self-contained, incommunicable psyche. It is through the body that the subject can express his or her interiority, and it is through the body that he or she can receive code, and translate the inputs of the 'external' world. Underlying this view too is a belief in the fundamental passivity and transparency of the body (Grosz 1994; 9).

Based on the above citations, it would appear that Grosz, and those that share her views, argue the body is either a passive medium through which representations of feminine subjectivity are received and transmitted, more conduit than agent, or that the body is reduced to a textual object inseparably bound to the processes of desire and signification. Grosz's work on corporeal feminism presents a thorough interrogation of the body's constitutive role and location in feminist theory, offering

direct critiques to the discourses of French Feminism. However, while Grosz directly counters the corporeal elements within the arguments of philosophers such as Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, she suspiciously fails to attack Cixous directly, instead relying on Cixous' guilt by association and proximity to French Feminism – a very revealing omission. Cixous very adequately defends herself: “more so than men who are coaxed toward social success, toward sublimation, women are body. More body, hence more writing. For a long time it has been in body that women have responded to persecution, to the familial-conjugal enterprise of domestication, to the repeated attempts at castrating them” (Cixous 1976; 886).

Grosz and her contemporaries fail to envelope and deconstruct the complex nuances of the Cixousian approach to the body and the subsequent fluctuating border it shares with language because Cixous does not fix or identify the limits of the body's influence in the formation of impulses and desires; all that can be said is that Cixous identifies that body's influence as variant, spontaneous, unknowable, and unfixed, particularly as pertains the female body and the feminine imaginary. Since it has already been established in this paper that Cixous does not reduce the body to an essentialized entity, I will point out that a non-essentialized body inherently cannot become predictable, transparent or knowable. Furthermore, as regards the reinstatement of the body as the boundary between the social and the natural it is quite possible that no such boundary exists, that there is no biological essence outside the realm of the social, and therefore the discourses, texts, and language that comprise the social world, including the social discourses of the “natural,” is our primary location and concern – as Derrida reminds us there is nothing outside of the text. Finally,

towards the accusation of reducing the body to a textual object Cixous does not push the body to become a textual object as the body cannot ever fully subsume the position of object, rather Cixous sees the body as a site capable of motivating, producing, and expressing otherness and alterity in language and the psychic realm – a challenge to the origin place of phallograticism, masculine language, and oppression - making the body a border-runner between the worlds of materiality, language and the psyche.

We've been turned away from our bodies, shamefully taught to ignore them, to strike them with that stupid sexual modesty; we've been made victims of the old fool's game: each one will love the other sex. I'll give you your body and you'll give me mine. But who are the men who give women the body that women blindly yield to them? Why so few texts? Because so few women as yet have won back their body. Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the word "silence," the one that, aiming for the impossible, stops short before the word 'impossible' and writes it as 'the end' (Cixous 1976; 885-886).

Cixous turns *écriture féminine* onto the theatre with a mandate of creating feminine alterity by rejecting the conventional form and representation of the female body and feminine subjectivity onstage, refocusing the primary cultural metanarratives and patriarchal master narrative frameworks, reinforcing bodies that lack prescription, and reconfiguring the relationship between the female spectator and the theatrical narrative from one of victimhood to one of centrality and signification; "Cixous' rejection of the theatre entails a rejection of the theatrical form itself as dominated by the structures of voyeurism and exhibitionism, structures which she

identifies with patriarchal discourse and masculine economies, and which inevitably exclude positive representations of the female subject” (Dobson 17). To start, *CUT* rejects conventions of form and representation of the female body in many powerful ways, such as the aforementioned urinating scene which desexualizes the female body and usurps taboo, the masturbation montage that provokes self-reflection and bliss while putting a powerful image of feminine sexuality in unapologetic full view, and the sequence of the woman who looks at her labia in a mirror onstage that restores the presence of female morphology uninvested in the male gaze – the woman is looking in the mirror at her vagina looking back at her.

In the mirror sequence *Woman 3* sees her genitals for the first time, but her reaction is one of intense anxiety over the sight of her previously unseen body parts – anxiety that surprisingly side-steps worldly material concerns and becomes immediately focused on the retributions of the divine. Anxiety of this nature is firstly a close representation of the lived experiences of women who, from the outset, have had their bodies devalored by religious discourses as base and sinful, but yet this image of the secret female body also immediately engages divinity, locating the female body at a powerful impasse between spiritual experience, oppressive discourse, and physical reality – after all, *Woman 3* does not look away even as the other women shout obscenities at her; she continues gazing. This small gesture of peeking at her vagina in the mirror is also an interruption of the religious discourses that police feminine hygiene as sinful and impure, particularly the biological and psychic experience of menstruation, as this moment is solely between the woman and herself with the other women as witnesses, forcing the question of ‘woman’s’ understanding and relationship

to the body of 'woman' in the face of the divine; "the scene takes place where a woman's life takes place, where her life story is decided: inside her body, beginning with her blood. This will be a stage/scene without event. No need for plot or action; a single gesture is enough, but one that can transform the world" (Cixous 1984; 547).

The act of *Woman 3* looking at her sex for the first time is confronted with the discourses of masculine erasure, but yet the presence of her previously unseen female body breaks away from existing oppressive discourses that surround it by rejecting conventional methods of engaging the female body onstage; the act of using a mirror to see the part of yourself that has been erased from the images of history is both a rebellious act and a way of re-positing the complete image of the female body in the face of its erasure. "Cixous argues that the foregrounding of women's voices and the disruption of voyeuristic structures would bring about a profound change in the nature of theatre itself" (Dobson 19), and so by presenting the body of a woman through an uncensored presentation of its sexual organs in a location impenetrable to men Marie separates 'woman's' body from the consuming and policing religious discourses of sin, sexual immorality, and unhygienic myths.

La Dame 3 : Et j'ai...regardé. Mon sexe dans le miroir. Regardé mon sexe dans le miroir.

Le chœur des Dames 1 et 2 : Le bon Dieu pourrait voir ta culotte ! Serre les jambes ! Serre les dents ! Serre les fesses ! Et prie !

La Dame 3 : Oui, je prie pour mon âme et le diable dont je vois l'oeil ici, surnois dans le miroir, qui me regarde. Peut-être le bon Dieu me voit? Me voit aussi faire ça...Regarder....Oh là là (Marie 2003 ; 74).

Woman 3: *And I...looked. My sex in the mirror. Looked at my sex in the mirror.*

Woman 1 and 2: *The good Lord can see your panties! Close your legs! Close your mouth! Close your buttocks! And pray!*

Woman 3: *Yes, I pray for my soul and the devil's eye that I see here, sly in the mirror, looking at me. Maybe the good Lord sees me? Sees me also doing this....Looking...Oh là là (Marie 2003; 74).*

When it comes to further disrupting the masculine “scopic economy” Marie sets the play in a location to which men, and the masculine, never physically, scopically, or psychically ingress – the women’s toilets; “*au troisième sous-sol d’un bar, d’un restaurant ou d’un hotel. De vastes toilettes pour dames avec des portes fermées en fond, du carrelage, des lavabos, des miroirs, peut-être*” [the third basement floor of a bar, a restaurant or a hotel. A vast women’s washroom with closed doors, tiled floors, sinks, mirrors, maybe] (Marie 2003 ; 69), a space that inherently segregates female-identified bodies from male-identified bodies as illustrated by the *femme de toilette*: “il arrive cependant que des hommes profitent du trou d’une serrure pour regarder des femmes pissent. J’en ai vu. Mais pas ici. Pas chez moi” [it happens sometimes that men take advantage of a keyhole to watch women pissing. I have seen them. But not here. Not in my house] (Marie 2003; 69). This segregation of bodies - although potentially troublesome if prescribed as a mandatory binary - provides a framework that resists universal human models which prefer the masculine as the neutral representation of humanity, advocating for a unique feminine space, body, and linguistic motivation while addressing “the problem of sexual difference, the problem of morphological bifurcation, the production of two different types of bodily form, and consequently two different types of subjectivity, two different types of being that cannot be understood through a reduced, or singular, universal, or purely human model” (Grosz 1994; 16). Having a women’s bathroom space in which the bodies of women, along with their

fluids, morphology, voices, and subjectivity are presented brings the performing female body out of fetishization, victimhood, and the male gaze, into centrality and signification by paralleling the alterity of the feminine Imaginary as a space that phallogocentrism does not traverse; therefore any bodies that appear within it can also be framed in this context. “Cixous goes on to suggest that the physical presence of the actors can work to undermine the dominance of the role and traditional character construction, thus establishing complex and dynamic relationships between character and spectator” (Dobson 19). For example, if we refer to an archival photograph of the 2003 production at the Théâtre du Rond-Point we can see that this production of *CUT* features a chorus of three women who emerge from a white-tiled floor into a clean space that only loosely signifies a toilet. The women emerge from an unknown depth and an unknown origin into the space of the play that maintains its separateness and impenetrableness from the male body and the masculine empire of language and ideology, presenting the women as a true emergence, rather than a refugee from the outside world. This emergence establishes a context for the female body in which it is new and becoming, not arriving from the outside, avoiding any implication of reclusion, withdrawal, or condemnation, but birth, arrival, and origin. This framework gives both the implied female spectator – and the actual spectators – a location for the female body that demands otherness from the dominant contextual framework of the masculine scopic economy; ‘man’ does not traverse this territory. Therefore, as the women appear in the journey of the play, their bodies, texts, and voices arrive in a presence ungoverned by the phallus. Furthermore, the architecture of the bathroom is vacated as this production does not feature sinks or toilets or mirrors, but rather is

flanked by darkness all around its borders so that an infinite territory or boundary is implied, transcending this space from a small, confined toilet to an expansive continent where women reside and transform – the feminine Imaginary.



Figure 3.1. Delacroix, Phillippe. *Archival photograph*. Théâtre du Rond-Point, Paris. 2003. Photograph.

If the stage is woman, it will mean ridding this space of theatricality. She will want to be body-presence; it will therefore be necessary to work at exploding everything that makes for 'staginess,' going beyond the confines of the stage, lessening our dependency on the visual and stressing the auditory, learning to atune all our ears, especially those that are sensitive to the

pulse of the unconscious, to hear the silences and what lies beyond them. 'Distantiation' will not exist; on the contrary, this stage-body will not hesitate to come up close, close enough to be in danger – of life. A body in labour (Cixous 1984; 547).

In the above quote Cixous calls for several things including an evacuation of theatrical illusions that construe women's bodies as the objects of pleasure or submissive constructs, a move away from the scopoc to give priority to spoken text and voice, and a new theatre that vacates the conventions of illusion and "distantiation," or distancing effects, that would alienate the body from its presence and ultimately its connection to the spectator. This desire for the presence of the body to arrive, to not be cloaked in the conventions of fetish or victimhood, is buried within a need for feminine spectators to connect to bodies that lack prescription; "it will be a text, a body decoding and naming itself in one long, slow push; the song of women being brought into the world, of the infinite patience of woman expecting Woman" (Cixous 1984; 547). For Cixous, to be a female spectator in the presence of a female performing body not inundated in the codes of the Masculine symbolic, not enveloped in the struggle that would see it reduced to scopoc pleasure, is the ultimate experience of presence in the theatre.

This suggestion of woman's physical and vocal presence is seen as capable of frustrating voyeuristic consumption. The refusal of the naturalistic creation of theatrical illusion, and the subverting of the conventional physical barriers between actor and spectator, would further work towards a subversion of the scopophilic power structures that Cixous identifies with the theatre at this point" (Dobson 20).

The archival photographs of the 2009 production of *CUT* at the Théâtre du Rond-Point continue the trend of vacating the architectural specificity of the women's toilet to further demonstrate Cixous' call for a detheatricalisation of 'woman' and feminine body-texts on the stage. Since Marie does not demand it, the visual language of this performance does not subscribe to the architecture or expectation of a filthy, derelict, underground Parisian women's bathroom, thereby transcending this toilet from one that polices feminine hygiene and confines bodily discourses, into one that liberates them by pushing back traditional signifiers, conventions, and physical boundaries simply through its sparseness. By not having any physical toilets present, for example, the urination and bodily fluids of the women can surpass the literal and the physical to become metaphorical and imagistic, opening women's bodies to multiple meanings and alternate significations beyond morphological functionality. This production's *mise-en-scène* is only comprised of three vaginal slits on the upstage wall and three plain chairs in a space portrayed exclusively through light so that 'woman' is presented to the audience primarily through the mediums of text, voice, song, and body, interrogating the location of 'woman' as a silent being, and, as Dobson suggests, frustrating voyeuristic consumption with its lack of theatricality because the bodies of the women are foregrounded without prescription or theatrical convention.



Figure 3.2. Enguérand, Brigitte. *Archival photographs*. Théâtre du Rond-Point, Paris. 2009. Photograph.



Figure 3.3. Enguérand, Brigitte. *Archival photographs*. Théâtre du Rond-Point, Paris. 2009. Photograph.

Marie concentrates on the need for non-prescriptive bodies by altering the perspective of the body to a new location between animal, social discourse, and religious connotation, blending the lines of human, gender, and deity, which ultimately result in a fracturing of the ideological location of the body as animal, woman or object. Marie further takes the discourse of “la nature” and acknowledges that it is one of the strongest forces in the formation of subjectivity, but she does not refer to it as an essentializing force, rather as a force that problematizes both social discourse and morphology – for better or worse nature has its way. In this passage Marie refers to nature as a step back from the social discourses that identify female morphology as weaker or less developed, instead calling on “la nature” as a place to release from these discourses and add the complexity of the biological to the social:

La Dame 1: C'est la créature qui me fait vivre. La créature, le bon Dieu l'a faite toute pissante pour mon Bonheur. Parce qu'on ne se dérobe pas à un besoin pressant, à une envie naturelle, à une course au petit coin. Parce qu'on ne se dérobe pas à sa propre nature. La nature est toujours la plus forte! Toujours la nature finit par vous avoir! Pour le meilleur. Ou pour le pire. J'ai un grand respect pour la nature qui nous a faites comme ça, avec un petit urètre...(Marie 2003; 72)

Woman 1: *It's the creature that gives me life. The creature, the good Lord made them all pissers for my happiness. Because we do not shirk a pressing need, a natural desire, in a race to the bathroom. Because we do not shirk our own natural state. Nature is always stronger! Nature will always get you in the end! For better. Or for worse. I have a huge respect for nature that makes us like that, with a small urethra...(Marie 2003; 72).*

Another example of this distortive questioning of the body's status that subverts the scripts and cultural meta-narratives of 'woman' can be found in a sequence that refers to the morphological particularities of women's internal organs, humorously

placed within a discussion of God's body and sex. The sequence opens by identifying that women often have to queue longer to use the toilet because they have smaller urethras and weaker sphincters, a morphological division with a comedic colouring, but then Marie cuts across this speech with a spontaneous interruption, declaring dogs as truth-tellers, setting up a very intriguing discourse of the body. The conversation continues by declaring that all creatures – dogs, men, and women, etc. – were made by God, and therefore there is no place for shame as all creatures have to relieve themselves, including women, so the physiological models that are used to establish hierarchies amongst bodies are as easily dismissed as they are created. The debate then takes a turn toward the divine in which it is determined that God does not have a sex and can only be defined in terms of itself; this points to the fact that if God can only ever be understood as God, then God's body may take on any form we wish it, not just that of a white male, creating a path for the female body to enter the realm of the sacred, or conversely to deconstruct the location of women's body where the sacred is concerned. Furthermore, as this exchange comes to a close, *Woman 3* declares that God is always represented with a beard, but quizzically identifies that everyone knows dogs and women are the ones who have beards, reclaiming and transcribing a new way to relate to the image of the bearded male God through the body of women and animals.

La Dame 2: ...Petit urètre.

La Dame 1: Et un sphincter peu puissant.

La Dame 2: ...Sphincter peu puissant...

La Dame 3: Je pensais justement que les chiens ne font pas tant d'histoires.

La Dame 2: Les chiens?

La Dame 1: Il n'y a pas de honte à être une créature du bon dieu madame! Une femme, un homme, un chien, c'est tout pareil.

La Dame 3: Croyez-vous que le bon Dieu soit un chien?

La Dame 1: Un chien?

La Dame 3: Un chien...

La Dame 1: Le bon Dieu c'est le bon Dieu madame.

La Dame 3: il est sans doute sans sexe. C'est pourquoi on représente souvent le bon Dieu avec une grosse barbe. Tout le monde sait que les femmes et les chiens portent la barbe (Marie 2003; 72-73).

Woman 2: ...Small urethra.

Woman 1: And a weak sphincter.

Woman 2: ...Weak sphincter...

Woman 3: I think that dogs don't tell so many lies.

Woman 2: Dogs?

Woman 1: There is no shame in being one of the good Lord's creatures! A woman, a man, a dog, it's all the same.

Woman 3: Do you think that God is a dog?

Woman 1: A dog?

Woman 3: A dog...

Woman 1: The good Lord is the good Lord Madame.

Woman 3: It is no doubt without a sex. That is why we often represent the good Lord with a full beard. Everyone knows that women and dogs have beards (Marie 2003; 72-73).

The final example of body-narrative that I wish to present concerns the expression of the complexity of female sexual desire and the vast distance between the reality of female sexuality, and the fabricated image of the female body as it is

interpolated into the male gaze for the pleasure of men - an on-going battle for the location of the body in feminist discourse and feminist theatre across the ages. Marie begins this narrative with *Woman 1* who is preparing herself for a rendezvous with her distant lover by dressing her body in a fashion typically associated with the male gaze, namely that of the lingerie-clad, sexually available, enthusiastic woman, to which *Woman 1* identifies herself to a certain extent at first. While this decision to willingly assume the role of sexual object may not seem subversive initially, the status of this sexy, lingerie-adorned body transcends that of a pleasurable visual object as Marie describes the oceanic odours and tastes of the female body, directly referring again to the sex organs of women but through poetic language in a way that conjures the strength, depth, and vastness of the sea, crashing against the indoctrinated masculine language used to express and consume the female body, giving primacy to speech that surpasses visual objectification.

La Dame 1 : Quand Bernard vient à la maison je lui fais enfin je je me fais jolie oui enfin je lui fais la totale il ne vient pas souvent alors c'est la fête je suis allée au Prisunic acheter quelques fantaisies fanfreluches fariboles frivolités sans importance mais je sais que Bernard aime moi aussi je lui dis souvent Bernard tu es un coquin un brigand un vilain petit garçon je lui dis aussi oh mon homme amour de ma vie et voyant toutes ces fantaisies fanfreluches fariboles frivolités achetées au supermarché il rit puis doucement il me dit tu me fais rêver. (Un temps.) Tu es la mer, tu me fais voyager, l'eau salée qui écume et a poivré la mousse par-dessous le rocher. C'est comme ça que tu es.

La Dame 2 : Le string élastiqué.

La Dame 1 : C'est comme ça que je suis. L'eau salée qui écume et a poivré la mousse par-dessous le rocher. Et c'est le goût que j'ai. Je suis l'amer, le goémon et l'algue, je suis un coquillage aux senteurs océanes, odorifères, et c'est le goût que j'ai.

La Dame 2 : Le string élastiqué (Marie 2003; 84-85).

Woman 1: *When Bernard comes to the house I make him actually I I make myself pretty yes in the end I give him the works he doesn't come often so it's a special occasion I go to the dime store to buy some frivolous frilly flouncy fantasy foolery not a big deal but I know that Bernard likes me also I tell him often Bernard you are a rascal a brigand a villain little boy I also tell him oh my man love of my life and show him all the frivolous frilly flouncy fantasy foolery purchased at the supermarket he laughs then gently he says I dream about you.*

Woman 2: *The stretchy thong.*

Woman 1: *That is how I am. The spray of salty seawater and peppery foam underneath the rocks. And that is my taste. I am bitter, like the seaweed and algae, I am a shell of oceanic scents, odoriferous, and that is how I taste.*

Woman 2: *The stretchy thong (Marie 2003; 84-85).*

After the intimate encounter with Bernard occurs, *Woman 1* is dissatisfied and irritated, demonstrating the consequences of the disconnect between the masculine fantasy image of the female body, and its physiological and morphological realities. This exchange between *Woman 1* and *Bernard*, who is never present onstage but is always performed by the other women, holds firm to Cixous' mandate that women and their bodies require alternate understandings and expressions as conventional masculine language and scopic economies will always fail to express and perform the alterity of feminine sexuality with any truth or liberation. By having Bernard performed by the women it further highlights the need for distance between the masculine construction of 'woman' and the physiological realities of the female body because although the male body is not present, the male gaze still remains in tact for *Woman 1*, so Marie chooses to fulfill both sides of the discourse with the feminine voice

and the female body. In this case, Marie addresses this subject first by having the woman firmly denounce and refuse any further implications in sexual desire as constructed by men and masculine economies: “alors...t’as joui? (*Un temps.*) Il a demandé. T’as joui? Non j’ai fait. J’ai fait non avec la tête et avec la bouche. J’ai dit non et je n’ai rien ajouté” (Marie 2003 ; 88) [*“so...did you cum? (A pause.) He asked. Did you like it? I said no. I said no with my head and with my mouth. I said no and then I didn’t add anything else”* (Marie 2003; 88)], and then breaks open the images and conceptions of female bodies by claiming their erogenous plurality, restoring women’s bodies to whole beings, pushing back against the reduction of the female body to its sexual organs:

La Dame 1: Je ne crois pas être complètement insensible et frigide des seins par exemple et de la racine des cheveux aux lobes de mes oreilles aux paumes de mes mains aux doigts de mes pieds aux lunules des mes ongles aux yeux de mes orbites aux narines de mon nez aux lèvres de ma bouche bref. Et tout le tremblement. Tu vois il n’y a pas que mon sexe, le reste fonctionne aussi, sois-en convaincu, et je ne voudrais pas que tu croies que c’est la cause de toi même si je fais HAN-HAN c’est sincère je te le jure aussi parfois c’est parce que c’est bon. Aussi. Parfois. C’est bon. (*Un temps.*) (Marie 2003; 89).

Woman 1: *I don’t believe I am completely insensitive and frigid breasts for example from the roots of my hair to the lobes of my ears to the palms of my hands to my toes to the half-moons of my nails to the eyes in my sockets to the nostrils in my nose to the lips of my mouth there you have it. And all of it trembles. You only see my sex, the rest of me works as well, believe me, I don’t want you to believe that it’s all on you if I go Oh YES-Oh YES it’s sincere I swear to you but sometimes it’s just because it’s good. Also. Sometimes. It’s good. (A pause.) (Marie 2003; 89).*

To bring this final chapter to a close it can be summated that Cixous has a unique relationship to the theatre on which Marie and *CUT* capitalize. Throughout her theoretical convictions, Cixous maintains a fierce loyalty to the status of the written text, as does Marie, but as *écriture féminine* comes to the theatre the ability to be in the full presence of the body is augmented. The body, along with speech and the voice, becomes its own site of resistance that deconstructs and arrives at the other, reaching the spectator without alienation or theatricality. For although *écriture féminine* has always been enfolded with the biological processes of the body and psychic impulses of the Imaginary, this chapter puts to rest the attempt to critique Cixous as a philosopher whose *modus operandi* includes an essentialized view of the female body as a textual object serving as gatekeeper between the social and the natural, rather she attacks Cartesian dualism and puts back together the forces of mind and body, where the body is an irreducible, pluralized entity. *CUT* takes up the torch of *écriture féminine* and Cixous' will to alter the patriarchal narratives, masculine-governed understandings of the female body, and the conventional representations and expressions of feminine sexuality, through the textuality and corporeality of the theatre. Through primarily vaginal imagery, and discourses surrounding the sex and sexuality of the female body, Marie dislodges the location of the body of 'woman' from its position as sinful, victimized, sex object and explores the other relationships it can have in the face of the divine, sexual pleasure, and self-knowledge. In conclusion, the female body, along with feminine language, is given a unique otherness and alterity throughout *CUT's* approach to theatre, corporeality, and feminine writing.

Conclusion

The intent of this research was to intersect Emmanuelle Marie's play *CUT* with the textuality and corporeality founded in the poetic politics of Hélène Cixous' *écriture féminine*. In the analysis of this intriguing play, of which very little is known, this research has produced new contexts for feminine writing within contemporary feminist theatre studies, expanding the small circle of writers who have historically been identified as producers of experimental feminine texts and *écriture féminine*; the nebulous nature and constant motion of feminine writing should never prevent us from tracking and recording sightings of its presence. Although it can be said that feminine writing is something that is experienced more so than defined, observing and analysing texts and bodies through its critical, poetic framework is still valuable in contemporary feminist performance and narratives. Cixous maintains a fierce devotion to the status of the written text, providing dissonance from patriarchal master-narratives and universal models of humanity with common goals. By exploring the interplay of text, body, and signification we can hopefully conclude that *CUT* succeeds on many levels, including an interrogation of the psycho-social location of feminine bodies, language, sexuality, and signifying discourse. Over the course of this research, I have re-opened my understanding of Cixous' theories on *écriture féminine* and overcome many historical rejections from the recurring accusation of essentialism, dualism, self-contradiction and vagueness, isolation from oppressive material realities, and the polemical maternal metaphor, to emerge on the other side with a fresh version of feminine poetic politics and of how this powerful philosophy continues to be

relevant, productive, and transformative in the current feminist landscape and critical methodologies.

The textual analysis of *CUT* helped demonstrate some of the observable modes and devices by which *écriture féminine* can weave itself through the language of the father, creating a new order in which all masculine, biblio-capitalist codes are destroyed and 'woman' emerges with a new language and a new relationship to Symbolic existence. Marie demonstrated her ability to fragment patriarchal discourse, affirm the female body through interplay with language, and produce feminine self-knowledge by disturbing the discursive expressions of women's social location, sexuality, and subjectivity. This research considered *CUT*'s overall structure as well as its individual parts, exemplifying Marie's textual strategies which all served to interrupt the linearity of phallogratic ideology, revalorize the taboo female body, deconstruct signification, and connect feminine language to the erotic, producing a non-reciprocal emergence in the symbolic through feminine language.

Finally, the last chapter was an intensive focus on the body and corporeality within feminine writing, *CUT*, and the specific context of the theatre, looking at Cixous' desire to reject the conventions of the old, masculine structures of the theatre to emerge with a new politicized, feminine one. This chapter explored the status and boundaries of the body, establishing that the body is "both a thing and non-thing," and again responded to the historical objections of Cixous' works on sexual difference as regards the body. This chapter further determined that the body is neither transparent nor predictable, as the body is not reducible to a single essence, and moreover that the body is not a discursive object but a producer of discourse, rejecting the conventional

forms and representations of the female body and subjectivity on stage. This final chapter demonstrated how Marie was able to adopt the textual corporeality/corporeal textuality of *écriture féminine* to reinforce female bodies that lack prescription, reject the position of victim, and reclaim the body and sexuality of 'woman.' In conclusion, this research sought to interrogate and seek out new locations and interpretations of both existing and contemporaneous expressions of feminist discourse, bodily presence, and feminine writing through an analysis of a new, little-known play that took them all on with full force. A lot can be discussed, undone and questioned in the women's bathroom.

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