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Research Article:

Where Poetry tends towards the Philosophical:

Hélène Cixous's Gift of Feminine Writing

*Rajarshi Bagchi*

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Where Poetry tends towards the Philosophical:  
Hélène Cixous's Gift of Feminine Writing

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Hélène Cixous is today, in my view, the greatest writer in what I will call my language, the French language if you like. And I am weighing my words as I say that. For a great writer must be a poet-thinker, very much a poet and a very thinking poet.

– Jacques Derrida, introducing the second of Hélène Cixous's 1990 Wellek Library Lectures.

It is significant that in his introductory speech Derrida chooses to call Hélène Cixous a great writer precisely because she is a "poet-thinker". The 'poet' and the 'thinker' weigh equally on the scales of the Derridean hyphen which fuses and simultaneously retains the specificity of each term. By thus setting up a *différance* between the traditional categories of poetry and philosophy Derrida points to the "alliance of genres" (Cixous, *White Ink* 18) which is the hallmark of the Cixousian oeuvre. A deconstructive glance at the textual gaps and silences of the quote also reveals the necessity of being alive to *interpellation*. It is particularly imperative in the face of Cixous's caveat, "Be careful because I hear all. All that is said. All that not being said is said otherwise" (*Stigmata* 189). Along with Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous – widely known as the author of 'theoretical' texts like "The Laugh of the Medusa" and "Sorties" – is said to form the 'holy trinity' of French feminist theorists of *écriture féminine* ('feminine writing') (Ives 15). But readymade qualifiers like 'feminist theorist' or 'woman writer' which are tagged on to Cixous in countless anthologies are conspicuously absent in Derrida's appreciation of her greatness. In his view she has travelled much beyond them. This paper attempts a brief overview of some aspects of Cixous's *écriture* in order to point

out how her poetics travels beyond the confines of 'theory' and invites the great questions of being and becoming.

## I

If reconciliation of opposites is one of the surest signs of genius, Hélène Cixous seems to have made it her second nature. Born "at/from the intersection of migrations and memories" in 1937 to a Jewish family in French-occupied Algeria, Cixous is a (wo)man of many parts (Cixous, *Reader* xvi). She is a writer of 'Poetic theory'<sup>1</sup> who engages and questions fundamental patriarchal assumptions of Western thought and culture; a semi-autobiographical explorer of the unconscious who also stages political plays on 'the question of History'; a pioneer researcher on 'feminine writing' whose favourite *feminine* writers include Shakespeare, Kafka, Rimbaud and Joyce; a Director of Women's Studies at the Université de Paris VIII-Saint Denis – the first of its kind in France – who does not wish to be labelled 'feminist'; a celebrated author of the French *nouveau roman* who grapples broad socio-ethical problems in and through linguistic and stylistic improvisations reminiscent of modernist *avant-garde* writers; a librettist, a screenwriter, reviewer, political activist, a humanitarian – the list is almost endless. Indeed, the singularity of Hélène Cixous lies in a vital multiplicity of person and persona. As Betsy Wing observes, "Between life and the Cixousian text there lies only an osmotic moment, a present of writing or reading, in which everything is held very briefly in a living balance. For Cixous all writing is necessary both autobiographical and fictional, shaped by history and the unconscious" (*The Book of Promethea* vi).

Somewhat akin to Derrida's concept of writing as *differance*, though not without important differences, Cixous's *écriture féminine* is less a 'theory' than a subversive textual practice. Resisting the ontological manoeuvre of capture and containment in a 'definition', it works "against the pervasive masculine urge to judge, diagnose, digest, name . . . not so much in the sense of the loving precision of poetic naming as in that of the repressive censorship of political nomination/conceptualization." (Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?" 51). Cixous proclaims: "At the present time, *defining* a feminine practice of writing is impossible with an impossibility that will continue; for this practice will never be able to be *theorized*, enclosed, coded, which does not mean it does not exist. But it will always exceed the discourse governing the phallogocentric system; it takes place and will take place somewhere other than in the territories subordinated to philosophical-theoretical domination" ("Sorties" 92).

Nonetheless, Cixous urges one to “begin to speak. Begin to point out some effects, some elements of unconscious drives, some relations of the feminine Imaginary to the Real, to writing”. Although it is very difficult to sum up the protean ensemble of philosophical, libidinal, ethical and textual approaches loosely assembled under the rubric of *écriture féminine*, Morag Shiach manages to present a cogent graph:

Cixous began by theorizing the possibility of a model of sexual difference not based on exclusion or hierarchy, and relating this to a model of subjectivity based on openness to the Other rather than obliteration of the Other. She then argued for the possibility of understanding such sexual difference, not at the level of possession or absence of the penis/phallus, but at the level of *jouissance*. Such libidinal difference was then related to particular practices of writing, since writing was seen as a privileged space for transgression and transformation. . . . Finally, in the last stage of her argument, Cixous introduced women, as historical subjects, arguing that women have had most to lose in patriarchy, and have most to gain from its defeat . . .” (23).

## II

Cixous’s *écriture* avoids dialectical recuperation as another variant on anti-/post-theory by exposing masculine libidinal investments of scopophilia and paranoia inherent in *theoria* itself<sup>2</sup>. In a way, Cixous effects a *poetic* (‘feminine’) critique of what Derrida calls Phallogocentrism. She deconstructs the ‘phallacy of masculine meaning’<sup>3</sup> by questioning the ideological ‘neutrality’ of realist/objective discourses, and by problematizing the “eternal-natural” fixation of “all concepts, codes and values” through “dual hierarchized oppositions” (Sorties 64-65). Culling random binary opposites like activity/passivity, day/night, culture/nature, speaking/writing, logos/pathos etc. Cixous contends that they are all gendered, implicitly or otherwise. The ‘inferior’ of the two terms in any binary is marked as *feminine* by patriarchal Western culture, and repressed.

Cixous’s theoretical intervention into this state of affairs is twofold – a deconstructive reading of phallogocentric discourses like philosophy and psychoanalysis, and proposing an alternative libidinal economy which will produce a socio-cultural (r)evolution in favour of the Other. In “Sorties”, Cixous is especially critical of Freud’s “voyeur’s theory” of sexuality and its Lac(k)anian reworking both of which perpetrate the violence of specularity by reducing everything to the hierarchized binary – having/not having the penis (‘phallus’) (82). Based on a

“fantasized relation to anatomy”, these androcentric theories privilege the visual as presence and thereby relegate feminine sexual identity to a “Dark Continent” of “lack”. Instead of such “phallic monosexuality” Cixous proposes an alternative libidinal economy, provisionally called ‘feminine’, which is based on *jouissance* [(sexual) pleasure] (85).

Significantly, Cixous does not simply propose a reversal of the binary terms – valorizing feminine sexuality over the phallic. It is because such an operation would leave the binary structure intact. Rather she relates feminine *jouissance* to “other bisexuality” which is not a neutralizing of masculinity and femininity into asexuality (Sorties 85). On the contrary, such bisexuality is the simultaneous presence of both gender traits and sexual modes in any individual with all their specificities. It results in a polymorphous and ethical desire of/for the ‘other’. However Cixous does not forget to note that, “(f)or historical reasons, at the present time it is woman who benefits from and opens up within this bisexuality . . . without its necessarily going the rout (*sic*) of abasing what is same, herself.” (85-86). It is because “she doesn’t create a monarchy of her body or her desire” unlike masculine sexuality which “gravitate(s) around the penis” (87).

Cixous traces phallogocentrism to the Hegelian *master/slave dialectic* where the desire for the ‘other’ results in the latter’s consumption/appropriation by the ‘SelfSame’(78). By contrast, feminine desire freely gives the other the ‘gift’ of love which is “a renunciation of the demands of a self that wants to exert power over the other. . . ” (Cixous, *White Ink* 26). In the phallic Realm of the Proper (‘proper’, ‘property’, ‘appropriate’ – cognate words which point to the [male] obsession with classification, systematization and hierarchization) a gift “is perceived as establishing an inequality – a difference – that is threatening in that it seems to open up an imbalance of *power*. Thus the act of giving becomes a subtle means of aggression, of exposing the other to the threat of one’s superiority” (Moi 111). But in the feminine Realm of the Gift, one accepts and spends generously in “a type of exchange in which each one would keep the *other* alive and different” without trying to ‘recover her expenses’”. (Sorties 79-87)

### III

In a way, Cixous’s “absolutely other” (Sorties 71) is akin to Emmanuel Levinas’s ‘irreducible other’ who defies the violence of *comprehension* (the Latin *prehendere* means “to grasp”). It thereby resists objectification, and suspends the formation of a masterly, Cartesian subject. The irreducible other’s insurmountable

distance from this *subject-in-process*<sup>4</sup> produces in the latter a response-ability for what Maurice Blanchot calls the “relation to the unknown”. The strangeness of this interminable approaching over an infinite distance initiates the *ethics* of dialogue between the two. The perpetuity of such a dialogue cannot be ensured through knowledge, which is “a drive to appropriate and conquer” (Nietzsche, “Der Wille zur Macht” 448, *Will to Power* 227). It is enshrined in non-knowledge, in a Keatsian ‘negative capability’:

I think we must respect this immense territory, the ‘unknown’ . . . ‘I don’t know you’ one should not understand negatively . . . life is to desire the other — is precisely the fact that I don’t know you, you surprise me, I don’t understand you, and yet I exist in a state of desiring to know. . . . (T)he possibility and necessity . . . of *another knowledge*. It’s a moving knowledge, mobile, open, capable of accepting that I cannot own the other; that is what escapes me. . . . (Cixous, *White Ink* 34)

Cixous contends that this “advancing in incomprehension, advancing towards incomprehension” is “the very movement of literature” (20). Writing is that “somewhere else that can escape the infernal repetition” of the patriarchal system (Sorties 72). The sublime poetry with which she theorizes on this point demands a fuller quotation:

Writing is the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me – the other that I am and am not, that I don’t know how to be, but that I feel passing, that makes me live – that tears me apart, disturbs me, changes me, who? – a feminine one, a masculine one, some? –several, some unknown, which is indeed what gives me the desire to know and from which all life soars. . . . Other-Love is writing’s first name. (Sorties 85-99)

For Cixous, the beautiful failure of ‘writing’ – which includes (mis)reading – a circular, unending, infinite ‘book of You’ is what constitutes *literary ethics*. It is a position Cixous shares, among others, with Blanchot. In her re-visionary poetics, a poet is “any writer, philosopher, author of plays, dreamer, dreamer of dreams, who uses life as a time of ‘approaching’” (Cixous, *Coming to Writing* 114).

#### IV

However, although she upholds the utopian *there* as a potential revolutionary position, Cixous, like Derrida, is aware that a pure ‘outside’ to the ‘closure of

metaphysics' is untenable. Phallogocentrism has to be subverted from within. It is time for the feminine

to displace this 'within', explode it, overturn it, grab it, make it hers, take it in, take it into her women's mouth, bite its tongue with her women's teeth, make up her own tongue to get inside of it. . . . It is not a question of appropriating their instruments, their concepts, their places for oneself or of wishing oneself in their position of mastery. . . . Not taking possession to internalize or manipulate but to shoot through and smash the walls. (Sorties 95-96)

The "poetically political, politically poetic" (Cixous, *Promethea* vi-vii) project of *feminine writing* pushes the deadening limits of (male) Reason and Intelligibility by unleashing the poetic-affective dimensions of language. Arguing in favour of degrammaticalization and of being "transgrammatical the way one could say transgressive" (*Live Theory* 89), Cixous summons "the strength of women that, sweeping away syntax" breaks the grammatical line "which acts for men as a surrogate umbilical cord" (*The Laugh of the Medusa* 14). Speaking on behalf of "the writers who are conscious" and "in a manner that is strictly specific and reserved to writing", Cixous asserts it is "their role, it is their mission – they are the *guardians of language*, that is to say of the richness of language, of its freedom, of its strangeness, strangeness." (*White Ink*, 85)

The cognitive and ethical aspects of defamiliarization are accentuated in these observations. Language is not merely a tool for (phallic) discursivity or information-exchange. It is also a material form where sounds, tone and musicality couple with images and the very shape of words to produce an excess of meaning. "This interest in the material texture of language", observes Morag Shiach, "is related to Cixous's conviction that writing is produced, and understood, in relation to the body". The critic follows with a word of explanation – "By this she (Cixous) does not mean that there is any simple equivalence between the writing body and the written text, but rather that it is impossible to sustain the complete dichotomy between mind and body which offers the illusion of intellectual control at the cost of erasing, censoring and hystericizing the body" (Shiach 71). One remembers Nietzsche who had wondered "whether, taking a large view, philosophy has not been merely an interpretation of the body and a *misunderstanding of the body*" (*Werke* 16, *The Gay Science* 34-35).

## V

Cixous finds the semantic *dissemination*<sup>9</sup> of a poetic, 'living' language manifested in the archaic and repressed realms of the 'feminine' – in *jouissance*, dreams, the unconscious, and in myths – all of which unsettle the illusion of mastery, autonomy and conscious control. In "Sorties", *écriture* is characterized by the psychosomatic and cultural dimensions of human voice. As a non-specular, affective mode of perception-conception, voice is allied with painting and music. In *Coming to Writing*, for example, Cixous refers to her desire to write like a painter in order to capture the changing present moment or the *quasacles* ("quasi-miracle-instants"). At the same time, she also declares, "I write blindly: what I see is voice. That which speaks." (*White Ink* 132). Dream-reality and visual-voice(s) are conjoined in the race towards *the secret* of the other which always escapes. However, Cixous moves contrary to Derridean 'absence' and seeks a living presence in speech from the feminine *other side*. This becomes possible because a woman "defends the 'logic' of her discourse with her body; . . . she does not deny unconscious drives the unmanageable part they play in speech." (Sorties 92)

Laughter too is unmanageable, for it can "break up the 'truth'" (The Laugh of the Medusa 16). In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche proclaims that laughter can "dispatch all metaphysical comforts to the devils." As an-other's discourse, laughter is, for Georges Bataille, the "fundamental phenomenon of interattraction" (Lawtoo, "Bataille and the Birth of the Subject" 81). Lawtoo glosses, "laughter, for Bataille, is not only at the origin of communication but is also an affective locus of *both* dissolution *and* emergence of the subject, of being *oneself* while becoming someone *other*" (ibid). In the face of rigid phallogocentric solemnity, the laugh of all the Medusas and Medeas becomes a collective transgressive identity: "Culturally speaking, women have wept a great deal, but once the tears are shed, there will be endless laughter instead." (Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?" 55).

According to Betsy Wing, Cixous's re-citation of myths "re-mark our culture. As changed citations (as in the feminization of the name Promethea) they are no longer schoolbook recitations but projections of Cixous's desires into culture". (*Promethea* xii). One can study if it also marks an exploration into posthumanism and zoo-ontology, since Promethea is simultaneously a woman, the narrator's 'other', and a mythical beast who transforms herself into a horse, a doe, a lioness, an eagle and so on. Effecting a Biblical re-interpretation from the 'other's perspective, in texts like *Stigmata* Cixous writes about riding "straight to the essentials" with Abraham's donkey and about learning humanity from her dog 'Fips'. Fips also appears in the

eponymous chapter “Stigmata, or Job the Dog” and in *Reveries of the Wild Woman* among Cixous’s other texts. Her cat ‘Thea’ too is an important entity in *Stigmata*, occasioning ontological and linguistic musings by Derrida in his tribute to Cixous, *H.C. for Life, That Is to Say....* The ‘question of the animal’ is thus an important one in the Cixousian oeuvre.

Finally, *voice* is also the *writing* of unconscious desires and dreams on the body. Cixous underscores the element of physicality by punning on ‘*écriture*’, a word which can mean both ‘writing’ and ‘handwriting’. Amy Crawford finds Cixous as undoing another binary through such gestures, since “this escape from mastery via writing situates Cixous not as an idealist. Cixous intervenes on the level of thought and writing, but sees the language itself as material, body”. The critic therefore calls Cixous’s operation as “material idealism” (“Dis/Eruption” 42).

## VI

Cixous’s insistence on writing the body has been (mis)construed as essentialism, her eulogizing ‘the mother’ condemned as a crude biologism which presupposes compulsory motherhood and heteronormativity<sup>5</sup>. But the tables get turned when Barbara Freeman asserts that “It is precisely the assumption of a non-textual body outside of language, of a linguistic domain which is not itself corporeal that Cixous’s re-formulation of mind-body relations in a feminine economy calls into question” (Shiach 18). Indeed as early as in the “The Laugh”, Cixous states that “you can’t talk about a female sexuality, uniform, homogeneous, classifiable into codes – any more than you can talk about one unconscious resembling another” (03). In “Sorties” Cixous speaks of “a huge system of cultural inscription that is legible as masculine and feminine”. She states that she is using these “qualifiers of sexual difference here to avoid the confusion man/masculine, woman/feminine: . . . . We have to be careful not to lapse smugly or blindly into an essentialist ideological interpretation . . .” (81). Cixous uses masculine/feminine as terms *under erasure*.<sup>6</sup> In fact, she asserts: “I talk of femininity in writing, or I use heaps of quotation marks, I speak of ‘so-called feminine’ writing” (*White Ink* 22).

Cixous actually presents the ‘third-wave’ feminist problematic of *sexual politics*<sup>7</sup>. As Moira Gatens rightly observes, “The project of *écriture féminine* involves challenging the masculine monopoly on the construction of femininity, the female body and woman” (*Destabilizing Theory* 134). By signifying the textual-corporal dynamic, *écriture* effects what Judith Butler calls in another context the “rewriting of the morphological imaginary”. Writing is an act of self-creation and self-knowledge

by hearing the pre-Symbolic, non-verbal 'song' of the unconscious as played on the body. In a characteristic gesture, Cixous undoes the verbal/non-verbal binary too by observing that "a text is compared to a textile, to a tapestry ... but for me this tapestry is not silent, it's completely musical, echoing, reverberating." (*LiveTheory* 100). If woman allows her body to hear "what comes before language reverberating", it "will 'realize' the un-censored relationship of woman to her sexuality . . . will return her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her vast bodily territories kept under seal . . ." (Sorties 88-97). An empowering feminist re-interpretation of motherhood can thereby read male inferiority and fear in "the taboo of the pregnant woman" (90). Nevertheless, when Cixous states that "woman is never far from the 'mother'" she avoids all originary implications by observing that the latter is not "the role but the 'mother' as no-name and source of goods" (94). This "source" is the 'Third Body' which is born in the folds of *écriture* and the unconscious.

## VII

When Cixous asks, "How could the woman, who has experienced the not-me within me, not have a particular relationship to the written?" (90), the term 'woman' reconciles *experience* (of maternity) of a humanist subject with the non-closure of a provisional subject-in-writing. Neither constructivism nor essentialism, Cixous uses a political tactic reminiscent of Gayatri S. Chakraborty's "strategic essentialism". Rosi Braidotti's term is "essentialism with a difference" – an act of self-legitimation which "opens up the field of possible 'becoming', providing the foundation for a new alliance among women, a symbolic bond among women *qua* female sexed beings" (*Destabilizing Theory* 68). In *écriture féminine* 'woman' is not only a female sexed being but also a signifier of a different approach to the other and to subjectivity and writing. "What Cixous tries to do", explains Morag Shiach, "is to subvert the discourse of patriarchy, to open it up to contradiction and to difference, while still retaining the possibility of shared recognition which would make a political movement of and for women possible" (20).

Cixous tries to posit 'woman' beyond binaries, and into the 'in-between', wishing neither to be imprisoned in the Imaginary nor silenced by the Symbolic. In our contention, the Cixousian 'in-between' has a radical ethical and ontological possibility. In her essay "Words and Things" Michele Barrett rues that "we need a better conception of agency and identity than has been available in either (anti-humanist) poststructuralist thought or its (humanist) modernist predecessors . . . to reopen in new and imaginative ways the issue of humanism" (*Destabilizing Theory*

216). Cixous's feminine "impossible subject" who experiences "a wonder of being several" can be re-imagined as engaging this lack (Sorties 88-98).

As Cixous points out, such a subject "is a non-closed mix of self/s *and* others" (*Reader* xvii, emphasis added). Always loving the other, such a subject can "deappropriate herself without self-interest". But it does not go "the rout (*sic*) of abasing what is same, herself", she is not "undifferentiated magma" (Sorties 86-87). Active-passive simultaneously, the non-closure of her subjectivity is "not an opportunity for destruction but for wonderful expansion" (86). In *H.C. for Life* Derrida speaks of Cixous's poetics of *might*, the word indicating both the modal of 'possibility' and the synonym of 'strength'. Such a poetics can be formulated in this context as the *plural speech*<sup>8</sup> of the Cixousian 'Third Body'. It is constituted, *contra* Derrida, not by a *deathly* absence and displacement but by an overflow of *lively* subjectivities. Cixous's subject comes into being-becoming on "the tangential line between the possible and the impossible" through an evocative 'writing' (*White Ink* 176). As Cixous relates, "This is why I never ask myself 'who am I?' (*qui suis-je?*) I ask myself 'who are I?' (*qui sont-je?*) – an untranslatable phrase. . . . We: are (untranslatable). . . . A 'myself' which is the most intimate first name of You" (*Reader* xvii).

Derrida's insistence on Cixous's greatness as a poet requires this new perspective. She resists the containment of the rich "chaosmos of the personal" (*Laugh* 16) into neat discursive boxes. As Verene A. Conley observes, "Cixous becomes the poet who can do what philosophers cannot, that is, account for the living or for otherness within a realm of intelligible experience." (*Readings* xii). Resisting both the tag of an automatic-writer and what Derrida calls "the reductive manipulation that consists in classifying the name and the work of Hélène Cixous among the 'great-French-women-theorists-of-the-feminine'", she always writes "withagainst" her other(s) (*H.C.* 140; *White Ink* 84). "This is not a way of repressing or obliterating theory", she explains, "but of giving it a place which is not an end in itself . . . not to be confined by theory, but for theory to appear what it is, useful and traversable" (*Live* 114). Cixous traverses the politico-philosophical in and through the lyrical, in a poetics which thinks the 'unthinkable'.

## VIII

A consideration of the Cixous's style is necessary to elucidate why she holds a unique position, not only as a woman writer of the twentieth century but as a poet-thinker of Western culture as a whole. Dense and deceptively simple, Cixous's *feminine style* cannot be dismissed as "overdetermined results of literary choice"

(Showalter, *Modern Criticism and Theory* 335). Not least because this “great unclassifiable writer”, as Derrida calls her in *H.C. for Life*, “knows how to produce unique events, insofar as they call the best protected securities into question once and for all: genre, gender, filiation, proper noun, identity, cultural heritage, the distinction between faith and knowledge, between theory and practice, between philosophy, psychoanalysis, and literature, between historical memory and political urgency” (138).

Ranging from the messianic and lyric-erotic to the surrealist and autobiographical, Cixousian style creates a labyrinth of signifiers which encourages non-linear reading, destabilizes narrative voice, and resists interpretive closure. Packed with neologisms, puns, alliterations, parodies, symbolic repetitions of motifs and images, her self-reflexive texts play with all kinds of author-ity. They are ‘untranslatable’ in every sense of the term. But perhaps the singularity of Cixous’s “text of poetic fiction” lies in what she calls “the overflow of genres” – where fiction, theory and theatre get allied, “where poetry tends towards the philosophical” (*White Ink*, 18). Blyth and Sellers sum it beautifully: “Uneasy with the idea of limits, ignoring conventions, boundaries and rules, difficult but rewarding, serious, playful, humorous, poetic, even, on occasion, self-contradictory, Cixous’s writing has a complex and luminous quality that is always just eluding definition” (*LiveTheory* 05).

By way of conclusion one must say that the difficult joys of reading Hélène Cixous are priceless. It does not happen everyday that a ‘theorist’ sets us on the path of thinking by writing a sentence like – “Poetry is the music of philosophy, it’s the song of philosophy” (ibid 99). “Cixous is one of the very few writers”, Kelly Ives observes, “who possess a mastery (a ‘mistry’, a mystery) of language. She has the luminescence of Arthur Rimbaud, the deft control of language of Gertrude Stein or Samuel Beckett, and the *jouissance* of Sappho” (67-68). Of course, it cannot be gainsaid that Cixous’s gift of *écriture féminine* has implications beyond one’s emotional and intellectual gratification. As a poet-thinker who valorizes poetry-language-thought to resist individual and institutional repression, she is often subjected to twin strategies of academic containment. Cixous is co-opted as a somewhat idiosyncratic thinker and passed over in favour of more ‘theoretical’ and ‘proper’ intellectuals. Contrarily, she is celebrated as a poet who is wonderfully innocent of socio-historical realities. In view of such symptomatic expropriations, Cixous’s practice of “cultural ecology”<sup>9</sup> assumes a wider significance:

Cixous needs to be read less against herself – less as a proper name, a cult figure whose signature can be moneyed – but *en effet* (in effect), as a force

corresponding to certain shifting preoccupations of global importance, though they might be articulated, in her own style, from a French vantage point. Through her readings we sense a concern both aesthetic and ethical for the world, and a growing preoccupation with a site, a milieu, that is, with a need for new and other links with the world, the self, and, it is hoped, social collectivities. (Conley, *Readings* xiv)

#### ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Blyth and Sellers's term (*Live Theory* 16).

<sup>2</sup> A term from psychiatry, *scopophilia* derives from the Greek *skopein* ('look at') + 'philia'(love). It relates to *Theoria* (the etymological root of 'theory'), the Greek word meaning 'contemplation', which in turn corresponds to the Latin word *contemplatio* ("looking at", "gazing at", etc.). The violent subject-object separatism in libidinal (male) gazing – and its implicit anxiety of the 'other' – is emphasized here. (Note by the author of this paper).

<sup>3</sup> Mary Jacobus's term. (Showalter 334)

<sup>4</sup> Julia Kristeva's term. (Kristeva, *Polylogue* 1977)

<sup>5</sup> A socio-cultural system where heterosexuality is normative. (Note by the author of this paper).

<sup>6</sup> "In recent theoretical usage, normally associated with a practice popularized by Jacques Derrida . . . of leaving deleted words 'under erasure' (*sous rature*) in his writings – that is, of leaving them crossed out but not removed. By so doing . . . he makes use of words and terms which he feels to be inadequate but for which he finds no viable alternatives. Derrida apparently adopted the practice after noting Martin Heidegger's use of it." (Hawthorn 107)

<sup>7</sup> The politics surrounding the 'sexuality' of the text and the 'textuality' of the sexual. (Note by the author of this paper).

<sup>8</sup> Blanchot's term. (Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation* 1969)

<sup>9</sup> Verena A. Conley's term. (*Readings* xiv)

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