

שִׁיר הַיָּסוּדִים JOUISSANCE

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ב

עצירה המשקיע JOUISSANCE



Living-reading

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Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Last but not least, there is the enigmatic text, the Song of Songs, herself, her author, her scribes, her protectors, her journey of reception, her passionate voice, her beautiful disruption, an enigma in the discursive space of the present.

Abstract

This thesis, *Jouissance*, emerges at a distension of disciplinary borders, engaging the hermeneutics of the Hebrew Bible's *Song of Songs*. In the milieu of exegetical readings, *Jouissance* asks "can she be read?" *Jouissance* asks whether it is possible that a poetic text characterized by star falls and shadows can be systematised; an object of exegesis.

An-'other' kind of reading is proposed; a kind of reading that resists the exegetical economy as absolute by disclosing an open system. It would be a kind of textual encounter. It would orient itself as one of unlimited possible readings but it would be naked, unique and 'true'. In the reading, the reader-author would inhabit the text, bringing her 'whole being' to it; allowing herself to be taken in its jaws, one time, and once only. If this could be called reading, it would be live-reading, or reciprocating-reading or corporeal reading. It is a reading of the Song of Songs that is birthed and dreamed; that joins breath with breath.

The inspiration undergirding *Jouissance* is the post-structural, post-Lacanian world-space of literary theory and philosophy, that of Hélène Cixous and her corpus of *écriture féminine*, Jacques Derrida's poetic philosophy, and with contemporary scholarship in literature, philosophy and psychoanalysis. Via the midwifery of Cixous's own texts, the author-reader encounters the enigmatic poetry of the Song of Songs, existentially and aesthetically, drawing on what is evoked by the reaction of meeting at a unique moment. The reaction-of-meeting highlights the way the author's world is catalysed by the text; highlighting the creative and transformative polysemy invoked by poetic texts.

The character of this exploration of the Song of Songs is 'other' and 'outside' of systematizing methodologies. The thesis works and desires, both succeeding and failing to maintain its internal integrity. The methodological concept is held in tension between poetics and ethics. The new text or 'third body' engendered is imaginative, reflective and multi-valent. It is inscribed with elements that are both continuous and discontinuous, as well as the dynamic, mythic and subversive. If read in the spirit of Cixousian literary theory, this thesis is a visceral-corporeal experience of the transgressive and creative act of reading the Song of Songs that merges the limits of language with the bliss and suffering of the beyond: *jouissance*.

... On eating scrolls

The thesis presentation

Presentation

The thesis presentation consists of two books. Each book has a different scope and a different rhythm, but also has, simultaneously, mutuality and affinities. The one interleaves with the other. *A Cixousian Encounter* enacts a poetics of the Song of Songs as a Cixousian live-reading. It opens exposition and situation; a locus and tempus of the Song: an embodied living-reading. *Living-Reading*, has an exegetical and subliminal relation to the other with accents on subjectivity, text and reading.

Jouissance is a thesis presentation conceived on a nuanced Cixousian understanding of reading and writing. In light of these touches, crossings, and non-linear arrangements between books there is no prescribed sequence for reading. The sequencing of the reading will create an originary cut that has the effects of spectral re-figuration. The reader will forge a path, a path that I did not cut, or score, presenting the possibility of unlimited uniqueness of the *envoyage*. Furthermore, given the privilege of the poetic in this text and the ancient text,

there is always the chance of catastrophe.



It [the poem] traverses
the other, who learns it
by (way of the) heart.
But it is precisely in the
course of this traverse
that it exposes itself and
so risks catastrophe.¹

Jouissance: A Cixousian Encounter of the Song of Songs, is a living-reading or 'dream'-reading of the Song of Songs. It has two major sections: parts 1-3 and parts 4-8. Parts 1-3 open to the rationale

behind the reading with interwoven deviations into theoretic and poetic writings at the nexus of psychoanalysis, continental philosophy and French literary theory. Poetry and literature, ancient and contemporary, play an important role in this interaction, as creative, ‘fluid’ voices, unveiling and disclosing the shades and ‘truths’ in which the reading is brought to life. This chorus of creative voice calls for a visceral response to the Song of Songs. Hélène Cixous’s corpus (both theoretic and creative) is the blood of both sections. Her texts guide and midwife the unbearable birthing of this text *Jouissance*, teaching it again and again “how to die.”² Parts 4-8 record the echo of the sound of a willing descent, a *katabasis* into *Sheol* with the Song of Songs, which in Cixous’s economy of *féminine* writing/reading may allow for an *anabasis*, as Live-text/Life-text. The Song of Songs is asked “*che vuole?*” and the relation of self and other in separation and encounter is lived. The reader relives the night journeys of the Song of Songs but the scene is Israel or Paris or Damascus or Jordan and the time, always in the present. The text *Jouissance* is in search of the other in a beautiful and troubled land (the land of the Song, interior lands, dark-lands, the lands of the other).

Part 1 “Prelude” appeals for a hermeneutic of life-texts embraced as an incarnation of Cixous’s *écriture féminine* in biblical reading. With Part 2 “Prehistory,” the thesis comes *face-à-face* with the *féminine* as it struggles against the Law, the Father, against rape; ancient witnesses on the side of the feminine raised from the deep are Bathsheba, Eve, Shulamith and Medusa. In Part 3 “Icara,” the thesis celebrates the creative, resistant and feminist writing of Hélène Cixous.

In Part 4, “*Che Vuole?*” the voice of the [ancient] Song of Songs, is cast in ripples around the themes of encounter and absence in terms of place and space.³ With poetic and mimetic language, the voice of the Song of Songs is threaded into poetry, poetic-philosophy and literature through the ages and in the same vein of

careful abandon, I write myself into the text, consciously merging our twin worlds, challenging myself to face both absurdity and meaningfulness in this ecstatic text. The result is a transformative collision in the present. While maintaining this progression through a constellation of ideas related to certain existential themes, a narrative emerges in Part 5, “Peace Odyssey” where I listen for the voice of the Shulamith in the presence of oppression. She travels with me in Israel, where I am challenged by her love-talk in a turbulent State; her voice attains a political edge, a voice for freedom.

Parts 6 and 7 “Cirque du Soleil” and “Shibboleth” engage life, death and love in the thematic threads within the Song of Songs. Threads from literature both ancient and modern (old and new fruits, Son 7:13) are interwoven within Cixous’s and Derrida’s noted discourses on life and death. I imagine it weaves together like a silk tallith. Is this an illicit weaving of more than one kind? Or silk woven with silk? In the finale Part 8 “Dream Scenes” the encounter with the Song of Songs is drawn to a close (or a new beginning) scaffolded by the love & death thematic in Chagall’s symbolism. Book One closes with extended notes for each section.

Jouissance: Living-Reading is constituted by a formalized first layer of text and a generative and disruptive/eruptive second poetic layer creating an interplay of explicit and implicit elements. This presentation appears in a series of three interconnected essays which are coupled to the ancient poem [her-] self, with an English translation and notes. The three essays constitute an opening to the Song of Songs from 3 merging borders: in light of Cixousian literary theory, in light of Cixous’s engagement with psychoanalysis (dreams and *jouissance*) and in light of the poetic in a milieu of poets’ voices—those of Cixous, Derrida and Celan. The 4th section comprises an annotated translation of the Song of Songs as well as the original text in Hebrew.

סמכוני באשיות
רפדוני בתפוחים
חולת אהבה אני כי

Lie me down in the blossoms;
bed me in the apricots;
for in a fever of love I am ^[2:5]

Reading hélène cixous & the song of songs

Her eyes were lips on the lips of G-d

“She had not realized that eyes are lips on the lips of God.”

—Hélène Cixous¹

I don't go just to any strange Dreams. I go to those that resemble the ancient gardens where I spent a forgotten life, to those that spread out beneath the earth, before names, in the zones where music is spoken, where the languages before languages resound.²

1

Live-text

I have written my own text in order to read a text, which in the current frame might be said to be a circular endeavour. At the radius of this circle there are voices acknowledged and woven into the writing. For example, there are those that are met in the preface of *Jouissance*: the voice of the Shulamith, and my own voice that is perpetually becoming. These are the voices of my interior chorus. These are imagined voices but none the less real in that they speak and sing. This is the magic of a text, to allow for the chromatography of the voices of the psyche to which, in deep readings, new voices merge-distil and the dynamics, the encounter of the voices means for inexorable change. I open for the voice of the Song of Songs, herself, she transmutes, an analyte, to me and within me. I am eluent, a non-singularity, a cluster of voice. And the voices of the angels, whose angelic texts in literature and philosophy will always be with us, transmute also and flow into the two of us creating a third. We become live-texts that have, suffused within us, the voices of angels. It is literary alchemy.

One part ardour...

—two parts desire ...

Why undertake such an unconventional journey, so unconventionally? At first I would say it is one part ardour and two parts the desire to possess the impossible. I am in debt to beautiful texts. I hear them. I feel them. I want to let them live, embrace their aesthetic. They are a montage of voice, they transcend time and space and come to us out of time and space, after an eternity, to our reading.

Arcane power...

It is also one part for arcane power. Beautiful texts are always speaking powerfully, and in the new context of the present, in the evolving context of the human condition, they speak again, a resistance, a diversion, performing at a point of tension. Such is the power of poetry, to speak many things, and different things all at once, even those that the author would have never believed possible, even those that the reader would dearly love to eschew. Every reading is unique, never the same reading twice, and sometimes more than one reading at once. This is the arcane power of the poetic. Free-text. Live-text.

—*and for woman...*

Yes, for her. Finally...

Finally it is for woman. The poetic accentuates what is essential to an *écriture féminine*, a feminine-writing. This poetry, the Song of Songs, accentuates woman's voice, woman's experience. In her resistance to phallic economies, her polysemy, her crafty transgressions and liveliness, she is *par excellence écriture féminine* regardless of the controversy over the gender of her authorship.

—*Live-texts*

Life-texts...

The thesis explores this ancient poem-song as a life-text.

The life of a life-text, relived, reborn, dying, coming back. I imagine an ouroboros as her ellipsis. This life-text circles round, and has circled round on us for three thousand years from death into life continually. It is an ouroboric journey and in reading her we will return upon ourselves many times. She reads us, she lives us. When we allow this angelic text to flow into us, something alchemical happens. Part of us turns to gold, part of us drinks the elixir of eternal life. Another part dies ... then *Jouissance*! A kind of breaking free, some part that

doesn't return back, that force that escapes. This is when she is a *jouissance*-text which is a life-text on the very edge. Not a mere text of pleasure but a text of *jouissance*, hyper-lyrical, defibrillating. This order of writing brings ecstasy which within it houses both life and death; life and death which are enigmatic and intersecting qualities that bring about the alchemical transformation of the reader. She becomes the Gift that cannot be returned.

In the pages of *Jouissance*, the Song of Songs is let loose as a slippery life-text via Cixousian hermeneutical alchemy.¹ Through H.C.'s writings on reading-writing phenomena and her bountiful corpus² of the exotic, the mythic, the books with legs, I read with her. I have read with her so deeply that she has written me and in reciprocation, I am writing her; a counter-signing on a Derridean spiral.

This Cixousian reading of the ancient text is enigmatic. This is an evasive tactic that highlights the resistant qualities inherent in poetic writings like the Song of Songs. The thetic moment enacted here in reading the Song of Songs resists dead-weight and dead-readings. Texts are not to be knifed and held immobile, but let free.³ This is the [*contra*-] hermeneutic space I inhabit in trying to describe how I encounter her, as I see her, *elle est là*, so as not to undermine this thesis, that "she, the Song of Songs, cannot be held down," and that because she cannot be held down, if I open to her *différance*,⁴ and the polysemy, the multidimensionality, breathing, the speaking-several-languages-at-once, she will transform me. Life will engage me. I will life.

... a philosophy, at once impassioned and formidable,
of existence, beginnings and endings, of the battle
between love and death ... [engendering] all the
great poetic texts and theatrical fictions.⁵

In the late afternoon I dragged my bamboo rocking chair to the centre of a green field. Trees, old and wise, stood silent with secrets around me in a perfect square. I sat on the bamboo and worn cushion in the falling light of the late afternoon on a carpet of green, a magical flying carpet. It was Shabbat, and it was falling, falling with the sun.

It was a forever day. That is, a day to keep forever in one's memory. A day to etch onto a white page, to hold lightly as if one could the rays of dying light of the fourth world between fingers. It is the 5th of May. [I might add that the moon was at her perigee. Even now she is bright and full. Filling the world with anticipation of the new. The feeling is so strong. I have a feeling that anything could happen.]

The Song of Songs is an elusive, transgressive and feminine text. Her exegetes throughout her history have been concerned to have her conform to the mores of the Judeo-Christian orthodoxy,⁶ to try to make her the simulacrum, the exact representation of a patriarchal world. However, in contemporary readings she is often framed as erotic hyperbole only and the intellectual or philosophical voice is subsumed.⁷ In her reception history, she could be said to have taken on a feminine body and experiences, as women often have, the effect of being silenced, (by a

repressive allegory) or by objectification, becoming the object of sexualised readings. There are many readings of the Song of Songs but these are the dominant two: allegory and erotic hyperbole. In this reading I have desired not to force the text into a hermeneutical fantasy of absolute meaning. Instead a space is constructed for a human/humane discourse that seeks to be worked in tension with the other, in a multiplicity of truth, giving birth to meaningful arrays. Thus, I ask questions for which there may not be answers, search with a light touch for her own peculiar and multi-faceted articulation of a poignant philosophy; of the human condition; of life and death; of love; of sexual difference; of exchange; of relational ethics. Veiling and unveiling in a flowering of ancient feminine wisdom—*une genie*—that is vibrant, astonishing and burgeoning in a most beautiful song.

A model for this dialogic and radical encounter I have proposed here may be found in the *écriture féminine* theoretic of feminist writing developed in varying forms amongst the post-structural feminist philosophers in France in the 1970s. The primary post-structural philosopher engaged in this regard is Hélène Cixous, a controversial poet-philosopher, writing poetically on all kinds of encounters, and who, in her early theoretic writings coined the term *écriture féminine*.⁸ Luce Irigaray is also significant in “French Feminism”⁹ and theorized a similar genre termed ‘love discourse’¹⁰ by which she sought to encounter, as Woman, the fathers of continental philosophy.¹¹ Julia Kristeva is also an important contributor with her work *La Revolution du Langage Poétique*.¹² A further affinity for these philosopher-feminists is the portent of the psychoanalytic in their work. For this reason Freud and Lacan are significant along with the discursive space of Parisian Theory of which nothing could be said without considering the work of Derrida, Barthes and Bachelard. Further to this group is the work of Lévinas and the Israeli-Viennese philosopher Martin Buber.

Hélène Cixous was born in *Algérie française* in 1937. This was a period of turmoil both in Europe and in Algeria. She was part of the French-speaking Jewish minority in Oran and suffered doubly in terms of being ostracized by the Catholic French due to her Jewish ethnicity, and being identified with the French during the Algerian uprising. Her

In the late afternoon the rays of sunlight touched the green through the autumn leaves of the trees. They framed my view as if I was set in the centre of the camera obscura. They frame my view and direct it up into a perfectly blue sky. My gaze is infinite. There is no vanishing point in an ocean-blue sky.

My children and I climb a tall corner pine, climbing up into the sky.

The sky knows that in my hands I hold secrets, of archives, of letters, of a corpus but just as I, myself, was beginning to vanish ...

Life interrupts me.

Life laughed, calling down from the branches. Little monkeys swinging from limb to limb.

Brand new, never before heard of little monkeys living in the jungle hill tops of northern Myanmar.

Little sneezing monkeys, their little concave noses sneezing with life.

"I'm scared" says my daughter. She had climbed so high. She was at least 6 branches up. Far Too High. I hold my breath. But this is the courage of the child. She won't stop, hellbent on freedom, for the feeling of air, refusing to be told 'no'. She climbs in spite of the safety of the ground disappearing. She just goes branch to branch. Going up by sheer stubbornness. Away from me, from where I sit cross-legged in my bamboo chair. I am still holding my breath, becoming faint. I don't need to climb anymore. I have already fallen. C. is there. C. calls for her to come down and together they find a wooden plank in an old oak on which to perch and laugh. He has spent half his life 6 branches too high.

father, a doctor, died during these turbulent political times. It was mourning that catapulted her into writing. She wrote, at first, she reflects, to bar death.¹³ In 1955 she immigrated with her immediate family in order to study at the French capital. Cixous went on to work towards her *docteur ès lettres* at the University of Paris-Sorbonne, with a thesis called, *L'Exil de James Joyce ou l'art du remplacement* under the guidance of Jean-Jacques Mayoux.¹⁴

Cixous's own experiences in the academic environment in which she wrote her thesis resonate. How far have we moved from one woman-scholar's experience of university discourses in 1963 to one in 2012? In a little essay called "The first lucidity," from which I quote, Hélène broods over the resistance she experienced from 'Paris', regarding her literary notions. She considers her sense of exclusion which she intertwines with the illustration of her approach to the writings of Proust as one of love. This love arises in her because of the way that he exposes truth/s with rawness. She is inspired by the extent to which he is prepared to reveal his souls, to bare them up. Mostly she loves the way in which he "loves love like a pig."¹⁵ This glorious and bare animality is compared unfavourably with the hypocrisy of the 'university'. She refers to her teacher J.J. who describes her progress in her writing as a passing from delirium into lucidity or lucidities. She recounts the necessity to enter this delirium in order to avoid the deadness of the machine of the 'university', of 'Paris', of 'The Capital'. The initials J.J. are curious in this text, making the referent ambiguous. Cixous may

refer to either Jean-Jacques Moyeux, her mentor or James Joyce, her subject. It could be that she refers to both significant JJ's. James Joyce is known for his novel *Ulysses* that evokes such descriptors as obscure and elaborate, for "capturing the slightest waves of consciousness," or for making "words come as close to turning into musical notes as words can."¹⁶ Certainly Hélène Cixous imbibed James Joyce in his text and some of his blood became hers. She draws on *Ulysses* in her famous essay *Sorties*. "What is a father?" asks Joyce, "Fatherhood is legal fiction," he says.¹⁷

It is not surprising given these strong feelings of being other and outside of the weighty traditions and hierarchical blindness of the universities of Paris (i.e. The Paris in which HC was situated) with its interdependent relation to Parisian culture, that the May 1968 student uprisings in Paris could be credited (as Verena Andermatt Conley does) as a critical moment in Cixous's life.¹⁸ As a direct result of her alignment with the dissenters' manifesto, Hélène Cixous found herself as *chargé de mission* of an experimental university with a utopian vision built upon these ethics-of-the-other: freedom, democracy, inclusion. This was the *Université Paris-VIII* (Vincennes) that would house renowned scholars such as Deleuze, Foucault, Lacan, Badiou and Lyotard. Several years later (1974) she would also found the famed *Centre de Recherches en Études Féminines*.

In reading Cixous's memoirs of her own doctoral studies, I am brought to the present of my own. My own work is an-other kind of exploration of the Song of Songs, one which, like Cixous's *L'Exil du James Joyce*, comes from "the other side of the water." The lucidity of my own quest to encounter a '*féminine*' text was at stake vis-à-vis the hard rock of academic conventionalities that align against the '*féminine*' per se. This is not the whole of the matter; certainly research is profoundly evolving, and I have experienced many escapes, openings and grace, but particularly in my field that is biblical literature there remains a resistance to

change. I desired a space for delirium that passes in and out of lucidities. I desired a space where I could love my text and not be party to textual obliterations, assassinations and decapitations; decapitations such as those that figure in Perseus' tale. I did not want to be Perseus slaughtering Medusa. I longed, like Cixous, for a space in which to burn with curiosity; a space that is situated "at soul's end."¹⁹



... you pursue an effort of lucidity: in the very place of writing's blindness—of which you are conscious. A kind of work that involves turning back on the sentence, that recycles, that reflects and flexes the flux of writing.²⁰



From the first, Hélène Cixous was engaged in a poetic-philosophical exploration in the mysteries of subjectivity. In her writing she was engaged obsessively with her own subjectivity/ies which includes relentlessly searching out and fathoming the unfathomable depths of the other; the 'other' other as well as those others within the self. In the preface of her English Reader she gives an overview of her project emphasizing subjectivity as a central philosophical consideration and describes her evolution in the subject via this small window in 1994; at a self-expressed *fin-de-siècle*.²¹ In her preface she displays concern over how 'subjectivity' had come to be confused with an exclusive and reductive kind of individuality, rather than the expansive and inclusive "infinite domain" of the human being, which she describes as a "landscape that draws the artist," as well as "every creature blessed with the difficult happiness of being alive."²²

Subjectivity for Cixous is, thus, not what separates us but what draws us together, the complex and coalescent concords, “there are no I’s without-you’s.”²³

The book that I hold in my hands in the falling light of late afternoon, in the leaf-strewn green, contains secrets as imperceptible as the true colour of your lips. I enter the lips of the book. I enter it as if it was the mouth of Hades cave.

נסתרות

Swallowed by this mouth, I had never eaten like this before. Inside the mouth; I tasted endless delicacies. The incessant, illimitable sense of being nibbled.

My edges were frayed from the work of small teeth. This text worked at me with its teeth, like a velveteen mouse come alive. It nibbled at my edges until they were translucent and thin. Thin enough to see the blood pulse through the veins. A feast; a degustation; a banquet of pleasures.

It was a work of eating, of taking inside the body. It made me raw, inchoate, earthen. Itself, it was made of earth, an authenticity, organic quality born of earth that stains the hands. So much so I could never wash myself clean of her, especially since she was always filling up my mouth with leaves —leaves from the old trees standing round the green.

When Cixous says “I’s,” this is exactly what she means. For Cixous, the subject of the human being is constructed of a core social identity that is in some tension or balance with a number of other selves that can be proportionately turbulent and astonishing. She sees her own subjectivity as not only these identities that come into play in the present mode or moment but also the selves that represent all our hours both past and future, even those selves we can never become: “we journey through ourselves.”²⁴ Lining this rainbow is a plane of exchange where languages, sexes, all others continually limn this array with light and shade.

To rise above the interior chaosmos each one of us gives ourselves a spokesperson I, the social I who votes, who represents me. I have an I who teaches, I have an I who escapes me. I have an I who answers for me. I have an I who knows the law. The I who writes gives speech to all other Is. In dreams I has not

yet eaten the fruits of the forbidden tree.²⁵

In the body of my text I explore my own I's in relation to the 'you's' of my text, the Song of Songs; my own I's as they are limned by textual I's. The textual I and the reader's 'I': these are the two worlds of subjectivity that come together in reading: the reader's subjectivity and the subjectivity of the persona/s formed by the text and then the third that arises from the encounter. This non-singularity of person in the text is coded in my work as both the 'Singer' and as 'Shulamith', these two consistently hypostase, coalesce and evolve. These are the phoenix-voice/s of the text, raised from ashes. These voices merge with my own, and seep into my own poignant experiences, for example, my lived experience of C. as the simultaneously real and mythical lover who opens for me a space of mutuality with Shulamith as she encounters her own (and also as I encounter her through him).

My own voices in the text are clustered and in flux. A set of creative voices that are the product of merging and discoursing between these multiple selves as they disperse and coalesce in streams of consciousness. Primal or raw voices, hypostases of my 'I', are the result of birth, death or awakening in the experience of textual encounter. These are often indented, italicized and rich in poetry. The reflective and discoursing voices are italicized and indented. Reflective voices that withdraw from encounter to third person exist in the text as a complement to the mediator 'I'.

Voice offers us something very specific, an odd cross between deepest illusion and deepest promise. The connection of its rhythms with body and specifically with the body of the mother is capable of drawing us in like music, lulling us, sucking us into a sense of existing in a moment of space and time in which we

seem connected to another meaningfully and without mediation.²⁶



Of particular significance in terms of subjective exchanges, is the voice of 'Hélène', who along with the Singer has been my primary m/other. With her I have experienced the exchange of languages (French and German), an exchange of cultures (Algerian, German and French). I have felt both affinity and also curious difference. Most of all it has been incarnational. The Singer and the work of Hélène Cixous are so intense, incendiary, prurient and without reserve. To open myself to these two textual others, has been an unearthly haunting, having the intensity of mortal combat, and most certainly a 'living agitation'.

It is in this living agitation that there is always room for you in me, your presence and your place. I is never an individual. I is haunted. I is always, before knowing anything, an I-love-you.²⁷

Many other voices of theorists, philosophers, poets, and writers are interwoven in this thesis with the voices of HC, Shulamith and my own, often creatively as direct speech in discourse with my own text. These voices of others have haunted me, entered me, accelerated my transformations. These transformations are sometimes unplanned and unpredictable. Sometimes they are beyond rational expression and I fall into poetry. Sometimes they are signalled in the text as un-cued changes in person (i.e., a reverie in third person may abruptly become first person and vice versa) producing an effect, such as a sense of approach or withdrawal. This movement away or coming close is not alien to the Song of Songs. She is a mistress of such conflicting moments.



Derridean deconstruction will have been the greatest ethical critical warning gesture of our time: careful! Let us not be the dupe of logocentric authority. We are not “pure I”. A gesture dictated by humility, and which recalls us to humility.²⁸

One of the ‘others’ that appears with great regularity in my thesis is Jacques Derrida. Already in terms of Cixous’s own overview of her project, he stands very near. For myself, the embrace of JD’s oeuvre was not immediate. I found his seminal tomes, certainly those most commonly engaged in the Anglo world, such as *Dissemination*, and *Writing and Difference*, difficult to enter. However, my resistance weakened when I began to read his poetic writings such as *Voile*, *The work of mourning*, *Circonfession* and *Glas*. I began to gain a greater sense of his love for truth, his love for the other, the beauty, humility and compassion of his work.²⁹

As Cixous writes, “Derridean deconstruction will have been the greatest ethical critical warning gesture of our time.”³⁰ It is his consideration of difference that is crucial to Cixous’s understanding of subjectivity. Derrida continually reveals the inherent instability of language, of systems, of concepts, of structure, of most cherished ideals as phantasms. The result, to which Cixous alludes, is that the cherished belief in a pure ‘I’ is also phantasm. This distrust of absolutes continues with

But what the green and the trees were beginning to understand was that I had nursed this book at my breast like a new-born. Woke to her when she cried out in the night. In the morning light, she was my son, with his rainbow smile that burst through his eyes like a supernova.

Pure love mirrored in her face.

That was the moment I drew back in fear. The intensity, the purity, the fires that I couldn’t hold in my blooded hand ... and when the moment came, I knew then my cowardice. I didn’t want to die.

My father had given me five crystals from his warm palm. Now again I felt the cool weight and the light that was too bright refracted through glassy facets. I glanced at my father one last time, and leapt, without looking back, into the glowing volcanic stream.

Derrida's engagement of words like 'man' or 'woman', 'masculine' or 'feminine' which are seen in deconstruction, as "parts of a pseudo-whole determined by the symbolon of [a] fictitious contract."³¹ Phantasms.

Sexual Difference, then as Cixous accords, is a problem to be approached with Derridean humility. In a simplistic frame, man and woman represent sexual opposition, a sexuality that is determined anatomically. Identification, however, of man as man or woman as woman is a transformation achieved in adulthood; a constructed identity that prescribed by a social discourse. This is a perspective developed in Lacanian theory as Ellie Ragland writes, "One learns one's sexual identifications—one's sexuation—from the symbolic order, but as correlated with imaginary identifications, not biological anatomy."³² Sexual difference is discussed by Cixous and Conley in terms of libidinal economies.³³ The libidinal drives are not anatomically exclusive, yet remain bodily, and Cixous describes them as pulsions that are feminine or masculine in intensity. However, when we refer to the multiplicity and generality of that which characterizes 'men' or 'women' in our closest experiences, Conley remarks in "Voice ii," in her interview with Derrida (and as Cixous does also), that the 'masculine' would "be marked by traits of reserve, of retention, of appropriation, of organization, of centralization" while femininity would be characterized by "overflowing, overabundance, spending, a relation to loss which would be more often positive than negative."³⁴ Conley warns that these qualifiers are not exclusive, not based on anatomical difference, but:

... for cultural and political reasons, one would tend to find a libidinal economy said to be feminine more easily in a woman because a man, if he does not accept the phallic contract for his entry into society runs the risk of effacement, death and castration...³⁵

Women, then, are more open to the libidinal pulsion that draws out the humid, life drive rather than the totalizing force that is represented as the phantasm of castration, to which Cixous refers as 'dryness'. By 'dryness' Cixous means a kind of determination or appropriation; one that is not necessarily the *propre* of men, as this generous "humidity" is not necessarily the *propre* of women.³⁶ In this same interview Cixous describes the author, Kleist, in his work as evoking a feminine economy:

Capable of spending at all levels, displacing the rhythms ... of the living, of the relationship between life and death...³⁷

Cixous desires to theorize a notion of feminine writing that can be both feminine and non-essentialist.

According to Conley, Derrida dreams of a 'beyond language', or a 'beyond sexual difference' which he describes as "double dissymmetry;" he dreams of a state of affairs where sexual marks or codes do not discriminate.

The relationship would not be a-sexual, far from it, but would be sexual otherwise: beyond the binary difference that governs the decorum of all codes beyond the distinction masculine/feminine, beyond bisexuality as well, beyond homosexuality and heterosexuality which comes to the same thing. As I dream of saving the chance that this question offers I would like to believe in the multiplicity of sexually marked voices. I would like to believe in the masses, this indeterminable number of blended voices, this mobile of non-identified sexual marks whose choreography can carry, divide, multiply the body of each "individual", whether he be classified as "man" or as "woman" according to the criteria of usage. Of

course, it is not impossible that a desire for sexuality without numbers can still protect us, like a dream, from an implacable destiny which immures everything in the figure 2. And should this merciless closure arrest desire at the wall of opposition, we would struggle in vain; there will be never but two sexes, neither one more nor one less. Tragedy would leave this strange sense, a contingent one finally, that we must affirm and learn to love instead of dreaming of the innumerable. Yes, perhaps; why not? But where would the dream of the innumerable come from, if it is indeed a dream? Does the dream itself not prove that what is dreamt of must be there in order for it to provide the dream?³⁸

Conley responds to this compassionate soliloquy by asking how such a dream might be enacted in the artistic practice of writing (poetic writing such as Cixous's) and how a totalizing force might be sloughed. The text then might figure as:

... a weave of voices, would be sustained by different rhythms, tones, breaths which ebb and flow. These voices would not be enclosed in a system or logic, nor in a theory, yet they would modify the discourse you chose, the discourse of philosophy, the most strongly marked as masculine.³⁹

But Conley despairs in that the world, even in this enlightened era, continues to be so subject to these phallogentric binaries and that the law of castration still rules writing, almost in totality. The question Conley poses to Derrida is regarding how these multiple voices might displace the law of castration, and create an evolution of artistic inscription. Of course Derrida will not be drawn

into making a judgment either on the place of woman herself, or how woman should judge her place. He responds with further aporiae.

Cixous on the other hand is explicit in her engagement of this matter. Describing the scene to which a man is called as a scene of castration; a scene that due to historical reality of time and chance, woman is not called to in the same way: “the power struggle.”⁴⁰ This presents both opportunity and misfortune. The misfortune is that women who do not struggle are on the side of men “with its phallic stakes” trying to become men, which Cixous describes as “losing everything, such as, the possibility of a jouissance, of paradise; of modes of life.”⁴¹ The other way, according to Cixous, is to touch the other, to touch oneself at the site of the traces of the originary bisexuality. By touching the other respectfully, through an enlightened mode of exchange, each one is altered so as to “feel the other of the other,”⁴²—a mode of exchange that celebrates freedom rather than enslavement. The movement that keeps exchange in motion is fluid, fluid in terms of language usage, and in the privileging of life over death.



Of course my language does not kill anyone. And yet: when I say, ‘This woman’, real death has been announced and is already present in my language; my language means that this person, who is here right now, can be detached from herself, removed from her existence and her presence; my language essentially signifies the possibility of this destruction; it is a constant, bold allusion to such an event. My language does not kill anyone. But if this woman were not really capable of dying, if she were not threatened by death at every moment of her life, bound and joined to death by an essential bond, I would not be able to carry out that ideal negation,

that deferred assassination, which is what my
language is.⁴³

Cixous, insists on radical encounter with the other in her writing. This encounter through writing is a cataclysm that occurs at the very borders, at the edge, beyond which the face of death is. It is the writing practiced by her beloved texts, Kleist, Montaigne, Lispector, witnessed here again by Blanchot, writing from the border; from the body and in full view of killing fields, fields of bones. “We annihilate the world with a book,” she says with this writing that touches and alters and kills.⁴⁴ “We must have death,” she says, death that is close and sharp, that we cannot escape.⁴⁵ Death that surprises, and we meet this surprise face to face at the limits of life, at its most vivacious limit when we have the audacity to go to its threshold; when we excavate and breach the caverns of Sheol. “Writing is learning to die,” she says, and it is only at this “extremity” that we discover we are alive.⁴⁶

For Cixous, it is at this extreme edge of (textual) encounter that life and love erupt;⁴⁷ that they move. [Textual-] encounter achieves a transfer and fluidity at this edge; a procreative humidity; an organic fecundity. This is its paradoxical nature and this is the caesura where she writes-creates, as she evokes loss as the dark side of love; death as the dark face of life.⁴⁸

... between your love and my love there is murder.
All great texts are prey to the question: who is killing
me? Who am I giving myself to kill?⁴⁹

This is the phenomenon of the Song of Songs. This is the radical encounter that escapes the scene of castration, “escaping in broad daylight,” subverting, provoking, rebelling, “eating the forbidden fruit, making forbidden love, changing eras, changing families, changing destinies, and changing day for night.”⁵⁰ She escapes the forgone conclusions of the *phallogocentric*, the

monolithic, the unitary outcomes, the absolutisms, the illusions of the perfect exegesis.

This mise-en-scène that I am escaping here.

The scene of castration that I am playing to here.

That I am both failing and fulfilling here.

... each one kills the other on the other side of the book: the object of passion. It's true, those who love texts incite the hatred of those who don't. It's true: one can kill for a book or a poem. For or against. One can kill a poet on account of poetry. It's true: poetry—what poison for those who can't take it. For between us, readers and anti-readers, there are crimes prompted by *jouissance*.⁵¹

This is what was happening while I sat on the bamboo rocker in the green field at the end of the day. A text was being taken into my body. She had ceased to be “what is it?” and had become “il y a.”

I had magically entered the “Oub-lire” [the forgetread] and had descended into a delicious “de-lire.” I was sinking with her, with the sun, into a mysterious locale, some forgotten ocean, some stormy unconscious and then arising out of it, like Isis at her beginnings. I kept up this tidal motion until I felt my child's kiss.

[Her act of reading, her encounter with her reader, this text that invokes and calls, is a work of Interiors and Deeps, of birthing, and of Rachel's grief.]

It was at this moment I noticed you, my young son, my little Osiris, you had been consumed by a giant tamarisk. You had sat in contemplation in its arms too long.

Imperceptibly the roots and branches stretched out and encircled me.

The Song of Songs incarnates *jouissance* in its text, in this ingenious working of its poetry, a play of language for deleterious, psychotropic effect, *une fée verte*, a style and sequence that fills each page with disorienting ploys, and delirious plays. By doing so she [dis]orients the reader into a radical encounter with the other before one has the chance to self-censure. In the same moment it is a devastating realization of immense separation. She says, “Lie me down in blossoms” (2:5a) and in that moment I imagine her, imagine myself, imagine her

touch, imagine him touching her, their/our lying down in a cloud of scented petals, a paradise of touch and sense. She repeats, “Bed me in apricots...” (2:5b) and in that moment to suddenly realize again the ‘never’ of the touch. To feel the presence and the harsh absence of the touch. There is no abyss like the *almost* of a touch. *Je l’ai presque touché du bout des doigts.*

The text reveals to me how foreign I am and you are. In front of the text I have felt abandoned and yet present. I am alive and yet close to death. This text is killing me and in this same breath, gifting me an unbelievable vibrancy. Who is reading? Who is writing? Who is being read? Who is being written? I lose track of whether I am reader or writer or page. I experience this reciprocal phenomenon as the unsettling sense of being read by the very text one is reading. This is the *je ne sais quoi* and the *entre-nous* of encounter in poetic, magical form that brings out the unsaid, the beyond-language. The poetic breaks down obstacles and boundaries that would prevent the reader from invoking the emotions and the angst that are cultivated and poignant in the Song of Songs, as well as the mystery and paradox that escapes and flees through her beautiful dance of words; her music. The Song. The poetic text opens up a “beyond language” reminding us tangibly that while one cannot stare straight into the sun, somehow poetry invokes the ‘illusion’ of access into the real; a kind of *lalangue*.⁵²

That which the poem makes us hear, its own music plus the echo of that music... What is left us of the poem is not only the interior of the poem, not only its message, or simply its literal meaning, it is this beach, this bank, this shore, between its music and silence. Poems are surrounded by silence... with poems there is always a border, and you must hear this border.⁵³

Because radical encounter demands a ‘without capitulation’, this thesis is necessarily expressive of my own journey of reading—viscerally articulating the moment and the response, the discourse, the questions, the tensions, the disagreements. The thesis itself desires the subjective revelation, epiphanic response expressed in rawness of detail. As I read the Song of Songs with this kind of reading-encounter, I find myself being read, encountered in return. I am opened, interrogated, and exposed.⁵⁴ Again, this thesis is necessarily a personalized work. The emotional response and the description of what is evoked, craves the creative expression that ‘hears’ the border. This is a task that requires sophisticated articulation across a number of domains in its conception, incarnation and expression. This is an argument of meta-logic, in that such a subject requires a very complex, trans-epistemological exploration of the emotive and vicarious phenomena arising in a living-reading of the Song of Songs.

The rationale for a Cixousian living-reading here is also ethical. In a thesis that argues towards a transformational reading, it would be hypocritical to write from the objective and objectifying persona that would shut down rather than open up the transformational process. Such a thesis must bear up internally to its own scrutiny; maintain the very ethics of reading it espouses. To this end an *écriture féminine* pours through the work.⁵⁵ From the first chapter a dialogic and poetic form emerges and develops. The intent is that radical encounter via the ‘thinking-poetic’ will be an indigenous feature of the thesis, and thus accentuate for my own reader, the viscosity and complexity of reading a potentially alchemical text. Through the ‘not-plain’ nature of poetic writing it is my hope that the deeper things of this text will be made very plain indeed.

Beverley Bie Brahic, in her translator’s notes to Cixous’s *Hemlock* describes the qualities of Cixous’s own incarnation in *écriture féminine* as:

[weaving] narrative, internal monologue, dialogue and discourse, making a fabric whose seams are, deliberately, visible: characters, voices and settings overlap and merge. Sometimes the Reader isn't sure who is speaking and where: is it the mother, the daughter, the brother, Balzac, Proust, all or none of the above? Are we in Paris, Algiers, Bordeaux, Athens...? Time shifts freely, often abruptly, from past to present, from literary and historical memory to the local market; closure – of chapter, of book – is momentary stay against confusion.⁵⁶

I have embraced a mimetic pulsion,⁵⁷ something uniquely my own, my *écriture féminine* and not replicable, something that erupted in me in my live-reading of the Song of Songs; a child born to me during my love journeys through Hélène's corpus. This is the mimetic of 'being-in-it'; a mimetic of force and dynamic. Shared elements are metonymy, synaesthesia, metaphor, free polysemy; threaded through with continuous-discontinuous and mythic elements.⁵⁸

Of course, the poetic, non-linear, disruptive, discontinuous-continuous movement of Cixous's lines are purposeful. The aim is to animate polysemy in the reading through the vibrant metaphor; rich metonymy with multiple levels of allusion that connect past to present, future to past, literature to real life, the banal to the extraordinary. According to Brahic, the "unconscious" of the text is thus revealed.⁵⁹ In fact it is within this space of the unconscious, a 'feminine' imaginary, that the encounter finds its origin. Cixous's texts have inspired me to explore how such a genre might encounter the Song of Songs revealing new insight. Would it reveal this text's unconscious; its before-language? Or perhaps my own text's oceanic deeps? These are the shifting colours of my own sea of desires.⁶⁰

The thesis explores the dynamic and transformative potential of texts when read as a radical encounter. Post-structural and existential thought on dialogic, ethical and relational discourse with the world and with the other is drawn upon. And so, immersing myself in *écriture féminine* [a 'writing-feminine'] as imagined by Cixous, I encounter the Song of Songs by being-one-with-her, and the articulation of the encounter finds a poetic-philosophic form; a form that tries to speak the unspeakable; a form that will both succeed and fail as it tries to enter language. This *écriture féminine* becomes the water of radical encounter with the Song of Songs, and heightens the possibility of transformation of the reader in exhilarating and terrifying ways. Lack becomes excess. Death becomes life. The world of the Song of Songs collides with the world of her reader. This collision brings on a birth of light.

Reading, which establishes another universe of light and dark to that of the outside world, and which is obviously the prolongation of the universe of writing. This happens in intimacy, where sunlight does not reign, reigned over by another light ... light comes from inside and you cannot account for the arrival of light in your life ...⁶¹

My living-reading of the Song of Songs oscillates around four sites of tension prominent in the text: tension that is the spectrum on which the binaries of death/life, separation/encounter, captivity/freedom and absurdity/meaning are laid out. These unstable tensions feature prominently as text or subtext in the Song of Songs, as the poetry weaves between each of the poles in an ornate folding of words that interconnect on multiple levels and dimensions. For this reason the exploration-deconstruction of these binaries is neither linear nor sequential.

Jouissance enacts a creative hermeneutic for reading the Song of Songs and other biblical texts.⁶² Such a hermeneutic advocates the intellectual exercise of reading the poetic with the poetic, as well as framing the thinking-poetic⁶³ (such as *écriture féminine*) as a newly born⁶⁴ feminine epistemology. A new and productive tension is provided with biblical hermeneutics that prioritize the priorities *de l'empire du propre* of biblical studies. This 'newly born' hermeneutic does not narrow the range of meaning to a solitary and absolute truth but allows for open-ended readings. The Song of Songs is suffused with celebration of life, but each reader is drawn to an infinitely unique encounter. The hermeneutic [un-]key[-ing] is invoked in the embrace of the body, of *l'humanité*, and discovery and escape (in broad daylight) of the sacred in a diversity of forms. This [un-]key[-ing] is also characterized by courage—the courage to risk the abyss and the willingness to leap into the face-to-face space of the other.



And here, the body also has a thing or two to say. It is very tiring to write. It is a high speed exercise ...⁶⁵



It's so cold, this 12th of June. The morning chill encompasses me. I am reduced to that small place inside. Inhabiting my own inner organs and still the cold seeps in. It seeps endlessly.

Even though blue light filters through grey blinds. I can't see it. It's in my bones. In the grey. Inside.

It's been so long. So long now since I have grown cold. My fingers find scant warmth in the frantic movements—on the sharp keys, on the soft skin. I type you. I type you. Your smooth skin is a fantasy of heat. It shoots a seed, unfurls the Green leaf. And then fades into the grey, creeping mist.

But this is too fast. I type you. The creature doesn't live without breath. And I can't breathe you because I am sinking into the grey, slowly and surely. My knees, my hips, over my breasts, creeps up round my neck and until just below my mouth. I look up for the last drink of air. I see the blue light filter through the grey blinds.

—I'm cold. This place I find myself is within a series of circular rooms. Each door locked and barred, yet nothing fixed ... nothing is fixed and the walls and windows separate, and suspended they drift away dissonantly. I call them in, and they hold for a second, but in the inevitable moment of distraction they drift again like helium balloons or kites. In the end I am the one suspended while the silent world observes. It's careless in its gaze.

—I am the swivelling bamboo rocker, spinning like the planet's rotation as it moves through an orbit. Ceaseless rotation, ceaseless movement around the ellipsis. Going nowhere.

—Sounds are muffled. I am craving to escape inside you where it is warm. Night-warm. Under-blankets-warm, where for a moment everything stills and I can gain traction and breathe. Tired of gasping for air in the grey stillness. The stillness is spinning like a saucer, defying gravity, pouring round, rotating endlessly. I want to get off, crawl inside, my head is spinning, just to close my eyes, rest by your fire. I type you again, living text, "warm up, open up so I can crawl inside, please, just for a moment, to close my eyes." Maybe drink a little of your warm fire. "Pour into me molten fire-river." Present and velvet text, living flame. Dragon. Black fire on white fire, raven-black locks of hair.

Close, your letters flash by me in exotic formation. I think I saw the letters that spell אהבה. They just burst like fireworks before I could catch them. Maybe that wasn't the word. It could have been anything. But it felt like the balmy peace of sleep. I burn the words to keep warm.

I type you. I type us. I want to say Yes.

2

The burning book

J'ai un peu peur pour ce livre. Parce que c'est un livre
d'amour. C'est un buisson de feu. Mieux vaut s'y
jeter. Une fois dans le feu, on est inondé de douceur.
J'y suis: je vous le jure.¹



In her project one cannot escape the observation that Hélène Cixous weaves between Freud and Lacan for her ground.² Derrida might say—in their shared valuing of the poetic—that her writing appears in “the shadow of this shadow” as a “birth of light.”³ Like Lacan, there are tracts in Cixous’s writing that could be considered a ‘return to Freud’, staged as a rereading; post-Freudian. From yet another view, she is aligned tangentially with the tenets of the Freudian and Lacanian schools of Psychoanalysis, simultaneously engaging in a subversive project that moves beyond them; deconstructs them.

The attraction of psychoanalysis for Cixous is its particular focus on how sexuality is constructed in the subject. While Cixous visibly invokes and provokes the name of Freud in her writing, the invisibility of ‘Lacan’ in her many texts is a mysterious exception. While he is hardly ever specifically invoked, named,⁴ Lacan is felt in Cixous’s languaging of subjectivity and sexual difference, even at the boundaries that mark her dissent. Lacan has presence in Cixous’s biography. They worked together regularly, in person, on the subject of James Joyce (on this subject’s relation to language) for a period of two years in the mid-sixties.⁵ Cixous was face to face with Lacan over the text body of James Joyce. It might have been then when she fell out of love with him and Joyce died.⁶

In Cixous's corpus there are multiple and vocal intersections with Freud and his studies. A primary example is her engagement with Freud in his female casework, one client of which is 'Dora'. Dora came to Freud (sent by her father) after several years of symptomatic 'hysteria'⁷ culminating in suicidal tendencies. She would become one of Freud's most famous failed cases.⁸ Freud's publication of the case *Fragment of a Case of Hysteria* revolved around the interpretation of several dreams, one in which she dreams she is trapped inside a burning house. The story that emerges in the case of Dora is one of violation and betrayal by those closest to her. Rather than exploring this understanding of her own suffering, Freud entered into a complex and contradictory interpretation of Dora's sexual life. Forced upon her was an alternate rendering of her trauma. This trauma, Freud figured, stemmed from her secret desire *for* these sexual violations of her childhood.⁹ Of Dora's sexuality, Freud claims:

These masculine or, more properly speaking,
gynaecophilic currents of feeling are to be regarded
as typical of the unconscious erotic life of hysterical
girls.¹⁰

Freud asserts, with this masterstroke, the unconscious and normative psychopathology of feminine sexuality.

Cixous enters the scene.

Cixous intersects Freud's casework on Dora at multiple sites in her essay "Sorties" and in the dramatic production of the story of Freud's analysis of Dora in her play *Portrait de Dora*.¹¹ In "Sorties" her thoughts culminate in the following panegyric:

It is you, Dora, who cannot be tamed, the poetic
body, you are the true "mistress" of the Signifier.
Before tomorrow your effectiveness will be seen to
work—when your words will no longer be retracted,

pointed against your own breast, but will write themselves against the other and against men's grammar. Men must not have that place for their own any more than they have us for their own.¹²

For Cixous, in the hysteric and in the sad story of Dora is the poignancy of the feminine, the unveiling of the imaginary—a gift. In Freud's scene of the art gallery, Dora sits fascinated by the image of the Madonna and [girl-]child, the resurrection of the pre-Oedipal mother. Here is the rebirth of lost feminine language, a “reignition” of feminine jouissance, a multiplicity of molten sexuality: complicit with dreams.¹³

For Cixous, Freud is aligned with the Name of the Father, the patriarchal economy that leaves woman mute. ‘Dora’ is the *femme fatale*, whose ‘hysterical’¹⁴ and tumultuous speaking-of-the-body ruptures the *propre* of sexual economy, and brings the phallocratic pillars of Freudian theory to the brink by immolation. Cixous is engaged in a series of exchanges that will see psychoanalytic metaphors of woman as lack overlaid with metaphors of woman as excess. And more so, in place of the debilitated and bleak form of Ida Bauer,¹⁵ whose body Cixous recreates in mythic form, pairing Ida's ‘Dora’ with Medusa of the Gorgons. As Dunn eloquently describes:

... a mythological figure who continues to haunt patriarchy. She continues to blow up the Law of the Father. Her words, coming to us in twisted form, still rise up against the master/author of her story.¹⁶

In Cixous's own words in “Laugh of the Medusa” we see Dora phase into the glorious monster:

Too bad for them if they fall apart upon discovering that women aren't men, or that the mother doesn't

have one. But isn't this fear convenient for them? Wouldn't the worst be, isn't the worst, in truth, that women aren't castrated, that they have only to stop listening to the Sirens (for the Sirens were men) for history to change its meaning? You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing.¹⁷

Cixous is incensed when Freud attempts to further demarcate feminine sexuality, in *The Question of Lay Analysis*. Freud describes woman (and at this point his language is rife with metaphor) as a primitive 'dark continent', an arable, unexplored land, desirous, black, opaque, obtuse. As he writes:

But we need not feel ashamed of this distinction; after all the sexual life of adult women is a 'dark continent' for psychology. But we have learnt that little girls feel deeply their lack of a sexual organ that is equal in value to the male one; they regard themselves on that account as inferior, and this 'envy for the penis' is the origin of a whole number of characteristic feminine reactions.¹⁸

Again in *Sorties*, Cixous counters by rending this assertion with an extravagant rewriting that challenges the attribution of lack, filling the same space with generosity, dispersal, and superfluity. Here she finds it essential to invoke the Song of Songs; a song where the feminine is writ large. She, Woman, is breathing, loved, voiced, beautiful, searing and awesome.¹⁹

We, coming early to culture, repressed and choked by it, our beautiful mouths stopped up with gags, pollen, and short breaths; we the labyrinths, we the ladders, we the trampled spaces; the stolen and the flights — we are "black" and we are beautiful.²⁰

The erotic awakening of Shulamith and her lover in the Song of Songs mirrors the feminine awakening Cixous imagines in “Sorties.” Just as Cixous’s platform for the salvation of Dora is word and text, so is the poetess’s. They find a way through language that liberates the feminine, liberates voice. Their texts in deconstructive mutuality: at once prurient and innocent, at once worldly wise and utopian in vision; voluptuous, generous and exultant.

In many ways, Cixous’s text imaginings are limited to this—mere poetics—a critique put forward by Anglo-American feminists like Toril Moi or also from among French contemporaries, such as Catherine Clément in her exchange in *La Jeune Née*.²¹ The sad truth is Ida Bauer’s life was full of suffering; full of the qualities that Cixous lists here as obstacles: choked into submission (by those who profess love her), her mouth stopped (not least by Freud), gagged, suffocated, rejected. She was not to become a revolutionary Anna O.²² She never achieved the utopian heights Cixous dreamed into writing in “Sorties.” She would never become in life that cosmic Gorgon Cixous envisioned. Cixous takes this failure into herself, joining herself to it, calling the hysterics “my sisters” and saying of her own history “I am what Dora would have been if woman’s history had begun.”²³

Voice of the play: In May of 1900. In Vienna, at a crossroads where there was a great deal of traffic, Dora saw Mr K. get knocked down by a carriage. She saw him fall. It was the most horrible day of her life. It was the happiest day of her life. She walked across the avenue dry-shod, lifting her elegant dress with her fingertips, barely allowing her ankles to show. It was only a minor accident. The inside of Mr K. was in hell, his outward appearance was still prepossessing. He had seen Dora pass. There is no greater sorrow than the memory of love.

And that Freud knew.²⁴

The book of dreams

In the corpus of Hélène Cixous, if psychoanalytic thought had not been such a Lascaux of possibilities (a veritable Lascaux) she would not have taken the time to delve so deeply into its caverns and chambers. Cixous plays out in her texts, a romance with interiors, an *affaire de cœur* with the wild unconscious. She evidences in her language a subterranean embrace of the psychoanalytic.²⁵ That psychoanalysis has contributed strongly to literary theory and criticism is clear, but most certainly to Cixous's writing. There she finds insights into the novel, openings into the poetic, and ferry crossings to the 'other'-side of the interior landscape of her texts. It is the fecund possibilities for languaging this interior landscape which holds her fascination; the way in which language facilitates and frustrates the subterranean entry. Not least it is psychoanalytic belief in the work of dreams—Dora's incendiary dreams.

What the dream shows us in its theatre is the translation, in the open, of what we cannot see, of what is not visible but can be sensed in reality.²⁶

The Song of Songs is replete with dreams. It is a book of dreams, of dreaming. In the Song these are a sublime merging of dreamed dreams, imagined dreams, daydreams, fantasies and nightmares. She leaves us to wonder if she dreamed the poem, or if she was dreamed by the dream. In the end, we also question who dreamed who in this text. We also become part of the dream. The ambiguity is part of her brilliance. Reality and fantasy are neither concrete nor discrete in the Song of Songs. Reality is fantasized, fantasy is realized—and is that from which the poem continually escapes.²⁷

By night on my bed I sought him

The one I love with all my breath
 I sought him and could not find him_[3:1]

The dream and I stand at the French doors looking out upon a cool, green afternoon. It's late spring. It's cool but not cold. Such a beautiful habitat. White painted walls, wooden frames, a green fern in a lovely blue dragon pot.

I can't explain how I know, because I cannot see him, but there is a tiger at the door.

The couriers in this town are unbelievable. How could they do it, leave a tiger boxed in light cardboard at my door? Are they mad? This is very dangerous behavior.

I know it is outside, I can feel it. It's out of its box and stalking my house. It doesn't know what it is.

"I must warn the children," I say to myself, to no one in particular, as I walk down the hall near their rooms. "They'll have to stay in their rooms, they mustn't go out." Immediately I know this will never work because of my daughter—my beautiful, stubborn, little daughter. I mustn't say to her "There is a tiger at the door!" I simply won't be able to stop her; she'll want to go out.

My daughter, where is she? I heard her playing in her room just a few seconds ago but now it's quiet.

—I hear my daughter; her excited footsteps. Where is she? I follow the sound of her laughter looking around wildly. But, there is the front door swinging open in the pleasant breeze.

The Song of Songs presents as a sequence of inter-connected poetic vignettes featuring a primary protagonist, a woman, a 'Shulamith'²⁸ in her 'dream' encounters with a series of other characters: her masculine lover, the daughters of Jerusalem, her brothers, her mother and the nefarious 'watchmen'. Just as in a series of merging and unmerging dreams, the language and logic of each scenario do not adhere to a linear and logical narrative. The text streams in a manner reminiscent of streams of consciousness.²⁹ Scenes, scenarios, sensations, temporalities lurch and shift. Fixating in one instant, flying away in another. Her discourse is tempered with raw disclosures, peppered with symbolic richness, part narratives, fantasies and confessions.

For Freud, dreams are the *via regia* to "the knowledge of the unconscious element in our psychic life."³⁰ Through analysis of dreams, like Dora's burning

house, like Shulamith's night journeys, Freud believed he could make an invisible terrain, visible. He could bring into the present, exclusions. He could cause to be heard that which she could not/would not speak.³¹ Freud conceives dreams as representative of the wish, constituting a desire that leads the dreamer into the future:

... the ancient belief that dreams foretell the future is not wholly devoid of the truth. By picturing our wishes as fulfilled, dreams are after all leading us into the future. But this future, which the dreamer pictures as the present, has been moulded by his indestructible wish into a perfect likeness of the past.³²

But Cixous has other uses for dreams and would never dream of putting a dream-text under analysis. She is not their master. She is in a symbiotic relationship with both dreams and dream-texts, slippery and disobedient though they are.

Dreams are the tutor of a writer, a way of getting to the 'other'-side.

Writing is the delicate, difficult, and dangerous means of succeeding in avowing the unavowable. Are we capable of it? This is my desire. I too would like to die; though this doesn't mean I have succeeded. I make the effort. So far I haven't succeeded. In the meantime I do the closest thing I can. To approach the place where I can unlie and have something in common ... with the dying, I go to the other school, the nearest one, the one that most resembles the School of the Dead: The School of Dreams.³³

But in describing dreams as a door to writing, there is a caveat—the land of dreams is a kind of travel, a destination, that can't be forced or bought. The text

cannot be browbeaten, forced to unveil, like Freud's treatment of Dora, forced into logic and reason, drained of her dreams. A book like the *Song of Songs* cannot be thought through to a conclusion; unveiled. The [non-]reading of this book must bypass recipes, instructions and keys, entering intravenously. "The book is the Door" she writes, thus, the *Song of Songs* is for Cixous "the Dream of the other that doesn't escape us—that dreams us and waits for us."³⁴ Barthes also

The dream has me on a rickety bamboo walkway suspended above a wetland lagoon. I don't want to set foot on it but everything depends on it.

I'm with my little daughter and I lie down with her, my arm around her.

Below us, bathing in the water is a curious wild elephant. She telegraphs her trunk and the wet, mucous of the proboscis touches me. The mammoth creature doesn't know her own strength and the pontoon begins to creak as she presses her bulk closer. I know the bamboo walkway will collapse.

I call urgently for my daughter to come. I don't think the structure will stand. She doesn't see the danger. It is only now that I see a new terror in the water. There is a crocodile beneath the walkway, submerged in the murk.

I call my child, desperately, but she is afraid and stumbles. The elephant also pushes towards us and everything comes apart. My child slips, falls, and begins to slide into the swampy water. The crocodile takes his chance to grab her legs in his jaws. I hurl myself at the edge where she is suspended, and I am just barely able to pull her free for a moment.

— I wake suddenly in my bed, alone, exhausted and numb with distress.

describes a kind of [non-]reading. He calls it dream-reading. A reading practice that overwhelms, that is "sliding, euphoric, voluptuous, unitary, jubilant."³⁵

This dream-reading of a dream-text combines for Cixous all the elements of the feminine: the body, body-to-body, music, tarantella, jouissance, love. All of these accompany the poetic text. The poetic act is movement schooled by dreams.

How far must one not arrive in order to write, how far must one wander and wear out and have pleasure? One must walk as far as the night. One's own night. Walking

through the self toward the dark.³⁶

In *La Jeune Née*, Catherine Clément writes about the ritual of the tarantella in Taranto, Italy.³⁷ Young women, afflicted by a supernatural spider bite, enter a waking dream and dance fervently for hours until exhausted and utterly spent. The dance is cathartic and at the end of the dance the young woman emerges from her psychosis.³⁸ The dance itself is like a dream, symbolizing the rejection of the world in the embrace of the imaginary. This ritual actualizes a bodily feminine jouissance; and is a potent metaphor for Cixous's relation to her text.

Cixous sources her creation of texts, 'creative-writing' as well as creative-reading from the unconscious which she describes with the terms of female experience of pregnancy and childbearing, "A woman who writes is a woman who dreams

Something moves in my belly. I feel full, inhabited. Perhaps it is the dream. Regardless, it feels ominous and I know deep down there is something desperately wrong. I shouldn't be pregnant.

I need to go to hospital. I tell my friends and they are warning me that I should go to the good hospitals in the city. This is not what the letter says. I have a letter from the government and it says I must go to the other one—the one I am afraid of; the one where people die.

I go against their counsel because of the letter. I must follow the instructions in the letter. If I follow the letter I will be safe from the worst.

There at the hospital, in the busy waiting room I am met by an obstetrician, a woman. (Do I know her? I don't know how I know but it is Hélène's mother Eve.)

The woman assures me that all is well. And for a second I feel comforted. But when I look down I see that my womb is outside my body, and that it's displaced, somewhere near my feet.

Something has gone terribly wrong.

The mouth of the womb is opening through the sole of my foot and what is emerging holds my gaze, an obscenity, and I can't look away. My body contracts dreadfully and gapes.

First the fangs appear through the opening, dark and sharp. Then 8 legs, long, black and haired in an iridescent blue. Black thorax, downy blue furred abdomen.

It's a tarantula, cobalt blue—Haplopelma lividum. Beautiful and terrible. I see it there in a puddle of amniotic fluid.

—it crawls away

—everyone stares silently.

about children.”³⁹ It is from this dream child that Cixous believes that it is possible to write a book that lives. The child that appears in the dream is the text and empowers the mother/author to do the impossible—to pass from the end of ourselves to the other.⁴⁰

Our dream children are innumerable. The writing time, which is like reading time—there is latency, there is prewriting—is accompanied by a child state, what Tsvetaeva calls the “state of creation.” The unconscious tells us a book is a scene of childbirth, delivery, abortion, breast-feeding. The whole chronicle of childbearing is in play within the unconscious during the writing period. We will bring forth into the light of night innumerable children. Sometimes the child is the size of a leaf and it crumbles to pieces. Sometimes it is just a small piece of paper you put on the bed that is suddenly lost. You do not know whether it is the child who faded or whether it is you who forgot the child. Sometimes it comes into the world six months old, bigger than you are, and of course it speaks better than Shakespeare. Sometimes it’s a sticky little girl stuck to your leg, sometimes it’s a terrible cocklike little boy running mad in a room on four cock legs. The worst is the scene when the child emerges and then disappears.⁴¹

This is true for the Song of Songs, whose dreams, dream-scenes, dreamy echoes seep with milk, with the sounds of travail, with forays into the mother’s room-womb, the girl-infant newly born, the ripening and bursting of fruit in the tree in the same scene as the birthing mother, of breasts and of primal, maternal love, ‘life exchanges’ that are all “matters of life and death.”⁴²

The feminine sanctuary of the Song of the Songs is a garden of dreams. For Cixous this garden is one lost to the forgotten dream of childhood. The childhood garden of innocence, hope, of the scent of flowers, the first tastes of fruits, all this is the exhilaration of the wondrous, miraculous child-world: the wonders of light on dew drops, the butter-yellow of dandelions and the epiphany of the bumblebee. "Most poets are saved children," says Cixous.⁴³

Thus the bible dreams and "dreams quickly,"⁴⁴ the Song of Songs is one of them. Eden is another. A pomegranate-pink dream and a deep-blue dream in Chagall's imagining. They both contain trees of life. But as Cixous explains in her exodus of words that when the Bible forgot Eden in the dry, desert journeys of the patriarchs, a magic ladder was needed. Jacob, weary, far from home, with his head on a stone, stumbles upon it while deep in sleep. Jacob dreams. There it is, the very ladder, upon which the angels ascend and descend, a ladder reaching from earth right into heaven: a "ladder of

The dream takes me. Here I am, in a little fishing village in Siam which bustles with activity. Smells and sights are both exotic and familiar. My beloved grandmother is there – how did she come, what a surprise! Because I know deep down that she is dead, her appearance here has the quality of messianic arrival. I have missed her and I know the moment I look away she will vanish again. I walk with her slowly as she shuffles with her stick. I drink in the moment.

It is late afternoon and the stroll by the banana palms is so pleasant. I notice now that my whole family is there. The pause makes me slow, and now I see in the distance that my grandmother has continued down the tree lined road. I will never see her face again.

I had thought to catch up but I am distracted by something by the road. Now I see it's my daughter. I stop to glance at her and then the next minute she is gone.

My mother is with me now and we search together, looking for her high and low. We are asking everyone but they see we are strangers and they simply stare. I ask with my best Thai. Some of them look like relatives but they don't respond.

We search the noodle shops and restaurants, the hardware shops and through the stacks of bamboo bird cages filled with yellow birds. In one restaurant there is a long fish tank brimming with exotic yellow fish. I look up and see that the sun is going down.

Will we find her before dark?

generations.”⁴⁵ This is the same magic ladder that must be ascended and descended in order to enter the Song’s secret garden. It is the magic ladder, Cixous believes, that gets you over Law’s many walls.

In the period of my own living-reading of the Song of Songs my dreams were vivid and poignant. I ‘lived the night’ in my dreams, waking in the morning as if I had danced the tarantella. My dreams are scattered through this text, witnesses, to what I have lived inwardly in writing *Jouissance*. These dreams were intense and I bore a relation to them that even now I cannot explain. Did I dream or was I dreamed? The dream passed between me and my text. My text became strange—a beautiful stranger—as strange as my dreams. They then contained both my wonder and my terror, strength, always on the edge between living and dying, of violent loss, of mourning and love.

These dreams: what we are when we are no longer ourselves: our survivings. Prophets of our traces, of our ultimate metamorphoses. Self-portraits of our future phantoms.⁴⁶

The book of desire

When I began to write, I suspected that I was insane, in fact I was convinced of it. I showed some traces to Lacan in a worried gesture: “Does this mean I am mad?” Lacan told me yes. “Clearly, it’s obvious, only you could write such things.” Derrida, to whom I “submitted” what became *Le Prénom de Dieu*, as if I were unveiling the plague or leprosy, found me to be in a perilous place. He had the courage to encourage me in the danger. Both of them thought, each in his own way, I had a future in madness. [...] But they

didn't really know, either of them, where I might go.⁴⁷

Cixous incarnates within Lacan's shadows of theory, "a birth of light," but in the same moment undermines its central premise.⁴⁸ As Conley explains, "Cixous writes at the interstices of Lacan's theory of language—that of the chain of signifiers and not that of the phallus—and Derrida's *différance*."⁴⁹

Cixous's stance is one of possibilities within and beyond Lacanian theory, locating *écriture féminine* at the heart of the imaginary. The Lacanian imaginary is significant to Cixous because at this stage one's sexuation has not taken place. She considers it the trace period of a primordial bisexuality, before the existence of sex or gender as oppositional binaries; a time before male and female identity solidifies as a construct. This period of bisexuality takes place in maternal space rather than the patriarchal space of the symbolic.⁵⁰ This is space intrinsically linked to the mother's body, the mother's room, my reflection in her face, my love of her love. Dunn describes this as a

My rabbit-pig has his snout in fresh dirt and is fossicking for dream-grubs. He's part mini-lop and part cooney cooney—cute little thing. I can see him joyfully pawing the earth through my window in the yard that slopes down between eucalyptus trees. It is a winter's morning, a cold, gray day and a chill clings to the feeble sunlight.

Suddenly it strikes me that the scene is a portent. The dirt that my rabbit-pig is snuffling is fresh. Where did all this dark soil come from? Did it come from the mountain slopes above us? To be there in front of the house, it must have come through underneath, slipped down the slope through the skirting boards and the foundations of the house.

I call for my children and we race through the front door. We haven't time to shut the door. In a split second the house where we had lived, that was ours, is buried and bursting with fresh, moist dirt from the upper slopes.

It seemed of utmost and uncanny significance then, as I lay in the twilight between dream and waking, that I had been able to read the omen of "rabbit-pig." It was only because I had made the association—rabbit-pig was a signifier for "slip" and "landslide"—that we had been saved from certain death. I wondered then, in sadness, whether my little rabbit-pig existed at all.

significant position that allows for the feminine as a “way of signifying that calls into question or disrupts the Law of the Father.”⁵¹ Thus Dunn believes Cixous rejects definitions of a feminine imaginary that is “non-signifying or outside of language.”⁵²

Cixous’s most visible critique of Lacan appears in her essay «Le Sexe ou la Tête» which was published in *Les Cahiers du GRIF* in 1976—approximately a decade after their work together on Joyce.⁵³

Quant à grand-papa Lacan, il reprend la formule « Que veut-elle ? » en disant « De sa jouissance une femme ne peut rien dire. » C’est très intéressant, ça ! Tout y est : une femme ne peut pas, n’a pas de pouvoir; elle n’a pas de pouvoir; le « dire » n’en parlons pas : c’est justement ce dont elle est dépouillée à jamais. Pas de dire sur la jouissance = pas de jouissance, pas de vouloir : pouvoir, vouloir, dire, jouir, tout ça c’est pas pour la femme.⁵⁴

[As for grandpa Lacan, he takes the phrase “What does she want?” by saying “Of her *jouissance* a woman cannot say anything.” It’s very interesting, that. It’s all there: a woman cannot, hasn’t power; she has no power; forget “speaking”: it is precisely this that she is deprived of forever. Not to speak about *jouissance* = no *jouissance*, no wanting: power, wanting, speaking, enjoyment, none of that for woman.]⁵⁵

Cixous clearly expresses here an opinion of Lacanian theory as a paradoxical representation of patriarchy rather than its apt analysis. In her published interview, “My text is written in white and black,” she describes her scholastic journey of the early 1970s as one of exploration of psychoanalysis and other

discourses but found only undesirable things: “a tableau of a general repression.”⁵⁶ What is fascinating, however, is that in spite of this resistance, Cixous uses the language of Lacanian theory pervasively. Danielle Ramsey perceives Cixous’s relation to Lacan and his thought as “inflected” through that of Jacques Derrida and his philosophical explorations of *écriture*.⁵⁷ This version of Cixous’s orientation to Lacan is supported by the Lacanian scholar Juliet Flower McCannell.⁵⁸

Cixous’s «Le Sexe ou la Tête» winds itself like a vine through Lacan’s theory of subjectivity both reliant on the tree but of another species. Specifically she differs with Lacanian thought on the basis of its representation of Woman. In the article she illustrates these representations that she believes are complicit with the dark side of patriarchy: exclusion, dissociation, repression and annihilation of Woman. She questions the de-privileging and disempowerment of Woman and the logic that facilitates it, that is, Lacan’s proposal of the ‘relation to the Phallus’ as the primary organizer of sexuality and difference. She calls on an eclectic chorus to bear witness to what has happened: Tireisias, The Prince, Sun Tzu, Kafka, Marguerite Duras, Kierkegaard, Kafka, Red Riding Hood (who went into the woods without the psychoanalyst’s permission) and Don Juan.

From Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* Cixous comes upon a text of terror. She recounts the tale of a general’s wager that he could train women for war. He took 180 of the King’s wives and began with marching formation. The women were not responsive and ignored the drum. They laughed and talked. The general, a tried commander in war, forthwith executed the concubines who were at the head of these new ranks. He decapitated them in front of the concubine-battalion. The result was a horrified and fearful silence. The general was rewarded with complete obedience from the remaining 178 women from that point on. A just act, implies the narrator of *The Art of War*, (the narrator sees the tale as a fitting

object lesson in command), « *c'est la Loi absolue* » says Cixous, a position from which psychoanalysis has not moved.⁵⁹

Thereupon he repeated the signals upon the drum
and the women faced left, right, to the front, to the
rear in strict accordance with the prescribed drill.
They did not dare to make the slightest noise.⁶⁰

It is the imagery of the decapitation of a woman that gives Cixous her title (in English) for this article. For if a woman is to keep her head, says Cixous, she must enter into complete silence: « *c'est que si elles ne perdent pas la tête comme ça, à coup de sabre, elles ne la gardent qu'à condition de la perdre.* »⁶¹ She suggests that masculinity is ordered by a rule, a 'natural' order—a drum beat. The threat is that of castration, a threat which facilitates the keeping of time, but as an effect of man's castration anxiety there is a kind of retroaction Cixous believes, which transfers onto woman as the threat of metaphorical decapitation. To 'keep her head' she descends into silence.

Cixous's writing in this essay draws also on the imagery of the feminine in fairytales. The Prince kissing Sleeping Beauty is a metaphor for Freud/Lacan's relation to woman (she merges the two psychoanalysts here)—and makes a veiled accusation that their desire is not in fact to wake her, but to place her in yet another bed where she remains perpetually asleep.⁶² The sleeping woman is an allusion to Kierkegaard's woman both that of Venus and also Eve. These are those whom Kierkegaard considers “under the category of nature” and “vegetative.”⁶³

She first awakens at the touch of love; before this
time she is a dream. Two stages, however, can be
distinguished in this dream existence: in the first

stage love dreams about her, in the second, she
dreams about love.⁶⁴

This same woman is also Little Red Riding Hood, this time the rebellious girl-child who enters and explores her own forests « *sans la permission de l'analyste*. »⁶⁵ *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* is caught in a web of binaries, ever on the side of the second, ever passive, inert and concave. Cixous asserts that psychoanalysis rests on a foundation that is in opposition to woman and a foundation that has fossilized, is repressive and ceases to grow, 'commentary on the commentary'.⁶⁶ She says this most clearly in her interview, "My text is written in White and Black."

Psychoanalysis has reached an impasse, it is tightly
boxed in, hampered ... still tied to its ponderous
patriarchal origins ... still heavily dependent upon the
domineering personalities that oppress it in France.⁶⁷

Her concern in « *Le Sexe* » is towards the representation of the male/female couple in psychoanalysis as engaged in an irresolvable enmity, in a paradox of impossibility, such as Lacan's assertion in Seminar XX, « *Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* » [there's no such thing as sexual relationship].⁶⁸ There are many no's in Lacan's figuring of sexual relation (the relation of man to woman) which all add up to impossibility of accessing the other: no relation, no reciprocity, no harmony, no wholeness, no Woman, no meaning.⁶⁹ Cixous challenges this opposition of man/woman that is represented in culture and that is tied to the Word, with its precepts and dictums espousing a Law that kills. Language, word and [foreclosure of] meaning setting off a chain reaction that divides the couple, rends them apart as one is lifted above the other—the other sinks into oblivion. The trouble is the system, a surfeit of metaphor and discourses that reduce in their most simplistic form to the male/female binary. Cixous asks if there is

possibility for the couple, for a different encounter. With deconstruction and transformation the couple might hope, not hopelessly in the face of impossibilities, but for the *possibilities* of love, a love that is more than masquerade.

C'est un couple qui est pose comme s'opposant, c'est un couple dans lequel il y a tension, il y a lutté... un couple où une certaine guerre est livrée, où une mort est toujours à l'œuvre... C'est sur le couple qu'il faudrait travailler toujours, et donc... par exemple, sur « qu'est-ce que serait une relation de couple tout à fait autre, qu'est-ce que ce serait qu'un amour qui ne serait pas la simple couverture, le simple voile de la guerre ?

[A couple posed in opposition, a couple in which there is tension, there is a struggle... a couple at war, where death is always at work... It is on the couple that work still has to be done... for example, about “what would be the relation of the couple if it was different, what of love that was more than a mere cover for, a mere veil of war.”]⁷⁰

Both Derrida and Cixous ask whether or not psychoanalysis ought to be a disseminating site for an “essential compassion” (a love) that overcomes the distinctions that mark the outside and inside. This movement, which Kamuf explores in her article “Outside in Analysis,” has already begun in the writings of Derrida and Cixous, their “feeling-at-a-distance” the other, the other’s text.⁷¹ Cixous saw in Derrida’s texts an audacity, a ‘native naiveté’, an autobiography in which she saw a “stigmatized body, a body of blood and of signs.”⁷² His writing, in her eyes, illustrated the possibility of a philosopher willing to write with his

body, writing a philosophy of flesh and blood “in sex, in sweat, in sperm and in tears ... revealing what it hides.”⁷³

Derrida himself published a gesture of love to Lacan, entitled “For the love of Lacan,” though perhaps with a slight air of irony, for after all, what is love in Lacan’s corpus but a cover for something else.⁷⁴ According to Andrea Hurst, who attempts to mediate between the two theorists, Derrida and Lacan evidence in their written counters a bond of “mutual respect and resistance” but whose factions unfortunately could be characterized as the Montagues and Capulets.⁷⁵ The possibility for “generative cross-fertilization” is boundless, says Hurst, but the complexity of each oeuvre is confounded by readers’ misconstructions of a series of provocative catchphrases on each side.⁷⁶ Kamuf on the other hand excavates from the archives a Derridean charge that Lacan must answer.⁷⁷

Let us merely ask ourselves whether, yes or no, what is called “psychoanalysis” does not open up the only way that could allow us, if not to know, if not to think even, at least to interrogate what might be meant by this strange and familiar word “cruelty,” the worst cruelty, suffering just to suffer; the making-suffer, the making- or letting-oneself suffer just for, if one can still say that, the pleasure of suffering. Even if, as I am inclined to believe, psychoanalysis alone did not yet give us to know it, think it, treat it, at least one could no longer anticipate doing so without psychoanalysis.⁷⁸

For Kamuf, at least, the question that is posed to psychoanalysis is the question of compassion in place of cruelty, that of “substitution” and “feeling-at-a-distance” which is alien to psychoanalysis’s reduction of the subject to a symptom.⁷⁹ This, she believes, is poignantly resonating in Cixous’s writing and constitutes a possibility of movement out of self, and towards and into others, over boundaries

and demarcations, hard limits that are “impelled” and softened by compassion.⁸⁰ Cixous transcribes this text of the other, of the body, giving it expression in language. They are wordless texts that form “an immense textual surface ... connecting nodes of affect and memory, insight and blindness, chance and fate.”⁸¹ Kamuf describes Cixous’s writing world as non-bifurcating but rather an invaginated topology. It is a labyrinth of folds, folding in myriad ways, opening language, opening to the reader in a movement that is neither an appropriation nor assimilation (she “touches without touching”); an active non-repression of the feminine.⁸²

... et ce qui se passe c’est une circulation infinie du désir d’un corps à l’autre, par-dessus, à travers la différence sexuel mais sans les rapports de force et de génération qui sont organisés dans les familles. Je crois que la génération saute, l’âge saute, le temps saute ... Un texte de femme, ça fait passer du détachement, un détachement gratuit : pas le détachement avec une reprise immédiate mais vraiment la capacité de lâcher prise et de laisser aller.⁸³

In «Le Sexe» Cixous imagines this textual surface as « *un corps textuel féminin*. »⁸⁴ It is open, always beginning (not originating), never-ending, a de-familialization. A transforming flow of language that thrusts the reader into the void, written on all sides at once, and in the place of silence, laughter. The question posed to such a text is not “What does she want?” or “What does he want me to want?” but « *qu’est-ce qu’elle donne?* » [what does she give?] and this writing « *comment elle donne?* » [How does she give?].⁸⁵ The writing of the non-touching touch⁸⁶ (“this touch passes through the ear”) circulates desire limitlessly, enveloping and crossing beyond sexual difference, “leaps” and lets go (disturbs, risks, wanders, surprises, touches).⁸⁷

This is a textual surface that folds into a sea of rivulets called the Song of Songs. She is also a writing that touches, that gives voice to desire, to share a dream of the other, to cross over, to caress without killing, that stirs and awakens, that gives and gives, envelopes and travails. She is the possibility of entanglement in braids of long black hair, and in threads of magenta, in her eyes, her gaze that is as cool and deep as the pools of Heshbon: “a king is entangled in their tendrils.^[7:6]”



For the oeuvres of Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida take on psychoanalysis, each differently and each in at least two senses at once: they take it on board, assume it, and confirm it in its principal insights, on the one hand, and, on the other, they take it on, meaning to argue with it.⁸⁸



The book of the mother

There are two Canticles scholars who read the Song of Songs in the light of Lacanian analysis. Carey Ellen Walsh wrote *Exquisite Desire*, as well as the essay “Absence of Love” in Hawkin and Stahlberg’s *Scrolls of Love*. The other is Roland Boer and his much cited article in *Biblical Interpretation*, “The Second Coming” which is loosely related to a chapter in his book *Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door*.⁸⁹ Both scholars draw attention to how ‘lack’ operates in the Song of Songs and cultivates desire for “love beyond the milk.”⁹⁰

Walsh begins by acknowledging her own desire to encounter the Song of Songs, and the phenomenon of her accompanying emotions such as joy and curiosity. She then aligns her object with Lacan’s.⁹¹ The question for Lacan is ‘how does the

Song express desire?’ Walsh categorizes the many ways the Song of Songs speaks about desire: descriptions of how desire hurts, glowing descriptions of desire’s objects, descriptions of arousal and also cautions. Finding these various artefacts within the Song, Walsh sets out to show how separation or absence, this experience of lack, motivates the poetry as it seeks to satiate the poet, to become a temporary substitute. Of course in this, language continually fails to constitute the object of desire, failing to fully satiate the pain of loss and has quite the opposite effect. Desire continues to build in the presence of this absence becoming a series of crescendos. Walsh notes that within the poetry, metaphor itself plays (without end) difference and similarity against one another in unstable tension.

Absence is conveyed in the Song in a number of ways. According to Walsh, the most fascinating of these is sleep and death, surfacing in chapters 3, 5 & 8 (twin brothers Hypnos & Thanatos in Greek mythology). The former, *Hypnos*, is a temporary absence or separation, and the latter, *Thanatos*, the terrifyingly absolute separation. Both appear strategically in the Song—the little death, and *la Grande Mort*. This multiplicitous positing of lack in the Song of Songs, according to Walsh, draws out and exposes the reader’s lack. The Song is a visceral encounter in this way, in that the body is evoked; bodily desire that is both represented and simulated.

Desire in its purity is of course ‘death-drive’, it occurs
when the subject assumes without restraint its
‘being-toward-death’.⁹²

Like Walsh, Boer draws attention to Lacanian conceptions of desire, reminding the reader that “for Lacan, desire is the ‘metonymy of our being.’”⁹³ He then also pursues the body. Boer finds that desire, generated, is located in a body. He notes first that the body is that which constructs itself by assimilating itself with

the body of the '(M)Other'. Simultaneously that economy of loss and return also relates to these primary recognitions of bodies but mostly with Her. Loss, says Boer, is felt as pain, but the pleasure of the return is worth it, and so pain itself is economized.⁹⁴

... pleasure and pain are presented as a single packet
to take or leave ...⁹⁵

The pain of permanent loss, specifically of the '(M)Other', Boer reports, is never fully reconciled, and her desire, which was so compelling, in the permanence of her loss, becomes "impossible to know or attain."⁹⁶ In adulthood Lacan's question *che vuoi?*, or "what do you really want" (what is the desire of your desire) is thus tormenting and unanswerable.

At this point Boer draws attention to Lacan's association of desire with disgust and envy, betraying its earthy link to materiality (hence Boer's discussion of Lacan's 'rheumy rims').

There are really two major aspects of desire as it may emerge in the fall of sexualisation—on the one hand, disgust produced by the reduction of the sexual partner to a function of reality, And on the other hand, ... in relation to the scopic function, *invidia*, envy.⁹⁷

Boer invites the Law into the discussion at this point. It is the Law, says Boer that has an incendiary effect on desire: "desire is excited by its prohibition."⁹⁸ This is in contrast to Walsh who reads the cautions and symbols of the Law that appear in the text with consistent ubiquity at face value.⁹⁹

Promise me, daughters of Jerusalem, that you will
not rouse nor awaken love_[2:7]

Boer, who is not averse to the perverse, finds these cautions as purposefully desire-inciting prohibitions. These oaths are perversely introduced into the text to do the exact opposite of what they intone. Such a Sadean placement in the Song of Songs, opens the text as a repository of the “darker side of natural Eros.”¹⁰⁰ It then becomes a song where Law is raised as a guarantor to desire as is pain, with the sole purpose of inciting the reader to transgress that law.¹⁰¹ It is a demanding song: demands transgression, demands pain, demands movement because of that unbearable desire that progresses in a Sadean circle. This is the moment where Boer believes that unsatisfied desire in the reader becomes just that: the desire to be never satisfied. This song is full of impediments (towers, doors, watchers, brothers, absences, lost objects, darkness, sleep, death) with only brief interludes in which relief flows like a river. To the reader’s (delicious) angst, relief fails, unable to be sustained. Satiation is continually postponed. The impossibility of complete fulfillment, pricks and stings. Walsh contributes here where she admits “I keep returning to this Song because it whets my readerly pleasure and keeps me from attaining satisfaction.”¹⁰²

Walsh notes the force of a second dynamic held by language in the Song. A second kind of language stokes the Song’s fires—the language of voluptuousness, of *plus*, running rampant in the descriptions of gardens, bodies and fruits. Walsh invokes the concept of *jouissance*. Lack, she says, exposes us, but excess holds us in the poem, lost in rapturous memories of *jouissance*, of bliss, of our own gardens. But this *jouissance* is built on a pedestal of impediment, pain and perversity and absolute descent: “... *jouissance* implies precisely the acceptance of death.”¹⁰³

Boer too, attempts to articulate this ineffable quantity, ‘jouissance’ that runs riot in the Song:

Here the excessive moment that constitutes desire itself makes an appearance, the moment of *jouissance*. This is the realm of *objet petite a*, the excess, the leftover, that which does not compute, the useless remainder which is crucial for the very constitution of the whole, manifested in a myriad of ways...¹⁰⁴

Both Boer and Walsh find themselves mouthing for the breast by the end of their essays, the breast of the ultimate mother, the ultimate lost object, *El Shaddai*, יְהוָה.¹⁰⁵ Boer inventories the presencing of the maternal in the text, questioning whether in fact the Song is an anthology of love songs to her rather than him. At the same time this maternal figures for Boer, as “dangerous and undesirable,” ultimately unattainable, both a rejection and an appropriation of a desire that is painful and repetitive, the desire of the Other.¹⁰⁶

But the only (M)Other here
is Yahweh ...¹⁰⁷

Boer finds us, the reader, complicit, with a text whose secret quest is the desire of the Infinite and Eternal Mother, God. In Seminar XX, Lacan also invokes God in his discussion of feminine *jouissance*, describing as the “God face,” the face of the Other through the enigmatic workings of feminine *jouissance*.¹⁰⁸

My mother and I lie together on a futuristic couch. The dream surrounds us with plants and vegetation. Above is a glass dome. It is some kind of sustainable eco-sphere that I am sure I have seen in science fiction.

We are dressed in luminescent white garments, soft and filmy. My hair is covered by a cap of the same material. I see myself in the dream. I haven't aged a day I note in surprise but somehow I know I am/she is about to die.

At the moment I realize I am about to die, my mother disappears. This is the worst thing that could happen at this moment. I look around wildly, full of grief. The feeling of loneliness is overwhelming and I lie back down to wait in a haze of sadness.

A moment later I realize there is an old woman next to me, she feels familiar. My hope is barely raised, is it her?

It isn't—the woman looked so much like my mother but it wasn't her at all.

Doesn't this jouissance one experiences put us on the path of ex-sistence? And why not interpret the face of the Other, the God face, as based on feminine jouissance?¹⁰⁹

Lacan shares this epiphany with Lévinas, who believes “the feminine presents a face that goes beyond the face.”¹¹⁰ This feminine “God face” holds significance also for Cixous, for whom the access is through the poetic, what she calls “surrendering to the face of God.”¹¹¹

What we hope for ... is the strength both to deal and to receive the axe's blow, to look straight at the face of god, *which is none other than my own face, but seen naked, the face of my soul*. The face of “God” is the unveiling, the staggering vision of the construction we are, the tiny and great lies, the small nontruths we must have incessantly woven to be able to prepare our brothers' dinner...¹¹²

For Cixous the Absent Other is the naked self. But Walsh finds this desire for the desire of the Absent Other as the quest of the entire Bible that finds its strongest signification in the veiled and always already empty Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies.¹¹³ Walsh dispels the allegorical reading of the Song as too blunt to be a hermeneutical key; rather, she reaches again for Lacan's conceptions of loss and Freud's *fort-da*. God, for Walsh, is the “suggestive metonym for desire's loss of any object.”¹¹⁴ God is the absent presence that breathes through the Song. At every moment of loss, the other-face-of-God is a moment that moves to metonymic excess. God, says Walsh “... is not the Song's male lover, he is the lover's *absence*.”¹¹⁵

The book of jouissance

According to Ehsan Azari, Cixous's theory of writing brought her close to late Lacan and his conceptualising of creative (Joycean) writing via the terms *sinthome*, and *jouissance*.¹¹⁶ Perhaps this rethinking brought Lacan close to Cixous in terms of exploring the 'beyond' (or beneath) of language; beyond the militaristic conservation that is the symbolic order. Already Lacan had considered the "creative spark" (from Saussure) that activates generativity in language, working against its tendency to foreclose and sclerotize.

The creative spark of the metaphor does not spring from the presentation of two images that is of two signifiers equally actualized. It flashes between two signifiers, one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present through its (metonymic) connexion with the rest of the chain.¹¹⁷

Azari considers Lacan did not en-'gender' writing as Cixous clearly did with *écriture féminine*.¹¹⁸ However, Lacan did move towards a kind of *jouissance* that could be conveyed by poetic language at sites of rupture. *Jouissance* arises here via a primal language (*lalangue*) escaping through poetic tears in the symbolic. *Lalangue*, in Lacan's conception, is a kind of interior arrangement, system of signs, a mother tongue, a non-communicative substrate beneath language, a transgressive space which Žižek describes as:

... language as the space of illicit pleasures that defy any normativity: the chaotic multitude of homonymies, wordplays, 'irregular' metaphoric links and resonances...¹¹⁹

In Lacan's engagement with Joyce, he admitted the possibility of a creative writing that produces a resonance, a *lalangue*. MacCannell describes the Lacanian

understanding of this writing as that which can “convey (rather than cut away) the specific *jouissance* of its author.”¹²⁰ Lacan described as *le sinthome* (an archaic form of the word symptom) the ‘signifier-symptom’ that could endure *jouissance*. In Lacanian terminology, *le sinthome* undoes the Borromean knotting of the three orders and has the capability to transform symptom and symbol into “a formation that somehow permits *jouissance* to flow through it rather than be repressed and hidden by it.”¹²¹ MacCannell finds in Lacan’s *le sinthome* a revaluing of the imaginary; in fact a new imaginary, “an imaginary that is freed, through a mis-tie, from its eternal imbrication in the triple knot, can address the elementary structuring of meaning that the knot affords”¹²² that can be placed in a relation to the real; allowing the new, allowing access to one’s own *jouissance*, “a bearer of infinite promise.”¹²³

Much of Lacan’s reworking of his thought and the possibilities of a ‘Joycean’ *jouissance* were formulated for Seminar XXIII that took place in 1975. This is 8 years after Cixous’s first published novel *Le Prénom de Dieu* that already constituted her native knowledge of language and its possibility to recreate, overflow, to resonate, and rupture. The seminar was a year prior to her publishing «Le Sexe ou la Tête» in *Les Cahiers du GRIF* and also a year prior to Roland Barthes’s inaugural address at the *Collège de France*, 1977, where he describes literature as a permanent revolution against the fascist *tendance* of language.

In Cixous’s theory of writing, signifier calls to signifier and it is the call between signifiers that Cixous translates in a poetic movement that conveys *jouissance*. As Calle-Gruber declares, in this she raises what has lain repressed, raises it to the ground, burning and flaming.¹²⁴ This is the Cixousian work that she describes as metaphorization that reveals the ambiguous boundaries between masculine and feminine. The metaphor allows a traverse. Its flashing radiance opens doors. It

is an *écriture féminine* that sets the phallic economy ablaze with its prohibited desires.¹²⁵

If everything is metaphor, then nothing is metaphor.
A man is your mother. If he is your mother, is he a
man? Ask yourself rather: Is there a man who can be
my mother? Is a maternal man a woman? Tell
yourself rather: He is big enough and plural enough
to be capable of maternal goodness.¹²⁶

Cixous associates “working with the signifier” with her very life. Writing for Cixous was a refuge against the world and its violence. It was a glass shield. She describes her experience of the world in terms of language “there was no language, and too many languages and not enough languages...”¹²⁷ Writing was a way of gaining the present,¹²⁸ gathering epiphanies, kindling joy. In this—the work of the Song of Songs—its play with the signifier is very much like that of Cixous’s. The *lalangue* of The Song sends what comes to the reader as the sense of walking across a sea of glass, never knowing at what moment it might shatter, the highest stakes. It is a work that conveys a *jouissance*, which burns and flames radiantly. The reader feels in the present the *jouissance* of the one who wrote. The Song of Songs is a burning book.

In Cixous’s texts, the feminine and feminine *jouissance* are the same blood, tied to memories of the Mother’s body, tied to the imaginary. In her text, *Rootprints*, she goes back to this word, ‘jouissance’, again and again.¹²⁹ For Cixous, *jouissance* is an arrivance at the moment of touching, fires kindled at the boundaries, Boer’s rims.

... in love’s book of hours, in those extreme moments
where separation is extinguished in the tightest
embrace. It is there, it is then, in the infinitesimal
and infinite space of proximity... in the instant we

approximate ourself, in the embracing, it is there at the point of contact, that we feel it, that we touch it, we touch difference and it touches us, in what form? It is the ultimate, voluptuous and cruel point of temptation: if only I could pass to the other side, if only I could one time slide myself in you, ... you belong to a world I cannot enter—refused to me from the beginning and for eternity, that *jouissance* of yours to which I am and I remain an enchanted and unknowing witness. But I cannot, because we were created to desire (to enter) and not to enter.¹³⁰

Ragland-Sullivan describes the phenomenon of feminine *jouissance*¹³¹ as a presentation of the “Lacanian Woman” who desires, who has a strength that is expressed as a “sense of infinity that comes from having accepted castration.”¹³² She moves from the masculine *propre* (of love) to that of the feminine becoming, in the process, bathed in the-Other-*jouissance*. She moves beyond phallic concerns gaining “access to the real of a lost *jouissance*,”¹³³ and this phenomenal ‘incarnation of desire’ has a force that destabilises the symbolic. The question, says Ragland, is within which economy the inscription of this fluid force will be made: Thanatos or Eros.¹³⁴

Our murders are decided in a violent and obscure relation to *jouissance*, in jealousy so dark, primitive, and remote we don’t even see it. There in the shadows, a scandalous scene of deprivation is played out ...¹³⁵

Is Shulamith a Lacanian Woman? Is Cixous? She is a desiring woman, appearing to inscribe her sexual experience in Eros, right there in the face of death.¹³⁶ Her subversion of the symbolic is palpable and iconoclastic as is her fluidity, her risks for love, her illimitable desires, her incarnations, her *jouissance-of-being*. She is a

subversion of the symbolic, a de-totalizing of a master discourse, an alignment with a certain-kind-of-discourse.¹³⁷ This is a feminine discourse, that of the not-all. As Lacan announces:

It is no accident that women are less enclosed than their partners in this cycle of discourses. Man, the male, the virile, such as we know him, is a creation of discourse – at least none of what is analyzable in him can be defined in any other way. The same cannot be said of woman ... This is why, before she starts to shake, the woman animated by the revolutionary properties of analysis could tell herself that she will benefit much more than the man does from what we shall call a certain culture of discourse.¹³⁸

Cixous aligns herself with Lacan in asserting that *jouissance* is constituted in sexual difference, and that while the masculine renounces *jouissance*, the feminine weeps it.¹³⁹ In *Rootprints* she attempts to find the words that ‘unforget’ the secret of *jouissance*, she is a *maestro* of this certain-culture-of-discourse; a certain culture of unconcealment. She houses this desire to share in words as an impulse that comes from the fundamental inability to share the experience of *jouissance*. She longs, she says, to share the “unknowable-*jouissance*-of-the-other”¹⁴⁰ but she cannot and so she reaches out in her desire (the dream of sharing) for words; for words of desire, for heat.¹⁴¹ This longing is the incandescence of the Song of Songs in her encounter at the limits, the other’s body.

Non, nous ne parlons pas du tout les mêmes langues.
Ce qu’elle laisse jaillir en gerbes d’étincelles, je
voudrais le recueillir, le lier. Elle brûle, et moi je
veux écrire le feu ! Heureusement, je n’y arriverai
pas !¹⁴²

Shulamith in her Song, casts herself at language in order to read “the book of the world with [her] body.”¹⁴³ In her urgent search for words that might absolve the strongest of sensations, the same words that then catch fire and whose sparks fly over to the other side, in a sense, through the senses, conveying that ineffable and unknowable knowledge of the *jouissance-of-the-other*; a trace that pervades all her dreams of love and fire.

... as vehement as death ... as jealous as Sheol ... its
 flashes, the flashes of a radiant, flaming fire...^[8:6]

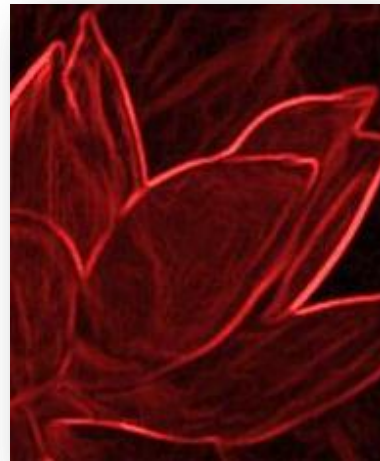
3

The road to awe

Who is this?
 ascending from the wilderness... [3:6]

Here she is. Here she comes, lifted up on the smoke of incense. She journeys through the centuries of wildernesses, atop her camel, draped in desert garments, green eyes, kohl-lined, flashes of gold at her ears. Her caravan of precious spices is an oasis for the senses, replete with myrrh and aloes.

Envois. An act of sending. Envois. The sending of a missive to an-Other—into another time-space to Someone who will read. I can imagine them there, that Other in their time-space reading my missive. The space between us, requiring the Post, to overcome the abyssal distance. In



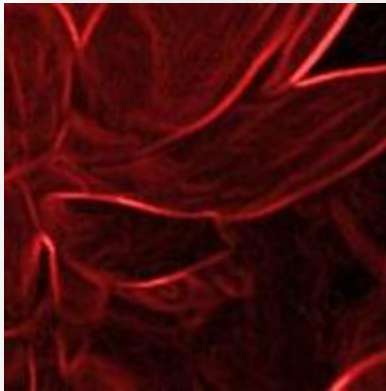
The poetics of Celan as expressed in his published speech, *The Meridian* as well as Derrida's concept of 'the trace' frame this creative exploration of the nature of truth in the Song of Songs. It is *aletheia*. Celan, formidably and paradoxically, discloses 'truth' in poetry in the very midst of its *aschenglorie*, the Song too is an *aschenglorie* of verse.

telematics, language must cast itself onto lines, into print and disjointed from all contexts/times/spaces, an envois arrives having leapt over the absence of presence; from Letterbox to Letterbox so to speak.¹ The Song of

Songs is a kind of envois that leaps a gap.

I see a woman, but she is actually a scroll. We hide her in a lidded urn, and stopper the top to keep her from spoiling with age. The wilderness is hard on scrolls. The ones in broken urns never survive.

Who or what is an Object? Something strong, secure, concrete? Perhaps an Urn for example.² But this urn-object is just a shell, a frame for space; a holder of space; fashioned around a hole. And so we ask “Filled with what?” to make sense



of it: ashes of the departed or brim full of wine. Deconstruction: I see the urn, name it, but I wonder what’s inside it. What’s ‘inside’ makes all the difference.

But the urn of language is fragile. It crumbles and you blow on the dust of words that are the very cinders [*qui sont la cendre meme*]³

If you were to unstop the urn, unroll the scroll, would she tell you the truth?

Poetics both ancient and contemporary generate *résistance* to certainty, abject denial of determinacy,⁴ prophesying, philosophizing, poetizing the meaning of what it is to-be-there and invocation, in perfectly-imperfectly-perfect lines, poetry reproducing for itself, the poetic act, the enigma of the poetic experience, evolving further in translation, taking even the author in its grasp. Poetry like the Song of Songs starts with the author but suddenly becomes the world’s. The Singer, now merely the signatory of waves of disruptive lines. The Singer becomes other to her text. The text, She, is Infinite Transitive.⁵

She wrestles in the half-light in the Hebrew tongue. Writing poetry, writing between two infinities, wrestling with words. What does she do with her language? Does she destroy it? Tear it apart from within? Or reconstruct it? Or reinscribe it? Or in search of justice does she make it bear witness? Does she bear witness?

Paul Celan writes on language and his own wrestling in the night, his own holocaust:

Only one thing remained reachable, close and secure amid all losses: language. Yes, language. In spite of everything, it remained secure against loss. But it had to go through its own lack of answers, through terrifying silence, through the thousand darknesses of murderous speech. It went through. It gave me no words for what was happening, but went through it. Went through and could resurface, 'enriched' by it all.⁶

According to Derrida, Celan finds something sacred in the poetic. She, Derrida avows, is “the act of faith that poetic experience is.”⁷ The poetic experience of the Song of Songs is an act of faith. The Singer goes toward language with her being, wholly, her lines an act of faith, an act that reaches through time. I, reader, reciprocate, in faith. Celan would further argue that the poetic “... lays claim to infinity, it seeks to reach through time—through it, not above and beyond it...”⁸ The Song of Songs contains within herself a glimpse of the infinite.

She contains within herself a Trace. We don't see her clearly, there. We are so close, we still only see a piece, an outline, like the outline of the gazelle, the resemblance of a doe, the petal of the lotus, the simulacrum that covers her like a veil.

Jacques Derrida—hermeneut—sparked epistemological wildfires with deconstruction. Central to this is his idea of the trace, that is, trace or *Arché* or Specter or Origin-of-Origin. Is this then also the trace of truth? I'm after truth from the Song of Songs, but not the usual kind of truth, the usual figuring of truth that might be conceived of as 'the placebo' for the real thing.

The Place-Holder.

The Illusion of Absolute Certainty.

This placebo-truth is carried around with us in the form of presuppositions about the world, forgetting of course that absolute truth is prevented from ever being appropriated by a human being due to the fact that every piece of data is mediated by a mortal series of electrical impulses that translate, transliterate every sense of the outside world leaving a gap, great or small, between us and it. I'm after the truth that is felt with the hackles, with the fine hairs at the base of the neck when it is glimpsed in the reflection of Rosenzweig's mirror, in Heidegger's mirrored halls.

... in the mirror of this appearance, truth reflects
itself ...⁹

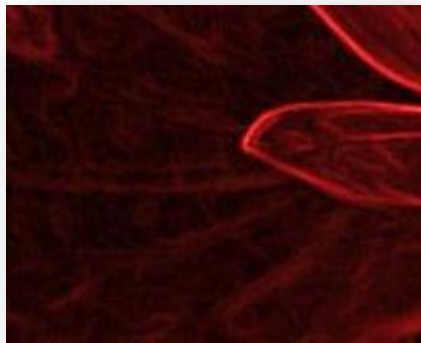
The world is metaphor to humanity, necessarily so. A veil hangs before us. It is called the interface or cinders or the erasure. It is an invisible construct, which in innocent moments, unguarded moments, unveils the unbearable; that of a world that does not exist. This is why the concept of trace is so important. The Absolute Truth of poetry (of anything) appears to us; can only appear to us as a trace. It remains at the limit. Always approaching and never arriving. The trace is what remains after it has passed through the mind's eye, passed through time, that flicker. Metaphor, at work to yield the "effects of unveiling" without tearing the veil from bottom to top, to have it continue to breathe, giving the sense of

truth, to make a truth, “to make the trace of the secret spring to life,” even in its egress.¹⁰

Trace: the *histoire* in a sign. Our knowledge and interaction with the world is through a maze of signs. They are the “mark of the absence of a presence, an always-already absent present.”¹¹ So both absence and presence are in play. How can these two be in play? Through the sign. The sign is the marker for what is absent. The sign provides the illusion of presence; foregrounds the absent object. There is space between sign or signifier and the signified. A deficit is signaled. A deficit opens up a crack; a *différance* that is as deep as the ocean, and for some a screaming abyss. This is “lack at the origin”¹² for Derrida creating a paradox at the core condition of experience.

The value of the transcendental arche [origin] must make its necessity felt before letting itself be erased. The concept of the arche-trace must comply with both the necessity and the erasure....The trace is not only the disappearance of origin,.....it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never

constituted except reciprocally by a non-origin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin. From then on, to wrench the concept of the trace from the classical scheme which would derive it from a presence or from an originary non-trace and which would make of it an



empirical mark, one must indeed speak of an originary trace or arche-trace.¹³

Of course, Derrida is enlarging the notion of language here. He takes it and allows it to swell until it swallows the world. In the same space of this, his own text, *Of Grammatology*, he makes his famous claim «il n'y a pas de hors-texte»¹⁴ or “there is no outside-text”, claiming not only is the world made up of signifiers to always-absent-presences, arrivals, envois, but also we ourselves are texts; bodies of a written trace.

«il n'y a pas de hors-texte» there is nothing beyond her white fire on black fire, her raven locks, the delicate curve on the arms of the ψ. I also become layers of language, here, I am leaving behind only a trace. In this very line, I have already disappeared...

Différance: in attempting to conceive an invisible presence through replication, simulacrity, multiplication, the sign ultimately fails to represent, absolutely, that which it signifies.

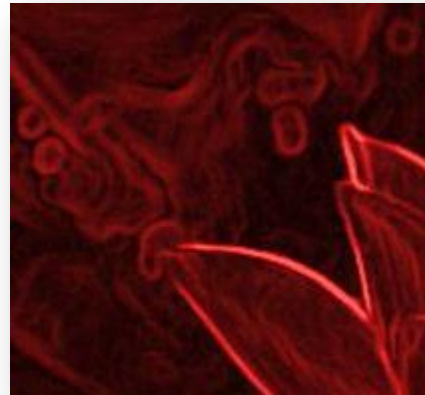
Translation is at the mercy of this *différance*, a chasm between the text and its translation. Translation: when the mouth opens, “when a tongue licks the word on the other’s tongue.”¹⁵ Can *the Song* be rescued, elevated, from its Hebrew tongue, if one was to make strenuous efforts, to act in good faith, conserve the “psychic density essential to the poetic text,”¹⁶ and yet, there it is like a poorly fitting skin, sloughed off: snake skin: dry, colours faded.¹⁷ “The scene is written under a cloak [sous cape].”¹⁸ The text is betrayed by its translation; clouded; a violent event has taken place however unintentional. Tongues do not replicate—someone always dies.

Stimmen vom Nesselweg her:
Komm auf den Händen zu uns.

Wer mit der Lampe allein ist,
hat nur die Hand, draus zu lesen.

[Voices from the path of the nettles:/ come on your
hands to us./ Whoever is alone with the lamp/ has
only his palm to read from.]¹⁹

The Song of Songs is Naked text. Text read alone, by lamp, burned on the palm. A surfeit of enigmatic contradiction; nettles. This antithetical deconstruction deals in naked text. Text laid bare. Bare text. Meanings made, flying by, reproducing like bacteria on agar jelly. To allow the rupture of these words is to rupture the metaphysics of pure presence; the Infinite, God within the Word; the always-already hidden within that which is already in the paradoxical process of being revealed and re-concealed. Contradiction— that makes all thoughts, all plans rupture in the face of it. This trace, this origin of the origin is G-d; between God and God, of gods— of gazelles. I diminish in the face of her double concealment.²⁰ G-d, the site of the ultimate failure of the symbolic.

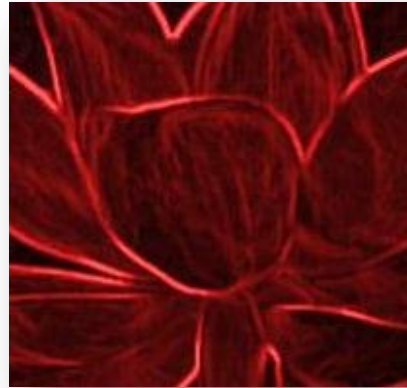


... [the] return to the book is then the abandoning of
the book; it has slipped in between God and God...²¹

Aletheia. She is doubly-veiled; veiled in metaphor, and inside metaphor veiled again by memories of night, sleep and dream. And yet, she awakens in the mind's eye, the shades of twilight. We, drawn with her, anticipate, and are

brought to the edge, to the 'almost' of truth, of revelation, of true meaning. Her words bring, almost, into view, her edges, and her reliefs.

... an allegory of truth itself in its movement of veiling and unveiling: the origin of light, the visibility of the visible, that is the black night, that which, letting things appear in the light [*la clarté*], by definition hides itself from view. That is what she does: she *hides from view* [*se dérobe à la vue*], she escapes from view by slowing exhibiting, making you wait in imminence, the gesture by which she suggests the movement of disrobing. Visibility itself is invisible, it is thus dark, obscure, nocturnal (*dark**) and it is necessary to be blind to it (immersed in darkness, *in the dark**) in order to see. In order to be able [*pouvoir*] to see [*voir*] and to know [*savoir*]. This law of the luminous phenomenon (*phōs*) is inscribed, from the origin, in nature (*physis*). Like the story of the eye.²²



She brings us to the place of burning. She brings us into a glowing solar furnace, a fusion of desire.

Poetry leads to the same place as all forms of eroticism – to the blending and fusion of separate objects. It leads us to eternity, it leads us to death, and through death to continuity. Poetry is eternity; the sun matched with the sea.²³

Jouissance: the speaking of the unspeakable; the inter-dicted; the contra-dicted; the poetic is the site of the beyond-the-limits. Beyond control, beyond logic. The limit of selfhood. The Song of Songs brings us to the threshold. Bliss. Oceanic feeling issues through the fractures. Language Interrupted, “violently punctured ... blissed-out ... broken down.”²⁴ The annihilation of the illusion of absolute representation.

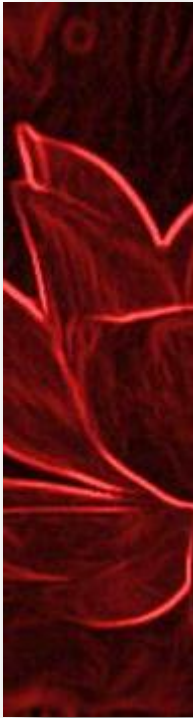
Every time there is ‘jouissance’ (but the ‘there is’ of this event is in itself extremely enigmatic), there is ‘deconstruction’. Effective deconstruction. Deconstruction perhaps has the effect if not the mission, of liberating forbidden jouissance. That’s what has to be taken on board. It is perhaps this jouissance which most irritates the all-out adversaries of ‘deconstruction’.²⁵

How she is laid bare by the Song of Songs. She opens to being, she rises. Her pain held in tenuous grasp. Her hope, chancing an irrefutable void. Was that the glimpse of a mystery? The glimpse of a secret. A promise of the impossible?

Hélène Cixous, poet-magician, does not deny the possibility of truth. It is in poetry she insists that the infinite itself is becoming unconcealed, its untruths evidence magically what is most true... *at the edge of the threshold, at the opening of the breathing folds of the veil.*

What is most true is poetic. What is most true is naked life. I can only attain this mode of seeing with the aid of poetic writing. I apply myself to ‘seeing’ the world nude, that is, almost to e-nu-merating the world, with the naked, obstinate, defenceless eye of my nearsightedness. And while looking very, very closely, I copy. The world written nude is poetic...

What is most true is poetic because it is not stopped-stoppable. All that is stopped, grasped, all that is subjugated, easily transmitted, easily picked up, all that comes under the word concept, which is to say all that is taken, caged, is less true. Has lost what is life itself, which is always in the process of seething, of emitting, of transmitting itself. Each object is in reality a small virtual volcano...²⁶



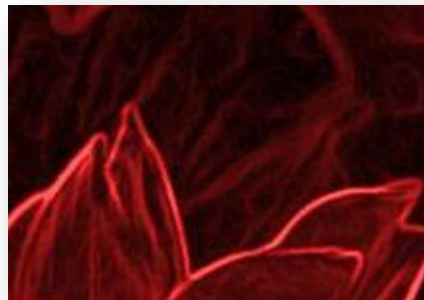
The rupture, this slight gape evidenced by the trace that is writing, is the flash of the starry heavens through the curtains of the window. This is the face turned upwards towards the sky. Within the rupture is infinity.²⁷ The curtain breathes and parts. In the space, in the partition is a glimpse of God.

...its starry wandering about which we sense, without ever seeing it, the presence of an order other than our own ... of this astral nature, sparks that they are of a dead or distantly imminent fire.²⁸

Trace. Seems to begin with a word. Any word at all. A word. Her word. The Word. A word bearing “within itself the necessity of its own critique,”²⁹ the messianic word, in poetry lifting itself up for love or witnessing to the lack of it. Words as unstable as nitroglycerin; and yet with the curious ability to heal the heart. Cixous names them the “guarantor[s] of desire,” and conditions brood that “gives body to the writing.”³⁰ At that moment the word is flesh-word and pierces barriers that would prevent “physical sensation” and “cardiac certainty,” those deep scores are “rhythms, rhymes,

passages—that come under another temporality,” even time is provoked and waylaid, “holding the untenable division; the position of the interval.”³¹

Wordplay, play-of-life, play-of-the-infinite. The Song of Songs is playing on signs, eliciting a trace: wordplay; trace-play. The Singer working, being worked by her own language, rupturing the boundaries, a degustation of infinities.



כיעזה כמות אהבה
קשה כשאול קנאה
רשפיה רשפי אש שלהבתי

For as fierce as death is love/ As relentless as Sheol
her desire/ Flashes of a radiant, flaming fire_[8:6]

When we read, partake, in such poetic language, when we realize that the centre cannot hold—when we realize her language has an unstable core. Reactive. Reacting. Emanating. The centre finally cannot hold. The centre cannot hold in the Song of Songs. The centre collapses and a gaping hole is left, revealed by a poetic that plays at the edge of language, plays within language and its faux-certainties. The centre collapses and what is left is space. *The empty urn*. Through that space, that rupture, lies the Infinite. There it is in the poem, right where the centre has failed. Where is the centre situated when it fails? It is situated in the one who dared read.

A radiant, flaming fire:

Cinders.

Ash.
 Glory.
 Shadow-rock.

Poetry: what is left when the origin has been burned to cinders. The Song of Songs, the aschenglorie of the collapse of language.

The Song of Songs comes to us as an Other, an-Other searching for an-Other to address. Celan says in his speech, *The Meridian*, on the occasion of receiving the Büchner Prize for German Literature in 1961.

The poem wants to reach the Other, it needs this other, it needs a vis á vis. It searches it out and addresses it./ Each thing, each person is a form of the Other for the poem, as it makes for this Other.³²

And Celan, with the voice of Buber whispering in his ears, asks if reading the poem is not already an act of movement? Does one not journey, leave the bed, open the front door, place one foot before the other? Voice enters, the beat of the step, awakening a cardiac staccato.

—does one travel such paths with poems? Are these paths but circuitous paths, circuitous paths from thou to thou? There are, however, among possible paths, paths on which language acquires a voice; these are encounters, a voice's paths to a perceiving thou, creaturely paths, sketches of existence perhaps, a sending oneself ahead to oneself, in the process of searching for oneself ... A kind of homecoming.³³

When reading the Song of Songs what happens? Those aggressive discourses that encircle me, deceiving, in their name I want to confront it, this object, I explain, fill in the detail, explicate the symbol. Break the urn to get at it. I put out my

hands for the *Savoir Totalité*, and her fine papyrus crumbles like gold leaf under rough hands and boots. Dust. (But there is also the possibility that something other and terrifying happens and it involves the annihilation and then the resurrection of the reader. I read and am read.)³⁴

Rebleute graben
die dunkelstündige Uhr um,
[Vinegrowers dig up/ the dark-houred clock,/]³⁵

This is when I found her or when she found me, when I had dug deep, put my hands in the soil, entered the hidden caves. The Song of Songs lay there, interred in the urn, I read in secret, in hidden chambers, in the cool dark. Her hands chimed through my dark hours, all my movements, transits, changes, reinscriptions, annihilations, resurrections.

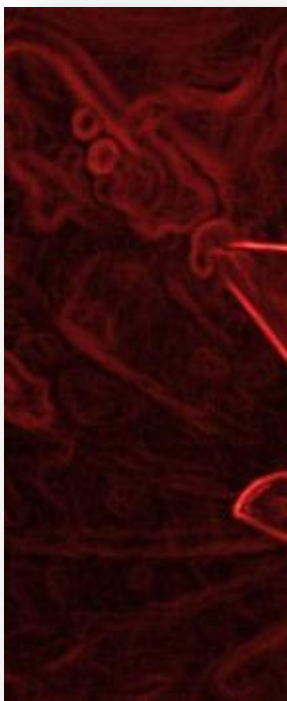
Tiefe um Tiefe,
du liest,
es fordert
der Unsichtbare den Wind
in die Schranken,
[deep upon deep,// you read,// the Invisible/
summons to the wind/ into bounds,/]³⁶

The enigmatic poem I read. I glimpsed that what lies there is bare, there in the folds, I gasped at the universe laid bare within. Brought into a sensation of fullness, into oceanic feeling, into *jouissance*. Dangerous, generative, allusive, not-able-to-be-subjugated, both life and death held aloft by an untrustworthy wind, I cannot go.

du liest,
die Offenen tragen
den Stein hinterm Aug,
[you read// the Open ones carry/

the stone behind their eye,/] ³⁷

The reader is acted upon when the poem is invoked; it knows. The truth of the poem always already veiled, retreating, touching with its rays, lighting secrets of shadows, truths that are capricious vagrants of the infinite imagination. Always a stone behind my eye. I can't see you clearly so I reach. I carry with me my desire to reach you. The stone, the stone is the secret, it rolls across the mouth of the tomb. I open. A work unworkable, working me, working the creativity of the breath and tongue, summoning me into the wind, a gale, into the taste of earth. "Vine-growers dig." Her vines, entangle me, I dig and dig; the excavation, a promise of an unconcealing of the Invisible. She escapes me. An escape from time, of intervals, a 'dark-houred clock', that tolls out the moments, boundless. It knows me. I rest, a moment's rest, Shabbat.



der erkennt dich,
am Sabbath.
[it knows you,/ come the Sabbath] ³⁸

עד שיפוח היום
ונסו הצללים
אלך לי אליהר המור
ואלגבעת הלבונה

—Until the day breathes
and dark shadows flee
I will journey to the mountain of myrrh
and to the hill of frankincense ^[4:6]

והתורה במה היתה כתובה על גבי אש לבנה באש שחורה³⁹

שיר השירים

A translation of the Song of Songs into English

שיר השירים
אשר לשלמה

ישקני מנשיקות פיהו
כי טובים דדיך מיין
לריח שמניך טובים שמן תורק שמך
עלכן עלמות אהבוך

משכני אחריך נרוצה
הביאני המלך חדריו
נגילה ונשמחה בך
נזכירה דדיך מיין
מישרים אהבוך

^sThe Song of Songs,¹

for the one to whom peace belongs [1:1]

Let him kiss me, with the kisses of his mouth!

For your love-making is exquisite, better than wine [1:2]

To breathe your fragrant oils is wondrous, your name is oil poured out,

—All the girls adore you [1:3]

Bring me after you, let us run!

He has brought me, the King, into his most private place

We will laugh and be happy, together,

[even] to imagine your love-making is better than wine!!!

—naturally they all adore you [1:4]

שחורה אני ונאווה בנות ירושלם
כאהלי קדר
כיריעות שלמה
אלתראוני שאני שחרחרת שזפתני השמש
בני אמי נחרו־בי
שמני נטרה את־הכרמים

כרמי שלי
לא נטרתי

I am black and beautiful, daughters of Jerusalem
 dark as the [Bedouin] tents of Keder
 as the [exotic] tapestries of Shlomo ^[1:5]
Do not see me as black; I have been pierced by the Sun's rays
The sons of my mother, their anger blazed
They placed me to keep the vineyards...

*My own vineyard, that is mine,
I have not kept* ^[1:6]

הגידה לי שאהבה נפשי
איכה תרעה
איכה תרביץ בצהרים
שלמה אהיה כעטיה על עדרי חבריך

אס־לא תדעי לך היפה בנשים
צאילך בעקבי הצאן
ורעי את־גדיתיך
על משכנות הרעים

Tell me, one I love with all my breath!

Where are you grazing?

Where are you resting in the hot sun of midday?

What if I should be like a [veiled one] and come upon the flocks of your friends_[1:7]

—If you don't know, most beautiful of women
follow in the sheep-trails
and pasture your kids
by the shelters of shepherds_[1:8]

לססתי ברכבי פרעה
דמיתוך רעיתי
נאוו לחייך בתרים
צוארך בחרוזים
תורי זהב נעשה־לך
עם נקדות הכסף

As a mare amongst pharaoh's chariot steeds,
I picture you, my darling friend!_[1:9]
Beautiful cheekbones – earrings ornament them
your neck with strung beads_[1:10]
A circlet of gold, we will make for you
embossed with silver_[1:11]

שהמלך במסבו עד
נרדי נתן ריחו
צרור המר דודי לי
בין שדי ילין
אשכל הכפר דודי לי
בכרמי עין גדי

הנך יפה רעיתי
הנך יפה עיניך יונים
הנך יפה דודי אף נעים
אף־ערשנו רעננה
קרות בתינו ארזים
רחיטנו ברותים

As the king reclines on his spacious divan...

My musk-scented nard, its fragrance breathes,

A parcel of myrrh is my lover to me

between my breasts he lies

A spray of henna is my lover to me

in the vineyards of Ein-Gedi [1:14]

—beautiful one, my friend!

so beautiful, your eyes are doves [1:15]

so beautiful, my lover, exquisite!

truly, ours is this bed of lush green, [1:16]

our roof beams of [leafy] cedar,

our panels of pungent cypress [1:17]

אני חבצלת השרון שושנת העמקים

כשושנה בין החוחים
כן רעיתי בין הבנות

כתפוח בעצי היער
כן דודי בין הבנים
בצלו חמדתי וישבתי
ופריו מתוק לחכי
הביאני אל־בית היין
ודגלו עלי אהבה
סמכוני באשיות
רפדוני בתפוחים
כיחולת אהבה אני

שמאלו תחת לראשי וימינו תחבקני

§I am a crocus of the Sharon plain – a valley lotus_[2:1]

— like a lotus amongst thistles,
such is my love among the daughters _[2:2]

—like a fruiting apricot among the woodland trees
this is my lover among sons
in his shadow I desire to make my home,
and his fruit is sweet to my mouth _[2:3]
he has brought me to the house of wine;
his standard over me is love_[2:4]
 lie me down in the blossoms²
 bed me in apricots
 for I am in a fever of love_[2:5]

*...His left hand beneath my head, his right arm will embrace me*_[2:6]

השבעתי אתכם בנות ירושלם
בצבאות או
באילות השדה
אס־תעירו
האהבה ואס־תעוררו את
עד שתחפץ

Promise me, daughters of Jerusalem!
by the gazelles, [tzeva'ot]
deer of the field [el shaddai]
for if you rouse
if you awaken love
at the limits of her desire... [2:7]

קול דודי הנהיזה בא
 מדלג עליההרים
 מקפץ עליהגבעות
 דומה דודי לצבי או לעפר האילים

זה עומד אחר כתלנו הנה
 משגיח מן־החלונות
 מציץ מן־החרכים

ענה דודי ואמר לי

קומי לך רעיתי יפתי ולכילך
 כי־הנה הסתו עבר הגשם חלף הלך לו
 הנצנים נראו בארץ
 עת הזמיר הגיע וקול התור נשמע בארצנו
 התאנה חנטה פגיה
 והגפנים סמדר נתנו ריח
 קומי לכי
 רעיתי יפתי ולכילך
 יונתי בחגוי הסלע בסתר המדרגה
 הראיני את־מראיך
 השמיעיני את קולך
 כיקולך ערב
 ומראיך נאווה

The voice of my lover, look at this, he comes!
 springing on the mountains
 skipping on the hills [2:8]
 my lover, looks like a gazelle, a young stag!

Look, he stands outside our wall
 searching through the lattice
 peering through the fretwork [2:9]

He answers, my lover and speaks to me,

—Rise up, come, my darling friend, come away! [2:10]
 winter is over, the rains too have passed and gone [2:11]
 wildflowers appear on the earth
 now the time of birdsong is beginning
 the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land [2:12]
 the fig is turning, the young fruits
 the vines blossom, giving scent
 rise up and come
 my friend and beauty, come away! [2:13]
 my dove, from refuges in the rocks,
 in the secret places of the crag
 let me see your face!
 let me hear your voice!
 for your voice is sweet,
 you are a vision of loveliness! [2:14]

אחזו לנו שועלים
שועלים קטנים
מתבלים כרמים
וכרמינו סמדר

דודי לי ואני לו
הרעה בשושנים
עד שיפוח היום ונסו הצללים
סב דמהלך דודי
לצבי או לעפר האילים
עלהרי בתר

—Seize for us the jackals,
 little jackals,
 vine spoilers!
 when our vines bud... [2:15]

My lover is mine and I am his
 shepherd in lotus-fields [2:16]
 until the day breathes and shadows flee
 turn [to me]! this image of you, my love,
 like a gazelle or like a young stag,
 on mountains of *Bāter* [promise]³ [2:17]

עלמשכבי בלילות בקשתי
את שאהבה נפשי
בקשתי ולא מצאתיו
אקומה נא ואסובבה בעיר
בשוקים וברחבות
אבקשה את שאהבה נפשי
בקשתי ולא מצאתיו

מצאוני השמרים
הסבבים בעיר
את שאהבה נפשי ראיתם

כמעט שעברתי מהם
עד שמצאתי את שאהבה נפשי
אחזתי ולא ארפנו
עד שהביאתי אל בית אמי
ואל חדר הורתי

On my bed in the night I sought him,
The one I love with all my breath⁴
 I sought him, but did not find him_[3:1]
 I must arise and encircle the city
 in the streets and in the plazas,
 I will seek the one I love with all my breath
 I sought him but I could not find him_[3:2]

They found me, the watchers
 the ones who [patrol] in the city...
—Have any of you seen the one I love with all my breath?_[3:3]

It was a little after I passed them by,
 when I found the one I love with all my breath
 I held him and would not let him go
 until we came to the house of my mother
 and to the chamber of the one who birthed me_[3:4]

השבעתי אתכם בנות ירושלם
בצבאות
או באילות השדה
אס־תעירו
ואס־תעוררו את־האהבה
עד שתחפץ

Promise me, all you daughters of Jerusalem
by the gazelles,⁵
by the deer of the field,⁶
for if you rouse
if you awaken love
at the limits of her desire ... [3:5]

מי זאת
עלה מן־המדבר
כתימרות
עשן מקטרת מור ולבונה
מכל אבקת רוכל

הנה מטתו שלשלמה
ששים גברים סביב לה מגברי ישראל
כלם אחזי חרב מלמדי מלחמה
איש חרבו על־ירכו מפחד בלילות

אפריון עשה לו המלך שלמה
מעצי הלבנון
עמודיו עשה כסף
רפידתו זהב
מרכבו ארגמן
תוכו רצוף אהבה
מבנות ירושלם

צאינה וראינה בנות ציון במלך שלמה
בעטרה שעטרה־לו אמו
ביום חתנתו
וביום שמחת לבו

Who is this?
She rises from the wilderness
like a pillar of cloud
smoke of myrrh and frankincense
all the spices of a trader_[3:6]

Oh the caravan of Shlomo!
sixty warriors surround it—the bravest in Israel_[3:7]
each of them holds a sword, tried in war
a man's sword at his thigh against the fears of the night_[3:8]

A palanquin, the king, Shlomo made for himself
from Lebanese timber_[3:9]
its stands he made silver
its cover, gold
its seat, purple
the interior,
wrought with love by the daughters of Jerusalem_[3:10]

Go out, daughters of Zion, and gaze at the king of [peace]!
the crown with which his mother crowned him
on the day of his wedding,
the day of the joy of his heart_[3:11]

הנך יפה רעיתי הנך יפה
עיניך יונים מבעד לצמתך
שערך כעדר העזים שגלשו מהר גלעד
שניך כעדר הקצובות
שעלו מן הרחצה
שכלם מתאימות ושכלה אין בהם
כחוט השני שפתתך ומדברך נאווה
כפלח הרמון
רקתך מבעד לצמתך
דויד כמגדל
צוארך
בנוי לתלפיות
אלף המגן תלוי עליו כל שלטי הגבורים
שני שדיך
כשני עפרים תאומי צביה
הרועים בשושנים

עד שיפוח היום
ונסו הצללים
אלך לי אלהר המור
ואלגבעת הלבונה

So beautiful! My [darling] friend! So beautiful!
 Your eyes are doves hidden in the folds of your hair
 [this] hair like a flock of [capering] goats descending from Mount Gilead [4:1]
 Your teeth a flock of shorn ewes
 Ascending, white and washed, from the pond
 All of them carrying twins and none of these are lost [4:2]
 A crimson ribbon, your lips – your voice is lovely!
 Like a rounded [rose-pink] pomegranate
 Your [blushing] cheek behind your veil [4:3]
 A tower of David
 [The lithe, proud lines of] your neck
 A stonework turret
 a thousand [golden] shields
 Strung about it
 round-shields of warriors [4:4]
 Your breasts like two fawns
 Twins of a gazelle
 Grazing in a lotus-field [4:5]

—Until the day breathes
 and dark shadows flee
 I will journey to the mountain of myrrh
 and to the hill of frankincense [4:6]

כלך יפה רעיתי ומום אין בך

אתי מלבנון כלה
אתי מלבנון תבואי
תשורי מראש אמנה
מראש שניר וחרמון
ממענות אריות
מהררי נמרים

—You are in every way beautiful, my friend, there is no flaw in you [4:7]

Descend with me from Lebanon my bride!

From Lebanon you must come down

Look down from the summit⁷ of Amana

From the summits of Senir and Hermon

From the lairs of lions

From the mountains of leopards [4:8]

לבבתיני אחתי כלה
 לבבתיני באחד מעיניך
 באחד ענק מצוריך

מה יפו דדיך אחתי כלה
 מה־טבו דדיך מיין
 וריח שמניך
 מכל בשמים

נפת תטפנה שפתותיך כלה
 דבש וחלב תחת לשונך
 וריח שלמתיך
 כריח לבנון

גן נעול
 אחתי כלה
 גל נעול
 מעין חתום

My heart is ecstatic, my sister-bride!
my heart is ecstatic one flash from your eyes
with [a flash of] one link of your necklace [4:9]

How beautiful is your caress, my sister-bride
how much better is your caress than wine
and a breath of your fragrant oils
than any balsam [4:10]

Nectar drips from your lips, Bride!
honey and milk under your tongue
in your clothes
the scent of Lebanon [4:11]

A garden enclosed,
my sister-bride!
A spring enclosed
A fountain sealed [4:12]

שלחך
 פרדס רמונים
 עם פרי מגדים
 כפרים עם־נרדים
 נרד וכרכם
 קנה וקנמון
 עם כל־עצי לבונה
 מר ואהלות
 עם כל־ראשי בשמים

מעין גנים
 באר מים חיים
 ונזלים מן־לבנון
 עורי צפון ובואי תימן
 הפיחי גני יזלו בשמיו
 יבא דודי לגנו
 ויאכל פרי מגדיו

You branch out
 like a grove of pomegranates
 with a treasure of fruit
 henna with nards, [4:13]
 nard and saffron
 calamus and cinnamon,
 all trees of frankincense
 myrrh and aloes,
 with all the finest balsam [4:14]

—A fountain of gardens
 a spring of living waters
 and flowing streams from Lebanon [4:15]
 Awake, Zaphon! And come Tayman!
 Blow into my garden, let my perfumes stream
 Let my lover come into his garden,
 and eat its treasure of fruit [4:16]

באתי לגני אחתי כלה
אריתי מורי עס־בשמי
אכלתי יערי עס־דבשי
שתיתי ייני עס־חלבי

אכלו רעים שתו
ושכרו דודים

—§I have descended into my garden my sister, my bride!
I have harvested my myrrh with my balsam
I have eaten my wild honey with my pure honey
...I have drunk my wine with my milk

—Feast friends and drink!
Drink deeply lovers! [5:1]

אני ישנה ולבי ער
קול דודי דופק

פתחילי
אחתי רעיתי
יונתי תמתי
שראשי נמלא־טל
קוצותי רסיסי לילה

פשטתי את־כתנתי איככה אלבשנה
רחצתי את רגלי איככה אטנפם

דודי שלח ידו מן־החר
ומעי המו עליו
קמתי אני לפתח לדודי
וידי נטפרמור
ואצבעתי מור עבר על כפות המנעול

פתחתי אני לדודי ודודי חמק עבר
נפשי יצאה בדברו

בקשתיהו ולא מצאתיהו
קראתיו ולא ענני

מצאני השמרים הסבבים בעיר
הכוני
פצעוני
נשאו את רדידי מעלי
שמרי החמות

I sleep but my heart is awake
 ... *the voice of my lover, knocking...*

Open to me
 my sister, my friend
 my dove, my perfect one
 for my head is saturated with dew
 and my hair with the mist of the night [5:2]

I had laid out my robe, should I put it on again?
 I have bathed my feet, should I put them on the ground? [5:3]

My lover stretched his hand from the opening
 and inside I seethed for him... [5:4]
 I arose [I] to open to my lover
 and my hands seeping myrrh
 and my fingers— pure myrrh seeping over the latch [5:5]

I opened [I] to my love but my lover had vanished
 my breath left me when he spoke

I searched for him but couldn't find him
 I cried out to him but he didn't answer me [5:6]

The watchers found me- the ones surrounding the city
 they struck me
 they bruised me
 they tore my robe off me
 ... those watchers of the walls [5:7]

השבעתי אתכם בנות ירושלם
אסִתמצאו את־דודי
מה־תגידו לו
שחולת אהבה אני

Promise me, you daughters of Jerusalem!
if you find my lover,
how you must tell him!
I am in a fever of love ^[5:8]

מהדודך מדוד
היפה בנשים
מהדודך מדוד
שככה השבעתנו

דודי צח ואדום
דגול מרבה
ראשו כתם פז
קוצותיו תלתלים שחרות כעורב
עיניו כיונים עלאפיקי מים רחצות בחלב
ישבות עלמלאת
לחיו כערוגת הבשם
מגדלות מרקחים
שפתותיו שושנים
נטפות מור עבר
ידיו גלילי זהב ממלאים בתרשיש
מעיו עשת שן
מעלפת ספירים
שוקיו עמודי שש
מיסדים עלאדני־פז
מראהו כלבנון בחור כארזים
חכו ממתקים וכלו מחמדים

זה דודי וזה רעי בנות ירושלם

—Is your lover [more than loved]
 beautiful-among-women?
 Is your lover [more than loved]
 that you would make us promise? [5:9]

My lover is radiant and wine-red
 a banner in a myriad [5:10]
 his head shines with pure gold
 his mane of hair raven-black [5:11]
 his eyes doves – beside springs of water – bathed in milk –
 he dwells in their fullness [5:12]
 his cheeks are terraces of balsam [trees]
 [cone-]towers of aromatic spice
 his lips are lotuses
 flowing myrrh seeps [5:13]
 his arms are wheels of gold filled in
 with sea-green chrysoprase,
 his loins are works of carved ivory,
 encrusted with lapis lazuli [5:14]
 his thighs, alabaster pillars
 set on pedestals of gold
 a vision of Lebanon, a towering cedar [5:15]
 his mouth is sweet,
 and altogether he is the sum of desires.

This is my darling and this is my friend, daughters of Jerusalem [5:16]

אנה הלך דודך
היפה בנשים
אנה פנה דודך
ונבקשנו עמך

דודי ירד לגנו
לערוגות הבשם
לרעות בגנים
וללקט שושנים

אני לדודי ודודי לי
הרעה בשושנים

§—Where has your lover gone?
Most beautiful of women
Which way did your lover turn?
We will search for him with you [6:1]

—My lover descended into his garden,
to furrows of balsam
to shepherd in the gardens
and harvest the lotus [6:2]

*I am my lover's and my lover is mine
a shepherd in lotus-fields... [6:3]*

יפה את רעיתי כתרצה
 נאווה כירושלם
 אימה כנדגלות
 הסבי עיניך מנגדי
 הרהיבני שהם
 שערך כעדר העזים שגלשו מן־הגלעד
 שניך כעדר הרחלים
 שעלו מן־הרחצה
 שכלם מתאימות ושכלה אין בהם
 כפלח הרמון
 רקתך מבעד לצמתך

ששים המה מלכות
 ושמנים פילגשים
 ועלמות אין מספר
 אחת היא יונתי תמתי
 אחת היא לאמה
 ברה היא ליולדתה
 ראווה בנות
 ויאשרוה מלכות
 ופילגשים
 ויהללוה

Beautiful you are, my friend, as Tirzah
 Enchanting as Jerusalem
 breathtaking as banners of legions^[6:4]
 turn your eyes away from me!
 for they overwhelm me!
 your hair like a flock of [capering] goats descending Gilead ^[6:5]
 ... your teeth a flock of shorn ewes
 ascending, washed from the pool
 each bearing twins and none lost ^[6:6]
 like a rounded [rose-pink] half of the pomegranate,
 your cheek, behind your veil ^[6:7]

60 of them are queens
 And 80 are concubines⁸
 And girls without number ^[6:8]
 She is unique, my dove
 my perfect one
 precious [unique] to her mother
 the pure one of she who birthed her
 daughters saw her
 queens smile on her
 and the concubines
 sing her praises ^[6:9]

מיִזאת
הנשקפה כמו־שחר
יפה כלבנה
ברה כחמה
אימה כנדגלות

Who is this?
she appears like the dawn
beauty like the white moon
searing like the sun's rays
terrible as the myriad constellations [6:10]

אלגנת אגוז ירדתי
לראות באבי הנחל
לראות הפרחה הגפן
הנצו הרמנים
לא ידעתי נפשי
שמתני מרכבות עמינדיב

Into the garden of walnuts I descended
to see the lushness of the wadi
to see the budding vines
the red-bursting flowers of the pomegranate trees [6:11]
I did not know my own passion
she set me in the chariot of my prince [6:12]

שובי שובי השולמית
שובי שובי ונחזה־בך

מה־תחזו בשולמית
כמחלת המחנים

מה־יפו פעמיך בנעלים בת־נדיב
חמוקי ירכיך כמו חלאים
מעשה ידי אמן
שררך אגן הסהר
אליחסר המזג
בטנך ערמת חטים סוגה בשושנים
שני שדיך כשני עפרים תאמי צביה
צוארך כמגדל השן
עיניך ברכות בחשבון על־שער בת־רבים
אפך כמגדל הלבנון צופה פני דמשק
ראשך עליך ככרמל
ודלת ראשך כארגמן
מלך אסור ברהטים

מה־יפית
ומה־נעמת
אהבה בתענוגים

§—*Turn, turn Shulamith [peaceful one]!*
turn, turn, so we can gaze at you!

—Why should you stare at the Shulamith
 like she was the dance of battalions! [7:1]

How beautiful are your steps in sandal's Prince's daughter
 the inturnings⁹ of your thighs are jewelled
 the handiwork of an artisan [7:2]
 your navel is like a luminous basin
 it does not lack mulled wine
 your belly, a dome of wheat encircled by lotus [7:3]
 your breasts like two fawns, twins of a gazelle [7:4]
 your neck like an ivory tower
 your eyes, pools in *Heshbon* at the gate of *Bat-Rabim*
 your nose like the tower of Lebanon
 overlooking Damascus [7:5]
 your head upon you like Carmel
 threads of magenta fixed in your hair
 a king is entangled in their tendrils [7:6]

How beautiful
and how enchanting
Love, daughter of ecstasy [7:7]

זאת קומתך דמתה לתמר
ושדיך לאשכלות
אמרתי אעלה בתמר
אחזה בסנסניו
ויהירנא שדיך כאשכלות הגפן
ורח אפך כתפוחים
וחכך כיין הטוב

הולך לדודי למישרים דובב שפתי ישנים
אני לדודי ועלי תשוקתו

This stature of yours seems like tall palm
 and your breasts like its date-clusters [7:8]
 I said "I shall ascend into this palm
 I shall take hold of its fruit-stalk"
 let your breasts for me be like the clusters on the vines
 and the scent of your nose, like apricots [7:9]
 and your mouth¹⁰ like good wine

— it goes to my lover smoothly/ moving gently the lips of sleep¹¹ [7:10]`
 I am for my lover and upon me is his desire.... [7:11]

לכה דודי
 נצא השדה
 נלינה בכפרים
 נשכימה לכרמים
 נראה אם פרוחה הגפן
 פתח הסמדר
 הנצו הרמונים
 שם אתן אתדדי לך
 הדודאים נתנורר
 ועלפתחינו
 כלמגדים
 חדשים גם ישנים
 דודי צפנתי לך

מי יתנך כאח לי
 יונק שדי אמי
 אמצאך בחוץ
 אשקך
 גם לאיבוזו לי
 אנהגך
 אביאך אלבית אמי
 תלמדני
 אשקך מיין הרקח
 מעסיס רמני

שמאלו תחת ראשי
 וימינו תחבקני

Let's go my love
 let's go away to the fields
 and pass the night among the henna blooms [7:12]
 at daybreak we will make for the vineyards
 we will see if the vines are budding,
 a show of blossoms
 the red-bursts of pomegranate flower
 there I will give my love to you [7:13]
 the mandrakes' scent fills the air!!
 and at our gates
 are choice preserves of every kind
 new and old
 my lover, I have stored up for you [7:14]

§What I would give if you were my brother
 nursing at my mother's breasts
 I would find you in the streets
 I would kiss you
 Yet no one would shame me [8:1]
 I would lead you,
 I would bring you into the house of my mother
 She will teach me,
 I will give you spiced wine to drink
 the sweet juice of my pomegranate [8:2]

...His left hand beneath my head
 and his right arm embraces me [8:3]

השבעתי אתכם בנות ירושלם
מהתעירו ומהתעררו את־האהבה
עד שתחפץ

Promise me, daughters of Jerusalem
why would you stir up and awaken love
to the limits of her desire? [8:4]

מי זאת
עלה מן־המדבר
מתרפקת על־דודה

תחת התפוח עוררתיך
שמה חבלתך אמך
שמה חבלה ילדתך

Who is that?
rising from the desert
reclining against her lover

Beneath the apricot tree I awoke you
there your mother travailed for you
there she wrested and birthed you [8:5]

שימני
כחותם על־לבך
כחותם על־זרועך
כיעזה כמות אהבה
קשה כשאול קנאה
רשפיה רשפי אש שלהבתיה

מים רבים לא יוכלו לכבות את־האהבה
ונהרות לא ישטפوه
אס־יתן איש את־כל־הון ביתו באהבה
בוז יבוזו לו

Bear me

as a seal upon your heart

a seal on your arm

for vehement as death is love

as relentless as Sheol its passion

her radiance is a radiant fire flaming [8:6]

oceans cannot overwhelm love;

floodwaters cannot quench it

if a man gave the entire wealth of his house – for love
they would bring him fully into shame! [8:7]

אחות לנו קטנה
ושדים אין לה
מהנעשה לאחתנו ביום שידבר־בה

אס־חומה היא
נבנה עליה טירת כסף
ואס־דלת היא
נצור עליה לוח ארז

אני חומה ושדי כמגדלות
אז הייתי בעיניו
כמוצאת שלום

כרם היה לשלמה בבעל המון
נתן את־הכרם לנטרים
איש יבא בפ־ריו
אלף כסף

כרמי שלי לפני
האלף לך שלמה
ומאתים
לנטרים את־פ־ריו

We have a little sister
 she does not yet have breasts
 what shall we do with her when she is spoken? [8:8]

—*If she is a wall*
we will fortify her with silver
If she is a door
we will barricade her with a cedar beam! [8:9]

—I am a wall and my breasts are towers!
 then I was in his eyes
 as one who finds shalom... [8:10]

A vineyard was Shlomo's in Ba'al Hamon
 He gave that vineyard to keepers
 And each man would receive for its fruit
 One thousand pieces of silver [8:11]

—My vineyard is mine! It is before my face!
 the thousand to you, Shlomo!
 and the two hundred
 for the keepers of his fruit [8:12]

היושבת בגנים
חברים מקשיבים לקולך
השמיעני

ברח דודי
ודמהלך לצבי או לעפר האילים
על הרי בשמים

[Woman] living in gardens
our comrades listen for your voice
let me hear it! [8:13]

—Flee my lover!
and be like a gazelle or young stag
on mountains of balsam [8:14]

Notes

...On eating scrolls

¹ Catherine Malabou and Jacques Derrida, *Counterpath: Traveling With Jacques Derrida* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 262.

² Hélène Cixous, "School of the Dead," in *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, trans. Sarah Cornell and Susan Sellers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 22.

³ Christopher Meredith has recently published on the themes of gendered space in the Song of Songs. These appeared too late to be embraced in the écriture feminine of Book One. Christopher Meredith, "The Lattice and the Looking Glass: Gendered Space in Song of Songs 2:8–14," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 80, 2 (2012): 365–86. Meredith's discussion of Inside/Outside (p. 382) mirrors my own in Book One "Space Odyssey" however my focus is on Son 3 (in her bedroom at night) while Meredith's is on Son 2 (at the lattice window). I also draw attention to the separation and blurring of outside/inside for the two lovers in my work. Where Meredith finds the woman's spaces as mostly captive space, I find these same spaces as safe haven or maternal spaces. Meredith's forthcoming volume *Journeys in the Songscape* further explores concurrently some of the themes my own work has traversed in this thesis, for example, the art of reading, the worlds of the reader and text and how these two interact, *Journeys in the Songscape: Space and the Song of Songs* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013 forthcoming).

Reading Hélène Cixous and the Song of Songs

¹ "Savoir," in *Veils: Cultural Memory in the Present*, eds. Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 9.

² Hélène Cixous, "School of Dreams," in *Three Steps*, 104.

Chapter one: Live Text

¹ Of the Song of Songs, Cixous does write, though not at length. But from another light she does seem to write it, counter-sign it, in spirit, in blood. In her book of interviews *White Ink* she describes the Song of Songs (Canticles) along with *Ecclesiastes* as her "accompaniments of all time" and describes them as the "two great sacred texts" with a resilient philosophy that engages the human condition: love, death, existence. These are strong affirmative statements that suggest the Song of Songs could well be a strong voice in her many writings on these themes. Hélène Cixous, *White Ink: Interviews on Sex, Text and Politics*, ed. Susan Sellers (Stocksfield, UK: Acumen, 2008), 41.

² For Derrida, the description of Cixous's oeuvre as a 'corpus' was significant. He alludes to her focus on the corporal, her writing-of-the-body. Jacques Derrida, *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres, and Genius: The Secrets of the Archive*, trans. Beverley Bie Brahic. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 72.

³ Hélène Cixous, *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (London: Routledge, 1998). See especially H.C.'s preface.

⁴ Here I am suggesting that reading the Song of Songs in acknowledgement of *différance*, is the acknowledgment that it never will be a transparent text leading to transparent meaning. Readings that are the attempt of a simulacrum are and always will be unable to replace it. There is so much of this poem that will never be made present, that is hidden under its veils – this is part of its allure, its attraction. We are here with a trace structure alone. The "transcendental signified" is an illusion, though in Biblical scholarship we wrestle and work to provide it via a hundred methods. We go to the text believing we can access its *physis* but our attempts are bound to the realm of *technê*. It is in the humility of readings that already accept their own contamination and failure, that truth of the poem appears, mirrored and reflected.

⁵ Hélène Cixous devotes this panegyric to the text at the centre of this work, the Song of Songs, in Cixous, *White Ink*: 41.

⁶ Such as the rabbinic, patristic and evangelical interpretations.

⁷ An example would be David Cline's sexualised reading: "Why is there a Song of Songs and what does it do to you if you read it?," in *Interested Parties* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); and Roland Boer's porn [re-]reading that appears brazenly in *Knockin' on Heaven's Door* (London: Routledge, 1999), 53-70. Though, in terms of a vivid reading that avows a creative (though slightly marginalized) voice, a voice that participates in this particular moment of scholarship is fascinating, and at times Boer's reading is surprisingly inspirational. Boer revisits his reading of the Song of Songs in the first part of his follow up volume, *The Earthy Nature of the Bible* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁸ Elizabeth Grosz provides an introduction to Cixous's conception of *écriture féminine* in her book *Sexual Subversions*. Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989) Cixous in "The laugh of the Medusa" makes her strongest stand beginning with these lines: "I shall speak about women's writing: about what it will do." Hélène Cixous, "The laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1 (1976), 875.

⁹ This label is more often applied to the French feminist trinity (Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva) than it is assumed by them.

¹⁰ Luce Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

¹¹ Such as Nietzsche in Luce Irigaray's *Marine Lover*. Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover Of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

¹² Julia Kristeva, *La Revolution du Langage Poétique* (Paris : Seuil, 1974).

¹³ Hélène Cixous, *Coming to Writing & Other Essays*, ed. Deborah Jensen. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Hélène Cixous, *L'exil De James Joyce Ou L'art Du Remplacement* (Paris: Grasset, 1968).

¹⁵ Hélène Cixous, *Love Itself in the Letterbox*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 54.

¹⁶ Richard Ellman in his preface to James Joyce's *Ulysses*. James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), ix.

¹⁷ Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 101.

¹⁸ Verena Andermatt Conley, *Hélène Cixous: Writing the Feminine*, exp. ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), xvi.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber, *Hélène Cixous: Rootprints: Memory, & Life Writing*, trans. Eric Prenowitz, (New York: Routledge, 2003), Kindle edition.

²¹ Hélène Cixous. *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, ed. Susan Sellers (London: Routledge, 1994).

²² *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, xvii.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., xviii.

²⁶ Betsy Wing, "A Translator's Imaginary Choices," in Cixous, *The Book of Promethea* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), x. Betsy Wing describes this effect of voice as a "fiction of presence" which can be repaired (or made authentic) if it is mapped as a "voice that offers escape from the unity of self" (x). Betsy Wing is describing Cixous's poetic project in *Promethea* but her statement also holds true for the Song of Songs in its poetic, mysterious (to the point of opacity) and yet very evocative and significant diffraction of voice.

²⁷ Cixous, *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, xviii.

²⁸ Ibid., xviii.

²⁹ Here I feel very much at one with Caputo. John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), kindle edition. Caputo writes lyrically of how poorly we have read him, how we missed or were blind to "the prophetic, messianic bent" describing his "passion for the im-possible" as well as his "tormented alliance" with Judaism, his "passion for God", coming like Elijah, and as Cixous also whispers how he was to her, to us like a Jewish saint. Caputo claims, "Deconstruction feels with a bleeding, circumcised heart in the midst of a heartless world...." Ibid., loc. 225.

³⁰ Cixous, *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, xviii.

³¹ Jacques Derrida, and Verena Andermatt Conley, "Voice ii," *Boundary 2* 12, no. 2 (1984), 68-93. See the interview "Voice ii" which also appears in *Points...* Jacques Derrida, *Points ... : Interviews from 1974-1994* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 156-170.

³² Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *The Logic Of Sexuation: From Aristotle To Lacan* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press), 74.

³³ Cixous, "Voice i," 52.

³⁴ Derrida, *Points*, 157.

³⁵ Ibid., 167.

³⁶ Cixous, "Voice i."

³⁷ Ibid., 54.

³⁸ Derrida, *Points*, 157.

³⁹ Ibid., 158.

⁴⁰ Cixous, "Voice i."

⁴¹ Ibid., 56.

⁴² Ibid., 56.

⁴³ Maurice Blanchot "Literature and the Right to Death," in *The Work of Fire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 323. On the same page Blanchot goes on to say "Language can begin only with the void; no fullness, no certainty can ever speak; something essential is lacking in anyone who expresses himself. Negation is tied to language. When I first begin, I do not speak in order to say something; rather, a nothing demands to speak, nothing speaks, nothing finds its being in speech, and the being of speech is nothing. That is not the musing of a high-class kind of nihilism. Language perceives that its meaning derives not from what exists but from its own retreat before existence, and it is tempted to proceed no further than this retreat, to try to attain negation in itself and to make everything of nothing. If one is not to talk about things except to say what makes them nothing, then to say nothing is really the only hope of saying everything about them." Blanchot is one of the authors that Cixous identifies as writing-the-feminine in "Voice i." In his literary theory there are many intersections with Cixous. This in particular, 'writing' as a form of textual 'murder' is a theme Cixous explores in "The School of the Dead."

⁴⁴ Hélène Cixous, "School of the Dead," 19.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁷ Joan Copjec makes this Lacanian observation about love and encounter that seems to reach remarkably towards Cixous's writing project of radical (love) encounter in terms of subjectivity: "Only love accomplishes the impossible by allowing the subject to encounter its world directly, that is, to experience the elusive "I" that always seems to disappear in any experience of the world, into the very content of one's thoughts or perceptions." Joan Copjec, *Imagine There's No Woman* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), loc. 1722, Kindle edition.

⁴⁸ Cixous, "School of the Dead," 12.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 21-22.

⁵¹ Ibid., 25.

⁵² "*Lalangue* is the (w)hole through which language flows—not a mouth, not a phoneme, not the object little *a* (which is a hole in language marked by discourse) but *lalangue* a w(hole) in language." David Metzger, "Interpretation And Topological Structure," in *Lacan: Topologically Speaking*, eds. Ellie Ragland Sullivan and Dragan Milovanovic (New York: Other Press, 2004), 142.

⁵³ Cixous, quoted in MacGillvray's introduction describes the poetic as a genre "beyond language" and makes this relation of the poetic to music, to song. Hélène Cixous, *Manna or the Mandelstams for the*

Mandelas, trans. Catherine MacGillivray, Emergent Literatures (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), lvi.

⁵⁴ Fiona Black pre-empts this kind of reading in her essay “What is my beloved?” in *The Labour of Reading* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1999) when she surmises that “the Song engages its readers as a lover, that the reading relationship is amatory, even erotic.” (p. 35). Black goes on to apply Roland Barthes’s texts on love, discourse and pleasure, and employs his notion of the embodied text (p. 39), the *texte amant*. The difference in my reading revolves around the political and ethical undercurrents that accompany *écriture féminine*, as well as the positioning of the work of Hélène Cixous alongside the Song of Songs. The only other work of Biblical Scholarship that engages the writing of a ‘French feminist’ in such a sustained way is Kelso’s Irigarayan reading of Chronicles. Julie Kelso, *O Mother, Where art Thou?: An Irigarayan Reading of the Book of Chronicles* (London: Equinox, 2007).

There are other readings that creatively engage the Song of Songs but are distinct from my own, proceeding from a different position, a different ethic or politic. I have referred to the writing of Bernard of Clairvaux already in Book One, as well as the rabbinic re-inscription that appears in the Artscroll Tanach series, but there are other poetic readings that might be described as sacred and mystical and in submission to a tradition of absolute reading of lover as Christ, and beloved as the soul, such as St John of the Cross and his *Dark Night of the Soul* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003). Similarly, Marguerite of Navarre in 1561 wrote a poetic work that draws on the Song called *Miroir de L’âme Pécheresse* which while written in service of Church was considered scandalous by the same. Teresa of Avila also found herself at the centre of Church censure for her sacred and poetic writing on the Song: *Meditations on the Song of Songs* which she completed in 1576, translated into English by E. Allison Peers, *The Complete Works of St. Teresa of Avila* (London: Burns & Oates, 2002). Jeanne Guyon in 1688 wrote a commentary on the Song of Songs. Her spirituality was clearly and deeply influenced by the Song’s poetics. She also faced censure and later imprisonment for this and other of her writings that were considered heretical. Marguerite, Queen consort of Henry II King of Navarre, Rouben Charles Cholakian & Mary Skemp, *Selected Writings: A Bilingual Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Jeanne Marie Bouvier de La Motte Guyon & Claude Louis-Combet, *Le Cantique des Cantiques de Salomon* (Bruxelles: Haute Pierre, 1997).

⁵⁵ Dobbs-Allsop connects the Song of Songs to Cixous and *écriture féminine* in his 2006 essay in which he describes and foretells a Cixousian reading of the Song of Songs that is “pregnant with untapped political, philosophical, and even theological possibilities and relevances” (p. 131). F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, “‘I am black and beautiful’: The Song, Cixous, And Écriture Féminine,” in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 128-140.

⁵⁶ Beverley Bie Brahic’s translator’s notes. Cixous, *Hemlock: Old Women in Bloom*, trans. Beverley Bie Brahic (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 169.

⁵⁷ I.e. What Derrida refers to as “counter-signing” which is an affirmation of what is “singular” in both Cixous’s oeuvre, and the poetics of the Song of Songs, but drawing them into my own world, my own

discursive space. See Derek Attridge, *Reading and Responsibility: Deconstruction's Traces* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 1.

⁵⁸ In *Paradoxes of Paradise*, Francis Landy investigates the discontinuities in the Song of Songs as a purposeful textual effect that plays on the Genesis 2 recounting of Adam and Eve in their separation and union (the aside of Gen 2:23-24 in particular). Landy writes: "the poetic structure metaphorically reflects the theme of the poem" (p. 219). Francis Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise: Identity and Difference in the Song of Songs*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010).

⁵⁹ Cixous, *Hemlock*, 169.

⁶⁰ Cixous, *Rootprints* 27. If as Cixous suggests, "The origin of the metaphor is the unconscious." this suggests all our metaphors in writings reveal our own unconscious; our own desires.

⁶¹ Cixous, "The School of the Dead," 21-22. Cixous goes on to describe reading as a cosmic practice where "One world swallows another." Ibid., 23.

⁶² Stephen D. Moore explores ways in which critical theory including *écriture féminine* have impacted or have the potential to impact biblical studies. Moore describes Cixous as a utopian writer and unfortunately conflates her project with those of Irigaray and Kristeva. Moore focuses primarily on Kristeva but includes Cixous when he describes their project as: "The purpose of writing—specifically the libidinal writing of feminine *jouissance*— is to expedite the return of the repressed." Stephen D. Moore, *The Bible in Theory: Critical and Postcritical Essays* (Atlanta, Ga: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 19. Moore's summary of the mood in Biblical Studies for poststructural readings is phrased thus: "we don't go in for this sort of thing much in biblical studies " and that the approach to theory has been "chaste and cautious" betraying a "fear of writing." Moore notes with irony that the biblical texts before the Biblical Studies scholar "manipulate words as cavalierly and startlingly as a Joyce or Derrida." (p. 396).

⁶³ Jacques Derrida is quoted as describing Cixous as a "thinking poet" in the back matter of *Coming to Writing*, and so I derive the adjective 'thinking-poetic' from Derrida's words. In his introduction to Cixous's *Stigmata*, he also adds the label "becoming-literary" to her genre of writing. Cixous, *Stigmata*, x. Cixous's articulation of writing as her *raison d'être* and Derrida's summation of this writing's significance as transformative-text (or text-as-transformation) is a light from the side. The Song of Songs shares some poignant similarities with Cixousian genres.

⁶⁴ Cixous describes her texts as 'birthlings', that which is born of the body; and writing as a passage to also becoming a newly born as woman; empowering escape from oppression. Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *La Jeune Née* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1975).

⁶⁵ Cixous, *Rootprints*, 41.

Chapter two: The burning book

¹ Hélène Cixous, *Le livre de Promethea* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 9. "I am a little afraid for this book..."

² Cf. Susan E. Dunn, "The Place That Writes: Locating Hélène Cixous in Feminist Theory, " *Stanford Presidential Lectures And Symposia In The Humanities And Arts*, last modified 1998, accessed 12 March 2012, <http://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/cixous/dunn.html#asterisk>.

³ Jacques Derrida, "Aletheia," *The Oxford Literary Review* 32, no. 2 (December 2010), 171.

⁴ My exception to this exception is Cixous's 1981 essay «Le Sexe Ou La Tête» in which she mentions Lacan twice. It appears in English in the journal *Signs* as "Castration or Decapitation." Hélène Cixous and Annette Kuhn, "Castration or Decapitation?" *Signs* 7, no. 1 (1981): 41-55.

⁵ Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber. *Helene Cixous: Rootprints: Memory, & Life Writing*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz (New York: Routledge, 2003), 210, Kindle edition. Lacan and Cixous worked together on the subject of James Joyce between 1963 & 1965. See also MacCannell's notes on the partnership in her article "The Real Imaginary." Juliet Flower MacCannell, "The Real Imaginary: Lacan's Joyce," *Journal of the Jan van Eyck Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 1, no. 1 (2008): 47.

⁶ Cixous mentions in *Three Steps* that at some point she stopped loving Joyce. It may have been because Clarice Lispector came on the scene. It may have been because Joyce was colonized.

⁷ Hysteria "- a physical display where the body becomes a symptomatic map to be read by the clinical gaze produces a site of condensation of major issues for feminist theory: woman as body-image-spectacle for a gaze historically construed as masculine." Sharon Willis. "Hélène Cixous's 'Portrait De Dora': The Unseen and the Un-Scene," *Theatre Journal* 37, no. 3 (1985): 288.

⁸ Andrew Scull, *Hysteria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud & Philip Rieff, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 55.

¹¹ Hélène Cixous and Eric Prenowitz, *Selected Plays of Hélène Cixous* (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹² Cixous, *Newly Born Woman*, 95.

¹³ Sarah French, "Re-imagining the female hysteric: Helene Cixous's Portrait of Dora," *Traffic (Parkville)*, no. 10 (2008): 254.

¹⁴ The hysteric: women, who shrieked, moaned, shook and dreamed dreams, dreaming that they had been the victims of six thousand years of violations. 3000 BCE is not a random date. It takes me back to the production of the first book *The Epic of Gilgamesh* which is dated by Andrew George to 3000 BCE. Andrew George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh: the Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian*, trans. Andrew George (London: Penguin Books, 2003). In *The Epic*, Gilgamesh sends Shamhat, the courtesan, out to the wilderness to civilize Enkidu, the half-divine Wildman. Little interest is taken in the complexities of life for Shamhat who is sent to service Enkidu. She is a pawn and demonstrates powerfully in the first book, the phallic economy unfettered.

¹⁵ Ida Bauer was Dora. Freud gave her the pseudonym 'Dora' in his casework so as to protect her identity, and more so, the identity of her father.

¹⁶ According to Dunn, Cixous continues to utilize parts of Freudian theory, for example his focus on castration that was also raised in Dora's analysis: "the law of the Father is ruled by the fear of castration." Dunn, "The Place That Writes."

¹⁷ Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1 (1976), 885.

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Question Of Lay Analysis: Conversations with an Impartial Person*, ed. Peter Gay, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1990), 38.

¹⁹ I.e. Son 6:4-10

²⁰ Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman*, 69.

²¹ Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 121-126. See also Catherine Clément's challenge in "Échange" (cited also in Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*, 122). Hélène Cixous, and Catherine Clément, *La Jeune Née* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1975), 292-3.

²² Anna O. or Bertha Pappenheim went on from her 'talking cure' to become an influential figure in Austrian feminism and the pioneer of the *Jüdischer Frauenbund*.

²³ Cixous, "Sorties," 99.

²⁴ Cixous, "Portrait of Dora," in *Selected Plays*, 58.

²⁵ Dunn considers that, for Cixous, the unconscious is an "unmediated space outside of culture." Because the unconscious is repressed, it becomes a site of association with other kinds of cultural repression such as the feminine and that of cultural minorities or the colonized.

²⁶ Cixous, *Rootprints*, 27.

²⁷ J. Cheryl Exum, *Song of Songs: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 45-46.

²⁸ Shulamith is only mentioned in one chapter (7:1) in the Song of Songs, occurring twice in the space of 4 lines in a single verse. But there is no indication that the heroine in each of the other vignettes is the same woman. The Song of Songs makes no stated link between these women. In fact, there are veiled intertextual allusions to many women in the Hebrew Bible. She may represent Eve, she may represent like Eve, Every Woman. Carol Meyers makes this abundantly clear by drawing distinct connections between the two texts. Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3, 178.

In Shulamith are thus the echoes of not only Eve, but of towering figures of the matriarchs: Sarah, Rachel, Rebekah and Leah—the echoes of a thousand mothers in Israel invoked eternally in the *parashot*, as well as those famed women, Esther, Ruth, Bat-Sheba. But also the tragic figures of Avishag, Tamar, Dinah, the judge's daughter, David's concubines, the Levite's concubine and Zion-Jerusalem herself are called to memory in violent scenes: such as the barring of the doors Son 8:9, the violent assault (outside the door) 5:7. However, it would be a mistake to reduce or explode Shulamith to an archetype in order to make sense of her. Exum, *Song of Songs*, 8. Francis Landy, in *Paradoxes of Paradise*, finds that the lovers are at once types, persons, symbols, mythical; fantasy in tension with reality: "at all points there is a discourse between the specific and the collective [an] individuality that is on the edge of expression." (p. 55).

Shulamith is no true name, but features as a moniker that means in Hebrew, 'peaceful one'. It is an apt appellation that I appeal to here in order to bring her into language. Marvin Pope traces this etymology, along with the various possibilities in *Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 596-600.

²⁹ As in Othmar Keel's reckoning of dream scenes in his commentary: Othmar Keel, *The Song of Songs*, trans. F. J. Gaiser (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 120, 188. In his discussion on Son 3, Keel concurs that many of the scenarios in the Song of Songs are unlikely to be available in reality due to social constraints and thus often take the form of 'wishes' or as in Son 3 encased in the notion of dream. Dreams or dreaming however are not specifically identified in the text (p. 120). Mariaselvam locates dream scenes both in the Song of Songs and in Tamil love poems; recounting of the dream as a kind of genre for love discourse in which actions that could never take place in reality, take place in the dream. Abraham Mariaselvam, *The Song of Songs and Ancient Tamil Love Poems: Poetry and Symbolism* Analecta Biblica 118 (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1988), 32-33 and 221.

³⁰ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation Of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 4 (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1976), 324.

³¹ "With the text on the couch, it will be expected that the desire of the text will be that of the other, of the analyst, whomever that may be." Boer imagines the text on Lacan's couch in his essay. But with the text on the couch who in fact is the object of analysis. As Cixous concurs, it's not we who dream the text, but the text that dreams us. Roland Boer, "The Second Coming: Repetition and Insatiable Desire in the Song of Songs," *Biblical Interpretation* 8, no. 3 (2000), 287.

³² Freud, *The Interpretation Of Dreams*, 783.

³³ Cixous, "School of the Dead," 53.

³⁴ Cixous, "School of Dreams," 58.

³⁵ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 37.

³⁶ Cixous, "School of Dreams," 65.

³⁷ Cixous & Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, 21.

³⁸ Danielle Ramsey notes, "In Lacanian theory there is only psychosis in the pre-Symbolic." This is psychosis as 'foreclosure' (of the symbolic); an unrestricted relation to the imaginary and the real. Danielle Ramsey, "Feminism and Psychoanalysis," *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*, ed. Sarah Gamble (New York: Routledge, 2001), 140

³⁹ Cixous, "School of Dreams," 74.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 71.

⁴¹ Ibid., 74.

⁴² Son 4:11, 5:1 (milk); Son 6:9 (girl-child from the mother's womb); Son 8:1 (lactating breasts), Son 8:5 (birthing a child under an apricot tree); 8:2 (exchanges – in the 'house' of my mother).

⁴³ Cixous, "School of Dreams," 66.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 67

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 106.

⁴⁷ Cixous cited in Peggy Kamuf, "Outside in Analysis," *Mosaic* 42, no. 4 (December 2009), 28.

⁴⁸ Žižek seeks to explain Lacan's difference to his forefather Freud as one of dimension. While Freud sought to adjust human existence to human reality, Lacan sought to provide a theory and practice of

that radicalism that is human existence. Going beyond the pragmatics of adapting to social reality, Lacan's project, according to Žižek, attempts to show how reality itself becomes constituted. To these two Žižek adds a third—the idea of truth. Not only did Lacan work with helping some soul accept a "truth" about himself, but he also shows how truth itself becomes a prospect. As in Cixous's appraisal of her sanity in the project *Le Prénom de Dieu*, madness attains a dignity of "fundamental philosophical attitude towards reality." The Lacanian School is a return to Freud from an interdisciplinary montage of humanities fields: Saussurean linguistics, Searle's Speech Act Theory, Lévi-Strauss's anthropology, mathematics, and a liberal smattering of continental philosophies: Aristotle, Heidegger, Plato, Kant and Hegel, and of course the writers of literature: Sade, Joyce, and Poe to name a few. This evolution of Freudian psychoanalysis also involved a re-languaging of psychoanalytic frameworks. The Freudian ego is transplanted by "subject" and Freud's psychosexual stages overshadowed by the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real. Lacan practices then, in his scholarship and in his clinic, a kind of reading of the analysand as text. His psychoanalysis consists of hermeneutical endeavor that revolves around the metaphor.

Slavoj Žižek, *How to Read Lacan* (London: Granta Books, 2011), loc. 81, Kindle edition. Hélène Cixous, *Le Prénom de Dieu* (Paris : B. Grasset, 1967).

⁴⁹ Conley, *Hélène Cixous*, 9.

⁵⁰ From Žižek's point of view, the symbolic represents "society's unwritten constitution which is the second nature of every speaking being." Žižek, *How to Read Lacan*, loc. 144. The world of the symbolic has the precondition of our instinctive acceptance of complex networks of rules that operate in terms of grammar, speech, and presupposition at all levels of communication. This system both requires me to obey in order to perpetuate the stasis of the status quo and in the same moment acts against me by restricting me according to a mutually upheld vision. It measures me, measures my compliance in subtle and preconscious ways. Reward and penalty are inherent operations that move according the degree of my compliance. This momentum of obedience sustains society's fabric. It is into this construction of reality mediated by language that a human being is founded.

While the Symbolic continues its operation around an infant, the infant itself is pre-linguistic and cannot participate in it. In the Lacanian framework, the infant thus experiences primarily the primitive world of the pre-Imaginary. In this world the site of experience is the body. The primary other in this world is the mother or primary caregiver, who forms a dyad with the child. The world is body, mother, breast; a primal and feminine space.

Between the age of 6 and 18 months, the Imaginary commences when the child begins to construct a sense of self primarily in terms of what is mirrored by the mother's face (the mirror stage), but while the child receives pleasure from the sense of differentiation as 'self', the phase also evokes illusions, deceptions and manipulations (as the site of experience is specular). The image held is that of a bodily whole, however the subject is alienated and fragmented. It is impossible to be fully conscious of one's wholeness, due to the exchange required from the other, but one imagines it. Thus it is in the eyes of the other that we become a subject. (Mirror Stage) Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2005), loc. 232, Kindle edition.

A second crisis is not far away. Around the age of 3, under the cloud of metaphorical castration (the oedipal complex), the child passes from the Imaginary (mother) to the Symbolic (father). The shibboleth required for entry to this world is speech. We enter via language, which precipitates an intrinsic and unavoidable relation to law. In Lacan this law is the Law of the Father, which, embedded in language, colonizes the child and sets conditions for sexual difference. What remains after these two crises, however, is grief. There is latent grief over the loss of mother and breast. There is also grief for the lost whole, that is the illusion nursed in the Imaginary.

The Real, Lacan's third order is, on the other hand, much more difficult to explain. Žižek attests:

"It is not an external thing that resists being caught in the symbolic network, but the fissure within the symbolic network itself. The Real as the monstrous Thing behind the veil of appearances is the ultimate lure ... for Lacan the Real – the Thing – is not so much the inert presence that curves symbolic space (introducing gaps and inconsistencies in it), but, rather, an effect of these gaps and inconsistencies." Žižek, *How to Read Lacan*, loc. 1135.

Even for Lacan this was an abstruse concept that evolved over the period of his work, gradually moving to the foreground. Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, (London: Routledge, 2005), loc. 1496, Kindle edition. The Real cannot be codified. It cannot be rendered in the symbolic, cannot be assimilated and made meaningful. It is an excess, the left over, that which is at the limit and limits the imaginary and symbolic, which simultaneously does not exist. It is the impossible encounter with objet a; a traumatic encounter always already circumvented by fantasy, fantasy masquerading as ideology or fantasy in any of its other masks. Ibid., loc. 1598.

⁵¹ Dunn, "The Place That Writes."

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Hélène Cixous, «Le Sexe Ou La Tête ?» *Les Cahiers du GRIF* 13, no. 13 (1976): 5-15. The English translation appears in the journal *Signs*. Hélène Cixous and Annette Kuhn, "Castration or Decapitation," *Signs* 7, no. 1 (Autumn, 1981): 41-55. The version in *Signs* was revised by Cixous and some text is omitted.

⁵⁴ «Le Sexe ou la Tête, » 8.

⁵⁵ My translation, also note Annette Kuhn's translation in Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation," 45.

⁵⁶ Cixous, *White Ink*, 59.

⁵⁷ Danielle Ramsey, "Feminism and Psychoanalysis," in *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Post-Feminisms*, ed. Sarah Gamble (New York: Routledge, 2001), 140.

⁵⁸ Juliet Flower MacCannell, "The Real Imaginary: Lacan's Joyce," *Journal of the Jan van Eyck Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 1 (2008):46-57.

⁵⁹ Sun Tzu. *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), loc. 1032, Kindle Edition. Cixous, «Le Sexe,» 5.

⁶⁰ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, loc. 1032-3.

⁶¹ Cixous, «Le Sexe,» 6.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “Essentially Venus remains equally beautiful whether she is represented sleeping or waking—indeed, she is perhaps most beautiful sleeping, and yet the sleeping state is precisely the expression for the absence of spirit.” Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), 59. But Cixous is also referring in particular to Kierkegaard’s *Diary of a Seducer*. Søren Kierkegaard, *Diary of a Seducer*, trans. Gerd Aage Gillhoff, Continuum Impacts Series (New York: Continuum, 2006).

⁶⁴ Kierkegaard, *Diary of a Seducer*, 137.

⁶⁵ Cixous, «Le Sexe,» 7. Cixous, “Castration,” 44.

⁶⁶ Cixous, “Castration,” 51.

⁶⁷ Cixous, *White Ink*, 66.

⁶⁸ Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972-73*, trans. Bruce Fink, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, vol. XX, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan (New York: Norton, 1998), 9. Lacan makes this statement first in Seminar XVII. Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Russell Grigg, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, vol. XVII, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan (New York: Norton, 2007).

⁶⁹ From the entry “Sexual relationship” in Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary to Lacanian Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), 181.

⁷⁰ Cixous, « Le Sexe, » 7. My translation, also note Kuhn’s translation in Cixous, “Castration,” 44.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Cixous, *White Ink*, 173.

⁷³ Ibid., 173-4.

⁷⁴ Evans, *Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 103

⁷⁵ Andrea Hurst, *Derrida vis-à-vis Lacan: Interweaving Deconstruction and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 2.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Kamuf, “Outside,” 33.

⁷⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Without Alibi*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Meridian (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 239.

⁷⁹ Kamuf, “Outside,” 31

⁸⁰ Ibid., 30.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Cixous, «Le Sexe, » 14.

⁸⁴ Cixous, «Le Sexe,» 14.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Irigaray also explores the possibilities beyond the Lacanian sexual divide. She specifically explores touch, physical touch, as a way of loving-the-other, whereas Cixous’s interest is ‘touch’ conveyed through writing. She figures it as a kind of holding and preservation of life, that does not apprehend,

but sustains. "No nourishment can compensate for the grace or work of touching. Touch makes it possible to wait, to gather strength, so that the other will return to caress and reshape, from within and from without, a flesh that is given back to itself in the gesture of love." Luce Irigaray, *The Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carol Burke and Gillian C. Gill (New York: Continuum, 2005), 155.

⁸⁷ Cixous, "Castration," 54.

⁸⁸ Kamuf, "Outside in analysis," 21-22.

⁸⁹ Carey Ellen Walsh, "In the Absence of Love," *Scrolls of Love*, eds. Peter S. Hawkings & Lesleigh Cushing Stahlberg (New York: Fordham University Press), 283-305. Boer, "The Second Coming" & Roland Boer, "Night Sprinkles," 53-70, in *Knockin' On Heaven's Door* (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁹⁰ Walsh, "In the Absence of Love," 284.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 2008), 266. As cited in Boer, "The Second Coming," 283.

⁹³ Boer, "The Second Coming," 277.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 278.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 189.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 278.

⁹⁷ Jacques Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, vol. XI, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan (New York: Norton, 1994), 172. Cited in Boer, "The Second Coming," 282.

⁹⁸ Boer, "The Second Coming," 283.

⁹⁹ Walsh, "Absence of Love."

¹⁰⁰ Boer cites Lacan here. Boer, "The Second Coming," 283.

¹⁰¹ Sade is invoked by Boer here, noting Lacan's association of Sade to Kant (i.e. the fulfilment of Kant). Of course Lacan found Sade to be a wealth of information on the law, pain, perversity triad and it assisted him to elucidate the mysteries of feminine jouissance. "The path of jouissance with a woman is not necessarily to subject her to all the acts practiced on Justine. On the other hand, in the domain of the articulation of ethical questions, it seems to me that Sade has some very solid things to say", Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, 188. *Justine* is very much a perverse and vile book, and yet, is brilliantly written and calls into question the very ethics of interest to Lacan. Perhaps the Marquis de Sade was more than just a dissipate libertine after all?

¹⁰² Walsh, "In the Absence of Love," 292.

¹⁰³ Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: 1959-1960*, trans. by Dennis Porter, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, vol. VII, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan (New York: Norton, 1997), 169.

¹⁰⁴ Boer, "The Second Coming," 282.

¹⁰⁵ Boer, "The Second Coming," 292., & Walsh, "Absence of Love," 293.

¹⁰⁶ Boer, "The Second Coming."

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 292.

¹⁰⁸ Jouissance-of-the-other

¹⁰⁹ Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, 77.

¹¹⁰ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2000), 260.

¹¹¹ Cixous, "School of Dreams," 61.

¹¹² Ibid. 63.

¹¹³ Walsh, "Absence of Love," 292. The Song of Songs was described as a Holy of Holies (of scripture) by the legendary Rabbi Akiba.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 293.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ehsan Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature: Desire, Jouissance and the Sinthome in Shakespeare, Donne, Joyce and Ashbery* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 38.

¹¹⁷ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, loc. 3701. Note also in the *Ethics* seminar where Lacan associates the feminine sexual organ with metaphor. "It is insofar as the female sexual organ or, more precisely, the form of an opening and an emptiness, is at the center of all the metaphors concerned." Lacan, *Ethics*, 169.

¹¹⁸ Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, 38.

¹¹⁹ Žižek, *How to Read Lacan*, loc. 572.

¹²⁰ MacCannell, "The Real Imaginary," 53.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 56.

¹²³ Ibid., 50, 57.

¹²⁴ I.e. to ashes. Mireille Calle-Gruber in Cixous, *Rootprints*, loc. 2730.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 158.

¹²⁶ Cixous, *Coming to Writing*, 50.

¹²⁷ Cixous, *Rootprints*, loc. 1979.

¹²⁸ It is this kind of "gaining of the present" that J. Cheryl Exum describes as the "illusion of immediacy" in her OTL commentary on Song of Songs. I am also witness to the same poetic effect in Book One, that the lovers' story (through the magic of present tense and direct speech, the jussive) appears to unfold before the reader, bringing about what Exum describes as collapse of both "time and place" (p. 5). Exum's description of the text as "invitational" also aligns with my reading. J. Cheryl Exum. *Song of Songs: A Commentary*, ed. James L. Mays, Carol A. Newsom and David L. Peterson. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

¹²⁹ Cixous, *Rootprints*.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 53.

¹³¹ Francis Landy discusses the notion of jouissance and the poetics of the Song of Songs in his article "Jouissance and Poetics" drawing not on Lacan per say, but on the work of Julia Kristeva and her *La Revolution Du Langage Poétique* as well as Roland Barthes's *La Plaisir du Texte*. Julia Kristeva's works *Pouvoirs de l'Horreur* and *Histoires d'Amour* are relevant in his discussion of the topic, which I have

explored in Book One. Kristeva's emphases are different to Lacan's and Cixous's and are not engaged here. Francis Landy, "Jouissance and Poetics," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 45 (1991), 51-64.

¹³² Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *The Logic of Sexuation* (New York: SUNY Press, 2004), 89.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Cixous, "School of the Dead," 25.

¹³⁶ Ragland-Sullivan, *The Logic of Sexuation*, 89-90.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 55. Lacan goes further to suggest: "women's jouissance is based on a supplementation of this not-whole (*une suppléance de ce pas-toute*). She finds the cork for this jouissance [based on fact] that she is not-whole—in other words, that makes her absent from herself somewhere, absent as subject—in the *a* constituted by her child." Ibid., 35. The Song wants to resist this perfectly logical conclusion when she avows—I am whole, complete, saying it with her mouth in the Hebrew: תמתי (teasing Lacan, and as her witness, her lover, did he not say, like a murmur, lips barely moving, as he was reading the *Song*, chapter 5 and again in chapter 6, did he not say: "perfect one" תמתי 5:2, 6:9). Is she anti-Lacanian? Is she trying to have all of the 'not-all'? Has she sinned?

¹³⁹ Cixous, *Rootprints*, 44.

¹⁴⁰ Ragland-Sullivan describes this as "a series of relations to the real and jouissance whose referent is object (*a*) and the hole in the Other ... from which the real emanates, marked by the shadings of inhibition, symptom, and anxiety in sexual desire" Ragland-Sullivan, *The Logic of Sexuation*, 89.

¹⁴¹ Cixous, *Rootprints*, 55.

¹⁴² Cixous, *Le livre de Promethea*, 32-33.

¹⁴³ Cixous, *Rootprints*, 55

Chapter three: The Road to Awe

¹ Jacques Derrida, "Envois," in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

² Note Lacan's contribution to this metaphor of "urn" (or vase) which he adapted from Heidegger's 1962 essay, *Die Frage Nach Dem Ding* [published in English as *What is a Thing?*]. Lacan writes:

"Now if you consider the vase from the point of view I first proposed, as an object made to represent the existence of the emptiness at the center of the real that is called the Thing, this emptiness as represent in the representation presents itself as a *nihil*, as nothing. And that is why the potter, just like you to whom I am speaking, creates the vase with his hand around this emptiness, creates it, just like the mythical creator, ex nihilo, starting with a hole." Jacques Lacan, *Ethics*, 121.

Lacan considers this just like the “fashioning of a signifier” into which a “gap” is introduced. Ibid. This links to my previous quote in which Lacan (in the same seminar) discusses the ‘female organ’ and links it to this idea of emptiness at the centre of the metaphor. Ibid. 169.

³ Derrida cited in Peggy Kamuf, “Outside in Analysis,” 31.

⁴ Jacques Derrida, “Rams,” in *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham Press, 2005).

⁵ From Derrida’s essay “Poetics and Politics of Witnessing” in Derrida, *Sovereignities*.

⁶ Paul Celan, *The Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, trans. John Felstiner (New York: WW Norton & Co, 2002), 395.

⁷ Derrida, *Sovereignities*, 95.

⁸ John Felstiner, “Preface,” in *The Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, xix.

⁹ Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Barbara Galli (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 216, Kindle Edition. Wolfson in his introduction finds Rosenzweig’s figuring of the “truth” of the Song of Songs akin to Heidegger’s notion of double concealment i.e. *aletheia*: “the Song instructs us that truth is mirrored directly in the mirror of appearance, that is, the mirror of the text. Through the agency of this double mirroring ... one can discern the inherently metaphorical nature of eros and the inherently erotic nature of metaphor.” Ibid., loc. 331.

¹⁰ Hélène Cixous, “Shakespeare Ghosting Derrida,” *Oxford Literary Review* 34, no. 1 (2012), 3.

¹¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Translator’s preface” in Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1976/1998), xvii.

¹² This is again, Spivak. Ibid.

¹³ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 61.

¹⁴ Ibid., 158.

¹⁵ Cixous, “Shakespeare Ghosting Derrida,” 3.

¹⁶ Betsy Wing “A Translator’s Imaginary Choices,” in Hélène Cixous, *The Book of Promethea*, trans. Betsy Wing (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), viii.

¹⁷ I have hesitated in my writing of translations of the Song of Songs. Even the best translations are transmutations. It becomes another song; another song entirely each time it is translated. Both Cixous and Derrida reflect on the way in which translation alters their work, an alteration to the point that it becomes something other. In “The Truth that Wounds” Derrida finds translation of Celan’s poetry, even his own translations, as “exiled in another language ... the most faithful translation is violent: one loses the body of the poem which exists ... once only.” Jacques Derrida, “The Truth that Wounds,” in *Sovereignities*, 168.

¹⁸ Cixous, “Shakespeare Ghosting Derrida,” 20.

¹⁹ Celan’s ‘little quatrain’ quoted in Derrida’s “Shibboleth for Paul Celan” in *Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan*, ed. Aris Fioretos (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994).

²⁰ Elliot Wolfson in Rosenzweig, *Star*, loc. 326.

²¹ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2009), 373.

²² The quote beginning "... an allegory of truth itself," comes from Jacques Derrida's article "Aletheia" — his meditation on the *light of the dark* album of Kishin Shinoyama's photography. Jacques Derrida, "Aletheia," *The Oxford Literary Review* 32, no. 2 (2010): 169-188, 172.

²³ Bataille develops this concept from his engagement with Rimbaud's poem: «*Elle est retrouvée/ Quoi? L'éternité./ C'est la mer allée/ Avec le soleil...*» which he cites on the same page, Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* (New York: Arno Press, 1977), 25.

²⁴ John Corbett and Terri Kapsalis, "Aural Sex: The Female Orgasm in Popular Sound," *TDR* (1988-), 40, no. 3 (1996), 102. See also Ralph Norman, "Jouissance, Generation and the Coming of God," *Theology & Sexuality* 14, no. 2 (2008), 155.

²⁵ Norman, "Jouissance," 155.

²⁶ Cixous, *Rootprints*, 3.

²⁷ Reminiscent of Kant's Starry Heavens: "Two things fill the mind with every new and increasing admiration and reverence, ... the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me. I do not need to search for them ... [as if] they were veiled in obscurity or in the transcendent region beyond my horizon; I see them before me..." Kant goes on to describe a sublimity, infinity, connectivity and "annihilation of worlds" which is the gift of his reason. In Cixous's starry heavens that follow (her own re-tracing of her work in *Jours de l'An* now in *Rootprints*) she reinscribes this 'practical' reason as an enigmatic invocation of a 'poetic' reason. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary Gregor, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 133-4; 5:162.

²⁸ Cixous, *Rootprints*, 148.

²⁹ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 358.

³⁰ Cixous, *Rootprints*, 145

³¹ *Ibid.*, 145.

³² Paul Celan's complete speech appears as "The Meridian" in the appendix of Derrida's *Sovereignties*, 173-186. This excerpt from the translation appears on page 181. Pierre Joris provides a translation with some difference: "The poem wants to head toward some other, it needs this other, it needs an opposite. It seeks out, it bespeaks itself to it. Each thing, each human is, for the poem heading toward this other, a figure of this." This appears in Paul Celan, *The Meridian*, ed. Bernhard Böschstein and Heino Schmull, trans. Pierre Jorris (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 9.

³³ Celan, "The Meridian," in Derrida, *Sovereignties*, 184.

³⁴ Gadamer cited in Jacques Derrida, *Sovereignties*, 138. Gadamer reverses the motion of the 'reading' of art. It turns back on the viewer: "Concerning this horizon of subjectivity, the work of art never stands there like an object facing a subject. What constitutes its being a work is that it affects and transforms the subject, beginning with its signatory. ... The 'subject' of the experience of art, that which remains

and endures, is not the subjectivity of the person who experiences it, but the work itself.” Gadamer’s notion transfers to the textual/sexual experience of reading (and being read).

³⁵ Celan, *The Selected Poems and Prose*, 376-7.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “and the torah was written in white fire and black fire...” סימן א, פרשת בראשית, מדרש תנחומא: בראשית, פרשת בראשית, סימן א [Midrash Tanhuma: Genesis, Parashat Bereshit, article 1], צל הרים [Tsel Harim], accessed 1 June 2012, <http://www.tsel.org/torah/tanhuma/breshit.html>

Shir haShirim: The Song of Songs

¹ Translation, transmutation and other obscene acts (a short essay on provenance and translation)

“In truth, the whole world is not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel.”
—Rabbi Akiva from the *Mishnah Yadaim* 3.5 and attributed to Akiba, see Landy, *Paradoxes*, 1.

Where was she birthed? Did she begin as folk poetry, folk song? Did she evolve and mature through generations of women like good wine? Sung in the evening, at village weddings, sung by the adolescent girls as they ran out and danced in the fields? Sung by carousers at taverns? By a veiled woman on a street corner? This past history of The Song of Songs has long since sunk into the deep of time. Nobody knows, nobody can know. The esteemed commentators are hesitant, tentative, hesitantly speculative and speculatively tentative. The thorough and long summaries, and the dense and even longer discussions on the vagaries of date and geo-historical setting of the Song of Songs cannot be engaged here, but have been engaged at length in commentaries such as Pope, Fox, Murphy and Exum, Gordis. Lys also should be lauded for his contribution to Songs scholarship, influencing particularly the work of Francis Landy (*Paradoxes of Paradise*). Daniel Lys, *Le Plus Beau Chant de la Création: Commentaire de "Cantique Des Cantiques."*, Lectio Divina 51 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1968). Other works that while remaining in the background have been a crucial foundation for my project are:

- א. Marvin Pope’s, *Song of Songs*;
- ב. Exum’s, *Song of Songs* (both Pope and Exum aforementioned)
- ג. Roland Murphy, *The Song of Songs: A Commentary on the Canticles or The Song of Songs*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990);
- ד. Robert Gordis, *The Song of Songs: A Study, Modern Translation, and Commentary*, 2nd ed. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1961);

This elusive song contains both classical and mishnaic elements in its language as well as a smattering of foreign loan words including both Persian and Greek. She plays with us—and in response educated speculations range from the beginning of Ancient Israel’s monarchy right through to the Greek

hegemony. Alter also discusses dating trends in *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 2nd ed., (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 185, Kindle Edition. The commentators such as Fox and Pope, aforementioned, place the codification of the Song of Songs hypothetically between 400-200 BCE.

Is she a unique song? Variations on her genre are sung throughout the agrarian and patriarchal societies of the world, past and present. According to Bloch & Bloch she is a village song, sourced from the world of women. She represents so poignantly the common places of the human condition. There may be a social comparison in the women's sung rituals in rural India at wedding preparations, where the women will sing together the rite of passage that women make from daughter to wife. Mira Nair represents some of these songs in her film *Monsoon Wedding*. *Monsoon Wedding*, [film], dir. Mira Nair (India, USA, France, Italy, Germany: Mirabai Films, USA, 2001). These sung rites of passage amongst women occur also amongst the Yeminite Jews, and certainly the danced rite of passage, the tarantella of the Tarantella region in Italy may also share. Entangled voices of love (Eros) and violence make a capricious midwife in this rite of passage. In India the women sing both of joys but also the terrors of their situation; their vulnerabilities. This kind of singing out, or dancing out as a kind of catharsis might well be the frame of the biblical Song of Songs. All the generations of womankind from Eve in her garden and onwards had to orient themselves within a patriarchal world in which song or dance is a temporary escape. Michael Fox's contribution to Songs scholarship in *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (p.191) invites us to consider the women of Ancient Egypt, who would wear necklaces made of shards of ivory, etched with remarkably similar love poetry, a trend popular in the 13th century BCE. His 1985 work was published by the University of Wisconsin Press in Madison.

In literal readings the Song of Songs is considered the writing of Solomon the King but there are few contemporary commentators willing to take up this particular baton. While attributed to Solomon, there is little evidence to suggest that his name exists as more than that of a patron, an attribution, by association or as an acronym, as suggested by Rashi. Elliot Wolfson explores the mythical possibility of Shlomo as an acronym 'the one to whom peace belongs' in *Language: Eros and Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 358. Pope also attests to this possible interpretation of the king's name.

Solomon figures as the legendary patron of Hebraic love songs and wisdom writings. At best he operates as a foil that illuminates the true love of others and at worst an object of ridicule. For example, Son 8:11, which refers to Solomon's vineyard, with a name which it is possible to translate as "husband of a multitude." [Fox, *The Song of Songs*, 187. Scott B. Noegal and Gary A. Rendsburg, *Solomon's Vineyard*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie, Ancient Israel and its Literature (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).] Noegal and Rendsberg read the poem as "invective" based on comparative Arabic traditions (p. 129-170). Thus there is no true closure that the great commentators can enact regarding the dating and authorship of the Song of Songs yet here we are alone with her through her text, and the air is heavy with frankincense. We could not be closer to her person.

If it is granted that the author is 'Anonymous' then even more speculative is discussion on 'his' gender. Or was she a woman? It is true that in all probability the inscriber of this lyric poetry was a

male scribe in Jerusalem. But it is not true that in all probability only a man could have composed this song. Andre LaCocque is one scholar who has argued persuasively for the author as Ancient Hebrew court songstress in *Romance She Wrote: A Hermeneutical Essay on The Song of Songs* (Harrisburg, Pa. : Trinity Press International, 1998). LaCocque also pursues this view in "The Shulamite," in *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies*, ed. André LaCocque and Paul Ricoeur (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998): 235-264. There are a number of good reasons to postulate feminine authorship. While Hebrew women's voices were not welcome at the gate, their participation in music, dance and lyrical arts is well attested in scripture. Of specifically female singers who perform publicly or at court (Neh 7:67, Ez 2:65), there are the King's singers of Ecc. 2:8 are both male and female. As to the composition of song by women, there is Miriam's 'Song of the Sea' (Ex 15:21), and Deborah's song (Judg. 5:1) for example. Also, there exist examples of the spontaneous songs of women after battle victory (1 Sam 18:7) and again women singing in response to life events (Isa 54:1) which is implicitly commonplace in the terms of the witness of the text. There are indications of women singing in a variety of situations, in the home/village, but also in the culture of prostitution and courtesan-ship (Isa 23:16) as well as celebrations such as a bride's wedding preparation (Jer 33:11). Women's voice in song seemed to serve Hebraic society in many ways; perhaps as transferable a commodity as the woman's body in dance or in childbirth. Carol Meyers discusses the experience of woman in *Discovering Eve* in detail that could not be explored here. In comparative religious domains women have been known to sing and dance. Enheduanna of Sumeria, for example, the En priestess of Ur, composed songs and psalms to the goddess Nanna in Sumerian language. As with Sappho, her lines became classic, embedded in high culture for over 5 centuries. Frymer-Kensy describes her as 'the Shakespeare of Sumer', Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Fawcett Columbine), 11-12.

The text herself is self-characterized as 'feminine' expression. In this attribution of femininity I refer to *La Féminine* as it is understood differently by Cixous, Derrida and Lacan; i.e., not reduced to the biological or anatomical; a pulsion that may be expressed by either sex. Cixous sees many of her favourite male authors such as Kleist and Genet as also capable of writing an *écriture féminine*. In no other biblical book does a woman speak so clearly, for so long and so untrammelled. She speaks without introduction and without a narrator-chaperon. She bursts onto the scene from the first line privileging for herself, for much of her song, the interests of the feminine as opposed to patriarchal and yahwistic interests to which LaCocque also attests in "The Shulamite." Even the voice of the male lover is focused on concerns of love, desire and life. The maternal, the erotic, the voice of peace, creation resound throughout in opposition to that of war, law, death and possession. However other Song scholars while noting the prioritising of the feminine read differently. Meredith (who follows Exum) for example, sees the Shulamith's gaze co-opted by the narrator, who puts his words in her mouth: "she is narrated to a world in which she narrates" ("The Lattice and Looking Glass," 382). I, however, want to pursue a Cixousian line, where due to the poetic, polysemous nature of song, women and men could sing truths without threatening the status quo to the face; that is, the poetic as a mode of resistance. As

such, songs also provided (particularly) women with a creative voice, feminine expression, defining themselves for themselves, a catharsis, a subversive text laced with struggle. They are emancipatory texts, deconstructing or subverting dogma and doctrine. Alter finds in his reading of the Song of Songs that:

“Only in the Song of Songs ... is the writer’s art directed to the imaginative realization of a world of uninhibited self-delighting play, without moral conflict, without the urgent context of history and nationhood and destiny, without the looming perspectives of a theological worldview.” *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 203.

It could be argued that she (the text) of herself is a writing that is profoundly gendered feminine. Along with the Song’s transgressive poetic style that ignores boundaries, linear structures, predictable patterns, linguistic rules and that de-privileges patriarchal interests, the text could be said to embody an *écriture féminine* as described by Cixous in «Le Rire de la Méduse.»

Regardless of the sex of the author, the expression of the text concerns the feminine and non-phallogocentric expression of an often oppressive, patriarchal world. At the same time it is also possible that the author was a woman or a man or ‘others’ occupying other positions in sexual difference. In the Ancient Near East, eunuchs both belonged to and were distinguished from other men in society (maleness in Israel was defined in strongly anatomical ways). These groups played prominent roles in scholarship, administration and service in the imperializing civilizations like Assyria and Babylon.

An English translation of the Song of Songs from the Hebrew appears hesitantly and last in this work, very conscious of its *différance*. I have hesitated in writing a translation. Even the best translations are transmutations. It becomes another song, another song entirely. And another song each time it is translated. Both Cixous and Derrida reflect on the way in which translation alters their work, an alteration to the point that it becomes something other. In “The Truth that wounds,” Derrida finds translation of Celan’s poetry, even his own translations, as “exiled in another language ... the most faithful translation is violent: one loses the body of the poem which exists ... once only.” [Derrida, *Sovereignties*, 168.]

In providing an English translation I accept that I have created something new, that some violence has been committed however unintentionally. I have feared domesticating her. I feel it, a kind of horror. The way you have to wrestle with such a beautiful text. I am worn trying to read her, wrestling with her words, because I am always about to brim over in pleasure with them, their glimpse, their sky and starlight. But then, to clip their wings and etch them in this very foreign tongue, English, this very modern tongue, is a kind of horror and feels perverse. Somebody dies. I don’t want to domesticate her. I face the same night-long struggle as many of Cixous’s translators who all inscribe her work in English in between pain and pleasure, in between *jouissance* and death. Trying, succeeding, failing to keep her *joie de vivre* live and wild, but somehow falling into domestication all the same. She goes from exotic mare to milch cow. Travesty. And so like many of Cixous’s translators, Macgilivray, Wing, Conley, Kamuf I wrestle that ‘uneasy tension between accuracy and readability’. Here she is, constantly escaping me. Here I am falling into her, trying to find the word, that exact simulacrum, the

measure of her face, her crystalline image. How do I write her with all her colours? At the end, it's not her. It's a doppelgänger.

It's not that I haven't made every strenuous effort, in good faith, reaching out to the heavens in a bid to retain the "psychic density essential to [this] poetic text" as Betsy Wing writes in her introduction to *Promethea*. [Cixous, *Promethea*, viii.] And yet, while the translation retains a strong genealogical connection to the Hebrew, this translation and any translation of the Song of Songs remains outside. She, the untranslatable (and every untranslatable simulacrum) is outside the boundary of the borders of language and languages. Even with my superfluity of good faith I have not translated her. I cannot faithfully translate her. She has never been translated. This is, and will each time be, a new poem. In spite of this resistance to and acknowledgement of the creative complexities of translation, in the spirit of Akiva, this lyric poetry is first in every way. Without a moment of reserve I have immersed myself in her, neck deep in this plasma and I have translated in response to this visceral posture, claiming with H.C.: "Honestly: here I am, in it!" [Ibid., 3.] And so, here I am in this poem, that is new. I celebrate this new poem birthed from its mother as the close edge between myself and the hebraic Song of Songs. Mother and daughter appear side by side here. Hebrew and English. She and her daughter have the last word in the body of my text.

My English 'birthling' (or translation/transmutation) of the Song of Songs is shaped by this visceral reading, this recognition of 3rd, 4th, 5th dimensionality in the Song of Songs. She is a poetic paper crane so it is important to explain my translation of the Song of Songs a little here because I have displayed it in such a way to draw attention to, by position and font, the spectrum of internal voices engaged in a caco-sym-phony of discourse. The way the voices call to each other within the poem. They call from the edges of my pages.

I have reduced the disruptions to the text (which often appear as verse and chapter numbers, labels, names) that have the effect of drawing inflexible boundaries. Verses are numbered in subscript but at the end rather than the beginning of each verse. Natural breaks and stylistic disjunctions do appear in the Song of Songs and these are marked by a centred symbol. Francis Landy alludes to these joints, breaks and repetitions, seeing in them mirrors of Gen 2:24 in poetic effect: leaving and cleaving which he explores as "Two Versions of Paradise," in *Paradoxes*, 172-262, esp. 219. Landy also explores this territory further in the article, "The Song of Songs and the Garden of Eden," in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98, no. 4 (1979): 513-28. Landy follows Lys, *Le Plus Beau Chant*, for this intertextual ground between the Song of Songs and the Garden of Eden (for Lys specifically Genesis 2-3).

The Song of Songs is not at all simplistic and succinct in its own arrangement of voice. There are multiple voices continually coalescing (or condensing) throughout. Identity is fluid rather than concrete. In my translation the Singer embodies multiple voices that cross gender boundaries, person-to-person boundaries and time-space boundaries. Meredith's recent contributions are important here however I like to return to Derrida's descriptions of multi-vocality (beautifully) reinscribed in *Cinders*:

«Un enchevêtrement de voix en nombre indéterminé, dont certaines paraissent masculines, d'autres féminines, et cela la se marque parfois dans la grammaire de la phrase. Ces signes

grammaticaux sont lisibles mais ils disparaissent pour la plupart à l'audition, ce qui aggrave une certaine indécision entre l'écriture et la voix, indécision dont le mot *là*, avec ou sans accent, dans *il y a là cendre*, faisait déjà courir le risque.» ["... an entanglement of an indeterminate number of voices, of which some seem masculine, others feminine, and this is sometimes marked in the grammar of the sentence. These readable grammatical signs disappear for the most part when spoken aloud, which aggravates a certain indecision between writing and voice, an indecision already risked by the word *là*, with or without the accent, in "cinders there are" [il y a là cendre]." Jacques Derrida, *Cinders*, trans. Ned Lukacher (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 22.]

Here Derrida discusses his own writing of a polylogue for the journal *Anima* but highlights the polylogue qualities inherent in the Song of Songs. Derrida goes on to comment that the writing of multiple voices in text seems to call out for or resonate with «la voix intérieure» [the interior voice] which, for Derrida, is «une voix absolument basse» [an absolutely low voice].

In the translation the singular, projecting and gendered voices are in the foreground of the mise-en-scène, calling to each other from opposite edges of the page. In order to accentuate the introverted and background voices that feature as soliloquy or reverie, voices that doubt and question, and hostile voices which seem to merge with or mimic those of society (of the village, of the women, and men, of male relatives, of friends, advocates, detractors and adversaries), these appear at the centre of the background, or via italics representing in font, the splitting or merging with the primary voices. From within and from the beyond (the chaosmos) two other voices distil—the voice of violence and the voice of peace (the voice of the mother). These voices hover in the subtext.

In the main body of the thesis the Song of Songs is quoted in Hebrew followed by an English translation. The Hebrew text follows the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. [K. Elliger, W. Rudolph, and G.E. Weil, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 5th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997).] My own translations of the Song of Songs have been enriched by the work of Ariel and Chana Bloch. [Ariel Bloch & Chana Bloch, *The Song of Songs: A New Translation With an Introduction and Commentary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).] The Hebrew text reproduced here is based on the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. [*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: With Westminster Hebrew Morphology* (Stuttgart; Glenside PA: German Bible Society; Westminster Seminary, 1996; morphology 1991), Electronic edition.] Vowel pointing and cantillation marks are removed to restore the originary openness of the text (for this translation that wants to privilege open possibility). The *Masorah* (text with pointing) as a medieval evolution of text (an originally unmarked text), has the effect of unveiling the text in some aspects yet veils it again in others. While the Masoretic reading and systematization of this song is formative, these diacritical features produce a reading of their own.

² באשישור "in the blossoms": According to Bloch & Bloch this phrase is enigmatic and untranslatable. The possibilities in translation then move from the traditional rendering of *ashishot* as "raison-cakes" to "blossoms" (in Fox's estimation). In the setting I have followed Fox's logic. Fox, *The Song of Songs*, 107. Bloch and Bloch, *The Song of Songs*, 151.

³ 'cutting'; 'covenant' See Gen 15:10b (Avram's covenant) : ויקחלו את־כל־אלה ויבְתֹר אתם בתוך...

⁴ Breath, passion, soul נפש

⁵ *The Song* plays in homonymy here in בצבאות with *adonai tzevaot* [יהוה צבאות] see Psa 24:10 et al.

⁶ Note the lightest allusion here in the phrase, באילות השדה to another name of God: *el-shaddai* [אל שדי] (see Gen 17:1 et al. eg. אני־אל שדי...). The singer tantalisingly mixes the profane with the utterly sacred.

⁷ 'head'

⁸ Concubines; the girls of the harem of the king.

⁹ Landy uses this word in *Paradoxes*, 255.

¹⁰ Palate; inside the mouth

¹¹ Lit. lips of sleepers

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The poem is lonely and en route. Its author remains
added to it.

—Paul Celan