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Conference Presentation for **Sexuate Subjects: Politics, Poetics & Ethics**  
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(Prelude)  
DESICCATIONS  
THE DARKNESS OF LIGHT'S SWEEP

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No guinea of earned money [money earned by the woman] should go to rebuilding the college on the old plan; just as certainly none could be spent upon building a college upon a new plan; therefore the guinea should be earmarked 'Rags. Petrol. Matches.' And this note should be attached to it. 'Take this guinea and with it burn the college to the ground. Set fire to the old hypocrisies. Let the light of the burning building scare the nightingales and incarnadine the willows. And let the daughters of educated men dance around the fire and heap armful upon armful of dead leaves upon the flames. And let their mothers lean from the upper windows and cry, Let it blaze! Let it blaze! For we have done with this "education"!

Virginia Wolf. *Three Guineas*; cited in Jacques Derrida, *Cinders*, p. 67.

In 'The "Mechanics of Fluids' Irigaray closes with a dis/location of a partial exile that exiles the ruling symbolic — a feminine language that ex-ists somewhere beyond comprehension. And to which in other parts of *This Sex Which is Not One* she describes as *speaking (as) woman (parler-femme)*<sup>1</sup> as that experimental process that finds connections to female sexuality and writing for the disruption of the syntax of discursive logic based on masculine self-sameness. This writing of bodies (*Écriture Féminine*) on conclusion to her *Fluids text*, is suggestive of a proximity in "such close touch with itself that it confounds your discretion" ... of a self-confounded by not having yet understood everything.

In an embrace of that which is not yet understood, and further desires for something beyond a totalized position of knowing everything, and what is more, a future-anteriority space-time process, my approach turns to the *Écriture Féminine* of Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida. In Derrida's text "Fourmis", *Lectures on Sexual Difference*<sup>2</sup>—he describes a dream encounter as the gift of sexual difference through Cixous writings on an ant, whose body is inscribed, cut, marked through the passage or passing of the text as the imperceptible and innumerable darkness of sexual difference. His encounter, he insists is one of interruption—as a time against time—a future anterior that could not quite anticipate the affect of *her language's gift*. Her gift advances on the dream of innumerability, where unthought-thought ex-ists beyond

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<sup>1</sup> Speaking (as) woman (*parler-femme*): Not so much a definitive method as an experimental process or a discovery of the possible connections between female sexuality and writing. "speaking (as) woman" would try to disrupt or alter the syntax of discursive logic, based on the requirements of univocity and masculine sameness, in order to express the plurality and mutuality of feminine difference and mime the relations of 'self-affection.'

<sup>2</sup>— [Lectures de la Différence Sexuelle] in Hélène Cixous & Mireille Calle-Gruber *Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz (London & New York: Routledge, 1997) pp. 119-127. ]

to rational comprehension. Outside of representational or conceptual paradigmatics exists the dream as a beyond all recognisable codes of sexual difference that exists in a shifting destiny, an existence proven because the dream of innumerability (beyond the figure 2) itself exists: “Does the dream itself not prove that what is dreamt of must be there in order for it to provide the dream?” (See Derrida, J. & Conley, V.A., *Voice II...* Boundary 2, Vol.12. (No.2. 1984) pp. 68-93 (On Feminine Writing: A Boundary 2 Symposium).

Irigaray’s *Écriture*, to different degrees converges also on a “revolution” or “dream” of an unimaginable future-to-come of a *feminine law* that would reside in a new language. The imperceptible darkness of an ant that shifts sex, as it passes by and in writing from *Une Fourmi* (feminine ant) to *Un Fourmi* (masculine ant) —crawls through language, as language, as writing bodies. Derrida’s reception of this *language gift* (in only his sense of the gift without return) activates a *contretemps* as an in-between space-time; a cut in progressive temporal logic. This *Story of Contretemps* / “against-time” is the story of two cuts: a cut that separates and a cut that joins and repairs. It is a cut that is never completely a/part. Derrida emphasizes “strangled” here. An ant has a body which is marked, phased and phrased, strictured by an annular multiplicity of rings, which cut it without cutting it, divide it without slicing, differentiate without dissociating it. In this respect there belongs something between the body of writing and the sexes that is “strangled” — the aporia that marks sexual difference and impacts on us all. It is an in-between that has a *turn* that cuts up old ground and in the *same* move “makes say what is in reserve.”

This dream is the undecidability and irreducibility of sexual difference that comes in the *form* [ant-writing] of an imperceptibly darkness that is—an adventure of reading and interpretation — *it* crawls with thousands of meanings. A fluid, decomposed and desiccated passing, alive with detours, interruptions, interpretations, that is writing’s trace to be *read*—it is not the proof of appearance for virtue of knowing everything. As Irigaray reminds us it is to be listened to with half-an-ear given *it* (this feminine language) is in such close proximity with itself) one needs to learn to hear differently, to hear difference in the inaudible, pulsating imperceptible darkness of uncertainty.

We work with a cinema of darkness, we associate with French experimental film-maker Philippe Grandrieux, described here as “... the sense of free-floating gaseous (*Gay-tious*) perception created by the throbbing, under-lit images; ... by the amorphous nature of the sound-track ... to relinquish the will to gain full mastery over it, choosing intensity and chaos over rational detachment.” (Martine Beugnet, *Cinema and Sensation*, p. 3.) We move between an enclosed darkness and an intensity of light, between the not-knowing of projections and performed gestures of a wanting-to-say. The work concerns the fluidity of desiccations as the future anterior of imperceptible shadows, traversing darkness and light, sound and image, meaning and ignorance, a whirl of uncanny encounter, a poetics of darkness, of imperceptibility. This concept of ‘Gaseous’ (*Gay-tious*) perception is a term Deleuze uses in the context of experimental films, where perception seems detached from any sense of purposeful subjectivity, and akin to the kind of perception experienced, for instance, in hallucinatory dream states. (Deleuze 1986: 84 *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*)

Critically this prelude suggests that *Desiccations* is a work where sexual difference is in passage through a cinema of sensation, of imperceptibility, as an expansion to bodily knowing — framing, movement of the camera, contrast, grain, light, sound variations, visual intensities, a-v disjunctions/separations-reparations of in-between desires, readings etc, that extend to smell, touch and taste – operate here as a dialogue between emotion and sensation as a desiccated decomposition that folds and disseminates multi-sensory evocation of longing, desire, fear and terror.

FIN

FURTHER OFFERINGS .... For Q+A Discussion of paper

The sensate cinema of Grandrieux’s he suggests is “to be able to hold the power of the real, its outpouring, its hallucinatory vibration ... The rhythm, the way bodies are framed and lit, that’s when we start to lose ourselves, and cinema comes closest to what it essentially is: a sensual experience of the world.” Grandrieux 2000:88

For Irigaray, the theoretical geometric-scientific-technical-mathematical fluids resisted in her text, she suggests ‘deal with a form of analysis to progress, while losing a certain relationship to the reality of bodies

in the process' — I'm pleased to note that Irigaray engages with the plurality of bodies rather than what is still today in common discourse described as THE BODY in such fields on gender, performance studies and those other contemporary disciplines engaged in corporeality, as though there is still the one, the same, the universal body — is it human, gendered, spatial, temporal, animal ...? This works hints at the *Gelassenheit* (*letting be*) of bodies with others that suspends all mastery or rule for territorial cuts. Agamben (in his text *Beyond Rights*) explores the displaced being (in the figure of the refugee) as the paradigmatic figure for contemporary urban living where displacement is increasingly becoming the norm voiding self legitimacy through archaic notions of citizen-state-nation-sovereign — Here the denizen activates a notion of extra-territoriality where borders are fused and confused to produce a space-time in excess for living on and *letting be*. This extra-excess economy of *letting be* gifts us bodies that resist the capture of fixity.

Derrida quotes: ... she gives in writing, she gives to write, she advances to the dream, she advances on the dream, she nourishes herself with dream but also she strides *on it, towards it*, she goes to, gives herself up [*serend*] to it, in advance, while as for me [*fourm?* —my addition], I stride to the interruption of the dream or rather to a certain separation/reparation of the dream ... Hélène, as for her, lets the gift of the dream breathe in her writing. It is as if her dream were at home there.

"I do not know. Must one think "difference" "before" sexual difference or taking off "from" it?" Derrida, *Choreographies*, op. cit. p.172.

Outside of this kind of representational or conceptual paradigm exists the dream that Derrida alludes to in his dream of the *Innumerable* that returns us to a time *forgotten*, a beyond all recognizable codes of sexual difference, that exists in a shifting destiny, an existence proven because the dream of innumerability (beyond the figure 2) itself exists

#### TIME OF WOMAN – EX-IST

Woman does not exist because whatever constitutes the *value* of existence woman is foreign to, and due to this foreign *currency* or the reserve of the gift that is withheld, a reserve in reserve: «propritation is a sexual operation, but *before* it there was no sexuality».³ SPURS




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