

PROMETHEA'S SONG OF SONGS

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I am a little afraid for this book. Because it is a book of love. It is a burning bush. Best to plunge in. Once in the fire one is bathed in sweetness. Honesty: here I am, in it.¹

It is a terrifying thing to write about the Song of Songs. Because it is a burning bush. It is a sweet thing. I love its love, its synesthaesthetic embrace that has one reading, tasting, embodying and envisioning all at once. A honeyed scroll that I desire to take into my mouth. The point at which I don't care if it takes everything I have or that it makes me fall. But let's be honest. The double edge of poetic ambiguity and the explicit carnality make it easy to caricature, as certainly some scholars have, such as calling it the Schlong of Schlongs,² a penultimate kind of phallogocentric labelling that one could love to hate. Yet, this kind of gratuitous engagement is almost eminently preferable to the obscene, academic neutrality that constitutes some other Song of Songs scholarship, analysing the elusive text with the obsessive and meticulous mercilessness of a sociopathic serial killer.

My interest in the Song of Songs is literary, and phenomenological. I

She woke with a start.

It was the strangest dream and she instinctively began to write.

'I haven't written for weeks', she wrote, 'I am afraid to. If I write I might enter that place that draws out infinity in me; that makes me expand unbearably. I should write. But I can't. There is never time. I am still yet to be born.'

But words had a way of breaking viciously through gaps.

She was so terribly sad. She wondered whether there was anything that could make her happy. She tried to imagine happiness but found herself picturing an asteroid bobbing in far off

1. Hélène Cixous, *The Book of Promethea* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), p. 3.

2. Roland Boer, *The Earthy Nature of the Bible* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 9.

am interested in the text's nuances of orientation, its bending of subjectivity. I am interested in the subjective 'I's' of the Song and what it does to the reader in terms of boundaries, positioning and in terms of generativity; the bodily investment the reader makes in the characters. The Song of Songs performs something. It makes something happen. This act of literature, that is the Song of Songs, has the power to say something that

is not normally allowed, has the power to make the reader feel. In this broaching of what is allowed there is a sense of lawlessness, and resistance, resistance to the laws of grammar, laws of interpretation, laws of the Father, laws of love. It carelessly merges the Symbolic with the imaginary, which has the consequence of tearing the expectations of the Symbolic apart.³ A gentle play on the boundaries of language that in an instant burns the whole thing up. It carelessly merges other things as well. There is a blurring and reconstitution of sexual identity. There is a blurring and reconstitution of human and animal.

As Hélène Cixous describes, there are numerous affects when one reads a text: 'When we read a text we are either read by the text or we are in the text'.⁴ The first person languaging in the Song of Songs exaggerates this particular affect, as does the erotic dramatic tension that builds throughout.

galactic seas. She thought about being alone, floating in the midst of all that space. 'The vastness is pouring over me. That's what it is', she wrote.

That was when she foresaw the end. She was lying back amongst the wisteria blossom. The dying rays of a dying world came to her. Translucent leaves of young oak all around her.

Did she love enough?

Had she borne enough? This and that, perhaps. But love. What was it?

Her search was perhaps one of courage. Because her refuge had been in the starry text illuminated by constellations and their interstellar signatures.

And then there was the fact that she had forgotten her body.

She had heard her body call out with phantom pains. Sight fading. She could no longer see, hear nor feel. Her rational mind was failing her. 'My rational mind is failing me', she wrote alongside her star charts. She could no longer remember salient details. The world called to her but she couldn't help drifting into the velvet curtain that marked the beyond that was also the limits of human life.

3. Jill H. Scott, 'Loving the Other: Subjectivities of Proximity in Hélène Cixous's Book of Promethea', *World Literature Today* 69.1 (1995), pp. 29-34.

4. Hélène Cixous, *Reading with Clarice Lispector* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 3.

The act of reading the Song produces a vicarious desire that plays into sexual fantasy. The act of embedding oneself in the text can only be sustained if there is a 'shuttling back and forth' between readerly engagement and disengagement with voices, acts, persons and genders of the text.⁵ One finds oneself embedded in the feminine gaze, then in the masculine, and this produces a remarkable reading experience that is bisexual in character. I, the reader, experience vicarious repositioning, disorientation and reorientation along the gender and sexual spectrum. It's a liberating *ménage à trois* when the reader and the male lover and the female lover converge, breaking down the dichotomy of sexual orientation into a panoply that is at the very least bisexual as one colour in its array. There is that moment when I, without a doubt, fiercely and passionately give myself to the female lover:

You stand like a date palm
 And your breasts are like its clusters of fruit
 I said to myself, I shall ascend this palm
 I shall take hold in its crown of fronds... (Song 7.9)

This bisexuality in Cixous's thinking is a result of conceptualizing self and sex as a matrix that is complex, fluid, and unfenced.⁶ She goes so far as to suggest it is fatal to confine oneself to a rigid identification of gender; fatal for generativity, for creativity, for writing and for reading, and for love. It is this generous opening and gifting of self that liberates self and other from 'the

It was pulling her further into a chaos of melting laws, a despair that was a quantum dirge. 'What remains?'

'I cry because he is leaving', she wrote on a wrinkled and stained star chart of the eastern sky, 'and already part of him is gone. I cry so hard because his leaving is like a death. I want to raise a stone altar to remember him, or a mosaic, or a carved stone with the words: "Here is where he kept his clothes". The space there that is his emptying is beyond bearing. I'm afraid of the nothing.'

But this was also a moment of calm and of courage. Because she was a coward and a fool seduced by every passing emotion. What was yearned for would arrive. Her deepest wish would arise from the deep.

*That last night in the observatory.
 That last night she cried so hard.
 Poured out liked water. His skin, his
 breath, his touch seemed so mortal.
 Death stalked. His clothes soon to
 also disappear. Memories took on*

5. Cixous, *Reading*, p. 3.

6. Ian Blyth and Susan Sellers, *Hélène Cixous: Live Theory* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 27.

Phallogocentric Performing Theater', and this release sustains the fertile presencing of both masculine and feminine in the mind. The bisexual transformation requires the sacrifice of 'glorious phallic monosexuality'.⁷ A vastly easier chore for women than for men, she suggests.

There have always been those uncertain, poetic persons who have not let themselves be reduced to dummies programmed by pitiless repression of the homosexual element. Men or women: beings who are complex, mobile, open. Accepting the other sex as a component makes them much richer, more various, stronger, and—to the extent that they are mobile—very fragile.⁸ Cixous goes on to claim that it is those artists, thinkers, philosophers having freed themselves from sexual monarchy who then invent and create new forms, unfettered from the banal, and captivated by anomalies. These

ones, she believes, drink in the 'abundance of the other', of sexual difference, of variety.⁹ She wraps this theory up in the notion of the possibility of a future human becoming with writing (and reading) as a conduit to its actualization. It is through writing and reading that crystallizes for Cixous this expansion of the interior I.

That there is no invention of any other I, no poetry, no fiction without a certain homosexuality (the I/play of bisexuality) acting as a crystallization of my ultrasubjectivities.¹⁰

some sacred hue. All her futures began to crack and fall.

She dreamed. Dreamed she was ice-skating. The ice was too thin. It was cracking up. Children were falling in. Alone. Then she dreamed of histories but the astronomers at the university laughed and pushed her aside.

She dreamed of him too. She dreamed that he came to her in the night. She dreamed that he asked her to marry him. She was wrapped in his warm arms. His deep heart was beating softly. Then, how sweet and warm was the world.

They made love that night. But it was not the same. It was not as sacred as it had been before. But it broke the tension and the pressure. There was a hardness in him. He was already partly gone. Part of him had disappeared into nebula. The invisible man, star child. He told him to give her time to grieve. This death comes slowly.

7. Blyth and Sellers, *Hélène Cixous*, p. 27. See also Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), p. 85.

8. Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 84.

9. Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 84.

10. Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 84.

It really is a beautiful fantasy. That one's libido could be cosmic, an unconscious that is limitless, that one's creative generativity is ongoing, without prescribed borders, falling into the other without condemnation, living inside the hims and hers, a kind or a conduit that is overwhelmingly prescient in a bisexual reading of the Song of Songs. An imaginary where one runs through palaces hand in hand with him, with her, with them, seeing through the other's eyes, feeling the desire, accepting it, kissing her lips and his, and having one's lips kissed.

...within the hims and hers whom she inhabits just long enough to watch them, as close as possible to the unconscious from the moment they arise; to love them, as close as possible to instinctual drives, and then, further, all filled with these brief identifying hugs and kisses, she goes and goes on infinitely.¹¹

Hélène Cixous wrote *The Book of Promethea* in 1983 as a lyrical and experimental exploration of textual subjectivity. It is a work of the imagination that is 'beyond' bisexuality, cast as a feminine homoerotic love story, a celebratory rewriting of myth that on a transcendent level remembers' the ancient woman

who gave fire to humanity and bears the wrath of Zeus for it. In the work the authorial persona struggles against the character she has created as her love object, which in turn has become a thing in itself, one with whom she must relate, love and desire even to the point of giving everything, including her life. The book is a Pandora that comes to life, literally a gift-horse, which is simultaneously real and fantasy, and one that traverses 'spiritual and physical pleasure'.¹²

Then at dawn, lying down in her bed she wrote: 'You strike me at odd times. In the bath. My feet, my toes. I weep tears. Lying in your tears, my tears. You're already gone.'

She really wanted to vomit. It rose up—the sadness, the anxiety, the unbelievable caught in her throat. She couldn't hold it in. She spilt out. The way in which he loves her. She loves his love. Raw. He tears her out, her soul rages and shrieks, her eyes burn. She gasps. She can't breathe or eat or shit. Everything is in turmoil. She bleeds for days.

Who is she now? What is she... who was she?

She was trying to find a way. This celestial labyrinth enclosed her, hedged her in on every side. Who could have said it? It burned when he said it. He thrust her against the heat mercilessly. Held her in his rays. She expanded and then collapsed in on herself.

'My soul pours out. My soul pours out. My soul pours out'. She wrote it over and over.

11. Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 88.

12. Betsy Wing, 'A Translator's Imaginary Choices', in *The Book of Promethea*, p. v.

In the outset, the work questions the act of writing as proprietary. The introduction is a work of grief where the author reconciles herself to the loss of the work. The work has become alive. For this reason it was difficult for her to write an introduction to a book that was already no longer hers. And to recognize also that the character she created has in turn changed her beyond recognition. The author describes herself as settling into the margins of the book as a 'minor character'.¹³ The kind of separation she describes is analogous to the birth of a filly. She writes:

As for Promethea, she is really the one who made the whole text already, the text from which I emerged just half an hour ago (my hair still clinging from the Atlantic and crystal flecks all over my body. Anyone who wants to know how this almost finished work tastes would only have to lick my shoulder).¹⁴

But the book soon moves to a battle between self and desired other. There is a mood in the work that could be described as abject. There are scenes where the love for the other is so overwhelming that the other is both loved and hated, just as the self is loved and hated. Repulsion and Desire contest. Both self and other become subject to violent rejection: 'A severing, tearless mourning reigned'.¹⁵ As Kristeva writes on the notion of the Abject, it appears immediately in the wake of the disturbance of identity, system and order.¹⁶ All of these things occur in a love affair and thus is why it is possible both to love and hate passionately the other in equal measure.

For love is as vehement as death.
Its passion as relentless as Sheol. A
radiant, flaming fire... (Song 8.6)

Black's work on the abject in the *Song of Songs* is poignant here. She

As if to offer an apology she lay down with him. Told the story of his home in the eastern sky when they were first together there. How he had made love to her in the evening, her head pillowed by Pleiades, her body aloft on the shining scales of Pisces, Venus's scent was heavy in the evening air. The time of the kites had come, their tails echoing with celestial flute. The heavens were alive with a cacophony of tones.

She recalled how they had been dressed in luminous silks, had their hands joined, bound with silver ribbons. Orion blessed them. The Twins wept happily.

Gently she ran her fingers through his hair and across his jaw.

He pulled her to him then and he drank her like a thirsting sojourner.

13. Cixous, *Promethea*, p. 5.

14. Cixous, *Promethea*, p. 5.

15. Cixous, *Promethea*, p. 85.

16. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 4.

finds the abject or grotesque in the *Song of Songs*, like that of *The Book of Promethea*, as a life-affirming and transformative exchange. That, the abject is a sign of life, a signal that the body is alive, that it is in process, that it is changing, that it will eventually die, but will always be: 'integrated with life, with nature with the world around it'.¹⁷ As H. writes in *Promethea*:

Promethea is mortal, she knows she is, passionately ... She gives me her life to take care of, to give her. I give it to her: that instant she is born. Nothing is more astounding than these births in the prime of life.¹⁸

This maternal theme abounds in *The Book of Promethea* and is an incendiary site for abjection. The birthing of a child is the first separation, the first differentiation, and the mother is abjected as is also the child, both expelled and expelling itself from the womb, both grabbing hold of and dependant on the mother, while pushing the mother away in order to exist separately. This attraction to and repulsion from difference is reinstated in future intimate relationships and is in fact the natural substance of human encounter. In the *Song of Songs* also, the language of maternity and birth is ubiquitous. It functions as a driver of the erotic tension of the poetry as travail, separation and loss intensify encounter and discovery.¹⁹ Without

They rolled together, holding, drinking, clinging, trying to hold together the falling pieces of the universe.

He asked her to stay. She fell asleep deeply, once again wrapped in his arms and legs. When they woke in the morning the magic had broken and they drifted away.

She left him there and fled. She journeyed beside a river. She fled into the hills. She fled into the heart of an oak. She ensconced herself there in a brace of oak, deep in the countryside.

This is where she gave herself over to her involuntary fears.

Surrounded by thistle soldiers, shoots sprouted from ancient bark. It was good to have her feet in the earth. She noted that the tree had split in two. The tree was solid and firm. She sat at its heart. 'Wait—', she said to the tree, 'let me climb down into your womb. Now I am in your womb.' Rain down, she thought bitterly. Unleash it all. I can't feel you here. I'm safe. Perhaps it is the shelter of this bark.

He was then exactly a thousand miles away. And she was curled in foetal position in the heart of a tree

17. Fiona Black, *The Artifice of Love* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2009), p. 120.

18. Cixous, *Promethea*, p. 125.

19. I.e. Song 8.1, 5.

separation, and the wrench of discontinuity we simply couldn't fall in love.

Under the apricot tree I awoke you. There your mother travailed for you. There she wrested and woke you to life... (Song 8.5)

imagining the eye of Osiris that lay at Orion's shoulder. 'I am trying to escape a murder. My brother, who is trying to steal my eternal life.' She wrote this. She wrote madly. Her descent into madness was barely arrested by the sound of her laughter.

In *The Book of Promethea*, the two women are unable to walk away from each other because of their entangled and dire love, yet unable to hold their soul-naked communion without destroying each other. That kind of ultimate union is just out of sight, and might simply be described as an oblivion from which one cannot return. Their insurmountable difference means constant obstacles to being truly together.

Promethea said to me: I would like to spend three years with the tribe... I would like to spend three years speaking their language and collecting their recipes.

I pictured it. My guts knotted and I said: I can't. I need my paper, my books, pens. To say nothing of light. And also the telephone.

We had a long, sad, three-year annum.²⁰

And then suddenly, out of the blue, they reunite, and experience for a moment a charged glimpse of joy, or jouissance, or heaven: 'I am already hip-deep in your eyes, I am already breast-deep in your soul', says H.²¹ At these moments gendered denominations of identity and sexual orientation give way to the complex bisexual weave of femininity and masculinity. The other is more than a woman or a mare, and more than a 'she', Promethea is everything.

For Cixous, bisexuality is not a new, neutral block that forms between masculine and feminine. It is the facilitation of exchange, movement, between self and other (also the other within the self). It is a giving and receiving that

The cold came quickly that night in the brace of oak. The moon hung at an impossible height, encircled by iced cloud. A succession of distant planets lay cast by its side. The coldness of the night was even greater in relation to the great heat that had been the day. It was a heat that stole from the body; that oppressed and wore down.

It was then that she crept out of the oak and into the field. Really she was trying to get away from the silence and perhaps the spectre of the night, but in the field all that light suddenly

20. Cixous, *Promethea*, p. 25.

21. Cixous, *Promethea*, p. 113.

'develops, lives, breathes' as a product of one's interior world.²² At this point notions of gender break down altogether. Sexuality becomes a myriad of differences where labels of man and woman are meaningless.

...in those extreme moments where separation is extinguished in the tightest embrace. It is there, 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.²³

One of the curious resonances between the *Song of Songs* and *The Book of Promethea* is the transgression of the fantasy of radical

discontinuity between human and animal. In both books, animal and human characters fuse shamelessly. In *Promethea*, H.'s object of affection is a semi-mythical horse, like Pegasus, but is also simultaneously woman. She speaks, she has hands and breasts she thinks and she can make H. angry and burn with desire at the same time. The transgressive redemption crosses species. *Promethea* is lioness, doe, fawn, lionessdoe. As is the *Song's* Shulamith (4.7): 'Your breasts like two fawns, twins of a gazelle'.

Landy paints the *Song of Songs's* play with pansexuality as allusion to Edenic innocence and perfection. Landy also directs us to the fragility and vulnerability of the field animal (i.e. dove, fawn, doe, gazelle), all of which are hunted.²⁴ But the *Song* also fuses the woman with the mountain lion and leopard (4.8), which alludes to the bare animality, passion, predatory aggression

seemed too bright, and a fiery heat pursued her down the country lane. The heat of world rose up from the basalt, from the bitumen. From fossilized depths, it issued up through cracks and vents. The road warped under that convection. The currents of the earth were surging through her. She could barely contain it behind her eyes. She grasped a brace of birches in her hands and tried to stand. When she could, she fled towards the shade but it neatly avoided her leaving her in the Sun and it was merciless.

So, on account of the light of the day, the night was a reprieve, but a reprieve that came too suddenly, too abruptly. Having become inured to the heat, the cold fractured her along her lines.

It was all too much. She had stared into the faces of the old gods. In paying the music, in truth. Truth that burned and scarred. It was no longer

22. Hélène Cixous, *Rootprints* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 52.

23. Cixous, *Rootprints*, p. 53.

24. Francis Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), pp. 232-34.

without law, and before sin. Cixous combines both the fragile and most predatory of animals in her vision of Promethea. Promethea is mare, lioness, doe and fawn. A strange beast, a seraphim and a paradox that explodes with pleasure:

H's desire: to overturn the mountain, to caress her until she turns into a foaming mare, and then, leaping onto her, to grip her warm flanks...until she turns into a lionessdoe, until she turns into a fawness ...²⁵

The woman as mare features in both texts. This raising of the horse to fuse with a human character could signify the redemption of the body as opposed to the mind. The body has always carried animalistic connotations. Bodily impulses are denoted as animalistic and beastly and are hidden and repressed. The sex act itself is associated with animality, animal passions, animal innocence, a primal moment that escapes the law but only for a moment. It then becomes subject to the law's full disgust. Perhaps what also figures here is the way in which the body as animal signifies mortality. It becomes the duty of sentience, perhaps stirred by a fear of death, to subdue both the animal without and the animal within, covering one's naked testament to animality with clothes. Derrida's contribution on animality and nudity is fascinating here. He writes,

about him. He was far way. Love was so poor. So wretched. She couldn't begin. The world had fled. She was left with the Father Sun in its fury. Diamond faceted light refracting, ice crystal, oh how it burned in her hand. Who would have known that a childhood in hay would emit such a screech? She was running out of room. Each word too strong. A tattoo. Indelible ink. She heard their cries but she was already gone, lost to the air, to the gentle breezes. She bled till her clothes and the bamboo chair was red. Red as the roof of the farm house above which her star children lay, far away, deep beyond the day. She knew she would stay to the end. Have them examine her last breath. Oh she had reached. The truth is she felt safe. Climbing up a ladder of angels' wings. Dreaming Jacob's dream. She would sleep. 5 days for a thousand years. I can write, she thought, but it's like giving blood. I always wonder if I will survive him. She wasn't anywhere. There was a high tide within her. Out it came. Why try to write this book of stars? she thought. Why? When I can't find the night, when I can't find the courage to look through the telescope. Rain. Rain on. There was nothing. Naught. And she wrote, wrote, carved, light slices, etchings from which words seep. Somewhere there was a tree in which she could be safe. But she was in a jubilation of despair. Nowhere. There was not a place. She seeped only.

25. Cixous, *Promethea*, p. 142.

'Before the cat that looks at me naked, would I be ashamed like a beast that no longer has a sense of its own nudity?'²⁶ Cixous's *Promethea* moves defiantly in an opposing motion. She raises the repressed body, and in particular the repressed female body that has, since Plato, been considered abject, inferior, bestial and wild, she unclothes it, reveals it to all. She brings out and confronts the reader with it. This is both political and poetic. She raises both woman and horse into existence and into being. And not into an acquiescent or subdued kind of being, but into vital, passionate and unbridled being. Further, she as human, authorial presence makes love to this seraphim that she has created, as does the lover in the *Song of Songs* when he touches her face.

As a mare amongst Pharaoh's chariots. My darling friend, you excite me. Beautiful cheeks, circlets at your ears ornament them... (Song 1.9)

In the poetic, it is possible that the animal can mythically become the Other, and an Other with which one can relate and elicit exchange across the borders of difference in the context where 'the most powerful Philosophical tradition has refused the "animal" all that'.²⁷ For Cixous, it is not the case of losing the word 'human' but an opening towards the possibility of being a 'better human' and not depriving oneself 'of the rest of the universe'.²⁸ After all, if one is to

A white butterfly interrupted her swan song. Rain was beginning again to fall. Smudging her words. I will write she thought. I am given after him. At that the brace of birches clapped in adulation. Her eyelids were heavy. 'Not now, man', she wrote. Not now. Not when the birds were so prescient. The birches, constant, and the fields and heifers so omniscient. He knew her heart was near bursting—like knows like. Bite, marsh fly.

She couldn't feed. Tears dropped from her mother the sky, hand smudged the ink of her heart. Each breath spread it further. She was illegible. 'I don't care', she wrote. Not that her words were strictly true. So many cars had traversed the country road. Her sighs, the ineptitude of her accounting; and then having heard the bugle, the last post, La Marseillaise, la reveille. Footsteps echoed but she wouldn't see anyone. She had substance once. She had been flesh and blood once, but now she was in his orbit, and lacked the live calculations of solvency. Shorthand,

26. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (New York: Fordham University Press), p. 5. Derrida writes, 'I often ask myself, just to see, who I am—and who I am (following) at the moment when, caught naked, in silence, by the gaze of an animal, for example, the eyes of a cat' (pp. 3-4).

27. Derrida, *The Animal*, p. 135.

28. Cixous, *Rootprints*, p. 31.

challenge the fantasy of phallic monosexuality, one must also eventually challenge the fantasy of the radical discontinuity between humans and animals, and the rest of nature, that is, the pretense of the non-animality of human beings, the ironic indifference and the anthropocentric fantasy of superiority.²⁹

...nothing is as close to me as a being that writes, man or woman (because of the interior). They are animals [*bêtes*]. All of them, all my brothers and sisters. The *bêtes*, the animals. And we are all *bêtes* (Dreams of animals).³⁰

It is perhaps the dreams of animals in the *Song of Songs* that best construct, in this, the Bible's own 'Love's book of hours', a utopian plane of open exchange, where the characters keep trying, overcoming, approximating, meeting each the other in each one's myriad of difference within the entire emotional range. Both *Promethea* and the *Song of Songs* stretch memory back to earliest primal moments. In *Promethea* it is the ethereal cave paintings of Lascaux that are invoked, paintings of mares, cattle and other wild animals by some of the earth's earliest human beings, as it is in the *Song of Songs* the ancient memories of Eden, and perhaps even before this, in the Sumerian legends of the goddess-made Enkidu and his innocent relation to his family of gazelles. These primal fantasies stand for one's unconscious desire for continuity and completeness, the time of the imaginary, the fantasy of a time before guilt was gifted to us by law.

It is in poetic texts like the *Song of Songs* that this reinvention of concepts and forms proliferates in its ready, textual and sexual abundance of the other: male, female, animal and world. And where the open reader, open to the bisexuality and animality of the poetry, finds escapes from phallogocentrism.

She was a forest of glass; ornate crystal, finely blown. There was not and would never be any defense against this magnitude of event. She was nearing the end. Journeying up to the great city, golden, surreal. She knew it would be her last pilgrimage.

Her toes and fingertips gave her pain. Her extremities tingled with the torch of fire, of limits, of borders. 'Was it always to be?' she wrote haltingly. The rain fell lightly to remind her of her mortality. You will see it, she thought, on these very pages. Raindrops raining, ruining the

29. Derrida, *The Animal*, p. 134.

30. Cixous, *Rootprints*, p. 31.

print. Smudging the lines. When it rained she didn't care. Silence wanted to be awash in it. Drenched in it; savaged by it. There wasn't enough. Her soul was so dry. The rain soaked into it like it was parchment. The runes faded and ran. Everything was fluttering down, leaves, flowers, blossoms, fragments of the moon. Soon it was rampant. Trees streaming like rain, too dynamic. 'Stars!' she cried. Her mother found her. She must have known all along that she had sought refuge in the field. 'The moth's wing', she said absently to herself, very quietly in the field that was to be an orchard. The moths fluttered in the light after the storm. He called her to peace like a moth into the maelstrom.

But the asteroids, on and on, so many hurtling down the passage of sky. She wanted to sleep. And not the sleep of innocence, but the sleep of the truly guilty. This is what she had dreamed. He had never understood of course. He had given her over to it. Maybe that was his greatest blessing.

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