

## The Dead Girl in Feminism: A Transformation in Five Acts

HANNAH MCCANN

This paper considers the connection between death and feminism, specifically as constituted in response to claims of the death of feminism. As Sherryl Vint notes: “The death of feminism has been predicted for almost as long as there has been a movement identified as feminist” (2007, 165). Examining the perpetual question “Is feminism dead?” as seen in popular media, this paper charts the present-day agreement between feminists and media alike that a younger generation of “post-feminist” women are feminism’s killers. This paper considers that in naming post-feminism as feminism’s opposite, feminism finds a way to shout in the face of death and reassert a provisional existence. The paper proceeds in five acts, drawing heavily on the work of Hélène Cixous (1976, 1981, 1991) and the relationship between death, birth, writing and the feminine, as well as Gilles Deleuze (1983) on Nietzschean affirmation. This paper asks how we might approach what stands outside of the binary of feminism/post-feminism and is therefore paradigmatically unthinkable, to consider: How are we responding to the threat of death? Extending from Cixous’ Medusa who laughs in the face of death, to Nietzschean joy as a mode of engagement, this paper suggests that feminism ought to move away from the binary feminism/post-feminism and assert itself against a different paradigm.

**ACT ONE***In which feminism is killed*

Perpetually, the question “Is feminism dead?” staggers to its feet and bellows into the free-form space of print and screen. In 1998, *Time* magazine featured four disembodied female heads hung pasted onto its cover, with this question lurking underneath in bold red letters. On the left, in black and white and with small epitaphic names above: ‘Susan B Anthony,’ ‘Betty Friedan’ and ‘Gloria Steinem’. On the far right, in colour: actor Calista Flockhart with the title ‘Ally McBeal.’ Susan Gubar outlines the content of the article related to this cover – ‘Feminism: It’s All About Me!’ by Ginia Bellafante – which argued that a pop-cultured narcissism of a new generation had heralded the death knell for feminism (2000, 3). The byline of the article—‘Want to know what today’s chic young feminist thinkers care about? Their bodies! Themselves!’ (Bellafante 1998) – itself answers the question in as many words: feminism is dead, and young women have killed her.

However, the 1998 article was not the first of its kind. Mary Hawkesworth notes that the “obituaries of feminism” have long been present in the media (2004, 964). Hawkesworth discusses an article from 1976 *Harper’s* article titled “Requiem for the Women’s Movement” (Geng 1976 cited in Hawkesworth 2004, 964), published during a time often noted as a golden age for the feminist movement. Sarah Projansky (2001) argues that the periodic re-emergence of “Is feminism dead?” signals that feminism must continue to exist, for it to be held up to scrutiny: “On the one hand, if the question has to be asked repeatedly every few years (if not every year), often on the cover of a widely distributed national magazine such as *Time*, feminism is clearly not dead. It lives on, if only to instigate this question” (70). Projansky connects the infamous *Time* cover to post-feminism, specifically to what she terms “linear post-feminism” circulating in mass media (68). According to Projansky, the idea of feminism as a historical relic is perpetuated by media culture as a sensationalised selling point, tapping into a general sense that contemporary women have “made it”

and that feminism is therefore no longer a concern (70). This question appears as an attempt to dominate and silence, to proclaim the death of feminism, as seen in the *Time* cover example which explicitly cast feminists as “past” in black and white, in opposition to a colourful “present” of the (literally) fictional feminist. Seemingly the only option for survival is a turn away from the deathly women already faded away. This representation of feminism also creates a particular kind of mourning—as Projansky notes, perhaps the most problematic aspect of the *Time* cover is its assertion that feminism, though dead, can be categorised as distinctly white, heterosexual and middle-class (70).

However as we see for every assertion that feminism is dead, there is also research that suggests the feminist movement has been extremely active in recent decades. Hawkesworth writes: “A strange phenomenon has accompanied the unprecedented growth of feminist activism around the globe: the recurrent pronouncement of feminism’s death” (2004, 962). Similarly, as Suzanne Staggenborg and Verta Taylor argue in their article “Whatever Happened to the Women’s Movement?” (2005), a focus on feminism’s “waves” has given a false impression of feminism’s decline. They argue that the women’s movement has “evolved” rather than died, noting: “We argue, instead, for a more fluid and continuous conception of a complex movement with thresholds and turning points that scholars have previously mistaken as “births” and “deaths”” (48). What are we to make of this assertion then—of feminism’s death—in light of information that would suggest feminism’s burgeoning success? The answer, it seems, lies in the power of pronouncing death—a power that has repeatedly been used by feminists themselves to shore up the movement as a whole.

**ACT TWO***In which femininity is death*

Continually resurrected, denied and slain, the dead “girl,” or woman, is at once a central motif both *for* and *of* feminism. Notably, much feminist writing of the 1970s and 1980s was concerned with death as it pertained to sex crime (Caputi

1987), violence in the home (Rich 1979) and pornography and the patriarchal war on women's bodies (Dworkin 1989). Yet now we see this question of danger and mortality turned on feminism itself. Poking over "dead" feminism, popular media casts *not patriarchy* but young women as the executioners, who have smothered feminism with their apathy, high heels and forgetfulness of a history they were born outside of. Perhaps more surprisingly, it seems that feminism in the last decade has singled out the same killers, dubbed the "post-feminists", rather than focusing on patriarchy.

Angela McRobbie in *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*, defines post-feminism as "a process by which feminist gains of the 1970s and 1980s are actively and relentlessly undermined" (2009, 11), and as such characterises post-feminism as "a kind of anti-feminism" (130). McRobbie's critique focuses on the various aspects of "girlie" contemporary culture, which she argues actively reject and undermine feminism (158). As we see in McRobbie, post-feminism is often used to refer to a particular generation of women—a younger generation—who have reaped the gains of earlier feminist movements, but now wish to be independent and free in all ways, including being stereotypically sexualised or feminine if they choose. As Rosalind Gill states: "The notion that all our practices are freely chosen is central to postfeminist discourses, which present women as autonomous agents no longer constrained by any inequalities or power imbalances whatsoever" (2007, 153). McRobbie also categorises young post-feminists as reaping a vengeance on feminism past— "feminism, it seems, robbed women of their most treasured pleasures, i.e. romance, gossip and obsessive concerns about how to catch a husband" (2009, 21) —with young women characterised as rejecting feminism for its prudishness. However, McRobbie suggests that feminism hasn't simply been rejected, it has been killed; the death of feminism is invoked in the title of McRobbie's work, which suggests that we are witnessing the "aftermath" of feminism rather than its continuation. Or more precisely, we are living in a post-feminist world that is not simply a return to the 1950s, but is emerging in the *wake* of second wave feminism.

Though both Gill and McRobbie consider popular culture texts and their representation of a post-feminist world, the post-feminism discussed here differs from that of Projansky (2001) noted earlier, insofar as Projansky's "linear post-feminism" refers more specifically to print media representations of feminism as dead and gone. However Projansky also identifies other "forms" of post-feminism such as "backlash" post-feminism: Projansky describes this as women who identify as feminists but position themselves with a new type of feminism, not part of the older mode. According to Projansky, this particular type of post-feminism circulates the notion that past feminism relied on an ideology of being the "victim" (71). As Projansky writes: "These antifeminist postfeminist feminists blame the oppression of women on a version of feminism they imagine to exist. As a result, it must be eliminated and replaced with 'better' feminism" (71). Projansky describes this post-feminism as an "assault" against feminism that is connected to the iteration "Is feminism dead?" —that this movement is a way of trying to relegate feminism proper to the past-tense. Also considering popular texts and their role in circulating representations of post-feminism, Projansky concludes that we must think of post-feminism as discursively constituted, not as a historical fact or moment. Projansky contends: "Thinking of post-feminism discursively helps illustrate how postfeminism is a *cultural response to feminism*, one that seeks to rework—to *steal* rather than supersede—feminism" (88; emphasis author's own). Projansky charges post-feminism with "stealing" feminism's identity, which suggests a more insidious form of slow death, rather than outright murder.

Similar accounts of the decline of feminism can be found in feminist writing from the past decade, such as Ariel Levy (2005), Nina Power (2009) and Natasha Walter (2010). For example, Levy's *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* argues that a new generation of women now willingly partake in self-objectification, and that as such the true meaning of feminism has been lost. In the chapter "The Future that Never Happened", Levy states:

Instead of hairy legs, we have waxed vaginas; the free-flying natural woman boobs of yore have been hoisted with push-up bras or 'enhanced' into taut plastic orbs

that stand perpetually at attention. What has moved into feminism's place as the most pervasive phenomenon in American womanhood is an almost opposite style, attitude, and set of principles (2005, 87).

Echoing Projansky, Levy suggests that post-feminism has "moved into feminism's place", pilfering the label feminism and hollowing it out. The theme of feminism lost also reverberates throughout Walter's and Power's works. In Walter we see a nostalgia for the feminism of her girlhood, lamenting the way in which products are now sold to girls "that would have been unthinkable a generation ago" (2010, 2). Power also expresses a frustration, arguing that the term feminism has been misappropriated, that there is a "fundamental crisis in the meaning of the word" (2009, 8). Power also casts this new generation in a negative light, opening with the question "Where have all the interesting women gone?" (1). The accounts of these feminist authors can be seen within a broader context of feminism mourning feminism. As Jonathon Dean (2012) notes, contemporary feminism is marked by a discourse of "loss". Analysing feminist writing in the UK, Dean notes that evident in recent feminist writing there is a kind of nostalgia for feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, which also involves rejecting a new generation of women who call themselves feminist (319).

However, examples of feminists critiquing "so-called" feminists for murdering feminism, is not new, and indeed there is continuing debate over what a "true" feminist perspective might look like. As Janet Halley outlines, the history of feminism is characterised by both convergences and divergences between differing perspectives within the movement (2006, 25). For example, the internal splits within feminism were arguably never more prominent than during the so-called "Sex Wars" of the 1970s and 1980s, described by Lynn Comella as "an ideological turf war over who would define feminism's relationship to sexuality" (2008, 205). Though debates over questions of sex and sexuality have occurred since the beginning of the second wave, the "ferocious disputes" of the Sex Wars are particularly notable (Hunter 1995, 16). Divided on issues of abortion, sadomasochism, pornography and other questions of sexuality and sexual expression, feminists on both sides of the debate at this time found

themselves accusing the other of holding views deeply inconsistent with the fundamental values of feminism. One of the key proponents of the anti-pornography side of the debate, Catharine MacKinnon, reflects on this time in her paper "Liberalism and the Death of Feminism" (1990): "Once there was a women's movement..." immediately casting feminism as something relegated to the past (1990, 3). MacKinnon highlights the ideological changes she has observed in the women's movement that have led to the demise of its political efficacy and commitment to core values (however largely MacKinnon draws upon feminists *within* the movement with views opposed to hers, to illuminate exactly why feminism has fallen apart). MacKinnon lists the feminist defence of sadomasochism as an enjoyable practice and feminist anti-censorship activism defending pornography as key factors in feminism's death as a movement. However, at the conclusion of the paper, addressing the conference at which she was presenting, MacKinnon tells the audience: "Having said that, here we are in this room. ...You make me begin to believe that we may have a women's movement to get back" (13).

Here, MacKinnon uses a story of the demise of feminism to suggest a resurgent feminism that might rise in its place. We see the way in which claims to feminism's "death" provide a place from which to assert feminism's life. For it is in mourning that what is lost can be named, and thus granted a new kind of existence. As we see in Jane Caputi, her investigation of sex crimes against women opens up a space for her to name the women killed in "gyno-cide," so that they may exist and no longer be erased: "I call out their names in fury, in grief, and in the spirit of Nemesis that we *can* change the world, that all such atrocities will cease to be, will cease to deny female be-ing" (1987, 202). The recognition of death provides a space to shout anger in response and produce a space to survive, in spite of murder. The naming of the dead marks out an existence, we can "call out their names in fury." In this way, "Is feminism dead?" opens up a space to shout in the face of death and reassert feminism in recognition of what is being named as its opposite. But while we might understand the way in which this move allows for a reassertion of feminism, what are the effects of naming (post)feminism as feminism's killer?

## ACT THREE

*In which we write in order to live*

Despite the history of feminism against itself, there is a need to be careful here in drawing out the history of internal schisms within feminism. As Hawkesworth notes, many of the “obituaries of feminism” in the popular media have involved an accusation of “self-inflicted wounds” as a cause of feminism’s end (2004, 964). The point here is not to sit idly by and accuse feminism of tearing itself apart, but instead to consider the pattern within which feminism continues to maintain itself. Extending upon this, the point is to consider how we might think through this tension, *not* to reach a synthesis between competing viewpoints within feminism, nor to simply argue for “feminisms” plural. Rather, the aim is to re-think death within feminism, to move away from the logic that would turn feminism against itself to find affirmation.

To begin to think death differently, we might consider how death has been considered by feminists outside of discussions of the “Is feminism dead?” question. Somewhat ironically, given the previous discussion of the discourse of “lost” feminism, this involves a return to feminist writing of the 1970s. Adrienne Rich’s *When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision* (1972) describes the significance of awakening consciousness to women’s writing, and the women’s movement of early 1970s North America as a whole. Rich writes: “Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival” (1972, 18). Rich describes writing *as* life, and *rewriting* as critically important. Rich acknowledges this as a struggle, with the desire to exert change not all that is needed to win the battle. For example, on raising children while attempting to write, Rich recalls: “I wanted, then, more than anything, the one thing of which there was never enough: time to think, time to write” (24). But despite the difficulty of the fight, Rich contends political transformation must involve *writing against* traditional structures, expectations and ways of seeing. This pushback that Rich suggests echoes

with Cixous’ ideas in “Coming to Writing” (1991), in which she contends that writing is a way to hold back submission to death:

Writing: a way of leaving no space for death, of pushing back forgetfulness, of never letting oneself be surprised by the abyss. Of never becoming resigned, consoled; never turning over in bed to face the wall and drift asleep again as if nothing had happened; as if nothing could happen (3).

Cixous argues that writing allows for a flourishing that works against the crisis of death, to see and acknowledge death and yet live on. For Cixous, death provides an opportunity to assert life, “if you die, live” (8). In writing there is no space for death as all-encompassing, totalising, because life is affirmed: “Sometimes I think I began writing in order to make room for the wandering question that haunts my soul and hacks and saws at my body” (7).

How might we think of this “pushing back” in terms of the question of the death of feminism? In *The Laugh of the Medusa*, concerned with the topic of women’s writing, Cixous implores: “Write, let no one hold you back” (1976, 887). Here Cixous also notes that for male philosophers in particular, death is associated with the feminine, as the “unrepresentable” (885). Cixous uses the figure of Medusa in Greek mythology as exemplary of this view of women: “they need to be afraid of us. Look at the trembling Perseuses moving backward towards us, clad in apotropes” (885). H. A. Guerber recalls Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poem on the story of Perseus and Medusa:

Its horror and its beauty are divine.  
Upon its lips and eyelids seem to lie  
Loveliness like a shadow

(Shelley cited in Guerber 1991, 139).

Medusa is exemplary of the problematic association of death with the feminine, as we see in Shelley’s poem—the feminine is beautiful yet horrifying, dark. Further, Sigmund Freud famously uses the story of Medusa as symbolic of

the fear of castration which arises from the sight of female genitals (Oliver, 1995). Though her head of serpents also functions as replacements for the penis, as Oliver writes, her head also “becomes a fetish of sorts—it both acknowledges and denies castration by setting up a penis substitute” (1995, 115). Along these lines, Cixous rejects the psychoanalytic characterisations of women—Freud’s “penis envy” and Lacan’s “lack,” and the reference to women as the “dark continent.” Reducing the phallic to “monuments to Lack,” Cixous characterises its opposite (the feminine) as the very creative opening she is encouraging women to claim and to explore (1976, 884-885). Cixous notes how patriarchal logic has kept women “between the Medusa and the abyss” (885) —that is to say, women have been locked into a logic whereby the fear of death is marked as the feminine and this is opposed to a fear of the abyss as darkness and the lack. Similarly in *Castration or Decapitation?* (1981) Cixous considers that the fear of symbolic decapitation functions for women as the castration complex does for men. Just as Medusa lost her head to Perseus and was said to be “freed” from her life as a solitary Gorgon, the threat of decapitation for women means that they must stay silent: “they don’t actually lose their heads by the sword, *they only keep them on condition that they lose them*—lose them, that is, to complete silence, turned into automatons” (43). Rejecting this kind of logic, Cixous argues that “the feminine...affirms” (1976, 884), hence her encouragement to write against death with a “writing that inscribes femininity” (878). Rather than fear death, Cixous encourages: “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” (855).

Cixous’ view of death, as something women have been *told* is associated with the feminine, is very different from the feminist debates on post-feminism discussed earlier on in this paper. In Rich we see that writing involves a re-visioning to “wake” from what would otherwise be death. For both Rich and Cixous writing—feminist writing and feminine writing—is a way to mark out space to exist and to reject (phallic or patriarchal) elimination. The logic that would see women fearing one another as the enemy, as the Medusa(s) that might turn them to stone, is a logic that works against women to keep them in

a space of silence for fear of decapitation. How instead might we look Medusa in the face, as Cixous suggests, and laugh with her?

## ACT FOUR

### *In which we face death*

Within Cixous’ writing there is a sense of the critical importance of affirmation, which connects up in interesting ways with Gilles Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche. Linking Cixous’ project of “writing that inscribes femininity” with Nietzsche may seem strange, given Nietzsche is infamous for his (mis)treatment of women in his texts. For example, as he writes in *The Gay Science*, women continually bear a false way of being in the world as if it were a permanent act: “[women] ‘put on something’ even when they take off everything” (1974, 317). But while Nietzsche’s explicit treatment of women may be open to feminist critique, his philosophy of affirmation, and in particular Deleuze’s interpretation of this, strikes a chord with Cixous’ writings on death. Though few have considered the connections between Cixous and Nietzsche’s writings, a notable example is Alan Schrift. Schrift notes that although Nietzsche might be considered misogynistic, the ways in which his work resonates with Cixous reveals how his philosophy might be extended to consider women differently (1996, 203). We might also note that Cixous was no doubt aware of Nietzsche’s work, as he broadly influenced post-structuralist writing in France at the time; thus it is unsurprising that there is resonance between the two theorists.

A discussion of the connection between Cixous’ and Nietzsche’s ideas of affirmation helps to illuminate the way we might face death to affirm life. We might also keep in mind here that Cixous’ project is largely attached to playing with the French language in which her manuscripts were originally published. Much of her response to Lacan’s “lack” was regarding the connection made between the feminine and the negative within language. As Annette Kuhn notes: “The French approach to these questions is distinctive in that it tends to be informed by theories concerning the place of “woman” in language and

the question of a feminine relation to language” (1981, 36-37). As such, Cixous’ “writing that inscribes femininity” is not solely the province of women. However, it is also clear that in Cixous’ writing that the sociocultural heritage of “women” and how women have learned “restraint” remains crucial (1991, 39).

One important connection to be made between the two theorists is the similarity of Cixous’ discussion of birth with Nietzsche’s notion of the eternal return. Nietzsche describes the eternal return in *The Gay Science* as an interlude with a demon that condemns you to perpetually re-live the current moment over: “How well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?” (1974, 274). Deleuze interprets the eternal return not as a return of *the same*, but as an affirmation of pure *difference*, of possibility: “Return is the being of becoming itself, the being which is affirmed in becoming. The eternal return as law of becoming, as justice and as being” (1983, 24). Thus for Deleuze the eternal return is pure becoming (48); becoming is summarised in the notion of the eternal return, as this scenario—according to Deleuze—suggests a radical openness to the reproduction of diversity, the repetition of difference (46). Echoing with these ideas, Cixous describes affirmation as a process akin to a Deleuzian becoming. On the subject of writing without fear, Cixous describes herself as continually asserting life: “Madwomen: the ones who are compelled to redo acts of birth every day. ...I wasn’t born for once and for all” (1991, 6). Here we see in Cixous a kind of becoming—a daily transformation that is required to become again and differently.

Furthermore, we see a connection between Nietzsche and Cixous on what it means to affirm life and how this might be achieved. Deleuze asserts that for Nietzsche, laughter and dance are key to overcoming negativity, as they rupture our value-laden judgements that would have us remain essentially reactive: “To laugh is to affirm life, even the suffering in life. To play is to affirm chance and the necessity of chance. To dance is to affirm becoming and the being of becoming” (1983, 170). This connects with Cixous’ suggestion that Medusa herself is laughing. Laughter is essential for Cixous as it reveals an overcoming

of fear, an extending forward with open arms:

We’re stormy, and that which is ours breaks loose from us without our fearing any debilitation. Our glances, our smiles, are spent; laughs exude from all our mouths; our blood flows and we extend ourselves without ever reaching an end; we never hold back our thoughts, our signs, our writing; and we’re not afraid of lacking (1976, 878).

Deleuze focuses on Nietzsche’s call to affirm life, not deny it, and we see this idea mirrored in Cixous. Specifically, Cixous argues that affirmation can be found in writing as feminine, writing differently to phallic logic—recall her statement that “the feminine...affirms” (884). However, life extends beyond the page for Cixous. Warding off death through the affirmation of life, Cixous’ body “sings”: “I am spacious, singing flesh, on which is grafted no one knows which I, more or less human, but alive because of transformation” (889). The noisy, joyful body is also crucial to Nietzsche; in discussing Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Deleuze writes: “...laughter transmutes suffering into joy... dance affirms becoming and the being of becoming; laughter, roars of laughter, affirm multiplicity and the unity of multiplicity; play affirms chance and the necessity of chance” (1983, 194). We see in both Deleuze’s Nietzsche and in Cixous the joyful body, open to transformation, affirming life.

## ACT FIVE

*In which we affirm life*

While it is well and good to suggest that we “affirm life” in the face of death, we must remember the fear engendered by death. While we might seek to laugh despite death, to “live” as Cixous suggests, there are understandable reasons why the fear of death elicited by the question “Is feminism dead?” has played out and replayed the internal schisms of feminism considered earlier. The pronouncement of death is distressing because it claims that we are at the end of a powerful movement that has shaped women’s lives over the past century. We might have these concerns and others: if feminist writing is indeed

(as Rich claims) a form of survival, what would feminism's death mean (or is this actually impossible)? Does the death of feminism extend to awakening: might we be forced to "drift asleep again as if nothing happened"? Indeed we see this fear play out often in feminist writing. As Gubar writes in *Critical Condition: Feminism at the Turn of the Century*,

'Will the hive survive,' I continue to wonder, even in the midst of my newfound engagement with emerging modes of inquiry, since feminism as a political movement appears to be imperilled, while the social problems it addresses remain intact (2000, 17).

The stakes are high; it is no wonder that the response to this looming elimination—often seen as one that *has already happened*—has been to seek out someone close by to accuse of this crime. But as we have seen, the alleged murderer has often been found within feminism's walls. She is labelled an outsider, an anti-feminist or a post-feminist, and used as a way to reassert or define a particular version of feminism. However, we can re-think death as something that might be averted in writing, feminist writing, and in extension to this Cixous' feminine writing which seeks to affirm life rather than the negative.

This is *not* to inadvertently suggest that the feminist writers discussed are *merely* "killjoys." As Sara Ahmed (2010) reminds us, the feminist killjoy has been critical to feminism's history for questioning norms of aspirational happiness. No, we might certainly agree with Ahmed's evaluation that "kill joy we must, and we do" (87), and that feminists should continue to reject the status quo. It is also not to suggest that feminism considers itself some monolithic culture into which all perspectives must be absorbed—rather the opposite. This perspective on death, as something to write against so that we might go on living, suggests a *proliferation* of feminisms. This might also advocate that differences be seen as part of a larger conversation, rather than as signalling death. Death must be seen as *ceasing* to write; death is staying silent. In this way, as feminism continues to write, along multiple trajectories, it inevitably continues to live. To affirm life in the way that Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche suggests may be

to be open to radical difference, to the chance of what the future might bring. Rich herself encourages a kind of openness not just to the possibilities of life but to the possibilities of feminist imagination:

If the imagination is to transcend and transform experience it has to question, to challenge, to conceive of alternatives, perhaps to the very life you are living at the moment. You have to be free to play around with the notion that day might be night, love might be hate; nothing can be too sacred for the imagination to turn into its opposite or to call experimentally by another name. For writing is re-naming (1972, 43).

At this conclusion, Cixous might have the last word, which is really just the beginning in a long line of beginnings. On the subject of what might be said to be "stolen" in terms of her writing and thought, Cixous acknowledges the history of women she is indebted to:

"Thief!" "Me, a thief? But who's being 'robbed'?"

What belongs to whom? Who's love-pirate am I?

I listen to and repeat what women tell me at night. One part of the text comes from me. One part is torn from the body of the peoples; one part is anonymous, one part is my brother. Each part is a whole that I desire, a greater life that I envy and admire, that adds its blood to my own blood. In me there is always someone who is greater than I, someone nobler, someone more powerful, who pushes me to grow... (1991, 46).

Might we take our cue from Cixous and continue to grow.

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