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Composing a method: écriture féminine as performance practice

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COMPOSING A METHOD:
ÉCRITURE FÉMININE AS PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by
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ABSTRACT

The overall aim of this project is to theorize and invent a method of performance based on *écriture féminine*. This method is meant to be useable, generative, and transferable to other practitioners. Following a heuritic practice of reading selected texts for what they suggest about making new texts, writerly method that invites expansion in future research is revealed. This project is but a beginning of an articulation and proposes only one path through these texts. The tracking of the process of reading and experimenting with performance provides a space for reflection that illuminates gaps to be explored in future work.

The purpose of this study is three-fold. The first aim is to articulate a method for creating postdramatic devised feminist performance as an entry into and extension of the history of feminist performance and theater. Second, I advocate the use of *écriture féminine* as a generative starting point for devising rather than an after-the-fact application that subordinates performance to philosophy. The use I advocate moves beyond the application of philosophical ideas to performance examples to bring performance and philosophy into contact with one another and generate new ideas of both based on a mutually affective encounter. Finally, by using *écriture féminine* in this way I hope to reintroduce it into the feminist performance conversation from which it is often left out or dismissed as essentialist. I approached this project in three phases. The first phase was the close reading of *Stigmata* by Hélène Cixous, *Strangers to Ourselves* by Julia Kristeva, and *The Irigaray Reader* by Luce Irigaray and edited by Margaret Whitford. In this phase I gleaned compositional principles to use in performance experimentation. The second phase involved the rehearsal and experimentation process, which culminated in the public performance. In the third phase I review my close reading notes, the documentation of the rehearsal process, and audience feedback to formulate a picture of the project as a whole and reflect on what was accomplished. The

project concludes with a summary and suggestion for future possibilities as well as a number of practical exercises for performance purposes.

CHAPTER ONE: COMPOSING A METHOD

I have long been interested in the potential connections between the French feminist work of *écriture féminine* and performance. In my master's thesis I created a series of performances that, through the duration and repetition of actions of traditional feminine labor including gardening, laundry, and beautification, attempted to expose a hysterical feminine language. In other words, I strove to show how hysteria might be a type of communicative feminist performance, something Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva, the three writers on whom I focus in this study, all address at different times in their work. While that project was inspired by their work, the connection with it was tangential. As I studied other methods and theories in my scholarly endeavors the matrix of my work in the areas of feminism, devised theater, and performance art kept bringing me back to these writers. Feminism, devised theater, performance art, and *écriture féminine* are based in the experience of individuals as individuals and in groups, the sharing of radical voices, and the reordering of traditional power relations in the interest of collaborative or coalitional forms.

In the first book on the devised theater, Alison Oddey offers a definition that “devised theatre can start from anything. It is determined and defined by a group of people who set up an initial framework or structure to explore and experiment with ideas, images, concepts, themes, or specific stimuli that might include music, text, objects, paintings, or movement” (1). In traditional theater, one begins with a literary script that is staged with fidelity by a director, actors, and designers, all of whom have specific and separate roles. Devised performance, as a reaction against the traditional process, involves the collaborative creation of a performance work by two or more people starting from their own experiences rather than a script. Because of its experiential focus feminist groups, queer groups, and groups of people of color who had found themselves in the

margins of traditional theater took up devised performance as a way to tell their stories. In the 1970s and '80s feminist theater was largely engaged in the liberal feminist aim of “redressing the historical invisibility of women in the field” (Dolan 94). In these efforts, the focus was on showcasing plays by women, work featuring strong female characters, and the telling or re-telling of stories with a concentration on women’s experiences. As a result, “Identity politics, or collective activism based on embodied experiences of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity or nationality, . . . widely circulated in the 1980s as a response to social injustice, widespread prejudice and even assault borne by members of specific minority groups” (Diamond 64). These forms broke barriers with new content and structures of production. However, in their representational structures many of them clung to the realist narrative strategies of traditional theater. As an alternative to this type of narrative devised theater, Hans-Thies Lehmann offers the category “postdramatic theatre” to advocate performance work whose political efficacy is not necessarily obvious in its content and themes, but in the embedded substance of its process of production. Postdramatic performance is not bound to dramatic structures like action, plot, and catharsis, working in service of the text. Instead of being regulated by these traditional dramatic elements, each element in postdramatic performance becomes only one variant in the art as a whole.

The post-structuralist French Feminist project of *écriture féminine* also advocates finding new representational forms that are not bound to accepted traditions like narrative. The entrance of this theory into US institutions changed “the contours of feminist criticism in the academy” (Dolan 94). Feminist theater scholar Jill Dolan writes that Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva “seemed powerful and poetic in their descriptions of female sexuality as a subversive, antipatriarchal textuality. If women could write with their bodies . . . could the body also be a site of a new theatre practice and textual analysis?” (94). While performance scholars have taken up the work of these writers the use

of their theories is frequently used as a critical model applied to existing performances or the staging of their texts, such as the plays of Cixous. Given the exciting connections between feminine writing and performance as outlined by Dolan and others, and as I began to see in my work in my master's thesis, using this theory as a model or process for composing feminist theater seemed like a logical step.

I take this step in the study I detail in the following chapters. Through a close reading of selected texts by three leading writers of *écriture féminine*, Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva, I have gleaned and explored compositional principles for how they exemplify and can be used in performance practice. Rather than reading the texts to discover their meaning, I examined them so as to articulate performance examples and practical exercises that function like *écriture féminine* and bring attention to the processes and politics of representation in both. In the following chapters I detail the process of working with the selected texts through close reading, performance-based experimentation with selected formal strategies found in the close reading, the public presentation of this labor in the form of a show, and reflections on audience and performer reactions. While much devised feminist performance work relies on liberal, radical, or materialist feminism, this project takes a decidedly post-structural approach.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is three-fold. First, I aim to articulate a method for creating postdramatic feminist performance as an entry into and extension of the history of feminist performance and theater. Second, I employ *écriture féminine* as a generative starting point for devising rather than an after-the-fact application. I borrow this idea from Laura Cull who argues, “we need to go further in questioning how we use philosophy in relation to performance, and that theatre and performance scholarship should attempt to go beyond merely applying philosophical

concepts to performance ‘examples’” (20). Cull notes that while application etymologically means “‘bring things in contact with one another’” in scholarship “application implies the subordination of the powers of one practice or process to the needs and goals of another, the instrumentalization of the example for the purposes of an argument which has little interest in the example itself beyond its value for that argument” (21). This leaves practitioners (including myself) feeling obligated to insist they are doing more than application. As a corrective Cull suggests we might consider how “conjoining performance and philosophy might, by contrast, aspire to generate *new ideas of both* on the basis of a mutually transformative encounter” (23). She suggests we “move away from the application of the theoretical models we already possess and towards an embodied encounter with the resistant materiality of performance’s thinking: its embodied-thinking, participatory-thinking, or durational-thinking – encounters that generate new ideas of what thought is and where, when and how it occurs” (25). In other words, “we might also look to performance itself to produce new ideas of what thinking is” (25). In this project, the second part of the three-fold purpose is to use performance as a way of thinking in *écriture féminine*. Finally, by using *écriture féminine* in this way I hope to reintroduce it into the feminist performance conversation from which it is often left out or dismissed as essentialist. This last aim is the driving force for the study. The feminist work of *écriture féminine* is important and its absence from a lot of the feminist work in the US troubles me. More specifically its omission from feminist theater and/or performance work, with the obvious bodily and textual connections, is a dismaying oversight. I think it not only can, but should, be part of the feminist performance picture and this project is an example of one way to do that.

While there are likely multiple practices that could be articulated from the study of *écriture féminine*, I propose one that produces what Hélène Cixous calls “works of being.” In “The Last Painting” Cixous makes a distinction between “works of art” and “works of being,” suggesting the

former are those that answer and the latter are those that question. Works of art are “works of seduction, works that can be magnificent, works that are really destined to make themselves seen” (Cixous, *Last Painting* 116). They are delimited by their parameters and proclaim themselves as something to be looked at as static, stable, or fixed. They “search us out with [their] eyes” and “catch hold of us” and do not allow us to consider anything but them. Cixous connects them with “our need to veil, or lie, or gild” (114). In other words, they cover up the process of their making and disguise themselves in the form of an elaborate complete picture. Interestingly, Lehmann suggests that traditional theater is tied to illusion and specifically seeks to present the illusion of a world as whole. Reading Cixous’s and Lehmann’s ideas side by side, we can align works of art with literary narrative, theater or drama, and works of being with postdramatic performance. It is not that works of being and postdramatic performance do not involve illusion. They ask us to acknowledge their existence as illusion. Works of being ask us to experience rather than observe them. By experiencing them they become a part of us. Works of being are incomplete. They do not end or present an interpretation that stands on its own. They are messy and do not “need to proclaim their glory, or their magisterial origin” but evoke different ideas, feelings, and questions in each audience member based in the connection between the work and their personal experiences (116). Cixous admits that classifying writing or painting (or, I would add, performance) as a “work of art” rather than a “work of being” can be arbitrary. Nonetheless, the concepts both propose specific orientations to art and art making. Cixous’ terms are roughly parallel to terms I use later in this study, such as Hans-Thies Lehmann’s distinction between the dramatic and postdramatic and Roland Barthes’s distinction between the readerly and writerly. Works of art are traditional works that indicate a literary narrative whole that contains the key to understanding the work in its own terms and correspond with the dramatic and readerly. Works of being, postdramatic, and writerly

works are open invitations for multiple interpretations that relate to individual experiences. Because I am interested in creating works of being, I propose a method for making performance that shows its process, questions itself, changes as it moves, that does not present itself as an answer or a whole, but allows audiences to connect to their own disparate experiences and question the piece rather than be transfixed by it.

In *Feminism and Theatre* Sue-Ellen Case leads the reader through what she calls “feminist uses of history and theatre” beginning with the deconstruction of the canon tied to the practice of staging texts (1). She starts with the liberal feminist aims of expanding the dramatic canon to include women writers from Hrotsvit von Gandersheim writing in the Holy Roman Empire, to Aphra Behn who made a living writing in the late seventeenth century, to Mercy Warren, the first American woman playwright. Case extends this inclusionary practice by expanding the notion of the playwright to include female mimes who performed in the streets. In doing so, she moves the concept of theater beyond the proscenium stage and implicitly expands our understanding of playwrighting beyond the writing of a dramatic literary text to the making of performance by many means. For me, Case’s expansion of the notion of writing evokes a loose connection to *écriture féminine*’s call to “write your body,” though it is not something she notes in her project. Case describes how women performers “were denied the permanency of the written text, along with its privileged association with theatre buildings, state revenues and pools of professional performers, all of which were available to men” (29). She labels these impermanent and hidden performances “silent theatre” (53). She also notes what she calls “personal theatre” and “women performing for women,” which includes women performing for one another in private salons using what means were available to them (53). Case also includes in these categories the roles of women in the

performative events of the church, parades, pageants, and Native American tribal ceremonies, as well as performance art of the late twentieth century.

Marvin Carlson considers the influence of feminist activism and theory in the 1970s and '80s on the social and political function of performance art. Whereas the modernist, minimalist, and postmodern movements in the arts were catalysts in the development of contemporary performance, the work of feminist theorists, activists, and artists was integral to rethinking performance and directing focus to bodies in performance. Carlson, like Case, writes of liberal feminism's attention to inequality and efforts to gain equal footing in terms of rights regarding sex and gender. He also notes the erroneous and inherent acceptance of male standards as universal in these aims and points to cultural feminism as a feminism in opposition to some liberal feminist aims.

Both Carlson and Case articulate cultural feminism, also called radical feminism, as feminism not interested in the inclusion of women in male culture, but in the definition and establishment of a female culture that is separate and different from masculine culture. Radical/cultural feminist practitioners sought to make performances in a "theatrical language capable of communicating female perceptions which have been erased by the fathers and thus appear non-existent to the dominant culture" (Carlson 158). This type of performance was linked explicitly to the female body and experiences and the special powers of women's biology, connected with nature and spirituality. Radical/cultural feminism and its focus on the universal female biological body, its experiences and its essential difference from all things male, is the most common popular understanding of feminism in America. The language of radical/cultural feminism is not unlike the language of *écriture féminine* in that both indicate a clear difference in the ways women and men behave and communicate. However, unlike radical/cultural feminism, *écriture féminine* considers the feminine on the level of the symbolic rather than the biological and suggests

both men and women can access the feminine symbolic. Because *écriture féminine* focuses so much on the play of difference in language and the assertion that there is no singular base but always at least two, it narrowly avoids the essentialist trap that radical/cultural feminism falls into. Actually, Teresa de Lauretis makes a compelling argument that neither of these is essentialist in a simple biologically determined way. Rather, the focus on experience in *écriture féminine* is what makes it feminist, and not just poststructuralist, and this focus on experience is only thinkable thanks to practices that come from radical and liberal feminisms. I discuss de Lauretis's argument later in this chapter, but for now it suffices to say that because the languages of radical feminism and *écriture féminine* are so similar on the surface, the baby is thrown out with the bath water when *écriture féminine* is inaccurately dismissed as essentialist (see Berg).

Materialist feminism is yet another type of feminism covered by both Case and Carlson. It emerged largely out of feminist connections with Marxist and socialist politics, showing gender as a production of cultural power relations and underscoring "the role of class and history in creating the oppression of women" (Case 82). However, materialist feminism also treats women as a class, which allows for acknowledging the widespread categorical underemployment and undereducation on one hand, but ignores other important factors, such as race, on the other. Case attempts to address this in her chapter, "Women of Colour," and Carlson notes that the development of queer and ethnic performances attempted to redress this flaw. Still, materialist feminism made a major contribution to feminist thought and performance. Unlike the project of much leftist politics that separates political work from personal work, materialist feminism made the personal political and led to an overall heightened attention to the personal in feminist performance. In terms of body art and its focus on violence, this personal flavor marked women's performance as dramatically different from its male counterparts. In addition, because the personal and "authentic" were valued,

women were drawn to this type of performance because, unlike traditional acting, it did not require institutional training and provided them with control over their work. These performances blended personal statements with physical action, exposed women's activity (especially domestic activity) as either burdensome or pleasurable, and made autobiography a major theme by which feminist performance was able to address the social, political, and psychological meanings of being a specific woman in the 1970s.

As feminist performance became more concerned with signification moving into the 1980s, it became increasingly concerned with language and the construction and transformation of self. Performers began to question narrative structure as a masculine construct and began to rethink theatrical forms in the feminine in similar ways to *écriture féminine*. They posited somatic knowledge as an alternative feminine way of knowing. These materialist feminist body-centered epistemologies provided an alternative to symbolic narrative language. In the concluding chapter of *Feminism and Theatre*, Case indicates a move "towards a New Poetics" as the "basic theoretical project for feminism" (114). She notes this theoretical project reexamines epistemologies, discourses, and representations determined by "dominant philosophical traditions in the culture at large" necessitated by the need for incorporation of theory with activism (114). It is the acknowledgement of the importance of philosophical traditions in the "new poetics" that allows me to extend Case's project. In this final chapter Case addresses semiotics and its important contribution that reveals signs as constructed. She addresses how textuality allows texts to remain open and connected to their circumstances of production. Employing theory of the gaze, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis and feminist interpretations of them, she gives a survey of theoretical interventions that allowed for rethinking the feminist project and the symbol of "woman." Case's discussion exists at the level of application. She is concerned with subjectivity and, even when she

details the writing and formal production values of Cixous's play *Portrait of Dora*, she is interested in what it does in content rather than form or form of representation. Toward the end of the chapter she turns to *The Laugh of the Medusa*, the primary text in which Cixous calls for a new form of writing. She also notes Luce Irigaray's notions of touching and process. In both of these she is interested in their call for fragmentary, in-between, circular texts. However, in concluding this section she notes, "The feminist critic might analyse [sic] the plays of Adrienne Kennedy, women's performance-art pieces or witches' cyclic rituals using [these] notions" (129). Thus, while she aims to blend theory with practice, it is clear that theory for her does not posit a new model for performance creation or thinking but suggests new sites for application. Rather than bringing theory and performance into contact with one another to create new ideas of both, she suggests theory as an outside authority might help us understand the performance examples she lists. And, though she signals the importance of *écriture féminine* to the development of a new poetics, she does not name it and she tends to relegate it to the realm of biological essentialism. Nonetheless it is clear from Case's book that *écriture féminine* influences feminist thinking and thus provides methodological tools for considering feminist performance. What is needed then is the articulation of a method for doing so. This project makes the contribution of detailing specifically how *écriture féminine* can be done as a performer and stager of texts, just as liberal, radical/cultural, and materialist feminisms have been employed to theorize ways of making feminist performance in the past.

While writers like Monique Wittig and Bracha Ettinger are sometimes included in *écriture féminine* as a genre, the most consistently represented in its definitions and discussions are Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva. Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva continually reassert the importance and empowering possibilities of the feminine and the female body in the symbolic strata of language. Sometimes referred to as "French Feminism," these three thinkers all ground their writing in the

experience of women, but do not all readily identify as feminists. Therefore, the term *écriture féminine*, or “feminine writing,” is more appropriate. According to Kathleen O’Grady, in her introduction to a 1996 interview with Hélène Cixous, *écriture féminine* is “an ethical writing style (which women in particular can access) that is able, through a phonetic inscription of the feminine body, its pulsions and flows, to open up and embrace the difference of the other” (6). All three theorists address each aspect of O’Grady’s definition. However, their approaches and epistemological background, while intersecting, are simultaneously different from one another.

Highlighting the differences among these three thinkers is one reason for focusing on them in this project. Their modes of writing are quite distinct, and the differences are important to illuminate. Likewise, the distinctive ways they write yield different orientations to performance. While all three have a vested interest in the function and use of language as both oppressive and liberatory, their approaches to this discussion vary. Hélène Cixous often approaches her work through the analysis of literature and a writing style that can be described as more poetic and experimental than overtly philosophical. Though philosophy appears in her texts it is inextricable from her poetics. She does not write in a format germane to traditional academic discourse, but crosses genres from fiction to drama to literary criticism. Julia Kristeva, while also addressing literature, is a practicing Lacanian psychoanalyst and a professor of linguistics. Her work is closely tied to Lacanian psychoanalysis and linguistics. She finds possibility in the practice of psychoanalysis and typically writes in a more traditionally academic style than Cixous. Luce Irigaray is also a practicing psychoanalyst but, unlike Kristeva, she launches staunch criticism against the psychoanalytic establishment. She argues for a reformation of the base of language and psychoanalysis to allow the existence of both masculine and feminine symbolics in linguistic,

philosophical, and analytic institutions. I describe each writer's work and biography in detail at the beginning of the chapters that focus on each writer's work (chapters three, four, and five).

I have already noted that not all of these writers identify as feminists all the time, or at least they do not identify with what is often classified as liberal or radical American Feminism.¹ I am particularly drawn to and influenced by their varying brands of feminism, all of which seek to reveal at a structural or compositional level problems that lead to the subordination of feminine thinking and, by extension, those who are "other." None of them dictate the meaning of feminine thinking or, if they do, they quickly turn on their definitions to reveal that there is always more than one. *Écriture féminine*, at its most basic, models a feminism that deeply values acceptance and maintaining difference as the bedrock of being in the world. The form it takes is its content and thus it makes an appropriate site for this project. If the ideas of feminism exist in the compositional principles that undergird artistic projects then the result will embody those principles regardless of content. This is a type of feminism that is valuable to me.

Method

I take a heurctic approach to selected texts by Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva. Gregory Ulmer introduced the term heuristics to critical discourse as a program of experimentation in representation wherein researchers compose models that function critically as well as aesthetically. As detailed by Ulmer, heuristics looks to the historical avant-garde not as an object of study, but as an alternative way to use theory. It adds a generative productivity based on the important theory of the day to critical and interpretive work. For heuristics learning is closely akin to invention rather than verification. Thus users of heuristics are not just consumers of theory but producers as well, reproducing historical invention and inventing new poetics. As Bowman and Bowman write in

¹ This distinction is problematic as de Lauretis details. However, because it is a common distinction, I mention it here and complicate it in other areas of the study.

“Performing the Mystory: A Textshop in Autoperformance,” “The relevant question is not ‘if the theorists are right, what might be the meaning of this text/performance?’ [but] ‘if the theorists are right, how might a text/performance be composed?’” (164).

I focus on one specific text for each author in this project. These texts are *Stigmata* by Hélène Cixous, *The Irigaray Reader* by Luce Irigaray, edited by Margaret Whitford, and *Strangers to Ourselves* by Julia Kristeva. The three texts were selected based on the potency of their metaphors and images in relation to my project and because the formats of each are exemplary of the writing styles of each author.

In his forward to *Stigmata*, Jacques Derrida calls the book “a great classic,” writing: “It can be read as the best introduction to Hélène Cixous’s entire corpus whose strokes of genius it heralds and collects together as the becoming-literary of her life” (Derrida x). He further calls it “one of her most recent masterpieces” (x). In this book Hélène Cixous revisits some of her familiar tropes such as the phenomenon of the interior/exterior, the idea of silence, love and death, father/mother, and the notion of home to name just a few. A collection of previously published essays, the book is arranged into four parts: “Reading in painting,” “Ringing in the feminine hour,” “Going off writing,” and “From my menagerie to Philosophy.” In its wide range of topics and styles and its references to past work, the book can be seen as a primer for the entirety of Cixous’s works, and it exemplifies her poetic writing style. In her review of the book for *Hypatia*, Laura Camille Tuley writes that the book demands “submission to the process of poesis, in its messy, occasionally epiphanic, and precisely confusing ‘truth’” (Tuley 224).

The Irigaray Reader is the first of two compilations of writings by Luce Irigaray. The second, *Key Writings*, edited by Irigaray and published in 2004 deals with her more recent texts and ideas not yet developed in the texts comprising the first. However, in her preface to this later text,

Irigaray writes, “I do not intend to substitute this *Key Writings* for *The Reader* that Margaret Whitford composed ten years ago” (vii). I chose *The Irigaray Reader* because it contains essays from Irigaray’s most cited works including pieces from *This Sex Which Is Not One* and *Speculum of the Other Woman*. This text contains both Irigaray’s arguments against the depoliticized psychoanalytic relationship to language as well as explication of her fruitful bodily metaphors regarding the mother/child relationship, female genitals, and notions of excessive bodily pleasure that are useful for thinking about performance. Regarding these texts Lynda Haas writes, “These texts together present an Irigaray competent in philosophy, linguistics and psychoanalysis” (150). Alex Hughes calls the book “essential reading for those who seek a genuine understanding of the breadth and radicalism of her *oeuvre*” (1002).

In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Kristeva returns to Freud as a way to connect her discussion of the foreigner to the formation (or disintegration) of the self. In this book, “many of [Kristeva’s] previously-developed concepts find practical application within a highly charged political context” (Schultz 319). It is this practical application, linking foreignness to the uncanny as the place where foreignness exists and exposing foreignness in the self, that is interesting. Stephen Dobson writes that Kristeva provides “a unique blend of philosophy, psychoanalysis, aesthetics, religion and politics” that break from accounts of foreignness on the basis of race, economics, politics, or assimilation (82). The stranger, or foreigner, as well as the idea of strangeness within the self is explored by tracing the concept throughout history from the ancient Greeks to the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and into the twentieth century. Through this historical tracing combined with philosophical and psychoanalytical analysis, Kristeva “deepens[s] our awareness of symbolic irruptions and their importance in our everyday conscious experiences” (Dobson 83). While Kristeva does not jettison her personal interest in foreignness with its historical recounting,

the personal is not in the fore and thus *Strangers to Ourselves* exemplifies her writing style, which is closer to traditional academic writing than either Cixous's or Irigaray's.

I approached this project in three phases. The first phase was the close reading of the texts. The second phase was the rehearsal and experimentation process, which culminated in the public performance. In the third phase I looked back at my close reading notes, the documentation I did during the rehearsal process, and the audience feedback to get a picture of the project as a whole and reflect on what was accomplished. The first phase took roughly six months where I read and reread the texts, carefully marking them and taking notes, journaling about them and picking out ideas I wanted to experiment with. The general approach to the texts was a writerly one in which I read them not only for what they said, but for what they generated for me or, as Barthes writes, “to appreciate what *plural* constitutes [them]” (*S/Z* 5). I read them with close attention to their principles of composition and considered, as advocated by Ulmer, how they used theory in their compositions so I might use their theory similarly as I translated it to performance. I noted connections with performance methods I had used in practice in the past or studied as a scholarly interest. I chose a close reading rather than skimming or reading notes on the texts in question because it was important to me to read their work with an eye toward what I could make from it. Ulmer notes that “Theorists from Plato to Derrida have influenced the making of arts and letters as much as they have their analysis and interpretation” (3). Heuristics “does not stop with analysis or comparative scholarship but conducts such scholarship in preparation for the design of a rhetoric/poetics leading to the production of new work” (4). In order to take the next step, invention, attention must be paid to how the work was made. The creativity of the work rather than its arguments should be the focus. Ulmer notes the goal “is to read the [text] at the level of its particulars – its examples, analogies, and evidence – rather than at the level of its arguments” (12).

If I skimmed the work or read the versions presented in secondary literature I would primarily get the arguments rather than the poetics, the creativity of the work, which was ultimately what interested me. Therefore, a close reading where I took in the particulars of each text was most appropriate for the invention of performance work.

In total I gleaned ten principles from the texts that I took into the rehearsal process. From Cixous I took four strategies starting with *stigmata*, which is based on a metaphor of a wound opened from the inside out that never heals but continues to attack itself from all sides. Stigmata is comprised of the other three strategies: *passage* which refers to openings and movement to a new place, *trace* which is a citational mark left by a burst of thought, and *errors* which are felt by the body and hold possibility for new discoveries. From Irigaray I borrowed *genealogy*, which emerges in discussions of mythology and psychoanalysis and indicates an approach to history and the relationships between women. I also borrowed *two lips touching*, a morphologic metaphor focused on relations between parts that posits a process over a model as a corrective to psychoanalysis. Finally, *mimicry* is a strategy Irigaray uses in her own writing and encourages women to adopt as a way to question their social roles. From Kristeva I used *toccata*, *fugue*, and *foreignness*. The toccata and fugue are musical strategies that influence the development of the foreigner, which Kristeva argues is a part of all of us. Every one of these principles appears as both content in the texts and as forms used by the authors in their composition. As such, they appear as both content in the performance described in this project and as form.

Following the first phase I eagerly entered the second phase of performance invention for six weeks. Six weeks is the general time frame one has to put a show on its feet in the academic theater world. Because of the fact that I could experiment with these principles ad infinitum the necessity for a definitive end, if only temporary, was apparent. To enforce this I scheduled a public

performance to constitute a stopping point for this phase of the project. Also because I was concerned that my own predilections for performance composition and viewing would take over the project and I would not translate the principles openly, I enlisted two collaborators. Kari-Anne Innes did the experiments with me and we rehearsed together for a minimum of twenty hours a week. Kari-Anne did not do the textual study as I had in the first phase, but she was familiar with the authors and worked to become familiar with the strategies I had chosen. She had a very different performance background from mine. While I value physical specificity, rigor and precision in performance, letting an arbitrary structure be filled with symbols that then create multiple meanings, she valued narrative, storytelling, naturalism, and character development. We pulled from methods we both knew when they seemed apt, and tried things we did not plan. We also spent time out of rehearsal blogging about our experiences, ideas we wanted to test, new texts, images, and exercises to consider. As we neared the end of the six weeks, our third collaborator, Ben Powell, entered the daily process to help us structure the public performance in a way that would both present what we had learned and invite the audience to be a part of that performance.

This six-week period was a time in which we used the theory as a generative resource for composing our performance, our invention. Ulmer suggests a first step in heurctic experimentation is appropriating the format by asking “How was it made?” (6). One then takes the elements of the making, or the particulars, but “offer[s] a different . . . generalization at each point, to carry the examples elsewhere, to displace them. The idea is to strip off the level of argument and replace it . . .” (12). We picked apart the particular elements and mirrored their making in a variety of ways in our performance practice textually, visually, and physically. As Ulmer writes, “Part of working heurctically is to use the method that I am inventing while I am inventing it” (17), and we very

much did that. It is not that we created a statement or a discourse on or about *écriture féminine*, but we made one out of *écriture féminine*.

In the third phase of this project I once again worked alone. I looked back at our blog, our daily writings, our script, my close reading notes, and looked for a portrait of the experience. I spent time explaining the principles as the authors used them, as we used them, and what this taught me about how performance changes texts and how texts influence performance. I compiled exercises that we used to explore the principles and detailed them in step-by-step fashion so that others might use them. Mainly I considered how the matching of inner textual working to inner performance workings, the translation of literary compositional practices to performance practices, occurred in this project. Ulmer suggests in order for something, for my purposes performance, “to become a place of invention, it must be *formatted* by means of the Method” (129). In this final phase I went back to the experience and considered how we did and did not do this. Heuristics is an attempt to reinvent ways of reading and writing, or literacy, in a world that is increasingly visual. Ulmer is interested in hypermedia, or “the convergence of video and the computer. . . . With this equipment it is possible to ‘write’ in multimedia, combining in one composition all the resources of pictures, words, and sound (picto-ideo-phonographic writing)” (17). Hypermedia, much like postdramatic performance, uses many elements that all become part of the composition, and no single element takes the lead. It moves beyond traditional relationships to texts as things to analyze, critique, and interpret to use them as inventions of methods for the invention of new texts. This final phase of the project involved reflecting on how we did this.

Significance

This project is significant in a variety of ways. First it intervenes and extends current narratives of devised feminist performance history. It exists in a different representational form than

feminist theater as a type of postdramatic performance that moves beyond visibility and identity politics. The project in its heuritic approach of invention moves feminist theory from a means of interpretation to a generative site for a model of performance creation and redresses the frequent feminist distrust of theory. The project also reinserts *écriture féminine* into the conversation about feminist performance from which it has sometimes been dismissed to reveal a type of perception in the form of representation that can be used for political change. Finally, it provides a practical vocabulary for the training of performance studies artist scholars.

As previously noted, devised performance has been particularly attractive to feminist practitioners because it reorders power relations. First, there is no text that guides the making of a piece and there is no director that has final say. This means that feminist artists can enter into a more egalitarian, collective environment for creating art through devising that allows each woman a voice rather than subordinating those voices to the text and the whims of the director. The authority is dispersed amongst the group. Secondly, the turn to devised performance also moved performance out of traditional theater spaces. These spaces require that one have the funding to procure a slot in the season. They also require most frequently legitimization by some theatrical standard imposed from outside. Usually this means safer, less risky content in the show and appeal to the traditional theater audience in form. Devised theater moved performance into new spaces like cafes, storefronts, nonprofit arts centers, and even the street. This meant that anyone could practice devising and present their work to a public rather than being dependent on the grace of an institutional board. Finally, because there is not a text as the necessary starting point, this gives collaborators a chance to create their own texts, whether they are verbal, visual, or physical, and be the authors of their own experience. Content can shift to the topics the individual members of the group are interested in exploring and, because they are the creators, their stories that had previously

been silenced can be shared. It is perhaps the desire to share repressed stories that makes much feminist devised performance look narrative in form and entrenched in identity politics.

While feminist devising strayed from traditional literary theatre by employing different production standards, performing in new spaces, and introducing new content it has, for the most part, remained fairly wedded to traditional forms of representation and identity politics. Elin Diamond suggests, “Theatre is the cultural practice most concerned with the identity questions: ‘who am I?’ ‘Who are they?’ It is in the nature of representation, most clearly exemplified by realism, to invoke a hidden truth and for spectators to enjoy its disclosure” (65). She suggests that early feminist performing groups “made a fetish of identity” (66). Even radical performers like Holly Hughes, Karen Finley, the group Split Britches, and Anna Deveare-Smith tend to retain a narrative, story-telling, form of representation and focus on revealing some sort of true identity of the performer regardless of how fractured that identity may be. If this quest for a true identity were part of the theatrical nature of representation, then perhaps feminists would do well to change this traditional form of representation. This study makes that intervention.

Heddon and Milling suggest feminist devisers must consider their choices, strategies, and responsibilities so they can reshape representational forms as well as content. One thing this means is getting away from narrative structures which propose an illusionary whole story. Using postdramatic performance is one way of doing this. Postdramatic performance is political due to its “mode of representation” and not just its content. In this study we moved away from the dramatic structures of plot, character, and catharsis. The text and action in the piece did not serve to create distinct characters within a narrative or dramatic arc. Instead, text was used as one surface among many that worked together to create a performance from *écriture féminine*. Physical movement sequences, nonverbal sounds, and the use of different spatial areas within the performance space

were other surfaces we used to create the piece. The goal was to create a representational invention from *écriture féminine* that mirrored the forms found in *écriture féminine*. Rather than making a performance that fit *écriture féminine* into a preexisting dramatic structure, we looked to the particulars of the texts for how they could suggest a design for a new poetics to produce new works not based in identity politics.

In this way we made a second intervention by using *écriture féminine* as a generative starting point brought into contact with performance rather than applied to performance from the outside as a type of authority for understanding, or what I have been calling an after-the-fact application. As suggested by Ulmer, often we consider theory in terms of analysis and critique, but not always in terms of invention. Feminism and feminist theater have had a contentious relationship with theory. Feminism emerged not in the academy out of theory but out of the empirical experiences of activism. Thus a spurious divide between feminist theory and feminist practice emerged. One result of this divide has been that theory is often applied after-the-fact by “academic feminists” to acts and events created by “activist/artists feminists.” This divide still exists in conversations amongst feminists as can be seen in feminist blogs and conference discussion.² In these conversations, however, one can also see a desire to elide that gap in both activism and art making.

A recent issue of *Theatre Research International* takes up the question of philosophy and theater. There are many exciting articles, but in one in particular Laura Cull addresses the need for performance practitioners “to ask ourselves what we want from philosophy, and, furthermore, to examine what philosophy brings to those who engage with it in relation to performance” (20). She suggests that often performers turn to philosophy to validate their practice by applying philosophy to it. This philosophy provides interpretive value to performance yet stands “outside of it in order

² See Martin, who addresses blogging; and Chesson et al.

for it to have ‘meaning’” (21). Cull suggests instead that we might consider performance as a type of thinking. Rather than separating thought (theory or philosophy) and action (performance) we “might expand our understanding of the forms and kinds of activity that might count as philosophy or art” (24). Both can be viewed as creative invention and as thought. Cull argues:

Performance practice might be seen to avoid application when it conceives itself as a way of thinking rather than as the mere demonstration of existing ideas. Allan Kaprow, for instance, saw little value in generating artworks that ‘remain only an illustration of a thought’ rather than providing participants with what he called an ‘experienced insight’: an event of embodied thinking by the participant in the act of doing, which is not the same as the recognition of some underlying metaphorical meaning of the work determined in advance by the artist. To make performances that stage what we already know is not a valuable activity, for Kaprow, in contrast to creating the conditions for experiments the results of which remain unknown. (23)

Theory, when used heuristically, provides these conditions. Just as Ulmer notes the surrealists used Freud’s work to create a new poetics, we can do the same with contemporary theory. This is what we sought to do in this project. It is not application in the sense that we subordinated practice to theory or theory to practice. It is invention or generation that brings *écriture féminine* and performance practice into contact with one another and fosters a performance as a way of thinking like *écriture féminine*. In doing so we invented our own method through action.

There are already performers and performance groups that work with theory in ways similar to what I suggest to do. Artists such as Goat Island Performance Group and composer, multimedia artist, writer, and hip hop scientist Paul D. Miller a.k.a. DJ Spooky consider their engagement with theory integral to their performance strategies. DJ Spooky has written on Baudrillard as the

philosopher of the mash up (see Miller, *Jean Baudrillard*), and connects his own practice of remixing with philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Luc Nancy, Slavoj Žižek, and others (see ZEMOS98). Goat Island frequently calls upon Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze to explain the ecology of their performance work (see Bottoms and Goulish; Goulish; Goulish and Cull; Hixson). Neither engages feminist theory, however. The method I propose in this study is in line with these traditions, but different due to its base in the specific tradition of *écriture féminine*.

In addition, this project shows that performing like *écriture féminine* helps us think about devising differently and also helps us think about *écriture féminine* differently. By making *écriture féminine* live on stage the problems of dismissing it as essentialist become evident in new ways. Elizabeth Grosz writes that the project of *écriture féminine* is “concerned with the *lived* body, the body insofar as it is represented and used in specific ways in particular cultures. For [the writers of *écriture féminine*], the body is neither brute nor passive but is interwoven with and constitutive of systems of meaning, signification, and representation” (*Volatile Bodies* 18). She continues, “Far from being an inert, passive, noncultural and ahistorical term, the body may be seen as the crucial term, the site of contestation, in a series of economic, political, sexual, and intellectual struggles” (19). Because the body is the site where ideologies and discourses compete for dominance, using the live body in performance vividly shows this fight and the dichotomy-undermining aspect of *écriture féminine*. In the performance practice detailed in this project the body is not a single thing or character onto which the audience projects a fixed identity. Instead the bodies in this performance are seen in process switching roles, shifting spaces, crossing multiple discourses, and laboring in a place laden with an aesthetic and political history.

In this way, the project reintroduces *écriture féminine* to the feminist performance conversation from which it is often dismissed as essentialist. Teresa de Lauretis suggests we “shift

the focus of the controversy from ‘feminist essentialism,’ as a category by which to classify feminists or feminisms to the historical specificity, the essential difference of feminist theory itself” (258). While many willingly accept the poststructural work of Derrida or Deleuze, there is a reluctance to accept *écriture féminine* and feminist work that has been concerned with difference from its inception. De Lauretis argues,

the notion of experience in relation both to social-material practices and to the formation and processes of subjectivity is a feminist concept, not a poststructuralist one . . . and would be still unthinkable were it not for specifically feminist practices, political, critical, and textual: consciousness raising, the rereading and revision of the canon, the critique of scientific discourses, and the imaging of new social spaces and forms of community. In short, the very practices of those feminist critics . . . allocate[d] to the ‘essentialist’ camp. (260)

Grosz and de Lauretis deftly make an argument against essentialism, or an argument to rethink what essentialism means in relation to *écriture féminine*. Enacting a performance based on the same invention found in the theoretical texts of *écriture féminine* offers a new way of thinking about them outside of essentialist claims. Two lips touching, for example, often dismissed as a biological correlate, is literalized on stage in various ways to show how this is a relational process. In all of these efforts *écriture féminine* is added to the feminist devising conversation as a generative starting point.

Finally, in performance studies, we do not have a readily available training vocabulary that shows us how to devise postdramatic performance. We have guidelines for interpreting literature that can be helpful. There are books like Ulmer’s that come from outside performance studies, and give us excellent guidelines for extending how we interpret and use literature and theory. Scholars

have begun to try to create such a training or methodological vocabulary, and I review that literature in chapter two. I see this study as making a contribution to that effort. This project not only makes theoretical connections with *écriture féminine*, it details how to make a performance from theory. In the description of the rehearsal process this is evident. However, in the concluding chapter I include a number of practical exercises from the method we invented that provide a vocabulary to approach postdramatic feminist performance.

Conclusion

The overall aim of this project is to theorize and invent a method of performance based on *écriture féminine*. This method is meant to be transferrable to other practitioners and to be useable and generative. Following a heuritic practice of reading selected texts of *écriture féminine* for what they suggest about making new texts, the method revealed is writerly and invites expansion in future research. This project is but a beginning of an articulation and proposes only one path through these texts. The tracking of the process of reading and experimenting with performance provides a space for reflection and illuminating gaps that can be further explored in future work.

In chapter two, “Devised Performance and *Écriture Féminine*,” I provide a history of devised performance through a review of literature on the subject. In addition to a general history I discuss conceptions of postmodern performance and Lehmann’s postdramatic performance in detail. Following this I addresses feminist devising specifically. I also detail the history of my experience with devising, or what constitutes my devising process, to situate myself in relation to devising practices. I address the work of Anne Bogart and the SITI Company, Goat Island Performance Group, and butoh as my major influences and explain the connections and disconnections, I find with these practices and *écriture féminine*. I discuss how these various performance methods are

used in conjunction with *écriture féminine* in the rehearsal process and performance documented in the chapters that follow.

Chapter three, “Performing the Cixousian Stigmata,” includes highlights from my close readings of *Stigmata* focused on an explanation of the principles of stigmata, passage, trace, and error that I use in the performance experimentation phase. Following the articulation of these principles, I detail the period of performance experimentation with these strategies. I then provide the section of the script that deals with Cixous’s work.³ I end the chapter with further reflections on the specific principles discussed therein and the knowledge gained from the process. Chapters four, “Irigarayan Infiltrations/Interventions,” and five, “Kristevan Foreignness,” follow the same format with a focus on the principles respective to each author’s text.

In the concluding chapter I propose a number of practical exercises for performance purposes. I also suggest possibilities for the future and summarize the project with a section called “*Écriture Féminine* as Postdramatic Feminist Devising.” In this concluding section I address the ways in which bringing performance and theory together ease feminist distrust of theory, allow feminist performance to move beyond visibility and identity politics, and provide a postdramatic feminist alternative that models a politically salient form of representation that can change the politics with which we perceive the world around us.

³ The full script is included as Appendix B.

CHAPTER TWO: DEvised PERFORMANCE AND *ÉCRITURE FÉMININE*

Devised theater or devised performance comes from interdisciplinary, overlapping traditions that go by various names and call upon diverse methodologies. Some terms one might associate with devised performance include collaborative creation, avant-garde theater, performance art, physical theater, experimental performance, postmodern performance, live art, visual theater, applied theater, multimedia theater, performance composition, and postdramatic theater, to name only a few. I use the term “devised theater” or “devised performance” because it has a traceable body of literature and is flexible and familiar enough to most people working in performance to accommodate the other terms. Devised theater marks the intent to move away from traditional theatrical practices that begin with the dramatic text and usually have hierarchical and specified roles for individuals on- and backstage. Its contested definitions and terminology are closely linked to performance studies as a contested discipline. Shannon Jackson observes the role of anti-theatrical language in differentiating theater from performance in her disciplinary history of performance studies writing, “Performance experimenters were interested in foregrounding the durational, environmental and addressive nature of performance in ways that they did not feel were being exploited by the conventions of theater itself. It was precisely what they called their ‘anti-theater’ extensions into duration, environment and address that visual art critics called ‘theatrical’” (Jackson 173). These anti-theatrical extensions are also addressed by Michael Vanden Heuvel who considers the “sometimes antagonistic” relationship between traditional dramatic theater and avant-garde theater by focusing on “the space between the two” (2). He uses the terms “drama” and “performance” to talk about each respectively and their effects on one another (2).

Attention to how texts make meaning rather than the meaning itself is an important factor in both devised performance and *écriture féminine*. Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva all argue that we

must find ways of writing that do not obliterate difference. Each formal strategy highlighted in this project provides a starting point for how one might create art that acknowledges difference. Devoted theater, particularly that associated with postmodern or postdramatic performance, calls for new forms to express changing social and cultural realities. These forms are in keeping with the type of textuality engaged in a given performance. In this project, the performance we created was based on understanding the texts that were called upon as systems of meaning. We engaged the ways they produced meaning to produce our own meaning in a performance form that mirrored this system and relied on others' interpretations.

In the previous chapter I set up the general parameters of the project and in the following three chapters I detail the strategies borrowed from *écriture féminine*, the performance experiments with these strategies, and the results of this study. In this chapter I review the literature on devised performance and position myself within this tradition by articulating my particular take on devising. This articulation is of my own performance base, how the performance methods I use practically and theoretically connect with *écriture féminine*, and how I see *écriture féminine* filling in holes or supplementing my practice. I address the performance practices of Anne Bogart and the SITI Company, Goat Island Performance Group, and Butoh, which I consider my major influences in practice and in scholarship. I consider how these diverse methods are useful to me in performing like *écriture féminine*, and how the current project contributes to the practice and understanding of devised theater as one entry into the literature on the process and practice of feminist devising. In this way connections between devised performance methods and poststructural strategies, as well as the responsibility of making performance choices that are in keeping with the political and meaning-producing systems of such strategies, are illustrated in the form the process and product take.

Devised Performance

The first book dedicated to devising, *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook* by Alison Oddey was published in 1994 and is cited by nearly every other book or essay written on the subject. Oddey provides a general introduction to devised theater and includes many practical examples, suggestions and considerations for the devising artist. Her focus on practice is a trend that continues in much of the literature. There are a number of books about the devising processes of specific companies that include documentation of their work and interviews with company members. Company members have written some of these books themselves (see Etchells; Bottoms and Goulish; Graham and Hoggett), and others are by researchers outside the companies (for example, see Williams; Quick; Savran). These books serve as case studies, practical manuals, and philosophical considerations of specific practices. I have chosen to write my project in a way that contributes to this growing body of scholarship on devising and devising practices. There are also a number of books geared wholly at practicality that teach the reader how to collaborate through discussions and exercises about the creative process (see Kerrigan), through practical guidelines, interviews, and lists of resources (see Callery; Mackey; Bicat and Baldwin; Carlisle and Drapeau) and case studies (see Prendergast and Saxton). In addition to these books leading academic theater and performance journals such as *TDR/The Drama Review*, *Theatre Topics*, and *PAJ: A Journal of Performance Art*, regularly publish reviews of performances by well- and lesser-known devising companies and interviews with more established devisers like Goat Island Performance Group, DV8, Forced Entertainment, and others. The March 2005 edition of *Theatre Topics* is a special issue on devising and includes a number of short articles by different practitioners addressing the question “Why devise, why now?” *Theatre Topics* also published an often-cited piece by John Schmor wherein he advocates for devising in college programs, which he

argues empowers and fosters a sense of ownership in students. All of these publications focus on practice and infuse some theory in their search to describe devised theater and its differences and/or connections with traditional theater. More recent works consider the contextual history of devising (see Heddon and Milling) and the impetus for and changes in devising (see Govan, Nicholson, and Normington). Histories of the historical avant-garde are also useful and give insight into avant-garde performance, though they do not focus as explicitly on the devising process (see Goldberg; Lehmann; Berghaus; Vanden Heuvel).

While all of these texts take a stab at defining devising, Oddey offers an early description that persists. She writes that “devised theatre can start from anything. It is determined and defined by a group of people who set up an initial framework or structure to explore and experiment with ideas, images, concepts, themes, or specific stimuli that might include music, text, objects, paintings, or movement” (Oddey 1). Devised performance work comes from the performers’ creative

sharing and shaping of an original product that directly emanates from assembling, editing, and re-shaping individual’s contradictory experiences of the world. There is a freedom of possibilities for all those involved to discover; an emphasis on a way of working that supports intuition, spontaneity, and an accumulation of ideas. The process of devising is about the fragmentary experience of understanding ourselves, our culture, and the world we inhabit. (1)

Oddey looks at companies who devise and how their work reflects the given climate and changing society in which they work. Unique, eclectic processes and diverse methods persist across and within groups and make defining devising both impossible and full of possibility to shift methods and create solutions as needed. Thus, Oddey suggests a definition must include: “process (finding

the ways and means to share an artistic journey together), collaboration (working with others), multi-vision (integrating various views, beliefs, life experiences, and attitudes to changing world events), and the creation of an artistic product” (3).

Others make similar definitional moves. Callery includes amongst her explanatory list the “actor-as-creator rather than the actor-as-interpreter” approach, a process of working that is “collaborative” and “somatic,” which fosters an “open” relationship between the stage and the spectator, and an emphasis on “the live-ness of the theatre medium” (5). Heddon and Milling add that devising emphasizes nonhierarchical structures, cooperation, collaboration, anti-commodification, blurring of the art/life distinction and performer/spectator distance, a distrust of text and authorial intent, a possibility for social change, experimentation, innovation, and improvisation. The inclusion of collaboration in definitions of devised performance could suggest solo artists do not devise. Heddon and Milling, however, note the term “devising” is flexible and does not necessarily imply more than one person. At the core of both collaborative creation and devising “is a *process* of generating performance, although there is an enormous variety of devising processes used” (3). Thus some devising practices may be collaborations with others and some may be solo. Heddon and Milling further suggest while traditional theater practices may well involve collaboration, “devising is a process for creating performance from scratch, by the group, without a pre-existing script” (3). Though Heddon and Milling focus on group work they also argue “devised performance does not have to involve collaborators” and acknowledge their “decision to exclude [solo] performance art [from their study] results in the simultaneous exclusion of important radical voices, often of queer and feminist subjects” (3).

There are studies on the practices of solo performance artists that address these radical voices, but they are not part of the devising literature.⁴ RoseLee Goldberg's *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* does not address devised performance or devising practices specifically, but tracks a comprehensive history of the development of performance art through the historical avant-garde, illuminating the processes of some of the same artists addressed by devised performance researchers. When read alongside devising work, texts on performance art and the historical avant-garde suggest a shared political importance found in the impetus for artistic/theatrical establishment bucking. Günter Berghaus's work on devising does consider the historical avant-garde as "enmeshed in a matrix of critical discourses" (xxi). He argues the term "theater" suggests "a cultural institution charged with the exhibition of plays, operas and ballets . . . [tied to] . . . a narrative structure . . . involving fictional characters represented by professionally trained actors" and to talk about devising he uses the term "performance" instead (xxiv). Berghaus traces the concept through the cultural changes of modernity that "gave rise to a cultural attitude that valorized present over past . . . and took a positive stance towards the narratives of technological progress, prosperity, individualism and universal liberation" (13). Modernism was the artistic answer to modernity embodied in the art movements of "Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, [and] Surrealism" (14). The avant-garde, like modernists, was interested in new forms, but "took a far more transgressive and subversive stance towards the institutional framework of the production, distribution and reception of cultural artifacts" (14). Their art was political in that it rejected the institutions of the museum and the theater, offering options opposed to capitalism and the notion of wholeness. The avant-garde sought "rupture, revolution and destruction as vehicles of liberation" (16) and "conceived of itself as a highly ephemeral phenomenon, and not as an institution" (19). Thus, performance was a key tool in the battle against bourgeois institutions. Berghaus notes that

⁴ For examples, see Bonney, Carr, Hart and Phelan, Juno and Vale.

modernists “still treated theatre as a handmaiden of dramatic literature” but the avant-garde created performances that were separate from these texts (23).

Berghaus’s work indicates the political implications of devising, addressed by nearly every study on the subject. Some political implications are found in the concept of the actor-as-creator, the rejection of hierarchy, and a new relationship to texts. Devising “started out as a counter-cultural practice populated by iconoclastic practitioners acting in resistance to traditional forms and theatre conventions” (Mermikides and Smart 4). Devised theater is different from the dominant literary theater, which is focused on a text and its interpretation by a director who then stages it. In dominant literary theater the script is a precursor to the performance. Devised theater does not require a script and questions hierarchy by focusing on collective creation. Though there are connections with the historical avant-garde of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Oddey cites the beginnings of devising in the 1960s and ’70s as people sought more egalitarian ways to work, performance art gained popularity, and multi-disciplinary theater became important. The changing political and social attitudes of the time required new ways of working and new starting points for performance. In devised performance, “the creative process originates in ways different from traditional theatre” (Oddey 7).

Simply, there is a question in devising about where to start, what to make, and how to do that that does not exist in traditional theater that begins with a script. Devising can start anywhere the group decides. The actor-as-creator approach was a new starting point in partial reaction to Stanislavski’s method, the dominant acting method in the west, that proposed a universal system of acting for all types of theater that many practitioners found faulty and not true to their fragmentary experiences. With growing globalism and the integration of traditions outside western theater the actor came to be understood as enacting rather than representing. Phillip Zarrilli describes this as a

focus “on the actor-as doer and what the actor does” (1). His method is based on “an ‘energetics’ of performance” rather than “acting as representation” (1). Actors don’t just perform characters anymore, but must be able to perform “post-dramatic” dramaturgies (7). Postdramatism, coined by Lehmann and discussed more fully in the following pages, “denotes the diverse range of alternative scripted and devised performance produced since the 1970s in which there is no longer a central story/plot or character(s)/subjectivity(ies) forming the center of the theatrical event” (7).

The move to devising was a response to a “strong desire to work in an artistically democratic way” (Oddey 8). The political rhetoric of the 1960s and ’70s “was also applied to ideal (and idealized) models of devising and helps us understand why devising became such a desirable mode of practice during this time” (Heddon and Milling 15). Terms such as “‘individual and collective rights’, ‘self-determination’, ‘community’, ‘participation’ and ‘equality’” influenced practices of devising and collectives and collaborative groups sprouted all over (15). “Participatory democracy” gained traction throughout the world and in theatrical practice as artists moved from professional spaces to alternative and found spaces, and in community and educational programs. Devising allowed some to circumvent economic structures by performing in alternative spaces. But not all did this. Many found governmental and private funding options through individuals, corporations, and universities. With institutional affiliations, some devised performance moved from the fringes to the mainstream.

While devising companies originally moved away from hierarchies, Oddey notes that in the “last twenty years or so there has been a move from this standpoint to more hierarchical structures within many companies in response to an ever-changing economic and artistic climate” (9). The term “devising” lost some of its radicalism in the 1990s as people under economic constraints could not work as an ensemble for long periods of time. Unable to realize the ideal, groups had to

restructure themselves and began to call upon traditional theatrical constructs to make decisions about the use of time and money including planning, research, rehearsals, and presentation. Additionally, as groups moved from the fringes to the mainstream and drew their funding from the government, corporations, and universities, their status as radical became debatable. These changes suggest that within devising “a critical shift from modernist transgression to postmodernist resistance has since taken place” (Magnat 73).

Michael Vanden Heuvel noticed this shift early on, suggesting that some avant-garde practices have made their way into mainstream theater and many avant-garde performances return to a recognizable dramatic structure. He suggests complementarity between drama, a “form of theatrical expression that is constituted primarily as a literary artifact,” and performance, which is “ludic, liminal, liberating [and] can infiltrate the text, dispossess it, and displace its power along with that of the inseminating author” (Vanden Heuvel 2, 5). He argues the work of artists like Samuel Beckett, the Wooster Group, Sam Shepard, and Robert Wilson play up this resistive complementarity and

expose the entrenched workings of traditional literary drama . . . [and the] . . . radical motivating force . . . that theater need not be limited to representing reality in traditional ways. Indeed, among these artists, theater, as a processual and highly self-conscious activity directed toward seeing and speculation, continues to be privileged as the means by which old ways of seeing may be deconstructed and new alternatives suggested. (231)

Rather than transgressing theater the artists Vanden Heuvel lists have used it as a site of resistance and, in doing so, reshaped its formal properties to include the social and cultural.

Others have considered connections between devising practices and the social, political, and cultural epochs from which they emerge. Mermikides and Smart ask, “If earlier models of devising process represented collaboration as an alternative to the hierarchy of the director’s theater, is contemporary devising still defined by its collaborative nature and, if so, what kinds of collaboration are employed? Do established traditions of devising still have an influence? What kinds of relationships now exist between visual, physical, verbal and textual elements of performance?” (5). Heddon and Milling attempt a critical intervention, tracing the history of devising both chronologically and conceptually, finding “differences in devising across the diverse fields in which it occurs, and also examin[ing] what it is that links devising process and performance to the chronology of the cultural, political or social moment” (22). By looking at the practices in terms of how they emerge and reemerge in given contexts, the authors prompt current practitioners and students to consider their own choices, strategies, and responsibilities.

Heddon and Milling’s section on postmodern performance traces a conceptual history within devising. Postmodern performances are linked to “dominant critical discourses of the time” (190). These discourses “variously described as post-structuralist, postmodernist or postcolonialist” have moved outside the walls of the academy to influence the way audiences view performances from a critical angle and the practices of performance (190). Heddon and Milling include both Cixous and Kristeva as influential theorists of the time and note while many of the theorists diverge, the use of postmodern as a term implies “a shared distrust toward universal explanations (typically ‘foundational’ in their status) and accompanying certainties of knowledge” (191). They suggest “Performance practitioners would deny the intention of explicitly aiming to produce ‘postmodern performances,’ recognising it as a term of (often lazy) retrospective critical description rather than of practice” (191). Nonetheless, familiarity with these discourses influences devising choices. Such

productions tend to “make transparent the constructed narrative status of our (and its) interpretations/re-presentations of the world, implying or making explicit the processes and potential results of our meaning-making activities . . . enact interruptions . . . or challenges to already existing ‘authoritative texts’” and our interpretations (191). In postmodern performance “particular forms are chosen for intended effect (even if these cannot be guaranteed)” (203). These forms question the primacy of the text yet, while there is the association that devised work “emerges from a distrust of words or a rejection of a literary tradition in theatre, very few devising companies perform without using words” (Heddon and Milling 6-7). Even those physical theater and dance companies that devise include spoken texts, though such texts are considered one element amongst many rather than the element that dictates product.

Hans-Thies Lehmann’s term “postdramatic theatre” is very much connected with Heddon and Milling’s understanding of postmodern performance. Lehmann offers a theory of the relationship between dramatic and “the ‘no longer dramatic’ forms of theatre that have emerged since the 1970s. This relationship has often been neglected, or at least under-explored, by approaches that have preferred to call these new theatre forms ‘postmodern’ or more neutrally ‘contemporary experimental’ or ‘contemporary alternative’” (Jürs-Munby 1). Lehmann examines this new theater in relation to theater history, dramatic theory, the historic avant-garde, media, and mediated images drawing upon media and cultural theories. He uses the term “postdramatic” to indicate a wide range of performance practices that are often considered separately, including “‘devised’ experimental performance work, physical theatre and dance, multimedia theatre, performance art and ‘new writing,’ as well as innovative stagings of classical drama that push this drama into the postdramatic (by directors such as Einar Schlee, Robert Wilson and Klaus-Michael Grüber)” (2).

Problems with the term “post” emerge here as they do in misinterpretations of the word “postmodern.” Jüres-Munby argues “post” functions similarly to the way Lyotard intended, “neither as an epochal category, nor simply as a chronological ‘after’ drama, a ‘forgetting’ of the dramatic ‘past,’ but rather as a rupture and a beyond that continue to entertain relationships with drama and in many ways are an analysis and ‘anamnesis’ to drama” (2). The postdramatic is about the relationship between “theatre to drama to deconstruction” and the myriad iterations of such relations since the 1970s (2). Munby notes, “The theatre that Lehmann identifies as postdramatic often focuses on exploring the usually unacknowledged anxieties, pressures, pleasures, paradoxes and perversities that surround the performance situation as such” (4). She also notes that he “considers the politics of postdramatic theatre, arguing that it is not the direct political content or thematics which makes this theatre political, but the ‘implicit content of its mode of representation’” (6).

Lehmann suggests new technology has created a shift in our perceptive processes so that “A simultaneous and multi-perspectival form of perceiving is replacing the linear-successive” (Lehmann 16). The theater, like literature, is thus “no longer a mass medium” (16). Theater requires real bodies in performance and in the audience “where a unique intersection of aesthetically organized and everyday real life takes places” (17). The actors and audience together create a “*joint text*” between them. With changing interpretations of the word “text” this “joint text” is “subject to the same laws and dislocations as the visual, audible, gestic and architectonic theatrical signs” (17). It is this change in the “mode of theatrical sign usage [that] suggests that it makes sense to describe a significant sector of the new theatre as ‘postdramatic’” (17). These new texts are not dramatic in terms of the literary distinction. Instead they indicate “the continuing association and exchange between theatre and text” (17). Lehmann lists postdramatic writers who produce “texts in which language appears not as the speech of characters . . . but as an autonomous theatricality” (18). These

are poetic, sensual, “language surfaces” that replace dialogue and constitute only one element in the postdramatic, multi-perspectival text. (18). He notes traditional European theater “amounted to the representation, the ‘making present’ . . . of speeches and deeds on stage through mimetic dramatic play” (21). As such theater was bound to dramatic structures like action, plot, and catharsis, working in service of the text, which was thought to be a narrative whole. This dramatic theater was tied to illusion, representing the world and reality as whole. Lehmann writes, “Dramatic theatre ends when these elements are no longer the regulating principle but merely one possible variant of theatrical art” (22).

Lehmann notes that this new theater is often connected with the historical avant-garde emerging at the beginning of the twentieth century. His project “proceeds from the conviction, however, that the undoubtedly deep caesura caused by the historical avant-garde around 1900, despite their revolutionary innovations, largely maintained the essence of the ‘dramatic theatre’” (22). Though he devotes a section of the project to exactly how the historical avant-garde “paved the way,” he also notes that the meaning of these forms changes based on context and new communication technologies (23). In developing his project “as a way of defining the contemporary, it can retroactively allow the ‘non-dramatic’ aspects of the theatre of the past to stand out more clearly” (23). He warns that “overestimating the depth of the rupture” or “perceiving the new always as only a variant of the well known” are dangerous misjudgments (23). His term “postdramatic” is an adjective that indicates “a theatre that feels bound to operate beyond drama, at a time ‘after’ the authority of the dramatic paradigm in theatre. What it does not mean is an abstract negation and mere looking away from the tradition of drama” (27). Thus it always references that which came before, and yet does not reinforce that tradition’s logic as a requirement.

Feminist Devising and the Postdramatic

I have not yet discussed feminist devising specifically. In chapter one I provided a brief overview of feminist performance. I suggested that feminist performance has often been aligned with identity politics. Many of the principles of general devising pair well with this alignment. For example, the fact that devised work emanates from individuals' accumulation of fragmentary experiences of their world suggests identities are important in making devised works. The political underpinnings devising shares with modernism and the historical avant-garde including the actor-as-creator, the rejection of hierarchy, and a new relationship with texts are all part of feminisms' fight for liberation, equality, and assertion of the personal as political. In "In Defense of Discourse," Jill Dolan notes in the 1970s and '80s "[t]he bulk of critical effort was aimed toward redressing the historical invisibility of women in the field. When French theory began to find its way across the Atlantic it changed the contours of feminist criticism in the academy" (94). Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva specifically "seemed powerful and poetic in their descriptions of female sexuality as a subversive, antipatriarchal textuality. If women could write with their bodies . . . could the body also be a site of a new theatre practice and textual analysis?" (94). Thus, as devising shifted from modernist transgression to postmodern resistance, similar shifts in the political project of feminism were beginning to take place.

However, not all feminists openly and widely embraced the shift. Dolan notes that poststructuralism challenged "many long-held theatrical assumptions that some liberal and radical feminists aren't ready to release" (95). For example, the poststructural death of the author "threatens what some see as feminist criticism's role in validating women's identities in performance" (95). Poststructuralism considers identity as "a site of struggle, at which the subject organizes and reorganizes competing discourses as they fight for supremacy" (96). As such, "feminist criticism's

struggle between poststructuralism and identity politics has provoked a metadebate over theory in feminism.” (97). Dolan explains:

Because poststructuralist theory questions the authenticity of experience as truth, many feminist theorists have been attacked as jargon-wielding elitists who have no political project and who trivialize years of political action organized around radical feminist epistemologies. This is not the intent, as I know it, of theory. . . .

Poststructuralist performance criticism looks at the power structures underlying representation, and the means by which subjectivity is shaped and withheld through discourse. These are intensely political projects. (101-2)

Others also note the change the entrance of theory had on theater and performance. Elaine Aston notes, “By the late 1980s . . . there was an increasing exchange of cultural ideas on theory and practice as professional feminist practice came into the academy (in the form of workshops, performances and talks by practitioners); feminist scholars began to write about and to theorise this work; and, in turn, some feminist playwrights and practitioners became interested in theory” (4). Sue-Ellen Case suggests, as a result, “No longer would our study of performance be dominated by historical accounts, but it would work to reveal the very base meaning-making” (*Feminist and Queer Performance*, 6).

While one can see in these comments a clear connection with Lehmann’s postdramatic performance and Heddon and Milling’s postmodern performance, there has been a reticence to let go of identity politics in feminist performance. Perhaps this is because, as Elin Diamond suggests, “Theatre is the cultural practice most concerned with the identity questions: ‘who am I?’ ‘Who are they?’ It is in the nature of representation, most clearly exemplified by realism, to invoke a hidden truth and for spectators to enjoy its disclosure” (65). Yet, she also notes, “theatre overlays ontology

(who one is) with action (what one does), and, by its very nature, puts identity in play” (65). Thus feminist devising might be well-served by reshaping their use of theater, as Heddon and Milling suggest, considering their choices, strategies, and responsibilities or, in other words, what they do. Because postdramatic theater is not political due to its themes or content, but instead in its “mode of representation” feminist devising would also be well-served by adopting an approach to form which shatters the illusion of a cohesive whole or narrative in favor of presenting multiple surfaces of meaning (Jürs-Munby 6). Even those creators of devised feminist performance who question identity in radical ways such as Anna Deveare-Smith and Kate Bornstein, as cited by Dolan, or Peggy Shaw, as added by Diamond, still rely largely on narrative structures and/or use text as a governing element. While feminist devised theater should and will reference what came before, it should work, like postdramatic performance to not reinforce that tradition’s logic. By using strategies from *écriture féminine*, this project attempts to introduce a new logic of representation based in the postdramatic to feminist devising.

My Devising Practice

Before I address how *écriture féminine* influences my devised feminist performance logic, I will share the story of my personal history with devising. Because devising can start from any place, it is useful to make known where I tend to start based on my fragmentary performance experiences with theater, dance, performance art, and theory. I tell three stories, somewhat chronologically, beginning with my exposure as a young actor to the work of Anne Bogart and the SITI Company, followed by my work with Goat Island Performance Group, and finally my training in butoh dance. I describe how I became acquainted with each method and what I find useful in my own practice. Following this, I consider these influences together with the theoretical work of *écriture féminine* as I have found it generative for devising.

Anne Bogart and the SITI Company

I was nineteen in 1999, and had the great fortune and formative experience of spending the summer studying with Anne Bogart and the SITI Company in Saratoga Springs, New York. At the time I had little knowledge of the American theater director and her international collaboration with Tadashi Suzuki that beget the SITI Company. A friend who had seen the poster advertising the summer program that emphasized physical and devised theater encouraged me to apply. I was wait-listed for the fifty-student program and received a call two weeks before it started notifying me that someone had dropped and they had a slot for me. The decision to quit my summer job, piece together small loans from family members and supportive mentors, and travel alone to a place where I knew no one had a profound impact on me personally and changed the way I thought about performance. I now understood performing relies on seizing opportunities and fully committing to acts. I was enrolled in a liberal arts theater program that, like most, was largely focused on realism and naturalism. There were one or two professors who did experimental and feminist work and I was drawn to them. Bogart and the members of the SITI Company taught me that I could decide how a script could be performed, I could make my own scripts working on my feet with my body writing them down later, and that there was a place out there for work that did not seem to fit the traditional confines I was most accustomed to. This was my first real introduction to devising and the experience that ultimately led me to performance art, performance studies, and a critical, as well as creative, engagement with performance.

During this summer I trained for eight hours a day under the tutelage of the SITI Company, becoming acquainted with Bogart's methodological contribution, known as the viewpoints. Bogart's method is derived from various sources, most notably the postmodern dance of Mary Overlie. Overlie, a choreographer and dancer in the Judson Church experiments that shaped what is

now known as postmodern dance, was a colleague of Bogart's at New York University in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Overlie developed six viewpoints for structuring dance, and "[s]he is adamant about their purity. To her chagrin and delight, her students and colleagues, recognizing the genius of her innovations and their immediate relevance to the theater, have extrapolated and expanded her Viewpoints for their own uses" (Bogart and Landau 5). Bogart was among those extrapolators. Coen describes the viewpoints as "a philosophy of movement designed to develop a common language shared by the actors, through which they can become the collective choreographers of a play's physical action" (30). They are a way of thinking about time and space. The viewpoints and composition, another aspect of Bogart's method, "offer a way to *collectively* address the questions that arise during rehearsal" (Bogart and Landau 18). They give the performer ownership of the process and the "gifts" of "surrender," "possibility," "choice and freedom," "growth," and "wholeness" (19-20). There are a total of nine viewpoints in Bogart's formulation, and they are broken into the physical viewpoints of time and space, and the vocal viewpoints. The physical viewpoints of time include tempo, duration, kinesthetic response, and repetition. Those of space include shape, gesture, architecture, spatial relationship, and topography. The vocal viewpoints include pitch, dynamic, acceleration/deceleration, silence, and timbre. The viewpoints are used in composition, a "method for creating new work" that "provides a structure for working with our impulses and intuition . . . in dialogue with other art forms, as it borrows from and reflects the other arts" (12-13). The actors and Bogart call upon the individual viewpoints as necessary in improvisations to devise patterns that will comprise the action of a play.

The combination of Bogart's training/method with that of Tadashi Suzuki is important. Combined with Suzuki's work, the training offered by the SIT Company involves a physically rigorous preparation and fine-tuning of the body so that the performer might have control, and at the

same time freedom to be influenced by what is outside of them including other performers, the performance space, and the audience. Suzuki's training is not a style of performance but a diagnostic method for finding energized stillness and physical and vocal control for the performer so they might limit extraneous habitual movement and make their actions precise. Because the training is so difficult, the performer engages the entire body to test its limits. The training is based on what Suzuki calls the grammar of the feet.⁵ At the base of his training is stomping, or stamping as he calls it, where performers rhythmically stomp their feet for different durations of time. Coen notes, "the foot-stamping then becomes the basis for a demanding and precise stage vocabulary of stillness and movement" (30). In the action of stomping, only the lower body moves while the upper body remains erect and still, as if floating on top of the legs as they move it across the floor. The performers locate their center of gravity in the pelvis. It is in the pelvis that the performer balances the energy generated by the stomping movement of the lower body with the stillness of the upper body. It becomes the control center. This requires a good deal of effort, discipline, and focus. Suzuki training happens in a group, but each performer is focused on the self and their own individual responsibility. It is this self-focus that provides a necessary complement to the other-focus of Bogart's viewpoints.

In the US viewpoints are sometimes taught alone without mention of Suzuki's training. For my experience and work, as well as that of the SITI Company, the combination of trainings is vital. SITI Company actor Tom Nellis reflects on this dual training:

I've always found the Suzuki training a very individual thing because . . . it's diagnostic. I'm always testing my own limits inside of it, trying to refine my concentration, my center, myself. And then when I go to Anne's training, it's something quite different – it's about everybody else. It's about listening with your

⁵ The concept is discussed in detail in Chapter One of Suzuki's *The Way of Acting*, "The Grammar of the Feet."

body to everybody else and responding to everything that's going on. In a sense, Anne's technique is about always getting out of your head, not letting your head be in the lead. (Coen 32)

Ellen Lauren, another company member, reflects, "When I began to work with Anne, the thing I was known for – my discipline – translated to rigidity. What was giving me so much trouble was that I was responsible not for myself but for the group" (32). Without the intense structure of Suzuki's work, it is difficult to find the freedom of Bogart's. One type of training rests on focus and physical acumen, but in the other training one must give in so as not to undermine the group. Both are necessary to balance performer and community. Finding the discipline in the self to attend to both the self and the group is vital so that one might develop the aptitude physically, mentally, and vocally to respond in fruitful ways. Lauren reflects on the asset a physically disciplined Suzuki-trained actor is to Bogart's work. She observes of these performers, "if they repeat the same movement and phrase a million times, the structure will stay the same. And that clarity allows [Anne] to make the work more complex *and* still supportable. Sometimes, if you don't have the discipline the work doesn't get more complex, it gets complicated, and the structure can fall in on itself" (32). It is structure or form that Bogart is interested in setting. She leaves the emotional life of the character for the actor to change within the confines of the form. SITI Company member Kelly Maurer reports of Bogart, "She would prefer to set where your hand goes, what the outside is, and then allow the freedom to happen within the structure itself. Oftentimes in rehearsal, an emotion comes out, and the response from the director is . . . do *that*. And it's destroyed. Anne feels. So she sets the stuff around it, the life can still exist within it" (32).

The first thing taught when learning viewpoints and composition is "soft focus," one way of being open to reception. This is revisited at the beginning of all rehearsals. Through a series of

running exercises, stretches, and the incorporation of yogic sun salutations, the private focus is turned into a group focus where no individual leads, but the group completes these exercises as a whole in unison. Soft focus is essential to growing community, whether it is a community of two people, as in this project, or a larger group. A visual strategy that then extends to a bodily awareness, soft focus is a way to relinquish focus in a way where “the eyes are relaxed so that, rather than looking *at* a specific object or person, the individual allows visual information to *come* to him/her. With soft focus in the eyes, the individual expands the range of awareness, especially peripherally” (Bogart and Landau 23). This also allows for the rest of the body to engage so that we might see with more than our eyes alone and accept information without desire. It creates an awareness and rapidity that allows one to listen with their entire body. It is not until this ability to move with others, which also contains the ability to control one’s own physicality, is cultivated that one can move on to learn the individual viewpoints, their combinations and incongruities. Bogart also uses the concepts of feedforward and feedback. The former is “an outgoing energy that anticipates the necessity for action” (34). The latter “is the information and sensation that one receives as the result of an action” (34). In performance performers and audience make adjustments in perception based on this exchange of information, attending to both the past and anticipating the future of the event.

Goat Island Performance Group

During a cold winter in 2005, I yearned to stimulate my mind and body. I enrolled in a weekend workshop with Goat Island Performance Group. In the beginning exercises I was paired with a dancer who asked me to do things with my body I thought were impossible. I quickly learned that attempting to do the impossible, even if you do not succeed, is a tenet of the work of Goat Island who set up impossible tasks so they may find the possibility in them. My dancer-collaborator

and I were paired with another duo to create a short performance combining all of our work. I know I was pushed to try things I would not have on my own, and I hope I pushed others to do the same. Later that same year I performed at the Performing Arts Chicago Edge Festival where Goat Island was presenting their piece, *When will the September roses bloom? Last night was only a comedy (a double performance)*. I went to see the piece three times and was enthralled every moment. The piece was structured so that the middle section of each performance contained three interchangeable parts. The audience sat on opposite sides of the stage looking at one another as the action took place between the seating banks. I saw a different show each time, though it was also the same.

As Goat Island began working on *The Lastmaker*, their final piece as a performance group, I was preparing to leave Chicago to attend graduate school in the south. During my last week in Chicago I saw a work-in-progress presentation of about thirty minutes of this final performance at the Chicago Cultural Center. Again I was mesmerized and wanted to make performance like this. I returned in the spring of 2007 to see *The Lastmaker* fully mounted at the Museum of Contemporary Art. I left the performance with my companion unable to speak except in short bursts. The performance still haunts me. I knew the Goats were reaching their end, and the final year of their summer school at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago was fast approaching. I had wanted to enroll for years but never found the time or the money. Finally, in the summer of 2008 I participated in what was their final summer school as a company. In this program I heard lectures by visiting scholars, artists, and all of the members of Goat Island, and engaged their method to create four performances during the month there. I also had the opportunity to have conversations with Matthew Goulish, one of the original members, about connections between performance and some of the philosophical texts, like those of Cixous, that interested both of us. While I expected a more disciplined experience like I had experienced with the SITI Company, I grew to appreciate the

acceptance that Goat Island offered for all levels of performers. This balance between the discipline of the SITI Company and the more laissez-faire approach of Goat Island is something I carry with me in my work and teaching.

Goat Island Performance Group began in 1986 with a meeting of four people in a Chicago apartment. The group did not know they were starting a performance group. They “only knew that [they] were beginning” (Bottoms xiv). They performed their final performance in February of 2009, which they announced two years prior. When the group disbanded so that members could pursue other projects they were a collective of six artists (one director and five performers) and a group of creative associates (people who help with things like web design, music, video, sound, publicity, etc.). These collaborators worked collectively to create original works comprised of juxtaposed texts, prolonged dance-like movement sequences, and images made from the combination of their bodies and inanimate objects. Over the course of twenty-three years the members of the group changed with two of the original members remaining at the end. They performed eight full performance works spending roughly two years preparing each, which they toured through the US, Canada, and Europe. They also published numerous texts, held summer school programs for eleven years in two countries, and gave countless workshops and lectures. The “undirected” beginnings and constant systemic change are indicative of the whole of Goat Island’s practice.

Like other “Theatre of Images” practices, Goat Island engages in a visual stage language that is highly stylized, nonvirtuosic, where “text is merely a pretext – a scenario” which “increases the critical activity of the mind” (Marranca xi-xiv). In the Theatre of Images, “The absence of dialogue leads to the predominance of the stage picture” (x).⁶ Rather than characters developed through narrative as in traditional theater, the text is just one element among many that creates the stage picture. Goat Island’s work is postdramatic in Lehmann’s sense in that it aims to create joint

⁶ For a thorough description and definition of Theatre of Images see Marranca or Counsell.

texts with the audience and use language as one surface in the performance rather than as dialogue. As Marranca notes, this type of performance is “devoted to the creation of a new stage language, a visual grammar ‘written’ in the sophisticated perceptual codes” (xv).

Goat Island begins their work with a question and does not anticipate the solution. Any answers they find along the way are continually questioned. Questioning is considered a creative force rather than an indication of lack. They call this part of their process “creative response,” wherein one observes another’s work and responds to the parts of that work they find exciting. In creative response the observer makes a new piece that would not have been made were it not for experiencing another work. The critical and creative minds are both engaged in this process. The critical act is observation with the intention of picking out the miraculous parts. The creative act is responding with a new artwork. This is how Goat Island generates material and it involves a radical sharing of material rather than ownership by an individual.

It is worth noting that Bogart also addresses the distinctions between the creative and the critical in *A Director Prepares*, a book not so much about the method undertaken by her and the SITI Company, but about her own journey as a director. In the chapter “Violence,” she claims violence is a necessity in every artistic endeavor. Artists must be decisive. While improvisation makes up a large part of the creative process, Bogart suggests that most artists know improvisation “is not yet art” (Bogart 45). She argues, “Only when something has been decided can the work really begin” (45). Precision allows for possibility. She contends, “To be articulate in the face of limitations is where the violence sets in. This act of necessary violence, which at first seems to limit freedom and close down options, in turn opens up many more options and asks for a deeper sense of freedom from the artist” (47). She asserts this moment of making a choice is instinctual and creative. It happens without time to reflect because “The analysis, the reflection and the criticism

belong before and after, never during, the creative act” (50). Whereas Goat Island tries to bridge this gap with the creative response process that engages the critical and creative together, Bogart sees the creative and critical both as necessary yet separate endeavors. Rather than violence, Goat Island employs a metaphorical gardening approach in creative response wherein one attends to inspiring moments, allowing them to grow, and ignores what is not fruitful letting it fade away. They conceive of this not as violent, but nurturing what is helpful. I discuss this in relation to *écriture féminine* later in this chapter.

Because they begin with a question, the Goats are not concerned with what a performance will be about. They do not gather information based on a theme. Rather the form the piece begins to take through creative response dictates what information is gathered. The piece grows from the question in many directions connected through the process and the group. Focus on the emergent form leads Goat Island to use space in innovative ways. They typically begin in a blank space and then tape out the space so as to delineate where the audience will sit and where they will perform. Throughout the performance bodies, objects, text, and histories move in and out of this space, changing it and echoing previously intimated structures. The audience continually reengages as the space shifts. In addition, the audience spatially surrounds the performance and becomes directly involved in it. From the beginning of creating the piece, the Goats see it as collaboration with future audience members. To its viewers Goat Island recommends “developing a comfort with not knowing everything in order to know something” (Bottoms 40). They embrace the obstructed sight lines imposed by their spatial configurations, repeating movements in different directions so texts can be heard, employing technology to do so, affecting the rhythm of the piece, and turning the space into a “living space” rather than an “acting space” (Bottoms 40). The performer and the audience both become aware of the whole performer and space when they see what would

otherwise be hidden or directed away. When I saw *The Lastmaker*, performer Mark Jeffery crawled over my feet, a microphone was moved in and out of my personal space, I saw bellies when shirts moved as actions were performed away from me, I watched the same movement from many different angles and from each performer with new associations from each iteration.

While different types of performances have different levels of interaction with the audience, Goat Island likes to think of their work as a collaboration with the audience and to think of this collaboration in terms of “edge phenomena.” Edge phenomena are places like riverbanks where two ecosystems rub up against one another creating processes and life forms that are dynamic and condition one another. Thus, rather than actively “messing with their audience” or treating the audience with hostility as, for example, Richard Foreman advocates, the Goats prefer to condition the audience and allow the set up of the audience space to condition the shape their performance area takes.⁷ As they shift their orientation in the space and repeat movement sequences at different times and in different spaces, both they and the audience adjust how they see and move. While the audience relationships advocated by Foreman and those advocated by the goats do not necessarily look different on the surface, the Goats’ positive intention versus Foreman’s hostile one undoubtedly affect the performance environment in different ways that are palpable. The Goat Island performers are always “serious,” and this seriousness is perhaps the only through line in a Goat Island piece. Because the textual composition is postdramatic, Goat Island’s performances are fragmented rather than having a plot-based through line. However, the poise with which the performers move informs the material, focusing the open content and giving it intentionality. Like other theatre of images techniques the body carried this way “presents spectators with the fact of structuration, inferring a fictional world whose elements obey some organisational logic, and which are therefore intelligible, decodable” (Counsell 194). In other words, they reveal the structure as

⁷ Foreman writes about this in *Unbalancing Acts*, and has repeated it in various interviews.

created so the audience might find their own logic in the piece and recognize that as constructed as well.

Butoh

I first encountered butoh during my MA program. My thesis advisor, Jeffery Byrd, used butoh in his performance art and taught a few brief workshops to his students. I later saw him perform in an evening of butoh with two other performers, Nicole LeGette and Rachel Finan, at Links Hall in Chicago in December 2004. I was excited by the dances that evening and signed a mailing list for more information. In the spring of 2005 I began training with LeGette at the artist collective, spareroom. I experienced the community that comes with butoh here and was committed to it from that moment on. That summer we practiced butoh on beaches, in parks, in the studio and presented a piece, “What to Forget,” at the Lurie Gardens and the Chicago Cultural Center. I pushed my body to physical limits I had not yet experienced. I found myself able to let go of my need to have everything I did in front of an audience be precise. By breaking my physical and mental boundaries I found possibility in letting myself appear vulnerable. The emotions and memories that arose from this practice connected me with my body in a way I had not experienced before. That same year I studied with Diego Piñon of Butoh Ritual Mexicano who focused on bringing out the emotions in butoh and experiencing them in a community. In 2006 I studied with Katsura Kan who had a different focus from Piñon, in that he was stricter in pushing his students to our movement limits and forcing us to dance in ways we might not naturally. I also worked with Eiko and Koma that same year, who are more butoh influenced than butoh practitioners. In 2007 I attended the New York Butoh festival and studied with both Yoshito Ohno and Akira Kasai. The flowing imagistic practice of Ohno in comparison to the electric, sharp movements and technical proficiency required of Kasai showed me very different places on the butoh spectrum, which range from small to large

movements and highly choreographed to improvised performances. In 2010 I spent a week working and eventually performing with Hiroko and Koichi Tamano. The work racked my body, a bit out of practice having not danced for this length of time or intensity in several years. But it also opened me up to a deep experience of the image-based nature of butoh and the ways in which images can be experienced differently in the bodies of dancers as they morph into different images in choreography.

Butoh is a Japanese dance/theater form created by two dancers, Kazuo Ohno and Tatsumi Hijikata, as a reaction to the post-World War II climate “partly as a refraction of America’s bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and more generally in protests of Western materialism” (Fraleigh 11). The first performance of butoh, *Kinjiki* was performed by Hijikata in 1959 with Ohno’s son, Yoshito, and a live chicken. Butoh is a blending of traditional forms of Japanese theater, performance art, and German expressionist dance. As Owen O’Toole notes: “Butoh is a modern Japanese dance-theater form, born of the atom bomb and Japanese theater, Noh and Kabuki. Alternating grotesque and beautiful, Butoh is a ‘body art’ evoking scenes from mythic stories of creation” (20). In *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy*, Sondra Fraleigh details the beginnings of butoh, its fusion of Japanese and Western aesthetics, its healing potential, and its metamorphosis over the last fifty-plus years as a “borderless art for a borderless century” (1). She claims butoh is not so much a form of dance, like ballet or tap, as it is a dance of change. In other words, it does not have a set structure imposed from the outside but emerges from inside the dancer and changes as they do. In *Kazuo Ohno’s World: From Without and Within*, Kazuo Ohno and his son Yoshito Ohno describe the process involved in creating a dance. Importantly, they note that “from its inception, butoh has been a living art and the essence of life is change” (Ohno 6). It is not,

nor has it ever been a pure art, as the co-founders Ohno and Hijikata had great differences in their approaches, themes, and execution of dances.

Before the emergence of butoh, Japanese dance and theater, like traditional Western theater before devising, had a strictly codified system. Butoh deconstructed these forms. Fraleigh cites Japonisme as a part of the dispersal of butoh. Japansime, a Western fascination with Japanese culture, art and fashion, began in the late-nineteenth century. Fraleigh notes, however, that “as art exited Japan, Western influences also entered. . . . In several ways, butoh is the inheritor of the confluence of East and West in Japan . . .” (19). As elements were translated from one culture to another they inevitably changed. Fraleigh draws attention to the ways butoh was influenced by the subjective, psychological, and spiritual movement of expressionism. In the early years of butoh many dancers trained with Western modern and postmodern dancers like Mary Wigman, Martha Graham, and Pina Bausch, and brought their ideas back to Japan. Hijikata was influenced by Western literature and Surrealism with its penchant for collage and imagery from the unconscious. He often engaged in surrealist practice of automatic writing in the workshops he taught. Butoh, as Fraleigh sees it, “revives Japanese nativism, including its shamanist aspects, and it employs the myriad stylizations belonging originally to Japanese culture that we have explored as Japonisme in the West’s fascination with Japan” (25).

Rather than having a specific style, butoh takes a freer approach, allowing its dancers to express experiences that live dormant in their bodies, both individually and collectively. Butoh was and is a way of bringing the inside out, expressing interior tensions through dance, and bridging the mind/body split (Ohno). There is no instruction for specific ways of moving in butoh. There is no plié, no relevé, and no first or second positions. Rather, the dancer’s movement is viewed as phenomena already deeply ingrained in their system. Before choreography the dancer allows the

body to move freely. They train their bodies to be open to new movement from inside themselves rather than mastering movements from an outside system. New moves are born in rehearsal and performance and this activity resists the creation of a classified set of steps. For butoh to be effective, cognitive control needs to be in close alignment with intuition. In other words, the mind and body should work in concert. Once a dancer moves too much into thought, life is lost. Butoh performance has a framework created by the dancer that remains open and fluid, allowing the dancer to interact with the images created through his or her body. Like modern dance, movement is the focus and each new piece has new moves to match the ideas, as opposed to ballet, which fits new thoughts onto classic forms.

The meaning in the dances does not come from messages but from experiencing them as dancer or audience. Fraleigh describes this as the alchemy of butoh, wherein base feelings are transformed into radiant dances. For her, the butoh dancer undergoes a metamorphosis. In training, dancers embrace and explore streams of transforming images, chronicling them for later use. The butoh dancer relates to these images rather than represents them. Indeed, this is not about self-expression. The dancer attempts to move beyond the body. While “the standards for such dance can be vague, [this] doesn’t mean that butoh performers don’t train assiduously” (Fraleigh 71). To move beyond the self, the butoh dancer often engages difficult physical tasks that force them to be completely absorbed in the task so they cannot think of the self.

While speaking is not typical in butoh, the rehearsal process relies heavily on language. The rehearsal process is a long period of “mining the body’s strata,” as Ohno would say. Ohno explains that before he dances he sits and writes thoughts and reflections stimulated by reading. According to his book, “this constant writing and erasing of notes, sketches, and impressions ... enables him to embark on a psychological journey into the hinterlands of his inner life and ultimately discover a

‘new world’ in the process” (Ohno 9). This process is referred to as “‘excavating’ his body” (10). He calls it a way “to mine the body’s many different strata: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Considered in this way, language in itself becomes an indispensable tool in creating dance” (10). He urges the dancer to probe deeply into the subconscious with language, excavating his/her body with the written word, stripping away layers of the self one by one in order to tap into the depths of the psyche. Ohno claims that through the writing process “the marks of this inward-bound voyage are readily visible” in his dance (10). Hijikata, as already noted, also realized the importance of language to dance by engaging in surrealist automatic writing practice. The writing creates literal marks that are translated to the body. The connection to writing as part of the process is important because it shows the tricks of language allow not only the writer-artist like Cixous, Irigaray or Kristeva, but also the dancer-artist to move. This process is a type of research that informs the body in performance, but is not explicitly seen onstage.

Tatsumi Hijikata died in 1986 and Kazuo Ohno in 2010. Butoh has been carried on by students of the two masters and because of its informal technique has been abstracted. Every teacher explains butoh and its philosophy a bit differently. Similarities include a focus on controlled movement, a lowering of the center of gravity, playful movement, grotesque imagery, and often white makeup that obscures the face of the performer. Techniques for creating performances vary greatly across the spectrum of pedagogies and, because of this, various performances of butoh may appear disparate. As butoh has influenced Western dance and performance, it has become more of an influence on performance than a pure form.

Devising Influences and *Écriture Féminine*

My experiences reading *écriture féminine* have changed the way I think about the practices I draw on most in making performance and devising in general. My study of the texts by Cixous,

Irigaray, and Kristeva selected for this project, and extracting and activating their principles, has enhanced my understanding of particular elements such as time, space, flow, violence, the body, and the role of the psychological in my performance practice. This project has led me to think about these elements in different contexts, how they operate, and their politics. It has let me think of the methods I use as *écriture féminine* and how *écriture féminine* might manifest in and as a performance method. I see the principles I found in my close readings at work in these methods and also the places where the formal strategies stray from or complicate these methods. This highlights where I too deviate from these methods in performance.

Bogart's work connects with Cixous's passage and trace and Irigaray's mimicry and genealogy. The viewpoints are equally valued points in a process which one passes over and between in an improvisatory process that leads to the physical score of a piece. These points are movements that shift the container of the performance. Cixous's concept of passage involves the preparation and readiness to receive messages as well as to send them. The tension between disciplining the self and being open to the group in the combination of Suzuki training and the viewpoints allows one to effectively send and receive. Likewise, the importance of soft focus in Bogart's practice makes performers always ready to receive what passes between them and other performers, the space, and the audience. Soft focus also relates to Irigaray's two lips touching in that it allows for movement and relations rather than consumption. The performance product is the trace of all this passing. Bogart's invocation of violence as a necessary severing of other options connects with Cixous, who thinks of writing as a violent process using blood and birth as metaphors for the process of writing and what is left, the book, as the trace severed from the passage. The trace is not only a product but is bound up in the process of writing wherein thoughts go forward and back on themselves again, erasing and rewriting similar to Bogart's concept of the adjustments

made based on feedforward and feedback. Finally, both Irigaray and Bogart use gesture as a strategy. Irigaray's mimicry is theorized from the gestures of the hysteric as a strategy for moving beyond assigned roles by performing them knowingly. In *A Director Prepares*, Bogart addresses the need to embrace stereotype and perform it to such an extreme that one "put[s] a fire under" it (93). She argues, "If we embrace rather than avoid stereotype, if we enter the container and push against its limits, we are testing our humanity and our wakefulness" (111). While Bogart does not necessarily advocate reclamation or remaking of stereotypes to be used subversively in the same way as Irigaray, it is possible she desires something similar. Bogart wants to show the history at the origin of concepts, whereas Irigaray rejects and wants to show the construction of "origins."

Goat Island's method connects with Cixous's passage, trace and error, Irigaray's two lips, and the toccata, fugue, and foreignness of Kristeva's work. Passage is evident in Goat Island's creative response process wherein ownership is relinquished so that ideas can expand in the passage of ideas between artists. The ideas that remain in the creation of new works are the traces of the process passing into one another. The passage takes time to allow ideas to move over us and the two-year time period Goat Island spends making a piece allows for the full passage and opening of many thoughts onto one another. Many errors are made in the process and Goat Island embraces them as new starting places. Creative response can also be considered in light of Irigaray's morphological metaphor of two lips touching. This metaphor focuses on relations that cannot be divided into units, but constantly opens, move, and shift. The lips connote exchange back and forth, rubbing against one another like creative response. Kristeva's foreignness, toccata, and fugue can also be seen in Goat Island's method. Foreignness and the other are part of the creative response process, wherein one accepts what is outside of them into their own work so that it can expand, transform, and emerge differently, perhaps uncannily. The systemic nature of Goat Island's pieces

functions like the fugue, with the introduction of a theme by one part, its reintroduction by another, and weaving the theme throughout the piece. Like the toccata their pieces build tension through the continuous movement and touching on ideas in their postdramatic use of language, gesture, and space.

In butoh images are in continual passage, morphing into other images. The body is in transition as is the dance form itself. It is a dance in passage, carrying with it traces of intellectual and artistic movements that have passed in and out of many borders over time. Like Kristeva's toccata images are touched on briefly and lightly without the concern of transmitting meaning to the audience. Also like toccata, butoh dances exhibit the virtuosity of the *butoh-ka* (butoh dancer), their skill and technique in the exquisite movements they execute. Butoh also connects with Cixous's stigmata and Kristeva's foreignness. Cixous articulates stigmata in relation to excavation, laying bare, opening, and allowing the inside out. Ohno uses the word "excavation" in his writings urging dancers to go deep within their interior and bare their psyche. Importantly butoh's excavation calls upon writing, also the way Cixous makes and reveals stigmata. In terms of Kristeva's her interest in the recognition of foreignness in the form of the uncanny and the unconscious can be seen in the way butoh brings repressed ideas out through dance. Butoh allows images to emerge uncannily and its mixed aesthetic always already has an acknowledged internal foreignness.

All three of these methods are concerned with the connection between the mind and the body. Goat Island's creative response merges the creative and critical, the body and the mind. In butoh the body and mind are one and those things potentially repressed by the mind are brought forth through bodily dance. While Bogart maintains that critical and creative acts are separate, one is of the mind and one of the body, she recognizes the need for both. The authors of the *écriture féminine* texts at the center of this project seek to involve the mind and body in writing. Cixous calls

to write the body and write texts that perform like the female body. So too does Irigaray, considering writing the body at the level of the symbolic and the necessity of attention to bodily differences. Kristeva urges us to notice what is foreign inside our bodies as a result of our minds' suppression so we might live more peacefully. Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva advocate an ethical approach to the other that opens up and embraces them without consuming them. It is fair to say that the three performance methods discussed all have a similar approach to the other, whether this is to other performers, or space, or to images that may frighten.

In more general devising terms, this project extends postmodern and postdramatic devising projects with its focus on poststructural texts as not just influences but as starting points. Heddon and Milling argue, "Performance practitioners would deny the intention of explicitly aiming to produce 'postmodern performances'" (191). This project creates a performance that is like the texts it presents which are poststructural. In other words, while Heddon and Milling argue performance practitioners never aim to produce a postmodern performance, in this project we are explicitly aiming to create a poststructural, postdramatic performance. Rather than representing the texts of Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva faithfully to interpret their meaning, the performance makes meaning in similar ways to the texts and evokes "continuing association and exchange between [the performance] and text" (Lehmann 17). Lehmann's postdramatic performance suggests the politics of devised theater should not only be about the content of the piece but also the method used in making it and the forms involved in its construction or its mode of representation. Many feminist practices have been concerned primarily with progressive political content, but hold onto traditional theater models aiming for "social-realist with naturalist dialogue, narrative-driven with linear plot, and structural unity and coherence, for example – [which] could not easily be made using a collective devising process" (118). This project intervenes with a focus on the politics of

production, process, and form so that, more than just content, all elements are inline with this feminist project. Rather than reading theoretical texts for the purposes of “ongoing consciousness-raising and political education” as feminist collectives of the past have, we use them as sites for the invention of performance forms (Heddon and Milling 101). In the following chapters, this logic and its performance manifestations are detailed in depth.

CHAPTER THREE: PERFORMING THE CIXOUSIAN STIGMATA

In her introduction to a 1996 interview with Hélène Cixous, Kathleen O'Grady remarks, "Introducing the work of Hélène Cixous is not an easy task; it involves describing *several* lifetimes of achievement" (6). Cixous is considered "one of the most versatile and radical voices in contemporary French feminism..." (Richter 1643). She has written fiction, drama, poetry, literary theory and criticism, philosophy, and feminism.⁸ Born in 1937 in Oran, Algeria Cixous later moved to France, earned her doctorate, and was part of the creation of the University of Paris VIII, heading the English Literature Department with a focus on "the presence of women in literature, on what sexuality signifies, what the body signifies in literature" (xxvii). This work paved the way for her founding of the Center for Feminine Studies. Cixous has remained committed to writing and the feminine, but has resisted aligning with a single movement for equality "arguing that women's liberation must be accompanied by the institution of a new socio-symbolic frame" (xxviii).⁹ This new frame requires a radically different approach to the other from a place of "sympathy rather than antipathy, in liking rather than disliking" (Conley xxii). Conley writes, "The constant in [Cixous's] writerly endeavor over these years remains a call to freedom – personal, collective – and a need to do away with all forms of repression" (xi). One way of accessing freedom and opening exchange is through feminine writing.

The major concern for feminine writing is the obliteration of women's sexuality by a system that has constituted it as other. Sellers notes, "Cixous employs the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' to denote the possible poles of response to its law" (xxviii). She continues, suggesting these terms "could be viewed as markers which could be exchanged for others" (xxviii). Cixous argues sexual

⁸ For a thorough overview of Cixous's projects, influences, the trajectory of her career, and her ideas in connection with changing cultural and historical epochs, see *Hélène Cixous: Writing the Feminine* by Verena Andermatt Conley. See also *The Hélène Cixous Reader* edited by Susan Sellers.

⁹ As discussed in chapters four and five, Irigaray and Kristeva have also resisted such alignment.

difference provides a way of showing different perspectives. Since woman has traditionally existed not as her own symbolic but as the symbolic other of man, acknowledging and inscribing her sexuality as her own could change ruling systems. While she connects this symbolic economy with female bodies' ability to give birth, for Cixous, "life and writing are about the discovery of *you*, rather than about the consolidation of a self...the body lived from the inside, rather than as a fetishistic object, cultivated from the outside" (xx). Feminine writing is not limited to the female sex or to a singular notion of what constitutes it. Feminine writing, accessed more often by women but accessible by men, is an ethical economy of excess and movement that respects rather than destroys or absorbs the other. It moves the writer beyond the constructs of a unified self to exist in process instead of as a fixed model. Cixous argues for a similar approach to theory, creating it as a lived process rather than a fixed model. Conley notes that Cixous's work is significant because of "its ability to combine writing, theory, and living. . . . For her, theory is not just an intellectual construct and a means to power but a way of living, speaking, and seeing the world" (xxii). She blurs the distinction between theory and practice and her works are both at once. This is especially important to this project because I am not seeking a truth (what devised feminist performance *is*) but rather a process of devising performance that blurs the theory/practice distinction, performing theory as a way of seeing the world and in turn offering theory in practice. In other words, I seek to develop a performance process that moves like Cixous's theory. The opening of practices and ideas onto one another is evident in *Stigmata*.

In *Stigmata*, Hélène Cixous revisits tropes common in her writing such as the phenomenon of the interior/exterior, the notion of home, the feminine body, wounds, writing from a feminine border, and the dialectics of excess. In this collection Cixous, as always, addresses writing. Or perhaps it is fair to say within each essay there is a nod to this all important process, whether it is

the presumed topic (as in “Writing Blind”) or not. In fact the title, *Stigmata*, alludes to writing, or writing the body through marking, and Cixous deftly addresses this process throughout the book in various formulations. Presented as a series of twelve essays divided into four sections titled “Reading in Painting,” “Ringing in the Feminine Hour,” “Going off Writing,” and “From my Menagerie to Philosophy,” the book also includes a forward by Cixous’s long-time friend Jacques Derrida. Derrida calls the book “a weave of poetic narratives, [that] overflows *our* language, the French language, in every way, while nonetheless cultivating and illustrating it in a rare and incomparably new fashion” and “a great classic” (ix). The book, in its wide range of topics and styles could be seen as a primer for the entirety of Cixous’s works and as the constant becoming of her literary career through her recollection and presentation of her own stigmas or scars.

Through the entire piece, though not explicitly referenced, stigmata recur. The stigmata, as a mark or a trace of a bodily wound “strikes and removes, sows, speckles signs its blows, leaves behind and takes away, annoys and excites at the same time, gives back what it takes, serves the interests of the thief and the police” (Cixous, *Stigmata* xiii). The stigmata also stimulate and become an effective metaphor for the entirety of the book that focuses on the ways we are marked and therefore permanently changed. Though tracking a linear through line with any work by Cixous is troublesome, all of the dyads she explodes could be thought of as marks within a scene that is too big, too full of possibility, to understand. Rather, making marks on this scene of literature and life through these texts allows the reader to see the many marks, the many ways of marking, and the process of this unfolding. This is illustrated through Cixous’s conclusion to the preface to this book: “Each Stigmatext is the portrait of a story attacked from all sides, that attacks itself and in the end gets away” (xvi). Indeed, while this text starts out running and will run on after the reading is completed, it will most certainly sting the reader in ways that will not disappear.

A variety of principles from *Stigmata* could be used in performance practice. As previously noted, Cixous returns to many common themes of her overall work in this text. While I find many of them exciting I had to narrow my scope for this project. As I read and re-read the book and my notes I identified four strategies I continually returned to. I wanted to choose strategies indicative of Cixous's larger project and yet particular to *Stigmata*. The four strategies I chose encompass a range of possibilities and engage the ethical project of Cixous's work in general with specific anchoring in this compilation of texts. Cixous's process-based, transformative approach to the body, writing, theory, and living is apparent in each strategy. One could choose different terms to get at similar ideas, but I chose these labels because they arise as terms, themes, and compositional processes or models in this text that can be understood both theoretically and practically. In addition, I found promise in them to be particularly generative for performance practice. I name these strategies *stigmata*, *passage*, *trace* and *error*, though none of them are completely inextricable from the others. Through Cixous's praxis they come alive, and through my translation of them to performance they are extended.

Stigmata is based upon a metaphor of the wound that opens from the inside out and lays bare the process of its creation. The stigmata never heals or closes up but continues to attack itself from all sides. Cixous creates texts that do the same, and these texts are spurred by an injury. *Passage* refers to both spatial passages that move us from one thing to another, remaining open like stigmata, and to the temporal passage of the present to the past. Cixous argues that good art remains in the passage rather than arriving at a time or place. *Trace* and *error* are the related and final strategies I call upon. The trace is, as it sounds, a brief mark left by a thought, a fragment, or a burst that is citational and, together with other traces, creates a portrait of a life. Errors are felt by the body and hold possibility for new discoveries. In the remainder of this chapter, I guide the reader through an

explanation of these strategies and their translation in performance experiments. I provide a section of the performance script developed as a result of this process and conclude the chapter with reflections on the process as a whole, the presentation of this work to an audience, and what the process taught me about the practice of devising feminist postdramatic performance.

The Formal Strategies

Stigmata

Cixous prefaces *Stigmata* by declaring all the texts within are the result of an injury, a metaphorical or actual spilling of blood that has remained in her heart. She claims, “The texts collected and stitched together sewn and re sewn in this volume share the trace of a wound” (xi). This wound, the stigmata, the blessed wound that comes from the inside out, becomes the overarching structure of the book also appearing as referential content, explicitly returned to in the final culminating essay, “Stigmata, or Job the Dog.” Cixous suggests a doubling, found in the form of the stigmata and in each text, of fleeing the threat of immobilization and yet, “In fleeing, the flight *saves* the trace of what it flees” (xii). The threat is both absent or left behind and yet will never not be present in some way. This doubling is found in the form of the stigmata, which Cixous makes clear in her distinctions between stigmata and scars. She suggests scars cover while stigmata open, noting, “*scar adds something*: a visible or invisible fibrous tissue that really or allegorically replaces a loss of substance which is therefore not lost but added to, augmentation of memory by a small mnesic growth. Unlike scar, *stigmata takes away*, removes substance, carves out a place for itself” (xii-xiii). Stigmata, like a prick or sting, both leave holes in the flesh, or absence of substance, and mark it, the present trace remaining by the past act of puncture. They mark one as double, “exclusion and election” (xiii). Returning to her texts Cixous concludes, “Each stigmatext is the portrait of a story attacked from all sides, that attacks itself and in the end gets away” (xvi). In

other words, unlike the scar, which closes up, contains, and heals, these texts like the stigmata get away because they remain open, unfinished, incomplete and without a moralizing ending. The process, the pinch or sting that created these texts is both absent and yet present in the traces on the page. It is on the concept and process of creating stigmata that all of the texts in the book can be hung.

Cixous suggests the “*Felix Culpa*,” “blessed wound,” or stigmata is “the founding secret of all major creation” (243). Some essays like “What is it O’Clock,” “In October 1991. . .” and “Stigmata, or Job the Dog,” address literal wounds such as circumcision, childbirth, and puncture. The opening of flesh is a hallmark of these wounds, and it shows “the inside come out, and that there is an inside,” offering an “unexpected discovery” (84). The physical remnants of the puncture wound are scars that mark a physical and emotional transformation now absent. However, scars can be metaphorically re-opened and attacked from many sides to reveal the multiple circumstances of their creation and the processes hidden beneath a closed representation. Cixous opens scars in her essays. “Bathsheba or the Interior Bible” is a stigmatic study of Rembrandt’s *Bathsheba at her Bath*. The essay is structured in twenty-four short segments referred to as “twenty-four steps in the direction of Bathsheba” (3). Each step moves the reader deeper into the painting, revealing wholly new sides of it. Cixous turns the painting into an event comprised of the process of its creation, reception, and continued life that, like the stigmata, continues to fester. Each step offers a perspective that opens interpretation further, providing new discovery and opening up previous interpretations as well. It does not settle on one.

As a performative strategy, stigmata can be considered to encompass the other three strategies from Cixous. Passage, trace, and error are each specific components and processes within stigmata. The passage is movement on many levels. The trace is the marks left by that movement.

The error is the bodily feeling that alerts us to the fruitful wound and all it has to offer encouraging us to look deeper and attack the ideas from another side. A stigmatic performance process will be apparent and intentionally highlighted in the performance product. The process and the performance then is open, full of movement, double or multiple meanings, and the reopening of what may be assumed to be closed, taking steps toward the deep inner space of an idea and bringing that to the outside by performing it. The performance will also establish a relationship with the audience members that allows them to engage a similar interpretive process.

Passage

Passage has multiple meanings. It can indicate the passage of time from past to present or a physical passage like a corridor, hall, path or route. A passage can be a voyage or a journey such as the transition from child to adulthood. To receive passage means to be allowed access, and the passage of a bill in government grants it authority. To be passed over means not chosen or overlooked, but making a pass indicates interest in interacting with an other. Finally, a passage can be a selection, an excerpt, a quotation, or citation of a piece of text. These diverse meanings, all of which indicate movement and liminality, an in-between place of transition or transformation of both time and space, are present in Cixous's text and shine light on one another.

Like stigmata, passage operates as both compositional form and subject matter. Bathsheba's previously mentioned staircase is a passage that structures the piece. Cixous argues that in order to really see an other we must cut them open, pass into them and see ourselves in them. In "Bathsheba" and "Without End, No, State of Drawingness, No Rather: The Executioner's Taking Off," she suggests we acknowledge what "passes between us and the [painting], the electric current . . . the emotion is born *at the angle* of one state with another state. At the passing, so brusque" (34). Other referenced passages include bodily processes replete with blood, urine, and sweat that pass

from us. For Cixous, writing is a bodily process and she pushes this connection by suggesting that writing in the passage is like giving birth: “There is a long time and a short time. . . . There is gestation and giving birth” (192). The actual birth, writing the book, is quick when it is ready, but it passes from the body only after circulating within it in the long, slow gestation period. Like giving birth, writing in the passage means one cannot predict precisely when or what one will parent. Of this passage Cixous argues, “One cannot speak it. One can only perform it” (198).

We can understand thought as passage. One can never write or draw one thought. What we read or see in a work of art is what is left by the passage of thought, though much more escapes the work than remains in it. Cixous suggests thoughts move in many directions at speeds our bodies cannot achieve and that writing should occur at the raw speed of thought. Writing means being ready to receive messages as they pass and to depart on a journey with them. Writing in the passage is different from narrative writing that kills the present, “knows everything in advance, and . . . forewarns us incessantly” (52). To write in passing is to write in the present “the way life happens to us, by gusts, by events, depositing discontinuous elements” (189). To put a piece written in passing together, “one cheats: one reassembles, pastes together, puts it all in order. . . . a form hidden in disorder” (60). Cixous prefers books that do not end, “books that get away,” that stop but do not close the passage (56). It is not the end but the process of passing that is important. Cixous argues the only intentional action in her writing is stopping or the art of “cutting” (191). Writing is a balance between speed, which permits ambiguity protecting one from insincerity, and slowness which, when found within speed enables depth and meticulous attention to detail rather than skipping over. Speed with slowness is “grace” (191). Cixous argues art should acknowledge and signal what passed outside of its contours.

Writing should thus remain in the passage, between two physical locations, two ideas, or it should stay in the present so as to watch the passage of time. This take on composition is extremely influential for the performance process and compilation of performance. We engaged it by allowing ideas to quickly pass over, noting them, putting them on a blog, videotaping or photographing them, and not thinking too much about it. There was a long gestation or study period of these ideas before they were passed, or birthed. After this we could return to our notes and find an emergent order for composing the performance or putting the traces together. In addition, we used the architecture of the space to create various passages through which we moved and performed at different points in the piece.

Trace

The trace is what remains after the dash through a passage. All sentences, all bodily acts are residue from the passage that came before. Cixous argues:

thought doesn't go straight ahead, as we think, but in a frenetic movement, invisible to the naked-eye-of-thought, it goes straight ahead of itself like lightening and almost simultaneously returns backwards on its own streak to step on it and erase it and almost simultaneously shoots forward like a rocket ... thought is not a sentence at all, but, after several explosions, a fallout in words. (38-9)

In the instant a plethora of possibility emerges and passes. One must slow down to find the remaining traces. The trace is both a movement and a mark left by the movement, like the scars from the bite in "Stigmata, or Job the Dog." Trace can also indicate a small quantity like the garden of flowers, fruits, and vegetables planted by Cixous's father before his death referenced in "My Algeriance, in Other Words: To Depart Not to Arrive from Algeria." After her father's death Cixous's family "lived off these plantings of the one who was dead" (205). These traces were small

pieces of him kept alive, nourishing them. To trace something is to investigate, follow, find, or discover its origin or development. Cixous calls upon these definitions to indicate a trace is a citation. It is a mark of something passed whose current use may have little resemblance to its original use though a descent can be traced. The trace as citation is the focus of “‘Mamãe, Disse Ele,’ Or Joyce’s Second Hand,” where Cixous illuminates many traces in Joyce’s work. She compares the call to the father at the end of *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* with the call to the mother at the end of Clarice Lispector’s “The Message.” She traces the citations of the Icarus myth in Joyce’s use of the name Stephen Daedalus and the labels of mother, father, son, and daughter noting these are incomplete traces in a web of actual interpersonal relationships.

From this, Cixous suggests we compose in traces. Her essay, “In October 1991 . . .” explains this compositional strategy explicitly, though it could be argued all of her essays use the approach. Cixous asks at the beginning of the essay, “How did I ‘write’ this? I took notes” (60). All of the notes were fragments that came in discontinuous bursts to create a “portrait of October.” Stories about starting school in October, Gorbachev’s resignation, and her mother came in bursts passing over her. She noted their traces, which together became the subject of the essay or the story. The subject was a mystery until the last minute, though its development can be traced through what remains. Traces are different than the character that passed and made them. The movement leaves a trace separate from its enormity, reminding us of its existence without the weight of its entirety.

Error

Cixous argues that “we don’t lose anything by erring, to the contrary. The unhappy thing would be to believe we had found. As long as we are seeking we are innocent” (29). Rather than seek truth we should follow errors. We feel truth as bodily pleasure, but pleasure can fool us. Errors alert us to the absence of pleasure by creating bodily sensations that feel off rather than pleasing.

The body recognizes this dissension without question or confusion. Rather than efface error to rid ourselves of discomfort or discrepancies, Cixous argues we should interrogate it and use it as a place to start a new journey. She argues errors show us we are on track. They are not seen but felt as inaccurate estimations asking to be retraced. Errors can be forgotten things that arise again and they are embedded in discussions of the trace and passage. Errors are traces that don't quite fit allowing us to pass into new territory.

Cixous writes of errors in her life that she has followed so as to pass through difficulty. Names can be errors that indicate a role we play, but not all of the roles we play. The assertion of nationality on a passport does not tell the entire story. The call to a homeland that is not really one's home evokes an uneasy feeling in the body. Errors allow us to resist these labels. Following them, we can show that much has passed outside of them and the traces that are erased. Following these errors allows a fluidity that exceeds categories and contours, and which encourages movement.

Performance Experiments

The period of performance experimentation began after I had spent roughly six months solidly focused on the texts, though I had read them all several times before this period. At this point I felt very close to the strategies I had selected, so much so that I could not really see my way out of them or explain them clearly to others. They folded upon one another and the task of engaging a performance process that embodied the strategies and the creation of a performance that operated like them, a commitment I had made many months prior, was daunting to say the least. Luckily for me, my two collaborators, Kari-Anne Innes and Ben Powell, entered the process at this point, which forced me out of myself and into the rehearsal space. In many ways the internal festering and mixing of the texts with my own thoughts and experiences were opened out, like the stigmata, to be changed by my collaborators and later our audiences. We spent six weeks, the length

of a traditional rehearsal period, beginning in January of 2011 taking notes, passing through ideas, interrogating our process, and finding a structure for our presentation of the work in mid-February.

Before we began the rehearsal process I gave Kari-Anne and Ben an early draft of a chapter describing the strategies I had selected with some citations from the texts as well as how I saw them structuring or operating within the texts. I also connected the strategies with my own performance practice and influences as a way to provide a place to begin working.¹⁰ One could call this “table work”: “starting work on a play with a series of sit-down rehearsals during which production concepts are spelled out by the director and designers, the script is dissected line by line by the actors, background information is provided by the playwright and/or dramaturge, and open-ended impressions and ideas are shared by everyone involved – . . . a common theatrical practice” (Cummings 198). Often this is an initial period of becoming acquainted with the people involved in the project. However, in devised performance this process differs, as there is not always a script or distinct roles because the performers may also be the designers, dramaturges, and directors. In addition, in devised performance, the ensemble is often formed because certain people desire to work together on a particular concept or in a particular way. This was the case in our project. Table work was not a period of time where we got to know one another and our concepts. We had all worked together in different ways previously and had been preparing for the project with our own research long before our official rehearsal period began. Kari-Anne and Ben were both familiar with the authors but had not spent a lot of time with the specific texts. My draft, rather than providing answers, suggested places to go within the larger texts to do further research. For us table work was closely aligned with Anne Bogart’s description:

. . . table work is not about finding answers. The discussions and slow, deep readings are about opening up possibilities and making room for discovery rather than finding

¹⁰ Discussed in detail in chapter two.

answers or solutions. We look for clues and hints that can lead to unexpected associations and fruitful directions. The objective is not to emerge from the process with explanations; it is, rather, to provoke many more questions. We attempt to enter into the mystery of the material by opening up to the myriad of possible readings that one text can provoke. (*And then*, 122)

It was not necessary that we all had the same experience of the textual study but that, as collaborators, we could open the texts up and get multiple perspectives. Our diverse experiences and performance proclivities could further open up areas like the stigmata, rather than closing them off, and allow ideas to pass between us, the texts, and beyond. As Cixous suggests in the previously noted description of passage, it is at the meeting of the paths of diverse ideas that creation happens.

Kari-Anne and I generated the majority of performance material in rehearsals, and Ben came in later in the process to help us arrange and fine-tune the material we had devised. In order to create a rehearsal plan, we decided to work our way through the principles in my draft one at a time. Each rehearsal began with a discussion of the previous rehearsal focusing on our individual discoveries, concerns, questions and group issues. In an effort to keep writing central to our process, as it is to Cixous's, between rehearsals we recorded our reflections to share at the next meeting. We also incorporated free-writing into our rehearsals taking time to make notes at the end of rehearsals and having the option of calling a "writing time out" at any point in the process. While rehearsals would be clearly outlined there would need to be outside work as well. To share work we did between rehearsals in the form of assignments and further research we created a blog. We kept the blog private so that only the three of us could access the content and filled it with our writing, rehearsal video, rehearsal notes, and links to images, sound files, and other video that we found inspiring. This created an archive of our process and allowed Ben, who was not present at the early

rehearsals, to still be a part of them. In many ways the blog allowed us to attack an idea from many sides, pass from and between ideas, follow traces in the form of links, and document and follow errors. This is how we began our process and the plan we put in place to create a performance. In what follows I describe in more detail the process of exploring the formal strategies of stigmata, passage, trace and error while calling upon and combining devising strategies we were familiar with including creative response, exercises with Grotowski's *plastiques*, the concept of the performative lecture, and our own movement- and text-based exercises.

Stigmata was the first strategy on our list and we began with Cixous's distinction between scars and stigmata. As already noted, the scar is physically a growth and allegorically a memory growth. It is where two sides meet and grow into one another. In a scar fibers, parts, or fragments from the edges of a wound come together to build something new. Scars hide the puncture, stop the festering, heal and seal. A scar, like a stigma, is a mark, but it is a new substance replacing another. We wondered: is an open scar a stigma? Stigma is sometimes used as a synonym for a scar, but it is different in many connotations.

In terms of the human body, the stigma is connected with the ovary. It is an area on the ovary where a follicle literally bursts through and releases the ovum during ovulation. In this bursting forth and puncturing permeation, the ovum is released into the fallopian tube becoming viable to fertilization and creating something new. This stigma, this surface that is ruptured, continually creates possibility for new life or new passage. This connection with the female body, important to *écriture féminine* in general and Cixous's writing specifically, should not be overlooked as a site of potential. Nor should it be confused with the other bodily condition of astigmatism, an optical defect resulting in blurred vision due to the eye's inability to transform the focus on a point into a clear and focused image on the retina. The astigmatic image is always

distorted, never fixed. Perhaps it is an apt metaphor as well. The eye struggles to make the image sharp, constantly readjusting and processing, not successfully pinning down the image. The stigma is also part of the female parts of the flower known as the pistil. The stigma in the flower is the receiving place that is adapted to catch and trap pollen, distinguishing between which to accept and which to reject. Thus in the human body a stigma is a rupture through which possibility bursts and in the world of botany it is a structure that engulfs and/or declines certain possibilities or potentialities.

Sociologically a stigma is an attribute an individual possesses or has attached to them that then causes their society to reject them. It is that phenomenon that causes their rejection. But it is also that phenomenon that is often examined, pondered and questioned from all sides. Erving Goffman's book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* discusses how people are categorized socially and denotes three types of stigma: stigma of character traits, physical stigma and stigma of group identity. Most often in sociology and human biology the stigma denotes a mark that is indicative of some sort of defect or disease. The Christian notion of the stigmata of Christ refers to marks or wounds indicative of the crucifixion that appear on certain people seemingly supernaturally and bleed during certain mental or emotional states. Cixous is interested in the process of creating and living with the stigma. Both scars and stigmata are marks but they develop differently. Cixous wants to "cultivate the stigma" (Cixous, *Stigmata* xiii), and we focused on doing the same in our performance work calling upon passage, trace, and error to help us.

Considering varied definitions of stigmata opened up many ways to think about and approach it in performance. The distinction between stigmata and scars was one we came back to throughout our performance process. We looked for marks in texts and movement that we could rupture so new passages could yield expanded ideas. For example, we created a repeated movement

sequence that became a distinctive feature of our performance by engaging what we considered to be a stigmatic process that also allowed the sequence to change and remain open throughout the piece.

To create this movement sequence we first engaged the creative response process outlined by Goat Island Performance Group because, by definition, it attacks work from many sides, a requirement of the stigmata. It also excavates parts of the piece that may be hidden or receive less attention than others allowing them to pass into the open. While Goat Island has guidelines that we followed at first, we allowed them to change according to our needs. Creative response is connected with Cixous's philosophy that "theory is not just an intellectual construct and a means to power but a way of living, speaking, and seeing the world" because it attempts to engage both the critical and the creative mind (Conley xxii). Creative response employs the critical mind in viewing a performance to find those moments that are the most "exceptional and inspiring – the miraculous moments" (Bottoms 210-11). The creative mind, unlike the critical mind, which tends to find problems, nourishes the possibilities of focus objects so they flourish. By engaging both types of mind we can critically pick out those "miraculous moments" and allow them to grow by responding to them creatively. Creative response is "your own work that would not have existed without the work you are responding to. Start[ing] with the most obvious miracle . . . what appears obvious to you may not appear obvious to everyone else" (211). One may choose a "structural element, a visual element, a spatial element, or some other quality in the work observed" to respond to (211). This element then becomes the focus of the new work and is multiplied. Through an engagement with creative response, Goat Island suggests we can change the boundaries between our critical and creative minds and instead see how they relate. They suggest two types of creative response: the silent response and the three-line response. We engaged both beginning with a silent response.

A silent response is just that and is largely movement based. Goat Island advises, “As you compose your response, try to consider what silence offers. Try to present material that actively avoids the use of sound rather than material that has had the sound removed from it” (211). We first free-wrote from the prompt, “All these texts aim to flee the fatal nail, the sword, the knife, the axe which threatens to fix, to nail, to immobilize them in, by death” (Cixous, *Stigmata* xii). Next, we read our writing to one another, noting salient phrases and images. For example, from Kari-Anne’s reading I jotted the notes, “cross – whose peg in mouth like phallus; head. Blood traces (circles), moving target, accident – can’t fix severed head. Always scratch, itch. Iodine sting Ahhhh. What comes through holes. Vagina stigmata.” From these notes I created a silent movement piece and shared it with Kari-Anne. I began standing on one leg drawing circles with my foot in the air. After several rotations of my leg I began scratching my arm. Eventually I slapped the scratching hand and raised it to cover my mouth while at the same time I exhaled an “ah” sound. I repeated this sequence on the other side of my body. Next I placed my left hand in front of my face, put my right index finger into the palm of my left hand, and pushed it as far to the left from the center of my body as I could. I repeated this in the opposite direction and then brought my hands together in the center of my chest. Finally I pointed my right index finger to the sky and my left to the floor and slowly extended my arms as far as possible in opposite directions. I finished with my chin in my hands, pushing my head upwards and stretching the rest of my body up and forward with it.

Kari-Anne also created a silent response to my writing. She began kneeling on the ground, smelling her forearm and wrinkling her nose. She swung her right arm down behind her, over her head, and brought her right fist down upon her left over and over like she was pounding a stake into the floor, moving her hands closer with each repetition until they were sandwiched between her thighs. She pulled her hands out with great effort, inspected her palms, held them up and smiled.

Then she suddenly shot her hands up into the air. To conclude she playfully slapped the ground with her hands and then crossed them over her chest and ran them up her head until the palm of her hand squished her nose. She moved her hand away from her face, looking at it intently, and presented it to the audience. It was exciting to see what we picked up on. Both of our pieces involved some sort of representation of pain and our movements were also wrought with tension. But they both had moments of releasing tension, indicated by the slap in my response and the playful portion of Kari-Anne's. In the passage of ideas between us and between the different media we were working in (text and image) we opened up new areas not articulated in the writing prompt or our free writing. We could consider the pleasure in pain and the playfulness in structure. Traces of the process began to come into view, retaining some history and yet marking new directions.

The next creative response was the "three line response" (211). We each wrote three lines in response to the movement pieces, and then we chose a body position and location in the room to speak them from. We both used the repetition of a phrase in these responses. I said, "take this and that" repeatedly. Kari-Anne said, "in and out" many times. This point of convergence, which still retained differences, seemed worth noting and incorporating into our work. We wove the movement and text that we liked from each creative response together into a short piece. This piece eventually became the repeated movement sequence that was a hallmark of our final performance. This movement sequence, though made from disorder, gave us an ordering mechanism for bringing all of the strategies explored in our project together in our final piece.

We found that this sequence allowed us to engage all of the Cixousian strategies we chose. In terms of the stigmata we attacked everything we came up with from many sides and excavated meaning that was not intended or obvious in the first presentation. Within the piece traces of the previous work remained, and the notes we took at each step in the process were like the traces

Cixous uses to create an essay. We also allowed ideas to pass between us, staying with them and allowing them to change and pass to take new forms. Errors were also followed when one of us would pick up on something the other did that was not intentional or was “wrong,” but that we found interesting and incorporated into our responses. In addition to finding these strategies embedded in what we were doing, we found that we could focus on each strategy and that would allow us to adjust the piece. For example, the notion of speed within the trace was exciting to me. Cixous claims thought moves faster than our bodies possibly can and cannot be fully captured. I wanted to try to make our bodies match the speed of thought and anticipated this would inevitably introduce error also. It did and also changed the way we performed the movements and how they appeared to observers.

One of us performed the established movement sequence at a fast tempo while the other noted errors for later consideration. We did the same thing again, but the observer made a sound when there was an error, and the performer either started the sequence over from the beginning or followed the error until the movement became something different. In the public presentation, we chose the errors we thought were most interesting and extended them. As Cixous suggested, they showed us we were on track. They continued to change, and we discovered new things in them each night. We also adjusted the timing of text with the movements. The final movement of the sequence had us on our knees with our palms on our noses as Kari-Anne had done in her silent response. When we did this movement I usually said, “I will not smell like that.” In one rehearsal I placed my nose on Kari-Anne’s upturned hand instead of in my own and she spoke this text instead. We followed this error and kept the alteration. As the movement refrain entered the performance presentation the repetitions were oriented differently in the space. Sometimes we completed the movement sequence, and I was very close to Kari-Anne. Other times I was far away. No matter

where I was I stayed there and reached my nose to meet her hand. Sometimes this involved crumpling down into a ball, other times it meant leaning over, or extending my body into a plank position to make contact. What first appeared as an error, the changing spatial relationship between the two of us, was embraced as a chance to fill the gesture with multiple meanings. As the action changed within the history of the performance the trace of the first time remained and yet each different repetition(?) brought new meaning.

The forward and backward motion of the trace was also fruitful. We attempted to reverse the sequence entirely trying several variations. At first we simply changed the order of the movements putting the last movement first and the first last and so on. This was interesting but we wanted more of a challenge and decided to attempt the sequence as if it were on rewind and each movement and bit of text would be backward. We spent hours investigating or tracing the movements, trying to figure out how they could work in reverse and what that would do. We continued to learn the movement in rewind while we changed only the order of the text. For instance instead of saying “in and out” we would say “out and in.” Instead of saying “I will not smell like that” we would say, “that like smell not will I.” Training our bodies to slow down and trace movements backwards was a useful lesson in the perseverance required of working with these strategies. It showed us how rarely we take the time to really consider how we do things. As I reflect in the conclusion of this chapter, it was also illuminating for the audience. While the work with the movement piece gave us unanticipated access to a number of the strategies gleaned from Cixous, we were primarily focused on using creative response as it related to stigmata. This showed us how to open ideas and come at them from many sides. As we began to understand the strategy and its connection with the others, we wanted to focus more on exteriorizing internal ruptures. This part of the process of stigmatic

creation is specifically related to passage, moving from one space to another, perhaps leaving a trace in the wake.

As we moved on to work with the formal strategy of passage, we were interested in creating passages and considering what passed between texts and ourselves, texts and other texts, and texts and images. In her essay “Bathsheba or the Interior Bible,” Cixous introduces the passage by “reading” drawings and paintings to reveal what passes between viewer and painting and what has passed outside of the remaining traces that are the artwork. In doing so she breathes life into the painting and the subject of the painting, turning it into an event with a history. We took this strategy and applied it to Rembrandt’s drawing, *A Seated Woman Nude as Susanna*. We did this first with writing and then with movement so as to also call upon the creative response process. We wrote in three segments: first, about the surface of the drawing; next, imagining an inner life or life beyond the painting for the subject; finally, our personal associations brought up by the painting as informed by the writing in the previous two sections. In both of our writings we discovered many moments where we assertively noted what we saw and then immediately questioned those assertions, catching the traces of passing thoughts. The writing contained sentences or fragments of sentences that ended with question marks and many speculative lists about objects in the drawing, what happened before and after the drawing, how the subject’s body felt, and what her expression conveyed. Though we were not specifically focused on it, the structure of our writing remained open and allowed for passage. It was as if the strategies were already becoming an underlying guide in the work we produced.

Following this writing exercise, we alternated reading our texts while the other improvised movement, confined to a chair like the subject in the painting. We considered the possibility of moving very quickly, dashing through the pass with continual movement, but realized that is how

we wrote. Instead, using slow movement underscored the slowness of the body in comparison to the quick movement of the passing thoughts of the text. This movement of thought opened and unfixed the images created by the body. As we began to think about how this might work in the final performance, we wanted the audience to have to turn their bodies, to see what we were doing. This meant we had to redefine the space for them and somehow get them to move. In the final performance, we combined our writings into one piece and played a recording of it while we performed this movement against the backdrop of movable screens which started in the main playing area and were moved throughout the space, ending up at the back of the space where the audience had entered. In order to see what we were doing they had to turn their bodies in a way that mirrored the body in Rembrandt's drawing.

Excavating the inside through writing is a strategy used by both Cixous and one of my major influences, butoh. In butoh, writing provides traces of a period before dancing when one goes deep within the self and makes notes and reflections about what they encounter. This is a time of excavating the sedimented layers of experience we all have. These traces in the form of language provide images from which to create dances. Because butoh is a nebulous form without specific exercises, and because Kari-Anne did not have experience with it, we chose to work with another method that engaged a similar approach to excavation and images, Jerzy Grotowski's *plastiques*. In *An Acrobat of the Heart*, Stephen Wangh chronicles his use of Grotowski's exercises and his adaptations of them to bring out the inner creativity of his students. We worked with two exercises, "The Container" and "The Kiss," both found in the section "*Les Exercices Plastiques*."

Plastiques begin as physical isolations of parts of the body and are a major cornerstone of Grotowski's work. They are "an *external* key to an *internal* door" or "emotive gesture(s)" involving the isolations, or the exploration of one body part at a time (Wangh 76). Wangh summarizes, "What

makes something a *plastique* is that the movement is specific, that it is filled with life, and that it is related to an image” (84). There are several steps in the use of *plastiques*. First, one engages the isolation of body parts to garner the physical vocabulary and specificity to allow “feeling to exit from [their] body and to start turning itself into art” (84). Next, one abandons isolations and encounters a range of images by allowing “the *plastiques* to do the leading. To enter a *plastique* river” (79). After gaining physical specificity through isolations and access to a breadth of images in the river, images are narrowed and explored in depth. This is where “The Container” and “The Kiss” come in. These exercises require the performer to stick with one image over a fifteen to twenty minute period of time exploring the oppositions within a given image. Wangh advises the “*plastiques* [are] external traces of the actor’s inner, emotional life. Yet they are not simply emotion-filled movements. They are gestures that call up an image from within us” (108).

In “The Container,” the performer lies on the ground imagining they are in a container they must escape. As they move, they discover what holds them and engage in the struggle to break out. Each time a container is escaped they are then trapped in another. This continues until the allocated time runs out. “The Kiss” requires the performer to stand or kneel in an open position as opposed to the lying down and closed position of “The Container.” They keep their eyes open and imagine the touch of a kiss on their body. The kiss can move along the body and the performer is to remain open and receive images. Wangh describes the choices in this exercise as “choices of permission rather than of effort” like the choices in “The Container” (105).

Both of these exercises were difficult for me and because of this gave me valuable insights to the theory we were working with. In “The Container” I destroyed all of my containers. Some I destroyed with ease, like a bag, a wrapper, and a cardboard box. Others required more thought, such as when I found myself in a vase and moved my body rapidly until the vase fell to the floor and

shattered. Or when I was trapped in a snow globe and threw objects at the glass, pounded on it for outsiders to help me, and then pounded down with my feet and up with my hands simultaneously until it opened. I found it hard to put myself in a container I could not alter. Kari-Anne found herself in fluid containers: a sticky bubble that became her body and moved with her making it difficult to puncture, a net like a veil, and a pool of water. As she got out of a container she met more obstacles. For instance, she could kick out the box, but the size of it would constrain the rest of her body. Reflecting on this exercise, I began to think about the various things that contain us and that most of them involve language, which also contains us. Like Kari-Anne's fluid containers it imprints us, but because it is fluid we can change its contours. Like the containers I destroyed, we can pass outside of it. And this is exactly what Cixous is advocating in the formal strategies. Tricking language to complicate and change it and, like in this exercise, going deeply into it, fully engaging it in order to get outside of it.

In "The Kiss" I was very frustrated that I was supposed to "remain open to possibility" when I began to imagine unfavorable kisses. Kari-Anne amended the exercise to consider places on our bodies that kiss, or touch, one another, something that would become useful when considering strategies in Irigaray's work. Kari-Anne also considered the sounds of kisses as well and what an unwanted kiss does to the face. Sometimes the exercise even made her feel powerful. This exercise encouraged us to consider the passage from feeling powerful to feeling vulnerable and how they are always connected. In performance we usually experience both at different times. The way social dynamics pass into art making became an important focus for us. The Grotowski exercises did not consider how power dynamics outside the theater might affect work in the theater. Nor did they account for the very real presence of sexual domination and what asking someone to go through this could bring up. In both Cixous's practice and in butoh the internal excavation is self-guided and

thus one has the power to go where they desire. This does not mean the performer working with Cixous's strategies or butoh is invulnerable or that uncomfortable feelings do not arise, or even that they do not interrogate social dynamics. On the contrary, they usually do. But it does mean that exploring those images is up to the performer and they can control their vulnerability. In Grotowski's work, and in many traditional theater practices, the director or acting teacher guides the performer or student. In the process they judge whether the display the performer gives meets their standards. In doing so they can force the performer into unsafe emotional territories in the search of something "real." With Cixous's practices and butoh the performer measures their success by their own standards and decides where they are willing to go emotionally rather than being forced.

While we had already been engaging trace and error we also explored them explicitly with text and movement we had already created or found. We wrote quotes from our own writing and various texts on the chalkboard in our rehearsal space. We ended up with this:

Grazing Bathsheba's groin with a veil. The position is impossible. I tried. But this is of no importance. It is the soul the presses the thighs together. For one kiss upon her scarlet lips. If only I might crush her bodies self within my hungry arts. I know that I may hold you in my arms and press your lips to mine without the black thick shadow of wrath to come between us. Seeking an understanding, and knowing not how to obtain it, presses her warm, vibrating lips to the cold lifeless ones of [] the curtain of darkness that enveloped her soul falls. Are not my lips made for love, and the twin breast for loving – suffer me to kiss they mouth. I will kiss you. Let me kiss you with the kisses of his mouth. Mouth a red pomegranate cut at the feast. What comes to pass in the *jouissance* of woman is in excess of it. She cannot repeat herself or

produce herself as wholly other in pleasure, for the other already in her affects her, without her ever becoming one – masculine or feminine. An indefinite overflowing.

We stood together and read the text from the board, each speaking each piece of text in an improvised order. We repeated this several times noticing where we ended together, where we spoke the same thing at the same time, and interesting combinations that contradicted or supported other text we spoke. We each chose a favorite line, but kept it to ourselves. As we repeated the exercise we went to the board and erased the text trying to retain the line we had chosen. Kari-Anne began erasing text with her body, which left traces of chalk on her clothing. We engaged in an impromptu battle where she wrote on the board and as she wrote I erased her marks.

The combination of the container exercise and this last exercise of ordering text prompted both Kari-Anne and me to think about staging possibilities and containers that would hold and organize our work while not making it rigid. We wanted something that would allow us to pass between various physical and aesthetic spaces. Rather than perform a series of nebulous exercises without a bulwark, we wanted to provide a frame for our audience so that they might be able to access both the philosophical concepts we were using as performance strategies and engage our performance on its own terms. Cixous suggests that while reality is fragmentary and comes in bursts, one puts these traces in an order when composing an essay. In her work one gets a strong sense of the assemblage of traces and is challenged to make meaning of the traces within a loose framework. In our performance, we wanted to retain the sense of openness working in the passage and collecting traces, but we also wanted, like Cixous, to find an order so the audience would be challenged but not completely lost.

In a recent *PAJ: A Journal of and Art*, Patricia Milder wrote about the performative lecture. In this essay Milder reviews several types of traditional performative lectures including

Chautauquas, Activist Speeches, and Joseph Beuys's *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*.

Milder explains that Beuys viewed the essence of sculpture as material transformation and desired to turn this artistic labor of change into a social form. Thought, language, and civilization, if considered as material, can then be transformed as well through artistic practice, Beuys suggested. In his lecture *Energy Plan for the Western Man*, he toured three cities in ten days, “explaining his most basic ideas about art, politics, and education—that they are one” (Milder 17). As he explained his ideas on art, he simultaneously made art and attempted to “ignite creativity in others by making his ideas known to them through dialogue” (17). The performative lecture and Beuys’s use of it blurs “the line between performance and pedagogy” (17). Milder discusses contemporary groups who take up these traditions and refashion them giving their own take on the form. She discusses Jérôme Bel who combines choreography and lecture to expose the inner social workings of ballet. The National Theatre of the United State of America is a group who refashion Chautauqua. Finally, Milder highlights Sharon Hayes who calls upon the history of activist street-corner speeches by combining the aesthetic of public speaking and elocution to deliver politically-charged love letters through a bull-horn in public spaces confusing the roles of audience and performer. In this essay, Milder concludes:

Lecture-performance (or at least successful lecture-performance) does not have, as many assume it does, an easy, DIY aesthetic. The works I’ve focused on have all been rehearsed, precisely constructed, and layered with meaning on many levels. There is an intricacy in the form; the relevant question is not whether this rehearsal and development process is theatrical rather than visual art performance, . . . It is, rather, how the precise construction of the form serves to hold and disseminate the

message, meaning, and direct impact of a work of this nature's true substance:
progressive thought. (26-7)

This format would allow us to construct a specific and rehearsed performance in which we could layer our own writing, text from the theorists we were working with, and the physical manifestations of their ideas we had been discovering in rehearsal. In addition the form aligned with the theory we were working with. The transformation of thought through artistic labor that is a hallmark of the performative lecture is also part of Cixous's project as well as Irigaray's and Kristeva's. They attempt to rethink language to allow for other types of speaking. Their texts are forms that are rigorously structured to include ambiguity, which spreads the "true substance" of their work, "progressive thought" (27). Using the performative lecture as our container allowed us to fill it richly and to show the ways that art, politics, and education, and the way we do each of those things, are one. Likewise, this structure would be one our audience would likely be familiar with as we were performing on a college campus and, even though we would fill it with performance practice that would be less familiar, they would have a frame to enter. This presentational form, which exhibits its construction, was more appropriate than a representational one that might hide how its construction because the process is of paramount importance to our work. In terms of the space we were performing in, the container exercise prompted us to consider ways in which we might change the space as we moved through various containers in the exercise. The constant shifting of the space, or the shape of the space, also seemed to be in keeping with Cixous's ideas as well as ideas we would be working with from Kristeva and Irigaray as well. In addition, it returned me to Bogart's viewpoints of architecture and topography which encourage performers to use what is available to them in the physical environment and to attend to the patterns they make. We set up the space so there could be multiple playing areas, such as the one discussed

earlier that required the audience to adjust their position to see us. We used a number of rolling curtained screens found in the space to shift and divide the space in different ways to create “lecture” areas and areas that allowed larger movements.

The following is the section of the script dealing with the strategies from *Stigmata* as performed at The Elsewhere Theater on the campus of Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio on February 12th and 13th, 2011. It reveals what the process just described produced. Chapters four and five contain the sections using strategies from Irigaray and Kristeva respectively. Breaking the script into sections serves the purposes of this document, but it is a bit misleading. These concepts build on one another and are not confined to individual segments of the performance. Rather the principles of stigmata, passage, trace, and error, as well as the principles discussed in chapters four and five, can be seen throughout the entirety of the piece, but are the focus of the specific sections to which they lend their names. Thus, while it is useful to break them up here, I urge the reader to consider the performance as a whole as well. A full script can be found in Appendix B.

Experiments in *Écriture Féminine*: Performance Script

(The performers enter through the main entrance to the performance space carrying their scripts. They split upon entering, BRIANNE arching around the stage right audience-seating bank, KARI-ANNE the stage left. As they reach their music stands, they place their scripts on them, make eye contact and move to the center of the main playing space.

They execute a unison movement sequence, hereafter referred to as “repeated movement sequence.” They begin facing forward, balancing on their left legs, moving their right leg in counter-clockwise circles. Following five circles they begin scratching their right arms with their left hands as they complete five more circles of the leg. They stop and simultaneously slap their left hands. Their left hands cover their mouths as they utter “ah.” At different points this sound indicates shock, pain, or pleasure all in varying degrees and

registers. They repeat this sequence on the left side of their bodies.

When their right hands are in front of their mouths they raise their left hands up close to their faces, so that their palms face stage right. They place their right index fingers into the palm of their left hands and push their left hands stage left as far as the arm will extend. This movement is full of tension as if they were trying to drill a hole through the palm, following the motion with their heads and torsos. This movement is repeated on the opposite side of the body. They face center again and, with the right index fingers pointing up and the left pointing down extend an imaginary line in opposite directions as far up and as far down as they can extend their arms, again with tension in this movement. As they do this with their hands, they shrink in upon themselves, shoulders rising toward the ears, pelvis scooping forward, head moving slightly forward as well. Next, they take their chins in their hands and raise their heads back up and their bodies follow, straightening out. Now they move into the second part of the sequence.

They drop to their knees and placing their left fists on the ground, about three feet from their bodies as if holding a stake, then bring their right arms back and over their heads to land their right fists onto their left as if hammering in that stake. The phrase “take this and that and this and that and this and that” is spoken throughout this movement with “this” spoken on each meeting of fists, “that” as they draw the fists closer to their bodies after each meeting, and “and” or “take” happening as the arms swing back and overhead. Upon the third succession, the hands draw into their thighs and they catch their hands between them as if to prevent this stake from entering their bodies or as if it hits them and stops. They slowly pull their hands out looking at the palms of each eventually saying, “a tight rope frayed.” They raise their hands up and as they stop at the top take an audible gasp of air. They then begin slapping their hands on the ground right then left, three times, saying, “and in and out” slapping on each “in” and on each “out.” They continue this with each hand across their chests and then on their checks. Their right hands then move to their noses as the left falls to the side. They put their noses into the palm of their hands and move the hands back and forth on the tip of the nose. BRIANNE quits as KARI-ANNE lowers her right hand and begins the same movement with her left. BRIANNE puts her nose in KARI-ANNE’s right hand

and mimics the motion. KARI-ANNE says, “I will not smell like that.”

Following this they rise and each move to their respective music stands. They then each perform a ten-second-preparation sequence that is repeated throughout the piece, getting faster as the piece progresses. BRIANNE takes a drink of water, brushes off her skirt three times, takes off her glasses, puts them back on, and arranges her papers on her music stand, making a sound with them to conclude. KARI-ANNE adjusts her script, takes a drink of water, turns to face upstage and raises her hands, and turns back to the music stand when she hears the sound of BRIANNE’s papers. To conclude this sequence each time they look at one another, cover their mouths with fists and clear their throats. They speak to the audience for the first time.)

BOTH

(To the audience.)
Stigmata

BRIANNE

Wound. *Blessure*.

KARI-ANNE

Stigmata, stig-may- to, stig-motto. A hemorrhage of the soul, to sting, to spur, to stimulate.

BRIANNE

“Scar adds something: a visible or invisible fibrous tissue that really or allegorically replaces a loss of substance which is therefore not lost but added to, augmentation of memory by a small mnesic growth.”¹¹ Unlike scar, stigmata takes away, removes substance, carves out a place for itself. Stigmata are likened to a pinch, a prick, a sting; actions which simultaneously make a hole and a mark; injure and propel. The stigma is the trace left by the act of puncture and it marks one as both the exclusion and election, bad and good, outlaw and saint. It is both a mark and an absence. In terms of the human body, the stigma is connected with the ovary. It is an area on the ovary where a follicle literally bursts through and releases the ovum during ovulation. In this bursting forth and puncturing permeation, the ovum is released into the fallopian tube becoming viable to fertilization, creating something new. This stigma, this surface that is ruptured, continually creates possibility for new life or new passage. The stigma is also part of the pistil of the flower, the female parts. The stigma in the flower is the receiving place that is adapted to catch and trap pollen, distinguishing between which to accept and which to reject. Thus in the human body a stigma is a rupture through which possibility bursts and in the world of botany it is a structure that engulfs and/or declines certain possibilities or potentialities.¹²

¹¹ Cixous, *Stigmata* xiii-xiv.

¹² Cixous, *Stigmata* xiii-xiv.

KARI-ANNE

“These texts aim to flee the fatal nail, the sword, the knife, the axe, which threaten to fix, to nail to . . .”¹³ Number One.

(BRIANNE and KARI-ANNE both move CS. BRIANNE begins and repeats the first part of the repeated movement sequence. KARI-ANNE skips to the second part of the movement sequence, kneeling as she speaks.)

She did not flee.

(Continues movement sequence to the point that the following corresponds with the movement of hammering.)

Take this and that and this and that and this and that . . .

BRIANNE

Number Two.

(Slaps her hand and raises it to her mouth which she opens widely to make the “ah” sound, but refrains from vocalization, holding this position and then moving back into the movement phrase from where she stopped.)

KARI-ANNE

(Still performing the movement sequence.)

Number Three. For me, it seems a stigma, a hole that never closes, never heals itself, but sometimes others, sometimes a well, sometimes a wound, sometimes a womb.

(KARI-ANNE stops the movement sequence with her hands raised and moves to stand next to BRIANNE. They perform the repeated movement sequence together in the same stage positions they did at the opening of the piece. Following this repetition they return to their respective music stands and perform their ten-second-preparation sequences and face one another to clear their throats. They speak to the audience from these positions.)

BOTH

Passage

BRIANNE

Speed. *Malavisé*.

KARI-ANNE

Pass sage. Ill-behaved. Unwise.

BRIANNE

Requirements. One: Be ready to receive a message.

KARI-ANNE

Two: The message is sent.

¹³ Cixous, *Stigmata* xii.

BRIANNE

This is writing on the run, a constant departure both freed and trapped in the labyrinth. Threads must be laid and held on to. Receiving what comes through doors and stairs, veils and seeing, speed and time. Dashing through the pass unclear, improper, unfinished, and continually moving; that third space that is neither of us. The joy of the present. Collecting fragments that come in bursts to create a portrait that appears in “puffs of air, in fragments, in sorrows.”¹⁴

KARI-ANNE

“What escapes us, what just happened, what is going to happen, and which traverses us suddenly, pierces us, turns us upside down, escapes.”¹⁵ “We live more quickly than ourselves . . . To catch it we stop the present. One cannot after all write a book with only one stroke, of only one page, and yet we should. But we are born for lateness. Time, the body, are our slow vehicles, our chariots without wheels.”¹⁶

(BOTH remove tape recorders from their music stands. The tape recorders have shiny purple ribbons tied to them that they slip over their heads so that the recorders hang on their necks in front of their stomachs. They grasp the sides of the music stand’s desk and turn center, in unison, to face one another.)

“I am trying at this moment to capture the mysteries of passage so as to confide them to you.”¹⁷

BRIANNE

“One cannot speak it. One can only perform it.”¹⁸

KARI-ANNE

(To the audience.)

Number One.

(Turns back to face BRIANNE.)

(They each grab one of the center screens and roll them down the center aisle of the audience, splitting the audience in half. The screens are not perfectly inline so that there is a thin passage between them that the performers can look and speak through. The audience cannot see through this passage from their seats. As the screens are moved from their original positions the space behind them is revealed to show what others have left: cubes, chairs, other music stands, etc.)

KARI-ANNE

(Looking through the passage created by the new screen arrangement.)

“I am trying at this moment to capture the mysteries of passage so as to confide them to you.”¹⁹

¹⁴ Cixous, *Stigmata* 60.

¹⁵ Cixous, *Stigmata* 16.

¹⁶ Cixous, *Stigmata* 39.

¹⁷ Cixous, *Stigmata* 191.

¹⁸ Cixous, *Stigmata* 198.

¹⁹ Cixous, *Stigmata* 191.

BRIANNE

(Looking back at KARI-ANNE.)

“One cannot speak it. One can only perform it.”²⁰

(BOTH move a half circle in opposite directions, around the audience seating banks on their respective sides of the space. They arrive back at the screens, having switched positions.)

KARI-ANNE

(Speaking through the screen passage.)

“I am trying at this moment to capture the mysteries of passage so as to confide them to you.”²¹

BRIANNE

(Responding through the screen passage.)

“One cannot speak it. One can only perform it.”²² Number Two.

(KARI-ANNE moves one screen stage left to face the stage left audience bank. BRIANNE moves the other a foot or two down the aisle toward the main stage area, still separating the audience, though some audience members can see the audience on the other side of the screen now. Both BRIANNE and KARI-ANNE perform a modified version of the leg circle/scratching gesture that is part of the repeated movement sequence, but their hands go through the curtains on their respective screens so that one side of the audience can see their hands moving and the other can see the rest of their body. BRIANNE pushes “play” on her tape recorder and we hear the following.)

RECORDED

“Suddenly I am letter struck. And I see only it. This letter! no, it’s a hole in the body of the painting, the rent, the tear in the night. If I see the letter, I no longer see . . . The letter is in opposition. To the veil. To the linen.”²³

(BRIANNE and KARI-ANNE slap their hands and make the “ah” sound and then walk around their screens to the opposite side and repeat this modified segment of the repeated movement pattern. The recording continues throughout.)

“To the reading. It is a letter from the back. It turns its back to us. When I wanted to read it: forever forbidden. To paint a letter seen from the back! The Door is closed . . . an old tale whispers to me. It is the outsider. The outside. The arranger. [The] invisible. . . that’s it: it is . . . to the letter.”²⁴

(BRIANNE stops the recording.)

²⁰ Cixous, *Stigmata* 198.

²¹ Cixous, *Stigmata* 191.

²² Cixous, *Stigmata* 198.

²³ Cixous, *Stigmata* 14.

²⁴ Cixous, *Stigmata* 14.

BRIANNE

Number Three.

(The screens are moved to the back of the space, blocking the entrance and creating a frame for the movement to come. BRIANNE and KARI-ANNE each pull a chair onstage from the offstage area. They circle them in unison, look at one another, remove the tape recorders from their necks and slowly place them on the floor in front of their chairs as they sit down. BRIANNE pushes play on her recorder and they begin to perform slow non-choreographed movements in these chairs as the following is heard from the recorder.)

RECORDED

“The passage of the other, towards the other . . . respect for a same that respects the other’s alterity.”²⁵ The woman sits, leaning forward. The focal point is the wide-open eye and then you must make yourself look away. Look down to the softly opened lips. Notice that the back is bare, naked, which you did not notice before because you were drawn to the eye. Why? She is wearing a dress with a large skirt, but the top is down around her waist. Her back is three quarters to us. The back. The spine defined separates the left from the right, almost a cleavage. Her left arm covers her breasts a bit while her right is extended, forearm resting on the arm of a chair? Hand gripping loosely its edge. Then it seems her left arm that was holding her breast is more across her lap, the fingers of that hand intertwine with the right gripping the chair. I cannot tell on what she sits. The one armed chair curved on top of a log? A half cylinder, a bread box? The light comes from above and to the left of her back, yet she looks beyond the light, crouching away from it, out of it. The folds of the skirt take up a good deal of space and almost look like they are moving, falling – the two lines in the front by the knee. Where the skirt ends and the chair begins is hard to discern. She is leaning from us but her head is also tilted slightly toward us. Thick lines or dashes of black charcoal above her head. It appears she quickly moved it or turned it to look at what she now sees. She is in mid movement and her eyes are fixed. Two downward strokes at the knee. Movement. The head, too, the black strokes seeming to move the head downward. The dark shadows on the left arm, bruises. She is turning away. This woman has a spine, so why is she turning away?

Preparing for bed: taking down her hair, removing her gown when something stopped her. Was it a sound? A nearby sound? An exterior sound? A blur of voices, a familiar strain, a word, a laugh that she knows would turn to anger if he should see. A hand in the darkness, a hearty farewell, as it turns. Perhaps it was not a sound at all but instead a thought that stopped her. Sitting up straight all day. The soreness between the blade of the shoulders. Sitting at the window, letting the sunlight hit the muscles, warm the back, she decides to draw the zipper down. Did they have zippers? Or, has someone helped her undress? Unbutton the back? She glanced slightly up the way she does when she want to let an idea arrive; like if she made eye contact with anything it would stop the arrival. Instead, softening her focus she looks off so her being might receive this message. Under her hand(s) there is a book she has been writing in for hours. Her look is not upon anything present. In fact she is not even here. She is lost in thought, her body alone remaining before that thought shoots through her body to her fingers, to her pen, to the page where she lives and is lost. She feels only the sun and the silence. Or else she does hear a nearby sound, the maker of which reveals itself

²⁵ Cixous, *Stigmata* 99.

shortly after. It is an intruder, a man, her mother, the cat, a breeze, the artist's gaze. She holds herself close so the other who passed into the room and into her thoughts can only pass, not possess. You may enter but you cannot take this with you.

Those things that make us leave our bodies: fear. It's like we get lost in it so when it arrives we are ready to meet it. I wonder why he never knocked on the window to bring me back. Oh that feeling of being stopped by the sight of something or the sound or something inside. Patting down my body to find what I lost. Turning the corner in avoidance. Running another direction. The muscles stop but the heart and the mind race thinking we grabbed onto the wrong thread. Gathering all our energy, pooling it for temporary sense making or coping. She looks calm and poised but her heart shows through her face. Cultivate that absence. Be less present and protect myself. Charcoal can be smudged. The passage of the other, towards the other – respect for a same that respects the other's alterity.²⁶

(BOTH lean down to the tape recorders during the last line and BRIANNE stops the recording from playing. They rise from their chairs and turn toward the audience that has now turned around in their seats to see what the performers have been doing. BRIANNE and KARI-ANNE begin the repeated movement sequence at a very fast tempo. As they enter the section where they push their hands away from the center of their bodies with their pointer fingers, they let this movement take them in long strides down the center aisle. They turn around before falling to their knees. The “this and that” movement of hammering allows them to move backward toward the main playing space. They use the “in and out” section to find their way fully into that space and end far apart from one another. In order to get her nose to meet KARI-ANNE's hand for the final image of the sequence, BRIANNE stretches her entire body out in a long plank position. Following this sequence they stand, move to their music stands and perform their ten-second- preparation sequences. They clear their throats then speak to the audience.)

BOTH

(To the audience.)
Trace.

BRIANNE

Mark. *Signe*.

KARI-ANNE

Tracer, retrace, retrouver, localizer, suivre la trace, décalquer, esquisser, calquer, faire remonter, orner.

BRIANNE

²⁶ Cixous, *Stigmata* 99.

“Thought doesn’t go straight ahead, as we think, but in a frenetic movement, invisible to the naked-eye-of-thought, it goes straight ahead of itself like lightening and almost simultaneously returns backwards on its own streak to step on it and erase it and almost simultaneously shoots forward like a rocket . . . thought is not a sentence at all, but, after several explosions, a fallout in words.”²⁷

“Bodies are always irreducibly sexually specific, necessarily interlocked with racial, cultural, and class particularities. This interlocking, though, cannot occur by way of intersection (a grid-like model . . .) but [must occur] by way of mutual constitution.”²⁸ Refuse singular models. Refuse dualistic models. Make excessive models. Articulated. Disarticulated.

KARI-ANNE

Verb (used with object). To follow. To follow make out. To follow footprints. To follow the course. To ascertain. To draw a line. To make a plan, diagram. To copy a drawing or plan. To mark or ornament with lines. To make an impression or imprinting of a self-registering instrument. To put down in writing.²⁹

BRIANNE

Number One.

(She moves out from behind her music stand and runs up the center aisle. KARI-ANNE follows her. BOTH run quickly back and forth in the diagonal aisle for roughly thirty seconds or until KARI-ANNE’s next line.)

KARI-ANNE

Number Two.

(BOTH stop where they are and make their way back to the chairs they used in the previous scene. In unison, they pick up their tape recorders that were left by the chairs and drag the two chairs back to the main playing space, placing them in the center, touching one another where the screens had been. They return to their music stands with their tape recorders and place the recorders back on the stands.)

BRIANNE

Number Three.

(BOTH move to the center of the space and perform the repeated movement sequence in the same position the did at the opening of the piece. Upon completion the reverse the entire sequence, including the text, performing it backward. They then return to their music stands, perform their ten-second-preparation sequences, and speak to the audience.)

BOTH

Error

KARI-ANNE

Error. *Erreur. Faut.*

BRIANNE

²⁷ Cixous, *Stigmata* 38-9.

²⁸ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* 20-1.

²⁹ “Trace.” *Dictionary.com*. Web. 20 Jan 2011. <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/trace>>.

Hope. *Possibilité*.

KARI-ANNE

“The difference between the observed or approximately determined value and the true value of a quantity.”³⁰

BRIANNE

“We don’t lose anything by erring, to the contrary. The unhappy thing would be to believe we had found. As long as we are seeking we are innocent.”³¹ Errors show us we are on track. They are the truth the does not fool us. That our body recognizes. We must follow them.

KARI-ANNE

Number One woman plus one woman plus one woman. (Repeating until BRIANNE has interrupted her three times.)

BRIANNE

(Overlapping with KARI-ANNE.) Equals woman error. (Repeat three times.)

KARI-ANNE

Number Two.

(BOTH move center and begin the repeated movement sequence. As they go to place their hands over their mouths, after they have slapped their hands, BRIANNE misses and slaps her mouth. She then begins playing with her mouth, slapping it lightly over and over with both hands, making sounds. KARI-ANNE looks at BRIANNE and back at her hand more rapidly as BRIANNE’s sounds become more rapid. BOTH stop and resume the sequence on the left side of their bodies. KARI-ANNE begins to lose her balance and makes the sound of a buzzer indicating an error. She continues to follow the motion, letting her hips get into it, moving her leg in circles, stopping to touch the floor with her foot as she passes it. BRIANNE, when trying to slap her hand misses and begins a series of missing her hand, that turns into arabesques and leaps that eventually involves both arms and turns into jumping jacks. BOTH return to stillness and resume the movement sequence at the point where they push the palms of their hands to either side. As they begin to adjust their heads KARI-ANNE makes another error sound. She runs her hands up the sides of her head as she rises and then flops over at the waist. She repeats this several times. BRIANNE, having moved on, gets stuck on “this and that” and makes the error sound. She continues to move her hands back and forth across the floor as if scrubbing it and then the movement infects her

³⁰ “Error.” *Dictionary.com*. Web. 20 Jan 2011. <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/error>>.

³¹ Cixous, *Stigmata* 29.

entire body and she begins rising and flopping over at the waist. KARI-ANNE joins her, performing the “this and that” motion and at the moment the hands get wedged between her thighs BRIANNE joins her in this position. BOTH complete the movement sequence. There is no number three in this section. They perform the repeated movement sequence as a transition, but this time BRIANNE stands behind KARI-ANNE starting at the beginning. KARI-ANNE, kneeling in front of BRIANNE starts at “this and that” and they meet up at the end with KARI-ANNE at the end of the regular sequence and BRIANNE with her chin in her hands at the end of the first half of the sequence. BOTH go back to their music stands and repeat their ten-second-preparation sequence.)

Reflections

There are several questions to consider when reflecting on the study (the performance process) and results (the performance script and its presentation) of this project. First, were we successful in translating the strategies from Cixous’s text to performance, both in the process and product? Did we thus offer some sort of “experienced insight: an event of embodied thinking by the participant in the act of doing, which is not the same as the recognition of some underlying metaphorical meaning of the work determined in advance by the artist” (Cull 23)? Finally, if we did provide such insight for ourselves and/or the audience, what does this tell us about devised performance, and more specifically devised feminist performance?

Reflecting on the process engaged in the performance application, the product that arose from that application, and audience responses to the product, I think we succeeded in making a “stigmatic” piece that echoed the process and laid bare our process. Our consideration of scars revealed them as a place where two sides meet and grow into one another. The stigmata, instead, is a rupture or a structure that accepts and rejects possibility. To make a stigmatic piece we had to allow for ruptures. The performative lecture format allowed us to show two sides physically in the space spoken from two different bodies and perspectives. While we sometimes met in the middle,

we never stayed there but continually moved throughout the space. When we came together our repeated unison movement was repeatedly disrupted. One audience member remarked on the staging of synchronicity in the piece. He noted this synchronicity phased in and out of sync and the rubbing against one another of our natural out of sync-ness was very interesting to him. The fact that it pulsed in and out, he said, gave him the understanding that difference and process do not go away. Some of this was planned like the changes to the movement sequence in the passage, trace, and error sections. Some of it was an unplanned result of our different bodies that we were aware of and did not seek to control. While it was not intentional it speaks to passage, what passes between the two performers, and between them and the audience unexpectedly through process. It also speaks to the possibilities of following errors.

Another audience member reported that work in the trace movement sequence was one of the most interesting parts because it was obviously not a mechanical rewind but she could see us having to think about it. She said that seeing us thinking about it made her consider it and by extension the ways our bodies come to internalize sets of movements and to stop and do them backwards requires a lot of thought and intention. She connected this with the amount of thought and intention it takes to try to look at something backwards or upside down in life. Because our thinking becomes linear, she suggested, it takes a lot more intention to try to think about things in a different way. For her, this became a kind of metaphor for the work at large.

Our work in the passage section further disrupted the notion of two fixed sides as we literally ruptured the space, moving the screens and creating new possibilities for seeing, hearing, and interpreting. While we always returned to our individual positions, we did not grow into one another but opened up the texts further. For me this was also a type of tracing where we shot forward and then back on ourselves, moving out into the space and returning to our music stands.

One audience member noted that he processed what was happening persistently throughout the entire piece. For him the most important thing about watching this piece was the constant processing and reprocessing of information that occurred in the performance and that he was asked to engage as an audience member as well. We stayed in the passage, and he felt as if he could as well.

For me the concept of the stigmata became all encompassing as both a mark and the process of marking that comes from the inside out. In order to make this piece we had to get deep into Cixous's text to see how it worked. We then internalized the creativity of her text and the particulars of how it was made. We took it in, let it roll around with our personal experiences, stories, and connections, and it came out in the form of writing and performance. Everything began to affect everything else. Likewise, the performance existed as traces or marks. Every day we traced the previous day and the final performance product was comprised of traces that remained from the passage of the process and the errors we made along the way. I came to understand passage, trace, and error as strategies that make stigmatic performances. Each time the performance began to solidify we noticed an error to focus on or a different trace to follow. The performance is the remainder, the trace after dashing through the pass. The daily work happened at a fast pace where we constantly moved from the theory to physical work, through new doors, following new errors. As we stopped to read the theory the process slowed down. There was a constant pulsing in and out in this process. Errors allowed us to pass to a new concept following a trace that was left behind. The movement we came up with at the first rehearsal remained in various ways and flooded the other sections as well.

Ultimately, this experience provides insight to devising practices and valuable elements to include in a process for making postdramatic feminist performance. While text was not the driving

element of the performance, it remained an important part of our piece. Cixous writing is not preplanned. It is done by taking notes and staying in the passage. Like devising, the product emanates from the process of doing and continually becomes new as it is performed and interacts with other elements of staging such as the spatial layout, spatial relationships, physical vocabulary, sound, and compositional structure. While we included a good amount of text from Cixous, we cut it up and refashioned it just as she does with pieces of literature, painting, and her own writing. We combined it with physical vocabulary, which opened it up to different interpretations and kept it in process like the stigmata, which does not close but opens up for the audience to pass through and to be marked with the traces of movement.

What I have reported is mostly what worked in our process. However, there were other things that we tried that did not work, that we struggled with, and there were other things that we did not have time to try. We did a number of text based exercises like the last one described and produced pages of writing that were not included in the final script. These ideas fell away as we moved forward with our work. During our work with “The Kiss,” we created short performances combining text from our reflection writings and from the movements we had found in the exploration that we abandoned almost immediately. There were stretches of time when we would sit or move about the space searching for something to try. We struggled to stay focused on the formal strategies. I had worked with them for a year at the point I introduced them to Kari-Anne. She found new things in the text. She especially latched onto the religious references in Cixous, which is where her own research is based, sometimes thinking about them over the strategies. Because we were trying to model an acceptance of the other I had to figure out how to walk the fine line between directing this project in the way I thought it should go and allowing for her influence. Her influence was vital, and I could not have engaged the strategies without a willing partner like her.

Sometimes she would let me control the process and we had to struggle to make this our project instead of my project. I came into the process with many ideas for a physical vocabulary, but I had to remain open and accept the fact that we did not have time for Kari-Anne to train in the physical methods I had been using for years. Thus, we did not get to explore butoh to the extent I had hoped. Because Kari-Anne makes performance in stories and narratives, and I tend to think in fragments, we each had to struggle to accommodate the other's thinking. This was perhaps the most useful experience for me. Because I was focused on embracing the stigmata and passage I had to allow for her flow. In other performance processes, I have asserted my desires and gotten what I wanted and the performance matched my vision. In this situation, I was aware of this bad habit and found possibilities in narrative that I thought I was "beyond."

Finally, I noted in chapter two the ways in which I saw *écriture féminine* complementing and filling holes in the three major performance methods I tend to call upon. I expected we would use these methods in our rehearsals. In actuality, these methods got shoved to the side as we focused more and more on the strategies we took from *écriture féminine*. I can reflect on how I see Bogart, Goat Island, and butoh connected with *écriture féminine* in our performance process. For example, I can note how the process of writing our associations, sketching images and impressions that led to the repeated movement sequence is like the excavation that happens in butoh. Or I could suggest that we used creative response throughout our entire process by constantly responding to the work of one another and Cixous. I could also talk about the way we engaged Bogart's viewpoints of architecture, spatial relationship, and topography to stage the piece and how we kept a soft focus on the theory that informed our piece. However, to suggest that we were actively using these methods in a vital way would be misleading (though we did use creative response in the specifically noted exercise). The fact that we did not engage these performance methods out right suggests to me that

we were indeed moving beyond application as Cull defines it. By bringing *écriture féminine* and the performance practices already engrained in our bodies together we were able to engage an embodied-thinking about both theory and practice to produce new ideas. In this way we brought about an “experienced insight” by moving beyond metaphorical meanings to invention. We no longer had to return to methods of performance we knew and cobble pieces of them together to think *écriture féminine* in performance. Instead we were thinking-performing stigmata, passage, trace, and error.

CHAPTER FOUR: IRIGARAYAN INFLTRATIONS/INTERVENTIONS

Like Cixous, Luce Irigaray's work is interdisciplinary. Her controversial *Speculum of the Other Woman*, also her first widely received work, illustrates this. It begins with a critical explanation of Freud followed by "a full-scale reading of the Western philosophical tradition from Plato to Hegel" (Moi, *French* 10). Her work does not come from an exclusively theoretical or academic foundation, "It is informed by, and feeds back into, a range of practices – for example, professional (her work was a psychoanalyst), party political (such as her work with the youth movement of the Communist Party of Italy), spiritual (her practice of meditation), and scientific (her collation of the uses of language)" (Robinson 5-6). Irigaray, unlike Cixous, consistently avoids the inclusion of her personal life in her work and refrains from answering personal questions in interviews. She argues that knowledge of her personal life will interfere with, rather than illuminate, the reading of her work. Whitford suggests that Irigaray adopted this suspicious stance toward self-disclosure as a result of seeing the work of other radical women, like that of Simone de Beauvoir, reduced to their biography. However, this refusal to allow access to the personal has also led to a dismissal of her work by some feminists. Some consider her essentialist because of her use of female anatomy in her metaphors and her insistence that women have "a special relationship with the fluid" (Schor 58). Her work has been absorbed under the umbrella of *écriture féminine* muddling the differences among her, Cixous, and Kristeva.³²

Irigaray's writing style is often referred to as sibylline, or intentionally mysterious, cryptic, and prophetic. However, Whitford notes Irigaray's later work is less so as the imperative of delivering her message became more pressing.³³ She uses terms that do not translate precisely into

³² See Whitford.

³³ See Moi, *French Feminist Thought* and Whitford.

English.³⁴ These terms such as “genre,” “sexe,” “sexuate,” and, especially, “feminine” have caused problems for translators and scholars who seek to respect the openness Irigaray advocates in her language usage. Some, such as Whitford, have included glossaries explaining the multiple possibilities of words and their usage. Some translators have left the word in the text in French. Others, like Robinson, have attempted to develop their own terminology in English to deal with this lack of equivalency to the French, to address the problems and possibilities of this openness, and to highlight “the production and understanding of all signficatory systems in the Symbolic (gestural, political, visual . . .)” (Robinson 12-13). Through a combination of difficult cultural translation, alignment with a European philosophical and psychoanalytic tradition, and intentional ambiguity in her writing, Moi (and others) claim that American and British feminists have had difficulty embracing French feminism, and Irigaray in particular, because:

Where we [American and British feminists] were empirical, they were theoretical; where we believed in the authority of experience, they questioned not only the category of experience, but even that of the “experiencer” – the female subject herself. . . . when we were looking for women writers, they sought feminine writing, which, they confusingly claimed, could equally well be produced by men. (5)

More recently, as some American and British feminists have sought to elide the theory/practice gap in activism and art making, they have embraced Irigaray as an appealing and helpful figure.³⁵ Robinson writes, “It is this return of practice to the acts of theorising, and of theory to the place and time of practice – allowing practice to be productive of theory – that to my mind is one reason why Irigaray’s work is so attractive for artists” (6).

³⁴ For a discussion of these issues in relation to Irigaray and the necessity of linguistic *and* cultural translation, see Burke.

³⁵ See Berry; Robinson.

Whitford has referred to Irigaray as a “philosopher of change . . . attempting to begin to state the conditions under which the status of the ‘female’ in the symbolic realm might be altered” (*Philosophy in the Feminine* 15). Irigaray advocates change at both the social and symbolic levels. She takes a feminist stance that largely comes out in her texts as advocating for the existence of the feminine, the woman, the female as its own entity outside of masculine phallogocentric³⁶ definitions. She critiques psychoanalytic philosophies of Freud and Lacan, yet remains hopeful for the possibilities of such work. She works with Levinas’ ethics of the other and Derrida’s deconstruction to advocate a feminine language, gesture, and discourse outside of masculine phallocentrism, which she reveals as underlying language, its usage, and cultural understandings. Moi describes Irigaray’s work to move outside phallogocentric thought as “attempting instead to grasp the utopian modes of thought necessary to found a society based on the recognition of sexual difference as constitutive of its own basic categories, such as time, space or ethics” (6). Irigaray contemplates the unsymbolized differences between the sexes through various metaphors including the lips, which I address more fully in this chapter. She seeks to reconsider social foundations from a place of difference so that multiple possible origins are revealed and considers strategies and sites where these utopian modes of thought are already happening or might happen.

Irigaray’s work is expansive, spanning many decades, topoi, and writing styles. The book I focus on in this project, *The Irigaray Reader* edited by Margaret Whitford, was the first major translation of various works by Irigaray into English. Irigaray herself compiled a later anthology, not as a substitute but to “continue such work by presenting more recent texts and allowing

³⁶ Phallogocentrism is a neologism coined by Jacques Derrida that refers to the privileging of logos (the Greek word for thought, speech, law, or reason) and the ways in which language and the subject’s entrance into language, according to Lacan, are based on the negotiation of the phallus and gendered masculine. “Discourse is ‘phallogocentric’ because it is centered and organized throughout by implicit recourse to the phallus both as its supposed ground (or logos) and as its prime signifier and power source; and not only in its vocabulary and syntax, but also in its rigorous rules of logic, its proclivity for fixed classifications and oppositions, and its criteria for what we take to be valid evidence and objective knowledge” (Felluga).

dimensions . . . to appear not yet envisioned in the first *Reader*” (Irigaray, *Key Writings* vii).

Whitford notes in her introduction that she had to select an emphasis for the anthology as Irigaray can be contemplated from many positions. While she considered many different foci, Whitford decided, “[Irigaray’s] most essential audience was the feminist one – those who are involved, like her, in the project of bringing about fundamental social and symbolic change” (Introduction 1). This allowed her to deal with the many “faces” of Irigaray and allowed readers “a glimpse in this collection of Irigaray the philosopher, Irigaray the psychoanalyst, Irigaray the researcher in linguistics, and Irigaray the visionary” (1).

The book is divided into three sections: “The Critique of Patriarchy,” “Psychoanalysis and Language,” and “Ethics and Subjectivity: Towards the Future.” Each section contains between four and six chapters derived from translations of Irigaray’s work from diverse publications available before the publication of a full volume of English translations.³⁷ Whitford provides an introduction to each section that frames the essays, but I deal with these introductions very little if at all in the interest of reading Irigaray’s writing itself and finding my own points of resonance. The title of each section, however, indicates three major aspects of Irigaray’s work as Whitford sees them. The first involves the enactment of identity in language, and in particular language breakdowns as she finds them in her work as an analyst. Irigaray seeks to “examine the expression of sex in language” not as biology but as “identity assumed in language within a particular symbolic system known as patriarchy, and described by Lacan, in which the only possible subject-position is masculine” (3). This first section contains essays that define women not as a lack in relation to this position, but to call for a feminine symbolic based on a feminine imaginary. The imaginary is a result of Lacan’s mirror stage and is the first of two important stages in the formation of identity, the second of which is the entrance into the symbolic. The child sees itself in the mirror as a unified subject distinct from

³⁷ For a complete list citing these works see the “Acknowledgements” on pages v-vi.

others, though its bodily experience lacking in control, mobility, and motor skills does not match the image. This creates a division, for,

Although the mirror stage thus provides the child with the grounds of its identity as a being separate from other beings, it also is the basis of an alienation, a rift which it will forever unsuccessfully attempt to cover over. It is necessarily split between what it feels (fragmentation, ‘the body-in-bits-and-pieces’) and what it sees (the image of itself as a *gestalt*, as a visual whole), between a sense of its own identity and the identity provided for it by the other/mother/mirror. (Grosz, *Sexual* 22)

This identity is “illusory and anticipatory” and is “necessarily social” because it is based on an other (22). However, the Symbolic enters as a mediator between the self and the other, as a third term that separates the two and initiates exchange. In the beginning this Other is the mother. As the Symbolic enters the child begins to see this (m)Other’s lack of phallus. The Symbolic is discourse, language, speech, and the Law-of-the Father, which reorders the relation between the two and ensures adherence to its law through repression of the feminine imaginary, which is never symbolized and is associated with the mother. Irigaray seeks to symbolize a feminine imaginary and the essays in this section suggest “Irigaray’s thesis, formulated in *This Sex Which Is Not One* . . . that there might be the possibility of a different, non-masculine discourse” (4).

The chapters of the second section deal with Irigaray’s critique of both Freud and Lacan, their lack of political commitment and awareness of their own political positions of power, and the limitations this puts on what is an otherwise helpful therapeutic and analytic model. She calls for psychoanalysis to be aware of its own history, its own unconscious, and its patriarchal tendencies. The final section contains critiques of philosophy and suggests Irigaray’s interest in “having an effect on society and changing existing social forms” (10). There is included in this section a

concern about postmodernism because, while Irigaray sees feminism sharing a similar rejection of modernism, she also recognizes the “emancipatory thrust of feminism is rooted in the Enlightenment” (12). While she highlights possibility here, she also addresses the ways in which postmodernism embraced quickly and unassumingly might be dangerous for feminism. Whitford writes of Irigaray, “If, as she argues, all western theory – including the theories of postmodernism – fails to recognize sexual difference, then we have to examine postmodernism for its sexual subtext. She warns against displacing the male/female binary before the female side has acceded to identity and subjectivity” (13). In this final section one sees the imagination Irigaray injects into politics that makes it dynamic and brings it to life. Whitford urges we read Irigaray similarly, for her creativity, without trying to fix her writing in a narrative, and that we continually ask questions of her work so that it, like the discourse she advocates, changes.

There are three formal strategies I chose from my study of *The Irigaray Reader*. They are *genealogy*, *two lips touching*, and *mimicry*. An advantage of choosing this text, which draws on a variety of texts by Irigaray, is the ability to see how the strategies operate across her early work. All of the strategies have been discussed in other critical texts on Irigaray but, in order to stay true to my project and create my own interpretations and highlight what I found important, I performed my close reading before consulting these texts. These critical texts are referenced in footnotes where applicable. Though I do not deal with them in depth, they provided helpful clarification at times regarding the intricacies of Irigaray’s arguments. As a strategy, *genealogy* has multiple meanings, as do the other strategies. It emerges in discussions of mythology and psychoanalysis and their influence on societal structures. *Two lips* becomes a morphologic metaphor related but not in strict adherence to the model of the female genitals. This strategy concerns the relations between parts, an already inherent alterity, and posits a moving process over a fixed model of representation as a

corrective to psychoanalysis. Finally, *mimicry* is a strategy Irigaray uses in the form of her writing and one she encourages women to adopt. Drawing on Plato, she suggests a productive form of mimesis would allow women to question their assigned roles. While I have written about each formal strategy separately, they are not separate. Genealogy operates, as the reader will see, in all three strategies. Two lips is a process for doing genealogy and mimicry becomes a strategy for accessing a feminine genealogy. I define these strategies and describe experimentation with them in performance in the first part of this chapter. In the performance script that follows, one can see the connections between the strategies most fully. As I reflect upon the process in the last part of this chapter, I highlight the changes in my thinking about the strategies and their operation at multiple levels in the project following the public presentation.

The Formal Strategies

Genealogy

The focus of genealogy in Irigaray's texts is to reveal mother/daughter relationships and their manifestations in other relationships with and between women.³⁸ In doing so, she wants to uncover a feminine genealogy suppressed in our culture by masculine interpretations of myths that give rise to such things as Freud's Oedipus complex, a key player in identity formation. Oedipus, one might recall, fulfilled the prophecy that he would murder his father, marry his mother, and thus bring ruin upon his family and city. While Freud focuses on patricide as the foundation for all cultural structures, Irigaray suggests considering desire and the mother will yield alternative ways of being. Thus genealogy is related to excavating relationships with women and, like Foucault's genealogy, traces a line of development to reveal the dissension at the beginning of things. Rather than a coherent origin, genealogy will show there are always at least two sexes. This mode of doing

³⁸ I am only dealing with the manifestations of this meaning of genealogy in this text. For a description of its development across Irigaray's texts, see Muraro. For a detailed description of its connection with the symbolic see chapter four in Whitford, *Philosophy in the Feminine*.

history reveals subjects often thought to be without history as culturally embedded and shows how they constitute knowledge and discourse and imprint the body.

Irigaray argues that seeking equality within a structure that previously excluded women is a false articulation of a deeper issue and considers psychoanalysis an important site for “understanding the self-realization of consciousness, especially in its sexuate determinations” (31).³⁹ For rights to be truly won they must “result in the inscription of equal (but necessarily different) sexual rights before the law, women – and couples, come to that – must be allowed access to an other identity” (31). Or, in other words, they must allow for multiple histories, not absorbed into one, but existing together. As an example Irigaray offers an alternative to the traditional psychoanalytic interpretation of the Oedipus myth on which, she argues, modern thought is based. The psychoanalytic interpretation suggests the boy simultaneously wants to kill the father so he can be close to the mother and also realizes the father is more powerful than him. He feels emotionally connected to the father, admiring and respecting the father’s power while, at the same time, hating him for standing between him and the mother. Irigaray argues this ambivalence, rather than hurting the father, is “retroactively projected on to the archaic relationship with the body of the mother” resulting in repression of the feminine and identification with the masculine father (38). Oedipus’s hatred for the mother tears her apart.

Freud is not concerned with her destruction, but with the murder of the father. Irigaray offers an alternative to the traditional interpretation of the murder of the father as an attempt to usurp his power. She suggests we might consider the murder is prompted by a desire to remove the father

³⁹ In Whitford’s “Glossary” she addresses the translation of this term: “sexué, translated as sexuate. The problems with this term are similar to those with the term *sexe*, so again no attempt has been made by the translator to interpret the text” (18-19). Regarding the translation of the term “*sexe*” Whitford notes it is “usually translated as sex, although it can also mean something like gender. Because of the theoretical debates over the use of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, it seemed best not to pre-empt discussion by opting for one or the other term in specific cases. Accordingly, *sex* as been kept throughout, except that *sexe* can often mean sexual organs or genitals, and where appropriate has been translated as such.” (18)

who disingenuously severed the link between mother and child and assumed all creative power including the feminine. If we consider the motive might involve both Freud and Irigaray's proposals then the assumed singular power of the father, of masculine discourse, could be interrupted by the feminine which could then be given its own power and symbolic interpretations. Without representation, female sexuality appears endless, threatening, and its power cannot be understood. Rethinking these myths can help women escape the culture they were erroneously placed in by masculine language by offering alternatives for creating their own symbolic. This genealogical endeavor involves the exposure of histories relegated to the background, revealed by considering relationships with/to women, and showing the imprint of history on bodies.

From here Irigaray calls for the psychoanalytic establishment to show and acknowledge its history. Language, the tool of psychoanalysis, always already shapes interpretation, and the masculine system of language with its repressions and exclusions keeps certain things unsaid. Irigaray's concern is that if analysts do not acknowledge their immersion and the immersion of language in culture change cannot happen because they will hear how and what they desire. Rather than hearing the multiple particularities of each analysand's history, they will see only those specific desires that verify the system in which they work. For Freud and early psychoanalysts each analysis was a chance to discover new dimensions of their practice and theory. It was not until psychoanalysis claimed to have found a universal law cut off from history at work in the unconscious that it became a science or a complete system that sought to prove itself. In order to prove itself the particularities of each analysand were reduced to how they fit into the universal psychoanalytic system. In this way the other is an effect of the psychoanalytic system rather than its own entity. In order to recoup the other we must "interrogate *the conditions under which systematicity itself is possible*" and show the hidden materiality, systems of exchange, and use of

discourse behind coherent narratives regarding the circumstances of production (123). This requires listening to particulars, what they might tell us about a whole, and how they might reveal multiple foundations in a genealogical “profusion of entangled events” (Foucault 155).

Two Lips Touching

Two lips touching is a metaphor frequently used by Irigaray to indicate the differential play of women’s morphology. It is important to note that she thinks of this term morphologically rather than anatomically. There are both biological and linguistic definitions of morphology. Biologically morphology “does not refer to deterministic analysis of forms in themselves, but to a method of discerning patterns of *relationships between* forms” (Robinson 97). In linguistics, Irigaray’s first doctoral subject, morphology is the study of the form of words and their parts. Morphology then “is a concept that opens up the possibilities of different legibilities” (97). Opening these possibilities allows for transformation and creation of different identities and symbolizing processes. Robinson argues, “Through bringing women’s morphology into play, phallic morpho-logic will have to shift” (101). Phallic desire has a goal and an origin. Women’s morphology in terms of the lips is playfully ambiguous referring to “*not* the lips of the mouth, not the lips of the genitals, but at the same time *both* the lips of the mouth *and* the lips of the genitals” (101). They are always at least two. Irigaray’s intervention into history, language, and sexual difference is to focus on plurality and relations rather than forms.

Irigaray claims man’s auto-eroticism assumes an individualized subject and object. Man, Irigaray argues, seeks to absorb alterity to make all the same and like him or of use to him. She argues, “man needs an instrument to touch himself: a hand, a woman, or some substitute. The replacement of that apparatus is effected in and through language [*langage*]. Man produces language for self-affection” (Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 58). It is this instrumentalism and

substitution that makes masculine discourse different from feminine. In masculine usage, language is an instrument of power for specific pleasures like self-representation that ensure mastery. In order to own this pleasure and power man attempts to hide that which does not fit into his discourse. The other, the instruments that allow him to pleasure himself, threatens man's auto-affection by asserting themselves as instruments separate from him and take their own subjectivity. Man's response is to replicate or replace these others or instruments with other objects.

Women want more than this substitution, Irigaray argues. They want an economy of the open lips, not closed but infinitely touching. Woman's autoeroticism is more blurry and open. The edges of the opening, its lips, touch each other. Her pleasure always already relies on an other and the two never merge but always remain in an "endless exchange with the other in a (self-) touching that no privileged identification arrests by re-absorption" (61). As long as the exchange remains the space is always transformed and *jouissance* remains. In the moment the space becomes fixed and transformation ceases a masculine economy, where pleasures are replaced or traded rather than exchanged, is put into place.

Irigaray suggests using the movement of two lips touching as a possibility for a women's imaginary. It is not an essentialist return to anatomy, as some of her critics have suggested, but a way of opening the closed circle of the current system of representation and discourse to allow for other speech. She writes, "women have two lips several times over!" (97). Thus, her formulation corresponds neither to the "morpho-logic" nor to the Lacanian notion of woman as lack in relation to the "One" (97). This is because there is not a model but a process that "is not only never complete or completable; it takes place ... thanks to this non-completion" (97-8). The woman is always becoming, and representing her as a fixed model is not possible. She is:

Indefinite, unfinished/in-finite, *form is never complete in her*. She is not infinite, but nor is she *one* unit: a letter, a figure, a number in a series, a proper name, single object (of a) sensible world, the simple ideality of an intelligible whole. . . . This incompleteness of her form, of her morphology, allows her to become something else at any moment, which is not to say that she is (n)ever unambiguously anything.

(55)

A fixed feminine identity is a masculine idea, “whereas what comes to pass in the *jouissance* of woman is in excess of it. An indefinite overflowing in which many a becoming could be inscribed” (55). Irigaray writes, “One woman + one woman + one woman never will have added up to some generic: woman” (55-6). Each woman exceeds these categories and, while she identifies with different points, this multiple identification suggests the ways in which she also exceeds an identification of the self.

Mimicry

If woman is an effect reproduced by masculine discourse, how can she produce herself? How do women enter the masculine system of discourse that is crafted to exclude them? To these questions Irigaray suggests women might begin with mimicry. Mimicry is a practice women have historically been consigned to any way. Irigaray writes that women should “assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it” (124). In this way women can speak within masculine discourse by entering it through an assigned role. At the same time they enter the system they can also challenge it by knowingly speaking as a masculine subject and therefore calling attention to the relation between the sexes. Women can begin to perform the feminine role with a difference and as subjects. Irigaray

writes, “To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it” (Irigaray, *Reader* 124).

Following Plato, Irigaray notes there are two kinds of mimesis, productive and nonproductive. She writes,

There is *mimesis* as production . . . and there is *mimesis* that would be already caught up in a process of *imitation, specularization, adequation, and reproduction*. It is the second form that is privileged throughout the history of philosophy and whose effects/symptoms such as latency, suffering paralysis of desire, are encountered in hysteria. The first form seems always to have been repressed, if only because it was constituted as an enclave within a ‘dominant’ discourse. Yet it is doubtless in the direction of, and on the basis of, that first *mimesis* that the possibility of a woman’s writing may come about. (134)

This first mimesis is productive while the second is not.⁴⁰ Many have claimed Irigaray performs a type of mimesis in her writing, and “the mimetic strategy makes it difficult to know to what extent Irigaray is endorsing any of the positions she occupies discursively, and to what extent she is consciously imitating them in order to expose the patriarchal symbolic distribution” (Whitford, *Philosophy in the Feminine* 95).⁴¹ The confusion evoked by the use of Irigaray’s use of mimesis in writing is in fact a major part of what makes this strategy efficacious.

The point of mimicry is not to create a new theory that posits a position for women within existing theory, but to disrupt the mechanism of theory so that its “pretension to the production of truth and of a meaning that [is] excessively univocal” is suspended (126). This process does not

⁴⁰ Irigaray uses many words to describe the different types of mimesis including mimicry, masquerade, and hysteria. Robinson breaks these down nicely in the first chapter of her book.

⁴¹ See also Chisholm, Robinson, and Whitford *Philosophy in the Feminine*. Chisholm’s essay is devoted to interrogating this notion.

have the goal of creating a feminine logic, a definition of woman, or to attain the same level of knowledge as men. Instead the goal is to change the questions and economy of masculine logic by disrupting it with feminine excess that is outside this discursive system, thus showing there is an outside.

Irigaray argues that women should not use language to exclude but to understand men so they might know how to play men's games. Women must also see their desire as women and "play on that excess to beat the system. To reintroduce the values of desire, pain, joy, the body. Living values" (51). Thus, while playing men's games, we can disrupt them. Irigaray argues that up until this point women "have been trapped in the role of she who satisfies need but has no access to desire" (51). Now needs must be turned into desires by speaking them so that women are no longer objects of desire but subjects with their own identities and desires. This means that women will play with ideas that are found about her in masculine discourse, but through her bodily performance, through her perceptible matter and excess, she will make visible what phallogentric discourse has tried to cover up and allow for the possibility of a feminine language. Irigaray refers to this as "an effect of playful repetition" (124). She also notes that this show of prowess and ability in mimicry reveals that women are not drawn up into mimicry, but remain somewhere outside as well: "if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply reabsorbed in this function. *They also remain elsewhere*: another case of the persistence of 'matter,' but also of 'sexual pleasure'" (124-5).

Performance Experiments

To begin our performance application of genealogy I explained my understanding of genealogy and historiography to Kari-Anne. I began with Foucault's "Nietzsche Genealogy, History," where he proposes: "What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the

inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity” (142). He suggests, “the disparate presents itself as an ‘event’ in the world of chance” (143). Foucault argues the task of genealogy is to “expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body” (148). History, bodies, and foundations are exposed as “a profusion of entangled events” (155). A key intervention performance studies makes is in the area of bodily focus, drawing attention especially to bodies laboring behind the scenes of History. Introducing bodily histories changes the traditional narrative and adds contingencies. I noted that in the introduction to *Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performance and History*, Della Pollock writes that the relationship between history and performance illuminates “substantial new insights into the structure and function of many forms of cultural production” (2). History, when considered in relation to performance, does not constrain possibilities for the future, but allows a forward and backward motion, looking ahead and looking back. Performance shows history as heterogeneous action unfolding over time that is contingent upon the bodies performing a history that is particular, contested, and exists as difference. Through concepts like performativity performance is understood as creating our reality and thus our ability to do history differently. Calling upon Judith Butler, Pollock notes performance and history are “linked together in deep patterns of iteration and reiteration, that performance mobilizes history through and as repetition, and that the performance of gender, for instance, is therefore at best doomed to fail history, to betray its course and dare punishment by showing the fragile temporality at its core” (2). It is worth noting that Butler calls upon Irigaray in theorizing gender performativity in *Gender Trouble* and works that followed. Irigaray’s interest in symbolic and material bodies and their differences allows her to perform genealogical writing, inserting difference into myths and philosophical discourse, exposing

foundations as multiple rather than singular. One way she does this through tracing matrilineal connections.

This is where we began too. We sought to detail a history of our own feminine influences but also to write it in a way that would allow for a variety of interpretations and multiple iterations of femininity. I recalled an exercise we had used in Michael Bowman's autoperformance course inspired by Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl." In "Howl," Ginsberg traces a genealogy of the counterculture he lived in. "Howl" is both an anti-establishment poem against repressive forms of normalcy that squelch difference and a tribute to friends moved to madness as a result of the oppressive atmosphere. We used it as a template each writing a piece listing women we knew or knew of who had something mad about them or who did outrageous things, and we focused on women. Kari-Anne's list included names of the people she was addressing including her mother, her grandmother, her aunt, and the biblical women Bathsheba and Lydia. My writing did not include names. Every line began with the word "who." My list was broad and included statements about Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva, the Biblical figures we had considered, my family, and myself. I wrote a lot of actions I saw as transgressing feminine norms without a specific individual in mind. Kari-Anne did the same, but also wrote about the more traditional women in her family respectfully and with hope that this role was their choice. Our pieces together revealed a genealogy of our development as women, performers, and academics by calling upon and tracing the diverse women who have influenced us. We read our pieces alternating lines, letting them touch one another and reveal a larger history in the spaces between them. This text became the basis for "number two" in the "genealogy" section of our public performance and we returned to genealogy when we worked with mimicry.

To translate the concept of two lips touching to performance we first attempted to literalize the morphologic metaphor. This served several purposes. Irigaray insists this is not an anatomical metaphor, but a morphologic one focused on relations between parts and between words. She also insists that women have many sets of lips. To literalize the metaphor, we considered the relations between various parts of our bodies to create many sets of lips. We used our arms across our chests opening and closing them. We used our hands like puppets. We used feet, legs, and our backs against one another. We talked about using socks and clothes with lips on them or red fabric to indicate lips. It was a fun way to get moving on the subject. However, these last ideas involved layering. Stigmata instead involve stripping away. Though we had moved on to Irigaray we could not leave Cixous behind. Irigaray is also concerned with exposure as indicated by the genealogical work already discussed and her strategy of mimicry as a way to reveal underlying structures of stereotypes. If we layered these elements on without getting at what was beneath them, we might neglect the conceptual aspects of two lips touching. Using costumes and props would also introduce other instruments. But Irigaray argues that alterity is inherent in the woman. We needed to find a way to accomplish the task with our own bodies. In the end, we decided to forgo literalization in the form of exterior elements, but we included literalization in movements, sounds, and the touching of parts of our bodies against one another.

We also engaged two lips touching in our textual work. We wanted to use a traditional dramatic script and chose a section from act four, scene one of *Much Ado About Nothing*. In this section, Beatrice tells Benedick she does not believe gentlemen of her time to be “men” and wishes she were a man so she could stand up for her cousin Hero who has been wronged by Claudio. We started by going to the “No Fear Shakespeare” version of the text, which includes both the original

text and a modernized version and put the versions up against one another.⁴² We first read them together, Kari-Anne reading the original and I reading the modernized. We read in unison and alternated where the texts diverged. This resulted in a type collaborative vocal experiment wherein Kari-Anne would read her version first, and I echoed it in an altered form. We liked the effect, but decided we wanted to include some of the other texts we had brought in. I again took the modern text and Kari-Anne took the original and we broke them up with the other works. I removed all of Benedick's text and replaced it with text from Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva by finding a related idea in the index of one of their books, turning to the indicated page and inserting text. Kari-Anne inserted a "beep" sound wherever a name or the word "men" or a variation on the word occurred. She also included other texts pulling from the same three as me, but also including text from *Loose Woman* by Sandra Cisneros and *Parables for the Virtual* by Brian Massumi. Again, we read them to one another and then we tried to combine them. We liked the idea, though it did not quite work in practice.

We wanted to keep the collaborative vocal quality we had found even though we could not get Shakespeare's text to work with our found texts. We decided we would try to do a vocal experiment instead with some of Irigaray's text. I photocopied a section of text that dealt with the concept of two lips touching and we set about assigning the text. I got very frustrated in this process because it did not seem to be working. The text was difficult and the language could be interpreted in multiple ways, changing each time I read it. Kari-Anne wanted to understand it. I did not have the same urge to understand its meaning that Kari-Anne did, but I felt we needed to know what we were doing with each pass and try different things. In other words I was not so concerned about making sense or delivering meaning to an audience, but we needed to make some sort of sense of it for ourselves so that we could deliver it. It seemed neither of us knew what we were saying so we could

⁴² See Crowther.

not see the possibilities in what we were doing. After breaking for the night Kari-Anne worked on the text assignment and at the next rehearsal we adjusted what she did to suit us both. We read it bumping into and rubbing up against one another. That seemed to work with the text Kari-Anne spoke, but not with mine. We read it in chairs, where I sat still and read the text facing forward, while Kari-Anne rubbed up against me exaggerating her words. This worked better. As we continued to rehearse the piece throughout the following weeks it continued to change and we discovered new meanings with each rehearsal, even during the public performances. Finally, we decided that this was the point. We were to remain in the process of performing it rather than finding a fixed model that we could repeat exactly.

We continued our exploration of mimicry physically. We did this first by calling upon Vsevolod Meyerhold's theories of theatricality. Specifically, we used his work with the trickster and the mask. The trickster character of Meyerhold's theatricality pools materials from diverse sources, altering the original functions of these materials, and in the process shows their double possibility. This focus on a double-life came to signify Meyerhold's theatrics. He used the mask and grotesque derived from *commedia dell'arte* in his process of stylization. Mask refers to any sort of physicality the actor uses that both hides and highlights certain characteristics of their character.⁴³ Using the mask shows the essence of a character, but also allows the performer to show through. It conceals and reveals. Grotesque is of the low domains and attends to the materiality of the body.⁴⁴ With a parodic attitude it "mixes opposites, consciously creating harsh incongruity and *relying solely on its own originality*" (Meyerhold 138). Meyerhold's work has strong connections with Irigaray's strategy of mimicry. Meyerhold's mask and double-life of the grotesque resonate with Irigaray's call for the woman to "assume the feminine role deliberately" so she might "recover the place of her

⁴³ For a full discussion of Meyerhold's mask see Meyerhold 131-2 or Pitches 58-61.

⁴⁴ For a full discussion of Meyerhold's grotesque see Meyerhold 137-43 or Pitches 61-7.

exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it” (Irigaray, *Reader* 124). Irigaray’s and Meyerhold’s strategies involve an active and knowing engagement of a character with enough distance between the actor and the role to potentially subvert it. The heightened display of construction in Meyerhold’s double life of the mask and grotesque are places to start doing as Irigaray suggests: affirm and thwart roles rather than be subordinated to them.

We first turned to popular images of women in commercials and imitated them. The media tends to present one-dimensional stereotypes in order to appeal to specific audiences. In terms of images of women those found in advertising tend to propagate a standard of beauty that is white, thin, and unattainable or idealized. In these commercials women exhibit erotic joy as they shave their armpits with the latest razor or wash their hair with an intoxicating shampoo. By engaging these stereotypes we could begin to thwart them by exposing the grotesque reality they hide. We began by mimicking these commercials for extended periods of time. As we did this we allowed the movement to change, showing the actual experience wherein one might get soap in their eye, have trouble removing the hair, or be in a hurry to fit this image and not have time to “enjoy” it. In our performance we presented both sides.

We next turned to the stories of biblical women in the interest of tracing a genealogy. Kari-Anne explained several stories and we began to work with the biblical story of Bathsheba. We tried to trace a genealogy of Bathsheba that also revealed disparate interpretations of the story that brought her to biblical prominence. Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah and then became the wife of David, which is what she is most known for. Some say she seduced David, others say David seduced her. David saw Bathsheba bathing from his nearby roof and immediately desired her and impregnated her. The details of how this happened are omitted. In an attempt to hide this transgression David, King and head of the army, requested Uriah who was actively serving in the

army, come home in the hopes he might have relations with his wife and make it appear the pregnancy was from this interaction. However, active duty soldiers were forbidden intercourse and Uriah would not disobey this commandment. Instead, David ordered his general to abandon Uriah in battle to the grips of the enemy. Upon Uriah's death, David married Bathsheba. Their son Solomon succeeded David as King, and Bathsheba became Queen Mother. We read a feminist interpretation of Bathsheba's story in *Helpmates, Harlots, Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*. This book notes there is little in the Biblical texts to indicate Bathsheba was complicit in David's act and suggests he raped her. He saw her from afar, discovered who she was, and called for her. There was no way she could have known what he was after. The narrator of the story never includes Bathsheba's feelings on the rape, the death of her husband, or her pregnancy and she is never allowed to speak directly in the text.

As Kari-Anne read from the book, I wrote phrases on the board including, "lamentation, seduction, seductress, veil, bather, interior bible, interior light, gaze, property, pure, kiss, queen, co-conspirator, landscape, repentance." We chose the phrases "look," "wife," "seductress," "bather," and "veil." These phrases lent themselves to a stereotypical and normative picture of Bathsheba allowing us to engage in a performance exercise using Meyerhold's double life of trickery and the mask. By boiling things down to an essence we could show the limits of that essence, the disparate ideas it contains, and also engage mimicry.

I broke the exercise into three steps, echoing Meyerhold's tripartite rhythmic structure used in his stylizations. First, we were to simplify and reduce each term to its essence in a gesture. Next we extended the range of expression used, exaggerating or shrinking the movements in size and speed. Finally, we attended to the rhythm in our movements and deliberately arranged the ideas. Like Irigaray's strategy of mimicry, the constructed nature and the possibility of being more than

just a received image are revealed in this doubling. As the movements shifted and changed they opened with possibilities. We performed our movements for one another noting similarities and differences. Then we put them together staging them so that they would also relate to one another and we allowed ourselves to improvise when we made connections. One idea we became intrigued by was that of a curtain which came from our exploration of the term “veil.” We used a large piece of fabric that morphed into a towel, a shower curtain, and a wrap Kari-Anne placed around me. This action made us both think about mothering. Irigaray argues we should retain the woman who has her own pleasure in the passage to mother. This exercise of transformation had us wonder when one became the other and what mimicry has to do with genealogy. Though we did not use physical curtains in the public performance, thinking about them conceptually influenced much of our work, including the way we performed mimicry.

This use of mimicry may seem obvious. As we continued in our process the time came to consider the structure of the overall public performance presentation and engaged mimicry more subtly as Irigaray does in her writing by imitating patriarchal forms. At this point Ben came back into the process and we considered the performative lecture and the article in *PAJ*. Ben suggested we must think about the ways we want the concept of a lecture to function. He felt in some of the examples in the article the lecturers talked down to the audience, placing themselves in a privileged hierarchical position. We noted his concern and continued to think about the politics of a lecture. I was interested in the examples in the article that did not “preach” to the audience from a place of privilege, but combined movement and image with the more typical lecture-style presentation to create many sites of meaning and to reveal the lecturer as vulnerable and part of the process. Ben was concerned with how to align the philosophy of lecture with the philosophy of the techniques we are exploring. In Irigaray’s terms we might say Ben was concerned with how we could mimic and

also stay outside of it. I suggested the textual composition, how we positioned ourselves, and how we moved in and out of a “lecture” voice could help to reveal the constructedness of that voice but also the possibilities of its function. The “lecture” was simply a different voice. We agreed that the function of the lecture would not be to present ourselves as the bearers of knowledge, but to provide a structure. Our lectures would be fragmented and show that we did not have a clear narrative to deliver. Rather, the lecture portions would give the audience tools, or a framework for entering the piece. As Kari-Anne pointed out this would provide more information with which the performance work could create sparks.

We wanted to find a repetitive structure that could accommodate our formal strategies and change as the themes built upon one another. Like the movement pattern we worked with, we wanted the structure to be affected by the strategies. Ben turned to Barthes’s *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*. Ulmer uses this text also in “Texts and Research: The Mystory” as a model that provides instructions for writing a mystory. He picks apart Barthes’s fragments to propose the parts of his model so that students might then write their own discourse using this model as a starting point. *A Lover’s Discourse* imposes a false structure upon the exchanges between lovers that then becomes a structure. Fragments are listed in alphabetical order, though the labels that give way to this order are somewhat arbitrary so that taken as a whole the reader can have a greater understanding of the ideas. We decided to create a lecture structure for talking about our project and the individual themes. But we built failure into it so that the lecture would not align squarely with the performance points we presented. Ben suggested it would be like doing a lecture based on a slide show presentation where we talk about the picture in the slide show but there were no pictures on the slides. I thought this would also be an interesting way to mimic the texts we are working with. Most of the texts use multiple headings and subheadings to segment the work within a

chapter. They often begin with what appears to be a clear description of what is to follow and then devolve into a circulation of multiple ideas embedded in forms of feminine writing that require the reader to move along, allowing connections to emerge without attempting to fix meaning. The headings and titles provide a welcome anchor for considering the more fluid writing that follows yet they do not dictate interpretation. This was the goal of our structure.

We decided the draft we used to structure the rehearsal process would serve as a loose frame for the structure of the performance. There would be ten segments: stigmata, passage, trace, error, genealogy, two lips touching, mimicry, toccata, fugue, and foreignness. Each would begin with an artificial performance of preparation. Immediately following the performance of preparation we would speak the segment title in unison. Following this we each gave two terms further clarifying the title. Then we each provided a definition or description in a style recognizable as a form of lecture. These could be closely related to the term or diverge from it. We discovered I was adopting a professorial voice and Kari-Anne a preacher voice during the lecture segments. We used this as a type of mimicry and the personas served as masks during our times at the lectern, highlighting the construction of the moment and demonstrating an attitude toward it. Following this we moved from the lecterns and performed what we called three references or examples of this definition. Again, these need not perfectly align, they could be textual, movement based, or both, and they could be of varying lengths. Finally we performed our repeated movement sequence at the end of each section. We would be able to interrupt this sequence, changing the movement to reveal different aspects of the strategies, sometimes not doing it at all and straying from the structure. Likewise the preparatory performance could change as we moved throughout the piece.

As we moved on to arbitrary definitions/descriptions and references we looked for words that evoked images or actions that could be applied to the work we already did and others that

evoked different ideas to be used as references in the rest of the piece. We reminded ourselves to focus on how the strategies operate and what they do, rather than what they mean. We had to construct the message so the form of the message would not undermine it. As we discussed Kari-Anne's confusions with Irigaray, the moments of understanding that get lost as you continue reading, I realized this is part of her strategy in constructing a message. Her texts constantly open and shift so there are moments of clarity, even moments of story that are then absorbed back into the process. The problem with narrative as Cixous articulated it is that it imposes a form that tells you the end in the beginning, following a trajectory to that goal. Life and desire do not work that way. They are more fluid. Life and our bodies exist according to rhythms affected by the environment, by other people, by things inside us we do not know. They are not determined. While there is a purported goal in this project to find strategies for making performance, we sought qualities rather than a form or steps to meet an end. Just as Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva find points on which they rest, circle, move from, and return to, we created a performance that mimics this movement. The lecture points circulate in the referents that take various forms of short stories, dances, movement and text, and move to other lecture points. Like the writers we provide the reader/audience something to rest on for a moment and then run with it, complicating it by operationalizing the formal strategies in the referents. Meaning emerges in the cracks between these points, the fissures, the prosody, and the processing.

Experiments in *Écriture Féminine*: Performance Script

(At their music stands they repeat their ten-second-preparation sequence.)

BOTH

(To the audience.)
Genealogy.

BRIANNE

Footings. *Empreinte*.

KARI-ANNE

Trace. *Généalogie*.

BRIANNE

“What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity.”⁴⁵ We must “expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body.”⁴⁶ “If the same is found in the realm and movement of dialectics, the disparate presents itself as an ‘event’ in the world of chance;”⁴⁷ “a profusion of entangled events.”⁴⁸ “Couples and generations have therefore been out of step ever since male and female genealogies were collapsed into a single genealogy: that of the husband. Whatever the rules of morality, this collapsing of one genealogy into the other is an ethical fault which perverts the spirit of the people, of peoples, and which prevents the constitution of an ethics of the couple.”⁴⁹

KARI-ANNE

“A surviving mark, sign, or evidence of the former existence, influence, or action of some agent or event; vestige: traces of an advanced civilization among the ruins.”⁵⁰ Number One.

(BOTH move center and strike a tableau reminiscent of a wedding cake topper, arms linked. They then turn back-to-back, link both arms, and slide down to the floor, letting their legs go out from under them as they land on their seats. From here, arms still linked, they stand back up.)

BRIANNE

Number Two.

(BOTH begin a movement sequence that looks like they are vacuuming followed by a gesture of picking up an invisible object and placing it on their backs or shoulders. This movement is repeated throughout the entire space as BRIANNE moves in a circle around the stage right seating bank returning to the main playing area from the center aisle. KARI-ANNE continues the movement throughout the open space in front of the stage left seating bank. Each time they place an invisible object on their backs, they lower their bodies closer to the ground to the point that they are on the ground by the final line of this section.)

⁴⁵ Foucault, 142.

⁴⁶ Foucault, 148.

⁴⁷ Foucault, 142-3.

⁴⁸ Foucault, 155.

⁴⁹ Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 200.

⁵⁰ “Trace.” *Dictionary.com*. Web. 20 Jan 2011. <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/trace>>.

Who bathed innocently with juniper soaps and rose water, following errors to the high rank of Queen.

KARI-ANNE

Who drove the nail into his mouth.

BRIANNE

Who gazed on suspiciously claiming seduction, committing adultery blamed on feminine wiles.

KARI-ANNE

Who shot his nuts. We've never met but I heard a lot about you.

BRIANNE

Who was sacrilegious enough to cut up his text and reassembling it with her own sense of sense.

KARI-ANNE

Who was fun.

BRIANNE

Who draws with her pencil in loops and in curves and in dashes and dots that are traces of thoughts.

KARI-ANNE

Who left him impotent.

BRIANNE

Who thinks of the body as a conveyor of messages that come through the fingers in language operations.

KARI-ANNE

Who washed her hair.

BRIANNE

Who is always right even when wrong and will fight to the tears to prove her point.

KARI-ANNE

Who washed that man right into her hair.

BRIANNE

Who uses her veil as a flag of her freedom, keeping her secrets she won't reluctantly share.

KARI-ANNE

Who cut him off, cut him down to size, to the size of a god.

BRIANNE

Who cut off his head with one quick movement, because she knew it was his head he had been thinking with all along.

KARI-ANNE

Who insists on peace, on being good.

BRIANNE

Whose thought shoots ahead and then back on itself in the tracing of problems she does not want to solve.

KARI-ANNE

Who has never felt the throws of violence, only healed them.

BRIANNE

Who glanced back in a glimpse at the glance he delivered, making herself object cum subject, and him in reverse.

KARI-ANNE

Who is too humbled to be saintly.

BRIANNE

Who danced in the water with movements of hips and of hair and of arms and of all of her charms.

KARI-ANNE

Who making rhubarb, staying home, waiting on us hand and foot, hand in hand, day to day. Thank you.

BRIANNE

Who gave herself up for the life of a people and was thought of as good until the end of her days.

KARI-ANNE

Who was thankful for me you weren't a feminist. Sorry that Granny was disappointed.

BRIANNE

Who struggled to be daughter when she'd always been mother and with troubled knowing she could feel pleasure too.

KARI-ANNE

Who didn't see you were being yourself? I honestly believe you were. I hope. I'm sorry.

BRIANNE

Who writes in a screed full of staunch ruminations on material metaphors for symbolics forgotten.

KARI-ANNE

Who loves you, but won't become you.

BRIANNE

Who was thrown out of the establishment for calling into question all the things they held holy and scientific at once.

KARI-ANNE

Who both leave our keys on the table, same butt, same hips. Same voice.

BRIANNE

Who write with their teeth and their tongues, always touching and scrawling in desire-full need.

KARI-ANNE

Who says, “Will you be disobedient to your mother?”

BRIANNE

Who sent him a letter he got many years later while she sat and waited to flee when he came.

KARI-ANNE

Who roll his joints, buy his beer, pay his bills, hide his letters, make excuses, bail him — blame him. Rinse and repeat.

BRIANNE

Who mourned for the bird she though was dead, and sobbed for the cat who watched it escape.

KARI-ANNE

Who will not repeat your error, but fears and flees the trace.

BRIANNE

Who saw that she was gone but her body remained.

KARI-ANNE

Number Three.

(BOTH begin a hand clapping game where they remove something invisible from their backs with one hand and then slap hands with the other hand. Each time they say “something borrowed” they remove an invisible object. Each time they say “something blue” their hands meet. On the final iteration they remove the object with both hands and meet the other’s hand with both as well.)

BOTH

Something borrowed; something blue. Something borrowed; something blue. Something borrowed; something blue. Something borrowed; something blue. Something borrowed; something blue!

(They go back to their music stands and repeat their ten-second-preparation sequence. They speak to the audience.)

BOTH

Two lips Touching

BRIANNE

Pleasure. *Jouissance*.

KARI-ANNE

Deux lèvres, tulipe, cisaillement.

BRIANNE

The movement of two lips touching is a possibility for a women's imaginary. It is not an essentialist return to anatomy, but a way of breaking the closed circle of the current system of representation and discourse to allow for other speech. "Women have two lips several times over."⁵¹ This formulation corresponds neither to the "morpho-logic" or to the Lacanian notion of woman as lack in relation to the "One" because there is not a model but a process that "is not only never complete or completable; it takes place ... thanks to this non-completion."⁵² "What comes to pass in the *jouissance* of woman is in excess of it. An indefinite overflowing in which many a becoming could be inscribed. . . . One woman + one woman + one woman will never add up to some generic woman,"⁵³ but will always exceed fixed categories. "She cannot repeat herself or produce herself as *wholly other* in pleasure, for the other already in her affects her, without her ever becoming one – masculine or feminine."⁵⁴

KARI-ANNE

Two lips, never becoming one, touching, not kissing, more than two, a woman has many...
(BOTH lower their music stands and take them to the chairs they placed in the center of the main playing space during the "trace" section. They face the audience.)

BRIANNE

Numbers One and Two

KARI-ANNE

...pleasures.

(BOTH sit in their chairs. The following segment oscillates between conversation and monologue. Sometimes the text overlaps, sometimes it does not, sometimes it is spoken to the audience, and sometimes it is spoken to the other performer. Throughout the first part KARI-ANNE reclines in her chair and leans or rubs up against BRIANNE who speaks facing forward.)

BRIANNE

Except perhaps, again, in God.

⁵¹ Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 97.

⁵² Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 97.

⁵³ Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 55-6.

⁵⁴ Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 56.

	KARI-ANNE
God?	
	BRIANNE
A beyond-heaven whose qualities, powers, names ... one has attempted, without reducing its duplicity, to enumerate — the condition for this being chastity ... God (of)	
	KARI-ANNE
God (of)?	
	BRIANNE
that horde which surreptitiously turns up at the opening	
	KARI-ANNE
(Overlapping with BRIANNE) <i>Entr'ouverture</i>	
	BRIANNE
of a diabolical pleasure? In order to fill a gap	
	KARI-ANNE
(Overlapping with BRIANNE) <i>Ecart</i>	
	BRIANNE
according to one, to enjoy it	
	KARI-ANNE
(Overlapping with BRIANNE) <i>En jouir</i>	
	BRIANNE
according to the other. To enjoy/	
	KARI-ANNE
take pleasure	
	BRIANNE
in the other —	
	KARI-ANNE
the Other —	
	BRIANNE
in his/	
	KARI-ANNE

her

BRIANNE

reduplication in nothing that is known, is known itself. Again...

KARI-ANNE

that 'God' should have been conceived as a perfect volume, a closed completeness, an infinite circle in the fullness of all extension, is presumably not the doing of their imagination. For this passion for a neatly tied up origin, even at the cost of biting the end

BRIANNE

of

KARI-ANNE

its tail, for a well-locked

BRIANNE

whore

KARI-ANNE

house

BRIANNE

Maison bien close

KARI-ANNE

in which the

BRIANNE

'thing'

KARI-ANNE

may possibly happen, for a matrix coiled back on/in its interiority, is not women's.

BRIANNE

Except sometimes in their maternal phallicism, or their impotent mimicry. Their

KARI-ANNE

'God'

BRIANNE

is quite other, like their pleasure. And, his death already having taken place, at least for this 'world', is not likely to come about.

KARI-ANNE

But of course they will not say so, because there is nothing there that can be exposed. Or known

BRIANNE
and this can be written differently depending on what one expects of its impossible

KARI-ANNE
re

BRIANNE
production.

KARI-ANNE
For the

BRIANNE
A

KARI-ANNE
woman

BOTH
two does not divide into Ones.

BRIANNE
Relations preclude being cut up into units.

KARI-ANNE
And when

BOTH
'she'

KARI-ANNE
clings so desperately to the

BOTH
one,

KARI-ANNE
even the capital of

BOTH
one

KARI-ANNE
god made Man, it is so as to repeat the value to which

	BOTH
‘she’	
	KARI-ANNE
has a right on the exchange market:	
	BOTH
none. The non-entity, the zero	
	KARI-ANNE
that founds and seals any settlement of accounts by its displacement.	
	BRIANNE
More or less.	
	KARI-ANNE
To reduce them to the same units, even if the accounts immediately become more complicated as a result:	
	BOTH
two	
	KARI-ANNE
producing	
	BOTH
one	
	KARI-ANNE
so as to merge and cancel	
	BOTH
one	
	KARI-ANNE
another out in their couple. Reproducing	
	BOTH
one	
	KARI-ANNE
more, and beginning not to know where he is.	
	BRIANNE
This second	

KARI-ANNE

of the

BOTH

one

BRIANNE

belongs to the mother?⁵⁵

KARI-ANNE

(Blows air out through her closed lips making a sound)

Number Three.

(BOTH start making a range of sounds with their lips by blowing air through them, smacking them, etc. As they do this they put the chairs behind the screens and move to their music stands. When they approach the stands they stop the noise and perform their ten-second-preparation sequence. They speak to the audience.)

BOTH

Mimicry

KARI-ANNE

Mimetisme. Imitation.

BRIANNE

Repetition. *Jouer.*

KARI-ANNE

“There is, in an initial phase, perhaps only one ‘path,’ the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of *mimicry*. One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to concert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it... To play with mimesis is this, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it.”⁵⁶

BRIANNE

“To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it.”⁵⁷ “Every sexual position is fundamentally comic.”⁵⁸ “The point is not to stay marginal, but to participate in whatever network of marginal zones is spawned from other disciplinary centers and which, together, constitute a multiple displacement of those authorities.”⁵⁹ “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender... identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its

⁵⁵ This section is a cut-up of the text on pages 62-3 of *The Irigaray Reader*.

⁵⁶ Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 124.

⁵⁷ Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 124.

⁵⁸ Butler, “Interview”

⁵⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble* xxxiv.

results.”⁶⁰ “There is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original.”⁶¹ Pick up the master’s tools.

KARI-ANNE

“It means to resubmit herself – inasmuch as she is on the side of the ‘perceptible’, of ‘matter’ – to ‘ideas’, in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make ‘visible’, by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language. It also means ‘to unveil’ the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function. They also remain elsewhere...”⁶²

BRIANNE

Number One.

(KARI-ANNE moves from behind her music stand, slowly making her way center. As she does this she seductively puts an arm over her head, caressing it clear down her side with her hand. She repeats this motion and others like it for a while until it she eventually stops her hand at her armpit where the movement turns into a shaving motion that is no longer seductive. She drops the pose, looks at the audience and speaks.)

KARI-ANNE

Number Two.

(BRIANNE now moves from behind her music stand, making her way center swaying her hips, caressing her rear and thighs until this movement turns into scratching and eventually she moves as if picking wedgie that ends with a snapping sound of her underwear.)

BOTH

Number Three.

(BOTH begin to imitate washing their hair as if in an herbal essence commercial: caressing their necks, faces, shoulders, making orgasmic sounds, until they stop with a gesture as if soap had gotten in their eyes. They make their way back to their music stands and perform their ten-second-preparation sequence.)

Reflections

⁶⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble* 34.

⁶¹ Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” 127.

⁶² Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 124.

As mentioned in the previous chapters there are several questions to consider when reflecting on the study (the performance process) and results (the performance script and its presentation) of this project. These include whether we successfully translated Irigaray's strategies and offered an experienced insight, as articulated by Cull, for the audience and ourselves. In addition we must ask what this tells us about devised performance and, more specifically, devised feminist performance. In the previous chapter on our work with Cixous, I mentioned I was aware of how much control I had in this project. As we got further along in the process and moved to the other theorists, I gave up more of that. This is indicated to me by comments from the audience and by the frequent reference in my rehearsal logs regarding my frustration that we were not dealing with the strategies with the depth or in the way I desired. One audience member remarked that she was very surprised this was the first time Kari-Anne and I had worked together and that it seemed like we had known one another and collaborated for years. This indicated to me that we struck a balance in our performance and a respect for one another in the collaborative process that shone through. As this audience member was also there for a talkback session following the performance, it also indicated that we were respectful of one another in discussing our work and both took ownership. Kari-Anne and I have both expressed that we had a positive exchange and were both reflected in the performance piece. We each had to give a bit to accommodate the other but the fluid process of exchange in keeping with the strategies we used was reflected in our performance. In many ways this approach exhibits Irigaray's two lips in that we were able to let our ideas constantly rub against one another, we never became one, and we still found joy in working on the piece and talking about it. In terms of feminist devising, a collaborative relationship like this is necessary to work like *écriture féminine*.

I do think there is further work that could be done with the strategies of Irigaray. Because we worked with Cixous first and because Kari-Anne was most familiar with Cixous's work it was difficult to leave her behind. As I had hoped to illuminate the differences between the theorists, I find this troubling. One audience member noted that the three theorists so often get lumped together, but she did not say whether our work showed them as distinct. I think the strategies did stand separately, but I definitely see the complexities of working in this collaborative way. It takes more time, discussion, and negotiation to work collaboratively than it would take were one of us to direct the project. In addition, as a result of the collaborative process one may not make the points or realize a singular vision. Had I taken a more directorial approach I could have told Kari-Anne what to focus on and perhaps insisted we pay more attention to the other strategies. But, as I noted before how we put the piece together was as important as what we made. And because I maintained a focus on the collaborative process mirroring the strategies we were using to create exercises and performance material, I think that material was more fully anchored in the approach and conveyed to the audience.

I believe the structure of the piece is what allowed us to make the individual strategies clear. One audience member noted that she had read and used *écriture féminine* in her dissertation many years ago, but that seeing these strategies performed helped her make sense of them in new ways. She could see how they operated and, though she had felt stupid reading the texts, she felt like she could actively engage them with our performance and even understand them more fully. Another noted that, though she did not have the tools to speak about performance, she thought the work was:

an amazing exercise in a sense making experience because it is not very often that we're confused or that we actually have to work hard to make sense of something. And so this experience of opening ourselves up to making sense or understanding

what is going on and then having that repetition which lays bare issues of structure was an incredible illustration or exercise for the person in the audience to go through things not being intelligible in a regular, conventional way and actually going through the process.

She noted that the experience was similar to that of reading the literature. The fact that she noted the laying bare of structure suggests we kept the constructed nature of our piece at the fore. The performance of mimicry in the structure, letting the anti-structure show through as it always will, revealed the importance of attending to structure. Another audience member noted that for him, the constant washing over, digestion in different spaces and times, and their conjunction and build up, allowed him to understand the piece in a lot of different ways because of the history of the show. These comments indicated to me that we had succeeded in creating a postdramatic “joint text” that dislocated signs and allowed the audience to experience “a unique intersection of aesthetically organized and everyday real life” (Lehmann 17). We replaced “the linear-successive” with “a simultaneous and multi-perspectival form of perceiving” (16).

That the show has its own history brings me to genealogy. I do not think the history of this show is dictated solely by the show, but rather engages the audience member in producing this history. One audience member noted that he could understand how things like toccata and fugue and repetition can clearly be used in performance. However, he asked, “given the problematization of origins and notions of sequence that seemed to get played out to some degree in this piece how does that translate into the devising process?” Here, I turn to Foucault who writes, “genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity” (Foucault 146). In our devising process we did not attempt often to fully explain a strategy. Rather than pretend that we had any unwavering understanding of the strategies as they exist in a text written in the past, we approached

them for how each “actively exists in the present” (146). Ruth Laurion Bowman writes genealogy is “a discursive method activated by the historian and the critical tools she uses to liberate divergences from the backwater of traditional histories and make some sense of it” (168). Thus, in response to the audience member’s question, we sought to find other options than our original responses, to interrogate all responses through the use of creative response, which is both critical and creative so as to allow for divergences to surface. We did not seek to represent these strategies, but to use them as sources for invention.

Regarding sequencing, Bowman highlights two genealogical approaches, those of Joseph Roach and W.G. Sebald that are apropos here. She writes, “Roach appears to have a pretty good idea of where he is headed and what he wants to map” (172). She finds this in the way he consistently aligns white culture in New Orleans with dominance and nonwhite with a refreshing creativity. Sebald, on the other hand, tells an untold past using creative alternatives drawn from fiction and performance. Bowman writes:

By means of first-person subjectivity, a polyglot of narratives, body metaphors, metonymic lists, and surreal juxtapositions, Sebald claims historical and performative agency. The conventions signal to the reader that the history is furnished forth, it emerges, through his writing. However, due to the double voiced poetics of many of the conventions, they also indicate that the meaning and significance of the history are ambiguous and multiple. The reader then must participate in producing the history Sebald offers. (173)

Through his suggestion of errors, the reader is encouraged to make their own connections. While we had a general idea of the points on a map that we wanted to hit like Roach, we also allowed ourselves to wander and discover other connections, like Sebald, not limiting ourselves to the text at

hand. Based on the responses from the audience, it seems to me we offered them a story more like Sebald's as well. The lack of traditional legibility in the performance indicates this. While some audience members were excited by the lack of this kind of legibility, others wondered how important traditional legibility is for the piece to function. I argue that we provided the structure of the lecture that allowed for some of that so that different types of audience members could find things to attend to. This mimicry of a recognizable structure began to mimic itself even as it disintegrated and provided a score to follow.

As we staged and rehearsed the section of Irigaray's text in the section on two lips, the invention that is part of the two lips that remain in process and affect one another really came alive. Performing the text together, rather than as a solo performance, further affected the reverberations of the piece. Here, we used the idea of two lips touching to structure the reading of the piece with two voices sometimes alternating when they spoke, sometimes speaking together, sometimes overlapping, and two bodies literally rubbing against one another. We worked to show the idea rather than tell it, to bring life to it. This metaphor is one of the major reasons Irigaray is dismissed as essentialist. By bringing the strategy to life through multiple sign systems at the same time including our voices, our touching bodies, the sounds of our lips, and the set up of the space with two main performance areas that moved and became many throughout the piece we showed how this metaphor is meant to show a genealogical approach with multiple beginnings rather than an essentialist return to anatomy. The audience began to understand the concept on numerous levels when we stripped away the argument and focused on the creativity the principle evoked.

From this work there are several strategies that can be taken into the devising process for making postdramatic feminist theater. The first is to write a genealogy whether it be fictional or not. One can do this with a focus on a subject or a structure or, by keeping notes and documentation

on a blog, the group can slowly create its own genealogy. Another strategy to take into the devising process is to engage mimicry physically in movement and structurally in the form of the piece. Mimicry at the level of the performer will show fissures in the masks we all wear and allow for the opening of these masks to more possibilities. It will also help the performer to remain in process and not become a solidified character. Instead they will always be able to slip between characters. Structurally, using mimicry allows one to layer a number of texts onto one another within a structure thereby showing the connections and divisions between texts and between texts and the structure as its own text. Finally, in terms of process, one can use two lips touching as a way of interacting wherein voices are allowed to be distinct and yet influence and affect one another. In terms of postdramatic feminist performance these strategies help artists avoid identity politics by not only constantly shifting the content of the piece, but at the level of the form of the piece the identity always changes opening new spaces for interpretation *and* invention.

CHAPTER FIVE: KRISTEVAN FOREIGNNESS

Julia Kristeva shares the radical and rigorous feminist theoretical stance of Cixous and Irigaray. Kristeva too deconstructs Western philosophical traditions but does this in her own way differently from the other two. Unlike Irigaray, “For Kristeva there can be no *essential* female difference in language, in the sense that whatever may seem to be specific to women’s texts today may well be the effect of prevailing ideologies or market conditions imposing certain themes and stylistic effects on women writers” (Moi, *French* 7). Kristeva has successfully navigated the traditionally masculine site of the academy and has remained a Lacanian psychoanalyst. Her career includes posts as “A tenured professor at the University of Paris, she was an early contributor to the influential avant-garde journal *Tel Quel*, an officer in the International Association of Semiotics, and an editor of the review *Sémiotica*” (Richter 1563). Studying under such “imposing figures” as Jacques Lacan, Lucien Goldmann, and Claude Lévi-Strauss, Kristeva has “contributed to the development of structuralist and poststructuralist thought, at once helping shape emerging ideas and incorporating them as they emerge into her own eclectic, ever-evolving body of thought (1563). Kristeva, who also has a background in Marxist theory, Russian Formalism, and the philosophy of Hegel, has written theoretical books, psychoanalytic books, monographs, essays, and novels drawing on her diverse influences.

She is known for her work in the area of intertextuality and according to Midttun, Kristeva strives “to show how a text always communicates with another text or other texts, in a polyphony of different voices that meet in the act of reading, which engender other, and new, interpretations of the text” (165). Her interest in intra- and intersubjectivity complements her intertextual work as it implies a similar relational ethic. Kristeva adopted “a *critical* position towards structuralism from the outset” which created conflict with the structuralist and semiotic communities she was a part of

(Moi, *French* 2). Because of this and the nature of her work, she has been marked as an important poststructuralist theorist.

Bulgarian by birth, Kristeva moved to France in 1966 on a doctoral fellowship (Moi, *Kristeva* 1). By 1967 she published regularly in journals, including *Tel Quel*, whose editorial board she joined in 1970. This journal “brought together the range of writers that defined French theory in Britain and the USA (Derrida, Barthes, Foucault, Kristeva, and Cixous write there, as do Bataille and Genette, and Lacan and Althusser are regularly cited). The journal aligns their work with a body of literary writing . . . in relation to which the notion of *écriture* would be defined.” (Gilbert 131). The group “based its work on a new understanding of history as *text*; and of writing (*écriture*) as *production*, not representation” (Moi, *Kristeva* 4).

Kristeva’s relationship to feminism “has always been that of a somewhat critical fellow-traveler” (9). She has reacted against the brand of Parisian feminism that, like British or American liberal feminism, desires equality within existing patriarchal, bourgeois structures. Yet Kristeva’s critiques and insistence on subverting such structures align her with other types of radical feminism. Still, Kristeva remains skeptical and distant from feminist approaches that “politicize *all* human relationships” asserting “her fear that *any* kind of political idiom, be it liberal, socialist, or feminist, will necessarily reveal itself as yet another master-discourse” (9-10). Moi suggests that while this is a real danger it underestimates the disruptive potential feminism holds. In other words, “This is not to say that Kristeva is wrong to indict the distressing tendency of some contemporary forms of feminism towards simplistic, anti-intellectual analysis of women’s position and struggle. It is, however, to argue that is no reason to reject feminism *en bloc*” (10).

Kristeva’s psychoanalytic practice influences her linguistic work producing a “psycho-linguistic understanding of language” (12). She is interested in the acquisition, process,

comprehension, and production of language and how they effect and are involved with subjectivity and identity. Her theories of psycholinguistics have “become a starting-point for a series of discussions on the status of the subject and the question of identity in psychoanalysis, an issue of central importance to political theories such as feminism . . .” (12). *Strangers to Ourselves*, the book engaged in this study, calls upon these question of identity and subjectivity to theorize foreignness as “The Kristevan subject . . . a subject-in-process . . . but a subject nevertheless” (13). The abject, an early step in identity formation, is connected with the maternal and the child’s recognition of the mother as in opposition to its “I.”⁶³ Like the uncanny, which is Kristeva’s focus in *Strangers*, the abject recurs only when triggered. Though once familiar it reemerges as detached, hateful, and strange. Just as the child is detached from the mother, the abject “draws on Kristeva’s notion of the foreigner as one who has suffered the loss of mother, of motherland, and often of mother tongue, and so endures the consequences of abjection on a personal level” (Barclay 6). Though Kristeva’s examples of foreigners are mostly males, their relationship to language is similar to that of the child to its mother. The foreigner is cut off from their first language, exists in a new system trying to acquire, process, comprehend, and produce language in accordance with new rules, and thus their identity is in process as they negotiate these boundaries. The foreigner is one who represents an excess of identity or national boundaries because they are decidedly outside, disrupting these systems and their rules, simultaneously trying to blend in and stand out. However, Kristeva suggests that because we all experience abjection and repress fears in our unconscious, there is foreignness, excess, or strangeness in each of us that makes us who we are.

Some have accused Kristeva of depicting foreigners ahistorically and of(?) ignoring individual material realities and obstacles. Barclay argues that Kristeva’s “appeal to psychoanalysis, which illuminates the otherness within each of us and so transforms us all into strangers, neglects

⁶³ For a full articulation of this connection as it operates in *Strangers to Ourselves*, see Barclay.

the lived realities of today's migrants, exiles and refugees [and] opens her . . . to accusations that, by privileging the psychic over the conflict in social relations, she is reducing material oppression to issues of psychology" (10-11). Some, notably Nancy Fraser, have seen this as a reason for feminists to have "only the most minimal truck with Julia Kristeva" (51). Others, including Iris Marion Young and Homi K. Bhabha have acknowledged these problems, but found Kristeva's "powerful critique and redefinition of the nation as a space for the emergence of feminist political and psychic identifications" (Bhabha 303). Barclay adds, "[my] objection notwithstanding, Kristeva does offer a model of respect for difference which, if achievable, would transform social relations . . . as Kristeva says, 'an understanding between polyphonic individuals, respectful of their mutual foreignness'" (Barclay 11).

Strangers to Ourselves, written in 1988, begins with an allusion to Johann Sebastian Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue* with which Kristeva finds a deep and meaningful connection. She notes, "Bach's compositions evoke to my ears the meaning of an acknowledged harrowing otherness that I should like to be contemporary, *because* it has been brought up, relieved, disseminated, inscribed in an original play being developed, without goal, without boundary, without end. An otherness barely touched upon and that already moves away" (Kristeva 3). This statement describes the compositional strategies of toccata and fugue that Bach uses and that I translate to performance. Toccata indicates the light touching on and quick movement between ideas as well as the agility it takes to play such a musical composition. A fugue is the repetition of a theme in various iterations throughout a musical piece. These structures develop over time, constantly change, arise and recede. Kristeva's statement about Bach's music also indicates the ethic of the subject-in-progress that she extends to national and community identity throughout the book. Gilbert calls *Strangers to Ourselves* "a work of ethics, calling, within the difficulties of contemporary nationalism, for a

recognition of foreignness, a difference from the self that Kristeva wishes to promulgate and disseminate” (135). Kristeva asks that we “all become nomadic foreigners to ourselves in order to ‘lighten’ the burden of the experience of the consolidated differences between particular groups” (135). She tracks the foreigner conceptually, legally, in relation to religion and spirituality, the body, individualism, and universalism. Her focus, while not ignoring the material, is largely on the psychical, inviting reflection on the relations between the psychic and the social through the consideration of literary and historical figures from ancient tragedy, biblical figures, early Christians, Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers, and finally and most importantly for her through a Freudian lens.

In this chapter I articulate three strategies *toccata*, *fugue*, and *foreignness*. All three are introduced in the title of the first chapter of *Strangers to Ourselves*, “Toccata and Fugue for the Foreigner.” In this first chapter, Kristeva introduces the *foreigner*, providing various definitions in the first sentence: “a choked up rage deep down in my throat, a black angel clouding transparency, opaque, unfathomable spur” (Kristeva 1). She plays out the heterogeneous nature of the foreigner who is “neither the romantic victim of our clannish indolence nor the intruder responsible for all the ills of the polis. Neither the apocalypse on the move nor the instant adversary to be eliminated for the sake of appeasing the group” (1). Finally, she asserts in this first paragraph what she will return to in the final chapter: “Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself” (1). The foreigner is a part of each of us, thus we are all strangers to ourselves. If we can recognize that we are all foreigners, then the “problem” of the foreigner will be eliminated according to Kristeva, because difference, otherness, will be seen as part of everyone. Kristeva writes:

Let us not seek to solidify, to turn the otherness of the foreigner into a thing. Let us merely touch it, brush by it, without giving it a permanent structure. Simply sketching out its perpetual motion through some of its variegated aspects spread out before our eyes today, through some of its former changing representations scattered through history. (3)

This quote suggests the other two strategies, toccata and fugue that, as already noted, are drawn from musical discourse and highlight a light touching on and quick movement between ideas and the persistence of ideas in different iterations. *Toccata* translates to touch and is usually free and moving. *Fugue*, means to flee or chase. In the suggestion we move from and escape solidified representation, touching on and following changing patterns, both toccata and fugue are implied. Kristeva confirms this connection by asserting her affinity for the compositions of Bach who was famous for his toccatas and fugues. I engage these strategies for the possibilities they provide for heterogeneous performance processes. I describe their activation in the specific performance project I undertook and consider performance methods that have similar strategies at work in them already. Finally I reflect on the implications this work has for devised feminist performance practice.

The Formal Strategies

Toccata

The toccata is a musical piece that developed over time with a variety of changing meanings. Cochrane defines toccata as “a piece in a free and idiomatic style, usually for keyboard and often in several sections and incorporating virtuoso elements designed to show off the player’s ‘touch.’” Most agree the term was first found in the late sixteenth century (see Cochrane, Caldwell, or Bradshaw). Caldwell notes, “the toccata principle is found in many works not so called, and a large number of pieces labeled ‘toccata’ incorporate other more rigorous styles (such as fugue) or

forms (such as sonata form).” Thus the term is confused. It “referred originally to brass fanfares played at ceremonies and festive occasions” of the Renaissance era (Bradshaw 13). However, “the origin of this usage and its relationship to the current one are obscure” (Caldwell). Despite its changes, “the toccata proper . . . denotes the most well-known type of keyboard composition in which sustained chords and brilliant scale passages alternate with imitative sections” (Bradshaw 14).

Bradshaw outlines five assumptions regarding the toccata, three of which are useful in terms of how Kristeva’s work informs devised performance. First, the toccata “was the first playground of pure, instrumental music [and] acquired its shape directly from the nature of the instrument itself, not indirectly from a vocal model” as was typical of the time (15). Second, many music historians have come to see improvisation as fundamental to toccatas which are “thought to be early examples of keyboard music realized at the spur of the moment – without forethought – even though such ‘improvisations’ were frozen in notation” (16). Finally, toccatas are structured based on “contrast between imitative, ricercar-like sections and the brilliant virtuoso ones” (16). The ricercar, an early kind of fugue, featured long, serious notes and this counters the quick playfulness of the toccata. During the baroque era the freeness of the toccata was often paired with the canonic imitation of the fugue and Bach, Kristeva’s influence, created “works in which the toccata and fugal elements are closely linked” (Caldwell). Bach’s toccatas built tension and emotive power that became a “cardinal feature of the modern toccata, the rhapsodic and fugal elements being almost entirely abandoned” (Caldwell).

The toccata is connected with Kristeva’s conception of the foreigner and the composition of *Strangers to Ourselves*. It also relates to devised performance. The free and idiomatic nature of the toccata is like the foreigner, who moves through borders with a constantly changing self, and who is

always connected to an origin that appears in language and behavior of their homeland. The foreigner does not always seek to belong in their new land, but often desires to live freely without root or origin. Their connection to their origin, like the toccata's, is confused and obscure. The first traditional assumption about toccata, that the piece gets its structure from the instrument, rather than something outside of it, is similar to how the foreigner finds a home within. Devised performance also finds its structure based on the group creating a performance rather than an outside script. Like the second traditional assumption foreignness requires on-the-spot improvisation to fit in or stand out as the situation dictates. In devised performance, performers play multiple roles and adjust their process of creation to the situation at hand. The balance of sustained chords with scales or imitative sections in the toccata speaks to the lived experience of foreignness. Chords, like the self, are composed of many notes that one must both sustain and allow to change. The foreigner also constantly moves like the imitative sections or scales. One must balance movement and stillness, home and new place, the virtuosity of the player to move quickly and still return to the sustained chords. The tension built in Bach's toccatas through this balance is also built in respect to foreignness. Devised theatre also changes according to the social epoch from which it emerges and yet retains hints of traditional theater.

Kristeva's text is structured like a toccata and fugue building tension through the final chapter and the fruition of her argument. The first chapter is an intonation or prelude that, like the toccata, touches briefly on twenty-three themes of foreignness moving quickly from one idea to the next. The toccata structure continues throughout the text as Kristeva touches on mythological, Biblical, literary, and philosophical figures whose stories include layers of foreignness. Each story shows both the change in foreignness over time and the way different individuals have navigated the concept in relation to their social and historical situation. As she moves through these stories,

themes of foreignness persist in tales of persecution, attempts to blend, travel, strangeness, and the changing laws regarding foreignness. She touches on each only briefly to show foreignness in different tones. Like a toccata these chords and runs are specific to the instrument, or story from which they come, and yet are found in other areas as well. We used a similar structure in our process, trying brief exercises and moving on, yet retaining a focus on the formal strategies. As the toccata is often paired with the fugue and its contrapuntal voices, distinguishing the voices that run through a work is also important.

Fugue

The fugue is a “piece of music based on canonic imitation” (Walker, *Fugue*), translated literally to “flight,” “fleeing,” “escape,” or “chase” (See Tucker and Jones, or Walker). Different from the canon, which requires a strict contrapuntal imitation, the fugue is more flexible in its imitation. While all fugues involve imitation, “as compositional approaches to imitation changed so did the meanings and usages of the word ‘fugue’” (Walker, *Fugue*). A fugue is comprised of various voices and is “a style of composition rather than a fixed structure” (Tucker and Jones). Generally, it “denotes a composition in which three or more voices (very rarely two) enter imitatively one after the other, each ‘giving chase’ to the preceding voice” (Tucker and Jones). In other words, each voice repeats some version of the melodic line and each voice is counterpointed by the previous voice. Walker notes, “Despite the prominence of fugue in the history of Western art music and its virtually continuous cultivation in one form or another from the Middle Ages until today, there exists no widespread agreement among present-day scholars on what its defining characteristics should be” (*Fugue*). However, it is noted, “the essence of fugue is, in the end, its rigor, a rigor born of rules and procedures that are almost purely musical. A fugal composition

succeeds or fails to the extent that its compositional creativity is held in check by a tightly controlled contrapuntal framework” (3).

Walker argues “Its conception may have been due more than anything else to the change in compositional process, effected in the course of the fifteenth century, whereby the old method of ‘successive composition’ (writing one voice at a time) was replaced by the ‘simultaneous conception’ of a piece (writing all voices at once, a few measures at a time)” (*Theories* 1). In the Renaissance, composers formulated “all the voices at once . . . exert[ing] much greater control over both the texture at any given point and the general shape and direction of the piece” (1). This meant that all of the voices, rather than only some of them, were involved in the imitative counterpoint, which also meant, “the melody to be imitated comprised only a few notes, it was treated flexibly, and the imitative procedure usually broke down long before the end of the piece” (1). Walker suggests the flexibility and refashioning of this imitated theme addressed “humanistic concerns” by allowing for a changing appearance “without sacrificing either melodic identity or good text declamation” (1). This changed the use of canon in compositional practices and meant that sections of imitation overlapped “to form a seamless composition” (1).

Kristeva’s foreigner lives the fugue, literally fleeing and escaping. Their manufactured self changes overtime, like the imitation in the fugue, and they must balance creativity with adherence to rules and principles. The foreigner also introduces a fugal quality to society with their contrapuntal voice. The change in compositional processes from one voice at a time to the simultaneous composition of all voices at once in the fugue indicates a textured, cosmopolitan society wherein foreignness is accepted and not assimilated. The fugue is cosmopolitan, comprised of many voices rather than the singular voice of nationalism. The development of a cosmopolitan treatment of the foreigner is the melodic theme repeated in various tones and intervals throughout Kristeva’s project.

She traces the development of cosmopolitanism through history. In a fugal fashion, she shows the reintroduction of the theme by different voices in different tones. From Socrates's "foretaste of cosmopolitanism," to the Stoic introduction of universalism and individualism in a cosmopolitan balance of care for the self and understanding the self as part of a larger experience, to Christian cosmopolitanism exemplified by the Apostle Paul's missionary work, Kristeva traces early ideas that acknowledged difference without absorption (Is this still Walker?? 52). She uses Renaissance literary voices to illustrate "a new cosmopolitanism [founded] on the universality of a self that is fragile, casual, and nevertheless virtuous and certain" (123). She notes, Montesquieu's Enlightenment "cosmopolity" called for "a rejection of unified society for the sake of a coordinated diversity" (133). Finally Kristeva references Kant's proposal of a league of nations as a cosmopolitan idea that suggests, "the acknowledgment of *difference* is inscribed at the very heart of the universal republic" which contains separate entities in a harmonious union (172). This work is important to devised performance work because Kristeva not only demonstrates the fugue as compositional strategy in her discussion of cosmopolitanism, but the description of the fugue as cosmopolitan provides insight into the ways one might engage the devising process. One must work to not erase distinct voices, but to allow them to find a unified harmony. In terms of composition, rather than trying to compress all variants into one theme, showing the variations on a theme is a useful strategy for feminist devising.

Foreignness

For Kristeva foreignness is an ethic toward the other based in psychoanalysis. She suggests recognizing our own internal foreignness in the forms of the unconscious and the uncanny can create tolerance and a cosmopolitan outlook on culture. This strategy involves, as Montesquieu suggested, considering our inner and individual selves in their glory, shame, and obscurity. We

must accept that we may never know that self and seek connections with others based on this universal experience we all share and filter through individual understanding. Embracing foreignness means finding ease with difference in ourselves and in others.

Kristeva wants to call attention to the “intrinsic foreignness in culture” exemplified by Freud (169). She begins with the concept of *Volksgeist*, defined by the German philosopher Herder as “a burst of national feeling anchored in language and mindful of each nation’s differential values at the core of universalistic humanism” (177). It is languages and their accompanying cultures that differentiate people who are otherwise united. As a translator, Herder was concerned with “balance between ‘one’s own’ and the ‘foreign’” (179). He understood that “in a centrifugal motion the translated work must be revealed ‘as it is,’ but also as it is ‘for us’” (179). Foreignness, localized in the form of language and culture during the Romantic era, recurs in Freud’s unconscious, accessible through aberrations in language logic specific to the national language of the analysand. Kristeva argues, “With the Freudian notion of the unconscious the involution of the strange in the psyche loses its pathological aspect and integrates within the assumed unity of human beings an *otherness* that is both biological *and* symbolic and becomes an integral part of the *same*” (181). The foreigner becomes something that is a part of rather than something in excessive disruption. We are always already foreigners and shaped by foreignness and must face others to reconcile this.

The unconscious emerges in symbolic language through logic confusions and the breakdown of signs. It enervates signs and affects symbolic processes so “The symbol ceases to be a symbol and ‘takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes’. . . . In other words, the sign is not experienced as arbitrary but assumes a real importance” (186). As the symbol takes material and real power, the material deteriorates and is displaced. Kristeva argues the meeting with uncanny strangeness, the emergence of repressions from the unconscious, reveals the flimsy nature of

repression and the existence of hidden psychic energies as well as the “the weakness of language as a symbolic barrier that, in the final analysis, structures the repressed” (187). The uncanny is an example of internal foreignness, an internalized and repressed scary element that causes anxiety upon its recurrence. The uncanny is not new but is familiar. Its strangeness comes from being hidden by long time repression, which makes it appear strange and causes anxiety and an uncanny feeling when seen again. In the strange encounter with the other, we recognize both our distinction from and identification with them. Our own boundaries and self become confused because “[t]he uncanny strangeness allows for many variations: they all repeat the difficulty I have in situating myself with respect to the other and keep going over the course of identification-projection that lies at the foundation of my reaching autonomy” (187).

The uncanny shocks us and changes the structure of the self through contact with the unforeseen yet familiar recurrence of a repression, which we simultaneously fear and connect with, making us feel the other or feel other. Freud argues “we cannot suppress the symptom that the foreigner provokes; but we simply must come back to it, clear it up, give it the resources our own essential depersonalizations provide, and only thus soothe it” (190). Kristeva suggests we might consider how joy and fear work together in our captivation with the foreigner. She writes, “when we flee from struggle against the foreigner, we are fighting our unconscious – that ‘improper’ facet of our impossible ‘own and proper.’ Delicately, analytically, Freud does not speak of foreigners: he teaches us how to detect foreignness in ourselves. That is perhaps the only way not to hound it outside of us” (191). He prompts us to see the self as fragmented so we might welcome, rather than eradicate or assimilate, foreigners in light of our shared uncanny strangeness. Through this recognition we do not need to suffer for we are all foreigners. Internal strangeness is the basic state

of “being *with* others” (192). In terms of performance practice, recognizing our own foreignness and calling it forth can serve as a useful and generative compositional strategy.

Performance Experiments

These three strategies are more connected than not. Thus our engagement of them was often overlapping. The toccata and fugue, as already noted, are most often connected and usually do not stand on their own. In addition they are hard to define because the application of the terms to musical compositions over the centuries has not been consistent. At best, there are some general guidelines one can follow when identifying them. The notion of touch as well and the emergence of music from within an instrument rather than an outside force are important for identifying the toccata. Improvisation and contrast between quick movement and elongated chords are also identifying factors of the toccata. With the fugue, it is the persistence of a theme, told in different voices to create tension, chasing, and a cosmopolitan composition. The foreigner is constructed through the toccata and the fugue, it is revealed through language and the recognition of the other within. Because of these deep connections we could not sever them and thus as we worked with one strategy we realized we were working with all three.

We began working with these strategies by listening to music. In middle and high school I played in the band and wind symphony and had been exposed to the fugue from these experiences. But that was many years ago. We understood the terms and their meaning from reading music dictionaries and articles, but nothing can really capture them like hearing them. Listening to them gave us a feel for their movement and structure. We noted the fast-moving, short-note valued, melodic lines of Bach’s musical pieces we listened to. The music vacillated between difficult to play runs and longer sustained notes. We were excited to hear different sections reintroduce the theme in another octave or tone and notice the way the fabric of the musical piece came together.

While listening one really got the sense of many voices contributing to the realization of the piece and the chasing of voices one after another. Yet, all these contrasting sounds and rhythms did come together to create a unified piece that evoked feelings for me of fear, excitement, joy, lamentation, and, in the end, fulfillment. I felt my body moving as I sat in my chair in similar ways to when I played my instrument fifteen years ago, as if this movement would allow the music to come from me.

We worked like the tempo of Bach's music in our performance process. There were times we would create quickly on the move and there were times we were still, letting thoughts run over us. The musical toccata is connected with the prelude that introduces a piece of music. Our preludes or introductions to each rehearsal, like the toccata, began with moving quickly through the terms we had chosen or the term we were exploring that day. We also touched on past work we had done and prepared for rehearsal by reviewing what sustained us, like the chords of the toccata, and then moved freely using the terms like the scales of the toccata. From this we learned the balance of reflection and movement. Like the toccata, the work we came up with and the way we did this was not set, but incorporated other works. Our work changed over time as well and was idiomatic in that it both pertained to the particulars of the given project and included expressions that were natural and specific for us. The idiomatic nature of the fugue, wherein the instrument rather than an outside source shapes the melody, is reflected in this process. The use of the blog, which allowed us to touch on many examples and link to the outside world, also functions like the toccata. Allowing our personal stories and connections to shape the work was important, and we frequently discussed our reactions to rehearsal events in the blog.

The improvisatory nature of the toccata also appears in our work. In the toccata the finished product appears as if it came in the moment and was recorded rather than being predetermined.

Exercises like “The Kiss” and “The Container” consisted of extended periods of improvisation. Some of this work was retained in movements and text used in the final production. The repeated movement sequence became a major focus of improvisation. We sped it up, slowed it down, performed it forward and backward, transposed different parts of it to different parts of our bodies, did it at different levels, exaggerated and minimized the actions. We broke it up into sections and performed them with different attitudes. As we connected the sequence to different strategies we let those strategies influence the performance. For example, when we performed it into relation to toccata we emphasized each touch within the sequence. In the final section of the performance, it was broken up entirely and other movements were inserted. Highly connected with the fugue, this movement sequence was introduced in many different ways, as different voices, and repeated throughout the piece. It reveals different voices and how voices work together to create harmony and shape.

We worked allowing tension to build, as it does in Bach’s pieces, until we reached a threshold where we put the piece together. Like the fugue we introduced multiple voices that imitated and chased one another, and were altered in the process. Rather than attending to one voice at a time, they were all layered so as to control the shape and texture of the piece. In the fugue the melody breaks down as the piece moves along creating an overlapping and seamless composition. It succeeds or fails to the extent that its creativity is held in check by the contrapuntal framework. One is not sacrificed for the other. Our piece did the same and sought a balance, as discussed in previous chapters, by fitting the creative work in the format of the performative lecture.

The toccata and fugue were textual strategies for the incorporation of other work and other voices. We combined the traditional text of *Much Ado About Nothing* with a modernized version and with other texts. The individual voices stood out and we found it difficult to create a harmony.

We attempted a similar combination with fairytales, reading various interpretations of “One-Eye, Two-Eyes, Three-Eyes” from the Brothers Grimm and Anne Sexton but were still unable to find harmony between the interpretations. I suggested rather than seeking different textual interpretations of stories to combine we could use the different elements of performance like sound and movement to tell the story in different ways. We turned to the combination of texts, physical movement, and the use of music to create a harmony with distinct voices. In the toccata section we used music to create space for movements and language. We recorded different toccatas on the tape recorders we used. As we played the recorders we emphasized the action of touching the play button. While one of us played music, the other moved and spoke. We included text from *The Object Stares Back* that dealt with types of seeing. The glimpse and the glance, two types of looking, are short moments of seeing or revealing a light touch through sight. Whereas the other sections of our piece were longer, the sections of the toccata were very short and highlighted the movement of the toccata.

We made the fugue section a “dance” to crystallize the concepts and allow the different physical and vocal voices to heighten texture and shape. The fugue is also used as a choreographic structure in dance and we could draw on that here.⁶⁴ I went through the piece and took “notes” of movements to compose a sequence to perform in different “octaves.” The movements looked different in our different bodies. Kari-Anne worked with the text of the piece to create a fugue like poem. We each focused on the development and repetition of a theme in various voices and wove them together compositionally using the same “notes” but in different tonalities. We wanted this to be contrapuntal, and gradually build into a complex form with clear divisions and a climax. We also wanted to incorporate fleeing or escape as indicated by the strategy of the fugue and like the fugue, allow the piece to fall apart. I created a dance sequence that used the whole space and included

⁶⁴ See Kassing and Jay’s *Dance Teaching Methods and Curriculum Design*.

movement from area to area. Kari-Anne spoke the poem while I danced. Then we reversed roles and I spoke while she danced. Finally, we did the dance together and split up the text. Tension built as we performed these actions and the tempo quickened. We ended together facing upstage doing a movement from our repeated movement sequence. This met the requirements of the fugue weaving contrapuntal voices together, yet keeping them distinct and developing throughout the piece. It also seemed to fall apart at the end as the many voices overlapped rapidly. The toccata was invoked as well through touching on of previous themes and quick motion. The emergence of movements and the text differently brought new meaning to phrases in a changed context. The emergence of something familiar in a strange or different context alludes to Kristeva's discussion of the uncanny embedded within foreignness.

In the collaborative and collective process of making devised performance the acceptance of foreignness is particularly important. In our work we strove to find a balance between understanding things for ourselves and understanding them as the other did. We strove to respect differences without absorbing them and to look for our own strangeness. Rather than staying frightened of things that happened in our improvisatory rehearsals, or dismissing seeming mistakes, we attempted to embrace them as material for unearthing further potential. As the context of text and movement changed, repeated throughout the piece and especially in the fugue section, they appeared uncannily, familiar and yet strange. Foreignness was always a part of our structure, but we also performed specific exercises within our rehearsal process focused on it specifically.

In order to engage foreignness as a performance strategy we had to focus on recognizing it and calling it forth from within ourselves. We also had to consider how to respect it outside of ourselves. Our use of Goat Island's creative response did some of this for us because part of that was taking the work of the other in and allowing it to expand. With some of our improvised

movement rehearsals we found ourselves bringing out unexpected and sometimes shocking ideas. For example, in one rehearsal we improvised a performance using the classroom we were allotted for rehearsal space. We had written a good amount of text on the chalkboard and we decided we would read the text at the same time, in whatever order we chose, and following that we would move throughout the room and explore the idea of “The Kiss” as explored in the Grotowski exercises from chapter three. This time we considered sounds that we could make with different parts of our bodies and the different places on our body that kissed either one another or the architecture of the room. We blew through our lips, made kissing sounds, made mouths with our hands, our feet, the crooks of our knees, and our elbows. We slid down walls and wiped the words off the chalkboard with different parts of our bodies and clothing. This ended up, as we realized later, an exercise in literalizing a metaphor. Foreignness involves materializing the symbolic and we were doing this in our actions. This is also a strategy Michael Bowman proposes to his autoperformance class.

Autoperformance means different things for different people, but the one consistent factor is that it has to do with autobiographical performances that are most often solo. As I see it, foreignness and the uncanny are a major and important part of autoperformance. Often these performances focus on a personal trauma on a variety of levels (see Warren). But there certainly are other sites that generate autoperformance as well. I detail a few here. The mystory is one type of autoperformance informed by poststructural theories. In chapter one, Ulmer’s heuristics is addressed and the mystory is a mode of creative research that falls within its parameters. The mystory engages intertextual research to produce an intertext. As a neologism it combines the notions of mystery, history, and my story. In performance it allows the researcher-author-performer to uncover their own story, approaching themselves as object and then subject through the study of a variety of

materials. The mystory performer explores a subject by investigating it and also their relationship to it drawing on a variety of professional, popular, and personal texts to create a nexus for exploring memory. It also exposes the constructed nature of memory, research, and knowledge. The subject of the performance, like the self of the performer, is allowed to continually shift in this network of stories and inter-subjects, producing new knowledge in a performance composition that highlights discovery, invention, and partiality. The composition style of a mystory comes from the logic invented through intertextuality and varies from piece to piece. Michael Bowman writes:

In seeking to release knowledge from the vagaries of memory and performance, science has given us an impoverished sense of ourselves and of truth. Perhaps what we need now is a method that begins with *pronuntiatio* and *memoria*; that begins with performed memories and then looks for a style, an arrangement, and a logic of inventions that will serve them, rather than vice versa. (349)

While clearly filtered through the self the mystory, through the incorporation of multiple sources, involves the other and reveals the self as constructed.

We are always involved in other's autobiographical accounts and this is where foreignness comes in. Craig Gingrich-Philbrook contends we should acknowledge that one thing revealed in the shift from performing literature to performing texts written by the performer is that literature always comes from some sort of "autobiographical impulse," as does theory ("Ambition," 33). He notes that in autoperformance the relationship with the audience is personal, tangible, of the moment, and fosters the potential for psychological transformation of the viewer through this engagement with the other. It is also invested in "(re)making, not merely representing or discovering, 'reality'" (Gingrich-Philbrook, "Autobiographical," 63). Finally, it resists binaries because the distinction between the autoperformer and the character is unclear. It is through a dialogic engagement that

both occur. Like in the mystory, the author is the subject of their understanding. In autoperformance the self is the text. Gingrich-Philbrook argues, “Autoperformers, in confronting the self as text, confront an other” (“Revenge,” 382). Writing about Michael Bowman’s “Killing Dillinger” he notes it, “manifests his encounter with himself as other, and with ‘other others,’ in ways that resist reifying the self/other binary” (383). Within one body, many others are shown to exist.

In terms of the psychoanalytic process highlighted by Kristeva, autoperformance is useful. Both get at the strangeness, the foreignness within, and turn the symbolic to the material. Gingrich-Philbrook hints at the psychoanalytic aspects of this type of performance in the above statement. When Bowman teaches autoperformance, he draws upon surrealist strategies designed to access and manifest the unconscious. Surrealist practices of automatic writing, cut-up poetry, and montage reveal the arbitrariness, disorder, and multiplicity of life and performers become channels for multiple texts. This type of autoperformance draws attention to the making of the texts. Realism is jettisoned and performers seek not to represent but to present. Psychoanalytic processes like projection, repetition, condensation, obsessions, fetish, and displacement are engaged as strategies for reshaping personal information. These processes are designed to get at those uncanny things that emerge as both familiar and strange. In this way the performer (re)makes their reality and in the process discovers it anew. The combination of these terms moves beyond personal stories that might attempt to present the self as a solid self/character. It moves beyond the self so that connections to culture are also exposed.

We took the translation of toccata, touch, as a chance for literalizing. In the toccata touch is symbolic. There is the literal touch of the musician’s fingers on the keys or strings, but it also exists as a metaphor. In the toccata section of the performance we highlighted the touch aspect by dramatically pressing play on a tape recorder that then played a toccata and stopping it with an

exaggerated touch at the end. We reliteralized this metaphor that Kristeva had abstracted. We worked with ideas of condensation and displacement, attempting to literalize the metaphor of the lips and through the fracturing of movement and text in the fugue sequence discussed in the last section. The familiar actions began to show themselves as strange or uncanny as we repeated them or extended the time it took to perform them. As we got tired and the movements became harder to perform differences in our interpretation of what we were doing arose. We tried to allow the material itself to spilt apart and reveal strange things within. For instance, the movement of pounding a stake into the ground at first felt violent, but as we slowed it down it became sensual. These strange transformation of violence into pleasure, revealed how they are part of one another. The pleasure in violence is repressed and vice versa. By acknowledging the one in the other we were able to allow both to exist without destroying either.

Our personal stories were refunctioned through the exercises we did to access uncanny foreignness. We called upon the surrealist practice of automatic writing, attempting to write without thinking. As we did this we would discover images and ideas in our writing that we may have otherwise covered up. We also played with language aberrations in our delivery. Language aberrations reveal the unconscious to the analyst and make the familiar strange. In our delivery we played with this to change the flow of the piece and introduce difference. We played with stuttering, repetition, singing words, having certain words trigger physical reactions, and more. In the performance we included planned language interruptions discovered in rehearsals. We considered the text as action and experimented with it in ways similar to our physical exercises with the repeated movement sequence. To retain the structure, we delivered the text in the lecture format from our music stands. The word “foreignness” became a trigger for me. Every time Kari-Anne spoke it or something like it I would snap and tip my head to the right. I also introduced difficulty

making the “k” sound so that it came from the back of my throat and was aspirated each time it appeared. Kari-Anne snapped each time she felt there should be a comma in my speech or hers and had difficulty with the “f” sound, stuttering to get it out and repeating phrases trying to get it “right.” These insertions interrupted the flow of meaning, made our bodies present through their interference with the text, and forced the audience to pay close attention to the text. In the final part of the foreignness section, we used the tape recorders rather than our live voices. Each of us recorded the final speech on our recorders. We recorded them somewhat in unison but as they played and the recorders had different battery strength, our voices were out of sync, introducing difference. The use of the recorders over our live voices implied the temporary loss of speech that might accompany the emergence of something uncanny. More importantly this section served as a culmination of the concepts from Kristeva and also returned us to the other authors. The different voices remained and spoke together, yet they were not smoothed out into one voice. They counterpointed one another and moved through the text, which at the same time addressed the excess and disruption of foreignness textually and through the way it was performed. The double strangeness of the uncanny was made literal by the sets of doubles before the audience including two bodies, two recorders, two voices, and two music stands. The symbolic and the material are woven together, coming from a place within the tape recorders that hung around our necks as both part of us and foreign to us.

Experiments in *Écriture Féminine*: Performance Script

(At their music stands they perform their ten-second-preparation sequence. They speak to the audience.)

BOTH

Toccata

BRIANNE

Touch. *Facile*.

KARI-ANNE

toccare

BRIANNE

“A ‘toccata’ is a touch-piece designed to display the keyboardist's technical prowess. [The toccata fuses the sensibilities of the player and the composer.] The player presents her own sense of the world of the composer, which the music evokes, ironically stating impressions without specific knowledge.”⁶⁵ she has, after all, never been in that world.

KARI-ANNE

From Italian, literally: touched, from *toccare*.

(BOTH move slightly center, BRIANNE takes her tape recorder with her.)

Number One.

(BRIANNE dramatically pushes play, lightly touching her tape recorder and we hear Baldassarre Guluppi's “Toccatina in D Minor” played on a harpsichord. During the music KARI-ANNE speaks the following moving her hands back and forth over her eyes in a game of peek-a-boo.)

“The opposite of a glance, by the way, is a glimpse: because in a glance, we see only for a second, and in a glimpse, the object shows itself only for a second.”⁶⁶

(They return to their music stands. BRIANNE replaces her tape recorder, KARI-ANNE picks hers up. They move slightly center.)

BRIANNE

Number Two.

(KARI-ANNE plays ten seconds of the same toccata, this time an electronic recording. BRIANNE speaks the following dropping to her knees and folding over in child's pose when she finishes.)

The baby gowns, the wedding dress, the flowers dead for years and dust to dusty ashes we all fall.

KARI-ANNE

Number Three.

(KARI-ANNE leap-frogs over BRIANNE, speaking the following line and mimicking her position.)

“The paradox of seeing is that the more forcefully I try to see, the more blind I become.”⁶⁷

(BRIANNE stands up. KARI-ANNE begins the in-and-out movement from the repeated movement sequence as BRIANNE begins the reverse movement of pulling a thread from both the sky and the earth. BOTH end with their hands over their eyes. They return to their music stands and perform their ten-second-preparation sequence. They speak to the audience.)

BOTH

Fugue

⁶⁵ “Robert Browning's ‘A Toccata of Galuppi's’ (1855). *Victorian Web*. 25 April 2011.

⁶⁶ Elkins, 207.

⁶⁷ Elkins, 210.

KARI-ANNE

Fuga. Fugere.

BRIANNE

Octave. *Huitan.*

KARI-ANNE

From French *fuga* “a polyphonic composition based upon one, two, or more themes, which are enunciated by several voices or parts in turn, subjected to contrapuntal treatment, and gradually built up into a complex form having somewhat distinct divisions or stages of development and a marked climax at the end. From Latin *fugere*, too flee. A period during which a person suffers from loss of memory, often begins a new life, and, upon recovery, remembers nothing of the amnesic phase.”⁶⁸

BRIANNE

A fugue, on the other hand is the development and repetition of a theme by several instruments wherein one takes it up, it is then reintroduced by others, and woven together compositionally throughout the piece. Johann Sebastian Bach’s “Toccata and Fugue” combines virtuous technique and its attendant finger mobility with the development and repetition of the theme played in various octaves of one instrument or by various instruments depending on the arrangement and presentation.

(BRIANNE moves CS.)

Number One

(BRIANNE begins the fugue movement sequence and continues while KARI-ANNE speaks. This movement sequence is a compilation, distillation, and reorganization of movements and floor patterns found throughout the piece thus far. As it is performed, BRIANNE moves throughout the entire space, ending by walking down the center aisle from the main entrance of the space with her back toward the audience performing the circling leg movement from the repeated movement sequence.)

KARI-ANNE

A hemorrhage of the soul
A hole that never closes
Ready to receive
Sent
On the run
What escapes us
More quickly than ourselves
The mystery
One cannot speak it
One can only perform it
I am trying
I am trying
At this moment

⁶⁸ “Fugue.” *Dictionary.com*. Web. 20 Jan 2011. <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/fugue>>.

To capture
One at this moment
I am trying
I am trying
At this moment
To capture
The mysteries
At this moment
I am trying at this moment
One
To confide them in two
The rent, the tear
Threads must be laid and held onto
The folds of the skirt take up a good deal of
Space
She is not even here
Those things that make us leave our bodies
That fear of being stopped
Running the other direction
Thinking we grabbed the wrong thread
Error
On the run
What escapes us
We live faster than ourselves
A follicle
Injure and propel
The texts that flee
The message is sent
Improper, unfinished, continually moving
Puffs of air
Preparing for bed
The truth does not fool us
The body recognizes
The dissension of other things
Couples and generations
A conveyor of messages that
Through the fingers
Impotent, sacrilegious, nuts
Seduction, veil, to prove her point
Reluctantly
Cut off his head
Insist on peace
Make rhubarb pie
Repeat herself
As wholly other
To fill a gap

Diabolical
To enjoy it
To cut him down
To take pleasure
In the other
In the Other
In which the thing may possibly happen
More or less
One must assume the role deliberately
Pick up the master's tools
Unveil
The mysteries
Facile
We fall
The paradox of seeing major themes
Octaves of one instrument
Is not of their imagination
For the woman, two does not divide into ones
To be simply reduced to it
A glance
The more blind I become
To the other
It turns its back to us
The Door is closed
An old tale whispers to me
It is the outsider
The outside
The arranger
The invisible
That's it.

(KARI-ANNE moves center as BRIANNE returns to her music stand.)

Number Two

(KARI-ANNE begins the same fugue movement sequence, with a slightly different orientation to the space as BRIANNE speaks.)

BRIANNE

A hemorrhage of the soul
A hole that never closes
Ready to receive
Sent
On the run
What escapes us
More quickly than ourselves
The mystery
One cannot speak it
One can only perform it

I am trying
I am trying
At this moment
To capture
One at this moment
I am trying
I am trying
At this moment
To capture
The mysteries
At this moment
I am trying at this moment
One
To confide them in two
The rent, the tear
Threads must be laid and held onto
The folds of the skirt take up a good deal of
Space
She is not even here
Those things that make us leave our bodies
That fear of being stopped
Running the other direction
Thinking we grabbed the wrong thread
Error
On the run
What escapes us
We live faster than ourselves
A follicle
Injure and propel
The texts that flee
The message is sent
Improper, unfinished, continually moving
Puffs of air
Preparing for bed
The truth does not fool us
The body recognizes
The dissension of other things
Couples and generations
A conveyor of messages that
Through the fingers
Impotent, sacrilegious, nuts
Seduction, veil, to prove her point
Reluctantly
Cut off his head
Insist on peace
Make rhubarb pie

Repeat herself
As wholly other
To fill a gap
Diabolical
To enjoy it
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To take pleasure
In the other
In the Other
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More or less
One must assume the role deliberately
Pick up the master's tools
Unveil
The mysteries
Facile
We fall
The paradox of seeing major themes
Octaves of one instrument
Is not of their imagination
For the woman, two does not divide into ones
To be simply reduced to it
A glance
The more blind I become
To the other
It turns its back to us
The Door is closed
An old tale whispers to me
It is the outsider
The outside
The arranger
The invisible
That's it.

(As KARI-ANNE returns down the center aisle, her back to the audience she stops.
BRIANNE goes to meet KARI-ANNE face to face.)

BOTH

Number Three

(BOTH begin the fugue movement sequence facing one another and continue it as they speak the following text. The result is that sometimes they perform the sequence in the same areas and other times the floor patterns move them to opposite areas of the performance space. The sequence ends with BOTH moving down the center aisle toward the main playing space, BRIANNE further upstage than KARI-ANNE and speaking the final text of this section with their back to the audience.)

KARI-ANNE

A hemorrhage of the soul
A hole that never closes

BRIANNE

Ready to receive
Sent
On the run

KARI-ANNE

What escapes us
More quickly than ourselves

BRIANNE

The mystery
One cannot speak it
One can only perform it

KARI-ANNE

I am trying

BRIANNE

I am trying

KARI-ANNE

At this moment
To capture

BRIANNE

One at this moment

KARI-ANNE

I am trying

BRIANNE

I am trying

KARI-ANNE

At this moment
To capture
The mysteries

BRIANNE

At this moment

KARI-ANNE

I am trying at this moment

One	BRIANNE
To confide them in two	KARI-ANNE
The rent, the tear	BRIANNE
Threads must be laid and held onto	KARI-ANNE
The folds of the skirt take up a good deal of	BRIANNE
Space	KARI-ANNE
She is not even here	BRIANNE
Those things that make us leave our bodies That fear of being stopped Running the other direction	KARI-ANNE
Thinking we grabbed the wrong thread	BRIANNE
Error On the run What escapes us We live faster than ourselves	KARI-ANNE
A follicle Injure and propel	BRIANNE
The texts that flee The message is sent Improper, unfinished, continually moving Puffs of air	KARI-ANNE

BRIANNE

Preparing for bed
The truth does not fool us
The body recognizes
The dissension of other things

KARI-ANNE

Couples and generations

BRIANNE

A conveyor of messages that
Through the fingers
Impotent, sacrilegious, nuts
Seduction, veil, to prove her point
Reluctantly

KARI-ANNE

Cut off his head
Insist on peace
Make rhubarb pie
Repeat herself
As wholly other
To fill a gap
Diabolical

BRIANNE

To enjoy it
To cut him down
To take pleasure
In the other

KARI-ANNE

In the Other
In which the thing may possibly happen
More or less

BRIANNE

One must assume the role deliberately
Pick up the master's tools
Unveil
The mysteries

KARI-ANNE

Facile
We fall

BRIANNE
The paradox of seeing major themes

KARI-ANNE
Octaves of one instrument
Is not of their imagination

BRIANNE
For the woman, two does not divide into ones

KARI-ANNE
To be simply reduced to it
A glance
The more blind I become
To the other

BRIANNE
It turns its back to us
The Door is closed
An old tale whispers to me
It is the outsider

KARI-ANNE
The outside

BRIANNE
The arranger

KARI-ANNE
The invisible

BOTH
That's it.
(They return to their music stands and perform their ten-second-preparation sequence. They
speak to the audience.)
Foreignness.

BRIANNE
Uncanny. *Étrange*.

KARI-ANNE
"Toccatà and Fugue for the foreigner."⁶⁹ Number One.
(As KARI-ANNE speaks, every time she comes to and "f" or the "f" sound she stutters,
having trouble getting the sound out. Sometimes this causes her to repeat phrases or
sentences. BRIANNE snaps every time "foreign" or any variation on the word is spoken.

⁶⁹ Kristeva, 1.

She also makes a hard “k” sound every time KARI-ANNE speaks a word that contains the sound.)

Foreignness is uncanny, it is internal, and we are internally split. The foreigner becomes something that is a part of each us rather than something in excess and disruptive; we are always already foreigners and shaped by foreignness. The only way to reconcile this is through facing others. The uncanny is that double strangeness where anything familiar also contains the opposite, making it strange. Strangeness is immanent in the familiar and by extension the familiar is immanent in the strange. When the familiar emerges uncannily, or appears differently, at either the personal or cultural level, the fear of the other, the unconscious arises. This evokes anxiety, doubling and repetition.

BRIANNE

Number Two.

(As BRIANNE speaks every time the “k” sound occurs in a word she makes the sound vary hard, creating a hiccup almost so hard that it stops the word. KARI-ANNE snaps every time there should be a comma in BRIANNE’s speech and each time she hears the “f” sound, imitates it similarly to the way she spoke in number one of this section.)

The devastation one cannot contain is projected onto this mean-spirited double. Repetition comes into play as a compulsion, as a drive that seeks to exorcise pleasure or something recurring from the unconscious. What is uncanny, the scary element, has been internalized, repressed, and causes anxiety upon its recurrence. It is not new, but is familiar and its strangeness comes from its long time repression until now. Death is one of the major repressions and we see its uncanny representation in ghosts and images. Another is the feminine. Thus the beginning and the end are obscured and their strangeness “frighten[s] us when they break through . . . Such malevolent *powers* would amount to a weaving together of the symbolic and the organic – perhaps *drive* itself, on the border of the psyche and biology, overriding the breaking imposed by organic homeostasis.”⁷⁰ These things that were once symbolic assume material and real importance.

(In unison, BOTH put their tape recorders around their necks and move CS.)

BOTH

Number Three.

(They push play on their recorders and the following is heard, overlapping from each recorder.)

“Foreigner: a choked up rage deep down in my throat, a black angel clouding transparency, opaque, unfathomable spur. The image of hatred and of the other, a foreigner is neither the romantic victim of our clannish indolence nor the intruder responsible for all the ills of the polis. Neither the apocalypse on the move nor the instant adversary to be eliminated for the sake of appeasing the group. Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns ‘we’ into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible. The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities.”⁷¹

⁷⁰ Kristeva, 185.

⁷¹ Kristeva, 1.

(BOTH stop their tape recorders, return to their music stands, collect their scripts and exit in the reverse of how they entered at the start of the show. The end.)

Reflections

These three strategies are perhaps the most accessible to work with because they have been detailed in many places and used in performance in the past. However, their use in devised and feminist performance specifically is related to their history. Like devised theater and feminist practice, the fugue came about as part of a change in compositional approaches. Devised theater typically involves a group of people, or voices, that work together to create an original piece. Feminist performance and activism also frequently takes a related form. Similarly the fugue is a composition of all voices at once. These voices take precedence at different times and counter one another. In the fugue they remain distinct yet create a harmony and a devised performance should do the same. By keeping this in focus one can use difference within the group to texture and shape the performance. In our piece this added dimensions such as the use of story, biblical reference, and personal references that I would not have turned to alone. In addition the lecture structure is toccata-like in its touching on many ideas, fugue-like in that many voices and strains are introduced, and uncanny or foreign in that the concepts first presented in a narrative form as mastered definitions are revealed strangely through the three performance excerpts demonstrating them that follow.

Providing the audience the structure of the lecture, which I have likened to the toccata and fugue, allowed them to have an anchor in a performance that otherwise asked them to encounter foreignness. Because we used a stage language that was not explanatory and left many openings for the creation of new meaning, they audience experienced the unfamiliar situation of not knowing. As many audience members noted the piece confused them like reading the literature that inspired it. They noted it is not often that we feel confused, or that we admit to it at least, and acknowledge that

we have to work to make sense of something. This experience opened them up to experiencing and attending to their own sense making. The combination of our physical movements were given as much weight as the text we spoke and the two made one another unintelligible in a conventional way. The audience had to go through the process of making sense of these ideas in their own way, with us, and with the other audience members. The constant washing over or return of themes in different ways, different spaces, and times, like the fugue gave them many opportunities to digest and understand these threads in many ways, both familiar and strange, as we touched on the issues.

In certain devising practices, such as those associated with “Theatre of Images” practices communication occurs through imagery. This imagery accumulates multiple references and unpredicted interrelations and encourages the audience to make their own meanings. The lack of linear sense is important to this work, which relies on a double way of understanding the world. Robert Wilson, who I note in chapter two was identified by Vanden Heuvel as an artist who plays with the complementarity between drama and performance, speaks of the type of understanding fostered by “Theatre of Images” in terms of screens: “The ‘exterior screen’ is the place of conscious, public meanings, where we ascribe to objects and events the same significance as our fellows. But at the same time we each register those same images on our ‘interior screen,’ where they are perceived subjectively, our imaginations granting them meanings personal to ourselves” (Counsell 180). Through these screens the audience, who lives in a world of frantic bombardment by media messages, is allowed to retreat as well so that a predetermined meaning is not possible. Wilson seeks to merge these screens by creating works that dodge fixed meaning and “public logics” by allowing individuals in the audience to take their own notes from the exterior screen and cultivate their singular response through their unique imagination (180). We sought a similar approach in our work, although we thought about it in terms of each audience member’s own

foreignness and a retreat into their own foreignness as a result of the confrontation with the foreign language of the performance we presented them. Confronting their own otherness in the face of an other.

An audience member commented that the extra acoustics that had occurred throughout the piece in the form of slaps, coughs, snaps, high fives, and pounding on the ground, built tension that he only thought about when we got to the sections with musical referents, toccata and fugue. The many nonverbal sounds we made became a musical score for him. For others the interrelation of sound and physicality got at the contrapuntal nature of the fugue. The running that occurred early in the piece and was repeated in the fugue section was contrapuntal in that the two of us ran in opposite directions, seemingly in counterpoint. The verbal text of the fugue section began univocally where Kari-Anne spoke and then I did. This was not contrapuntal, but it did introduce the same theme in different voices. When we split up the text and read it together alternating lines and words in the last section of the scene the imitative counterpoint was lost. In retrospect, I think this is something we could fix. We could play more with the idea of the canon or the round within the textual and physical elements of the piece rather than simply allowing the two to counter one another. Instead we could layer it more fully and this would make a more interesting harmony.

Finally, one audience member noted that he kept going back to the concept of intersectionality, a concept used frequently in feminist theory to account for the multiple relationships amongst social identities within one subject. It suggests that we must look at concepts like gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and religion as interdependent rather than in an additive way that separates parts of identity. We should consider how they construct one another on multiple, simultaneous levels. Oppression then can be viewed as a complex system of social inequity. These multiple forms of oppression intersect. This implies a sort of synchronicity, not in

that all of these forms of oppression line up or are the same, but that they all occur together. The audience member suggested we were offering a critique of intersectionality in favor of interaction. Whereas intersectionality focuses on the interaction of gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and religion in an individual, we focused on relationships between people wherein different people play the oppressor at different times. This indicates a move away from identity politics and a concern with how we exist relationally and maintain difference in harmony. No matter how many times we interact with all of these intersections the relationship between people will always be a little different. In terms of the fugue and foreignness, as well as previous sections of the performance such as two lips touching, this makes sense. Even the multiplicative effects of intersectionality cannot account for the fact that sometimes interactions change those things that are being multiplied. This performance and the work we did show this. As indicated by the many comments about the opportunities to digest and understand familiar and strange images in the piece and the comments by audience members that they finally understood the literature in a different way than they did when they had read it, it is fair to say that we offered them an experienced insight. We also had experienced insights. The concepts changed from the time I read them, through the rehearsal process, and sharing them with the audience. They moved from being metaphors for thinking about composition to places from which to invent new performance as detailed in these past chapters.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

Postdramatic Feminist Devising as *Écriture Féminine*

Écriture féminine is like devising in that the product emanates from the process of doing the work. It is not known before the writer puts her pen to the page or the performer steps into the workshop space. When devising in a group the contradictory experiences of individuals in that group come together, as do fragmented understandings of the self, to produce work that is multi-perspectival. Studying *écriture féminine* also indicates the ways this can come from one person. The foreignness within each of us, within society, and within art is exposed through writing that contradicts itself and gives the reader the experience of continual processing. In *écriture féminine* writing is in service of the body and all that exists with it. In postdramatic performance and devised performance the performance does not submit to the text, but text emerges from the performance process and is one element alone. Actors or performers do not perform characters but perform dramaturgies. The writing of the texts examined in this project, in their diverse connections and overlaps, never become about one thing. They give us a way to think about using bodies in performance to convey multiple texts and remain in the constant state of becoming a character, but never being a character for long. Using language as a surface allows us to think about language differently for the flow of multiple meanings it offers. The language of *écriture féminine*, which deliberately calls upon words with multiple usages and difficult translations and its complex unwillingness to settle on a point can be translated in this way.

In terms of feminist performance, the process of communication in *écriture féminine* is inspiring. Everyday performances of feminism as well as those we choose to stage as representations of our situations can benefit from trying to perform like the strategies of stigmata, passage, trace, error, genealogy, two lips touching, mimicry, toccata, fugue, and foreignness. To

perform as a process instead of a model, as in two lips touching, can allow us to change our approach to what it means to make feminist art and to account for many stances. We can move away from identity politics in content and mirror fractured identity in the politics of representation. Kristeva's notion of foreignness can help us confront the demons often hidden in the sometimes too politically correct and identity driven work in much feminist performance. We can turn to autoperformance and consider identity as difference in process. Rather than talking about this, we can build this into our processes and products. Works that don't signify meaning but that are constructed in a way that give a terrain on which audiences can engage and asks question confronting their own identities in process and unconscious foreignness. The content in this show was taken from a variety of texts, which did include some of those studied here. Through the translation of those texts into performance as language surfaces, they were articulated in a foreign language. Both the texts and performance benefit from this difference. The result was a poetic postdramatic performance devoid of traditional theatrical trappings of character, plot, and catharsis.

A method can be comprised of a series of exercises and guidelines. To extend the practice of devised performance in its postmodern, postdramatic, and feminist possibilities a series of exercises and principles derived from the experiments in the previous chapters with the three *écriture féminine* texts are proposed here. These exercises provide ways of generating performance material, editing that material, and structuring a performance piece that is like *écriture féminine*. They indicate what can be taken away from the authors of the selected texts in terms of a method and principles of composition. These exercises can be thought of as a practical manual for the method discovered and articulated through this project.

Practical Exercises

Writing is the medium of *écriture féminine* and as such is not abandoned in the translation of

its principles to performance practice. A focus on how one writes and composes within *écriture féminine* can be translated to the generation of multiple kinds of texts including movement, sound, images, and structure, as well as written documentation in the process of creation and reflection. This is the basis of making performance like *écriture féminine*: focusing on the multiplicity of ways something comes about, finding similarities and acknowledging differences. Throughout the exercises that follow a focus on process, continuing creation, and representation of differences without solidification of them is apparent. Writing on the page plays a prominent part. Writing with the body does as well. Almost always the two are related and move in and out of one another in a constant exchange and flow opening onto one another and accepting influence. They exemplify general conclusions about *écriture féminine* in terms of devising. Following the description of exercises, this chapter culminates in a summary of these generalizations.

Cultivate the Stigmata and Open Scars

We considered the definitions of stigmata versus those of scars at the beginning of our performance process. Stigmata lay bare their making whereas scars cover it up. Stigmata are related to a stick, which can be both a noun and a verb. So, while one makes a performance, one is always in the active performance of performing. To cultivate the stigmata is to have a structure, and also to allow that to change. We did this in various ways with the notion of finding scars, those places where an opening or wound has been covered up either in our work or in a text we were drawing from, and unsealed them, showing that they were still being made. One can see this in the fugal quality of the piece and the rearrangements of bits that came before, but we engaged several exercises to evoke this.

Option One: Create a movement piece that you can repeat many times in nearly the same way. Once all members of the group have mastered the movement introduce changes. Do the

movement as fast as you can. Note what becomes more difficult, easier, where you lose your balance, what images come into your mind as you do this, where the movement becomes something else, what movements you skip over. Repeat this process several times. You can also split the group so that some observe the changes, some perform them, and they share their reactions. You can do this same exercise, returning to the original sequence, and try slowing it down, making the movements bigger, reducing the size of the movements, or reversing the sequence. At each juncture note the changes and the images that occur. How does this change your perceptions of what you were doing? Return to the areas that you noted seemed different and repeat them. Allow them to become something else without continuing the sequence. See where they take you. Do the same with any images, textual or visual, that arose.

Option Two: Using a piece of your script or a selected text you would like to work with open up the script by inserting pieces of other text. You can do this by designating stopping points arbitrarily and putting in random text to see what happens. You can also do a search to put in a type of text at your designated stopping points that seems to correspond in some way, like using a definition or a quote that relates to the idea you were expressing, an idea embedded within, or a key word. Take no more than an hour to engage this activity so that you cannot over think it. Present it to the group.

Option Three: Combine the two options above by inserting text into the places in the movement sequence that change or by inserting movement into the stopping points in the text.

Write the Passage

This exercise can be employed as part of taking notes, rehearsal reflections, and/or posted on the blog should you choose to use one. Cixous claims, “I like being in the present; am interested in what’s in process: of passing by, of happening. The instant – the eternity of the instant” (*Stigmata*

43). This is what she means by writing the passage. Noting the moment as it passes, not to keep it, but to feel it in the instant. Automatic writing is a way to bring the subconscious to the page without conscious concern for content. Writing is done automatically, from the self, and the writer attempts to relinquish control over what they are writing and allow surprises to emerge that they are not aware of on the conscious level. These are often personal, but appear strange and thus evoke Kristeva's foreignness. The exercise itself comes from surrealist practices but by adding the concept of passage to it the importance of writing with speed and allowing the writing instrument to pass over the paper is highlighted. This is often the hardest part for those new to the practice. They want to think too much and by then the moment is gone. Thinking about noting instants as they pass through the body and mind helps one become less consciously involved. This writing may take the form of full sentences, paragraphs, jumbled words, seeming gibberish, and symbols or pictures.

Option One: Set a timer for a specified amount of time; fifteen minutes is a good amount to shoot for. Each member of the group should begin writing in his or her own space and continue to write without interruption or intermission for the entire time. While writing concentrate on letting the words flow from fingertips to page without concern for meaning, spelling, or grammar and without attention to the content of the writing. When the time is up, each collaborator can share their writing by reading it to the group. Both the writer and the group can jot down salient phrases or images that emerge from this exercise.

Option Two: When everyone has shared their writing, each individual should choose a salient image or phrase as a starting point. The timer should be set again and each collaborator will write for the allotted amount of time what passes between them and this image or phrase.

Option Three: Choose a starting point to guide the writing, such as a theme the group is exploring in performance work, a quotation, an image, or something else. The entire group will

write individually what passes between them and the starting point for a set period of time. Writing is shared with the group at the end of the writing period.

From any of these options and the lists of images and phrases they generate, the group can attempt any of the other exercises listed here, such as translating the text into sound or movement, and can also use the text in the performance work.

Collect Traces

Cixous writes by taking notes. These notes are traces of the passage of thoughts through her body to the page. She writes, “. . . thought doesn’t go straight ahead, as we think, but in a frenetic movement . . . thought is not a sentence at all, but, after several explosions, a fallout in words. (38-9). To put it together, she writes, “one cheats: one reassembles, pastes together, puts it all in order . . . a form hidden in disorder” (60). Before one can find the order, they must collect traces. Cixous assembles traces to give a portrait of the experience of passage, whether it is of time or space, it is always connected with bodies’ internal circulations and releasing of fluids. In performance rehearsals we often improvise with varying degrees of structure. In order to retain parts of these passing moments of improvisations we take notes. Notes can take the form of words, phrases, and sentences, but they can also be sketches and images. The notes can later be used in the compilation process.

A blog is an effective way for all members to have access to traces at all times. There are a number of free blogging sites including Tumblr, Blogspot, and Wordpress that allow collective blogs that can be public or privately shared amongst individuals. The nature of the blog format provides an archive of traces and allows the reader and writer to pass from an idea to many others and to comment on traces left by other bloggers. In addition, outside sound, image, and video sources are made easily accessible through this one location. Collecting rehearsal reflections and

documentation here allows for an archive of the performance process and a site to turn to when compiling work. The group can decide the frequency with which they want to post and designate a blog manager, or director, if desired.

Option One: As one collaborator or a group of collaborators performs, those watching record traces of images, impressions, connections, and likes.

Option Two: Following an improvisation, collaborators recount their experiences and impressions on the page for fifteen minutes.

Options Three: Reflecting on rehearsals at the following rehearsal is important as it shows which traces have the most traction. Sometimes one will have taken notes or blogged between rehearsals regarding things they would like to share. The reflection process allows for a tracing of and focus on process. It also allows traces of what has passed to remain, be followed, and changed. Like the fugue, one notices variations on themes repeated and changed that can then be incorporated into the performance. It is recommended that time is blocked off at the beginning of each rehearsal for collaborators to share their reflections. This may also include additional materials such as texts, images, video, or movement brought up through the process.

Follow Naming Errors

Though we resisted naming in the genealogy we included in our performance it can serve important purposes and provide areas for further exploration and opening. Cixous suggests, “we don’t lose anything by erring, to the contrary. The unhappy thing would be to believe we had found” (29). Names, labels, and definitions do not tell the entire story. Rather they cover up errors and reduce a people and events to a word. Cixous suggests that we follow errors to know that we are on track and uncover what is hidden. Within a name many directions can be found and the connotative meanings of a chosen word, along with the way it sounds in conjunction with the words

that surround it, make a difference. Looking up definitions in dictionaries is one place to start unraveling them. The many definitions show both connections between and divisions amongst words, like in the work of *écriture féminine* that recognizes similarities without erasing difference. Going to definitions and exploring them with movement and as texts allows for a full exploration. Calling upon a thesaurus is also helpful to see a range of associated words, considering their multiple definitions as well. As an example, we did this with the word ‘stigmata’ which became part of the script as we considered it as a mark, an absence, a wound, and a place from which life comes. Each definition or association shows an internal foreignness suppressed by the errors of labels.

Option One: Search in a dictionary for the word in question. Make a list of four or more different definitions related to the word. If the dictionary does not provide enough options, consult a thesaurus for associated words. Look the associated words up in the dictionary and add their different definitions to the list. Try to represent the definitions with movement. Note the different revelations about the word that occur when “errors” in naming are followed. An etymological dictionary is another source that can be consulted to reveal yet more definitions.

Option Two: Using the same list of definitions from option one, try to represent them with sound. The sound can be vocal, made through physical movements, the contact of the body with other objects, or made with musical or found instruments. Note how the sounds are different and what their tonalities and rhythms reveal. As with *écriture féminine*, tone and rhythm reveal an ethic toward the other and to definition.

Option Three: Put the material from options one and two together. Try making the sound first and then the movement and vice versa. Try doing them at the same time. Try combining the sounds associated with one definition with the movements from another. Try as many combinations as you can and note the importance of sequencing on rhythm, tonalities, and definition.

Option Four: Consider common malapropisms and antonyms of the words in question. As in the other options, perform these malapropisms and antonyms then combine them in the various ways outlined with the appropriate definitions. Note overlaps and contradictions.

Write a Genealogy: Get Inside a Subject

The question of genealogy as heritage and as a way of doing history was discussed in chapter five as an important strategy for telling untold, interwoven, stories that are the result of entangled events rather than separate periods. To make a performance like *écriture féminine* stories must overlap and diffuse into one another. One way to do this is to write a genealogy, fictional or nonfictional. This means to get inside the subject and see the many varied things that comprise it and the myriad that compose those things and so on and so forth. In the previous exercise relying on names and their errors was important. In genealogy we found it helpful to avoid using names, but to list characteristics or events that we felt made up our subject. The task of genealogy is to “expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body” (Foucault 148). The body and history become “a profusion of entangled events” (155). Performance draws attention to bodily styles and labor exposing history as heterogeneous action unfolding over time that is contingent upon the bodies performing it. Thus we attempted to use language specific to the body. For example, in the genealogy section we listed women who influenced our lives by the ways they influenced us or events we associated them rather than using their names. In this way we were engaging both the historical doing and the matrilineal uncovering Irigaray advocates. This can be done with any subject.

Option One: List all the ways your bodily habits have been influenced. For example, why do you brush your teeth the way you do? Who taught you to make a bed the way you do or fold clothes in a specific way? Write a sentence in homage to that person that acknowledges both them and the

act without naming the person. Use adjectives that describe the teaching and the action. Consider actions that are connected with your home life, work life, social life, and so on.

Option Two: Perform each of these actions. Perform them without the text and also with the text. Note how the perception of the performances and the performances themselves change.

Option Three: Make a concept map beginning with one idea and letting it grow like a family tree in many directions, through many unions and dissensions. Use this map to influence the arrangement of text and movement in your overall piece.

Two (or more) Voices Touching

Irigaray notes in two lips touching there is not a model but a process that “is not only never complete or completable; it takes place ... thanks to this non-completion” (Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 97-8). This touching provides “the pleasure of endless exchange with the other in a (self-) touching that no privileged identification arrests by re-absorption” (60). To engage this pleasurable touching we suggest collaborative vocal experiments.

Option One: Take any block of text and read it together as a group. Notice where there are overlaps, fits, starts, unison, disharmony, and allow those moments to grow. Also, take any block of text and divide it into a dialogue with lines also spoken in unison. Change the mood and delivery of both of these options either as an entire group, or individually, and listen to how and where the different voices blend and separate.

Option Two: Using language interruptions that call upon psychoanalytic “language disorders” can be helpful in finding new meaning to texts for performers and opening them up to give the audience time to think about language as sound during the presentation. A list includes stuttering; using words as triggers for actions; interruptions of tempo, rhythm, or duration; using jargon; speech turning into sounds; repeating words; and changes in volume. You will undoubtedly

come up with variations as you do the exercises. Choose a piece of text and apply these different strategies to it. Try mixing them up or using a few at a time. Note what happens. This is a great way to show the foreignness that exists in all language by explicitly making it sound foreign.

Option Three: Play with the sounds you can make when your body touches your partner's, parts of your body touch one another, or parts of the body touch the architecture of the space. Before beginning this activity you should address in physical concerns participants have as well as what types of touch they are comfortable with in terms of force and intimacy. Obvious starting places include clapping and giving one another "five." However, rubbing feet against the floor, hands together, and more can make sounds. Explore and see what you can find.

Physical Mimicry

We use mimicry as a strategy to get by in the "real" world. We are most often unaware we are mimicking behaviors we have learned throughout the course of our lives. Intentional mimicry, when one recognizes their mimicking behaviors and performs them consciously, can allow one to see the ways prescribed roles can be transformed by acknowledging the fissures in this performance and allowing them to take over. Irigaray advocates women knowingly assume their roles so that they might subvert them. In terms common to Meyerhold's grotesque, intentional mimicry involves letting the mask slip to show the multiplicity behind the whole and the constructedness of selves. In this exercise stereotypes are mimicked to find what lies beneath them.

Option One: An example of how this exercise may work is found in our work with Bathsheba in chapter five. Make a list of stereotypical terms to describe a given subject. These may be physical or emotional descriptors, associated terms, or how onlookers or outsiders have described the subject. Spend about fifteen minutes creating short movement pieces of these terms. Work through each term separately with the same amount of time. Sound can be added, but it

should not take the form of full sentences. Throughout this process a number of different ways to perform the term will likely emerge. Note them all, but select one that can be repeated exactly. Put together a sequence of the repeated movement phrases for several terms paying attention to order and transitions between the phrases. Each phrase becomes a mask.

Option Two: Select one of the repeatable phrases, or masks, developed in option one. Set the timer for somewhere between ten and fifteen minutes. Repeat the phrase constantly throughout the allotted time speeding it up, slowing it down, making the movements larger and smaller, and see how this changes it. Allow these changes to lead so that the movement mask slips and reveals contradictions to what was first presented. Let this slipped mask become a new mask, integrated with the first, and move back and forth between them creating new masks as the exercise continues.

Option Three: Watch a number of television commercials or find print advertisements that present different social masks. Mimic these social masks in performance for ten to fifteen minutes. As you do this allow the masks to slip and change to find what is behind them.

Structural Mimicry

The structure of the overall piece or parts of it can also involve conscious mimicry. This follows Irigaray's call to mimic, how she mimics the writing style of the philosophers she critiques, and Ulmer's mystory suggestion of finding a relay or model. In our work we found the toccata and fugue, and the performative lecture to be models that we could mimic in the arrangement and putting together of the piece. The toccata and fugue and performative lecture became our grammalogue, Ulmer's term for a metaphor that serves as the structural basis of the composition. Like the toccata we mixed short bits of information with sustained chords and like the fugue we allowed these themes to change and be reintroduced in different voices. These voices were our literal voices, our bodies, and the different layers of 'text' in keeping with postdramatic

performance, so that none took the focus but all worked together to create the composition of the piece. The toccata and fugue structure the performative lecture. We mimicked scholarly personas through our fugal model of the performative lecture.

Option One: In order to mimic a structure find something in the research or performance work created through the other practical exercises that can serve as a grammalogue. This grammalogue will be a trope or a metaphor that you can write with. In it there is a method of arrangement, or a picture that suggests an order. Use the material you have created through your other practical exercises and arrange it to fit within this structure, or to serve this picture. The material will take on new meaning when put in a new order.

Option Two: Layering structures upon one another is another option. For example, you may use the grammalogue from option one to structure the entire piece. Within the sections of this piece you may find other grammalogues you can use in the arrangement of the elements. Try arranging the text according to one trope, the movement according to another, and fitting it into your larger grammalogue for the entire piece. For example, the movement sequence in the performance in this study was fugal, the text was like the toccata, and both were fit into the overall structure or grammalogue of the performative lecture.

Make the Model a Process: A Note on Structural Mimicry

While you should find a model, this model should be flexible. Or, rather, your use of it should be flexible. In many ways you are not choosing a model, but a process. The fugue, for example is a process of composing that has changed over time. So is the toccata and the performative lecture also changes through interaction with audiences. Thus, you should allow your work to overflow this model. Allow the model to change. Use it as a template, but where the template does not work, move it. You do not have to break the model, just let it change organically

as your work changes it and introduces foreignness to it. It came from your work and will affect your work, but it should not become the entirety of your work. The process should continue to change the model as you solidify and re-present it.

Toccata and Fugue in Creative Response

Cixous writes, “. . . emotion is born *at the angle* of one state with another state. At the passing, so brusque” (*Stigmata* 34). As already indicated many of these exercises can be translated from text to movement and vice versa. This process of translation is engaged in the project as a whole and comes up in the performance work by shifting from medium to medium. This is especially clear with creative response. Creative Response can be physical, vocal, imagistic, written, or a combination of any of these. The primary defining feature is that collaborators observe one another with an eye toward what they find most appealing, magical, interesting, exciting, or inspiring and from those observations create something new. This response is creative and engages the critical process of picking apart a piece to generate more material. Responses can be made in any medium and do not have to be in the one observed. Parts of the observed piece may or may not be incorporated into the creative response. A variety of responses can be developed depending on your needs. It is helpful to create criteria for the response. Beginning with parameters helps. As a group gets more comfortable with the process of creative response allowing collaborators to make open responses outside of the parameters generates exciting material. Still, if the process seems to fail, continue with it for a bit and then return to specifications if necessary to redirect the group. This exercise introduces foreignness and has a fugal quality in that ideas are reintroduced in different voices. Like the toccata moments are touched on and moved from.

Option One: Stipulate the medium in which the creative response should be made. Writing, voice, sound, movement, image, or any other medium the group may be familiar with and any combination of media can be specified.

Option Two: Limit the amount of time a response should take or define its length. For instance, one may perform a series of movements or sounds for thirty seconds. Or if the medium is writing, for example, one may be limited to a series of three sentences.

Option Three: Perform a daily action as a response to another's performance while reciting lines of text from that performance.

Option Four: Add a textual response to a series of movements gleaned from an observed piece.

Option Five: Create a piece that seems to have little to do with the original piece but takes off from one idea, either intended by the original performer or not.

Concluding Thoughts

The exercises in this section provide the means by which one can devise postdramatic feminist performances. The document as a whole outlines a method by which one can devise postdramatic feminist performances by providing an overarching and specific example of the performance and the process of creation undertaken in this study. I brought together *écriture féminine* and performance practice in an encounter that does not subordinate one to the other as in after-the-fact application, but reveals both as a types of thinking and performance in their own right. Thus, experienced insights to both the theory and practice emerged. Through this encounter between theory and performance the frequent feminist suspicion of theory is ameliorated so that positive connections and uses can emerge, feminist devised performance is extended beyond visibility and identity politics, and the progressive politics embedded in the type of perception

modeled by the form of representation comes to the fore as a pedagogical and political tool for change.

My approach to the theory of *écriture féminine* was not to subordinate performance to it and imply that *écriture féminine* explains performance. Nor did I seek to “stage” *écriture féminine*. Instead I engaged an application that brought performance and *écriture féminine* into contact with one another to offer an “experienced insight,” or a type of embodied experience that provides new insight to both beyond the metaphorical. The encounter between *écriture féminine* and performance in the way it happens in this project brings together thought and action and expands the activities we assign to each category. Performance, typically understood as action, reveals itself as a type of thinking through the body, and *écriture féminine*, typically understood as a way of thinking, becomes a type of performance or art in its own right. This distinction between thinking and action is particularly important because it has been one that has haunted feminism.

The feminist distrust of theory, especially poststructuralist theory, comes from two places. First, a major feminist project has been to make visible and validate women’s experiences and identities in feminist texts and performances. Poststructural theory, including *écriture féminine*, questions the validity of the categories of experience and identity. Secondly, many activists have suggested feminist theorists rely on jargon and not political action, the focus for feminists working outside the academy. By bringing theory and performance together in an encounter such as the one in this study, feminist poststructuralist theory such as *écriture féminine* can also be understood as action. *Écriture féminine* does indeed question identity and experience, but the questioning becomes less threatening and more generative when the jargon is presented in performance as action that affects the perception and telling of experiences. With this insight theory can be understood as an

experience and as intensely political action and thought. Likewise, performance and action can be understood as a type of theorizing in its own right.

In chapter two, for example, I address how theory helped me understand my performance and everyday life experiences. My interest in both feminism and performance began through the actions of protests, consciousness raising, and watching and making performances. In each of these experiences I was thinking with my body and changing my perspective on the world. However, articulating my new insights was difficult. When I encountered theory, for me continental philosophy in general and *écriture féminine* specifically, I felt I had finally found a vocabulary that filled the holes in my experiences and gave me the means to put into words how my experiences were a type of theory. The theory itself was not enough. It was because the theory spoke to my experience, and because I began to use it to understand my performance practices that I was able to integrate performance and theory into a way of perceiving and moving about the world in a feminist way.

This encounter with theory allows me to make feminist performance that moves beyond visibility or identity politics to understand that perception and the form thought and action take are at the root of all feminist concerns. This is the extension that postdramatic feminist devising, as I propose it here, makes to feminist performance. It provides a way of thinking in action and acting in thought beyond visibility and identity politics to look at the issues at a basic and interactional level. Devised performance is an umbrella term that encompasses performance work that yields an artistic product starting from anywhere, not necessarily a text, and whose process of creation is determined by a collaborative group that is multiperspectival. The product, by this definition, can take any kind of representational form. As a result, many feminist devised performances are largely based on experience, maintain dominant narrative structures, and do not always theorize the representational

form they take. The performances tell stories and make gendered experiences visible, but they hide the radical politics of the creative process that is what makes the work different than traditional literary theater. Visibility and political content are only a beginning for feminist activism. I acknowledge that visibility and identity politics are important. However, visibility and identity politics are a first step, not an end. They bring awareness and for some groups, some feminisms, and some women this step still needs to occur. This project does not specifically address the visibility and identity needs of different races, classes, sexualities, religions, anatomies, and so on. I do believe it provides ground to do so and hope that future work will address these concerns.

I believe it provides this groundwork because at a certain point the question of how perspectives are represented must come into question. Visibility is not enough. We must question the structures that make visibility a requirement. That is what *écriture féminine* when brought together with performance and presented postdramatically does. It provides ethical ways of acting, thinking, and communicating with one another that move the political project of feminist performance to a new level. Feminist devised performance when done postdramatically like in this study moves beyond consciousness raising and visibility, while still referencing its importance, to propose a different mode of representation, or perspective, that is also political. This study demonstrates that postdramatic feminist performance adds to devising a critical consideration of how we represent our experiences and stories. Feminist theater no longer need be political due only to its content, or modes of production but also, by its “mode of representation.” While there is a need at a certain level for identity politics and the narrative and devised performance conventions that accompany it, presenting whole stories with beginnings, middles, and ends ultimately betrays the reality of experience which is continually becoming and changing. A whole can never be attained and will eventually prove frustrating to feminists who seek it. Postdramatic feminist

performance and the encounter with theory works to change perspective by offering representational forms that are reflective of lived experience. The performance generated by this study offers ways of looking, acting, and thinking through the eyes of *écriture féminine* and thus models a way of living, a process, and a way of being. The proposed practical exercises actively avoid the assertion of a whole identity, a narrative whole, and thus introduce to the feminist devising practices representational forms that are poststructural and do not rely on identity politics. By avoiding traditional forms of narrative, which the writers of *écriture féminine* have argued is aligned with masculine discourse, the performance forms provided here align with the political strategies and content of a feminist politics that moves beyond equality.

The experienced insights provided by postdramatic feminist performance provide valuable lessons and tools for political change for audience members and performers that can be used pedagogically in other arenas as well. While audience members may not pick up the texts of *écriture féminine* on their own, the performance provides a perspective on difference like *écriture féminine* that encourages social change by advocating ethical exchange in communication, action, and theory. Those who have read the texts will gain new understanding them not just as philosophy but has texts that provide guidelines for action by seeing the performance. Further, the exercises provided here offer ways for anyone to read and perform theory and thus understand it as both action and thinking. Performing becomes thinking when a student studies theory, makes the theory move and feels it in his or her own body. While often times the goal in performance is to stand in another's shoes through a dialogic engagement, here the performer can stand in the shoes of theory and find a place where their own experiences match that of the theory. Theory then is integrated as a part of the performer, a part of everyday learning, and communication. This is what makes the

encounter between theory and performance important: both performance and *écriture féminine* are ways of seeing the world and bringing them together is the extension this project makes.

Postdramatic feminist devising revealed through the combination of performance practices and *écriture féminine* in this study becomes a way of giving perspective and moving beyond visibility. The exercises in this chapter show that *écriture féminine* can indeed be useful to feminist devising. It can provide the useful structural tools of the ten strategies I gleaned and useful content materials. Theory and practice do not have to be separate. Instead, feminist devisers can look to theory for what it tells us about how to practice. And theory can look to practice for the insights it gives about modes of meaning making and the politics of form. These perceptual tools can then be taken into the world to make real political change at the level of the interpersonal and beyond.

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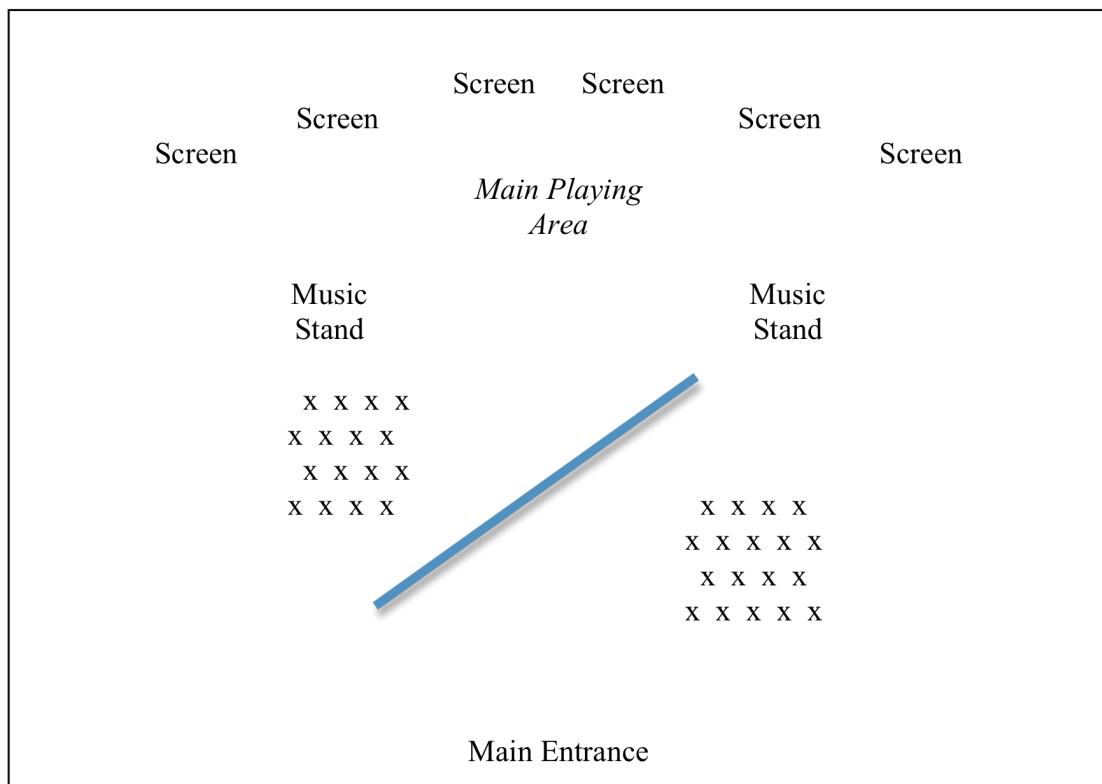
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APPENDIX A – DIAGRAM OF THE PERFORMANCE SPACE

x = Audience seat

 = Diagonal Aisle

UPSTAGE



APPENDIX B – EXPERIMENTS IN *ÉCRITURE FÉMININE*: FULL SCRIPT

(The performers enter through the main entrance to the performance space carrying their scripts. They split upon entering, BRIANNE arching around the stage right audience-seating bank, KARI-ANNE the stage left. As they reach their music stands, they place their scripts on them, make eye contact and move to the center of the main playing space.

They execute a unison movement sequence, hereafter referred to as “repeated movement sequence.” They begin facing forward, balancing on their left legs, moving their right leg in counter-clockwise circles. Following five circles they begin scratching their right arms with their left hands as they complete five more circles of the leg. They stop and simultaneously slap their left hands. Their left hands cover their mouths as they utter “ah.” At different points this sound indicates shock, pain, or pleasure all in varying degrees and registers. They repeat this sequence on the left side of their bodies.

When their right hands are in front of their mouths they raise their left hands up close to their faces, so that their palms face stage right. They place their right index fingers into the palm of their left hands and push their left hands stage left as far as the arm will extend. This movement is full of tension as if they were trying to drill a hole through the palm, following the motion with their heads and torsos. This movement is repeated on the opposite side of the body. They face center again and, with the right index fingers pointing up and the left pointing down extend an imaginary line in opposite directions as far up and as far down as they can extend their arms, again with tension in this movement. As they do this with their hands, they shrink in upon themselves, shoulders rising toward the ears, pelvis scooping forward, head moving slightly forward as well. Next, they take their chins in their hands and raise their heads back up and their bodies follow, straightening out. Now they move into the second part of the sequence.

They drop to their knees and place their left fists on the ground, about three feet from their bodies as if holding a stake, then bring their right arms back and over their heads to land their right fists onto their left as if hammering in that stake. The phrase “take this and that and this and that and this and that” is spoken throughout this movement with “this” spoken on each meeting of fists, “that” as they draw the fists closer to

their bodies after each meeting, and “and” or “take” happening as the arms swings back and overhead. Upon the third succession, the hands draw into their thighs and they catch their hands between them as if to prevent this stake from entering their bodies or as if it hits them and stops. They slowly pull their hands out looking at the palms of each eventually saying, “a tight rope frayed.” They raise their hands up and as they stop at the top take an audible gasp of air. They then begin slapping their hands on the ground right then left, three times, saying, “and in and out” slapping on each “in” and on each “out.” They continue this with each hand across their chests and then on their checks. Their right hands then move to their noses as the left falls to the side. They put their noses into the palm of their hands and move the hands back and forth on the tip of the nose. BRIANNE quits as KARI-ANNE lowers her right hand and begins the same movement with her left. BRIANNE puts her nose in KARI-ANNE’s right hand and mimics the motion. KARI-ANNE says, “I will not smell like that.”

Following this they rise and each move to their respective music stands. They then each perform a ten-second-preparation sequence that is repeated throughout the piece, getting faster as the piece progresses. BRIANNE takes a drink of water, brushes off her skirt three times, takes off her glasses, puts them back on, and arranges her papers on her music stand, making a sound with them to conclude. KARI-ANNE adjusts her script, takes a drink of water, turns to face upstage and raises her hands, and turns back to the music stand when she hears the sound of BRIANNE’s papers. To conclude this sequence each time they look at one another, cover their mouths with fists and clear their throats. They speak to the audience for the first time.)

BOTH

(To the audience.)
Stigmata

BRIANNE

Wound. *Blessure*.

KARI-ANNE

Stigmata, stig-may- to, stig-motto. A hemorrhage of the soul, to sting, to spur, to stimulate.

BRIANNE

“Scar adds something: a visible or invisible fibrous tissue that really or allegorically replaces a loss of substance which is therefore not lost but added to, augmentation of memory by a small mnesic growth.”⁷² Unlike scar, stigmata takes away, removes substance, carves out a place for itself. Stigmata are likened to a pinch, a prick, a sting; actions which simultaneously make a hole and a mark; injure and propel. The stigma is the trace left by the act of puncture and it marks one as both the exclusion and election, bad and good, outlaw and saint. It is both a mark and an absence. In terms of the human body, the stigma is connected with the ovary. It is an area on the ovary where a follicle literally bursts through and releases the ovum during ovulation. In this bursting forth and puncturing permeation, the ovum is released into the fallopian tube becoming viable to fertilization, creating something new. This stigma, this surface that is ruptured, continually creates possibility for new life or new passage. The stigma is also part of the pistil of the flower, the female parts. The stigma in the flower is the receiving place that is adapted to catch and trap pollen, distinguishing between which to accept and which to reject. Thus in the human body a stigma is a rupture through which possibility bursts and in the world of botany it is a structure that engulfs and/or declines certain possibilities or potentialities.⁷³

KARI-ANNE

“These texts aim to flee the fatal nail, the sword, the knife, the axe, which threaten to fix, to nail to . . .”⁷⁴ Number One.

(BRIANNE and KARI-ANNE both move CS. BRIANNE begins and repeats the first part of the repeated movement sequence. KARI-ANNE skips to the second part of the movement sequence, kneeling as she speaks.)

She did not flee.

(Continues movement sequence to the point that the following corresponds with the movement of hammering.)

Take this and that and this and that and this and that . . .

BRIANNE

Number Two.

(Slaps her hand and raises it to her mouth which she opens widely to make the “ah” sound, but refrains from vocalization, holding this position and then moving back into the movement phrase from where she stopped.)

KARI-ANNE

(Still performing the movement sequence.)

Number Three. For me, it seems a stigma, a hole that never closes, never heals itself, but sometimes others, sometimes a well, sometimes a wound, sometimes a womb.

(KARI-ANNE stops the movement sequence with her hands raised and moves to stand next to BRIANNE. They perform the repeated movement sequence together in the same stage positions they did at the opening of the piece. Following this repetition they return to their respective music stands and perform their ten-second-preparation sequences and face one

⁷² Cixous, *Stigmata* xiii-xiv.

⁷³ Cixous, *Stigmata* xiii-xiv.

⁷⁴ Cixous, *Stigmata* xii.

another to clear their throats. They speak to the audience from these positions.)

BOTH

Passage

BRIANNE

Speed. *Malavisé*.

KARI-ANNE

Pass sage. Ill-behaved. Unwise.

BRIANNE

Requirements. One: Be ready to receive a message.

KARI-ANNE

Two: The message is sent.

BRIANNE

This is writing on the run, a constant departure both freed and trapped in the labyrinth. Threads must be laid and held on to. Receiving what comes through doors and stairs, veils and seeing, speed and time. Dashing through the pass unclear, improper, unfinished, and continually moving; that third space that is neither of us. The joy of the present. Collecting fragments that come in bursts to create a portrait that appears in “puffs of air, in fragments, in sorrows.”⁷⁵

KARI-ANNE

“What escapes us, what just happened, what is going to happen, and which traverses us suddenly, pierces us, turns us upside down, escapes.”⁷⁶ “We live more quickly than ourselves . . . To catch it we stop the present. One cannot after all write a book with only one stroke, of only one page, and yet we should. But we are born for lateness. Time, the body, are our slow vehicles, our chariots without wheels.”⁷⁷

(BOTH remove tape recorders from their music stands. The tape recorders have shiny purple ribbons tied to them that they slip over their heads so that the recorders hang on their necks in front of their stomachs. They grasp the sides of the music stand’s desk and turn center, in unison, to face one another.)

“I am trying at this moment to capture the mysteries of passage so as to confide them to you.”⁷⁸

BRIANNE

“One cannot speak it. One can only perform it.”⁷⁹

KARI-ANNE

⁷⁵ Cixous, *Stigmata* 60.

⁷⁶ Cixous, *Stigmata* 16.

⁷⁷ Cixous, *Stigmata* 39.

⁷⁸ Cixous, *Stigmata* 191.

⁷⁹ Cixous, *Stigmata* 198.

(To the audience.)
Number One.
(Turns back to face BRIANNE.)

(They each grab one of the center screens and roll them down the center aisle of the audience, splitting the audience in half. The screens are not perfectly inline so that there is a thin passage between them that the performers can look and speak through. The audience cannot see through this passage from their seats. As the screens are moved from their original positions the space behind them is revealed to show what others have left: cubes, chairs, other music stands, etc.)

KARI-ANNE

(Looking through the passage created by the new screen arrangement.)
“I am trying at this moment to capture the mysteries of passage so as to confide them to you.”⁸⁰

BRIANNE

(Looking back at KARI-ANNE.)
“One cannot speak it. One can only perform it.”⁸¹

(BOTH move a half circle in opposite directions, around the audience seating banks on their respective sides of the space. They arrive back at the screens, having switched positions.)

KARI-ANNE

(Speaking through the screen passage.)
“I am trying at this moment to capture the mysteries of passage so as to confide them to you.”⁸²

BRIANNE

(Responding through the screen passage.)
“One cannot speak it. One can only perform it.”⁸³ Number Two.

(KARI-ANNE moves one screen stage left to face the stage left audience bank. BRIANNE moves the other a foot or two down the aisle toward the main stage area, still separating the audience, though some audience members can see the audience on the other side of the screen now. Both BRIANNE and KARI-ANNE perform a modified version of the leg circle/scratching gesture that is part of the repeated movement sequence, but their hands go through the curtains on their respective screens so that one side of the audience can see

⁸⁰ Cixous, *Stigmata* 191.

⁸¹ Cixous, *Stigmata* 198.

⁸² Cixous, *Stigmata* 191.

⁸³ Cixous, *Stigmata* 198.

their hands moving and the other can see the rest of their body. BRIANNE pushes “play” on her tape recorder and we hear the following.)

RECORDED

“Suddenly I am letter struck. And I see only it. This letter! no, it’s a hole in the body of the painting, the rent, the tear in the night. If I see the letter, I no longer see . . . The letter is in opposition. To the veil. To the linen.”⁸⁴

(BRIANNE and KARI-ANNE slap their hands and make the “ah” sound and then walk around their screens to the opposite side and repeat this modified segment of the repeated movement pattern. The recording continues throughout.)

“To the reading. It is a letter from the back. It turns its back to us. When I wanted to read it: forever forbidden. To paint a letter seen from the back! The Door is closed . . . an old tale whispers to me. It is the outsider. The outside. The arranger. [The] invisible. . . that’s it: it is . . . to the letter.”⁸⁵

(BRIANNE stops the recording.)

BRIANNE

Number Three.

(The screens are moved to the back of the space, blocking the entrance and creating a frame for the movement to come. BRIANNE and KARI-ANNE each pull a chair onstage from the offstage area. They circle them in unison, look at one another, remove the tape recorders from their necks and slowly place them on the floor in front of their chairs as they sit down. BRIANNE pushes play on her recorder and they begin to perform slow non-choreographed movements in these chairs as the following is heard from the recorder.)

RECORDED

“The passage of the other, towards the other . . . respect for a same that respects the other’s alterity.”⁸⁶ The woman sits, leaning forward. The focal point is the wide-open eye and then you must make yourself look away. Look down to the softly opened lips. Notice that the back is bare, naked, which you did not notice before because you were drawn to the eye. Why? She is wearing a dress with a large skirt, but the top is down around her waist. Her back is three quarters to us. The back. The spine defined separates the left from the right, almost a cleavage. Her left arm covers her breasts a bit while her right is extended, forearm resting on the arm of a chair? Hand gripping loosely its edge. Then it seems her left arm that was holding her breast is more across her lap, the fingers of that hand intertwine with the right gripping the chair. I cannot tell on what she sits. The one armed chair curved on top of a log? A half cylinder, a bread box? The light comes from above and to the left of her back, yet she looks beyond the light, crouching away from it, out of it. The folds of the skirt take up a good deal of space and almost look like they are moving, falling – the two lines in the front by the knee. Where the skirt ends and the chair begins is hard to discern. She is leaning from us but her head is also tilted slightly toward us. Thick lines or dashes of black

⁸⁴ Cixous, *Stigmata* 14.

⁸⁵ Cixous, *Stigmata* 14.

⁸⁶ Cixous, *Stigmata* 99.

charcoal above her head. It appears she quickly moved it or turned it to look at what she now sees. She is in mid movement and her eyes are fixed. Two downward strokes at the knee. Movement. The head, too, the black strokes seeming to move the head downward. The dark shadows on the left arm, bruises. She is turning away. This woman has a spine, so why is she turning away?

Preparing for bed: taking down her hair, removing her gown when something stopped her. Was it a sound? A nearby sound? An exterior sound? A blur of voices, a familiar strain, a word, a laugh that she knows would turn to anger if he should see. A hand in the darkness, a hearty farewell, as it turns. Perhaps it was not a sound at all but instead a thought that stopped her. Sitting up straight all day. The soreness between the blade of the shoulders. Sitting at the window, letting the sunlight hit the muscles, warm the back, she decides to draw the zipper down. Did they have zippers? Or, has someone helped her undress? Unbutton the back? She glanced slightly up the way she does when she want to let an idea arrive; like if she made eye contact with anything it would stop the arrival. Instead, softening her focus she looks off so her being might receive this message. Under her hand(s) there is a book she has been writing in for hours. Her look is not upon anything present. In fact she is not even here. She is lost in thought, her body alone remaining before that thought shoots through her body to her fingers, to her pen, to the page where she lives and is lost. She feels only the sun and the silence. Or else she does hear a nearby sound, the maker of which reveals itself shortly after. It is an intruder, a man, her mother, the cat, a breeze, the artist's gaze. She holds herself close so the other who passed into the room and into her thoughts can only pass, not possess. You may enter but you cannot take this with you.

Those things that make us leave our bodies: fear. It's like we get lost in it so when it arrives we are ready to meet it. I wonder why he never knocked on the window to bring me back. Oh that feeling of being stopped by the sight of something or the sound or something inside. Patting down my body to find what I lost. Turning the corner in avoidance. Running another direction. The muscles stop but the heart and the mind race thinking we grabbed onto the wrong thread. Gathering all our energy, pooling it for temporary sense making or coping. She looks calm and poised but her heart shows through her face. Cultivate that absence. Be less present and protect myself. Charcoal can be smudged. The passage of the other, towards the other – respect for a same that respects the other's alterity.⁸⁷

(BOTH lean down to the tape recorders during the last line and BRIANNE stops the recording from playing. They rise from their chairs and turn toward the audience that has now turned around in their seats to see what the performers have been doing. BRIANNE and KARI-ANNE begin the repeated movement sequence at a very fast tempo. As they enter the section where they push their hands away from the center of their bodies with their pointer fingers, they let this movement take them in long strides down the center aisle. They turn around before falling to their knees. The “this and that” movement of hammering allows them to move backward toward the main playing space. They use the “in and out” section to find their way fully into that space and end far apart from one another. In order to get her nose to meet KARI-

⁸⁷ Cixous, *Stigmata* 99.

ANNE's hand for the final image of the sequence, BRIANNE stretches her entire body out in a long plank position. Following this sequence they stand, move to their music stands and perform their ten-second- preparation sequences. They clear their throats then speak to the audience.)

BOTH

(To the audience.)
Trace.

BRIANNE

Mark. *Signe*.

KARI-ANNE

Tracer, retrace, retrouver, localizer, suivre la trace, décalquer, esquisser, calquer, faire remonter, orner.

BRIANNE

"Thought doesn't go straight ahead, as we think, but in a frenetic movement, invisible to the naked-eye-of-thought, it goes straight ahead of itself like lightening and almost simultaneously returns backwards on its own streak to step on it and erase it and almost simultaneously shoots forward like a rocket . . . thought is not a sentence at all, but, after several explosions, a fallout in words."⁸⁸

"Bodies are always irreducibly sexually specific, necessarily interlocked with racial, cultural, and class particularities. This interlocking, though, cannot occur by way of intersection (a grid-like model . . .) but [must occur] by way of mutual constitution."⁸⁹ Refuse singular models. Refuse dualistic models. Make excessive models. Articulated. Disarticulated.

KARI-ANNE

Verb (used with object). To follow. To follow make out. To follow footprints. To follow the course. To ascertain. To draw a line. To make a plan, diagram. To copy a drawing or plan. To mark or ornament with lines. To make an impression or imprinting of a self-registering instrument. To put down in writing.⁹⁰

BRIANNE

Number One.

(She moves out from behind her music stand and runs up the center aisle. KARI-ANNE follows her. BOTH run quickly back and forth in the diagonal aisle for roughly thirty seconds or until KARI-ANNE's next line.)

KARI-ANNE

Number Two.

(BOTH stop where they are and make their way back to the chairs they used in the previous scene. In unison, they pick up their tape recorders that were left by the chairs and drag the

⁸⁸ Cixous, *Stigmata* 38-9.

⁸⁹ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* 20-1.

⁹⁰ "Trace." *Dictionary.com*. Web. 20 Jan 2011. <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/trace>>.

two chairs back to the main playing space, placing them in the center, touching one another where the screens had been. They return to their music stands with their tape recorders and place the recorders back on the stands.)

BRIANNE

Number Three.

(BOTH move to the center of the space and perform the repeated movement sequence in the same position the did at the opening of the piece. Upon completion the reverse the entire sequence, including the text, performing it backward. They then return to their music stands, perform their ten-second-preparation sequences, and speak to the audience.)

BOTH

Error

KARI-ANNE

Error. *Erreur. Faut.*

BRIANNE

Hope. *Possibilité.*

KARI-ANNE

“The difference between the observed or approximately determined value and the true value of a quantity.”⁹¹

BRIANNE

“We don’t lose anything by erring, to the contrary. The unhappy thing would be to believe we had found. As long as we are seeking we are innocent.”⁹² Errors show us we are on track. They are the truth the does not fool us. That our body recognizes. We must follow them.

KARI-ANNE

Number One woman plus one woman plus one woman. (Repeating until BRIANNE has interrupted her three times.)

BRIANNE

(Overlapping with KARI-ANNE.) Equals woman error. (Repeat three times.)

KARI-ANNE

Number Two.

(BOTH move center and begin the repeated movement sequence. As they go to place their hands over their mouths, after they have slapped their hands, BRIANNE misses and slaps her mouth. She then begins playing with her mouth, slapping it lightly over and over with both hands, making sounds. KARI-ANNE looks at BRIANNE and back at her

⁹¹ “Error.” *Dictionary.com*. Web. 20 Jan 2011. <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/error>>.

⁹² Cixous, *Stigmata* 29.

hand more rapidly as BRIANNE's sounds become more rapid. BOTH stop and resume the sequence on the left side of their bodies. KARI-ANNE begins to lose her balance and makes the sound of a buzzer indicating an error. She continues to follow the motion, letting her hips get into it, moving her leg in circles, stopping to touch the floor with her foot as she passes it. BRIANNE, when trying to slap her hand misses and begins a series of missing her hand, that turns into arabesques and leaps that eventually involves both arms and turns into jumping jacks. BOTH return to stillness and resume the movement sequence at the point where they push the palms of their hands to either side. As they begin to adjust their heads KARI-ANNE makes another error sound. She runs her hands up the sides of her head as she rises and then flops over at the waist. She repeats this several times. BRIANNE, having moved on, gets stuck on "this and that" and makes the error sound. She continues to move her hands back and forth across the floor as if scrubbing it and then the movement infects her entire body and she begins rising and flopping over at the waist. KARI-ANNE joins her, performing the "this and that" motion and at the moment the hands get wedged between her thighs BRIANNE joins her in this position. BOTH complete the movement sequence. There is no number three in this section. They perform the repeated movement sequence as a transition, but this time BRIANNE stands behind KARI-ANNE starting at the beginning. KARI-ANNE, kneeling in front of BRIANNE starts at "this and that" and they meet up at the end with KARI-ANNE at the end of the regular sequence and BRIANNE with her chin in her hands at the end of the first half of the sequence. BOTH go back to their music stands and repeat their ten-second-preparation sequence. They speak to the audience.)

BOTH

(To the audience.)
Genealogy.

BRIANNE

Footing. *Empreinte*.

KARI-ANNE

Trace. *Généalogie*.

BRIANNE

“What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity.”⁹³ We must “expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body.”⁹⁴ “If the same is found in the realm and movement of dialectics, the disparate presents itself as an ‘event’ in the world of chance;”⁹⁵ “a profusion of entangled events.”⁹⁶ “Couples and generations have therefore been out of step ever since male and female genealogies were collapsed into a single genealogy: that of the husband. Whatever the rules of morality, this collapsing of one genealogy into the other is an ethical fault which perverts the spirit of the people, of peoples, and which prevents the constitution of an ethics of the couple.”⁹⁷

KARI-ANNE

“A surviving mark, sign, or evidence of the former existence, influence, or action of some agent or event; vestige: traces of an advanced civilization among the ruins.”⁹⁸ Number One.

(BOTH move center and strike a tableau reminiscent of a wedding cake topper, arms linked. They then turn back-to-back, link both arms, and slide down to the floor, letting their legs go out from under them as they land on their seats. From here, arms still linked, they stand back up.)

BRIANNE

Number Two.

(BOTH begin a movement sequence that looks like they are vacuuming followed by a gesture of picking up an invisible object and placing it on their backs or shoulders. This movement is repeated throughout the entire space as BRIANNE moves in a circle around the stage right seating bank returning to the main playing area from the center aisle. KARI-ANNE continues the movement throughout the open space in front of the stage left seating bank. Each time they place an invisible object on their backs, they lower their bodies closer to the ground to the point that they are on the ground by the final line of this section.)

Who bathed innocently with juniper soaps and rose water, following errors to the high rank of Queen.

KARI-ANNE

Who drove the nail into his mouth.

⁹³ Foucault, 142.

⁹⁴ Foucault, 148.

⁹⁵ Foucault, 142-3.

⁹⁶ Foucault, 155.

⁹⁷ Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 200.

⁹⁸ “Error.” *Dictionary.com*. Web. 20 Jan 2011. <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/trace>>.

BRIANNE

Who gazed on suspiciously claiming seduction, committing adultery blamed on feminine wiles.

KARI-ANNE

Who shot his nuts. We've never met but I heard a lot about you.

BRIANNE

Who was sacrilegious enough to cut up his text and reassembling it with her own sense of sense.

KARI-ANNE

Who was fun.

BRIANNE

Who draws with her pencil in loops and in curves and in dashes and dots that are traces of thoughts.

KARI-ANNE

Who left him impotent.

BRIANNE

Who thinks of the body as a conveyor of messages that come through the fingers in language operations.

KARI-ANNE

Who washed her hair.

BRIANNE

Who is always right even when wrong and will fight to the tears to prove her point.

KARI-ANNE

Who washed that man right into her hair.

BRIANNE

Who uses her veil as a flag of her freedom, keeping her secrets she won't reluctantly share.

KARI-ANNE

Who cut him off, cut him down to size, to the size of a god.

BRIANNE

Who cut off his head with one quick movement, because she knew it was his head he had been thinking with all along.

KARI-ANNE

Who insists on peace, on being good.

BRIANNE

Whose thought shoots ahead and then back on itself in the tracing of problems she does not want to solve.

KARI-ANNE

Who has never felt the throws of violence, only healed them.

BRIANNE

Who glanced back in a glimpse at the glance he delivered, making herself object cum subject, and him in reverse.

KARI-ANNE

Who is too humbled to be saintly.

BRIANNE

Who danced in the water with movements of hips and of hair and of arms and of all of her charms.

KARI-ANNE

Who making rhubarb, staying home, waiting on us hand and foot, hand in hand, day to day. Thank you.

BRIANNE

Who gave herself up for the life of a people and was thought of as good until the end of her days.

KARI-ANNE

Who was thankful for me you weren't a feminist. Sorry that Granny was disappointed.

BRIANNE

Who struggled to be daughter when she'd always been mother and with troubled knowing she could feel pleasure too.

KARI-ANNE

Who didn't see you were being yourself? I honestly believe you were. I hope. I'm sorry.

BRIANNE

Who writes in a screed full of staunch ruminations on material metaphors for symbolics forgotten.

KARI-ANNE

Who loves you, but won't become you.

BRIANNE

Who was thrown out of the establishment for calling into question all the things they held holy and scientific at once.

KARI-ANNE

Who both leave our keys on the table, same butt, same hips. Same voice.

BRIANNE

Who write with their teeth and their tongues, always touching and scrawling in desire-full need.

KARI-ANNE

Who says, “Will you be disobedient to your mother?”

BRIANNE

Who sent him a letter he got many years later while she sat and waited to flee when he came.

KARI-ANNE

Who roll his joints, buy his beer, pay his bills, hide his letters, make excuses, bail him — blame him. Rinse and repeat.

BRIANNE

Who mourned for the bird she though was dead, and sobbed for the cat who watched it escape.

KARI-ANNE

Who will not repeat your error, but fears and flees the trace.

BRIANNE

Who saw that she was gone but her body remained.

KARI-ANNE

Number Three.

(BOTH begin a hand clapping game where they remove something invisible from their backs with one hand and then slap hands with the other hand. Each time they say “something borrowed” they remove an invisible object. Each time they say “something blue” their hands meet. On the final iteration they remove the object with both hands and meet the other’s hand with both as well.)

BOTH

Something borrowed; something blue. Something borrowed; something blue. Something borrowed; something blue. Something borrowed; something blue. Something borrowed; something blue!

(They go back to their music stands and repeat their ten-second-preparation sequence. They speak to the audience.)

BOTH

Two lips Touching

BRIANNE

Pleasure. *Jouissance*.

KARI-ANNE

Deux lèvres, tulipe, cisaillement.

BRIANNE

The movement of two lips touching is a possibility for a women's imaginary. It is not an essentialist return to anatomy, but a way of breaking the closed circle of the current system of representation and discourse to allow for other speech. "Women have two lips several times over."⁹⁹ This formulation corresponds neither to the "morpho-logic" or to the Lacanian notion of woman as lack in relation to the "One" because there is not a model but a process that "is not only never complete or completable; it takes place ... thanks to this non-completion."¹⁰⁰ "What comes to pass in the *jouissance* of woman is in excess of it. An indefinite overflowing in which many a becoming could be inscribed. . . . One woman + one woman + one woman will never add up to some generic woman,"¹⁰¹ but will always exceed fixed categories. "She cannot repeat herself or produce herself as *wholly other* in pleasure, for the other already in her affects her, without her ever becoming one – masculine or feminine."¹⁰²

KARI-ANNE

Two lips, never becoming one, touching, not kissing, more than two, a woman has many...
(BOTH lower their music stands and take them to the chairs they placed in the center of the main playing space during the "trace" section. They face the audience.)

BRIANNE

Numbers One and Two

KARI-ANNE

...pleasures.
(BOTH sit in their chairs. The following segment oscillates between conversation and monologue. Sometimes the text overlaps, sometimes it does not, sometimes it is spoken to the audience, and sometimes it is spoken to the other performer. Throughout the first part KARI-ANNE reclines in her chair and leans or rubs up against BRIANNE who speaks facing forward.)

BRIANNE

Except perhaps, again, in God.

KARI-ANNE

God?

BRIANNE

A beyond-heaven whose qualities, powers, names ... one has attempted, without reducing its duplicity, to enumerate — the condition for this being chastity ... God (of)

⁹⁹ Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 97.

¹⁰⁰ Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 97.

¹⁰¹ Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 55-6.

¹⁰² Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 56.

God (of)?	KARI-ANNE
that horde which surreptitiously turns up at the opening	BRIANNE
(Overlapping with BRIANNE) <i>Entr'ouverture</i>	KARI-ANNE
of a diabolical pleasure? In order to fill a gap	BRIANNE
(overlapping with BRIANNE) <i>Ecart</i>	KARI-ANNE
according to one, to enjoy it	BRIANNE
(overlapping with BRIANNE) <i>En jouir</i>	KARI-ANNE
according to the other. To enjoy/	BRIANNE
take pleasure	KARI-ANNE
in the other —	BRIANNE
the Other —	KARI-ANNE
in his/	BRIANNE
her	KARI-ANNE
reduplication in nothing that is known, is known itself. Again...	BRIANNE
	KARI-ANNE

that 'God' should have been conceived as a perfect volume, a closed completeness, an infinite circle in the fullness of all extension, is presumably not the doing of their imagination. For this passion for a neatly tied up origin, even at the cost of biting the end

BRIANNE

of

KARI-ANNE

its tail, for a well-locked

BRIANNE

whore

KARI-ANNE

house

BRIANNE

Maison bien close

KARI-ANNE

in which the

BRIANNE

'thing'

KARI-ANNE

may possibly happen, for a matrix coiled back on/in its interiority, is not women's.

BRIANNE

Except sometimes in their maternal phallicism, or their impotent mimicry. Their

KARI-ANNE

'God'

BRIANNE

is quite other, like their pleasure. And, his death already having taken place, at least for this 'world', is not likely to come about.

KARI-ANNE

But of course they will not say so, because there is nothing there that can be exposed. Or known

BRIANNE

and this can be written differently depending on what one expects of its impossible

KARI-ANNE

re

production.	BRIANNE
For the	KARI-ANNE
A	BRIANNE
woman	KARI-ANNE
two does not divide into Ones.	BOTH
Relations preclude being cut up into units.	BRIANNE
And when	KARI-ANNE
‘she’	BOTH
clings so desperately to the	KARI-ANNE
one,	BOTH
even the capital of	KARI-ANNE
one	BOTH
god made Man, it is so as to repeat the value to which	KARI-ANNE
‘she’	BOTH
has a right on the exchange market:	KARI-ANNE

BOTH

none. The non-entity, the zero

KARI-ANNE

that founds and seals any settlement of accounts by its displacement.

BRIANNE

More or less.

KARI-ANNE

To reduce them to the same units, even if the accounts immediately become more complicated as a result:

BOTH

two

KARI-ANNE

producing

BOTH

one

KARI-ANNE

so as to merge and cancel

BOTH

one

KARI-ANNE

another out in their couple. Reproducing

BOTH

one

KARI-ANNE

more, and beginning not to know where he is.

BRIANNE

This second

KARI-ANNE

of the

BOTH

one

BRIANNE

belongs to the mother?¹⁰³

KARI-ANNE

(Blows air out through her closed lips making a sound)
Number Three.

(BOTH start making a range of sounds with their lips by blowing air through them, smacking them, etc. As they do this they put the chairs behind the screens and move to their music stands. When they approach the stands they stop the noise and perform their ten-second-preparation sequence. They speak to the audience.)

BOTH

Mimicry

KARI-ANNE

Mimetisme. Imitation.

BRIANNE

Repetition. *Jouer.*

KARI-ANNE

“There is, in an initial phase, perhaps only one ‘path,’ the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of *mimicry*. One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to concert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it... To play with mimesis is this, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it.”¹⁰⁴

BRIANNE

“To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it.”¹⁰⁵ “Every sexual position is fundamentally comic.”¹⁰⁶ “The point is not to stay marginal, but to participate in whatever network of marginal zones is spawned from other disciplinary centers and which, together, constitute a multiple displacement of those authorities.”¹⁰⁷ “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender... identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results.”¹⁰⁸ “There is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original.”¹⁰⁹ Pick up the master’s tools.

KARI-ANNE

¹⁰³ This section is a cut-up of the text on pages 62-3 of *The Irigaray Reader*.

¹⁰⁴ Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 124.

¹⁰⁵ Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 124.

¹⁰⁶ Butler, “Extracts”

¹⁰⁷ Butler, *Gender Trouble* xxxiv.

¹⁰⁸ Butler, *Gender Trouble* 34.

¹⁰⁹ Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” 127.

“It means to resubmit herself – inasmuch as she is on the side of the ‘perceptible’, of ‘matter’ – to ‘ideas’, in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make ‘visible’, by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language. It also means ‘to unveil’ the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function. They also remain elsewhere...”¹¹⁰

BRIANNE

Number One.

(KARI-ANNE moves from behind her music stand, slowly making her way center. As she does this she seductively puts an arm over her head, caressing it clear down her side with her hand. She repeats this motion and others like it for a while until it she eventually stops her hand at her armpit where the movement turns into a shaving motion that is no longer seductive. She drops the pose, looks at the audience and speaks.)

KARI-ANNE

Number Two.

(BRIANNE now moves from behind her music stand, making her way center swaying her hips, caressing her rear and thighs until this movement turns into scratching and eventually she moves as if picking wedgie that ends with a snapping sound of her underwear.)

BOTH

Number Three.

(BOTH begin to imitate washing their hair as if in an herbal essence commercial: caressing their necks, faces, shoulders, making orgasmic sounds, until they stop with a gesture as if soap had gotten in their eyes. They make their way back to their music stands and perform their ten-second-preparation sequence. They speak to the audience.)

BOTH

Toccata

BRIANNE

Touch. *Facile*.

KARI-ANNE

toccare

¹¹⁰ Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader* 124.

BRIANNE

“A ‘toccata’ is a touch-piece designed to display the keyboardist's technical prowess. [The toccata fuses the sensibilities of the player and the composer.] The player presents her own sense of the world of the composer, which the music evokes, ironically stating impressions without specific knowledge:”¹¹¹ she has, after all, never been in that world.

KARI-ANNE

From Italian, literally: touched, from *toccare*.

(BOTH move slightly center, BRIANNE takes her tape recorder with her.)

Number One.

(BRIANNE dramatically pushes play, lightly touching her tape recorder and we hear Baldassarre Galuppi's “Toccata in D Minor” played on a harpsichord. During the music KARI-ANNE speaks the following moving her hands back and forth over her eyes in a game of peek-a-boo.)

“The opposite of a glance, by the way, is a glimpse: because in a glance, we see only for a second, and in a glimpse, the object shows itself only for a second.”¹¹²

(They return to their music stands. BRIANNE replaces her tape recorder, KARI-ANNE picks hers up. They move slightly center.)

BRIANNE

Number Two.

(KARI-ANNE plays ten seconds of the same toccata, this time an electronic recording. BRIANNE speaks the following dropping to her knees and folding over in child's pose when she finishes.)

The baby gowns, the wedding dress, the flowers dead for years and dust to dusty ashes we all fall.

KARI-ANNE

Number Three.

(KARI-ANNE leap-frogs over BRIANNE, speaking the following line and mimicking her position.)

“The paradox of seeing is that the more forcefully I try to see, the more blind I become.”¹¹³

(BRIANNE stands up. KARI-ANNE begins the in-and-out movement from the repeated movement sequence as BRIANNE begins the reverse movement of pulling a thread from both the sky and the earth. BOTH end with their hands over their eyes. They return to their music stands and perform their ten-second-preparation sequence. They speak to the audience.)

BOTH

Fugue

KARI-ANNE

Fuga. Fugere.

¹¹¹ “Robert Browning's ‘A Toccata of Galuppi's’ (1855). *Victorian Web*. 25 April 2011.

¹¹² Elkins, 207.

¹¹³ Elkins, 210.

BRIANNE

Octave. *Huitan*.

KARI-ANNE

From French *fuga* “a polyphonic composition based upon one, two, or more themes, which are enunciated by several voices or parts in turn, subjected to contrapuntal treatment, and gradually built up into a complex form having somewhat distinct divisions or stages of development and a marked climax at the end. From Latin *fugere*, to flee. A period during which a person suffers from loss of memory, often begins a new life, and, upon recovery, remembers nothing of the amnesic phase.”¹¹⁴

BRIANNE

A fugue, on the other hand is the development and repetition of a theme by several instruments wherein one takes it up, it is then reintroduced by others, and woven together compositionally throughout the piece. Johann Sebastian Bach’s “Toccatina and Fugue” combines virtuosic technique and its attendant finger mobility with the development and repetition of the theme played in various octaves of one instrument or by various instruments depending on the arrangement and presentation.

(BRIANNE moves CS.)

Number One

(BRIANNE begins the fugue movement sequence and continues while KARI-ANNE speaks. This movement sequence is a compilation, distillation, and reorganization of movements and floor patterns found throughout the piece thus far. As it is performed, BRIANNE moves throughout the entire space, ending by walking down the center aisle from the main entrance of the space with her back toward the audience performing the circling leg movement from the repeated movement sequence.)

KARI-ANNE

A hemorrhage of the soul
A hole that never closes
Ready to receive
Sent
On the run
What escapes us
More quickly than ourselves
The mystery
One cannot speak it
One can only perform it
I am trying
I am trying
At this moment
To capture
One at this moment
I am trying

¹¹⁴ “Fugue.” *Dictionary.com*. Web. 20 Jan 2011. <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/fugue>>.

I am trying
At this moment
To capture
The mysteries
At this moment
I am trying at this moment
One
To confide them in two
The rent, the tear
Threads must be laid and held onto
The folds of the skirt take up a good deal of
Space
She is not even here
Those things that make us leave our bodies
That fear of being stopped
Running the other direction
Thinking we grabbed the wrong thread
Error
On the run
What escapes us
We live faster than ourselves
A follicle
Injure and propel
The texts that flee
The message is sent
Improper, unfinished, continually moving
Puffs of air
Preparing for bed
The truth does not fool us
The body recognizes
The dissension of other things
Couples and generations
A conveyor of messages that
Through the fingers
Impotent, sacrilegious, nuts
Seduction, veil, to prove her point
Reluctantly
Cut off his head
Insist on peace
Make rhubarb pie
Repeat herself
As wholly other
To fill a gap
Diabolical
To enjoy it
To cut him down

To take pleasure
In the other
In the Other
In which the thing may possibly happen
More or less
One must assume the role deliberately
Pick up the master's tools
Unveil
The mysteries
Facile
We fall
The paradox of seeing major themes
Octaves of one instrument
Is not of their imagination
For the woman, two does not divide into ones
To be simply reduced to it
A glance
The more blind I become
To the other
It turns its back to us
The Door is closed
An old tale whispers to me
It is the outsider
The outside
The arranger
The invisible
That's it.

(KARI-ANNE moves center as BRIANNE returns to her music stand.)

Number Two

(KARI-ANNE begins the same fugue movement sequence, with a slightly different orientation to the space as BRIANNE speaks.)

BRIANNE

A hemorrhage of the soul
A hole that never closes
Ready to receive
Sent
On the run
What escapes us
More quickly than ourselves
The mystery
One cannot speak it
One can only perform it
I am trying
I am trying
At this moment

To capture
One at this moment
I am trying
I am trying
At this moment
To capture
The mysteries
At this moment
I am trying at this moment
One
To confide them in two
The rent, the tear
Threads must be laid and held onto
The folds of the skirt take up a good deal of
Space
She is not even here
Those things that make us leave our bodies
That fear of being stopped
Running the other direction
Thinking we grabbed the wrong thread
Error
On the run
What escapes us
We live faster than ourselves
A follicle
Injure and propel
The texts that flee
The message is sent
Improper, unfinished, continually moving
Puffs of air
Preparing for bed
The truth does not fool us
The body recognizes
The dissension of other things
Couples and generations
A conveyor of messages that
Through the fingers
Impotent, sacrilegious, nuts
Seduction, veil, to prove her point
Reluctantly
Cut off his head
Insist on peace
Make rhubarb pie
Repeat herself
As wholly other
To fill a gap

Diabolical
To enjoy it
To cut him down
To take pleasure
In the other
In the Other
In which the thing may possibly happen
More or less
One must assume the role deliberately
Pick up the master's tools
Unveil
The mysteries
Facile
We fall
The paradox of seeing major themes
Octaves of one instrument
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To the other
It turns its back to us
The Door is closed
An old tale whispers to me
It is the outsider
The outside
The arranger
The invisible
That's it.

(As KARI-ANNE returns down the center aisle, her back to the audience she stops.
BRIANNE goes to meet KARI-ANNE face to face.)

BOTH

Number Three

(BOTH begin the fugue movement sequence facing one another and continue it as they speak the following text. The result is that sometimes they perform the sequence in the same areas and other times the floor patterns move them to opposite areas of the performance space. The sequence ends with BOTH moving down the center aisle toward the main playing space, BRIANNE further upstage than KARI-ANNE and speaking the final text of this section with their back to the audience.)

KARI-ANNE

A hemorrhage of the soul
A hole that never closes

Ready to receive
Sent
On the run

BRIANNE

What escapes us
More quickly than ourselves

KARI-ANNE

The mystery
One cannot speak it
One can only perform it

BRIANNE

I am trying

KARI-ANNE

I am trying

BRIANNE

At this moment
To capture

KARI-ANNE

One at this moment

BRIANNE

I am trying

KARI-ANNE

I am trying

BRIANNE

At this moment
To capture
The mysteries

KARI-ANNE

At this moment

BRIANNE

I am trying at this moment

KARI-ANNE

One

BRIANNE

To confide them in two

KARI-ANNE

The rent, the tear

BRIANNE

Threads must be laid and held onto

KARI-ANNE

The folds of the skirt take up a good deal of

BRIANNE

Space

KARI-ANNE

She is not even here

BRIANNE

Those things that make us leave our bodies
That fear of being stopped
Running the other direction

KARI-ANNE

Thinking we grabbed the wrong thread

BRIANNE

Error
On the run
What escapes us
We live faster than ourselves

KARI-ANNE

A follicle
Injure and propel

BRIANNE

The texts that flee
The message is sent
Improper, unfinished, continually moving
Puffs of air

KARI-ANNE

Preparing for bed
The truth does not fool us

BRIANNE

The body recognizes
The dissension of other things

KARI-ANNE

Couples and generations

BRIANNE

A conveyor of messages that
Through the fingers
Impotent, sacrilegious, nuts
Seduction, veil, to prove her point
Reluctantly

KARI-ANNE

Cut off his head
Insist on peace
Make rhubarb pie
Repeat herself
As wholly other
To fill a gap
Diabolical

BRIANNE

To enjoy it
To cut him down
To take pleasure
In the other

KARI-ANNE

In the Other
In which the thing may possibly happen
More or less

BRIANNE

One must assume the role deliberately
Pick up the master's tools
Unveil
The mysteries

KARI-ANNE

Facile
We fall

BRIANNE

The paradox of seeing major themes

KARI-ANNE

Octaves of one instrument
Is not of their imagination

BRIANNE

For the woman, two does not divide into ones

KARI-ANNE

To be simply reduced to it
A glance
The more blind I become
To the other

BRIANNE

It turns its back to us
The Door is closed
An old tale whispers to me
It is the outsider

KARI-ANNE

The outside

BRIANNE

The arranger

KARI-ANNE

The invisible

BOTH

That's it.

(They return to their music stands and perform their ten-second-preparation sequence. They speak to the audience.)
Foreignness.

BRIANNE

Uncanny. *Étrange*.

KARI-ANNE

"Toccatà and Fugue for the foreigner."¹¹⁵ Number One.

(As KARI-ANNE speaks, every time she comes to and "f" or the "f" sound she stutters, having trouble getting the sound out. Sometimes this causes her to repeat phrases or sentences. BRIANNE snaps every time "foreign" or any variation on the word is spoken. She also makes a hard "k" sound every time KARI-ANNE speaks a word that contains the sound.)

¹¹⁵ Kristeva, 1.

Foreignness is uncanny, it is internal, and we are internally split. The foreigner becomes something that is a part of each us rather than something in excess and disruptive; we are always already foreigners and shaped by foreignness. The only way to reconcile this is through facing others. The uncanny is that double strangeness where anything familiar also contains the opposite, making it strange. Strangeness is immanent in the familiar and by extension the familiar is immanent in the strange. When the familiar emerges uncannily, or appears differently, at either the personal or cultural level, the fear of the other, the unconscious arises. This evokes anxiety, doubling and repetition.

BRIANNE

Number Two.

(As BRIANNE speaks every time the “k” sound occurs in a word she makes the sound vary hard, creating a hiccup almost so hard that it stops the word. KARI-ANNE snaps every time there should be a comma in BRIANNE’s speech and each time she hears the “f” sound, imitates it similarly to the way she spoke in number one of this section.)

The devastation one cannot contain is projected onto this mean-spirited double. Repetition comes into play as a compulsion, as a drive that seeks to exorcise pleasure or something recurring from the unconscious. What is uncanny, the scary element, has been internalized, repressed, and causes anxiety upon it’s recurrence. It is not new, but is familiar and its strangeness comes from its long time repression until now. Death is one of the major repressions and we see its uncanny representation in ghosts and images. Another is the feminine. Thus the beginning and the end are obscured and their strangeness “frighten[s] us when they break through . . . Such malevolent *powers* would amount to a weaving together of the symbolic and the organic – perhaps *drive* itself, on the border of the psyche and biology, overriding the breaking imposed by organic homeostasis.”¹¹⁶ These things that were once symbolic assume material and real importance.

(In unison, BOTH put their tape recorders around their necks and move CS.)

Both

Number Three.

(They push play on their recorders and the following is heard, overlapping from each recorder.)

“Foreigner: a choked up rage deep down in my throat, a black angel clouding transparency, opaque, unfathomable spur. The image of hatred and of the other, a foreigner is neither the romantic victim of our clannish indolence nor the intruder responsible for all the ills of the polis. Neither the apocalypse on the move nor the instant adversary to be eliminated for the sake of appeasing the group. Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns ‘we’ into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible. The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Kristeva, 185.

¹¹⁷ Kristeva, 1.

(BOTH stop their tape recorders, return to their music stands, collect their scripts and exit in the reverse of how they entered at the start of the show. The end.)

VITA

Brianne Waychoff was born and raised in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where she graduated from Thomas Jefferson Senior High School in 1997. Brianne attended the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, Iowa, completing a Bachelor of Arts in Theater Performance: Acting in 2001. She worked in New York City with the International WOW Company in 2001 and 2002 and returned to the University of Northern Iowa to complete a Master of Arts in Women's Studies in 2004. Brianne spent two years living in Chicago, Illinois, working with various performance groups and artists collectives and as a production editor for McGraw-Hill Education. She began her doctoral work at the University of South Florida in 2006 and transferred to Louisiana State University in the fall of 2007. In 2011 and 2012 she taught at St. John's University in Queens, New York, and at Bronx Community College in Bronx, New York. She will complete her Doctor of Philosophy in communication studies with a minor in women's and gender studies from Louisiana State University in May 2012.