CHAPTER 2

# Writing as Speaking

**Abstract** In this chapter we explore the methodological underpinnings of this book and ask how do we do feminist research which works towards the gender just society we hope for? Here we ground our work in the writings of Hélène Cixous and Sara Ahmed, two different women writing at different times in different places but arguably searching for ways to work within/against the in-between-ness of women's experiences. Drawing on Cixous' *écriture féminine* as a 'willful' methodological approach (after Ahmed, *Willful subjects*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014) allows us to reconsider what constitutes knowledge, research practice and ultimately power that opens up a space for the reception of feminist academic voices. It makes room for us to consider writing as speaking 'other than patriarchy', that it is to speak and write like feminists.

In writing for academic publication, as feminists, we often find ourselves unwittingly participating in the very research and writing conventions and social structures that our work seeks to disrupt (Derrida 1976). Introduction, body, conclusion; introduction, background, data collection, data analysis, results and implications; such structures pervade and invade our sense of what real academic work should look like as writing. Even the mundane rhythms of everyday academic work, our email correspondence, our job applications, our promotion assessments, our administrative tasks, and our peer reviewing, 're-modulates the ways in which we relate to one another as neoliberal subjects, individual, responsible, striving, competitive,



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enterprising' (Ball 2015, p. 258). The process of speaking and thereby writing women's voices and experiences into history and into academic knowledge should not simply be to fit women into a pre-existent male-dominated tradition (Eagleton 1996; Phillips et al. 2014); simply adding women and asking us to do the stirring according to a patriarchal recipe is not enough, as women we have been relegated to that presumed role of domestic bliss too often. Instead in writing this book we wanted to pay particular attention to how we might speak and write differently in feminist research on gender inequality in academia. Knowing that language is an important part of methodology but that gendered language continues to be prejudicial towards women in academia, we want to disturb the perceived gender neutrality embedded in social science research methodologies by following Cixous who suggests that 'You write a text in order to respeak it' (Cixous in Derrida et al. 2006, p. 2), to speak in a different way through a different medium of academic language. The structure of this chapter then, is deliberately fluid, circling around and swirling between only to return again to concepts and ideas which we may have already touched upon.

## Why Write with Cixous and Ahmed?

Of all of the wise women (and some men) whose words we have included here, the names of Cixous and Ahmed are perhaps those whom readers will remember most after reading this book. While we cannot make any claims to identities as philosophers or to a deep knowledge of psychoanalysis, we are both drawn to the subversive entanglement of poetics, politics, playfulness, and performativity in Cixous's work. Notably absent from this book is a deep engagement with the feminist poststructuralist philosophies of Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray. While there are many similarities—and differences—in their work to that of Cixous', we felt that Cixous would bring to bear a specific perspective on the question of writing and speaking feminist, specifically through her enactment and exploration of the concept *écriture feminine*. Translated from French as 'feminine writing', *écriture feminine* is a theory which emerged predominantly from the writings of Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva to deconstruct the relationship between the cultural and psychological inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text. However, it is not helpful to think of *écriture feminine* in the masculinist theoretical sense, bound as it is by fixed forms of representation and rigid structures, but rather one that places emphasis on feminine embodied experience, affective movement, material creativity, and fluid cycles of speaking-writing. Cixous lays

out this understanding of *écriture feminine* at the very beginning of her 1976 essay, 'The laugh of the Medusa' when she writes, 'I shall speak about women's writing: about *what it will do*. Woman must write her self, must write about women and bring women to writing…Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement' (p. 875).

We concur with Mary Phillips, Alison Pullen, and Carl Rhodes (2014, p. 315) that in exploring the possibilities in the writing of Cixous we do not aim to find a new 'truth' in academic writing but to 'play with the fluctuating possibilities of gender' and that this endeavour is a test of our own complicity as academics in reproducing a masculine norm in our feminist work, a norm that continues to render the feminine outside of institutionalised sites of intellectual practice. Drawing on *l'écriture feminine*as a methodological approach in this chapter allows us to reconsider what constitutes knowledge, research practice, and ultimately power, opening up a space for the reception of feminist academic voices. Cixous' writing radically and creatively disrupts everyday gender norms and distinctions and instils a desire to escape the masculine mastery and hierarchy by 'writing through the body' (Cixous 1976). Her notion of feminine writing does not replace the masculine with the feminine or suggest an erasure of difference. Instead Cixous' approach to writing is a playful displacement of gender and sex and allows for an imagining of the self as multiple, beyond the gender dualism. She searches continually for those places in-between; she wants to be heard as 'all the twos, all the couples. The duals, the duos, the differences, all the dyads in the world: each time there's two in the world' (Derrida in Cixous 1994, p. vii) and takes great delight in the uncertainty, fluidity, and possibilities of in-between-ness for it is here that we might come close to translating the word to life, to text, and back again. We find that the creative potentiality of Cixous in academic writing provides an avenue for accessing those hard-to-get dimensions of social life, opening up a multiplicity of meanings and ways of knowing (Leavy 2012a, p. 516). Similarly, through our use Ahmed's interdisciplinary queer archive of willfulness in *Willful subjects* (2014) we wanted to explore the ways in which feminist talk is willful talk inside the academy. Speaking-writing-thinking in, through and by performances of willfulness and *l'écriture feminine* present themselves as ways of embodied thinking that move beyond theory and practice. Although we do not intend to place too much on Cixous or Ahmed, because to do so might reduce the potentiality of such theorisations and undermine the power and significance of the feminist voices we have interviewed, there is no

hiding that Cixous' way of thinking-speaking-writing as *écriture feminine* and Ahmed's reading of willfulness hovers in the air all around this book and are concepts to which we aspire.

A criticism of adopting Cixous' *écriture feminine* and Ahmed's willful subjectivity is how easily the individualistic nature of a willful politics fits within a neoliberal doxa. The freedom to act in a way we choose. For some, willfulness and the capacity to say 'no' and to resist on a day-to-day level ignores the broader systemic issues and hierarchies of oppression; the fact that your unwillingness to do something may in fact result in someone else carrying out that task, and if we think about the most least favourable jobs in academia they are invariably undertaken by women. It is also because of this criticism that such methodological and epistemological approaches are often confused or reduced to individualism that it offers some of its most rich potential in navigating the confluence of neoliberal and feminist discourses in academia and how we might approach contemporary feminist challenges and struggles for gender equity in the university. We do not want to reinforce the gendered, raced, and classed hierarchy that exists in Australian higher education. Rather we must then consider who our feminist 'willful' talk may impact, and how to speak in a way that empowers one another. Willfulness is an individual act, but it is an act carried out because of one's connection to 'a culture whose existence is deemed a threat' (Ahmed 2014, p. 151). There is an exciting potentiality in Ahmed's theorisation of a willful subject in the increasingly measured and corporatised university. Willfulness has the capacity to adapt discursively to such a complex and contradictory environment and connect individuals as well as create a sense of collective will. To recover the collective social body of willfulness is to garner a collective power which may distract and weaken the ever consuming 'baroque monster' (Connell 2014) that is neoliberalism. We need to recognise how women in the academy are acting willfully in different ways. In this chapter then, we trace the masculine legacy of academic research as well as our own coming to Cixous as feminist researchers to explore *écriture feminine* as a 'willful' (Ahmed 2014) methodology.

## Breaking the Libidinal Economy of the Neoliberal University: Rationality in Academic Research

The production of academic knowledge in the contemporary neoliberal academy is governed by what Cixous defines as the 'masculine libidinal economy'. She states:

> I maintain unequivocally that there is such a thing as marked writing; that, until now, far more extensively and repressively than is every suspected, writing has been run by a libidinal and cultural—hence political, typically masculine—economy. (1976, p. 879)

This system of exchange privileges the masculine and that of science, rationality, objectivity and rigour. The notion of a feminine 'libidinal economy' is excluded. Silenced by patriarchy. The masculine norm renders the feminine outside of institutionalised sites of intellectual practice, even those devoted to studying gender, as Phillips et al. (2014, p. 315) contend. In such libidinal economies both masculine and feminine are predicated on a relation to the phallus, which is governed by a Freudian inspired fear of castration, which in Cixous' mind equates to a 'fear of being a woman' (Cixous 1976, p. 884). Cixous calls out the phallus as the 'primary organiser of the structure of subjectivity', it is 'the condition for all symbolic functioning' (Cixous 1991, p. 46). Moreover, in writing Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar ([1979] 2000, p. 6) observe that:

> The text's author is a father, a progenitor, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis. More, his pen's power, like his penis's power, is not just the ability to create life but the power to create a posterity to which he lays his claims.

The author is the 'man of reason' (Lloyd [1984] 1993). Although Gilbert and Gubar are referring to literary history their descriptor fits very much within the dominant discourse of academic writing and research. For Heather Höpfl (2000) to break the silence around phallic knowledge we must critique the production, and break what Kristeva calls the 'mastery' of knowledge. Women's writing interrupts the silence of phallic knowledge and organisational spaces through the subversion of language, or what Phillips et al. (2014, p. 314) refer to as the 'playful displacement' of the Cartesian dualism. Indeed, as Sissel Lie asserts, Cixous (1991, p. 43) wants us to 'oppose norms, break loose from rigid concepts, at our own risk and peril, to arrive at a new freedom for our thoughts'. This sentiment is echoed in Rosi Braidotti's (2011, p. 24) recent invitation to 'disidentify ourselves from the sedentary phallogocentric monologism of philosophical thinking'. In a resistant way, women's writing willfully ignores the punishing glare of the great 'One-Eyed Father' (Haraway 1997, p. 45) and refuses to become 'partially submerged' (Greene 1994, p. 209) by

it. Together, these words urge us to find new ways of writing academic words; ways which deliver an antidote to the paralysing and prohibiting structures of high theory (Braidotti 2011, p. 24). Cixous insists that this is what writing will do, writing must no longer be determined by the past and instead must seek to break up, to destroy, and to foresee the unseeable (1976, p. 875).

Academic knowledge production has traditionally been predicated upon a masculine legacy of science and rationality. Phillips et al. (2014) claim that it is the legacy of science, as a privileged mode of inquiry and knowledge production that is central to the imperviousness of masculinity as the assumed mode of theorising. While their work focuses specifically on organisational research, we contend that the objectivity ascribed to 'hard' data, the notion of 'rigorous' methods, and primacy of 'seminal' works make up the accepted standard in research methods in the majority of scientific and social science fields. Rigour; that which is hard, strict, and severe, is understood as essential to research practice. Rigorous work is that which measures (Phillips et al. 2014). Gender is integral to measurement and valuation as a practice is connected to measure in a problematic way, not least because in the neoliberal university the value derived is one of capital. The logic of capital commodifies and monetises every aspect of our lives (Skeggs 2014). Measurement is thus a political act and plays an integral role in the creation of value and the social construction of reality (Adkins and Lury 2012). In the bean counting, hoop jumping neoliberal university, what gets researched, which projects gets funded, who researches it, and how that research is then valued reinforces rather than removes the gender dichotomy in higher education. Women's continued marginalisation in academia, as Marianna Fotaki (2013, p. 1253) observes, 'has profound implications both on how knowledge is reproduced and on what counts as knowledge'. In the neoliberal university, knowledge production is increasingly connected to academic promotion and leadership opportunities via research output. Dominant research methods are ones where rigour is pursued 'with a certain scientific rationality—one that valorises precision, systematicity, objectivity and the advancement of knowledge' (Clark, Floyd and Wright 2006, in Phillips et al. 2014, p. 316). The discourse of rationality is seen to transcend the feminine. Genevieve Lloyd ([1984] 1993, p. 1) in her historical exploration of the philosophical origins and association between rationality and maleness asserts that:

> Rational knowledge has been constructed as a transcending, transformation or control of natural forces; and the feminine has been associated with what rational knowledge transcends, dominates or simply leaves behind.

Indeed, St Pierre (2000, p. 487) agrees and suggests that 'feminists have celebrated the profileration of reason, with good reason, since they have historically been fixed on the wrong side of the rational/irrational binary. Rationality itself is defined against the feminine, thereby casting women cast as 'reason's "other" ' (Braidotti 1991, p. 148). Women therefore, have been excluded from everywhere, argues Irigaray, through the representation of women in relation to, and exclusively through male discourse, 'most hidden as woman and absent in the capacity of the subject' (1985, p. 32). Cixous responds to the (im)possibility of women being in or outside of reason by stating that:

> If woman has always functioned 'within' the discourse of man...it is time for her to dislocate this 'within', to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it into her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of. (Cixous 1976, p. 257)

To explode 'the discourse of man' conjures somewhat similar imagery to that which equates women with nature. To explode is to burst and shatter. An explosion is the culmination and moment of excess, an eruption of something that cannot be contained. Women; with all their leaking and flowing bodily associations with birth, breastfeeding, menstruation are seen as suspect and dangerous; as inauthentic against the construct of the 'ideal' academic subject. The leaky academic and female body can be understood as such an explosion and must therefore be carefully controlled. Their reproductive capabilities, whether or not they are mothers, sees that women are never able to transcend their bodies (Fotaki 2013; Phillips 2014), never capable of achieving rationality (Potts and Price 1995). As female academics, we sit in committee meetings, seminars, and academic appraisals as props or tokens of successful inclusion, when in fact our corporeality rips and tears at the invisible fabric of the masculine logic and rationality. Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price (1996) describe women as being both contaminating and contaminated and yet the gendered university requires and relies upon such representational aspects of maternity. Epstein et al. (2007, p. 117) provocatively suggest that women are

positioned as the 'eternal breasts' of the university, naturally and expected to take on the motherly roles of 'growing up' good students, nurturing all those around us by taking down notes and cleaning up the tea rooms, taking on large amount of teaching and being attentive to the small tasks that enable the men around us to do the work that really counts. In Beryl Fletcher's ([1991] 2002) *The word burners*, a novel about the paradoxes of being a feminist academic, she writes about the need for a new language:

> For too long we listened to the voice of the non-cunt who formulated our identity in tune with His need, His desire, His vision. The muteness of our tongues has been redressed, the silence is silenced. We have regained our voice and have tuned the talk towards ourselves. The Quiet cunt is no more. The talking cunt is here. (Fletcher [1991] 2002, p. 219)

Cixous believes that it is conceivable for women to write outside of this gendered binarism, only if women write in the in-between-ness of masculine and feminine writing, although it is mode of writing that is not essential to women. When Cixous speaks of a 'decipherable libidinal femininity' it is one 'which can be read in a writing produced by a male or a female' (Cixous 1991, p. 51). It defies the patriarchal order. Cixous understands what we as women and feminist writers are up against when we write with mind and body:

> I know why you haven't written…because writing is at once too high, too great for you, its reserved for the great- that is, for 'great men'; and its 'silly.' Besides you've written a little, but in secret. And it wasn't good, because it was in secret, and because you punished yourself for writing, because you didn't go all the way; or because you wrote, irresistibly as when we would masturbate in secret, not to go further, but to attenuate the tension a bit, just enough to take the edge off. And then as soon as we come, we go and make ourselves guilty—so as to be forgiven; or to forget, to bury it until the next time. (1976, p. 876–77)

The psychological effects of women's oppression are so engrained, so much so that we doubt our ability to write and free ourselves from our patriarchal indenture. A criticism of French feminist philosophy is that it returns to female desire and women's erotic body, despite this being the very site of women's pronounced objectification as sexual objects (Weil 2006, p. 153). Yet, by calling out to female desire, by writing and speaking from the cunt, as Fletcher writes, French feminist philosophy is exposing

masculine deception at its core (Weil 2006, p. 154). Cixous notes that 'Men still have everything to say about their sexuality, and everything to write' (1976, p. 877). Cixous and her contemporaries give us strength to challenge the primacy of masculine academic rationality at the expense of women's sexual and scholarly constraint, and the power and influence of women's writing.

## Thinking-as-Writing-as-Speaking Through the Body: The Centrality of Cixous' *sécriture Feminine* to This Text

It is from this 'yearning' for writing beyond phallocentric masculinist practices that leads us to the work of Hélène Cixous. Described by Abigail Bray (2004, p. 20) as a 'post-structuralist feminist of difference', Cixous' writing takes many forms of expression including poetic fiction, chamber theatre, philosophical and feminist essays, literary theory and literary criticism (Sellers in Cixous 1991, p. xxvi). In her work, Cixous seeks to write as a woman in order to empower women, and her writing is most often associated with the concept of *écriture féminine* or 'feminine writing' (Sellers in Cixous 1991, p. xxix). Cixous herself, refused to 'fix' *l'écriture feminine* by committing the error of providing a definition (Lie 2012, p. 43). From our reading of her work and in agreement with Lie (2012, p. 42), the opening sentences of her revolutionary piece 'The laugh of the Medusa' provide an understanding of the concept of *l'écriture feminine* as 'liberating writing':

> I shall speak about women's writing: about *what it will do*. Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies…Woman must per herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement. (1976, p. 875)

*L'écriture feminine* can be interpreted as a liberating bodily practice that aims to release 'the subject away from the stagnant confines of phallocentric thought' (Bray 2004, p. 43) through the release of creativity. Cixous' feminine writing is at once disruption and dismissal of the power of a Cartesian dualism which separates mind from body; it has the potential to 'exceed the binary logic' that informs the current phallocentric system (Sellers in Cixous 1994, p. xxix). Cixous is trying, writes Banting (1992,

p. 239), to 'unname the Cartesian body'. Bray (2004, p. 7) suggests that for Cixous 'To think is also to write, to create meaning, and that process of production is embodied'. Cixous herself explains, 'to me writing is the fastest and most efficient vehicle for thought; it may be winged, galloping, four-wheeled, jet-propelled etc.—according to the urgency' (1994, p. xxii). We might then, go so far as to say that Cixous' 'thinking-writing-body' is linked to a 'feminist way of knowing, and this in turn is linked back to a feminist way of theorising being' (Stanley 1997, p. 4). Moira Gatens (1992, p. 230) asserts that 'writing itself is a political issue and a political practice for many contemporary feminists' and for this reason, we need to resist essentialising the project of *écriture féminine*. Indeed, Cixous (in Cixous and Clement 1986, p. 72) explains, writing in the feminine is 'a place…which is not economically or politically indebted to all the vileness and compromise. That is not obliged to reproduce the system. That is writing'. In 'The laugh of the Medusa' Cixous (1976, p. 892) further encourages a refusal to be 'impressed by the commotion of the phallic stance' in our writing—'that's the woman of yesterday!' she proclaims. Her voice reaches fever pitch as she desires us to go further still, 'Shrug off the old lies, dare what you don't dare…rejoice, rejoice in the terror, follow it where you're afraid to go…take the plunge, you're on the right trail!' (1991, p. 40). This sentiment is echoed in Greene's (1994, p. 209) refusal to be 'swept along by what the great ones have said and remain partially submerged by them' and Braidotti's (2011, p. 24) recent invitation to 'disidentify ourselves from the sedentary phallogocentric monologism of philosophical thinking'. Cixous encourages the search for new ways of writing academic words; ways which deliver an antidote to the paralysing and prohibiting structures of high theory (Braidotti 2011, p. 24).

In 'The laugh of the Medusa', Cixous urges women to enter in the flight of thinking by rewriting women's lack (Bray 2004, p. 8) and it is through *l'écriture feminine* that the body speaks in her inevitable struggle against conventional man (Cixous 1976, p. 875). We emphasise the word struggle here, it's a word that Cixous uses often: a woman in struggle, a 'fundamental struggle', 'sequences of struggle', the 'struggle for mastery', 'struggle-to-the-death'. There is no doubt that Cixous' talk of struggle results in a call to arms and rebellion from within. 'We must kill', she urges, 'the false woman who is preventing the live one from breathing' (1986, p. 880) and her words are reminiscent of Woolf who decades earlier sought to slaughter 'the angel in the house' ([1942] 1992) which prevented her from writing-speaking-thinking as a woman. Cixous further describes

women writing through their bodies as militants inherently engaged in a struggle which takes place on the battlefield of a unifying, regulating, homogenising history (1976, p. 882). Here we are again reminded of the ways in which women's writing bodies hold the tantalising possibility of rendering unpredictable damage to the libidinal economy. When such movement arrives, she declares, 'it's an explosive, utterly destructive, staggering return' (1976, p. 886) which cannot fail to be more than subversive (1976, p. 888). Harrowing explosions and earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, are necessary 'in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the truth with laughter' (1976, p. 888). For Cixous, in becoming a writing-speaking-thinking, woman herself becomes the ultimate 'antilogos weapon' (1976, p. 880). In a similar way, our writing-speaking-thinking performance of this text seeks to continue this Cixousian revolution.

Cixous' *écriture feminine* disrupts the perceived gender neutrality of institutional cultures, measures, discourses, and practices that coalesce in the neoliberal university. Cixous argues that in writing-as-speaking in the feminine, it is possible to break the 'codes that negate her' (1976, p. 879) and thereby inscribe the heterogeneous: the diverse, the divergent, and the different. As women, she argues, we have 'no reason to pledge allegiance to the negative' and are in 'no way obliged to deposit ourselves in their banks of lack' (1976, p. 884). Because the symbolic order of phallocentricism exists and holds power, such writing requires courage and collectivity. 'In one another', she writes, 'we will never be lacking' (1976, p. 893) and one of the aims of this book is to build a speaking-as-thinking-as-writing collectivity between and amongst ourselves as feminist academics. Cixous wants more than collectivity however; she wants women to grab hold of their own agency—each woman for her self-and-other—in order to bring about change. She insists that in order to achieve such 'emancipation of the marvellous text of her self she must urgently learn to speak' (1976, p. 880) and seize the occasion to come to voice. For Cixous then, writing *is* speaking the body and speaking *is* writing the body and through such embodied acts woman will take up 'the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus' and 'break out of the snare of silence' (1976, p. 881). This book, in a Cixousian sense, seeks to write-speak-think our bodies as feminist academics within/against the neoliberal academy as an act which holds within it 'the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures' (Cixous 1976,

p. 879). Cixous' mode of writing in the feminine destabilises gender binaries and masculine hegemony but does not replace the masculine with the feminine (Phillips 2014). It 'is a form of exchange from one subject to another where both contribute to a whole, rather than facing one another in opposition, always harbouring a potential transformation that can make us anew' (Phillips et al. 2014, p. 324). For Cixous, the feminine defies all boundaries; it cannot be pinned down or controlled. It is related to otherness, but it is not in opposition.

For us then, Cixous' writing is alluring and provocative; a mix of stylistic, narrative, poetry and philosophy that disrupts phallocentric notions of gender and language as one and the same. In relation to Cixous' writing-as-thinking, Bray suggests that it is:

> Perhaps more important to 'put the accent on the poetic', for the poetic is precisely that which rationality attempts to repress and it is the very repression of 'the poetic' which is thought to lead to violence. The poetic is the domain of excess, the unconscious, the body, sexuality, creativity, the feminine, all that the political attempts to limit and contain through the application of 'hard' and 'cruel' reason. (2004, p. 15)

In a similar way, post-academic writing seeks to respond to the question, 'what forms of writing were excluded by the way you were taught your research question should be written about?' (Livholts 2012, p. 3). Contemporary neoliberal ideology, driven as it is by 'ratings, rankings, and counting' (Livholts 2012, p. 3) 'defines out' the critical and creative potential of alternative academic writing methodologies. Mona Livholts (2012) recently described such devalued and ignored textual practices as 'post-academic writing'. 'Post-academic writing' is often 'out of time' and 'out of step' with the temporal demands of academia, and as a consequence, 'has often been put aside or mislaid, because for some reason it did not fit, even in the mind of the author' (Livholts 2012, p. 7).The academic writing that 'counts', more often than not, is that which reproduces phallocentric masculinist processes, replete as they are with words like 'rationale', 'limitation', 'objectivity', triangulation', and 'free from bias'. Livholts asserts that such main/male-stream textual forms are 'often related to a system that privileges certain kinds of knowledge over other, subjugated knowledge' (2012, p. 3) and adopting feminist creative academic writing provides an avenue for accessing those hard-to-get dimensions of social life, opening up a multiplicity of meanings and ways of knowing (Leavy 2012a, p. 516). Indeed, Cixous' *l'écriture feminine* holds

the possibility, as Lie (2012, p. 50) asserts, of 'opening up more of one's resources for thinking when writing for Academia [which] is important if one does not want to repeat what others have said'. Indeed, we would argue, alongside Grosz (2010b), that it is 'time' to re-explore materialities and discourses of bodies, particularly women's bodies, in relation to the temporal forces of the contemporary neoliberal university and the ways in which we might direct questions of change to the 'out of time' and 'untimely' work we engage in as academic feminists.

In the neoliberal university where new managerialist practices suppress dissenting voices, where increased measurement and calls for innovation enforce conformity via vigorous competition, Liz finds that it is through writing that she can subvert 'the libidinal economy':

> If I'm being nice and being quiet and being seen to be subservient, the way that I can be subversive in another context is through writing and feeling that sense of no, there is no censorship. I don't have to feel censored by what I write. I can write whatever I like.

For Briony, Women's Studies offer her a vocabulary and empowering language from which to articulate inequalities. As an undergraduate student coming to the poetic prose of Cixous and other writers like Lorde, hooks, and Monique Wittig offered her a new way of writing those new words. It was a revelation. The poetic genre can in many ways be more verbally explicit in that it can reveal contradictions in dominant discourses that other forms of writing and speaking cannot (Gal 1991, p. 194). When she reads Cixous, Briony feels Cixous' presence permeates the space; like a warm whisper in your ear, forcing you to touch the hairs on the back of your neck, to look around, to stretch your body as you ponder her words. It was a surprise at first, how affecting Cixous can be, but now many years later when Briony returns to Cixous' work time and time again Cixous' arrival in the room is like that of an old friend, a weary traveller through the years, and not least a complicated and sometimes maddening companion, but Cixous is always there when you seek her out. The spectre of Cixous can be quite the comedian, offering reflections and anecdotes and theory all wrapped together into one frustratingly layered gift, simultaneously defined and ambiguous. But the poetics of Cixous and others is not merely a stylistic device. It is employed to disrupt the phallogocentric text (Hölpf 2000). Writing in the feminine allows us to break the constraints of the masculine tradition of academic writing and to speak in a way that

is not mere lip service to a neoliberal institution that seeks to profit from a feminist politic.

## Emergent Feminist Methods: Ruptures and Secrets

Research methodology is inextricably linked to the status of women in higher education and standing alongside Cixous in this book are other strong and inspiring women's voices from the academy who have willingly placed themselves within the field of disruptive feminist academic writing practice. Ruth Behar (1996, p. 162) positions herself as a 'Woman of the border: between places, between identities, between languages, between cultures, between longings and illusions, one foot in the academy and one foot out' in her work *The vulnerable observer*: *Anthropology that breaks your heart* and seeks to research and write in a feeling-as-sensing-as-knowing way that matters. Laurel Richardson's text (1997) *Fields of play*: *Constructing an academic life* presents a series of feminist post structural experimental essays to search for ways to engage with concepts of 'reflexivity, authority, authorship, subjectivity, power, language, ethics, representation' so that we might 'write ourselves into our texts with intellectual and spiritual integrity' (p. 2). Carolyn Ellis (2004), in her book *The Ethnographic I*: *A methodological novel about autoethnography*, intentionally combines the self, fiction, and ethnography to write about the material, emotional, and affective dimensions of social experience, and in doing so, contests the binaries of creativity and analysis. The social fiction works, *Low-fat love* (2012b) and *Blue* (2015) by Patricia Leavy make it possible for story as life to become life as story and importantly, demonstrate the ways in which fiction as research might become intertextual in its capacity to speak to all of us. Reading her work we imagine and see ourselves as each and every character and thereby experience the power of reflection to change the ways which we might become in the world. These are but some examples of feminist academic textual practice which we have found inspiring, largely because they reject the notion that our writing must be distant and dispassionate, and instead, 'yearn to theorise in a more passionate way' (Livholts 2012, p. 6). By putting the 'flesh of life on the bones of experience' (after Holman Jones 1998), such writing acknowledges that there is no dividing line between our academic lives and our academic writing—the personal truly becomes the political as phrases, paragraphs, and pages come into being, so much so that the use of our embodied and emotioned voices is a way we might '[break] the disembodied flow' of academic writing (Potts and Price 1995, p. 100).

Such a rupture is important to us. This book's traditional academic structure is broken, or perhaps more appropriately, built upon the presence of several interludes or vignettes of our interview participants' experiences of 'talking feminist' as well as being speckled throughout the chapters themselves. Sometimes an argument escapes us. It cannot be contained. It spills out from its appropriate bookends and leaves us questioning. This is the kind of 'untimely writing' that Livholts refers to, writing that 'appears unexpectedly, disturbing and interrupting the un-named hegemonic style' (2012, p. 7). The creative anecdotes preceding each chapter purposefully hover in the in-between spaces, disrupting the ever-present libidinal economy and what constitutes an academic text. These are characterised as short narratives which describe a personal and intimate incident and tell us something about ourselves as feminist researchers and our interview participants. Mike Michaels observes that 'such narratives become anecdotes by virtue of their telling' (2012, p. 25). Anecdotes are self-reflective narratives broadly situated within the fields of auto/ethnographies. They capture the mundane everyday as well as documenting something out of the ordinary and unusual. It enacts both difference and sameness and allows us to interrogate that which is taken-for-granted.

> Ruby sat down at her desk in the room she calls her own and began to write what she imagined to be autoethnography. She was a trained anthropologist and new all about how to 'write culture' and loved a good story. As words began to take shape on the page she saw her autoethnographic writing become heartlines; letters and phrases, and then soon enough whole essays, which through their own flesh and blood, breathed life into the possibility of her becoming. Writing-as-heartlines began to decorate her sleeve, first one and then the other. The heartlines wrote themselves in white ink and Ruby saw in that moment that they belonged to the undutiful—daughters or otherwise—who delighted in the ethico-onto-epistemological disturbances and diffractions possible in the moment of writing. Ruby watched as through writing heartlines the personal become political became pedagogical became performative became thinking-full, theory-full, became hand-full and heart-full, full to overflowing. Writing watched Ruby, Ruby watched her writing as together they weaved their heartlines inwards and outwards, back and forth in time and out of time at the self and the social. She watched writing become a beautiful woman laughing, dancing and rejoicing like the Medusa in the power she held for embodied, emotioned and ethical ways of thinking, being and doing autoethnography. Ruby also knew that it would be foolish to remain unaware of the dangers; a heartline is like any other—it can break and be tossed ruthlessly aside by others, once, twice and many

> times over but Ruby is not afraid; she knows from her heart to her hand, that 'censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time… your body must be heard' (Cixous 1976, p. 880).

The autoethnographic moment is performative both for the researcher and the researched and the anecdote is a way of incorporating that explicit performativity. It is a means of writing the self 'into the narrative in order to problematise the authorial voice' (Michaels 2012, p. 28). Interviews and our autoethnographic self-reflections are always constructed and only ever partial and so in focusing on these intimate encounters that come out of our interviews and our own experiences we hope to complicate this as well as capture how these incidents are affectively charged and highly recognisable. Unlike typical forms of autoethnography, Michaels (2012) suggests that the anecdote serves as a means for tracing the co-emergence of research, researcher and researched. The anecdote is methodologically tacit in that it both adheres to and escapes the particular confines and productivities of its discipline and so this book attempts to push the methodological limits of anecdotes as a form of feminine writing.

These intimate encounters not only capture a moment that becomes a resource we can study but the performative aspect of writing these anecdotes also reveals a process of *becoming* in the research process. What we hope to capture in the stories of our interview participants is what Cixous describes as 'the eternity of the instant' (Cixous [1998] 2005, p. 30). The immense range of emotions, the minute detail of a fleeting moment. This is what Cixous does when she writes. She consciously attempts to write in the moment (Blyth 2004). She attempts to capture what is 'appearing and disappearing *in the same moment*' (Cixous qtd. in Blyth 2004, p. 77):

> The moment a something flashes…I try to note it down because I know that five minutes later its itness will have vanished totally, even from my memory. It's not because I am a miser, it's simply because this is absolutely exceptional: it's something that has been given, which is irreplaceable and if I don't make the effort to note it down immediately it's as if it never had happened.

Michaels notes that 'performativity lies in the way prior events come to enact the storyteller' (2012, p. 26). These stories illuminate critical reflection and reorientation that make them full of relevance (Michaels 2012, p. 33). Michaels asserts that anecdotes, while they may trouble the notion

of traditional research methods they expose how our relationship to them is not simply in terms of 'analytic fodder' (2012, p. 34). There is an impossibility in recording such moments, in writing the present *after* the present has passed and Cixous realises this (Blyth 2004). Writing cannot capture everything but through writing these moments are spoken and in speaking there can also be a letting go.

Narrative with its emphasis on storytelling is often positioned in opposition to science and so to, to rationality. Narrative and anecdotes could be identified as a feminine method of research and writing. Such an assumption reinforces the gender binary, and yet positioning a narrative approach in this way is also a gendered act that seeks to destabilise such a polarising construct; indeed, Cixous contends that 'the masculine-conjugal subjective economy' is invested in the maintenance of the gender binary (1976, p. 888). In these creative anecdotes we deliberately make repetitious use of the phrase 'the women'. For French post-structuralists like Cixous, Irigaray, and Wittig, the French collective, plural feminine pronoun *elles*, meaning *they* in English, escapes its cultural and biological femininity, and particularly in Wittig's *Les guerilleres*, it allows Wittig's Amazonian, female warriors, freedom from the categories of wife and woman (Rosenfeld 1981). In English, this revolutionary etymological act has less impact than in the works of Wittig, yet our engagement with the pronominal 'the women' is not merely a superficial stylistic imitation. Nor is it to homogenise women's experiences. What it does is that it allows us to critically explore the multiplicity and fluidity of feminist academic identities and voices.

Indeed, we are keenly aware of the intersectional nature of feminist subjectivities. Attempts to theorise women's experiences in feminist discourse are heavily criticised by women who sit outside white-middle-class Western hegemony as nothing more than tokenistic discussions of race, or analyses which exclude race altogether and make whiteness invisible. At this point in this text, we begin to twist and turn uneasily—we are mindful that feminism has a particularly 'white' façade, colonial foundation, and exclusionary reputation. We are also wide awake to the fact that our subjectivities as white cis-gendered colonial settler middle class women place us firmly in the centre of such critique. Sandy Grande (2003) calls this type of 'racially' exclusive, conveniently ignorant and undeniably neo-colonial feminism, 'whitestream' to allude to the ways in which such feminists conveniently side-step, mis-align and refuse a dialogue with such

uncomfortable entanglements. Echoing similar criticisms by Huggins (1998) and Moreton-Robinson (2000), Grande uses the term 'ludic feminists', to refer to feminist scholars who have redefined politics as a 'purely academic exercise' (p. 331) and questions the interests that theorising 'other' women by whitestream ludic feminists really serve. In this text, the 'other' women are by and large women like us—women who are not necessarily and always already performing a distinctive form of whiteness, but who occupy a particular kind of educated and class privilege because we have rooms of our own in various sizes in universities. The issue of race is another 'stuck place' we find ourselves in as we write this book—it is not a clear analytical category but it sits with us, hovering at the edges of our discussion, reminding us that there is a conversation still to have.

Cixous' multiplicity sits as a category which assumes sameness yet insists on difference across the boundaries of race. She asserts that, 'there is at this time, no general woman, no one typical woman'. Cixous' universal 'woman' is an attempt to destabilise an essentialised woman. There is much criticism (Glass 2010) towards Cixous' ahistorical gesture, which in its liberating utopian vision masks race and class divisions, rendering the experiences and struggles of women of colour, the impoverished, and the elderly invisible. Cixous romanticises blackness and appropriates the experiences of 'otherness' when she claims women as 'darkness' reinforcing racialised representations through her appropriation of Africa, 'because you are Africa', Cixous claims, 'you are black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous' (1976, p. 877–878). Kathy Glass finds that Cixous 'lapses into essentialism via racially charged figurative language' (2010, p. 226).

For Lorde, ignoring difference enables the status quo and white privilege to flourish unfettered. She urges white women to face the realities of our various raced, classed, sexed orientations and subjectivities within the category of 'woman' and recognise how these distinctions produce 'difference in oppressions' (Lorde 1984, p. 112). As Cixous observes, 'Men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously, violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilise their immense strength against themselves, to be the executants of their virile needs' (1976, p. 878). We have in many ways been taught to internalise sexist and racist assumptions. In Cixous' words, we must 'kill the false woman' or in hooks' words, we need to 'acknowledge and confront the enemy within' ([1984] 1997, p. 398-99). For hooks, self-reflection is critical to the process of change. She argues that 'before we can resist

male domination we must break our attachment to sexism; we must work to transform female consciousness' ([1984] 1997, p. 398). To allow ourselves to be self-reflective, to be vulnerable, and to be 'willing' to create change, Lorde challenges us to consider our place in such systems of oppression. This, Glass (2010) summarises, allows us to challenge racist patriarchal norms and seek out 'new ways of being in the world' (Lorde 1984, p. 111). Furthermore, both Lorde and hooks argue that engaging in women's diversity is essential to the feminist movement. Women's commonality is in their diversity. Voices are heard and meaningful dialogue emerges when we are willing to challenge our centrality and are willing to have our identities 'fractured and rebuilt' (Paris 1995 qtd. in Glass 2010, p. 228). Approaching *l'écriture feminine* as a methodology recognises and allows a layering of multiple voices and narratives that are shifting, fluid, mobile, and ambiguous (Irigaray 1985, p. 233).

In our feminist methodological and epistemological approach we want to be able to capture both the macro politics of the university and the affective states of working in, researching and teaching in the contemporary university. We concur with Gill (2010) that research into the experiences of female academics is not an excuse to have 'a good old moan' and it is precisely because of this gendered presumption that women's conversations about workplace experiences are only heard as 'moaning'; 'as an expression of complaint or unhappiness, rather than being formulated as an analysis of a (political) demand for change' (Gill 2010, p. 230), that this research becomes so important. To be unhappy, to complain, to go against the grain even if that means going against the 'happiness script' is to be a feminist killjoy (Ahmed 2010, p. 70). We are proud feminist troublemakers and to demonstrate the significance of how and why we speak and write as feminists, as well as uncover when and how feminist voices are muted, and why some voices may choose to remain silent, we experiment with several inventive and emergent feminist methods.

Ahmed (2010) speaks of feminist researchers as secretaries to invoke the more obscured meaning of the word secretary: that is of a person who is entrusted with secrets, and while Ahmed acknowledges the gendered implications of this term, we find this description aptly fitting. Carol Taylor (2011) uses the term 'intimate insider' primarily in relation to the relationship between researchers and their pre-existing friendships with informants. Dana Cuomo and Vanessa Massaro (2016) build upon

Taylor's term 'intimate insiders' to describe their experiences as feminist geographers and the complex negotiations that take place when doing feminist fieldwork. This term 'intimate insiders' could indeed be expanded to include feminist academics working within and against the neoliberal university and in the case of this book, we both reside (relatively) permanently in the locations in which we are researching. Taylor (2011, p. 9) describes this 'intimate insider research' is research conducted in:

> A contemporary cultural space with which the researcher has regular and ongoing contact; where the researcher's personal relationships are deeply embedded in the field; where one's quotidian interactions and performances of identity are made visible; where the researcher has been and remains a key social actor within the field and thus becomes engaged in a process of self-interpretation to some degree; and where the researcher is privy to undocumented historical knowledge of the people and cultural phenomenon being studied.

This is a question of feminist epistemology. This is not just an important question for us as researchers, but also perhaps for the feminist academic women we interviewed because to name gender or racial discrimination 'can be an act of disloyalty, which is at once a form of disobedience; an act which refuses the veil of secrecy offered by diversity' (Ahmed 2010, p. xviii). In this way, feminist research can be understood as a form of praxis, 'a way of knowing that transforms what is known' (Ahmed 2010, p. xx). Biographical material exposes personal encounters and intimate experiences. Experiences that Gill (2010) reflects, are often kept secret or silenced that don't have 'proper channels' of communication. The challenges facing women in academia are well documented, as Davis (1997, p. 185) points out, taken alone, such experiences of marginalisation and misogyny might not seem particularly dramatic. The drama, however, 'is rather in their routine and systematic character. They are personal, but by no means idiosyncratic. Every feminist academic will have her own collection of atrocity tales'.

Belonging to feminist communities, as David (2014) observes, means that questions of anonymity and confidentiality are never straightforward. Ahmed suggests that: 'sometimes we need not keep secrets with which we are entrusted even if this means we become untrustworthy. What we do with what we are entrusted—whether we speak up or keep silent—remains an important question' (2010, p. xx). The women interviewed welcomed the opportunity to share their experiences and relished the opportunity to talk feminist during our interviews. This is not to ignore

the vulnerability we feel when we share such secrets. We are indebted to the women interviewed for the ways in which their insights have supported and enabled us to develop feminist critiques. Our sense of security in our intellectual ventures as feminist academics can feel, at times, fragile and precarious in the neoliberal university. David (2014) observes that in our belonging to such social groups as feminists in academia we must recognise that our ideas and views are never fully our own. We must 'let go of the fantasies of "writing" as autonomous intellectual work' (Potts and Price 1995, p. 99). There is no singular authorised feminist voice (Potts and Price 1995; Stanley 1997; Wise and Stanley 1993). Our work is collaborative and a product of our belonging to a community of scholars and activists (David 2014). Rather than this being a limitation, this acknowledgement serves to strengthen feminist research.

## (In)decision

As we bring this chapter to a close, we want to avoid the 'Eurocentric masculinist validation process' (Hill Collins 1990) of 'concluding' with neatly packaged up statements about what we feel to be the 'Truth' of writing theoretically and methodologically with Cixous and Ahmed. Our first and enduring reflection is that, notwithstanding the raced and classed hierarchies inherent in academia, universities are incredibly privileged spaces. They are places where we are encouraged, and we encourage others, to write and to speak, and to critically engage with language and discourse. Writing then, is a part of our livelihood as academics, and writing with Cixous and Ahmed—at least for now—provides a creative strategy for making it possible and permissible to challenge post-feminist and neoliberal discourses. Moreover, the more we write with Cixous and Ahmed, the more we sense that writing-as-speaking with/in willfulness makes room for a 'collectivising' of women's voices—we use the phrase 'the women' throughout to make our shared subjectivities and performativities visible. While many of the stories are from individual women, our own experiences tell us that they are also shared by many women in many different institutions. Thus for us, writing in the feminine is a way of rethinking the gendered speaking/writing binary. Cixous invites us to unleash our creative powers, and Ahmed invites us to do so with willfulness. We are not 'always already' sure however how close we might have come to this intention and sense that we would prefer to remain in the 'stuck place' that writing within/against the academy positions us.

# The Willful Writing-Is-Speaking-Is-Publishing Feminist Academic Body: A Conversation Between Cixous and Ahmed

*Setting*

*It is five o'clock on a Friday afternoon somewhere in the world. The two women sit down at their respective computers and smile. Six months prior they had decided to embark upon a feminist research project together and now they were preparing to 'write up' their 'findings' for publication.*

*The stage is split into two distinct rooms.* LIZ MACKINLAY *flips a sign on her office door that reads 'Caution, Woman writing. Enter at your own risk, or better yet, please come back another time! Thank you for your understanding.' She then walks across the room pulls out the office chair behind the desk in her office and sits down, fingers poised above the keyboard in front of her desktop PC, a cup of tea steams in a mug on the desk beside her.* BRIONY LIPTON *sits at home cross-legged and hunched over on a sofa, Macbook resting on her lap, several take-away coffee cups litter the low coffee table in front of her. A sign upstage left diagonally behind the sofa reads: 'Post-Grad Hot Desk' and three students play musical chairs around one small computer chair.*

*The women do not need to be in the same room to write together or even be in the same time zone for they know each other's work well. But more than this, academic time has become a commodified product in the neoliberal university. The women feel increased pressures to produce, to publish research. They feel the presence of increased expectations around the attainment of grants, and increased demands to innovate in teaching and learning. Frequent restructuring, intensified workloads, the rise in a casualised academic workforce and short-term contracts, and reliance on the use of online technologies all place individual responsibility upon academics and deflect institutions' accountability to their staff. There is a cultural expectation of long hours and flexibility that comes with academic labour and it goes largely unquestioned. The women click close on the last of the marking they were to tackle that day. Flicking open and minimising Word documents and Internet browsers, they make themselves comfortable.*

*The two women correspond ideas and project plans via telephone and email. Their email chain appears in real-time on a large screen projector positioned centre stage. They are ready to write, but soon realise that they are both quite unsure of what it was they want to say. A voice-over dialogue between* SARA AHMED *and* HÉLÈNE CIXOUS *disrupts the practicalities of* LIZ *and* BRIONY'S *conversation. Perhaps, they surmise, what they*

*might say is not the problem, but rather, the manner in which they might be expected to say it. Individualised time pressures and responsibilities weigh down upon* LIZ *and* BRIONY *seeking to sabotage all that they have worked for collectively. Neither* AHMED *nor* CIXOUS *are particularly fond of conformity, and so they decide in this instance, that poetic playfulness should prevail in the presentation of* LIZ *and* BRIONY'S *manuscript.*

### *Act One*

*Scene One*

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

LIZ: [*reads as she types out an email and clicks send*] Hi Briony, How are you? I hope you made it home to Canberra okay :) It was so nice to see you—a bright blue swoosh on a grey day! Thanks for setting up the manuscript folder on Dropbox—it looks great. I like all of your suggestions. I've included some more in the document.

[*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder]

LIZ: What do you think? The questions about the contract are good questions to ask—would you be happy to email the publisher? There still seems like a lot to do for the book but I am determined to get it done! More soon ... Best wishes.

[*Screen is empty except for the Microsoft rotating hourglass pending activity in the share folder. Finding the work life balance consumes* LIZ. *Each time she sits down to write she immediately has to get up to attend committee meetings, mentor Honours students and prepare for her undergraduate teaching. Documents piles higher and higher on her desk until she cannot see past the mounds of paper. Her cup of tea, now cold remains on the table. She hasn't even had time to drink it.* ]

CIXOUS: 'A woman enters *on stage* as having that strange difference she can only describe in this differential space where she will encounter you. Where does feeling the difference begin? Where does our feeling the difference begin?' (2010/1990, p. 52)
AHMED: 'The will becomes a technique, a way of holding a subject to account, it could be understood as *a straightening device*. If we have this

understanding of will, we would not be surprised by its queer potential. After all, you only straighten what is already bent' (2014, p. 7).
CIXOUS: 'At the exterior floor, 'up above', at the floor of the semblance—of myself—of order. Below, next door, we are always adrift. We respond straight ahead and think sideways' (Cixous and Calle-Gruber 1997, p. 9).

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

BRIONY: [*nervously*] Hi Liz, Just checking in on how you feel about the book deadline of March 2016? You have more experience in publishing. Do you think we can have a polished manuscript by March? Or have we set ourselves an impossible deadline?
AHMED: 'Willfulness might be what we do when we are judged as being *not*…not being white, not being male, not being straight, not being able-bodied. Not being in coming up against being can transform being' (2014, p. 15).
LIZ: [*enthusiastically*] Great to hear from you! Are you finishing up for Christmas soon? [LIZ *and* BRIONY *laugh sarcastically at this notion of taking a holiday break*] Today is my last day in my office—I hope I can work from home after that.
CIXOUS: There's no room for her is she's not a he. If she's a her-she, it's in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the "truth" with laughter' (1976, p. 888).

[LIZ *now sits with her laptop by the pool in her backyard, watching her kids swim. She feels a pull toward the water, to frolic with her sons on this sunny day, and swim away from her work deadlines. Instead she writes about a dark encounter she had last semester and about conversations she had with female colleagues about this idea of 'talking feminist'*]

CIXOUS: 'Writing is working; being worked; questioning (in) the between (letting oneself be questioned) of same *and* of other without which nothing lives; undoing death's work by willing the togetherness of one-another' (1994, p. 43).
AHMED: 'Research involves being open to being transformed by what we encounter' (2014, p. 13).

[*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder][*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

LIZ: [*texts* BRIONY *a message from her iPad*] Thanks for adding to the chapter—I'll take a look at it today. My writing has gone OK, but I am about two chapters short of finishing...I didn't get the Fellowship [BRIONY *lets out a disappointed exclamation of* '*oh no*']—trying not to feel too sad or dejected!—which means I'll be back at work in full swing in early January. Perhaps we could touch base by phone in the New Year about the book? I haven't heard anything about the Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) grant. I guess no news is good news and I haven't heard that anyone else has heard either...

[BRIONY *still sits on the sofa*, *although now her books and possessions are packed into boxes that crowd her workspace*]

BRIONY: [*dials* LIZ'S *phone number apprehensively*] Hi Liz, how are you going? Have I caught you at a good time? [*laughs awkwardly- there is never a* '*good*' *time*] Oh, okay. Yes, well. I was wondering, since I have to move out of my place... and there's been all these upfront costs with moving that my scholarship just can't cover...Yeah, I'm moving in with a bunch of other PhD students temporarily...I don't have enough time to type up our interview transcripts and just can't afford...
LIZ: I'm happy to pay for the transcription – that's no trouble.
BRIONY: [*sighs with relief but still feels guilty*] Oh thanks so much, Liz! I think this will really help, what with our deadline coming up and all...
[*Hangs up phone*]

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

*Scene Two*

[*Back at their respective institutions*]

BRIONY: [*emails* LIZ] Happy New Year! Hope you had a restful break. We had a lovely time on the NSW central coast. I've had some ideas over the break.
AHMED: [*cheers at* BRIONY'S *revelation*] 'There is agency in this becoming; *there is life*' (2014, p. 47).

BRIONY: I think we have to smash the traditional academic structure of a book in order to talk-write feminist. I think you are right, we need to be more explicitly creative with this book. Perhaps breaking the chapters up with a series of short affective pieces, say 500 words each? The interludes would be an example of *écriture feminine*, and they would also be a sort of continuous narrative of some of our and our interview participant's experiences of speaking and being silenced and the complexities around our argument. What do you think? It's just an idea.
CIXOUS: 'I never dream of mastering or ordering or inventing concepts. Moreover I am incapable of this. I am overtaken. All I want is to illustrate, depict fragments, events of human life and death, each unique and yet at the same time exchangeable. Not the law, the exception' (1994, p. xxii).
BRIONY: I've attached a rough chapter outline here of what I think needs to go into each of the chapters. It would be good to set some drafting deadlines as well don't you think? [*Another pile of papers falls from the sky onto* LIZ'S *desk*] Especially since you'll be back teaching by late Feb. I am worried though, about what the publisher will think. Would Friday or Monday be a good time to have a chat on the phone about the book? Talk soon!
AHMED: 'Thinking through how will relates to the past as well as the future, and how the will is thus never quite present or in the time we are in' (2014, p. 19).
CIXOUS: 'The future must no longer be determined by the past. I do not deny that the effects of the past are still with. But I refuse to strengthen them by repeating them, to confer upon them an irremovability the equivalent of destiny' (1976, p. 875).
AHMED: 'When you stray from the official paths, you create desire lines, faint marks on the earth, as traces of where you or others have been. A willfulness archive is premised on hope: the hope that those who wander away from the paths they are supposed to follow leave their footprints behind' (2014, p. 21).

[*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder]

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

[*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder]

BRIONY: Hi Liz, Can I be a terrible pain and ask to reschedule our telephone chat until Wednesday? Pregnancy has left me feeling really drained and something has come up tomorrow and I won't have my

laptop with me and it would be good to be next to the computer while we discuss the book. Hope Monday isn't too busy for you.
AHMED: [*referring to* BRIONY] 'She is a powerful container' (2014, p. 17).
CIXOUS: 'We, the sowers of disorder, know it only too well' (1976, p. 884)…'Another thing, since I am on the side of the body: this text is full of bodily expressions, excretions, secretions, effusions' (2010/1990, p. 53).
AHMED: 'I hope to return concepts to bodies' and your words indeed remind me of 'how words leak into worlds' (2014, p. 18).
CIXOUS: 'Everything is lost except words. This is a child's experience: words are our doors to all the other worlds' (Cixous p. xxvii).).
AHMED: 'Words can smother us, enrage us; they can leave us full or empty. When they touch us they create an impression' (2014, p. 18).
LIZ: Hi Briony, Sure, no problem! Hope everything is okay. Hope you and bub are okay. Please rest when you need to. I am in meetings most of the morning on Wednesday but should be free by 2 pm our time, is that ok?

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

BRIONY: [*types out an email to* LIZ *and closes her laptop. She stands up and two removalists take the sofa away*] Quick update, all the chapters are still a bit choppy but I've tried to make some head way with analysis in chapters 3 and 4 and I've started to cluster some interview material for chapter 5. I still haven't added all my parts to chapter 2 so that chapter is looking a bit crazy. It all looks a bit of a mess but there are about 20,000 words all up so far. I'll stop working on all of the documents in about an hour. This weekend I've got to work on an abstract for a special issue journal that I'd like to be considered for, oh and I leave Canberra in less than 2 weeks time. We are all packed up but I still have to take my driver's test before I leave. I'm really sorry for the awful state of the draft. I'll need to do a lot more editing. Let me know when you want to talk about the manuscript.
LIZ: That's fantastic that you have a draft ready—words are words and once they are there we can work with them—well done! I'm starting the writing chapter today—it should be a nice interval from my other academic writing. Have a great day!

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder][*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder]

LIZ: Hi Briony, Tuesday morning would be great. Would you like to make a time? We are having a double celebration tonight—Hamish was elected as a Grade 5 student council rep and is very excited—he had to give a speech and everything, a big deal when you are 10. I remember that feeling of being forgetful really well when I was pregnant with both boys, I'm not sure it ever leaves you! Take care and hope you have a great weekend :)
CIXOUS: 'When I was a young child. At the time I did not know what would become of me. But already I lived with two worlds: with the world and its writing; with the world and what was written on it' (1997, p. 95), 'I do not think there are many writers who will have been magic enough, child enough' (1997, p. 103).
AHMED: 'I too was called a willful child' (2014, p. 18), 'the figure of the willful subject—often but not always a child, often but not always female, often by not always an individual—has become so familiar' (2014, p. 17).
LIZ: How are you going this week? I haven't been able to do very much since last weekend but hope to get some time tomorrow and Wednesday. Hope you are and baby are travelling well! Will you be in Sydney for Easter? Should we chat before then?

[*Screen is empty except for the Microsoft rotating hourglass pending activity in the share folder. Briony sits expectedly in a busy hospital waiting room, looking at her watch, and at her phone, holding onto her protruding belly. She worries about the unfinished book manuscript. She worries what people will think. She worries about how all these worries will worry the baby.*]

AHMED: 'I think of this as a life paradox: *you have to become what you are judged as being*' (2014, p. 144).
CIXOUS: A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic: as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there's no other way (1976, p. 888).
AHMED: 'Willfulness represents a moment of crisis in the system of property: willful objects are unwilling to provide residence for will' (2014, p. 47).
LIZ: [*anxiously types email to publisher relaying news*] I am writing to update you on the progress of our manuscript. Unfortunately, it has not come together as quickly as we had hoped. We are finalising the text now but need a little more time to complete and proof read, and to ask colleagues for endorsements. Briony and I are hoping you might

consider granting us an extension of our submission deadline to April. If you could get back to us as soon as possible that would be great. Thanks and best wishes. [LIZ'S *computer beeps to indicate she has received an email reply*] Thank you so much for your email. This is wonderful news—we very much appreciate it!
CIXOUS: 'One cannot speak the same type of language or use the same literary form on every occasion for every scene' (1994, p. xvi).

*Scene Three*

[*If the women are to finish this manuscript they must unburden themselves of self-imposed deadlines, word counts and structures. They must take care of themselves and write with their bodies*].

CIXOUS: 'A woman's body, with its thousand and one thresholds of ardor—once, by smashing yokes and censors, she lets it articulate the profusion of meanings that run through it in every direction—will make the old single-grooved mother tongue reverberate with more than one language' (1976, p. 885).
AHMED: 'Happiness follows for those who will right. Those who will wrong still will happiness' (2014, p. 4).
CIXOUS: 'She too gives *for*. She too, with open hands, gives herself—pleasure, happiness, increased value, enhanced self-image. But she doesn't try to "recover her expenses". She is able not to return to herself, never settling down, never pouring out, going everywhere to the other. She does not flee extremes; she is not the being-of-the-end (the goal), but she is how-far-being-reaches' (1994, p. 44).

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

CIXOUS: 'It begins with the remains—which are not and are not being' (1997, p. 132).

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

AHMED: 'Mere persistence can be an act of disobedience' (2014, p. 2).

[*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder]

CIXOUS: 'Thanks to their history, women today know (how to do and want) what men will be able to conceive of only much later' (1976, p. 888).

[*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder][*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

> CIXOUS: 'Writing is the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me—the other that I am and am not, that I don't know how to be, but that I feel passing, that makes me live—that tears me apart, disturbs me, changes me, who?—a feminine one, a masculine one, some?—several, some unknown, which is indeed what gives me the desire to know and from which all life soars' (1994, p. 42).

## (Not) The End

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