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**Écriture matière: a text that matters**

Abstract:

In the mid 1970s, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray (among others) famously placed a call for women to write their bodies as a way to break the bonds of patriarchal language structures and create a space for women's writing by using the form now most commonly known as *écriture féminine*. For the last three years I have written a book called *all the beginnings: a queer autobiography of the body*, and what I have discovered is that *écriture féminine* is not enough. How can *écriture féminine* describe this particular body, that is genderqueer, and tattooed, and has lost its womb? What if, instead of *écriture féminine*, there was *écriture matière*? What if every body, when allowed to write, to tell stories, to speak, was able to enact a form of narrative and civil disobedience, an unerasing of the corporeal from text? This paper is the development of the concept of *écriture matière*, a call for all bodies to write themselves, as they find themselves, in this moment, now. It is a call to create a generative textual and material space that is anything but exclusionary: a text that matters.

Biographical note:

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Keywords:

Creative Writing – Queer writing – body – Hélène Cixous – rhizome – abject – touch – Jean-Luc Nancy

## Being born

When we tell the story of the body (when a body tells its story) we are telling the story of mothers. Because

there is always one body too many in one's life. Each mother. Each child. The same body (Brossard 1983: 15).

And so I begin where I began: belonging to some other body. Being kept alive by placental beat, swimming in someone else's fluid, kicking from the inside, learning first a world of the senses, a world of organs and flesh.

This is how I know my m(other): by the sound of undulating bowel, throbbing heart, catching breath, rushing veins, muffled voice.

This is how I know my m(other): by the feel of uterine walls that I am already trying to push my way out from, by the press of organs all around me (bladder filling, liver wrapping, intestine pulsing).

This is how I know my m(other): by the flavour of amniotic fluid. Today it is chilli. Yesterday vanilla. Tomorrow cinnamon and ginger. These are smells that I don't smell, but imbibe. These are smells that are pulled in through my nostrils on a small fluid wave because I don't know air yet. I am laced with aromatics. I am basted. Every day I am a different cooked creature, ready to be served.

This is how I know my m(other): by the taste of her. Gingerbread on the worm that is my tongue but I never know what will come next. Her body is teaching me about the world one sense at a time: every sense at the same time.

This is how I know my m(other): by ruby red flutter love light streaming dark caressing orange casting blackened bruised pushing. Colour from the inside is muted and disturbed. No direct light. An abject spectrum. The dream of sun.

This is how I learn about love: in the violence of the senses. In the inside. In the outside coming in. There is no space for imaginary anatomy (Lacan 1953: 13) here. I am not an idea. I am not a subject. I am not a fight, or a dream, or the makings of some otherness that wants to sculpt or mould or believe. I am corporeal scream. I am flesh and guts turning in a world made only for me.

I am ginger seed. I am becoming-baby. She is becoming-m(other). We are the 'unfolding of difference in time' (May 2003: 147). This is not the fixing of identity. This is all of time, pushed up behind the body that carries and the body that is carried. We are not not-same. We are difference without the need to turn to negation (May 2003: 144). We are a thousand plateaus, trembling. Together, we are the Body without Organs (BwO), which is

a becoming, the opposite of a childhood memory. It is not the child "before" the adult, or the mother "before" the child: it is the strict contemporaneousness of the adult, of the adult and the child, their map of comparative densities and intensities, and all of the variations on that map (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 164).

Together, we are a map that is the folding paper you hold in your hands, that you touch and that simultaneously touches you back.

Together, we are the BwO which is

the egg. But the egg is not regressive; on the contrary, it is perfectly contemporary, you always carry it with you as your own milieu of experimentation (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 164).

Together, we are pulsing roads. A tracery through porcelain shell. A shining seed. Our own milieu of experimentation. We are poetry. We are the thingness of the thing. We are one moment, in time, reverberating.

And then, I am born. From the inside, it looks like this: push, wrench, the way a scalpel is almost nothing when you can't see the handle or the hand that moves it. Just a silver point moving down to make space: world-opener, light-bringer, flesh-slicer. Bleeding cut. More blood. Silver scoops coming for my skull, wrinkled walls made smooth, neck stretched (I will break I will break I will break). The way that nothing could prepare me for air, or light. The devastation of the world: the way that light comes from one place and every place simultaneously and makes no apology for entering the eye like a shard, for cutting through the cornea, for slicing images in at me. Air. The assault of breath. My m(other) slack on the bed behind me, being stitched back together. So much loss. Such mutual grief that is wiped away along with her blood. They make us clean.

They make me clean and I hate them for it. I want to climb back in. Give me vernix and amniotic fluid. Give me diffuse light and muffled voice. Give me body temperature, cinnamon and ginger, afloat, the song of the not yet born. Give me chora and then take certain things too. Because at the moment of birth, we enter time. There is a stamp. Mine is 2:54pm. Take my time stamp. Take light with a source. Take sound that comes loudly from all around, and cold cots, and a tube down my throat. I am not ready. I am too early. I am uncooked. Let me climb back in.

### **This body, writing**

*Écriture féminine*: the writing of the feminine body. This is what grabbed me. The swoon of Cixous. Every time I read her I felt as if she reverberated through my bones; jumped into my ribcage and rattled there, desperately. Yes, I must write my body. I must let it tell its story. And so that is what I have done. In the last three years, thousands and thousands of words have been laid down, and spoken, and performed, and read. This body, finally, has been allowed to speak.

Is it *écriture féminine*, this writing? Yes, and no. How can a feminine writing come from a body that finds its second skin in steel capped boots and torn jeans? Cixous speaks to this body, but then stops. What is this, this *féminine*? It is more than feminine, this I know. It is aligned with sexuality, it is the underplay of woman, but it seems to always want to stand in opposition with masculine. There is the sense that it will be one or the other. Woman is silenced, man silences. Woman is *jouissance*, man purpose.

*In body/Still more*: woman is body more than man is. Because he is invited to social success, to sublimation. More body hence more writing ... Woman, who has run her

tongue ten thousand times seven times around her mouth before not speaking, either dies of it or knows her tongue and her mouth better than anyone. Now, I-woman am going to blow up the Law: a possible and inescapable explosion from now on; let it happen, right now, in language (Cixous and Clement 1986: 95).

Woman, when she speaks, risks expulsion and explosion. Man speaks and immediately succeeds.

At the end of three years of this body, writing, something gnaws at the edges. This body doesn't want *écriture féminine*. It wants writing that is queered and queering. It wants to trans the dance that is poetry and that is he and she, it and them, here and there, now and then. It wants to perform. It wants to find itself in gaps, in leaks, in chasms, in splits. It is certainly Barthes's writing aloud. It is undoubtedly found *in there*, somewhere, away from intervention, from pinning down, from the tyranny of genre, of binaries, of feminine and masculine.

So this is what happens next (or before, which is now-then): surgery. A womb, removed. No cervix, no fallopian tubes, no uterus. Ovaries, hanging. Eggs floating into fluid with nothing to catch them. And when this body comes up, out of anaesthetic, into a hospital room, with a catheter and drain and drip, it is suddenly middle aged, it has jumped menopause, it is no longer sure of what it is. It cannot pin itself down. It cannot reproduce. It will cycle but not bleed. To find itself, it goes back to Cixous. 'Write yourself: your body must make itself heard. Then the huge resources of the unconscious will burst out' (Cixous and Clement 1986: 97). But then she says this: 'finally the inexhaustible feminine Imaginary is going to be deployed' (Cixous and Clement 1986: 97). The imaginary is most certainly about to be deployed, but a feminine one?

The project I undertake is this: to perform the figuration of this body; a cartography of the corporeal which 'is a living map, a transformative account of the self – it is no metaphor' (Braidotti 2002: 3). When I map my body, when I utter all that is in this corporeal moment (because every moment holds every other moment) I describe difference. Not difference as in *I am not this, or you are not that*, but Deleuzoguattarian difference. Difference that is 'not reduced to the banality of the negative' (Deleuze 1994: 51). Difference that comes first, that is the precondition for not only the text that follows, but for the body that has lived the text that follows.

I do this not in 'an attempt to change the rules of the game (of language and signification)... but [as] an attempt to challenge the game itself, by abstracting thinking and narrowing down the focus to the micro, the molecular, the singular, the imperceptible' (Nigianni and Storr 2009: 5). This body is singular and multiple. It is connected and outstreaming, but simultaneously held within the borders of its skin. It is Deleuze and Guattari's Body without Organs, which is an egg (1987: 164) that doesn't hold me, because it already is me. It is an egg that knows everything and nothing about difference. It is its own milieu. It pleasures itself from the inside out. It is cracking open on this page, but it will repair.

What if, when I write this body, I am making something real, that is taken up by other bodies, that read this body, writing? What if the act of writing the body is a kind of 'poiesis, an activity of production, from praxis, an activity of action' (Kristeva quoted

in Pont 2011: 3)? What if the textual body that lies here, on this page, pinned, under your fingers, is substantive, and sends its echo out, to reverberate in ‘the real’. What if I write about breast cancer (the thick hard scar that stretches from the middle of my mother’s chest to below her left arm, her now prosthetic flesh) and one woman, while reading, absently reaches up to touch, to hold, the tissue of her own breast and while she is there finds some marker of cellular overthrow, and stands and walks to the phone, to call her doctor, to delay the moment of her own death?

She reads one mother, breastfeeding, and remembers the suck and pull of her own baby, those many years ago, and her hand, with its own will, its own life, places itself upon her breast. Flesh meets flesh. Fingers trace and push as milk slips into her from the page. And there they find a puckering at the nipple, a ditch where before there was only fullness. Adrenalin. A pulse of denial. And then phone, doctor, mammogram, the way cancer looks on a scan: cloudy, dense, the worst kind of proliferation. But caught, caught in time, caught early enough to blast away. She is left with tattooed dots and less hair. Years of vagueness, the sense that all edges are blurred. The knowledge that text unhid what she may not have found.

If ‘this practice of writing is the inventing of life’ (Pont 2011: 16), then I want to say this: writing the body is the inventing of the body. It is the refusal of all of the ways we are taught not to speak about what lies beneath this boundary made from skin. Maintaining a clean and proper body (Kristeva 1982: 4) means obscuring the abject. We are hairless. We do not wet ourselves when we run or jump. Blood does not push through a cervix. We are fluid-less. Writing the body changes this.

Poiesis and praxis: production and action. And in between? In between is life, chora, breath, the sound of my name on your tongue: this distilled text.

Each time I am willing to say I leak, and drool, and gag, and bleed, I am torn, I am stitched, I am cut; someone reads the echo as it shimmers between substance and text and says yes, this. Some other body speaks, and tells the story of itself, and the quantum shiver repeats. Echo. Mirror. Mimesis. We speak. There is nothing more disobedient than this. Performed and performing, reading and read, what you will find here is already not what you seek. Promethean, this textual body is pinned to the page (that once was a rock) and offers her entrails to eagles, willingly. Gape at these insides; where viscera are stroked by sky tell her what you see. Watch as the beat of approaching wings makes her shudder with desire. Reach through the gape, she says. Unfurl this looping gut with a beak so sharp it sings. Paint. Peck. Purloin. I am Promethea, she says (Cixous 1991: 8). I disobey with every breath. Take, and take more. Return in the morrow. I will wait.

### **Doing sex wrong**

How do we speak the unspeakable? I am not the first person to ask this question. I will not be the last.

But I do know this: the feminist sex wars were fought upon my body (Rubin 2011: 32–3). Whether or not I could shave my legs was no small thing in my house. The 1950s had laid themselves down under my mother’s skin, had sewn themselves

through her follicles, and she did not want the same for me. She dreamed of girl children who did not need to take razor blades to themselves, to make themselves smooth for the sake of a look.

The feminist sex wars were fought upon my body. I knew, intuitively, how I should behave between the sheets. There should be soft music, and no penetration, and candles and rose petals (never mind that they looked like bloody stains on my white sheets, or that when I got close, and noticed veins, all I could see was the way flesh looked after too many layers had been peeled back).

I was taught BDSM was nothing except the patriarchy making its way into my desires. BDSM was an enactment of corruption; it was the penis that punishes: the hot blinding moment when every man said no, or down, or stay, to every woman. I was not supposed to like pain, or power exchange, or giving it all away. My desire was more than suspect: it was illegal.

So yes, there was a dungeon. A room at the top of two flights of stairs (dungeons are not always underneath). But there was another room at the top of a different set of stairs. These stairs were dark, and had a hard turn half-way up, and led to a room that belonged to a counsellor. Attic space. A roof that dropped so fast it felt as if it would hit me where I sat. Two chairs. A window that showed chimneys and the Sydney sky. Spiral pictures on the walls. A rug woven from rags spread between us.

A counsellor who sat opposite me, always, so before I could see the sky I had to see her. The feminist sex wars were fought in that room, on my body, but I didn't know that then.

The counsellor started by asking me about my desires. Slowly at first, and then more insistently. I had gone there to get the trauma out, to move past it, to speak it and watch the words come out of me, taking the shakes and jumping at noises and daily panic with them.

I told her the story of the wound. The one that hadn't closed over yet. But also the whole of my sexual history. All of those heated and writhing moments in bedrooms and play spaces laced with leather, the girlfriend with her wolfish canines and greying skin.

I told the counsellor the story of the wound but it was a wound edged with shame, and with the utter belief that I was sick, and with the hope that she would fix me.

She said I was a victim of violence. I argued, quietly (I remembered consent, and the feel of a collar buckled lovingly around my neck: the quantum shiver of desire meeting itself). She argued back. She insisted that I was having the wrong kind of sex. That I should go home and do it like this: gently. Nothing rough. Nothing going in. That it should mostly be holding, and kissing, and breath. Did she mean well? I'm sure she did.

### **The sound a body makes**

This is the sound the body makes when its sexuality is stolen: it is a keening, hollow sound; it is the sound of wind screaming between walls, the sound of a fall that will

never end, of one woman's middle being torn out through scars that have never quite healed over; the places where steel entered and took things that can never be replaced.

This is the sound the body makes when its sexuality is stolen: it is a w/retching sound. It is a scream in the night. It is all of itself, scooped out, and dropped away. It is never. And always. And won't. It is *can't*. It is end.

This is the sound the body makes when its sexuality is stolen: it is a scream that doesn't end, it is the sound of the self moving towards death, of an eternal wound being made.

The wound that hadn't closed over yet was made in a dungeon. It was infected with electricity and rope fibre, with the way eyes feel after a blindfold has been left on too long and then, suddenly, removed, with the smell of wetness burning, with wax, with the way a stranger's hands feel upon flesh. I would carry it for the rest of my life, I thought. This wound, this dark and rhizomatic thing that spread its tendrils into all of me

(the way I had shivered under the touch of a loved one, the hot splatter of wax on warm skin, all of those desires tinged with darkness, with sensation so strong some called it pain)

was the worst, I thought. And to get it out, I would have to write the worst. But '[w]riting the worst is an exercise that requires us to be stronger than ourselves' (Cixous 1993: 42), and I wasn't stronger than myself. I wrote *at* it, but I didn't write it. I wrote the detail, but I couldn't write the happening, the way that room at the top of the stairs (the first room, the dungeon in the sky without a key) became the seed of a ginger plant that I swallowed, and hated, and then loved.

### **Terrestrial plant/body/digging in**

You may have heard Deleuze and Guattari speak about this. *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). What does ginger do? First, it spreads. It goes horizontally under your feet. If a ginger seed is ingested, and takes root in the sternum, it grows all ways. Lie down and it will feel most at ease: horizontal, outspreading, shooting. You might consider that this is an invasion (or an embrace).

It's about the frame; it's about how I think it; I am not this plant nor my self; I am hybrid; botanical; I am named *Zingiber sapiens*. I welcome the root system, the way its browning tendrils bind me together.

The shoots are less welcome. Each morning I find new shoots making their way through the pores of the skin. I know when they are coming. At the start, there is a point. Slightly thicker than a bristle, but green, and with all the intention of growth behind it.

In the beginning, I tried to pull the point out with tweezers, the way I would any errant bristle, but the result was verdant and squashed: plant matter squeezed to nothing between metal prongs.

Eventually I decided to let them grow. There was a strange ecstasy at the moment when the full thickness of the stem finally expanded my pores past a width that they thought they could manage. There was a giddiness that came from the heat of the bulbs that flourished underneath my fascia and turned me lumpy when I let the shoots find sun.

*Zingiber sapiens*: spice, heat, spiking. Spreading, holding. Bound.

Does the metaphor make sense? I cannot speak the dungeon, I cannot speak the room at the top of the stairs. I can tell you the detail, I can say this happened, and this, and this. I can describe certain colours: a stain, the girls downstairs in red and black latex waiting for the next client, for the kettle to boil, for the next cigarette. I can come at the room at the top of the stairs from all corners. I can tell you that I was blindfolded for most of the five hours, and so I am given, for much of it, four senses to work with, not five.

But notice that I pace the edges of this place, this moment. Notice there is no centre. It is a spreading story that finds its way into all other stories. It is trope, symbol, invasion, dream, definition: it is a moment in time that explodes, and in the explosion reaches back to everything that came before and forwards to everything that comes after. It is the opposite of escape.

And the ginger? This plant-human hybrid I've become? This is the reason I didn't recognise the thief in the night. If my very nature was wrong, and if I couldn't recognise my rhizomatic self, the way that my swallowed trauma had grown roots, and found the roots of my desire, and said to those roots

'We are the same,'

then the counsellor could come with her shovel and do her best to dig the ginger out. I thought I would welcome the cut of the spade, the feel of her rough gloves. Get it out. Dig me out.

So she dug. I laid myself down on that therapeutic ground and she dug. What I could not know is that when she tried to turn me back into *Sapiens sapiens*, I would lose (and grieve without knowing what I was grieving) nearly all of my heat. I would be hollow.

What she didn't know, and what I could not know then, is that *Zingiber* cannot be extirpated. She could not entirely dig me out. Root remnants remained. I am remains. Think about potatoes. You have a field. You sow potatoes. You harvest them and eat them while they are still cell pulsing, almost alive. The season finishes. You want the field for something else. But every time you dig, every time you try to plant something new, there they are: upsprouting, sky seeking, shoots that tell you the roots were there all the time. But I didn't know. It was winter in the dirt of my body.

I was hollow. Unhybrid. Unbound. No feeling of rhizomatic roots. I was trauma overtaken by the sound a body makes when its sexuality is stolen: the sound I try to, but cannot write. The sound of less than nothing. The language of mathematics, of quantum physics, is more appropriate here. Give me the formula for an aleph eating

an aleph. Give me a string that describes a negative of a negative of a negative. Explain, with science, how symbiotes, once parted, will perish.

### **A poetics of the abject**

What is required is a poetics of the abject. What is required is a way of describing the pull and push that is this queer *I*. What is required is a writing *into* this place. If I make my peace with the abject (Kristeva 1982: 4), with the thing that makes me simultaneously me and not me, with my waking death, with expulsion and ingestion, with decay, then somehow, I am whole.

A poetics of the abject looks like this: ruby faceted but without angles or the shine that comes from a surface made hard with buffeting. If you could step inside it, it would show you the dream of decay; the way pulling apart makes room for something new; that putrefaction makes way for something else. It looks like levelling and coruscating at exactly the same time. It looks like the excrement that keeps us alive (without expulsion we rot, and die). It is pus yellow and blood red and mucus green. It is what lies between inside and outside. It is everything and nothing. It is what draws your eye, every time. It is the delightful beauty of the obscene. It is you.

A poetics of the abject sounds like this: descent. Bubbling. Making way. It is not rock fall, nor the violence of a scream. It will never touch speech. It is both more and less than human, but it is not animal grunt. You will have to place your ear next to an open wound to catch it: it is the sound that cells make. It is the peristaltic squish of your bowel. It is the hack that comes inside a gag. It is you.

A poetics of the abject smells like this: mango skins left in a hot bin, mould, piss, what happens to clothes that are worn for weeks and not washed, and then tumble dried after a drenching of rain; you will not be able to stay in the same room (the heat, the stench). It smells old, like gangrene, and sharp, like blood metal, and sweet, like nappies filled with shit and then left too long. It is the smell your nose will seek and simultaneously reject. It is you.

A poetics of the abject tastes like this: fizzing yoghurt (you were hungry, and it was all that was left, and so you dug with your spoon underneath the green mould skin and ate anyway), mouldy bread, prawns that have sat under the sun too long, rancid butter, off milk, smoked salmon that was slippery at the start but the slip has turned to slime and you failed to notice the slick of rot before you placed the pink and folded flesh on your tongue. It tastes like blood sucked from a slit in your lover's arm. It tastes like cum. It tastes like going down, and refusing to come back up. It is metal rot heat decay fizz split drip all at once. It is you.

A poetics of the abject feels like this: love. Being enfolded. Wet cotton wool. Pustules popping: the relief of things coming out. A whole fist against my cervix. Wax that was hot and is now dry being peeled off skin. Constricted breath. A bound chest. Crackling lungs. Phlegm making its way up my throat. Splinters being dug out with safety pins. Pain that has depth: being taught the edges of things.

## *Écriture matière*

This body is shy of categories and doesn't like overarching terms. It loves rhizomes outspreading, fungal nets, undergroundness: canopies and ceilings seem wrong. And so it is with some kind of jittering nervousness that it poses this: a true *au revoir* to *écriture féminine*<sup>1</sup>, and an opening to *écriture matière*, or a writing of the material, of matter (what is matter? It is atoms, joined and joining, it is this page, these lines, the body that reads and writes and touches, the soil under your shod feet...).

This body wonders what would happen if *every* body (not just woman's body), when allowed to inhabit the 'scene of writing' (Kirby 1997: 56), to tell stories, to speak, was able to enact a form of narrative and civil disobedience; an unerasing of the corporeal from text? It wonders if there could be a proliferation of *écritures*. It imagines a vast root system (*écriture matière*), that spawns all bodies, writing:

écriture féminine

écriture transgenre

écriture masculine

écriture noire

écriture queer

écriture différence...

It imagines bodies: black, brown, yellow, white, queer, transgender, two-spirited, heterosexual, cis-gendered, able, differently-abled, fat, thin, leaking, surgiered, stumped, twinned, intersexed, hunched, addicted, transformed, modified, tattooed, muscled, overflowing, dripping milk, pregnant, one-breasted, hirsute, shaking, opened, biohacked, distended, catheterised, wounded, grounded, still, near death.

It imagines throwing fragments down, and those fragments meeting, mattering *to each other*, writing matter, writing sense. Writing our worlds.

Because when we write the world, we write time, and space, and self. We are concerned with the ways that we speak. We discover divinity *in* flesh. We stop trying to trace the outsides of things; we allow the other to take up space. We make room for the fragment, the trace.

*Body*, like a piece of bone, a pebble, a stone, a granule, falls right where we need it. Which is why fragments are necessary, here more than anywhere else. In fact, the fragmentation of writing, wherever it occurs (either always and everywhere, or according to a 'genre'), responds to the ongoing protest of bodies in against – writing. An intersection, an interruption: *this breaking into any language, where language touches on sense*. (Nancy 2008: 21, author's italics)

This body, writing, has broken into language. It has made a *Corpus* (Nancy 2008). It hopes that in doing so, a generative process is begun. This body, writing, is always a strange body in a strange land. It belongs only to process, to becoming, to stories, to breath, to desire, to hope. By writing, this is its greatest hope: that it might, in some way, create the beginnings of a 'space that is *ours*', 'the dawn of a spacing, clarity

itself, the risk and chance for *areality* as what we're exposed to, and what exposes us, as *we* – as a *we-world*' (Nancy 2008: 81).

The risk and chance for *areality* is the risk and chance for the exscription of the world upon us, and of us upon the world. It is sense, touching, a writing onto, into, and under, but more importantly: a writing beyond. But what is this *a* that you find here, lingering in front of *reality*, that requires a pulling together, a stumble, a pause?

the breaking [*frayage*] and forcing of an *a* the entire signification and destination of which (in French the *à* [or in English the *to*] of the *a*) is the *exscribe itself*: to go up and touch the concretion of the world where existence makes sense (Nancy 1997: 14).

This *a* is the chance to touch. It is the making of a *we-world*, a fragment at a time. This body dreams of *corpus multiples*, jostling up against each other, shouting, singing, grunting, stuttering, weaving, quietening, ululating, *writing*. It dreams of the *we*, the *all-of-us*, of reading other bodies at exactly the same time as it speaks. Of making way, of making room.

I'm showing you mine. Show me yours, it says. This body, now, is still seven years old in a bedroom with those wooden venetian blinds, half-closed, that ruggedly brown carpet scratching the bottoms of its almost untried feet. There is another child standing, facing it. I'm showing you mine. It lifts up its shirt. And in the lines of light (flight) that land across its chest, the other child sees dust, beginnings, nipples pale salmon flattened across skin, the way light pushes at shadow. Penumbral moment. Half-awake.

The other child reaches out, and her fingers touch exposed flesh. Skin shudder heart flicker dark breath. Touch. The way it can reach across any space. A single moment. And finds herself, also, undressed.

This body, writing, has undressed. It is *always-now*, and sometimes *when*. It rarely finds itself where it thinks it is. Time-traveller, heat-seeker, hope-hunter, this is a body saying then, and then, and then. It stacks time on top of itself. Its lungs sometimes think that they can't take the weight. Time rests along all of it, and is heavy enough, sometimes, to crack open its breastbone, to break ribs. So many nows. So much it can never tell.

This body, writing, will traverse the space between truth and sense. It will take phenomenology and ask: what is this? How do you know I am lived? How do you know what my experience is? I am between sense and touch. I am in all-time and no-time. I am fragments always flying apart and coming together. I am

between a constitutive science and an evocative poetry, beyond this face-to-face encounter between a presentation of truth and its identical double, the stake of style or writing configures the space of a tracing [*frayage*] of sense. A space itself traced out [*tracé*] by the passage to the limit of significations, the exscription of thought *into* the world (Nancy 1997: 19-20).

An autobiography of the body is this: 'a mosaic of quotations, [because] every text is the absorption and transformation of another text' (Kristeva qtd in Campbell 2014: 20).

An autobiography of the body is this: the space traced out. There is no identical double on this page. Nor is there not-truth. There is a passage (there are many passages). There are wayfindings. Maps. Layers. What happens when we dig. What lies, unearthed, and what remains, undug.

This body, speaking, asks you to read. And as you read, it will require you to both fly and fall. As you read, it expects you will find this: the fragment, that invokes the whole, that is absence and presence both. A penumbra. A root system. A text that matters. A body that is a poem. A poem that sings.

## Endnote

1. And yes, this body knows that for Cixous and Kristeva and Irigaray the gender of the author does not preclude them from the form.

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