

3.2 □ *Sorties: Out and Out: attacks/ways out/forays*

Hélène Cixous

[. . .]

A Woman's Coming to Writing:
Who

Invisible, foreign, secret, hidden, mysterious, black, forbidden
Am I ...

Is this me, this no-body that is dressed up, wrapped in veils, carefully kept distant, pushed to the side of History and change, nullified, kept out of the way, on the edge of the stage, on the kitchen side, the bedside?

For you?

Is that me, a phantom doll, the cause of sufferings and wars, the pretext, 'because of her beautiful eyes', for what men do, says Freud, for their divine illusions, their conquests, their havoc? Not for the sake of 'me', of course. But for my 'eyes', so that I will look at you, so that he will be looked at, so that he will see himself seen as he wants to be. Or as he fears he is not. Me, nobody, therefore, or else the mother that the Eternal Male always returns to when seeking admiration.

Men say that it is for her that the Greeks launched a thousand ships, destroyed, killed, waged a fabulous war for ten-times-ten years – among men! For the sake of her, yonder, the idol, carried off, hidden, lost. Because it is for-her and without-her that they live it up at the celebration of death that they call their life.

Murder of the Other:

I come, biographically, from a rebellion, from a violent and anguished direct refusal to accept what is happening on the stage on whose edge I find I am placed, as a result of the combined accidents of History. I had this strange 'luck': a couple

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of rolls of the dice, a meeting between two trajectories of the diaspora,¹ and, at the end of these routes of expulsion and dispersion that mark the functioning of Western History through the displacements of Jews, I fall. – I am born – right in the middle of a scene that is the perfect example, the naked model, the raw idea of this very process: I learned to read, to write, to scream, and to vomit in Algeria. Today I know from experience that one cannot imagine what an Algerian French girl was; you have to have been it, to have gone through it. To have seen 'Frenchmen' at the 'height' of imperialist blindness, behaving in a country that was inhabited by humans as if it were peopled by nonbeings, born-slaves. I learned everything from this first spectacle: I saw how the white (French), superior, plutocratic, civilized world founded its power on the repression of populations who had suddenly become 'invisible', like proletarians, immigrant workers, minorities who are not the right 'color'. Women.² Invisible as humans. But, of course, perceived as tools – dirty, stupid, lazy, underhanded, etc. Thanks to some annihilating dialectical magic. I saw that the great, noble, 'advanced' countries established themselves by expelling what was 'strange'; excluding it but not dismissing it; enslaving it. A commonplace gesture of History: there have to be *two* races – the masters and the slaves.

We know the implied irony in the master/slave dialectic: the *body* of what is strange must not disappear, but its force must be conquered and returned to the master. Both the appropriate and the inappropriate must exist: the clean, hence the dirty; the rich, hence the poor; etc.

So I am three or four years old and the first thing I see in the street is that the world is divided in half, organized hierarchically, and that it maintains this distribution through violence. I see that there are those who beg, who die of hunger, misery, and despair, and that there are offenders who die of wealth and pride, who stuff themselves, who crush and humiliate. Who kill. And who walk around in a stolen country as if they had had the eyes of their souls put out. Without seeing that the others are alive.

Already I know all about the 'reality' that supports History's progress: everything throughout the centuries depends on the distinction between the Selfsame, the ownself (– what is mine, hence what is good) and that which limits it: so now what menaces my-own-good (good never being anything other than what is good-for-me) is the 'other'. What is the 'Other'? If it is truly the 'other', there is nothing to say; it cannot be theorized. The 'other' escapes me. It is elsewhere, outside: absolutely other. It doesn't settle down. But in History, of course, what is called 'other' is an alterity that does settle down, that falls into the dialectical circle. It is the other in a hierarchically organized relationship in which the same is what rules, names, defines, and assigns 'its' other. With the dreadful simplicity that orders the movement Hegel erected as a system, society trots along before my eyes reproducing to perfection the mechanism of the death struggle: the reduction of a 'person' to a 'nobody' to the position of 'other' – the inexorable plot of racism. There has to be some 'other' – no master without a slave, no economico-political power without exploitation, no dominant class without cattle under the yoke, no 'Frenchmen' without wogs, no Nazis without Jews, no property without exclusion – an exclusion

that has its limits and is part of the dialectic. If there were no other, one would invent it. Besides, that is what masters do: they have their slaves made to order. Line for line. They assemble the machine and keep the alternator supplied so that it reproduces all the oppositions that make economy and thought run.

The paradox of otherness is that, of course, at no moment in History is it tolerated or possible as such. The other is there only to be reappropriated, recaptured, and destroyed as other. Even the exclusion is not an exclusion. Algeria was not France, but it was 'French'.

Me too. The routine 'our ancestors, the Gauls' was pulled on me. But I was born in Algeria, and my ancestors lived in Spain, Morocco, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany; my brothers by birth are Arab. So where are we in history? I side with those who are injured, trespassed upon, colonized. I am (not) Arab. Who am I? I am 'doing' French history. I am a Jewish woman. In which ghetto was I penned up during your wars and your revolutions? I want to fight. What is my name? I want to change life. Who is this 'I'? Where is my place? I am looking. I search everywhere. I read, I ask. I begin to speak. Which language is mine? French? German? Arabic? Who spoke for me throughout the generations? It's my luck. What an accident! Being born in Algeria, not in France, not in Germany; a little earlier and, like some members of my family, I would not be writing today. I would anonymiserate eternally from Auschwitz. Luck: if I had been born a hundred years earlier, I told myself, I would have been part of the Commune. How? – you? Where are my battles? my fellow soldiers? What am I saying ... the comrades, women, my companions-in-arms?

I am looking everywhere. A daughter of chance. One year earlier. A miracle. I know it; I hate it: I might never have been anything but dead. Yesterday, what could I have been? Can I imagine my elsewhere?

– I live all of my childhood in this knowledge: several times I have miraculously survived. In the previous generation, I would not have existed. And I live in this rebellion: it is impossible for me to live, to breathe, to eat in a world where my people don't breathe, don't eat, are crushed and humiliated. My people: all those that I am, whose same I am. History's condemned, the exiled, colonized, and burned.

Yes, Algeria is unliveable. Not to mention France.
Germany! Europe the accomplice! ...

– There has to be somewhere else, I tell myself. And everyone knows that to go somewhere else there are routes, signs, 'maps' – for an exploration, a trip. – That's what books are. Everyone knows that a place exists which is not economically or politically indebted to all the vileness and compromise. That is not obliged to reproduce the system. That is writing. If there is a somewhere else that can escape the infernal repetition, it lies in that direction, where *it* writes itself, where *it* dreams, where *it* invents new worlds.

And that is where I go. I take books; I leave the real, colonial space; I go away. Often I go read in a tree. Far from the ground and the shit. I don't go and read just

to read, to forget – No! Not to shut myself up in some imaginary paradise. I am searching: somewhere there must be people who are like me in their rebellion and in their hope. Because I don't despair: if I myself shout in disgust, if I can't be alive without being angry, there must be others like me. I don't know who, but when I am big, I'll find them and I'll join them, I don't yet know where. While waiting, I want to have only my true ancestors for company (and even at that I forgive the Gauls a great deal, thanks to their defeat, they, too, were alienated, deceived, enslaved, it's true) – my true allies, my true 'race'. Not this comical, repulsive species that exercises power in the place where I was born.

And naturally I focused on all the texts in which there is struggle. Warlike texts; rebellious texts. For a long time I read, I lived, in a territory made of spaces taken from all the countries to which I had access through fiction, an antiland (I can never say the word 'patrie', 'fatherland', even if it is provided with an 'anti-') where distinctions of races, classes, and origins would not be put to use without someone's rebelling. Where there are people who are ready for anything – to live, to die for the sake of ideas that are right and *just*. And where it was not impossible or pathetic to be generous. I knew, I have always known, what I hated. I located the enemy and all his destructive figures: authority, repression, censorship, the unquenchable thirst for wealth and power. The ceaseless work of death – the constant of evil. But that couldn't last. Death had to be destroyed. I saw that reality, history, was a series of struggles, without which we would have long ago been dead. And in my mental voyage, I gave great importance to battlefields, conflicts, the confrontation between the forces of death and the forces of life, between wrong ideas and right ideas. Actually, I have always wanted war; I did not believe that changes would be made except through revolutionary movements. I saw the enormity of power every day. Nazism, colonialism, centuries of violent inequality, the massacre of peoples, religious wars. Only one answer – struggle. And without theorizing any of that, of course – I forged through the texts where there was struggle.

I questioned might – its use, its value; through a world of fiction and myths, I followed closely those who had it and who used it. I asked everywhere: where does your strength come from? What have you done with your power? What cause have you served? I watched the 'masters' especially closely – the kings, chiefs, judges, leaders, all those who I thought could have changed society; and then the 'heroes': that is to say, the persons endowed with an individual strength but without authority, those who were isolated, eccentric, the intruders: great, undaunted, sturdy beings, who were at odds with the Law.

[. . .]

The Empire of the Selfsame (Empirically from Bad to Worse)

For, unfortunately, Hegel isn't inventing things. What I mean is that the dialectic, its syllogistic system, the subject's going out into the other *in order to come back*

to itself, this entire process, particularly described in the *Phenomenology of the Mind*, is, in fact, what is commonly at work in our everyday banality. Nothing is more frightening or more ordinary than Society's functioning the way it is laid out with the perfect smoothness of Hegelian machinery, exhibited in the movement through which one passes, in three stages, from the family to the State.

A historical process dynamized by the drama of the Selfsame [*Propre*]. Impossible to conceive of a desire that does not entail conflict and destruction. We are still living under the Empire of the Selfsame. The same masters dominate history from the beginning, inscribing on it the marks of their appropriating economy: history, as a story of phallocentrism, hasn't moved except to repeat itself. 'With a difference', as Joyce says. Always the same, with other clothes.

Nor has Freud (who is, moreover, the heir of Hegel and Nietzsche) made anything up. All the great theorists of destiny or of human history have reproduced the most commonplace logic of desire, the one that keeps the movement toward the other staged in a patriarchal production, under Man's law.

History, history of phallocentrism, history of appropriation: a single history. History of an identity: that of man's becoming recognized by the other (son or woman), reminding him that, as Hegel says, death is his master.

It is true that recognition, following the phallocentric lead, passes through a conflict the brunt of which is borne by woman; and that desire, in a world thus determined, is a desire for appropriation. This is how that logic goes:

(1) Where does desire come from? From a mixture of difference and *inequality*. No movement toward, if the two terms of the couple are in a state of equality. It is always a difference of forces which results in movement. (Reasoning that is, therefore, based on 'physical' laws.)

(2) A little surreptitious slippage: the *sexual* difference with an *equality* of force, therefore, does not produce the movement of desire. It is *inequality* that triggers desire, as a desire – for appropriation. Without inequality, without struggle, there is inertia – death.

It is on this level of analysis (more or less conscious, depending on the supposed-masters) that what I consider to be the great masculine imposture operates:

One could, in fact, imagine that difference or inequality – if one understands by that noncoincidence, asymmetry – lead to desire without negativity, without one of the partner's succumbing: we would recognize each other in a type of exchange in which each one would keep the *other* alive and different. But in the (Hegelian) schema of recognition, there is no place for the other, for an equal other, for a whole and living woman. She must recognize and recuntnize the male partner, and in the time it takes to do this, she must disappear, leaving him to gain Imaginary profit, to win Imaginary victory. The good woman, therefore, is the one who 'resists' long enough for him to feel both his power over her and his desire (I mean one who 'exists'), and not too much, to give him the pleasure of enjoying, without too many obstacles, the return to himself which he, grown greater – reassured in his own eyes, is making.

All women have more or less experienced this cuntconditionality of masculine desire. And all its secuntdary effects. The fragility of a desire that must (pretend to) kill its object. Fantasizing rape or making the transition to the act of rape. And plenty of women, sensing what is at stake there, cuntsent to play the part of object. ...

Why did this comedy, whose final act is the master's flirtation with death, make Bataille laugh so hard, as he amused himself by pushing Hegel to the edge of the abyss that a civilized man keeps himself from falling into? This abyss that functions as a metaphor both of death and of the feminine sex.

All history is inseparable from economy in the limited sense of the word, that of a certain kind of savings. Man's return – the relationship linking him profitably to man-being, conserving it. This economy, as a law of appropriation, is a phallogcentric production. The opposition appropriate/inappropriate, proper/improper, clean/unclean, mine/not mine (the valorization of the selfsame), organizes the opposition identity/difference. Everything takes place as if, in a split second, man and being had propriated each other. And as if his relationship to woman was still at play as the possibility – though threatening, of the not-proper, not-clean, not-mine: desire is inscribed as the desire to reappropriate for himself that which seems able to escape him. The (unconscious?) stratagem and violence of masculine economy consists in making sexual difference hierarchical by valorizing one of the terms of the relationship, by reaffirming what Freud calls *phallic primacy*. And the 'difference' is always perceived and carried out as an opposition. Masculinity/femininity are opposed in such a way that it is male privilege that is affirmed in a movement of conflict played out in advance.

And one becomes aware that the Empire of the Selfsame is erected from a fear that, in fact, is typically masculine: the fear of expropriation, of separation, of losing the attribute. In other words, the threat of castration has an impact. Thus, there is a relationship between the problematic of the not-selfsame, not-mine (hence of desire and the urgency of reappropriation) and the constitution of a subjectivity that experiences itself only when it makes its law, its strength, and its mastery felt, and it can all be understood on the basis of masculinity because this subjectivity is structured around a loss. Which is not the case with femininity.

What does one give?

All the difference determining history's movement as property's movement is articulated between two economies that are defined in relation to the problematic of the gift.

The (political) economy of the masculine and the feminine is organized by different demands and constraints, which, as they become socialized and metaphorized, produce signs, relations of power, relationships of production and reproduction, a whole huge system of cultural inscription that is legible as masculine or feminine.

I make a point of using the *qualifiers* of sexual difference here to avoid the confusion man/masculine, woman/feminine: for there are some men who do not repress their femininity, some women who, more or less strongly, inscribe their masculinity. Difference is not distributed, of course, on the basis of socially determined 'sexes'. On the other hand, when I speak of political economy and

libidinal economy, connecting them, I am not bringing into play the false question of origins – a story made to order for male privilege. We have to be careful not to lapse smugly or blindly into an essentialist ideological interpretation, as both Freud and Jones, for example, risked doing in their different ways. In the quarrel that brought them into conflict on the subject of feminine sexuality, both of them, starting from opposite points of view, came to support the formidable thesis of a 'natural', anatomical determination of sexual difference-opposition. On that basis, both of them implicitly back phallocentrism's position of strength.

We can recall the main lines of the opposing positions: Jones (in *Early Feminine Sexuality*) in an ambiguous move attacks the Freudian theses that make woman out to be a flawed man.

For Freud:

- (1) The 'fate' of the feminine situation is an effect of an anatomical 'defect'.
- (2) There is only one libido and it is male in essence; sexual difference is inscribed at the beginning of the *phallic phase* that both boys and girls go through. Until that point, the girl will have been a sort of little boy: the genital organization of the infantile libido is articulated through the equivalence activity/masculinity. The vagina has not yet been 'discovered'.
- (3) Since the first object of love, for both sexes, is the mother, it is only in the boy that the love of the opposite sex is 'natural'.

For Jones: femininity is an autonomous 'essence'.

From the beginning (starting at the age of six months) the girl has a 'feminine' desire for her father; analysis of the little girl's most primitive fantasies would show, in fact, that in place of the breast, which is perceived as disappointing, the penis or (by an analogical shift) an object shaped like it is desired. One is already in the chain of substitutions, which means that the child, in the series of partial objects, would come to take the place of the penis ... for, to counter Freud, Jones obediently reenlists in Freudian territory. And overdoes it! He concludes from the equation breast-penis-child that the little girl feels a primary desire toward her father. (And the desire to have the father's child would be primary also.) He concludes that, of course, the girl has a primary love for the opposite sex as well. Therefore, she too has a right to her own Oedipus complex as a primary formation and to the threat of mutilation by the mother. In the end – a woman, that is what she is and with no anatomical defect: her clitoris is not a minipenis. Clitoral masturbation is not, as Freud claims, a masculine practice. And seeing the early fantasies, it would seem that the vagina is discovered extremely early.

In fact, by affirming that there is a specific femininity (all the while preserving orthodox theses elsewhere), Jones is still reenforcing phallocentrism under the pretext of taking femininity's side (and God's too, who, he reminds us, created them male and female!). And bisexuality disappears in the unbridged abyss separating the opponents here.

As for Freud, if one subscribes to what he says in his article on the *Disappearance of the Oedipus Complex* (1933) in which he identifies himself with Napoleon: 'anatomy is destiny', one participates in condemning woman to death. And in wrapping up all of History.

It is undeniable that there are psychic consequences of the difference between the sexes. But they certainly cannot be reduced to the ones that Freudian analysis designates. Starting from the relationship of the two sexes to the Oedipus complex, the boy and the girl are steered toward a division of social roles such that women 'inevitably' have a lesser productivity because they 'sublimate' less than men and that symbolic activity, hence the production of culture, is the work of men.³

Elsewhere, Freud starts from what he calls the *anatomical* difference between the sexes. And we know how that is represented in his eyes: by the difference between having/not having the phallus. By reference to those precious parts. Starting from what will take shape as the transcendental signifier with Lacan.

But *sexual difference* is not determined simply by the fantasized relation to anatomy, which depends to a great extent on catching *sight* of something, thus on the strange importance that is accorded to exteriority and to that which is specular in sexuality's development. A voyeur's theory, of course.

No, the difference, in my opinion, becomes most clearly perceived on the level of *jouissance*, inasmuch as a woman's instinctual economy cannot be identified by a man or referred to the masculine economy.

For me, the question asked of woman – 'What does she want?' – is a question that woman asks herself, in fact, because she is asked it. It is precisely because there is so little room for her desire in society that, because of not knowing what to do with it, she ends up not knowing where to put it or if she even has it. This question conceals the most immediate and most urgent question: 'How do I pleasure?' What is it – feminine *jouissance* – where does it happen, how does it inscribe itself – on the level of her body or of her unconscious? And then, how does it write itself?

One can ramble on for a long time about hypothetical pre-history and a matriarchal epoch. Or, like Bachofen,⁴ one can attempt to prefigure a gynarchic society, drawing from it poetic and mythical effects, which have a powerfully subversive impact regarding the history of family and male power.

All the ways of differently thinking the history of power, property, masculine domination, the formation of the State, and the ideological equipment have some effect. But the change that is in process concerns more than just the question of 'origin'. There is phallogentrism. History has never produced or recorded anything else – which does not mean that this form is destinal or natural. Phallogentrism is the enemy. Of everyone. Men's loss in phallogentrism is different from but as serious as women's. And it is time to change. To invent the other history.

There is 'destiny' no more than there is 'nature' or 'essence' as such. Rather, there are living structures that are caught and sometimes rigidly set within historicocultural limits so mixed up with the scene of History that for a long time it has been impossible (and it is still very difficult) to think or even imagine an 'elsewhere'. We are presently living in a transitional period – one in which it seems possible that the classic structure might be split.

It is impossible to predict what will become of sexual difference – in another time (in two or three hundred years?). But we must make no mistake: men and women are caught up in a web of age-old cultural determinations that are almost unanalyzable in their complexity. One can no more speak of 'woman' than of 'man'

without being trapped within an ideological theater where the proliferation of representations, images, reflections, myths, identifications, transform, deform, constantly change everyone's Imaginary and invalidate in advance any conceptualization.⁵

Nothing allows us to rule out the possibility of radical transformation of behaviors, mentalities, roles, political economy – whose effects on libidinal economy are unthinkable – today. Let us simultaneously imagine a general change in all the structures of training, education, supervision – hence in the structures of reproduction of ideological results. And let us imagine a real liberation of sexuality, that is to say, a transformation of each one's relationship to his or her body (and to the other body), an approximation to the vast, material, organic, sensuous universe that we are. This cannot be accomplished, of course, without political transformations that are equally radical. (Imagine!) Then 'femininity' and 'masculinity' would inscribe quite differently their effects of difference, their economy, their relationship to expenditure, to lack, to the gift. What today appears to be 'feminine' or 'masculine' would no longer amount to the same thing. No longer would the common logic of difference be organized with the opposition that remains dominant. Difference would be a bunch of new differences.

But we are still floundering – with few exceptions – in Ancient History.

The Masculine Future

There are some exceptions. There have always been those uncertain, poetic persons who have not let themselves be reduced to dummies programmed by pitiless repression of the homosexual element. Men or women: beings who are complex, mobile, open. Accepting the other sex as a component makes them much richer, more various, stronger, and – to the extent that they are mobile – very fragile. It is only in this condition that we invent. Thinkers, artists, those who create new values, 'philosophers' in the mad Nietzschean manner, inventors and wreckers of concepts and forms, those who change life cannot help but be stirred by anomalies – complementary or contradictory. That doesn't mean that you have to be homosexual to create. But it does mean that there is no *invention* possible, whether it be philosophical or poetic, without there being in the inventing subject an abundance of the other, of variety: separate-people, thought-/people, whole populations issuing from the unconscious, and in each suddenly animated desert, the springing up of selves one didn't know – our women, our monsters, our jackals, our Arabs, our aliases, our frights. That there is no invention of any other I, no poetry, no fiction without a certain homosexuality (the I/play of bisexuality) acting as a crystallization of my ultrasubjectivities.⁶ I is this exuberant, gay, personal matter, masculine, feminine or other where I enchants, I agonizes me. And in the concert of personalizations called I, at the same time that a certain homosexuality is repressed, symbolically, substitutively, it comes through by various signs, conduct-character, behavior-acts. And it is even more clearly seen in writing.

Thus, what is inscribed under Jean Genêt's name, in the movement of a text that divides itself, pulls itself to pieces, dismembers itself, regroups, remembers itself, is a proliferating, maternal femininity. A phantasmic meld of men, males, gentlemen, monarchs, princes, orphans, flowers, mothers, breasts gravitates about a wonderful 'sun of energy' – love – that bombards and disintegrates these ephemeral amorous anomalies so that they can be recomposed in other bodies for new passions.

She is bisexual:

What I propose here leads directly to a reconsideration of *bisexuality*. To reassert the value of bisexuality;⁷ hence to snatch it from the fate classically reserved for it in which it is conceptualized as 'neuter' because, as such, it would aim at warding off castration. Therefore, I shall distinguish between two bisexualities, two opposite ways of imagining the possibility and practice of bisexuality.

(1) Bisexuality as a fantasy of a complete being, which replaces the fear of castration and veils sexual difference in so far as this is perceived as the mark of a mythical separation – the trace, therefore, of a dangerous and painful ability to be cut. Ovid's Hermaphrodite, less bisexual than asexual, not made up of two genders but of two halves. Hence, a fantasy of unity. Two within one, and not even two wholes.

(2) To this bisexuality that melts together and effaces, wishing to avert castration, I oppose the *other bisexuality*, the one with which every subject, who is not shut up inside the spurious Phallocentric Performing Theater, sets up his or her erotic universe. Bisexuality – that is to say the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes, evident and insistent in different ways according to the individual, the nonexclusion of difference or of a sex, and starting with this 'permission' one gives oneself, the multiplication of the effects of desire's inscription on every part of the body and the other body.

For historical reasons, at the present time it is woman who benefits from and opens up within this bisexuality beside itself, which does not annihilate differences but cheers them on, pursues them, adds more: in a certain way *woman is bisexual* – man having been trained to aim for glorious phallic monosexuality. By insisting on the primacy of the phallus and implementing it, phallocratic ideology has produced more than one victim. As a woman, I could be obsessed by the scepter's great shadow, and they told me: adore it, that thing you don't wield.

But at the same time, man has been given the grotesque and unenviable fate of being reduced to a single idol with clay balls. And terrified of homosexuality, as Freud and his followers remark. Why does man fear *being* a woman? Why this refusal [*Ablehnung*] of femininity? The question that stumps Freud. The 'bare rock' of castration. For Freud, the repressed is not the other sex defeated by the dominant sex, as his friend Fliess (to whom Freud owes the theory of bisexuality) believed; what is repressed is leaning toward one's own sex.

Psychoanalysis is formed on the basis of woman and has repressed (not all that successfully) the femininity of masculine sexuality, and now the account it gives is hard to disprove.

We women, the derangers, know it only too well. But nothing compels us to deposit our lives in these lack-banks; to think that the subject is constituted as the last stage in a drama of bruising rehearsals; to endlessly bail out the father's religion. Because we don't desire it. We don't go round and round the supreme hole. We have no *woman's* reason to pay allegiance to the negative. What is feminine (the poets suspected it) affirms: ... and yes I said yes I will Yes, says Molly (in her rapture), carrying *Ulysses* with her in the direction of a new writing; I said yes, I will Yes.

To say that woman is somehow bisexual is an apparently paradoxical way of displacing and reviving the question of difference. And therefore of writing as 'feminine' or 'masculine'.

I will say: today, writing is woman's. That is not a provocation, it means that woman admits there is an other. In her becoming-woman, she has not erased the bisexuality latent in the girl as in the boy. Femininity and bisexuality go together, in a combination that varies according to the individual, spreading the intensity of its force differently and (depending on the moments of their history) privileging one component or another. It is much harder for man to let the other come through him. 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. This peopling gives neither rest nor security, always disturbs the relationship to 'reality', produces an uncertainty that gets in the way of the subject's socialization. It is distressing, it wears you out; and for men this permeability, this nonexclusion, is a threat, something intolerable.

Notes

1. My father, Sephardic – Spain – Morocco – Algeria – my mother, Ashkenazy – Austria – Hungary – Czechoslovakia (her father) and Spain (her mother) passing by chance through a Paris that was short-lived.
2. Women: at that time I wasn't thinking about them. At first, occupying the stage in a way that I could plainly see, the battle to death was the battle pitting colonial power against its victims. Beyond that I perceived that it was the imperialist result of capitalist structure and that it intensified the class struggle by deepening it and making it more monstrous and inhuman: the exploited were not even 'workers' but, with racism's assistance, something worse – subhuman; and the universe could pretend to obey 'natural' laws. War was on the horizon, partially concealed from me. I wasn't in France. I didn't see betrayal and collaboration with my own eyes. We were living under Vichy: I perceived its effects without knowing their causes. I had to guess why my father couldn't do his work, why I couldn't go to school, et cetera. And I had to guess why, as a little white girl informed me, 'all Jews are liars'.
3. Freud's thesis is the following: when the Oedipus complex disappears, the *superego* becomes its heir. The moment a boy starts to feel the threat of castration, he begins to overcome the Oedipus complex, with the help of a very harsh superego. For the boy, the

Oedipus complex is a primary formation – his first love object is the mother, as it is for the girl. But the girl's history is inevitably constituted under the pressure of a superego that is less harsh: because she is castrated, her superego will not be as strong. She never completely overcomes the Oedipus complex. The feminine Oedipus complex is not a primary formation. The pre-Oedipal attachment to the mother entails a difficulty for the girl from which, Freud says, she never recovers. It is having to change objects (to love the father) along the way – a painful conversion, which is accompanied by a supplementary renunciation: the passage from pre-Oedipal sexuality to 'normal' sexuality supposes the abandonment of the clitoris for the vagina. In the terms of this 'destiny', women have a reduced symbolic activity: they have nothing to lose, to win, or to defend.

4. J.-J. Bachofen (1815–76), a Swiss historian of 'gynocracy', 'historian' of a nonhistory. His aim is to show that the various peoples (Greek, Roman, Hebrew) have passed through an age of 'gynocracy', the reign of the Mother, before arriving at patriarchy. This age can only be deduced, for it remains without history. This situation, which was humiliating for men, has been repressed, according to Bachofen's theory, and covered by historical oblivion. And he attempts (particularly in *Das Mutterrecht* [Mother Right] 1861) to make an archeology of the matriarchal system, which is very beautiful, beginning with a reading of the first historical texts on the level of the symptom, of what is unsaid in them. Gynocracy, he says, is organized materialism.
5. There are encoded paradigms projecting the robot couple man/woman, as seen by contemporary societies that are symptomatic of a consensus of repetition. See the UNESCO issue of 1975, which is devoted to the International Woman's Year.
6. *Prénoms de Personne* [Nobody's First Names], Cixous, Éditions du Seuil: 'Les Comtes de Hoffmann' ['Tales of Hoffmann'], pp. 112 ff.
7. See *Nouvelle Revue de Psychoanalyse*, no. 7, *Bisexualité et difference des sexes* (Spring 1973).