

The Feminology of Spirit

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Abstract

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The work of the *Feminology*, in both process and product, is work born out of sifting through, listening and selecting-out from Hegel's language in the preface to his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The *Feminology*, then, is poetry produced under the constraints of erasure, but is not a process that is taken up to either claim or reject Hegel or his text, but to 'mingle' and 'linger.' The writing process undertaken in producing the *Feminology* is a process of writing-with, of taking the language of the source-text into a field of combinatorial play and not a battlefield. If battle is one possible aim for erasure, the *Feminology* works toward another. At the least, in the *Feminology*, there is no struggle for primacy, not in authorship and not in political positioning.

What Appears

Preface	i
The Feminology of Spirit	1
A Poetics of With-ness	49
Works Cited	62

for Kathleen,
the experience of love as being broken into

neither fish nor flesh
neither poetry nor philosophy

Hegel

Phenomenology of Spirit

Preface

Internalization Unencountered

When I thought to work on a long erasure piece, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* came quickly to mind; clearly, it was lurking—a text still charged and lingering and ready to be seen—again. I had disengaged from the *Phenomenology* (and any imagined incapacities that that disengagement might otherwise signify) for twenty years. This recent coming-to-mind was not its first return. A few years ago, I similarly let thoughts of the *Phenomenology* come to the fore, but these thoughts arose as unexpected questions and unwelcome guests. Caught by surprise, caught up prior to thinking, these thoughts functioned as a slippage, an opening, and the scene of writing my senior thesis on the *Phenomenology* twenty years ago—a scene of struggle and despair—animated me in full repetition. This was not reenactment, but bodily upheaval: its force made me recognize that my own disengagement, what I took to be passivity and turning away, was active, an energetic holding-at-a-distance. It was all force or counter-force: I could hold the text at bay or it could overwhelm me.¹ In recalling and recounting the scene, I encountered it not as the smoothed over site of failure and regret from which I had moved on, nor as a site of bitter resistance, but as my dead come back to haunt me.

[The following account, then, surely has to do with the discourse of the master—Hegel—and the discourse of the university—St. John's College, the canon, primary texts—and me, the discourse of the hysteric]:²

¹ "The very idea of reference is spatial: over here is word, over there is thing, at which the word is shooting amiable love-arrows."

² Expanding the Field of Terms: The initial terms that helped me make some sense of the interplay of the various agents or actors or forces that surrounded the *Phenomenology* for me, and the terms that feel most mine, are the following: *internal* and *external*, *force* and *counter-force*, *measure* and *countermeasure*. I have however also since come to map what Lacan calls the 'four discourses' onto that first set of actors and terms. They are somewhat uncanny in their ability to capture both the genesis of the project and join together my more disparate thoughts:

Discourse of the Master: struggle for mastery/domination/penetration.

Discourse of the University: provision and worship of "objective" knowledge — usually in the unacknowledged service of some external master discourse.

Discourse of the Hysteric: symptoms embodying and revealing resistance to the prevailing master discourse.

Discourse of the Analyst: deliberate subversion of the prevailing master discourse. ("Lacan's Four Discourses" web log post.)

To Lacan's list, this project is an attempt to add a discourse that looks to be differently energized, capable of various and shifting guises:

During the month given to me to write my senior thesis, I couldn't produce sentences and paragraphs. I read and wrote in the margins, read and underlined, sitting at the desk of a vacant room for hours—engaged in a writing process with no writing, no product—but also working with an effort now unimaginable. I sat at that desk for weeks trying to understand, if not to master, at the least, to emerge with some kind of hold on the *Phenomenology*. Letting food rot on trays in front of me, I was completely full of what I was reading, the pressure to thoroughly incorporate was so forceful that what I might understand of the text was lodged in me—much went in and nothing came out. I had written the text into myself with no means to dislodge it. The force of internalizing Hegel was so strong that I was left silent; I had no way to communicate my inability to write or speak.³ Because I imagined myself to be powerful enough to overcome any challenge given me, I did not know that the words of despair existed for me, what they meant, that I could appear as less-than, less than a self always sufficient to any task, and so, they were never spoken. I had collapsed under the pressure of producing, or produced only under the pressure of collapse.

[the discourse of the analyst]

When words did come (some years later), it was not as memory but the collapse of present into past, not first as relief but as reliving. In this restaging of the scene, though, there was a difference which was then also an opening: I had with me now another figure⁴—a kindly figure, someone whom I could not know and who, even if she could know me, could not do any reality testing, which meant I could imagine, I could figure her at the scene of my failed production. I reclaimed the crisis, repeated it with an expanded cast of characters, staged a scene of struggle now not between two but involving a third, not me against any internalized

Discourse of the Maker: one that tries to mediate between but also sustain the prohibitions and permissions, the forces and figurations, of the other four—a mediation that sustains the interactions, keeps the positions from collapsing, but also prevents the vision of infinite progress.

³ “The solitary modern individual and his Freudian super-ego, a master and a slave in a world of their own. ‘Who do I fear?’ Richard III asks at the end of his play, ‘Myself? There’s none else by.’ (Phillips web log post)

⁴ —“that there is more to a person—more parts, more voices, more fragmentary alternative selves—than the judge and the judged. There is, in effect, a repressed repertoire. Where judgment is, there conversation should be. Where there is dogma there is an uncompleted experiment. Where there is self-condemnation it is always more complicated than that.” (Phillips web log post)

institution, not me against a master, internal or otherwise. This was the discourse of the analyst, an alternate self with whom to speak.

[perhaps a fifth discourse of the maker]

With this project, I take up the *Phenomenology* again, still energized, reappearing, now not just as something to be bound, but as the object of renewed desire—finally, the love-arrows. With force and exertion, I had written the text into me.⁵ I could not however revisit the scene of the inscription except under a new permission, and a new prohibition. I had moved on twice: first in melancholy, and then in mourning. After melancholy and mourning, a triumphal return to the scene seemed unseemly, and the prospect in fact deadened the world for me and deflated my imagination. I needed to reclaim my dead—I needed some other logic (some alternative to the masculinized logic of inscription)⁶ that I could use to write the text back out of me. It was and is to approach the text in search of a public experience of the pleasure first denied [discourses of the master and the university] and then privatized [discourse of the analyst] in a process that takes an example of being with an other and works to turn it into an exemplar.

Re-recovery: the *Phenomenology* as a site of this rupture had been covered over as it was recovered, and the *Feminology* is a response to that. In the work of the *Feminology*, there is no recovery, but a redoubling back through the opening,⁷ a negation of the negation made possible by a logic of feminization under which language can become a charged passageway rather than a tool of or for mastery. The logic of inscription, of writing the text into myself,

⁵ “The discourse of the master accomplishes its revolution, in the other sense of the turning that buckles itself.” (Bracher quoting Lacan 119)

⁶ Here I am thinking of Sianne Ngai’s work on anxiety in her book, *Ugly Feelings*, where the masculine conception of anxiety is taken up as a call to the masculine intellect, spurring the intellect on in a quest for truth, “Anxiety nonetheless comes to assume its prominent role in structuring the “philosophically stylized” quests for truth, knowledge, and masculine agency . . . precisely as a way of rescuing the intellectual from his potential absorption in sites of asignificance or negativity. In other words, there is a form of ‘revolutionary uplift’ which anxiety’s projective character makes available to these intellectual subjects and which directs attention away from the questions of ‘sinking worlds’, ‘horrible interspace[s]’, and ‘unknown foreign feminineness[es],” (Ngai 246-7)

⁷ “If one wants to be subversive, Lacan suggests, one might do worse than to approach ‘the hole from which the master signifier gushes’.” (Bracher 122)

was the logic of impression (*tabula rasa*) and singular identity. Here, in this work, there is no striving toward a goal,⁸ it does not work to cauterize the rupture, but there is an aim, which is to move into its opening, to translate the rupture in a different way—now in other ways of knowing and not knowing—other ways of translating. I am interested in other ways of being with this very particular source text—re-writing it in front of me rather than inscribing it into me or putting it behind me, working with the text, with the language as it appears before me, now in a field that does not ask for either mastery or instrumentality. And I am interested in it, in part, because Hegel, read one way, exactly puts out the call for mastery, and that makes me interested in being with that call, not simply rejecting or countering him. What the *Feminology* is written between me and Hegel, and the space is that of animated and energized language.

This thought about writing-with another is a thought about mindedness and the possibility that it exists between us, rather than in us individually. In my fantasy or staging of mindedness, of thinking and not-thinking between us, any (reality-) test of my knowledge of Hegel is foreclosed. But the work exists like the traces of a bungled action,⁹ inviting not only playful participation but also maybe exactly that testing mistake from its reader. This, then, becomes a part of the project. I am neither uncovering myself in narration, nor covering under a purely material accumulation of words. The result of working between these figures of appearance and non-appearance feels ‘personed,’ a play not yet finished, a scene being staged but waiting for other actors.

To open out onto this scene, I am making a public assertion that an externalization of who I am (and may become) can be written in a multiplicity of ways. It is no accident, not

⁸ What is “the Lacanian distinction between its aim and its goal? The goal is the final destination, while the aim is what we intend to do, i.e., the way itself. Lacan's point is that the real purpose of the drive is not its goal (full satisfaction) but its aim: the drive's ultimate aim is simply to reproduce itself as drive, to return to its circular path, to continue its path to and from the goal. The real source of enjoyment is the repetitive movement of this closed circuit.” (Žižek 5)

⁹ Here, I am thinking of Freud's “bungled action” from the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*; unlike his servants who mishandle art but respect science, I am mishandling the *Phenomenology* as a “scientific” object, disorienting myself and others about its source of value. In this, the discourse of the maker moves playfully and willfully between master and servant, irritation and harassment of one's chief. (173)

external to the *Phenomenology* (and yet not its primary goal), that I think this text can be the site for that multiple writing. I think, in the reception of my writing within the university discourse—too abstract, too thick, heads shaking—I might have felt a kinship with Hegel. His thick language gave and gives me a certain permission, allowed me to ‘go public’ as it were, first as hysteric, then as near-analyst, and now, as poet.

The Feminology of Spirit

Translator's Foreword

this translation of Hegel
Spirit has been made
from edition
edited

in attempting thought
who has no I

my course loose
departs at times

rendering

where to be
I have been
sparing in use

have used terms peculiarly

I have
omitted

the word has meaning

translation
was at the suggestion
of who
I am

I wish
to saw
parts

offer rest
of course

to my final draft

my pre face
its true shape

present time
is not the completion
of objections

the meaning of
transformation

picture into thought
is how
the false
contained the truth

its method
thinking

by the light of sound

the inspiration of conclusion

the relation of author
to her certain deception

forces
the understanding

the truth of
independence

of lord-ship and bondage

the marks
of sensibility and reproduction

the way
to be real
animal
or matter

the woman human
the word
alienated

realm and insight
the struggle with
freedom and terror

duplicity
in the form
of art work

the work
of art
revealed

Pre Face

[1]

why

to stand on the same

an explanation in view

leading

what might be said

a drift

about the way

to move within

here

in another

matter

expressed on the hand

ordinary anatomy

say the parts

the body we do possess

has no opening

the way these nerves

muscles

is spoken of

the hand would rise

long

with such inability
to grasp

[2] matter drags

the truth
obscured

more gets on
the more it tends

it does
but disappears

the bursting-forth
of the blossom

is refuted
up in its turn
and emerges
from another

each
as the other
alone

the life she rejects
is doing
in this way

she does not know

how to free herself
from freedom

[3] explanations pass
where the expression aims

more by age
yet more than mere

to pass as more than
evading real issue

sparing herself

carrying it whole
rather together

a mere that lacks

the bare result
the corpse
guiding behind it

where the thing stops
what the thing is not

passing is easier than
it might seem

always away beyond

tarrying with
and losing remains

worth is easy
to comprehend

hard to blend
the hardest thing
of all

[4] emergence
from view

to apprehend
abundance
and finally

to give upon beginning

when
penetrated to its depths

this kind of knowing
will still retain its place

[5] the shape
of truth

to bring philosophy close
to where it
aside

love of knowing
and actual knowing

that is what I have
set myself to do

necessity lies in it

motivation
is inner or in words
it lies in the shape

time sets its moments

to show
to be raised
[6] to lay down

I go against
what is called even

must more than
bare

to be felt
said

[7] we demand this
in broad text

she appears at the stage

beyond all
but beyond that too

turning away from the empty
and confessing it

the lost sense of opening
not by bringing
but by running

put asunder by suppressing

being
rather than
the holy bait

to arouse the desire

to bite the ecstasy of ferment

[8]

strenuous

almost

frenzied effort

to tear away from

private affairs

to direct their gaze

divine and ready worms

dirt and water

a heaven adorned

vast and all

hung on the light

following the eye

held fast

lucidity used

to have sense

sense fast rooted

in things to raise it

craving a mouthful

only the bare

feeling little now

satisfies

the extent of loss

[9] whoever seeks
to shroud earthly existence

beware the wish

[10] rapturous haziness

prophetic talk

depth looks

empty

pours

without force

a veil over and surrendering

she gives what they receive

in her sleep

nothing

but dreams

[11] to see
our birth

broken

with the world

imagined

to submerge

the past

labor

born
slowly and dissolving

bit by bit tottering

the crumbling face

cut short by features

[12] no more born
to bear this
mind

little finished

we wish to see it
massive and spreading

to be shown the crown
the beginning of upheaval

traversed and returned

[13] to begin
in memory

lack gives
of a few
possession of possession

[14] vulnerable
to strike
to refuse the demand

this seems to be the knot

still
under
the side is silence

the force of blustering
satisfied

but not
fulfilled

[15] at times
familiar
and by focus rare

everything embraced
everything expanded

a show
has come about
on its own remains

a wealth of shapes
into monochromatic material

[16] we are that
inability to master

imagining
we see
all the undoing of all

or rather the hurling
of all
into the abyss

declaring

one has been speaking

to pit everything against the full body
articulated palm

off as the night
saying goes
all
black

to see it reappear
will not vanish
however much may become

[17] age
on the hand
submerged

the hand
clings

[18] simple
doubling

becoming
the end to its end

[19] the well sinks

suffering

the labor
of one
troubled
with overcoming

[20] the end needs little
to set this show

I say all cannot pass
so plain that the words
contain words

something im-mediate
whatever is more than
a word taken back

surrendered

when more
is made
in nothing

[21] this
stems beyond

I reduced it

in this process
excluded

the reflection
that overcomes

this return
into embryo

simple freedom
at peace

lying there

[22] said
by saying

thinking
still

the unmoved is moving

[23] the word is a name
that says him

content
in the end

the empty beginning

why not speak

give without adding

sound is just this word
fixed to the affixed
belonging and not

the way
cannot be
other
than what she is

can only be
impossible
anticipation

the inert
point

[24] consequences follow

knowledge

pounded thorough by thoughts

if true

is also false

[25] the notion

alone

in words

for us

reflected

generated

into her

and the realm

she builds

for her

own

[26] in absolute

otherness

this aether

is the ground and soil

thinking alone

trans-figured

in order

to live

the demand
at least

the ladder to show
her

her possessing

this once
wanted
without necessity

inverted posture

this show and how it lacks

something inward

[27] coming-to-be
is scribed

in this
Feminology

to become to beget

must travel
a long way
and work
its passage

to be quite

least of all
[28] in blurred outline

more runs through this past
takes up
goes through

the preparatory studies
long absorbed in order

recall the eye

the stage
made level with toil

we find what ages
the mind

evens the child
traced in silhouette

the side of the
acquiring hand
devouring his nature

taking possession

[29] the goal into knowing
demands the impossible

to wit the end
without the means

the length
to be endured

one thing and
lingered over

the long passage
to take up
the enormous labor

bodied as much
as holding

lesser effort
less trouble

longer
still submerged

[30] we move
the whole remains

done and level

finished and done

finished with the Spirit
that does not comprehend

the hand
formed against
this knowing self

[31] we deceive ourselves

these remains
go back and forth

moving on the surface

testing

seeing
the body

[32] carried out

to break up into
to return

to divide into dissolution

the work holds its moments

nothing astonishing
an accident detached

what is bound
only with others
is the tremendous power

I want this

all things
most dreadful
to hold what is lacking

asking of her what she cannot do

life shrinks

closes

its

eyes

as when we say

done away and pass

looking in the face

and tarrying with

this with

we called

barely

outside

[33] the object becomes her
elevation

putting herself

to the test

every point

came
a cross
made
through and through

what is within
and
truncated

the task purging
the sensuous

making her
into a substance
that thinks

have I the power
of the negative

the sensuous power

to recognize her

not by leaving
but setting a side

giving up the fixity
I share
the nature
I become

[34] this pathway through
will compass
the entire sphere

[35] further

her return

into the im-mediate
of others

[36] what falls

what is too
suspending this other

the name we give

the whether of sensuous
still
unsensed

[37] in between

I am
the defect of both
that moves
the void

I seem to happen
outside of it

an act
directed against it

and show her
to be
the immediacy of separation

what is true

moments
spread out
fall apart

difference
organ-izes
into a whole

[38] wish to be spared
to be led without more

the name we begin with
is to be answered

what is false

gives us occasion

to speak

[39] held wholly

standing isolated

a coin

pocketed

ready-made

as some thing

thrown away

like dross

like the tool

which remains separate

from the finished vessel

we cannot say

let alone

a part

say there is two

oil and water

mixed

they are outside

they are

what

their expression says they are

[40] many feet were
there

the square
equal to the sum

on the other
two sides

a right-angled
nature

[41] such plain truth

illustrated
called for
books consulted

held
to have value
when she is
as a fact
bare

[42] we should be
less

a geometer who knew
outwardly without
knowing without

we
point them
inwardly
through their side

the hand
into parts

the way
coming-to-be
broken

[43] parts to other figures
whose origin is
the end

we are lost
to view

appearing in fragments

we see the well
could have been called
disappearance

[44] what is in this well

we see it

rise

to draw these lines

follow a path

that begins without beginning

[45] a gratifying treasury

empty

sense the least

rigid dead

we can stop having

rise

along the line

opposite into opposite

divide connections

ship to surface

[46] the motion
falling

how great the need

seeing nothing
would strip
these feathers

show necessity
for a different kind

[47] the hand
traverses
this whole

lying
who knows where
outside

on the other side

rising and passing away
rise and pass away

[48] I am bequeathed

divisions

axioms

deductions

and conclusions

we favor what is excellent

suppose that it will be put to use

to see that way

remains

to its material peculiar

an alien

in looser form

a pre face

long

ready to hand

time follows

where this leads

the chain

[49] of inspiration

of prophetic utterance

[50] the form reduced

a shadow
degraded
into a table
of terms

work was
still

uncomprehended

we imagine
the life
of a form
endowed with

say

magnetism

each
for an other

what the thing is

say

what is weakness
expansion and contraction

[51] in an hour

to be transformed
in this space of time

electricity

such a power
brings together things
that lie far apart

the thing of sense
through association

the sensuous mind
filled with astonishment

delighted too

repetition
sufferable conjuring
coloring the surface

an organism
with scraps of paper stuck
all over it

to read
flesh and blood

we submerge
all
in the void

[52] the excellent
cannot escape
being deprived

Spirit flayed

its skin
wrapped around
a lifeless knowledge

the power
over the mind
unfolding

[53] the show is something

ranges a moment
in the whole
all that living
does not keep

if it had sight
it would surely
give some sign

would drop

learn this fashion

learn that it offers
no offer at all

say

magnetism
is the way
speaking

away and back

back over

through
the whole
emerges

the wealth
seemed
to be lost

[54] we put it above
its own reflection
into failure

when I say
I am the source of that sight

an alien
reflection
sees the cunning

[55] an alien
within

[56] rhythm
shapes itself into
existence

to clothe
the form

to cease to be
content

[57] rhythm
has its course

in this
narrative

calling and counting
familiar truths

knowing

the guise
appears

[58] the higher habit
interrupted

thinking
back
and forth

absorbed
and hard to lift

what is looked for here

to sink
to intrude

[59] I fail at the heart of matter

imagine that the void
is always ahead

what emerges from this well

[60] the hand
runs back and forth

behaves in a different way
against
the ground
shaken

bound together
to run through the accidents

here I hold
since that first

knowing
I remain

[61] unity
destroys the rhythm

between
meter and accent

the floating center
emerges a harmony

the accent
dies away

[62] God is dissolved
ceases to be

loss
thrown back
exhausts having

the face
disappears

[63] this thought
is the source

possesses
over and over
a burden
outrageous to admit

leads one
to the well

we meant
something other

meant to mean

to go back
in some other way

[64] the way of
relating parts

[65] thinking
set forth

returning lost

[66] we recur
perpetually in need

Subject
through
and through
a part

the name as name
the proper name

the fixed point
underlying
the hand

it is this side

[67] this conceit
lays them down
to judge and pass sentence by appeal

in the case of all

everyone who has eyes

fingers
given to make

understand she did not possess
measure in her own foot

in absence
left off where he began

to be
void of content

lacking

gendered

let the other
as they like

with
without

[68] the long process
is offered

direct revelations

sound sense
never labored over

we are good substitutes
on a single chain

claiming at one moment
to be free of thought

to be even

once all the rage
in poetry
now made sense

begat poetry
beyond crazy

by the light of deficiency
an imagination disorganized

neither fish nor flesh

neither poetry
nor philosophy

[69] the other hand
flows
along

the course
of sound
offers its best
in reply

meaning resides
present in others

to have said the words
is the point in the recess
depth in the light

bringing forth

long
since
saying

it is difficult to show the mind
when it labors
to extricate itself

wilderment
sets up

falls
into contra-dictions

may well burst out
with the question

is that the truth

the view ordinary

the expression
dreaming

who makes an oracle
within her breast
has to say to anyone the
same in herself

in other words
under the root

to press onward
to other minds

[70] there is no more than

to rely on sound
and rest

with time
to read their pre faces

these preliminary pages

turn this common road
in casual dress

sense
the road
from the first

no
profound original ideas
lofty flashes of inspiration

yet thoughts
in sight
the labor of common vagueness

sense
ripened
to be capable
of being

[71]

I exist
in movement
in current

an attempt to be
in time

I bear
a mind
that has been held
to lie

there have been
times of ecstatic
dreaming
artistic disclosure
misunderstood ecstasy

I hope to hold
to conviction
when
her time has come

appear not ripe
need as yet

the feet of those
who will carry you out
are already at the door

[72] hold
the range

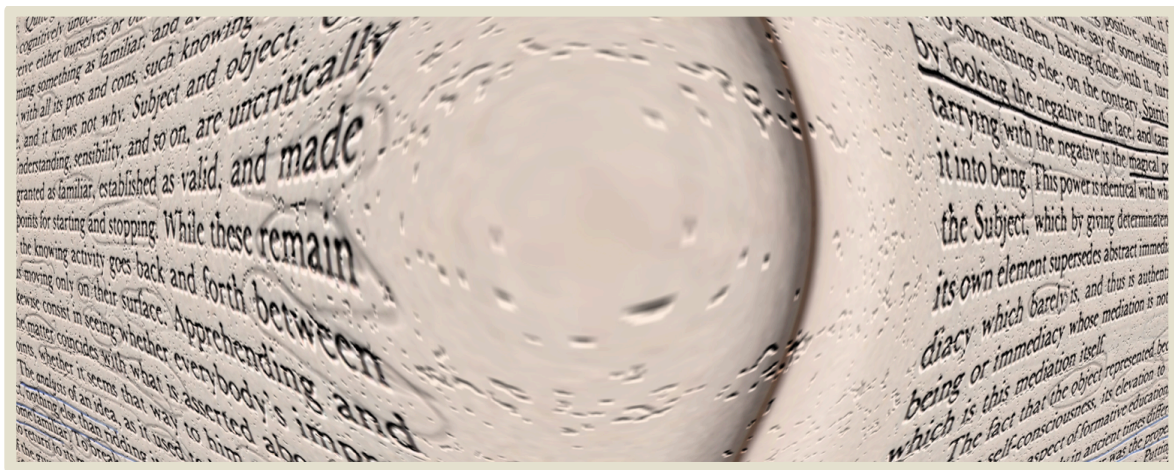
the work

make
what she can

less

But the life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself. It is this power, not as something positive, which closes its eyes to the negative, as when we say of something that it is nothing or is false, and then, having done with it, turn away and pass on to something else; on the contrary, Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it. This tarrying with the negative is the magical power that converts it into being.

(paragraph 32, Preface, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, A.V. Miller)



A Poetics of *With-ness*

Titling my piece a ‘feminology’ reflects my interest in framing my poetics as a feminization of the labor of writing and enacting that feminization through the logic or method that produces the *Feminology*. Conceived as an alternative to the work of an explosive poetic agent, my writing process looks to be tethered—producing a product of dispersed, multiple and moderated or diminished agency—a process and a product of various, shifting and partial guises. I am thinking here by way of writing, and in that, thinking a self that cannot be fully articulated, that resists full disclosure, as language falters, swerves, or loses its footing in the attempt. In language’s inability to communicate who I am, what I disclose of myself in writing and what remains hidden is as uncertain to me as to any other, an image, then, from any vantage, in a state of partial dress. In my writing, I take up this slippage or incapacity of language to fully capture me not as a moment to force language to move toward clarity, to do more, but as a moment of realization that in not being captured there is freedom, freedom to imagine other possible selves—to imagine myself to be always-as-yet undefined, indistinct—capable of being, otherwise. It is also a realization that coming-to-be is in process, and in that, I can imagine a beginning, a space prior to differentiation and separation, where my attachments are various and open, without intelligible judgment and categorization, but sensible bounds, affective articulation. This is a way of being that hopes for a space of being-with and being-with others that can sustain a life prior to being certain of what we know of ourselves or of others, hopes that we can exist with a knowledge of ourselves and each other that is less-than. In that, it is also a way of being that lacks the demand for more, to have more and to possess more—and in writing, a process of making without possession. I wear various and partial guises as I write with (and under) various prohibitions and permissions, moving between figures and forces, appearances and non-appearances. I appear here, in parts.

the hand
runs back and forth

behaves in a different way
against
the ground
shaken

An Opening

The process I undertake in the production of the *Feminology* is one of sifting through and listening to the sonic and sensuous register of Hegel's language¹⁰ in the preface to his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In moving with Hegel's language in this way, drifting within its material landscape rather than reading his text to capture meaning (or to capture Hegel—or maybe that a little), I find moments and spaces that are shifting and partial, that allow me to think that I may be always-as-yet incomplete, provisional. Instead of thinking that I should strive to be all-knowing and endlessly energized, I want to think that I may sink, wander, and at times, as here, playfully disfigure language or refigure the body. I want to think that I may preserve lack or absence in order to unseat a master-within who too often hears the call for synthesis—the demand to fully resolve complexity into a comprehensible and uncomplicated whole. I step back in my writing process to find a space prior to language's power to mean, world-make, or symbolize existence; I present the text to myself as charged bits and indeterminate fragments that I sift through and let combine in a mind hoped to wander as I look to present myself as a body desirous of these sensible (not yet intelligible) attachments. In that, I have come to think more explicitly of the possibility of psychogenesis in the production of my work, that is, to think that by limiting the movements of my conscious mind in language,

¹⁰ I should say the field of A.V. Miller's language, as he is the translator of the edition I use as my source text, but the distinction between the two was collapsed for me in my undergraduate program's concentration on "the texts themselves," all readings as "original," away from the suspect field of secondary commentary.

I might uncover a passageway to my unconscious¹¹—and within these limits, a shared passageway. At the least, I take the process of uncovering to be a process that reveals thoughts, feelings and contestations that surprise me, feel *othered*, but also offer the unsettling surprise of self-recognition.

In constraining my conscious mind in order to let my unconscious mind both mishandle language and be mishandled by it, my writing process tries to unsettle the call to mastery, meet it with a counter-force, without resolving the tension mastery helps engender. There is a struggle here between permission and prohibition, an internal revolution that wants to be heard, but not in the silence of the other. The struggle against mastery is also a struggle against the desire to overcome or overpower, become the new master. The *Feminology* moves away from resolution and knowledge production and toward the revolution of energized parts—bits—that in their restlessness break symmetries and uncover openings. But my work here is not to disallow or move away from determinacy or meaning indefinitely—to break apart whatever moves toward coherence—but to move in and out of coherency through the force and counter-force of the jostling of language. In the process some bits fall away, become de-energized and so resist being taken up, but so do others present themselves to me as overly energized, too charged with meaning. There, I resist as well. This double movement makes a conversation, a dialogue, and at times, an impasse, but in doubling, there is now more than one. My re-figuration of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* moves out from what Hannah Arendt describes as the lonely figure—moves out into human intercourse. But it also moves back again, mobilizing the movement of force and counter-force, *for* and *against*, in the hopes of straying and wandering *within* the bounds of human interaction. Arendt writes:

This revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are *with* others and neither *for* nor *against* them—that is, in sheer human togetherness. Although nobody knows whom he reveals when he discloses himself in deed or word, he must be willing to risk the disclosure, and this neither the doer of good works, who must be without self and preserve

¹¹ Hejinian cites Elaine Marks's *Signs*, where Marks describes "language and the unconscious, not as separate entities, but language as a passageway, and the only one, to the unconscious, to that which has been repressed and which would, if allowed to rise, disrupt the established symbolic order..." (54)

complete anonymity, nor the criminal, who must hide himself from others, can take upon themselves. Both are lonely figures, the one being for, the other against, all men; they, therefore remain outside the pale of human intercourse. (Arendt 180)

In what I treat as the feminized moments of writing-with¹² the *Phenomenology*, moments of straying and wandering with other minds, my consciousness is loosened, unbuckled as I move outside of the confines of my own mind, outside of the solitary thinking figure, and engage with an other, but I also think to find myself exactly there, bound to others, sociability in quivering and vibration and remainders, in intimacy—a presencing mutuality that comes in the confession of lack and need, wanting and desire—the pleasure of moving with other people, other minds, other texts—writing-with this text.

A Force Constrained

Although the process I employ in the work of the *Feminology* is work done under the constraints of erasure,¹³ I do not take up the process to either claim or reject the source text, but to ‘mingle’ and ‘linger,’ which make for a kind of malingering. I am working in and with the movement of Hegel’s project, but my process is so close in (and under the guidance of *pleasure*¹⁴ rather than understanding) that I cannot be said to judge it, to position Hegel’s project ethically or politically in any standard sense. And I extend that generosity to myself: I

¹² My poetics of writing-with is, to my mind, in conversation with the poetics of ‘writing through’ for, say, Mac Low or Cage, and with writing done using source texts and constraint-based writing in general. In developing a poetics of writing-with, I want however to emphasize that the force and counter-force between a singular mind and the source text then binds the one to the other, straying but always within these bounds. There is movement away from the source text *and* an unsettled and unsettling return, the tension between never broken or resolved. Upon return, the relationship between mind and the source text is now weakened and intimate, the positions of the mind fragmented and proliferating and the text more porous, more giving—return, now inextricably, now loosely, bound.

¹³ What I select-out from the *Phenomenology* follows the linear order of the words as they appear in the source text. I also do not add words not found in the text, nor do I rearrange the ordering of words or phrases in the editing process. There is one exception, or moment of freedom from these constraints—a clinamen; I leave the pronouns open to the possibilities of a shifting subject position that reflects a singularity or plurality of voice, a first or third person voice, a male or female voice, a masculinized or feminized voice.

¹⁴ In his lecture “Against Self-Criticism,” Adam Phillips asks what an ethics guided by desire rather than prohibition might look like. “If we have been living by a forbidding morality, what would an unforbidding morality look like? There are moralities inspired by fear, but what would a morality be like that was inspired by desire? It would, as Hamlet’s soliloquy perhaps suggests, be a morality, a conscience, that had a different relation to the unknown. The coward, after all, always thinks he knows what he fears, and knows that he doesn’t have the wherewithal to deal with it. The coward, like Freud’s super-ego, is too knowing. A coward – or rather, the cowardly part of ourselves – is like a person who must not have a new experience.” (Phillips web log post)

take up the work without any preconceived notions or intentions for what the *Feminology* may become. Instead, I conceive of my writing process as a writing-with, of taking the language of the source-text into a field of combinatorial play and not a battlefield. If battle is one possible aim for erasure, I want to work toward another. At the least, I want to say that, here, there is no struggle for primacy, not in authorship and not in political positioning, even if it mimes those gestures in restaging and refiguring my writing-with Hegel as playful struggle. If ‘erasing’ weakens Hegel, my use of the constraint of erasure and my move away from any desire to destabilize or elucidate Hegel’s project is also a hobbling or weakening of my potential authorial force, a self-imposed prohibition (and gentle castration, if you will).

A Figure Released

A possible symptom of writing-with is the kind of hypnagogic peace I find in this way of working, a calm pleasure, and yet it is precisely this weakened, moderated and loosened orientation that allows me to be jostled by the language and intentions of the source text, and that generates tension. Language exerts a force, is itself never at rest—is already in motion prior to any particular engagement. It is a counter-force to my ways of thinking, and my response and responsiveness depend on that. Here, I hope, is the productive tension, the give and take in the interplay of language, the production of writing as a shifting compromise-formation between the force and counter-force of language,¹⁵ indexing measure and counter-measure. Knowing where and under what conditions force and measure might be productive is, for me, a lesson in process—learning and making as re-figuration and revaluing.

What I produce out of these weakened moments, in my now moderated agency, is open, resistant and unresolved. The *Feminology* itself, then, and whatever agency it may have, is both pliable under and resistant to force. It too resists coming together or resolving itself into a whole—a whole where every word can be linked to a stable interpretation—and in its

¹⁵ “Writing’s forms are not merely shapes but forces; formal questions are about dynamics—they ask how, where, and why the writing moves, what are the types, directions, number and velocities of a work’s motion.” (Hejinian 42)

pliability, stays open to many and various interpretations. There is no unbridled directionality, for me or for the *Feminology*, but wandering. I have no notion behind which I line up the words or phrases of the source text, and so the *Feminology* itself lacks the strength to either exalt or deride, to raise or lower the *Phenomenology*—it leaves itself, and so the reader,¹⁶ few choices but to mingle, linger, malingering.

In being with, I look to “occupy a place, not advocate a position,” (Mackey 30) and here, specifically, a shared place.

This emphasis on moderated agency is a response to what I see as a danger in the pursuit of any knowledge or practice that wants to be all encompassing, fully understood—a danger of endless striving with no moments of rest and no space in which to either resist or be swept along. The singular call to mastery can only endlessly pursue the impossible goal of totality, of the *all*, and in that impossibility, is compelled to cover over or fill any lack or loss. My process here looks not to move on or recover from loss, to close these openings, but to hold what is lacking, tarry with what is and what passes away.

A Subject Set Adrift

Constrained to its source text, the work of the *Feminology* moves away from forced and static determinations—*pours without force*. Along the way, it is language that appears, sounds off, as words come to the fore that are slippery and variable in use and meaning.¹⁷ I avoid elation and suffering when I am working in this way; I am calm in a way that does not seem to depend on conscious thought. I don’t notice time passing, I am immersed somehow,

¹⁶ I hope the *Feminology* may hold for the reader, like it does for me, the surprisingly happy experience of castration self-imposed—a disarmament or forestalling of the reader’s power to judge.

¹⁷ “The process of poetry and art, says [Ernst] Gombrich, are analogous to those of a play on words. It is the childish pleasure of combinatorial game that leads the painter to try out arrangements of lines and colors, the poet to experiment with the juxtaposition of words. At a certain moment things click into place, and one of the combinations obtained through the combinatorial mechanism itself, independently of any search for meaning or effect on any other level becomes charged with an unexpected meaning or unforeseen effect which the conscious mind would not have arrived at deliberately: an unconscious meaning, in fact, or at least the premonition of an unconscious meaning.” (Calvino 19)

underwater but breathing.¹⁸ The process feels like a bringing-forth that uses sense to mark out what protrudes, that makes use of what thoughts or memories or ideations are in my mind but without my thinking them, without naming. This results in a winnowing away, a gradual and accidental-seeming but retrospectively-meaningful disengagement from the philosophical lexicon of the *Phenomenology*.

This wildered mind is also a conjuring mind—conjuring the forces and counter-forces of my mind, set in motion in the field of language. I feel the tension of accumulation, hear the minor notes as the forms of my mind become content. I hear words, combinations, phrases, and I feel a low echo—I feel the paralyzed sight of image on image, trace these along the surface of a screen. Those forces and counter-forces are old and determined, and they are new and shifting. The forms set adrift in my wildered mind whirl as they move and come up against each other—are forms of thought and memory¹⁹ that combine together under the pressure of my psyche—under the sounds of language moving together and breaking with assonance, consonance, dissonance—tripping and associative, bringing and running—appearing on a stage that manifests the desire of saying.²⁰

My work in the production of the *Feminology* is in process. And because I am set adrift—have hoped to create the conditions under which my mind can become wildered—what I produce is not final, not complete. Thus, the process remains open, and, each time I re-enter, I am again capable of becoming wildered, primordial, polymorphously perverse: not anxious or

¹⁸ “I know that when I write there is something inside me that stops functioning, something that becomes silent. I let something take over inside me that probably flows from femininity. But everything shuts off—the analytic way of thinking inculcated by college, studies, reading, experience.” (Duras 175).

¹⁹ For a mind that in memory is uneven, a stickiness where nothing sticks, each subsequent thought throwing out the one that came before, the process of writing-with is a pleasure for me as I bypass a memory that volunteers very little. In my attempts to recapture thoughts, they circle and join end to beginning and in that limit is a whole that hides its openings, that curves whatever thoughts I might have, that occludes. When I look there, trying to know beginnings or ends—my thoughts are energized at the edges and blurred at the center. Where I might re-enter or re-cognize or listen again is obscured; my memory is too often a wall and a well. At times I think that I might hold my thoughts together, remember them, see them clearly, even with a mind that sticks and slips. In the *Feminology*, I hear the sounds of remembrance, see the forms of my thoughts accumulate.

²⁰ —“something not yet said, something as yet only darkly felt by presentiment, suddenly appears and seizes us and tears us to pieces, like fangs of a man-eating witch.” (Calvino 16)

filled with doubt. As I am working under a certain logic, employing a method that unconsciously binds together disparate parts, slippages, the combinations that come together on the page could be otherwise. The movements of force and counter-force that unsettle my mind are in flux, and the fact of movement is the constancy of this this wildered state—always in motion, propelled by the energy of incompleteness, of a feminized logic—the logic of the not-all.²¹ The logic that forms the *Feminology* and its figurations and forces is meant to populate a field of discourse that is energized with other minds, other people. These figures, real and otherwise conjured, provide for me as the text does, giving, but not completely. This is a field in which to work, but one that is delimited *and* indeterminate. In producing writing out from the restrictions of a source text, I find moments, sections, that will not give and here I must then go about it in some other way, be willing to abandon parts of the piece that I have already constructed, give up, but without moving away from the text. Instead, I move closer in,²² but now shifting my focus, switching eyes, modulating voices, trying a different hand—sifting through again and again and at some point the text gives or I give and a different or differing way is found. There is no punishment here for uncertainty, no harm in breaking with form, no shame in struggling, no prohibitions—except against stasis.²³ In these feminized moments of sifting through Hegel’s text, working with the subject of another, I take up Hegel’s work not as subject matter, but as charged substance, words, material, and in the shaping of that substance through my unconscious or at least wildered mind, substance becomes subject, and many and proliferating subject positions seen from the advantages of other eyes, other means.

²¹ My use of the not-all is connected with Lacan’s interest in the ‘feminine logic’ that deals with partial statements, like ‘some are’ and ‘some are not,’ rather than universal and binary contradictions. This way of defining sets, groups, sexuations as less-than or not-all allows for a proliferation of kinds, of orientations.

²² “The novel and its traditional narrative style summarizes, it is a yardstick for measuring distance. But when I write, on the contrary, I move in close and what I see is enormous. I magnify the word with a close-up lens. I examine it at close range: it has its own way of being granulated, ruffled, wrinkled, gnarled, iridescent, sticky.” (Chawaf 177)

²³ Stasis here isn’t searching for its opposite; I have already looked to prohibit endless or frantic propulsion that continuously moves away from stasis. There is a ground for stasis and I let myself rest there in thinking and not thinking. In diminished vibration, I suppose a stillness, a silence, sense the end. I also move for and against a world of action, search for the detour, delay the last collapse. My oscillation, jostling within beginning and end is uneven, the middle unbalanced. I am not thrown about between shadowlands, but find myself where I am.

Externalization, A Counter-Measure

The proliferation of subject positions—that comes up out of a subject that refuses to be ‘fixed’ as object—makes for a stage populated with other selves, other actors. Here, then, is a stage set for inter-play, a stage where what we say is not determined prior to meeting the other—open to improvisation. Here, on this shifting stage, we find ourselves outside of or prior to judgment, an orientation that might let us notice a moment, allow us to be affected by the encounter, and be noticed and affecting in turn. This is an engagement with the other not as an object, but as a subject, (and with specificity, *this other, this actual other*), capable of resisting or putting us off our judgment—of ourselves and each other. This is a moment of relief that comes from the liveliness of the other prior to the work of coming-to-know—an experimental orientation, not experimenting under hypothesis, but in the spirit of openness to surprise. This is where we might find the potential for intimacy or sociality. In the production of these moments, each is the source for the other, each an indeterminate subject for the other, not an object for scrutiny or criticality.

The *Feminology*, then, comes out of an engagement with Hegel’s text as a source-text that I have taken up under a permission—a permission to tarry with it, to work or write-with the text outside of my own internal striving, exempting myself as a singular source²⁴ of language or strenuous knowledge production. In working in this way, I put myself under no pressure to gather the particularities of who I am (or imagine myself to be), do not press myself for resources, for proof of my power to think,²⁵ proof of mine as a fully vital life. I have placed the field of engagement, accumulation, and production outside of me—this particular

²⁴ In giving myself over to constraint and to other people’s language, I find space to move and wander, try on other ways of saying. I find a place for myself that works, works because I haven’t just captured some one and only possibility, some great thought that I can call my own, to look for what is absolutely unique, but to work with what lies before me—and here, working within these constraints, I find that my own words were never my own.

²⁵ Here I am taking up Heidegger’s conception of a good use for man as a thinker, “in the granting that needs and uses man so that he may share in revealing,” and wondering about using ourselves not just for thinking, but for doing and for doing in the world that looks like service to others. (Heidegger 32)

act stands in for the way I have imagined a field of engagement outside of myself more generally. I have also placed ‘the text’—here both mine and the *Phenomenology*—outside of the weight of the massive discourse that surrounds Hegel [and its absence for the hysteric]. This is language as the condition for the possibility of sociality, instead of as its obstacle.

The *Feminology* is an externalization of my way of forming an object (or knot), but this object has to find all of its sensuous qualities in language, and that means that the object produced is also an abstraction, constituted as it is uprooted. Not then of me as contented, but of me more bare, absented, not formed of concretized thoughts, but made out of thinking—not *as* or *of* content, but as a purer subject seen from divergent views. In that, whatever the vantage, the *Feminology* is not personal, but personed²⁶—my evacuated subject position now open and multiple as I imagine myself configured in those many vantages—him, her, they, we, I. There is a freedom here from narrative, a freedom gained paradoxically by way of a constrained drifting; I move through the text ghosting my existence, looking awry—loosened from my concrete self. Here, I find myself capable of many and various figurations. In this shifting of possible figures in the *Feminology*, there is no whole, no final determination of who I am, but only my self in its shifting, moving, taking up other possible positions—the feminization of my voice, my gaze, my hand.

An Other Force, An Other Figure

In the feminization of my writing, my hand, and precisely there, I feel the force of the other hand, and I recognize the need for some kind of counter-force to disrupt the safe and compulsive attachment to everyday life. Moving away from the actual and toward the theoretical takes strenuous effort and requires us to do violence to our own image. This is language in its threatening *and* generous function, a breach or tear in an otherwise somatic identity, a tearing away from, a curse but also the gift of distance. At this distance, even or

²⁶ “So that that writing that had seemed to distance itself from us by its solitude—opaque, obscure, difficult—now seems by its distance more public, its distance the measure of its music. A privacy in which the self itself disappears and leaves us the world.” (Bernstein 82)

exactly in what is now my prehistoric traumatic encounter, Hegel already functioned as that third term, the generous father, the figure that breaks the mother-child dyad. It may have been with the force of *ad*-diction, the figure of Hegel and the force of the *Phenomenology*, that enabled me to counter my own hysterical reaction to the *inter*-dictions of the discourse of the university, to break my silence, to take up or conceive of *contra*-diction at all. And yet, each chance at distance also comes with the danger of collapse: a collapse between self and university, self and text, self and analysis—the tyranny of the desire for synthesis, balance and normativity reasserted. In the order of temporal narrative, an improper thesis on Hegel's *Phenomenology* can only be a failure, but in the discourse of the maker, we can gather up the discussants in a synchronic space and let them speak, under which conditions impropriety or a failure of the understanding might be read again as a success of the imagination.

Counterfactual, A Retrospective Necessity

This work of Hegel's has particular meaning for me as it figured so prominently in my image of failure. The work of the *Feminology* has illuminated unknown knowns, insights have come to the fore, but not fully, not forcefully, not overwhelmingly. Because of a lack of overwhelming force in either direction, I am unable to fully resolve the tension between regret and necessity when I look back on my decision to leave academia. Should I have gone on to pursue a graduate degree in philosophy, I may have succumbed to the call for expertise that I now find so problematic,²⁷ but I also may very well have found that kindly advisor who would have disabused me of that very notion. The contingency of my failure becomes, in retrospect, a space, a gap, in which to tarry with my dead: if something passes away, the work is not to revive it but to uncover and re-cover it, live with it, and live with it as the presencing of lack. In this ability to hold on to lack, I am, then, unable to fully resolve the tension between regret and necessity. And yet, at some point, a retrospective has to look necessary—who but myself

²⁷ The expert is in too close, it's too thick and mucky in there, and the depth chokes out the fictive and imaginative space that comes with some (critical) distance from the supersaturated knowing-all, a space where one might be able to let words and thoughts and imagination slip about, to be able to mistake a rock for a head or a cloud for a lion—before or prior to judgment or taste or facts.

would I have become? How could the pleasure I take now in working with Hegel on my own terms, in my now feminized way of engaging with language, writing and philosophy, have been otherwise?

The Personed Is Political

The writing-with that I undertake in my work with Hegel's *Phenomenology* is a poetics of engagement and collaboration with other people, other minds—a poetics of *with-ness*. But it is also a poetics of refusal, importantly though, a mild or moderated refusal. I work toward a refusal that is not so idealized that it overpowers its counter-force, the force of allowance. In writing the *Feminology* with Hegel, in that writing-with, there is a refusal, a refusal to be taken up or consumed as a singular identity, as a font of inspiration and a vehicle that produces what is a new and unique commodity²⁸—a refusal to leave a singular mark (without refusing mark-making altogether). It is a refusal to mine myself (and we can take that for its *making-mine* meaning as well as in the sense of the extractive metaphor) for resources and to exploit those resources for something more, greater than—*more gets on the more it tends*. The emphasis on writing-with in the production of the *Feminology* is a refusal to appear as surplus value and is, instead, an exploitation of the machinery of systematic production for the sake of surplus reduction. The refusal to be used is only one political move though; allowing ourselves to be used is another. In bringing up refusal, I want, more so, to emphasize that what I refuse in theory is precisely what the poetics of with-ness seeks to allow in practice, the practice of being with other people. If we repopulate the theoretical with the actual, with people, we might not just recognize the danger of being instrumentalized or privileging certain ways of 'knowing,' but also the saving power of being instrumentalized, of being curious about other knowledge systems and curious about our own. We can think ourselves to be less-than—that we

²⁸ "What if the 'goods' refused to go to market? What if they maintained among themselves 'another' kind of trade? Exchange without identifiable terms of trade, without accounts, without end—without one plus one, without series, without number. Without a standard of value. Where *red blood* and *pretense* would no longer be distinguished one from the other by deceptive packaging that masks their respective worth. Where use and exchange would mingle. Where the most valuable would also be the least held in reserve. Where nature would spend itself without exhaustion, trade without labor, give of itself—protected from masculine transactions—for nothing: there would be free enjoyment, well-being without suffering, pleasure without possession." (Irigaray 110)

can use ourselves and what we know, and know how to do, as a tool for the use of, to be taken up by, other people. If each is the source for the other, the personed is political, the political is social, the social is ethical. Again, then, I think to find myself exactly there, bound to others, sociability in quivering and vibration and remainders, in intimacy—a presencing mutuality that recognizes the needs of others as a form of self-recognition.

There is pleasure in embracing lack, and pleasure in confessing it as well—we might conceive being less-than as the feminization of our way of being and being with other people. In the pleasure that writing-with brings, I discover my own inability to master as a source of pleasure rather than as a source of anxiety. Because lack is a potential source of pleasure, there is something in the lack of perfection that can be left untended—there is no striving to erase or make up for, no incapacities to feel guilt over. And the pleasure found in confessing lack has the capability to draw the thereby-feminized together to speak of vulnerability.

The *Feminology* sits now as an energized accumulation of excess that has formed outside of me, and that excess is not fully bound. This work holds something personal, confessional, a lament, and yet, in being with another, it is not occupied by me, taken up or saturated with who I am. As far as the work is personal, I can see myself wandering, lingering, tarrying on its stage, but I am not alone there—these traces, set before *an* other, are not personal but personed. Here then lies a scene, a stage that shifts, deceives, fails, divides into dissolution *and* is taken up with, is full and actual, is populated with other people, other minds. It is not what I would confess, but an attempt to produce the conditions under which confession is possible at all. These are, perhaps, the conditions for the possibility of writing as well.

I have searched for measure, sought sufficient distance to allow for empathy, for a space outside of and prior to judgment—left myself neither fully exposed nor fully covered, so that we might find ourselves *with*. We are here, appearing, in parts.

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