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Writing Out (of) a Gendered Language

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Oral Presentation O1.1

WRITING OUT (OF) A GENDERED LANGUAGE

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In her paper, "The Laugh of the Medusa," Hélène Cixous describes a woman's experience of speaking: "She throws her trembling body forward; she lets go of herself, she flies; all of her passes into her voice, and it's with her body that she vitally supports the logic of her speech. Her flesh speaks 'true.'" In order for women to truly inscribe themselves in language, they must use their bodies, "draw story from history." The difficulty, according to Cixous, lies in getting oneself enough outside of the patriarchal system of marked language, the system which prevents women from truly inscribing themselves in words and from finding their own sort of speech and their own sort of writing.

My project consists of two parts: a collection of experimental poems written of, about, and/or to gendered experience, and an essay that conceptualizes this work in traditions of feminist theory and poetry. Feminist literary thought, in its most complex and nuanced form, ultimately breaks open into poetry. Conducted through the English department with input from women's studies disciplines, this creative writing experiment attempts to poeticize feminism, creating poetic arguments from and for feminist ideas as well as enacting the theory into poetic language and structures. It is an exercise in writing a woman out of a binding system and into her own self, and it is inscribing her self in a language that has no linear bias, a language that can be what Cixous calls "these waves, these floods, these outbursts" not unworthy of being heard.