

THE INSCRIPTION OF  
"FEMININE JOUISSANCE" IN  
ELIZABETH SMART'S  
BY GRAND CENTRAL STATION  
I SAT DOWN AND WEPT

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What is feminine *jouissance*, Hélène Cixous asks in "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays," and how does it inscribe itself, write itself (82)? Elizabeth Smart's poetic prose work, *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*, provides a possible, albeit complex, answer to this question. The first section of this paper offers a Cixousian reading of Smart's text; it is not so much a critical analysis or defence of Cixous's ideas as an experimental application of these ideas, a praxis. The second section problematizes the way Smart inscribes feminine desire through her protagonist/narrator—a woman in love with a married man—by considering one of its costs: the oppression of another woman's desire. *By Grand Central Station* may be interpreted as feminine writing in Cixousian terms but is it feminist? An examination of the author's biographical data and its relation to the text not so much justifies as explains this paradox. The final section observes how Smart, through her use of Judeo-Christian metaphors and allusions, first installs binary and borderline definitions of woman which condemn her speaking/writing/sexually engaged subject to the negative terms of these borders, and then exculpates and extricates her subject by subverting and deconstructing these definitions.

Much of Cixous's delineation of *écriture féminine*—what she prefers to refer to as "writing said to be feminine" or as a "decipherable libidinal femininity which can be read in writing produced by a male or a female" (Moi, *Politics* 108)—is concerned with the articulation and inscription of feminine desire, specifically those feminine libidinal pleasures that have been "fridgified" by the "sex

cops" upholding the "phallo-logocentric aufhebung" which defines the feminine as the other, absence, negation, passivity, lack, etc. (Cixous 68-69). Cixous is an incendiary who incites women to write their bodies:

Voice: unfastening, fracas. Fire! She shoots, she shoots away. Break. From their bodies where they have been buried, shut up and at the same time forbidden to take pleasure. Women have almost everything to write about femininity: about their sexuality. . . . Woman's body with a thousand and one fiery hearths. . . . We have turned away from our bodies. Shamefully we have been taught to be unaware of them, to lash them with stupid modesty. . . . Why so few texts? Because there are still so few women winning back their bodies. Woman must write her body, must make up the unimpeded tongue that bursts partitions, classes, and rhetorics, orders and codes, must inundate, run through, go beyond the discourse with its last reserves, including the one of laughing off the word "silence". . . . (94-95)

She encourages women to write because the scene of writing is a "somewhere else" (72), a potentially subversive and rebellious site that is not obliged to reproduce the system (72), a space where one may valorize the feminine or deconstruct the hierarchical binary oppositions that have structured symbolic systems in general, a place where one may upset the harmony of a phallocratic binary system of thought that always subjugates the feminine yin (darkness) to the masculine yang (light). Cixous writes:

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 even if she 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? (82)

Her question is not rhetorical and her text reaches towards an answer—adumbrates an answer—while self-consciously eluding a definitive answer because writing the body resists the phallogocentric urge to theorize, enclose, fix, and code (92).

Anyone looking for step by step instructions will be disappointed.

Cixous perceives a bond, what I would call an analogy, between woman's libidinal economy and writing, between literal female *jouissance* and textual and linguistic *jouissance*, where woman's multiple erogenous zones and capacity for multiple orgasm translate into feminine texts which "strive in the direction of difference, struggle to undermine the dominant phallogocentric logic, split open the closure of the binary opposition and revel in the pleasures of open-ended textuality" (Moi, *Politics* 108). It may come as a surprise that Cixous's exemplary texts, in "Sorties" at least, are penned by men. *Écriture féminine*, she insists in an effort to avoid an essentialist ideological position, is a bisexual practice, bisexuality defined as "the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes" (85). Women, she claims, have a privileged position to writing because they are bisexual whereas men have been trained to aim for "glorious phallic monosexuality" (85). In "Sorties," writers who qualify as feminine writers include Shakespeare, Kleist, and above all Jean Genet, whom, incidentally, Brigid Brophy compares to Smart in her foreword to *By Grand Central Station* (11-12). In Cixous's "The laugh of the Medusa," she classifies Colette and Marguerite Duras as feminine writers. I would add Elizabeth Smart to this list.

As creative writers, Cixous and Smart are kindred spirits: both are gifted with a rhapsodic, sensual, and at times hyperbolic and over-wrought poetic prose style, a style capable of ecstatic ascents and sober descents; both have a predilection for the Old Testament; both are metamorphic writers who constantly shift identities and seek myths to inhabit, often the same myths; and because of this protean quality, both are very hard to pin down ideologically (for example, it seems both writers do and do not essentialize woman). Rosemary Sullivan, Smart's biographer, writes of her subject, "Her ambitions were Lawrencian: to evolve an almost mystical and indeed, for women, revolutionary ethic of love" (93). In some respects, the same could be said of Cixous (indeed, in the introduction to *The Newly Born Woman*, Sandra Gilbert asks, "Didn't D.H. Lawrence—in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and elsewhere—begin to outline something oddly comparable to Cixous's creed of woman before she did? Describing the cosmic mystery of Connie's *jouissance* . . ." (xvii). The love ethic in *By Grand Central Station* may be viewed as being revolutionary for women as Sullivan

suggests because Smart articulates and inscribes female desire and does so thirty years before Cixous writes, "Let them tremble, those priests; we are going to show them our sexts!" (69). Smart's narrator takes her adulterous lover into the forbidden forest mentioned by Cixous (68), and while there they write their "cyphers with anatomy" (34). Moreover, Smart engages the same terms and metaphors as Cixous in her powerful representation of the feminine libidinal economy. In the first part of my analysis of Smart's articulation of feminine desire, I will be focusing on the "I" and the "he"—the narrator in love and her lover—of the love triangle, because third parties spoil the mood, especially if the third party is "she"—the wife of "he." The narrator asserts her belief in a sensual, erotic, and earthly love: "To deny love, and deceive it meanly by pretending that what is unconsummated remains eternal, or that love sublimated reaches highest to heavenly love, is repulsive . . ." (26). While the affair is in its incipient stage of flirtatious uncertainty, the narrator's sex, heart, and head ache with yearning, with pre-coital tension:

I am over-run, jungled in my bed, I am infested with a menagerie of desires: my heart is eaten by a dove, a cat scrambles in the cave of my sex, hounds in my head obey a whipmaster who cries nothing but havoc as the hours test my endurance with an accumulation of tortures. (23)

Her entire body is aroused by his mere presence: "But he never passes anywhere near me without every drop of my blood springing to attention. My mind may reason that the tenseness only registers neutrality, but my heart knows no true neutrality was ever so full of passion" (20). "The continually vibrating I" (21) is in a state of perpetual *jouissance* at the mere anticipation of intimacy.

The love affair itself is transformed from a heterosexual coupling to a by turns bisexual, homosexual, lesbian, and incestuous union through poetry and metaphor. In her foreword, Brophy finds Smart "agreeing with Genet about the convertibility, the metamorphic indetermination, of the sexes" (12). Hearing her lover recount his homosexual encounter with "blond sapling boys with blue eye-shadow" in printshops (20, 68), the narrator replies, "One should love beings whatever their sex" (20). Both the narrator and her lover are hermaphrodites who metamorphose from one sex to the other at will. Their love partakes of the lesbian and incestuous embrace:

I remember the night it turned him into an Assyrian girl, casting down his lashes under a blossoming turban. Then we were two sisters and I the protive. He had no breasts, and this was nostalgic. O the glittering incest bird. But all so gracefully submissive, who will put the hand over the heart? (82)

Pondering her lover's shadow, the narrator becomes virile and grows phallic:

Also, smoothed away from all detail, I see, not the face of a lover to arouse my coquetry or defiance, but the gentle outline of a young girl. And this, though shocking, enables me to understand, and myself rise as virile a cobra, out of my lodge, to assume control. (22)

After a night of unsatiated desire, guilt, and despair, her phallic "phoenix of love is as bright as a totem pole, in the morning, on the sky, breathing like a workman setting out on a job" (36).

In contrast, she receives her lover's semen as passively as the earth receives the rain: "Under the waterfall he surprised me bathing and gave me what I could no more refuse than the earth can refuse the rain. Then he kissed me and went down to his cottage" (24). Thus, the narrator's articulation of her sexual desire is bisexual in Cixousian terms in that it encompasses images we traditionally associate with masculine and feminine sexuality. This bisexuality subverts the male-sexually aggressive/female-sexually passive binary opposition.

Bodies of water are Cixousian metaphors for the feminine libidinal economy, and the practice of feminine writing involves the reclamation of these waters: "But that's it—our seas are what we make them, fishy or not, impenetrable or muddled, red or black, high and rough or flat and smooth, narrow straits or shoreless . . ." (88-89). In *By Grand Central Station*, the narrator's seas are her "tidals of love" (39), her noisy "inside seas" (41), which make the reality outside her love inaudible. In contrast to the phallic economy of representation, this deluge of love "floods everything over, so that there is nothing the eye sees that is not covered in" (39). Her entire body lubricates, moistens, and turns to fluid at the mere sight of her beloved: "Even the precise geometry of his hand, when I gaze at it, dissolves me into water and I flow away in a flood of love" (39).

She turns to "liquid" to "invade his every orifice" when he comes to the door (40). The narrator's "inside seas" (41) brim and overflow:

But how can I go through the necessary daily motions, when such an intense fusion turns the world to water? The overflow drenches all my implements of trivial intercourse. I stare incomprehension at the simplest question from a stranger, standing as if bewitched, half-smiling, like an idiot, feeling this fiery fluid spill out of my eyes. (39)

She is prepared for sexual rather than "trivial" intercourse, and even her eyes ejaculate at the thought of it. In a state of post-coital bliss, she lies down on the redwood needles and seems to "flow down the canyon with the thunder and confusion of the storm" (25). The external geography reflects the geography of her body as the narrator and the landscape speak the erotic language of love in unison: "The Pacific in blue spasms reaches all its superlatives" (18), "the sea booms" (19), "the stream rushes loudly" (19), and "the creek gushes over green boulders into pools no human ever uses, down canyons into the sea" (18). Moreover, the surrounding vegetable life signifies sensuality, with sea kelp lying in "amorous coils" (19), tumescent "double-size flowers" (19), thick pine trees dropping "globular cones" (40), and "dishevelled palms with their pantaloons falling down their trunks" (40). In Cixous's rhapsodic terms, the narrator's libido is "cosmic," "her rising: is not erection. But diffusion," "she is what is erogenous in the heterogenous," she is "stunning, extravagant, one who is dispersible, desiring and capable of other, of the other woman she will be, of the other woman she is not, of him, of you" (88-89).

Now it is time to spoil the mood and consider the third party in *By Grand Central Station*—"the other woman she is not"—the wife. In articulating her own desire, the narrator oppresses another woman's desire; we must ask ourselves, is the inscription of the feminine libidinal economy in this poetic prose work feminist? In "Sorties," Cixous praises subversive texts that go off to war against the moral and social universe and political and religious strongholds (98), rebellious texts where people tear down barriers and are willing to live or die for an idea they consider right and just (72). In a sense, the text of *By Grand Central Station* is a battlefield and the narrator, in defence of her adulterous and passionate love, shuns World War II and instead goes off to war against conventional morality, society, and religion. As the world divides into believers and non-believers, she finds herself performing the role of love's advocate and as the evangelist preaching a religion of love.

In her essay "A Canadian Héloïse: Elizabeth Smart and the Feminist Adultery Novel," Lorraine McMullen calls *By Grand Central Station* Canada's first feminist adultery novel, a genre she defines as "the story of adultery told from the feminist perspective" (78). Smart's novel, she claims, is in the mainstream of an "honourable tradition" (78) that she traces back to Ovid's *Heroides vii* (Ovid's story of Virgil's Dido and Aeneas) and to *The Letters of Abélard and Héloïse*.

Dido, Héloïse, and Smart's protagonist have much in common:

All three are adulterers. All three give their love freely and rejoice consciously in that love. All three are distraught when abandoned by their lovers—Dido kills herself, Héloïse takes the veil in a mood of tragic despair, Smart's narrator contemplates suicide but then determines to go on alone. These are not conventional women: they are bound neither by contemporary mores nor by concern for appearances. None considers marriage as needful. (McMullen 80)

McMullen adds, "there is a sense of wrongdoing but it is a sense of sin and guilt acknowledged and fully accepted" (80). Just how honourable is adultery? How feminist? From one perspective, the term "feminist adulterer" has an oxymoronic component. A question that forces itself on any feminist reading of *By Grand Central Station* is what to make of the love triangle of "I," "he," and "she" wherein the cost of "I"'s *jouissance* is the victimization, humiliation, sacrifice, sainthood, and martyrdom of "she." Conscious of the risk of echoing the early, conservative, insular-minded, and somewhat sexist criticisms of *By Grand Central Station*, such as Cyril Connolly's dismissal of this extraordinary testament of female love as "a violent and adroit piece of home wrecking" (quoted in Sullivan 228), I hesitate to proceed in this direction. However, as Rosalind Coward writes in her essay, "The True Story of How I Became My Own Person," "questions of social responsibility and not hurting other people are no less important to women critical of conventional morality" (45).

In my effort to understand rather than judge, I had to place Smart's novel in its autobiographical context. In Sullivan's biography of Smart, *By Heart*, Smart's struggle to find authority as a writer—her anxiety of authorship—is emphasized. Smart knew she wanted to be a writer—indeed did write from early childhood on-

wards—but spent her life grappling with intense self-doubt. In her preface, Sullivan writes, “the real narrative of her life is more complex and compelling [than her legendary love affair with George Barker on which *By Grand Central Station* is based]; it has to do with the experience of being a woman artist in the middle of this century” (xi). In her journal excerpts published in *Necessary Secrets*, we find Smart the young aspiring writer writing, “I must marry a poet. It’s the only thing” (80). Sullivan writes:

Desperate to get started as a writer, Elizabeth chose the route most easily available to women. She fell in love with an artist. It was a familiar history lived by most creative women before her. A young man wishing to write finds a circle, and often becomes the protege of the famous writer. George Barker, at about this time, was being taken under the wing of T.S. Eliot. A young woman finds an artist/lover—a more dangerous strategy. (62)

Sullivan describes Smart as “stalking the muse, the demon lover who could crack the chrysalis” (2) and as looking for a “soulmate” whom she could “love, live, and write with” (94)—and, I might add, whom she could write. After several artist/lovers, including British painter Meredith Frampton and Greek collagist Jean “Yanko” Varda, Smart read a collection of George Barker’s poetry, fell in love with his words, and found her muse. The only problem was that her muse was married to a woman named Jessica; this problem was not insurmountable for Smart. I do not doubt the intensity or sincerity of Barker’s and Smart’s love, nor do I doubt that “it was clear that, completely in love, she [Smart] would do anything for Barker” (Sullivan 165). What I find of most interest in this biographical material as it relates to *By Grand Central Station* is how “in love she found her authority, and she would write her book” (Sullivan 173). Sullivan describes how Smart found her polyphonic “voices” after meeting George: “The vacuum of need she had felt at core was at last inhabited. Love for George provided the still centre, the emotional focus that freed her to write” (174). Smart the lover is inextricably tied up with Smart the writer: “Along with the painful ecstasy of the push/pull tension of love was the high rhetoric of its articulation” (Sullivan 173). My point is that Jessica was not only sacrificed for love—she was sacrificed for the word, for the language of love as well. Given Smart’s lover’s and writer’s



need for George, Jessica can be seen as a physical manifestation of Smart's writing block, as a block incarnate to Smart's literal and literary *jouissance*.

Since *By Grand Central Station* is a "poetic transmutation of autobiographical experience" (Sullivan 251), we can cross the borders of autobiography and fiction with some ease and view the wife in the love triangle as a block to the narrator's fulfilment of desire and her inscription of that desire. The narrator's projections and poetic metaphors metamorphose the wife into an innocent (24), a nymph (23), a bird (23), a child (27), a "goddess of all things which the vigour of living destroys" (24), a flower "able to die unceremoniously" (35), a saint (18), a martyr (31), a madonna and mock madonna (17, 24), and even "the lamb of god" (33)—everything, it seems, except a human being. At first the narrator pities her victim, her Christ-like martyr, but she becomes Pontius Pilate nevertheless. The "cloudy mask" of the narrator's "desire" superimposes itself over the "anguished" and "piercing face" of "she" (32). When "he" and "she" disembark from the bus in Monterrey, "I" contemplates postponing forever the "miracle hanging fire" (17) and renouncing him "for her peace of mind" (18). When the narrator asks, "Is there no other channel of my deliverance except by her martyrdom?" (31), the signification of deliverance is threefold: a spiritual deliverance, the delivery of the child that the narrator conceives with her lover, and the deliverance of the narrator's voice from silence. The narrator then disavows herself of culpability. The adulterous love affair is inevitable because "It is written" (22). "I am possessed with love and have no options," she claims (39). She asks, "How can I speak to her? How can I comfort her? How can I explain to her any more than I can to the flowers that I crush with my foot when I walk in the field?" (24). At the zenith of her ecstasy, she is bereft of pity: "There is no room for pity, or anything. In a bleeding heart I should find only exhilaration in the richness of the red" (42). At the nadir of her despair over her lover's abandonment, she feels pity only for herself:

If I am suffering, think what she suffered—a hundred times more and without hope, and I was dazzlingly happy on top of her profound and excruciating misery. . . . But it is not for her my heart opens and breaks: I die again and again only for myself. (85-86)

For Smart's protagonist, there really is no contest between love and pity because love is her religion, and this religion is mystical, carnal, and aesthetic. She breaks the heart of her lover's wife "like a robin's egg" (35) for her own pleasure and the pleasure of her text. The typewriter is a "temple of love" where part of the sacrifice is performed (25). She makes it clear that her acts of violence are sacrifices to love and literature when she writes, "on her mangledness I am spreading my amorous sheets" (32)—her "angels" do indeed have "sadist eyes" (26). The narrator asks, "will there be a birth from all this blood, or is death only extracting his greedy price? Is an infant struggling in the triangular womb?" (32). In fact, there are several births: the birth of the narrator's child and the birth of the book we hold in our hands, the book which Smart completes two weeks before giving birth to her first of four children with George Barker.

In between the ecstatic inscriptions of her desire, the narrator of *By Grand Central Station* does articulate feelings of guilt and shame, and these feelings have much to do with the antithetical constructions of the subject "I" and the object "she."

In "Sorties," Cixous claims that writing is an act that will "'realize' the uncensored relationship of woman to her sexuality, to her woman-being giving her back access to her own forces . . . that will tear her out of the superegoed, over-Mosesed structure where the same position of guilt is always reserved for her" (97). Considering the Judeo-Christian and classical allusions and metaphors that render the narrator's guilt, a superficial reading may suggest that Smart has not torn herself away from the "over-Mosesed structure," a structure that is part of a masculine economy that always perceives difference as opposition and valorizes one term of the relationship. In "Feminist, Female, Feminine," Toril Moi explains how women occupy the margins, borderlines, and frontiers of the symbolic order:

It is this position which has enabled male culture to vilify women as representing darkness and chaos, to view them as Lilith or the Whore of Babylon, and sometimes to elevate them as the representatives of a higher and purer nature, to venerate them as Virgins and Mothers of God. In the first instance the borderline is seen as part of the chaotic wilderness outside, and in the second it is seen as an inherent part of the inside: the part which protects and shields the symbolic order from

the imaginary chaos. Needless to say, neither position corresponds to any essential truth of women, much as the patriarchal powers would like us to believe they did. (127)

At times, it seems as though Smart does believe: her protagonist is a sexual agent who expresses and acts upon her desire for a married man within the context of a patriarchal Judeo-Christian positionality. The logic works as follows: if the wife is the innocent, the madonna, which is to say the second Eve, then the narrator is the Whore of Babylon and the first Eve, which is to say a temptress and a seductress—an unfortunate position given that “Jesus Christ walks the waters of another planet” (33) and a *felix culpa* is inconceivable. In a retelling of the Genesis myth, “the Beginning” (19) lurks outside the triangle until the narrator “beguiles” her true love to lie down under the redwood tree (34), and she is deserted by the angelic orders (23) and “God is out of earshot” (34) as a result of her “sin.” At the end of the Part One we find her consumed with guilt, crouching, and prepared to receive God’s wrath (27). “This is the trap that lured the archangel into your bed” (81), she says upon looking at her face in the mirror and seeing a temptress, a *femme fatale*. Even her lover eventually deserts her, calling her a “bitch” (67) and a “cunt” (81) and associating her with sirens who lure men to their doom (69) and with the “detestable all-female, who grabs and devours, invulnerable with greed” (68). The wife tells her husband to have his “orgy with Blondie” and to “work out” his “passion on her” as he would on a whore (75). When the narrator is incarcerated after being arrested at the Arizona border for “committing fornication” (47) with her lover, the police officer’s wife chides her for her Jezebel accoutrements: “Give me your bracelet, no jewelry allowed. . . . At once. And your ring. . . . And your bag. Carrying all those outrageous cosmetics! Lipstick and perfume! No wonder you’re where you are” (48). While the narrator may appropriate the words of the Song of Song’s amorous Shulamite wife in Part Four of the novel, the effect is ironic and subversive given her status as an adulterous lover. As for the wife, who is described as “legendary and stony as a Catholic Cathedral” (108), “all civilized men will weep for her. Choirs will mourn forever in front of that legitimate, moving memorial” (108).

Through a variety of strategies, Smart does play with, subvert, valorize the negative term, and at times deconstruct the

binary and borderline definitions of woman that encompass the virgin/whore, wife/mistress, legitimate/illicit, frigid/concupiscent dichotomies; however, this may be looked upon by some readers of a feminist bent with some ambivalence in that she seems driven, for the most part, by a need to alleviate her/her narrator's guilt over wounding another woman. The narrator begins by taking issue with God and becoming the Eve who talks back. One evening she boldly addresses God to come down from the eucalyptus tree outside her window to tell her how to atone (31), and the next morning she finds the "impotent" eucalyptus standing "gaunt" (35). She repays God's desertion by deserting God and empathizing with the enemy: "There are some who love Lucifer because he lost the battle with God. The devil had some justice on his side, and perhaps something was rotten in the state of heaven" (68). When her lover returns to his wife, she accuses him of sinning against love (88), prays for his return, and rebukes God for not cooperating, adding, "Sir, what I plead is just—what are you stalling for" (106), thereby affirming the legitimacy of her "illicit" and adulterous love affair. For a moment only, she solicits the saint's capacity for self-flagellation:

Let me lie on the cold stones! Let me lift weights too heavy for me! Let me cry More! to pain, with a white face shaping through fire, with whips of endurance, with cords of the invulnerable ascetic, into the badge of the possible saint! (95)

Alas, she can make saints but not become one: "I am lonely. I cannot be a female saint. I want the one I want. He is the one I picked out from the world. I picked him out in cold deliberation. But the passion was not cold. It kindled me. It kindled the world" (97). By refusing to ask forgiveness for sins she ultimately refuses to recognize (56) and by affirming the sexual dimension of her love, she invalidates and nullifies the negative terms of the binary and borderline definitions of woman evoked through the text's metaphors. She is neither virgin nor whore—she is different: she is a woman passionately in love.

The narrator further subverts the logic of the Judeo-Christian symbolic system that marginalizes woman as virgin/whore or the sexually engaged woman as legitimate wife/illicit mistress by positing this logic within a larger, more permissive and sexually anarchic logic of nature. "The lowest vines conspire to abet my plot," she writes, "and the poison oak thrusts its insinuation under

my foot" (21). Post-coital guilt and repentance have no place in nature's lexicon:

Absolve me, I prayed, up through the cathedral redwoods, and forgive me if this is sin. But the new moss caresses me and the water over my feet and the ferns approved me with endearments: My darling, my darling, lie down with us now for you also are earth whom nothing but love can sow. . . .

Gently the woodsorrel and the dove explained the confirmation and guided my return. When I came out of the woods onto the hill, I had pine needles in my hair for a bridalwreath, and the sea and the sky and the gold hills smiled benignly. (24-25)

On returning to her home in Ottawa as the pregnant "prodigal daughter" (55), she writes, "the old gold of the October trees, the stunted cedars, the horizons, the chilly gullies with their red willow whips, intoxicate me and confirm belief in what I have done" (55), and "every yellow or scarlet leaf hangs like a flag waving me on" (56). At this juncture, nature is an ally that legitimizes and encourages the fulfilment of her desires. Nature has its own agenda, however, and the topic of Smart's next book, *The Assumptions of Rogues and Rascals*, might best be described as nature's interest in the propagation of the species and nature's indifference to the propagation of feminine texts.

A Cixousian reading of the articulation of the narrator's desire in *By Grand Central Station* suggests that Smart's text is, in Cixous's terms, "writing said to be feminine." Saying this writing is feminist, however, is another matter given the price tag of this particular inscription of feminine *jouissance*: the annihilation of another woman's pleasure and the infliction of pain. Furthermore, can we say this text is feminist given the way binary and borderline definitions of woman are installed and then subverted in order to affirm the narrator's desire but also to alleviate her guilt over her violent acts? Because of these intriguing complications, ideological conundrums, and seeming contradictions, my relationship as a feminist critic to Smart's text (as well as to Cixous's discourse for that matter) is best characterized by a binary opposition: love-hate.

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