

The sex or the head? Feminine voices and academic women through the work of H el ene Cixous

Kirsten Locke & Katrina McChesney

To cite this article: Kirsten Locke & Katrina McChesney (2023): The sex or the head? Feminine voices and academic women through the work of H el ene Cixous, Educational Philosophy and Theory, DOI: [10.1080/00131857.2023.2219841](https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2023.2219841)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2023.2219841>



  2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 09 Jun 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 191



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

The sex or the head? Feminine voices and academic women through the work of Hélène Cixous

Kirsten Locke^a  and Katrina McChesney^b 

^aSchool of Critical Studies in Education, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand; ^bTe Kura Toi Tangata School of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

ABSTRACT

Hélène Cixous is perhaps best known for her paper, 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1976) and her literary contributions outside academia. In this paper, we pick up a lesser known Cixous text, 'Le Sexe ou la tête?' that offers an interesting and provocative perspective on the traps associated with being feminine in a masculine environment. As we converse with Cixous, weaving our own words and experiences with hers, we link her work more closely with the feminine in modern-day academia. We suggest that Cixous's remarks on decapitation and voice offer a way forward for academic women to be; to speak; to recognise the double jeopardy of decapitation in the university; and to use laughter as a strategic, powerful, political act of resistance and subversion against oppressive masculine power structures. We draw on and seek to enact Cixous's notion of *écriture féminine*—a disruptive style of writing that provides a mode of being, speaking, and writing that subverts the power of masculine norms in order to be heard and to bring possibilities for change.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 27 February 2023

Accepted 16 May 2023



KEYWORDS

Hélène cixous;
écriture féminine;
higher education;
women in academia;
gender in academia;
academic writing

Les préliminaires

The essay on which we centre this paper is an English translation of a transcribed interview conducted in French with writer Hélène Cixous in 1975. The original French publication was entitled '*Le Sexe ou la tête?*', directly translated as 'The sex or the head?' The English translation we engaged with (by Annette Kuhn, 1981), in contrast, was entitled 'Castration or decapitation?'. The English title first captured our interest, but it is the raw French statement that hammers home Cixous's blunt message: that to survive as women in a masculine environment, we will be forced to give up either our essence and identity as women (our 'sex') or our voice, freedom of thought, and criticality as independent thinkers (our 'head'). This message is uncomfortable and confronting, but is also worth taking time to think with.

Academia continues to be a stubbornly problematic environment for women (e.g. Amsler & Motta, 2019; Bacevic, 2021; Bönisch-Brednich & White, 2021; Brower & James, 2020; Butler, 2022; Oliver & Morris, 2020; Pebdani et al., 2023; Taylor et al., 2020; Yelin & Clancy, 2021). It is an environment that 'reproduces masculine dominance by what is otherwise referred to as

CONTACT Kirsten Locke  k.locke@auckland.ac.nz  School of Critical Studies in Education, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

'gender-neutral' procedures' (Muhr & Rehn, 2015, p. 129; see also Barnard et al., 2016). We hold with care and respect the accounts offered by other women of their lived experiences in this masculine academy (e.g. Ahmed, 2017; Buchanan, 2020; Fredericks et al., 2019; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Jarldorn & Gatwiri, 2022; Lahiri-Roy & Martinussen, 2023; Lawless & Chen, 2015; Lipton & Mackinlay, 2017, 2020; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2023; Stewart et al., 2022).

In this context, and as two white, heterosexual, middle class, able bodied, early/mid-career women navigating the landscape of academia and observing how this landscape influences those around us, our aim through this paper is to offer a window into some of our own sense-making around Cixous's '*Le Sexe ou la tête?*'—and to encapsulate this sense-making in a form that reflects Cixous's ideals. We suggest that Cixous's characterisation of the forces for castration and decapitation may speak not only to women but also to a range of individuals and groups who may be outside the hegemonic, hierarchical privilege economy that so often characterises our universities.

Throughout this paper, we provide points of entry to consider the ways in which academic women may be forced into desperate choices about what to sacrifice in order to survive. Sex/castration: Will we give up our different-ness, our relationality, our passions and delights and fulfilment in order to devote all our waking hours to a greedy institution that tells us we are never enough, never safe, can never rest and be present with those we love? Head/decapitation: Will we tone down our ambitious, provocative, disruptive original ideas in order to appease those who gatekeep publication, promotion, and potential? Or will we fight for the opportunity in what has, for so long, been a (white, able-bodied, middle-class) man's world, to retain both our womanhood and our intelligence? Will we simultaneously recognise—as we do in this paper—and then resist the binary choices that we seem to be faced with, instead doing the difficult wrestling required to carve out another way?

Méthode

Cixous's (1981) paper, as a transcribed interview, explicitly models the medium of a conversation. We have picked up this mode both in our thinking process and in our writing of this paper. As such, we offer through this paper our own dialectic 'conversation' as a triad of academic women (we two authors and Héléne Cixous herself). We interweave autoethnographic accounts (see below) of our shared thinking with quotes taken directly from Cixous's paper to explore how we—individuals, women in general, and members of other non-dominant groups—may be either made passively compliant, or punished for non-compliance, in the context of the university. We argue that through these forces, women are punished simply for being women within what Cixous terms the 'masculine economy' that the academy reflects.

As we make sense of these subversive ideas for ourselves, we converse 'poetically' and creatively with Cixous in a text whose very form resists the implicit discipline of a traditional academic paper. We draw permission from Cixous's conception of *écriture féminine* (feminine writing; Cixous, 1981, 1986), which refers to ways of speaking and writing that subvert or sit outside the norms of the masculine economy:

For Cixous, 'poetic writing' functions both aesthetically and strategically. Its aim is to undo homogeneous, dominant discourses that hide [the] will for power beneath eternal, conceptual truth ... According to Cixous, the poet escapes the [masculine language] contract and has recourse to voice. (Lauwo, 2018, pp. 702–703)

Thus, we bring Cixous's voice in concert with our own as we learn from and through her ideas, framing fragments of our imagined three-way dialogue in a series of vignettes interspersed with commentary and analysis. Our intent is to perform our own experimental methodology and *écriture féminine* through this paper. We seek to disrupt and destabilise normative conventions for academic texts and instead allow our text—in both form and substance—to creatively entangle with Cixous's insights and intent. An example of this in practice is our deliberate

resistance of the conventional expectation to align one's scholarship with a single definition or understanding of a key construct: rather than choosing between the two translations of '*Le Sexe ou la tête?*', we deliberately play with both. We allow all of the concepts across both translations—sex, head, decapitation, and castration—to arouse insights and inspiration, moving interchangeably and freely among these concepts in a way that resonates, for us, with Cixous's slippery subversion of traditional norms.

Our methodology has some resonance with other work that has activated collaborative forms of autoethnography in order to advance social justice (Anteliz et al., 2023; Sobre-Denton, 2012). We have also taken up Sobre-Denton (2012) invitation to think deeply and personally about the *then*, the *now*, and the *next time* as we 'wrestl[e] with [our] stories to discover the meanings of the stories in relation to their sociocultural contexts' (Chang et al., 2013, p. 17).

However, there are also key differences between our approach and others' use of autoethnographic methods and texts. We intentionally use more of Cixous's direct voice than would normally appear in an analytic text, as we seek to offer a dialogic engagement with Cixous herself rather than just a formal presentation of analysis that is solely our own. And in a stance that differs from much academic discourse, we hope that this text will speak to the heart as well as the mind; that it will bring surprises, smiles, and laughter; and that it will break, disrupt, and unsettle in the same ways that Cixous's own writing has affected us.

We recognise that Cixous's vision of *écriture féminine* and the attempts of many writers to enact it are not without critique (e.g. Jones, 2012; Pullen & Rhodes, 2008). In particular, we note the risks of essentialising what 'feminine writing' might look like or require (Jones, 2012), and the fundamental re-assertion of masculine dominance and control that such a move may reflect (Muhr & Rehn, 2015). We also acknowledge that neither we as academics, nor this text as an example of academic discourse, can ever fully escape or break beyond the structures and systems that hold power (Muhr & Rehn, 2015). However, in line with Cixous's call, we engage in efforts to 'destabilise authoritarian notions of masculinity, while still recognising that such critique is always performed within the gendered structures of society' (Lauwo, 2018, p. 690; see also Muhr & Rehn, 2015).

Importantly, just as the conversational extracts and quotations selected to appear in this paper do not reflect the full breadth of our lived experiences or the full extent of our conversations as we engaged with Cixous's work, so too the concepts and images we have chosen to draw out of Cixous's (1981) paper do not reflect the full scope of what she explores in an oeuvre that extends into the present. For the purpose of this paper, we leave aside much of Cixous's explicit psychoanalysis and sexual interpretation, while not diminishing its importance in relation to Cixous's fundamental arguments about the languages and structures that limit and repress women. We make no attempt to treat all of Cixous's suggestions equally or to make our paper mirror the content or structure of hers. Instead, we draw deliberately but selectively from Cixous's offering and bring forward extracts that particularly resonate with our experiences as women in academia and that may offer readers a useful introduction to Cixous's ideas.

Speaking from our positioning as two white, cis-gender, permanently employed (tenured) middle-class women in academia, we may face accusations of being privileged, myopic, fragile, or essentialist. Consideration of the merits of what we say may be entangled with perspectives on our identity characteristics (Bacevic, 2021). It is therefore important to be clear that we make no claims that our perspectives and experiences can speak directly for others. However, this does not mean that we have nothing to say. We recognise the boundaries of what we can (or should) say to those from groups that we are not part of. While our hunch is that Cixous's framing of oppression in the masculine economy may be relevant to other groups than just women, we recognise that what it is to be Indigenous in the academy is different from what it is to be white in the academy (e.g. Hawkins, 2021; McAllister et al., 2022; Ramdeholl & Jones, 2022; Ruru & Nikora, 2021). To be both Indigenous and a woman within the academy is different again (Blell et al., 2023; Buchanan, 2020; Fredericks et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 2022). To be an

academic who is LGBTQIA+ (Reinert & Yakaboski, 2017; Veale, 2017), from the Global South (Junaid, 2022), disabled (Brown & Leigh, 2020; Mellifont et al. 2019), neurodivergent (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist et al., 2022; Grant & Kara, 2021), an immigrant (Ghosh & Barber, 2021; Lawless & Chen, 2015), a refugee (Khuder & Petrić, 2023), first-in-family (Reyes, 2022) or from a working-class or disadvantaged socioeconomic background (Crew, 2020; Waterfield et al., 2019)—these are all unique and important experiences both individually and in their intersections (Ahmed, 2012; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Hewertson & Tissa, 2022; Lahiri-Roy & Martinussen, 2023; Niemann et al., 2020; Reinert & Yakaboski, 2017; Reyes, 2022; Sang, 2018). We imagine that as we converse (from our own lived positionality and lived experience) with Cixous within this article, there will be some resonances for other academics across these categories of difference. However, it is for others to speak from the experiences they hold. We hope that this paper contributes to inviting such voices.

Vignette un: Laughter, solidarity, and relationship as academic women

Kirsten: Katrina and I are sitting at a large table alongside other academics. I look at her, so contained, so focussed, so sharply engaged. I, on the other hand, am currently trying to desperately suppress the desire to laugh. I can feel the wispy tendrils of a giggle tickle my throat and creep slowly up my oesophagus. It is absolutely not appropriate to laugh. The group of academics continue to discuss whatever it is they are discussing as I continue to furtively, desperately pat down and discipline the chaotic goblinness of laughter threatening to make an unwelcome entrance onto the scene of this working context. Later, in a taxi to the airport, as Katrina and I have a cathartic debrief of the day's events, the laughter tumbles out unchallenged and I feel relieved, my unbidden desire to laugh sated.

Katrina: Kirsten is like my academic big sister. So often, she articulates something that I hadn't crystallised into words but that immediately resonates and clarifies my subconscious instincts. Her invitation to embrace laughter and consider its role in our lives as women in academia is one of these instances. My instincts (as a well-brought-up 'good girl') to afford automatic respect to those older or more experienced than me are opened up with Kirsten's embodied and vocalised reminder that, actually, there is a critical perspective to take even in academia's power-laden halls. Sometimes smart people do not-very-smart things; sometimes the intensity and conscientiousness needs to be tempered with the relief of a letting-go, this-is-ridiculous, hold-on-just-a-moment-and-think-about-this sort of laugh. As Kirsten and I engage in a sisterly chat that afternoon in the taxi, peppered with laughter, there's a sense of relief in being able to see something in all its imperfection and a sense of solidarity in knowing someone else sees it that way too. And yet it feels somehow 'naughty' or subversive ...

Kirsten: Katrina and I meet together to write, and invariably our conversation circles around the challenges, the frustrations, and often the absurdities of our academic lives as women, mothers, thinkers, and writers. It is important to differentiate between the girlish giggle (we don't do this) and the laughter that bubbles up in the cracks of our sentences and which accompanies our breath as we discuss our work and our lives. This laughter troubles the boundaries of our conversations and our written artefacts; it loosens the words from their heavy emotional weight and frees words and feelings to skip and play across our collective writerly endeavours. I like the way our time together makes us both feel lighter and gives us both permission to delve deeply into the complexities of thinking and writing together.

Katrina: As the two of us continue to meet, write, think, talk, and laugh together, I gain new awareness of the importance of laughter as a form of self-care and perspective-taking. The very attributes that make academics effective—passion, commitment, enthusiasm for our work—can lead us to burn-out or to being overly affected when things in either our work or non-work worlds do not happen in the ways we would ideally like them to. By laughing at the failures, ironies, absurdities, impossibilities, and blind spots in and around us, we do not dismiss the things we care about or the genuine efforts of others—but we feel the freedom to enact boundaries around what we decide to allow to upset us or weigh us down, and what we choose to let out, let go of, and release. We continue to have deep discussions about complex issues around the state of the academy, our institutions, our own careers and projects and families and wellbeing—but we do this with laughter as a tool held comfortably within our hearts and minds.

As women and as academics, we see the value in having a healthy appetite for the absurd. Everything can become overwhelmingly serious, earnest, tightly curated. Things can get tense, sometimes even nasty, but order demands to be respected and followed. The thing is, sometimes this oppressive seriousness just makes us want to laugh. Because if we don't laugh, we might just cry; shout; scream; misbehave; be dis-ordered; fail.

Our shared reflection on laughter led us to the work of French feminist writer Hélène Cixous (1937—), who among other things looks at laughter as feminine disorder (1976). Laughter is

what breaks the dominance of the masculine economy; laughter disrupts its seriousness and its earnest ordering—in Cixous's (1976, 1981) language, the *masculine* order—of disciplined routine, meaning, and power.

It was a serendipitous idea for the two of us to look at Cixous together. It brought us together from quite different disciplinary starting points, bridging and bringing us in to wrestle with issues that circle our daily work. We move on now from this entry point of shared laughter and engage with some of the darker aspects of Cixous's critique of masculine economies.

Vignette deux: Coming together

Kirsten: I hadn't really noticed how interested I was in Cixous, but Katrina and I had spent most of our working friendship talking about academia and Cixous just kept on popping up for me when we spoke. She'd orbited around my work on Lyotard and occasionally I had bumped into her thinking but I'd had to give her only a passing glance as I scurried after the 'big boys'. I knew that she had been part of that group—mates, as we say—with Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, and Lyotard in the heady days of the late 1960s. Together, they had created the experimental university in Vincennes, Paris VIII, almost through sheer force of personality energised by democratic zeal to open up the university to more French kids, to try and challenge what we now call inequity, to try and resist the bureaucratic ordering of the French university system. In the context of twentieth century Continental writing and philosophy, Cixous seems to me to be always there, but also always a little apart. What is she, anyway? An academic? No. How boring! A writer? Definitely. But that doesn't capture everything. She is also a playwright, a novelist, a poet, a thinker. She's everywhere, and also nowhere. Her presence lingers over the past, often providing intricate and delicate filigree to the masculine crown of philosophy. And unlike the big boys, she is literally still with us; her presence is still very much flesh and blood reality. Cixous's thought echoes in Lyotard, and sounds more forcefully in Derrida, for instance, but her voice in later life continues to build volume, to be heard more immediately perhaps—now. The position of being off-centre, decentred, a bit on the periphery even in the placement of the French poststructuralist canon (as oxymoronic as that sounds) is of course a position in which I think Cixous feels most comfortable. Perhaps this point of displacement and being not quite in the centre is also relevant to this writing project.

Katrina: 'Off-centre' certainly describes how I felt coming into the very new space of philosophy of education. It felt very foreign, as did venturing into the academic version of thinking and speaking about gender issues: While very active in discussions and support networks around women in academia, this would be my first foray into 'real' scholarship in this field. Imposter syndrome abounded, as did questions around who was allowed to speak (in a scholarly sense) of such things: Who was I, as just a woman/mother/scholar in academia, to speak about issues and experiences affecting women in academia? oh, wait. As I share this with Kirsten, we laugh at the irony and she says—'Yes, exactly! Why shouldn't you speak about this? Who better than women in academia to speak about women in academia? It's absurd to think it should be anyone else ...' My interest is piqued now as Kirsten shares some of what Cixous's writing might offer us in thinking about voice, silencing, gender, absurdity, and the academy. We decide there is something interesting and important here for both of us, and perhaps it will also be of use to others.

Kirsten: The focus would be one essay that I'd come across and had been intrigued by entitled 'Castration or Decapitation?' That's a title with a bit of drama, I thought. I don't really understand it, I told Katrina, but I think there are some interesting points that are relevant to us. Bold claim. Enter Cixous ...

[Hélène:] What is woman for man? ... Imagine ... a particular relationship between two economies: a masculine economy and a feminine economy, in which the masculine is governed by a rule that keeps time with two beats, three beats, four beats, with pipe and drum, exactly as it should be. An order that works by inculcation, by education: it's always a question of education. An education that consists of trying to make a soldier of the feminine by force, the force history keeps reserved for woman, the 'capital' force that is effectively decapitation. Women have no choice other than to be decapitated, and in any case the moral is that if they don't actually lose their heads by the sword, they only keep them on condition that they lose them—lose them, that is, to complete silence, turned into automatons. (Cixous, 1981, p. 43)

The extract attributed to Hélène above comes from the early part of the text we are thinking with in this paper (Cixous, 1981). Her framing of the oppositional relationship between the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' encapsulates the power structures we see in academia; structures that offer no space or reward for alternative ways of being, contributing, and speaking. We recognise the zero-sum logic of the masculine economy in our university, where so often there can only be winners and losers—and winning comes at the expense of others. Where the goalposts are constantly moving, and nothing we achieve is ever enough. Where to be different, to resist, and to move out of step with the juggernaut of institutional norms is to be a failure, an outsider, or a problem. Aptly, Cixous's language of pipes and drums summons thoughts of

footsoldiers—nameless, uniformed and uniform workers obediently marching in step with the directives of those in power—as well a sense of the very real, continuing, and exhausting demands placed on such soldiers.

In Cixous's telling of the story, it's only men who are the narrators. It is the men telling the story, the great narrative. It's men who are in positions of power and able to have the option of not being a soldier, or preventing others from having to be soldiers too. Men are made soldiers too—undoubtedly. But in Cixous's construction of the masculine economy, it's not that men do not participate in the same roles as women, but rather that the landscape of possibility afforded to the masculine is infinitely broader. The option to be something other than a soldier exists and is far more accessible for those in positions of privilege and power.

As two women in academia who are white, heterosexual, middle class, able bodied, and in the early to mid phase of their careers, our interactions with each other have precipitated many conversations—at first fleetingly hinted at, and then more roundly elaborated—around what and who we want to 'be' in academia. We have undoubtedly benefited from our privilege, and we wish to hold this humbly and use it to help make things better for ourselves and for others. We have affirmed and reaffirmed our desire to engage with academia in an ethical, inclusive, affirming way, acknowledging both our fundamental privilege and our current privileged positions. We have also shared a desire to clear a space to question how we want to speak and the tenor or timbre we want our voices to be heard in.

These aspirations lie in stark contrast to much of what we see taking place in the neoliberal university that we inhabit, where 'foot soldiers' abound and opportunities to act differently are challenged. How do we live, think, work, teach, and write with integrity, trust, respect, inclusiveness, and a sense of careful but joyful openness when the institutions that we engage with do their darndest to erode all sense of collegiality, trust, respect, integrity, inclusiveness and any sense of careful but joyful openness? It was curious and seductive, therefore, to see Cixous, who was writing this essay in 1975, single out the university later in her text.

Vignette trois: Repression through castration/loss of head, intellect, and voice

[Hélène:] Now, I think that what women will have to do and what they will do, right from the moment they venture to speak what they have to say, will of necessity bring about a shift in metalanguage. And I think we're completely crushed, especially in places like universities [our emphasis], by the highly repressive operations of metalanguage, the operations, that is, of the commentary on the commentary, the code, the operation that sees to it that the moment women open their mouths—women more often than men—they are immediately asked in whose name and from what theoretical standpoint they are speaking, who is their master and where they are coming from: they have, in short, to salute ... and show their identity papers. There's work to be done against ... [in] all schools, against the pervasive masculine urge to judge, diagnose, digest, name . not so much in the sense of the loving precision of poetic naming as in that of the repressive censorship of philosophical conceptualization. (Cixous, 1981, p. 51)

Katrina: What does she mean by metalanguage? Is this about form, style, voice, and the restricting, standardising expectations on how we (should) speak and write as academics? And/or the gatekeeping of who has the credentials to speak on a particular topic? Or perhaps she is going deeper ... Perhaps the metalanguage of the university means the structure of language itself—language as structure, and structure as language—the core logic. The discourses that produce and define the whole landscape of the academy.

Kirsten: Yes, I think here she is extrapolating from language as just words and recognising its influence as discourse. Language structures us; it's there before we are and is there after us; we can't escape its discursive influence and shaping.

Katrina: And so for us, it's the continual academic discourses of performativity, excellence, neoliberalism, meritocracy, achievement, reward, competition, evaluation ...

Kirsten: Exactly. These discourses that were there before we arrived in academia and are so embedded, even underpinning the words and actions of the people who on the surface (or in their own interpretation) offer encouragement, alternatives, and support—they, too, are still always and already embedded within this masculine economy and so their (and our) resistance can only go so far. There are so many ways we all reproduce these discourses even when we want to be disrupting them, and this is Cixous's point—even when we try to speak up and speak out against these structures of repression, the power structures themselves subjugate us by asking for our credentials and judging our right to speak in the first place. Just like you feeling like you didn't have the right to write an article like this because you weren't the right kind of scholar.

Twentieth century thinkers fixate on the power and operations of language and the way that language itself ‘speaks’ us just as much as we speak language. For Derrida, there is an incommensurable juncture between articulation and its essence, a juncture which can never be reconciled outside of the logic of language (1998). Lyotard also looked at this incommensurability in language, where one ‘master’ discourse subsumes all meaning and all logic and thus becomes a narrative of injustice and silence (1998). Now, in the twenty first century, postmodern, post-human, and other perspectives seek to stretch even further, going beyond language itself to explore the intertwined ecologies of the living and material world. Cixous’s (1981) essay provides seductive hints at what will later emerge from these subsequent philosophers, but her text also highlights the enduring truth that the (meta)languages around us can also silence us: castration indeed.

Vignette quatre: Repression through decapitation/loss of sex, identity, and delight

Let’s talk about what is meant by decapitation in relation to speaking and giving voice, then, we say. We turn toward Cixous, entreating her to talk to us further about this potentially violent concept. Cixous reaches out and rests two long fingered beautiful hands on each one of us, lowers the lights, and leans closer. Perhaps she lights a cigarette, and the sinewy smoke weaves elegant wisps that gently vaporise into the dark night.

[Hélène] It reminds me of a little Chinese story. Every detail of this story counts. I’ve borrowed it from a very serious text, Sun Tse’s manual of strategy, which is a kind of handbook for the warrior. This is the anecdote. The king commanded General Sun Tse: ‘You who are a great strategist and claim to be able to train anybody in the arts of war . take my wives (all one hundred and eighty of them!) and make soldiers out of them.’ So Sun Tse had the women arranged in two rows, each headed by one of the two favorite wives, and then taught them the language of the drumbeat. It was very simple: two beats-right, three beats-left, four beats-about turn or backward march. But instead of learning the code very quickly, the ladies started laughing and chattering and paying no attention to the lesson, and Sun Tse, the master, repeated the lesson several times over. But the more he spoke, the more the women fell about laughing, upon which Sun Tse put his code to the test. It is said in this code that should women fall about laughing instead of becoming soldiers, their actions might be deemed mutinous, and the code has ordained that cases of mutiny call for the death penalty. So the women were condemned to death. This bothered the king somewhat: a hundred and eighty wives are a lot to lose! He didn’t want his wives put to death. But Sun Tse replied that since he was put in charge of making soldiers out of the women, he would carry out the order: Sun Tse was a man of absolute principle. And in any case there’s an order even more ‘royal’ than that of the king himself: the Absolute Law . One does not go back on an order. He therefore acted according to the code and with his saber beheaded the two women commanders. They were replaced and the exercise started again, and as if they had never done anything except practice the art of war, the women turned right, left, and about in silence and with never a single mistake. (Cixous, 1981, p. 42)

Cixous withdraws her comforting hand and we hold eye contact. We are alone together, again. The whisper of Cixous’s thought brushes past—or through—us. The women in the story demonstrate the power of disruption that is the feminine economy, the disordered behaviour, and its relationship to the masculine economy, which is about order and keeping the beat and being in and on time. The hand reappears alongside scented cigarette smoke. She leans in close again and listens while the two of us talk.

Our conversations over the years have often touched on the disciplining forces of academia: the way that speaking out loud can sometimes result in, or at least feel like, punishment; the crushing forces that seem to stifle our voices if not fully in tune with the university chorus. These are the ways in which those who subvert the norms can be decapitated, silenced, and brought back into line. Being silent and good and obedient translates, in academia, into not calling out those moments that jar with our personal ethics for the sake of system efficiency;

into welcoming with gratitude and open arms the administrative and teaching demands of the university, even when each one of those demands becomes heavier and heavier by the minute and breaks our arms; into ensuring we succeed within the framework of the masculine economy so that we can ‘do those women who came before us proud’. Cixous helps us see these pressures as the metalanguage of the masculine economy, and this sharpened perspective heightens the weight and urgency of resistance.

Animosité

In this dark, sinister, and violent environment, we reflect, what is our way forward? For without some sense of hope, there is no sound reason for us to remain in this space—either the specific ‘thinking’ space of wrestling with these ideas or the wider space of continuing to work in an academia so essentially built on these masculine logics and discourses.

On one hand, it feels out-of-touch, indulgent, self-absorbed—even unsafe—to be banging the drum for feminism in the modern academy (or world), when so many other oppressed groups are quite rightly speaking up against their own oppression and oppressors; when there are suggestions that feminism itself is ‘both implicit and complicit in coloniality’ (Purewal & Ung Loh, 2021, p. 1). In a manifestation of the zero-sum mathematics of the masculine economy, others—even other oppressed groups—may seek to silence us on the basis that their grievances are sharper and should receive the attention and intervention, suggesting that there is only so much equity to go around.

There are also undoubtedly things we can point to: shifts in statistics, in policies, in practice that appear—on the surface—to have ‘made things better’ for women within and beyond the academy. In some ways, they have. But what Cixous teaches us is that this is not—can never be—enough. Just as colonised groups demand not inclusion but *decolonisation*—a fundamental deconstruction and reshaping of the metalogic of our universities—so Cixous calls attention to the masculine metalogic that ensures our universities continue to oppose and silence the feminine. These perspectives mirror each other and fundamentally intersect, because ‘the foundations and structures of academia itself are creations and continuities of hegemonic, racialised, masculinist hierarchies of knowledge and power’ (Purewal & Ung Loh, 2021, p. 4). Notwithstanding the changes that have been hard-fought to date, women (and other disadvantaged groups, haven’t shifted the metalanguage of academia. We haven’t through promotion and hiring processes (Barrow & Grant, 2019; Brower & James, 2020); we haven’t through citation practices (Bacevic, 2021); we haven’t through the informal networks of brokering, power, and favour (Locke, 2015).

Perhaps the lack of change in the underlying metalanguage is in part because we don’t even know how we might do this; our education within settings built on this masculine economy can never prepare us to ‘dismantle the master’s house’ (Lorde, 1984, p. 1). Until we finally crack open the masculine economy with feminine writing and different ways of writing and being and articulating ourselves within the academy, decapitation is always the logic that we work under and the risk we face. And this, we realise, is why we have stepped outside the bounds of our traditional ways of writing, publishing, and speaking to offer this article—as a step on our own journey of learning what an alternative mode or *écriture féminine* might look like. We choose to inhabit the uncertainty and ill-defined spaces of this thinking into an unknown future; we choose to experiment with ideas and structures, words and voices; above all, we choose to avoid silence. Because more than anything, the passive silence of obedience constitutes submission to the masculine economy. Cixous is damning of such silence, saying those who are silent:

[Hélène:] ... are decapitated, their tongues are cut off and what talks isn’t heard because it’s the body that talks (1981, p. 49).

Cixous bringing in the body to our discussion adds a further dimension to our thinking. Bodies and voices, matter and silence. It is the body that holds the ‘sex’ of Cixous’s title, the sex she suggests we must sacrifice in order to be allowed to have a head, a head with a voice, a head whose voice can be heard. Cixous is often read as, to paraphrase Renée Valiquette (2019), too textual for new materialism and too material for social constructivism. But despite Cixous’s non-conformity to these constructed categorisations, we can see the essential relevance of the marginalisation of bodies in service of the normalisation of the power structures that determine whose voices matter; whose will be heard; and whose must be mute. Citation practices, that old terrifying chestnut that has been notoriously difficult to crack for academic women, is a pertinent example of this marginalisation of (certain) bodies. Decisions about who to acknowledge in the economy of knowledge have material effects on the body. Sara Ahmed (2017), a soul sister of Cixous’s, powerfully exposes citation practices as ‘feminist bricks’ (p. 16), where thinking differently about whose voices are included, who can speak, and who can be heard, has material consequences (see also Smith et al., 2021). There are many ways to cut out a tongue.

Vignette cinq: Cixous offers another way

Cixous challenges us that we should not allow our tongues to be cut out, our heads to be cut off, our sex to be removed from us. What would she say to us as we wrestle with our way forward as women in academia today, in this place, in our unique identities and settings? There is, we decide, a lingering scent of hope in the form of Cixous’s *écriture féminine* and her call for women to speak and write in ways that break boundaries and move us forward.

[Hélène:] Woman ... does not resign herself to loss. She basically takes up the challenge ... she lives it, gives it life ... This makes her writing a body that overflows, disgorges, vomiting as opposed to masculine incorporation ... This is taking loss, seizing it, living it. Leaping. This goes with not withholding: she does not withhold ... (Cixous, 1981, p. 54)

It is this challenge that we have sought to take up through this paper, and through the reflection that writing this paper has asked of each of us. What we have offered here is imperfect; thinking-in-progress; a portion of the journey rather than the final destination. Cixous does not make understanding or resolution easy—and nor should she. This is our fight to fight; Cixous has offered her contributions, and it is incumbent upon us, as members of the current generation of academic women, and those who come after and alongside us, to wrestle with how to help reshape the contours of academic landscapes so that they offer solid ground for more and more of humanity, in all its diversity and richness. As we engage in this work, speaking back to dialogue with Cixous and speaking forward as we seek to summon a better, more equitable future, there is always something else to consider, too.

[Peer reviewer:] In this paper, you’ve said that ‘we will be forced to give up either our essence and identity as women (our ‘sex’) or our voice, freedom of thought, and criticality as independent thinkers (our ‘head’).’ It’s not clear to me how this dichotomy works. Isn’t giving up essence and identity co-extensive with giving up voice and freedom of thought from the perspective of *écriture féminine*? Where does the forced choice come in? And isn’t the head/sex dichotomy the kind of masculine categorization Cixous should reject (for women) in any event?

Katrina: Those are fair points about the binary ... it makes me think of our conversations about feeling like we were in a space with mirrors reflected inside other mirrors, constantly nested within each other—there’s more complexity than just two categories and even when we’re inhabiting one space (like writing this paper and trying to embody *écriture féminine*) we are always simultaneously nested within others (like us submitting and needing to work through the masculine economy of journal publication). So is Cixous just setting up yet another binary opposition?

Kirsten: Wait, I have lecture notes on this this is so interesting. Cixous actually wants to break down the binary, to trouble it. She argues that exclusion, singularity and binary opposition are all fundamental characteristics of male writing. These features, exclusion especially, transform sexual difference (i.e. differences between men’s and women’s writing) into a hierarchy of sexual opposition which ultimately silences women. There’s actually a little

footnote in the original essay, something that Cixous wrote but then decided to remove because it was ‘tangential’ to her main message—but now here it’s exactly relevant to the reviewer’s question. She writes about ...

[Hélène:] ... being ‘neither out nor in,’ being ‘beyond the outside/inside opposition’ that permits the play ...

Kirsten: When she writes this, she’s writing about bisexuality, and she decided this was a distraction from the main message of her paper, but it’s right there—she’s showing us that the feminine is not just to choose one side of the binary but to resist the binary altogether and celebrate the power and possibility to access both.

Katrina: So for us, it’s what we’ve always talked about, our whole academic friendship—wanting to do our jobs well but not at the expense of our health or our relationships or or sanity ... refusing the 80-h-workweek narratives and finding work that brings us joy without taking over our lives.

Kirsten: Exactly. She’s offering another way that resists the binary. This idea of another way can be extrapolated to things like gender categorisation and also to how we respond to what appears to be the forced choice to give up either sex or head—Cixous is saying we don’t have to allow ourselves to be either castrated OR decapitated—that there’s another way. It reminds me of Jones and Jenkins (2008) idea of ‘working the hyphen’, where we stand in the bridging spaces between two seemingly oppositional categories.

Fini

And in the end, she will write this not-withholding, this not-writing: she writes of not-writing, not-happening ... She crosses limits: she is neither outside nor in. (Cixous, 1981, p. 54)

This is the invitation Cixous leaves us with: Not to resign ourselves to that which we (are meant to believe we) cannot change, or to withhold our uncomfortable, non-conforming questions, but rather to write ourselves into our academic texts; to bring the intimate, the personal, the mundane, of our academic lives into conversation with the hard lacquered surface of theory; to shatter the shiny veneer of the university; to break its masculine economy, so that the fragments of our lives and the sounds of our voices as women can begin to be heard.

Cixous has left us a gift; an enticing trail of perfumed smoke, and something more mysterious—perhaps even miraculous, more promising. Holding this gift with a fragile sense of hope, wonder, curiosity, and purpose, this paper is an instance of our ‘not-writing writing’; perhaps it even borders on being on a ‘non-paper paper’ as we cross limits in taking up the challenge to live, leap, seize, and—fundamentally—speak.

And then, perhaps, we’ll avoid decapitation and get some change.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Katrina McChesney is a senior lecturer in education at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. Her research centres on people’s lived experiences in educational spaces and places, with a commitment to inclusive, socially just, person-centred educational. Katrina is currently leading or co-leading several projects related to equity and inclusion in higher education, exploring doctoral research by distance; trauma-informed postgraduate supervision; and the visibility of parents in higher education. Katrina serves on the National Council of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education and is co-editor of *Studies in Graduate and Postgraduate Education*.

Kirsten Locke is an educational theorist and philosopher. Her teaching and research interests include key thinkers and themes in continental and feminist philosophy (such as Nietzsche, Lyotard, and Cixous; affect, the sublime, infancy). She is interested in working with art and music to explore philosophical questions, and the intersections of feminist and critical philosophies to issues of gender and equity in education. Kirsten serves on the National Council of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education. Her 2022 monograph entitled *Jean-François Lyotard: Pedagogies of Affect* was published by Springer.

ORCID

Kirsten Locke  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2089-2793>

Katrina McChesney  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3991-6265>

References

- Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life*. Duke University Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life*. Duke University Press.
- Amsler, S., & Motta, S. C. (2019). The marketised university and the politics of motherhood. *Gender and Education*, 31(1), 82–99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2017.1296116>
- Anteliz, E. A., Mulligan, D. L., & Danaher, P. A. (Eds.). (2023). *The Routledge international handbook of autoethnography in educational research*. Routledge.
- Bacevic, J. (2021). Epistemic injustice and epistemic positioning: Towards an intersectional political economy. *Current Sociology*, 001139212110576. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921211057609>
- Barnard, S., Dainty, A., & Hassan, T. (2016). The challenge of contesting structures that reproduce gender inequalities: The dual power of New Managerialism and masculine norms in academic settings. Paper presented at the Gender, Work and Organisation conference, Keele University UK, 29 June–1 July 2016.
- Barrow, M., & Grant, B. (2019). The uneasy place of equity in higher education: Tracing its (in)significance in academic promotions. *Higher Education*, 78(1), 133–147. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0334-2>
- Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, H., Botha, M., Hens, K., O'Donoghue, S., Pearson, A., & Stenning, A. (2022). Cutting our own keys: New possibilities of neurodivergent storying in research. *Autism*, 13623613221132107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613221132107>
- Blell, M., Liu, S. S., & Verma, A. (2023). Working in unprecedented times: Intersectionality and women of color in UK higher education in and beyond the pandemic. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 30(2), 353–372. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12907>
- Bönisch-Brednich, B., & White, K. (2021). Whatever happened to gender equality in Australian and New Zealand universities? In P. O'Connor & K. White (Eds.), *Gender, power and higher education in a globalised world*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69687-0_5
- Brower, A., & James, A. (2020). Research performance and age explain less than half of the gender pay gap in New Zealand universities. *Plos One*, 15(1), E0226392. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0226392>
- Brown, N., & Leigh, J. (Eds.) (2020). *Ableism in academia: Theorising experiences of disabilities and chronic illnesses in higher education*. UCL Press.
- Buchanan, N. T. (2020). Researching while Black (and female). *Women & Therapy*, 43(1-2), 91–111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2019.1684681>
- Chang, H., Ngunjiri, F., & Hernandez, K. C. (2013). *Collaborative autoethnography*. Routledge.
- Cixous, H., Cohen, K., & Cohen, P. (1976). The laugh of the Medusa. (Trans. K. Cohen and P. Cohen). *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1(4), 875–893. <https://doi.org/10.1086/493306>
- Cixous, H. (1981). Castration or decapitation? (Trans. A. Kuhn). *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 7(1), 41–55. <https://doi.org/10.1086/493857>
- Cixous, H. (1986). *The newly born woman*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Crew, T. (2020). *Higher education and working-class academics: Precarity and diversity in academia*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Derrida, J. (1998). *Of grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, trans.). John Hopkins University Press. (Original work published 1967).
- Fredericks, B., White, N., Phillips, S., Bunda, T., Longbottom, M., & Bargallie, D. (2019). Being ourselves, naming ourselves, writing ourselves: Indigenous Australian women disrupting what it is to be academic within the academy. In L. M. Thomas & A. B. Reinertsen (Eds.), *Academic writing and identity constructions* (pp. 75–96). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01674-6_5
- Ghosh, D., & Barber, K. (2021). The gender of multiculturalism: Cultural tokenism and the institutional isolation of immigrant women faculty. *Sociological Perspectives*, 64(6), 1063–1080. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0731121420981098>
- Grant, A., & Kara, H. (2021). Considering the Autistic advantage in qualitative research: The strengths of Autistic researchers. *Contemporary Social Science*, 16(5), 589–603. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2021.1998589>
- Gutiérrez y Muhs, G., Niemann, Y. F., Gonzalez, C. G., & Harris, A. P. (Eds.) (2012). *Presumed incompetent: The intersections of race and class for women in academia*. University Press of Colorado.
- Hawkins, D. F. (2021). A racism burnout: My life as a Black academic. *Race and Justice*, 11(3), 301–317. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2153368720971025>
- Hewertson, H., & Tissa, F. (2022). Intersectional imposter syndrome: How imposterism affects marginalised groups. In M. Addison, M. Breeze, & Y. Taylor (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of imposter syndrome in higher education*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-86570-2_2

- Jarldorn, M., & Gatwiri, K. (2022). Shaking off the imposter syndrome: Our place in the resistance. In M. Addison, M. Breeze, & Y. Taylor (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of imposter syndrome in higher education* (pp. 529–543). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-86570-2_32
- Jones, A., & Jenkins, K. (2008). Rethinking collaboration: Working the Indigene-Colonizer hyphen. In N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies* (pp. 471–486). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483385686>
- Jones, A. R. (2012). Writing the body: Toward an understanding of l'écriture féminine. In D. Rosenfelt & J. Newton (Eds.), *Feminist criticism and social change: Sex, class and race in literature and culture* (pp. 86–101). Routledge.
- Junaid, F. A. (2022). Pakistani women in academia: Mid-career challenges and opportunities. In H. L. Schnackenberg (Ed.), *Women in higher education and the journey to mid-career: Challenges and opportunities* (pp. 98–118). IGI Global.
- Khuder, B., & Petrić, B. (2023). Intersectionality of marginalisation: EAL academics in exile writing for international publication. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2023.2170387>
- Lahiri-Roy, R., & Martinussen, M. (2023). Do our diversities count? Collaborative reflections on dwelling in academe's intersectional shadowlands. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2023.2178037>
- Lauwo, S. (2018). Challenging masculinity in CSR disclosures: Silencing of women's voices in Tanzania's mining industry. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 149(3), 689–706. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3047-4>
- Lawless, B., & Chen, Y. (2015). Immigrant women, academic work, and agency: Negotiating identities and subjectivities with/in the ivory tower. *International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities, & Nations*, 14(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.18848/1447-9532/CGP/v14/40143>
- Lipton, B., & Mackinlay, E. (2020). Before the door: Storying the material, affective and ethical dimensions of inclusion for women academics. *Continuum*, 34(6), 914–922. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2020.1842127>
- Lipton, B., & Mackinlay, E. (2017). *We only talk feminist here: Feminist academics, voice and agency in the neoliberal university*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Locke, K. (2015). Intersectionality and reflexivity in gender research: Disruptions, tracing lines and shooting arrows. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 25(3), 169–182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2015.1058722>
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Crossing Press.
- Lytard, J. F. (1998). *The Differend. Phrases in dispute* (G.V.D. Abbeele, trans.). University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1983).
- McAllister, T., Naepi, S., Walker, L., Gillon, A., Clark, P., Lambert, E., McCambridge, A. B., Thoms, C., Housiaux, J., Ehau-Taumaunu, H., Waikauri Connell, C. J., Keenan, R., Thomas, K.-L., Maslen-Miller, A., Tupaea, M., Mauriohooho, K., Puli'uvea, C., Rapata, H., Nicholas, S. A., ... Alipia, T. (2022). Seen but unheard: Navigating turbulent waters as Māori and Pacific postgraduate students in STEM. *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, 52(sup1), 116–134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03036758.2022.2097710>
- Mellifont, D., Smith-Merry, J., Dickinson, H., Llewellyn, G., Clifton, S., Ragen, J., Raffaele, M., & Williamson, P. (2019). The ableism elephant in the academy: A study examining academia as informed by Australian scholars with lived experience. *Disability & Society*, 34(7-8), 1180–1199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1602510>
- Muhr, S. L., & Rehn, A. (2015). On gendered technologies and cyborg writing. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 22(2), 129–138. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12057>
- Niemann, Y. F., Gutiérrez y Muhs, G., & Gonzalez, C. G. (Eds.) (2020). *Presumed incompetent II: Race, class, power, and resistance of women in academia*. University Press of Colorado.
- Oliver, C., & Morris, A. (2020). (dis-)Belonging bodies: Negotiating outsider-ness at academic conferences. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 27(6), 765–787. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2019.1609913>
- Pebdani, R. N., Zeidan, A., Low, L., & Baillie, A. (2023). Pandemic productivity in academia: Using ecological momentary assessment to explore the impact of COVID-19 on research productivity. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 42(4), 937–953. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2128075>
- Pullen, A., & Rhodes, C. (2008). Dirty writing. *Culture and Organization*, 14(3), 241–259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14759550802270684>
- Purewal, N. K., & Ung Loh, J. (2021). Coloniality and feminist collusion: Breaking free, thinking anew. *Feminist Review*, 128(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01417789211020249>
- Ramdeholl, D., & Jones, J. (2022). *Confronting institutionalized racism in higher education: Counternarratives for racial justice*. Routledge.
- Reinert, L. J., & Yakaboski, T. (2017). Being out matters for lesbian faculty: Personal identities influence professional experiences. *NASPA Journal about Women in Higher Education*, 10(3), 319–336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407882.2017.1285793>
- Reyes, V. (2022). *Academic outsider: Stories of exclusion and hope*. Stanford University Press.
- Ronsley-Pavia, M., Neumann, M. M., Manakil, J., & Pickard-Smith, K. (2023). (Eds.) *Academic women: Voicing narratives of gendered experiences*. Bloomsbury.
- Ruru, J., & Nikora, L. W. (2021). *Ngā kete mātauranga: Māori scholars at the research interface*. Otago University Press.

- Sang, K. J. C. (2018). Gender, ethnicity and feminism: An intersectional analysis of the lived experiences feminist academic women in UK higher education. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 27(2), 192–206. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2016.1199380>
- Smith, C. A., Williams, E. L., Wadud, I. A., & Pirtle, W. N. L.; The Cite Black Women Collective. (2021). Cite Black women: A critical praxis (A statement). *Feminist Anthropology*, 2(1), 10–17. <https://doi.org/10.1002/fea2.12040>
- Sobre-Denton, M. S. (2012). Stories from the cage: Autoethnographic sensemaking. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 41(2), 220–250. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241611429301>
- Stewart, G. T., Devine, N., Jenkin, C., Heta-Lensen, Y., Maurice-Takerei, L., Stuart, M. J., & Middleton, S. (2022). As the crones fly. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2022.2154206>
- Taylor, C. A., Gannon, S., Adams, G., Donaghue, H., Hannam-Swain, S., Harris-Evans, J., Healey, J., & Moore, P. (2020). Grim tales: Meetings, matterings and moments of silencing and frustration in everyday academic life. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 99, 101513. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2019.101513>
- Valiquette, R. A. (2019). An ecology of immanent otherness: The Onto/eco-poethics of Hélène Cixous [Doctoral thesis. York University], York Space Institutional Repository. <https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/handle/10315/36789>
- Veale, J. (2017). Reflections on transgender representation in academic publishing. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 18(2), 121–122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2017.1279868>
- Waterfield, B., Beagan, B. L., & Mohamed, T. (2019). “You always remain slightly an outsider”: Workplace experiences of academics from working-class or impoverished backgrounds. *Canadian Review of Sociology = Revue Canadienne de Sociologie*, 56(3), 368–388. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12257>
- Wren Butler, J. (2022). ‘I shouldn’t be here’: Academics’ experiences of embodied (un)belonging, gendered competitiveness, and inequalities in precarious english higher education. In M. Addison, M. Breeze, & Y. Taylor (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of imposter syndrome in higher education*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-86570-2_3
- Yelin, H., & Clancy, L. (2021). Doing impact work while female: Hate tweets, ‘hot potatoes’ and having ‘enough of experts’. *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 28(2), 175–193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506820910194>