

*An Ecology of Immanent Otherness:
the Onto/eco-poethics of Hélène Cixous*

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Abstract

Notions of identification and resemblance have been central to the onto-epistemologies of Anglo Environmental Ethics in the 20th and 21st centuries. In order to dismantle Western conceptions of the human as separate from the material world the case needed to be made for the *likeness* of humans and nature; “nature is us” (Crutzen and Schwägerl 2011). This dissertation builds on such efforts while also proposing a change of course, one that moves away from sameness and toward *otherness*. To contend with and address the deeply unsettling and unprecedented conditions of Anthropocenic life we need an environmental ethics of *immanent otherness*. To conceive such an ethics, I turn to feminist post-structuralist H el ene Cixous. Cixous remains under-represented within eco-theoretical readings of post-structuralism, despite expanding interest in her contemporaries. Too material for social constructivism, and too textual for new materialism, Cixous’s singular approach to materiality and immanence have remained decidedly overlooked. (Re)reading Cixous from within the literature of new materialism and environmental (post)humanities, we discover an onto/eco-poethics of immanent otherness that not only conceives poetic textuality *within* materiality, but otherness *as* constitutive of a seething, lively immanent world. In following Cixous, we surrender enduring enchantments with environmental ethics of unity, certainty and purity and discover how the poetry and *jouissance* of immanent otherness can help us to better navigate these strange, contaminated and incoherent times.

For Sacha, Sal and Graham, my family

Acknowledgements
(or, known entanglements)

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I don't really know where my ideas begin and Graham's or Sal's end.

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Introduction

"Sometimes...it is the fissure made by an earthquake, when material upheaval causes radical change in things, when all structures are momentarily disoriented and a fleeting savagery sweeps order away, that the poet lets woman pass through for a brief interval" (Cixous 1986, 98).

"Thinking is trying to think the unthinkable: thinking the thinkable is not worth the effort" (Cixous 1993, 38).

In the climactic final scene of Disney's 2016 film *Moana*, the story of an intrepid young Polynesian girl who seeks adventure beyond the limits of her home island, Moana restores ecological health to the world by recognizing that the havoc-wreaking monster Te Kā is in fact the life-giving goddess Te Fiti in disguise. As Moana places "the heart" of Te Fiti into the enormous, smoldering body of Te Kā, the goddess re-emerges and we see that she and Moana are mirror images of each other. In this moment, the ecological message of the film is made clear: environmental ethics is an ethics of sameness, symbiosis and likeness.¹ For the earth to be healed, humans and nature must be seen as one.

Such an approach to human-nature relations as rooted in identification runs through many branches of Anglo environmental ethics, and continues to resonate in the scholarship of new materialism and environmental (post)humanities.² Indeed, making the case for human identity as *part* of nature has been hugely important to resisting the enduring shadow of a Western transcendental metaphysics that places humans (or at least some of them, or some aspect of some of them) *outside* material being. Naming, affirming and exploring the likeness of human and more-than-human beings undoes the logic that places (some) humans *beyond* material reality. The fact of (the) matter, of course, is that "the ordinary is a multipartner mud dance issuing from

and in entangled species" (Haraway 2008, 32). The result of this crucial collapse of nature-culture dualism is that we material entities arrive on a shared plane of immanence. The ethics necessitated by this arrival are, understandably, oriented toward better forms of partnering and communing. "We" are, after all, "in this together" (Braidotti 2018, 6). And yet, in these fraught and troubled times that increasingly fly under the signifier "Anthropocene," reality seems defined not by affinity but by strangeness.³ How, then, do we reconcile the collapse of dualist metaphysics, of human-nature separation, with the proliferation of othernesses in the Anthropocene? In this dissertation, I make the case for feminist post-structuralist H el ene Cixous as the essential philosopher to help us navigate such deep waters. Over the course of fifty years of writing-thinking-being, Cixous has remained committed to otherness as a feature of material reality: the otherness of the self, of other humans, of other more-than-human beings, of being itself. For Cixous, otherness is the poetry of immanent life, and "the world written nude is poetic" (1997 4). Rather than furthering environmental ethics of identification, recognition, and togetherness, Cixous gives us an onto/eco-poethics of immanent otherness. With Cixous, we come to understand that it is otherness as much as entanglement that nourishes an exuberant world.

For much of the 20th and early 21st centuries, dominant approaches to ecological thought have been defined by Anglo environmental ethicists for whom "the environment" can be described and understood positivistically. The dominance of such an approach has also determined general conceptions of what it means to solve environmental problems: the natural sciences identify the issues; ethicists respond to the science and try to find a balance between human needs and the health of the planet. But nearly two decades into this century, one rife with environmental catastrophe, many eco-theorists are returning to the fundamental questions of

environmental thought in an effort to re-imagine the mess we're in. What new insights are discovered, and what novel solutions emerge, when we take such risks? To start, returning to such a "radical" space is allowing us to see ecological thought where for long we could not. An increasing number of eco-theorists are finding ecological relevance in post-structuralist philosophy, a branch of philosophy that has, until this recent interest, been relegated in environmental circles to the side of "text", "language" and "culture, and thus *against* nature. This interest in the ecology of post-structuralism has also meant more recognition of the new materialism and eco-theory of post-structuralist feminism, discarded for its biological essentialism within social constructivist circles, and too often swept away in new materialists critiques of the "semiotic turn." In re-considering how post-structuralist feminism helps us expand what counts as valid and important environmental theory, we are also able to uncover the ecological thought of Cixous.

First and foremost, this dissertation is an exploration of what Cixous makes possible within the metaphysical revolutions of new materialism and eco-theory that seek new ways of thinking and living naturecultures (Haraway 2003). As I will detail over the course of four chapters, in (re)reading Cixous through various new ideas unearthed by these and other fields, we uncover in Cixous's work a series of crucial interventions into and renewals of ecological thought. First, Cixous gives us a new way of thinking about text and textuality that circumvents enduring eco-critical debates on the capacity of language to touch "the real." In her invention of *écriture féminine*, which I re-read as an *écriture naturelle*, Cixous conceives a form of writing that lives in and with the poetic nature of being. And such re-imaginings ground her larger onto-epistemology, which, I argue, is best described as "immanent otherness": a theory of immanence that conceives of being as not only embedded, embodied and entangled, but as *containing*

otherness. Otherness, in Cixous's conception, is intrinsic to material reality, and *the* condition of joyful, exuberant and ethical existence. In this way, Cixous does nothing short of offer us a new metaphysics, one that, in placing otherness at the centre of material being, is vitally suited to the renewal of environmental thought, and to explaining and addressing the strange conditions of these Anthropocenic times.

To see brilliance in Cixous is nothing new. Indeed, she is recognized and celebrated the world over as an exceptional and singular writer and thinker. Born in Oran, Algeria in 1937 to a French Sephardic father and Austro-German Ashkenazi mother, Cixous grew up within a complex matrix of difference and exclusion: Jewish in French-occupied Algeria; French among an oppressed Muslim majority; female in various patriarchies. Speaking German, French, Hebrew, and English, her home life was a place of constant translation. Cixous, it is clear, has been scattered and beset by otherness from the start. In her essay "My Algeriance, in other words: to depart not to arrive from Algeria," Cixous describes her feeling as a child of having been "born elsewhere," her "obscure feeling of having appeared there by chance, of not belonging to any here by inheritance or descent, the physical feeling of being a frail mushroom, a spore hatched overnight, who only holds to the earth with hasty and frail roots" (1998 153). From this space of precarious belonging, at once material and ephemeral, Cixous forged a life of dreaming, thinking, and writing otherness.

But first she fell in love with the writing of others. Attending university in France, Cixous studied literature, passing the prestigious *agrégation* in English in 1959. Working as an academic throughout the early 1960s, she published her first text, *Le Prénom de Dieu*, in 1967, and earned a *Doctorat ès lettres* in 1968 with a thesis on James Joyce (*L'Exil de James Joyce ou l' art du remplacement*). In 1969 Cixous won the prestigious Prix Médicis award for her novel *Dedans*, a

win that introduced her to wider French literary circles. Though she questioned structures of exclusion and oppression from the start, Cixous's activism grew more public in the 1960s and early 1970s. Building on the fervor of the May '68 events, she joined fellow theorists Michel Foucault, Felix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, and others, in founding the experimental Université de Paris VIII at Vincennes, a school that endeavoured to dismantle the traditional hierarchies of the French academic system. Along with Tzvetan Todorov and Gérard Genette, she helped start *Poétique*, an influential and far reaching journal that developed alternatives modes of reading and writing "text." And she has long been an important figure within the French feminist movement, publishing exclusively through the 1970s and early 1980s with *Des Femmes*, the publishing house of prominent feminist leader Antoinette Fouque. Cixous was a key architect in the creation of the first European feminist research centre, *Centre de Recherches en Etudes Féminines*, which offered the first doctoral program in Women's Studies in Europe, and where she remains a Chair and continues to fight for the Centre's value and existence. Such sustained collaborations crossed into other genres of art as well, evidenced in her work as a playwright for Ariane Mnouchkine's experimental Théâtre du Soleil.⁴

Although her work traverses philosophy, literature, art, and theatre, Cixous is first and foremost a writer. I will not attempt to detail comprehensively all the ideas with which she has engaged over a half century of writing, but I do want to signpost a few important concepts that open a path to the new materialism and eco-theory that I trace in this dissertation. First, Cixous is recognized as a leading theorist of writing, which includes the writing process, the idea of writing, the ethics of writing, and much more. From *Coming to Writing and Other Essays* (1991) and *Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing* (1997) to *Encounters: Conversations on Life and Writing* (2012), she has consistently produced work that theorizes writing in enigmatic and

compelling ways. Second, Cixous is recognized alongside fellow feminists Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva as an essential theorist of sexual difference. Such recognition typically begins for Anglo scholars with the essays "The Laugh of the Medusa," and "Sorties," and her invention of the concept *écriture féminine*.⁵ *Écriture féminine*, often translated as "women's writing," has for long been interpreted as a call for women to write "themselves" and upend enduring phallogocentrism. However, since the 1980s, readers of Cixous have continued to expand the meaning of *écriture féminine*, and it is now recognized as a term that founds Cixous's larger theoretical project in which she explores how the transformation of intimate, personal subjectivities can beget larger social and political change (Bray 2004; Blyth and Sellers 2004). From this view, *écriture féminine* becomes integral to Cixous's enduring interest in what I will later describe as the phenomenology of entanglement and the political potential of re-imagined relationality.

Cixous has persistently sought to invent alternative "libidinal economies" in which relationality isn't measured in debits and credits (Conley 1991; Bray 2004). Whether exploring new possibilities for relational entanglement in familial dynamics, animal relations, "the sexes," or otherwise, Cixous always seeks a space that is inter-subjective, or "between." In her writings on love, bisexuality, the gift, death, and "the other," ideas to which she consistently returns, Cixous seeks to reimagine exchange value beyond or outside heteropatriarchal, (neo)colonial, and capitalist logics. For Cixous, it is in recognizing otherness, whether in the self as unconscious and dreaming, or the otherness of plant, animal, and human relations, or of "being" itself, that the economies of death (read oppression, violence, genocide) are challenged. "Poetic writing," by her hand, is a material, embedded, and relational act that endeavours to transform how all relations are lived through a recognition of otherness. Clarifying this approach sharpens

our appreciation of Cixous as an entangled *reading*-writer, someone who not only theorizes a plethora of relations in her work but who also never thinks/writes outside relationality. In the written text of her Welles Library Lectures, *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* (1993), Cixous makes the point clear: "Writing and reading are not separate, reading is a part of writing. A real reader is a writer. A real reader is already on the way to writing" (21). Her work is always *in* dialogue with others, including a company of fellow writers: Shakespeare, Montaigne, Kleist, Stendhal, Dostoyevsky, Mallarmé, Proust, Kafka, Tsvetaeva, Genet, Bachmann, and of course, Lispector. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that Cixous writes "dialogues" rather than "novels," "essays" or "poems," for she writes nothing with less than a chorus of voices.

Before I turn to my own (re)reading of Cixous, I think it is important, finally, to note that Cixous's dizzyingly extensive oeuvre -- which includes more than 70 published novels and books of poetry and hundreds of essays -- has inspired generations of readers and interpreters. Indeed, there exists a wealth of Cixous scholarship, coming primarily from French, English, Maghrebian, and Québécois literary theorists. There is an established cohort of scholars that have defined Cixous studies, including Verena Andermatt Conley (1984; 1992), Peggy Kamuf (1995; 2015), Susan Sellers (1996), Marta Segarra (2010), Abigail Bray (2004) and Mireille Calle-Gruber (1997; 2000), all of whom have written extensively and brilliantly on and/or with Cixous. And Cixous continues to inspire into the current decade. I offer a sampling, here. Mark Dawson's 2011 essay for *The Oxford Literary Review*, "Of Force and the Future - Hélène Cixous's Poematic 'Might,'" offers an analysis of Cixous's novel *Le jour où je n'étais pas là* (2000; in English, *The Day I Wasn't There*, translated by Beverly Bie Brahic, 2006), in which Dawson considers how Cixous "makes/lets what is wholly other, and what must remain wholly other, arrive" (152). French literary scholar Mairéad Hanrahan's 2014 text *Cixous's Semi-Fictions:*

Writing at the Borders of Theory, considers how Cixous invents new ways to give space to otherness in writing. And Véronique Bergen's 2017 *Hélène Cixous: La Langue Plus-que-vive*, looks at the exceptional vitality in Cixous's approach to writing. In France, it can be said, Cixous has become an institution: appointed to the *Légion d'Honneur*, and the *Ordre national du Mérite*, and awarded membership into the *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* in 2016, her complete works are now archived in the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, an instatement that Cixous and several of her key interpreters reflect on in a special issue of *parallax* (Prenowitz, 2007). And thanks to scholar and filmmaker Olivier Morel, there's now a feature length film about her. Titled *Ever, Rêve, Hélène Cixous*, the film premiered at the 2018 *Festival Des Films Du Monde De Montréal*. This ongoing interest isn't restricted to French, European and Québécois circles. In addition to Anglo writings on her work, there is Cixous's collaboration with LA based artist Alexandra Grant on *Forêt Intérieure/Interior Forest* (2013), inspired by a sustained exchange between Grant and Cixous on Cixous's text *Philippines*.⁶ And in 2017, New York University hosted *Cixousversaire: A Celebration of Hélène Cixous*, to mark her 80th birthday and celebrate Cixous's immense contribution to 20th and 21st century thought.

Given my interest in bringing Cixous into Anglo environmental thought and new materialism, and to reading Cixous through key revelations within these fields, I have chosen to work exclusively with English translations of her texts. Part of my project is to reform Anglo interpretations of Cixous, which have remained doggedly attached to her contributions from the 1970s, despite the subsequent fifty years of publishing her work in English. I also follow Cixous in recognizing that alongside the demand to remain fidelitous to a text there is always poetry in translation. In other words, translation creates meaning as much as it carries meaning across

linguistic divides. As such, I treat the English translations as their own texts with their own meanings relevant to Anglo discourse.

Despite being beloved, intensely read, and multiply interpreted, Cixous has long been a spectral figure with the broader post-structuralist conversation. Introducing Cixous at the *Cixousversaire*, Avital Ronell explains the enigma well: "Bold and unrelenting, H  l  ne Cixous demands a stupefying range of work and genres and despite her great popularity...she is considerably under-represented" (2017). This under-representation has continued within new materialism, new material feminisms, and post-structuralist ecology. While the general case for Cixous's importance and extensive contribution to literary theory needn't be made, she continues to be under-considered outside very specific conversations. My project, then, begins with the identification and exploration of Cixous as crucially under-represented in the areas of new materialism and post-structuralist eco-theory. In considering Cixous's under-representation we gain a deeper understanding of both the explicit and implicit boundaries of environmental thought. However, because I am focusing on Cixous as a new materialist and eco-theorist, this dissertation does not, for the most part, take up the extensive and impressive library of Cixous scholarship, except in the few instances where new materialist and ecological readings exist. Despite the lack of attention given to her materialism and immanentism, I argue that it is both possible and profitable to approach Cixous as an environmental philosopher. In reading Cixous this way, we not only expand and enrich the emerging fields of the environmental humanities, we also develop a more comprehensive appreciation for how radically Cixous transforms and advances Western metaphysics. Indeed, (re)turning to Cixous with all the insights of recent new materialist and eco-theoretical scholarship in tow allows a clearer picture to emerge of the immensity and significance of her contribution to contemporary environmental thought.

What, then, does Cixous make possible for new materialism, eco-theory, and metaphysics of immanence? The argument that I build over the course of the following four chapters hinges on a reading of Cixous as a *theorist* who develops the idea of "immanent otherness," a term that Cixous doesn't use explicitly but that I coin in order to better describe the lynchpin of her metaphysics. For Cixous, the only way we can reach toward truth is if we recognize that all being -- which includes all speaking, writing and thinking about being -- is *at once* immanent and other. Cixous follows the line of immanence in post-structuralist thought in positing that there is no outside being, and thus no transcendental framework with which to construct systems of absolute truth and value. Immanent otherness is, therefore, Cixous's contribution to escaping what speculative realists have termed the "correlationist dilemma" (Bryant, Srnicek and Harman 2010). The dilemma for the correlationist, which has defined modern philosophical thought, is whether the human mind truly knows the world as it is, or merely as it appears to human consciousness. For Cixous, and especially following her discovery of Clarice Lispector, writing-thinking cannot *not* be of the world because nothing isn't of the world -- even otherness. Cixous, therefore, should be recognized as contributing to the renewal of vitalist monism, a revival led by Deleuze but connected to a longer trajectory that reaches back through Spinoza, Hume, and Bergson (Colebrook 2010). What is exceptional in Cixous is that she posits otherness as equally present in all being, and as the source of ontological vitality and fecundity. In this way, she keeps company with Levinas's and Derrida's phenomenal othernesses. In arguing for otherness *within* immanence, Cixous engages not only Deleuze's transcendental empiricism, but also Lacan's speculative immanentism, and more recent speculative realisms. But it is Cixous who conceives a metaphysics that is not only immanent and other but also deeply attuned and responsive to a visceral, corporeal, sensible world filled with seething, emitting other(nes)s. Cixous offers an

otherness of *jouissance*, rooted in a visceral, smouldering, enfleshed, and thoroughly more-than-human immanence. And as such, it is Cixous's metaphysics of immanent otherness that is ideally suited to reconceiving what it means to think materially and ecologically.

At the centre of her metaphysical efforts is Cixous's "poetic writing": an aesthetic-ethic-epistemology suited to an ontology of immanent otherness. As Cixous explains in *Rootprints* (1997), in a passage to which I return throughout the dissertation:

What is most true is poetic because it is not stopped-stoppable. All that is stopped, grasped, all that is subjugated, easily transmitted, easily picked up, all that comes under the word concept, which is to say all that is taken, caged, is less true. Has lost what is life itself which is always in the process of seething, of emitting, of transmitting itself. Each object is in reality a small virtual volcano.... All that advances is aerial, detached, uncatchable. (1997, 4)

What is crucial here is that Cixous isn't wrestling *between* language and reality, a symptom of the correlationist fever; rather, she distinguishes between modes of engagement. She is contrasting (Western) transcendental forms of representation with poetic writing. Because *being* is poetic, that is, "not stopped-stoppable," it is only those forms of engagement that recognize this poetic ontology that are capable of finding what is "most true." Poetic writing isn't a scrim across reality; it is a way of thinking-being-encountering *as* immanent otherness. With Cixous, then, we cease worrying about whether or not our language is reaching or *not* reaching reality and begin to think differently about the epistemological, aesthetic and ethical potential of what has been called "language." This work is essential to current environmental theory precisely because "logos" has been so integral to Eurocentric conceptions of the human in the world, and to transcendental systems of meaning designed to maintain human exceptionalism, and also

because this legacy has contributed to the gridlock in eco-criticism regarding the veracity of words (Oppermann 2011). Poetic writing, by distinction, is simultaneously a mode of reflection on the immanent otherness that defines *being* across all species and substance boundaries, and an expression of this reality.

In recognizing Cixous as a theorist we are better able to identify her particular philosophical milieu, which lies at the intersections of post-structuralism, deconstruction, feminism and psychoanalytic theory, fields that each take up questions of immanence and otherness in different ways. From the start, however, Cixous refused to speak the language of theory in any kind of explicit way. She chose, instead, to take up writing -- the language of "writing," and to a lesser extent the discipline of literature and writing -- not simply because her preferred philosophers were writers but because she was, from the outset, interested in what it means to think, or write, in ways consonant with a material, immanent, and lively being. What is especially fascinating is that it is likely this commitment to inventing new forms of thinking-being-relating that *both* makes her work intensely relevant to new materialist interventions *and* that has left her contributions unseen or misrecognized. While debates regarding "textuality vs reality" were dominating eco-theoretical conversations, Cixous was trying to reinvent writing as a posthumanist onto-epistemology.

Recognizing the material immanentism and ecology in Cixous's work also opens up an alternative narrative for environmental thought, one traced through eco-poetics, eco-feminism, and feminist immanence, fields of inquiry that are increasingly overlapping. If the story of the environmental humanities is told as a forgetting and then remembering of materiality (Coole and Frost 2010), of turning away from materiality in the post-structuralist moment before returning to materiality with the arrival of new materialisms and object oriented ontologies (Bryant, Srnicek

and Harman 2010), then the post-structuralist feminists remain, ironically, immaterial. I propose an alternative story, one in which the French feminists generally, and Cixous in particular, are recognized as essential contributors to a broader and older feminist ecological, *nay* metaphysical, effort to name, challenge and undo the dominant socio-cultural-material structures that function via parallel oppressions. In such a retelling, we no longer have to work hard to make certain post-structuralist theorists speak immanently and ecologically, despite their nagging humanisms: we can read Cixous instead.

Overview of Chapters

In Chapter 1, I outline several key aspects of the discursive terrain of environmental ethics over the last sixty years in order to better understand why Cixous has remained un(der)considered, and to elucidate the context of the theoretical knots that I argue Cixous helps to unravel. Recognizing the persistent attachments to positivism among Anglo environmental theorists in North America, as well as neo-positivist leanings within various ontological turns, helps account for the near total lack of interest in Cixous among not only environmental ethicists but also new materialists and other environmental humanities scholars and feminists. I consider how the construction of "post-modernism" among environmental ethicists as the poster-child of anti-realism contributed significantly to the delay in ecological readings of post-structuralist theory among Anglo eco-theorists. To do so, I retrace the reality vs textuality debates of the 1990s, wherein anyone speaking about language, semiotics, and writing was deemed a dangerous influence for those addressing urgent environmental problems. Such discursive discriminations seem especially unfair to French feminists, who were, at the same time, being maligned by feminist social constructivists for being *too* material. The re-casting of post-structuralism as relevant to environmental questions is essential if Cixous's contribution to immanence,

materiality, and critiques of the Anthropocene are to be heard. Fortunately, this shift is well underway, as I demonstrate in the second half of the chapter with a series of literature reviews of ecological readings of Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Luce Irigaray. These (re)readings, Vicky Kirby and Cary Wolfe on Derrida, Elizabeth Grosz and Claire Colebrook of Deleuze, and Emily Anne Parker and Mick Smith on Irigaray, provide a model for my own efforts to encounter Cixous through immanence, materiality, and ecology. The six thinkers, in recognizing the relevance of "post-structuralism" to new materialism and environmental humanities, also help re-imagine what counts as a "proper object" of study to useful environmental theory -- work that is essential if we are to recognize Cixous's objects of inquiry as having ecological relevance.

In Chapter 2, I begin with the most obvious starting point in any discussion of Cixous: writing. As noted, Cixous's interest in writing, and her strong affiliation with literature, literary theory, and semiotics, has played a significant role in placing her resolutely on the side of "text" and thus, in the discursive battleground of the 1990s and 2000s, against the "real" and the "world itself" claimed by Anglo-American environmental philosophers. I argue that Cixous, far from reinforcing such a dichotomy, offers us a creative pathway out. By providing a reading of Cixous's famous *écriture féminine* as *écriture naturelle*, my aim is to demonstrate how Cixous conceives all of being as a process of poetic and material translation. From the start of her writing life, Cixous has been interested in questioning and transforming our understanding of the relationship between language, the self, and our embedded, relational existences. Rather than differentiate between "all text" and "all materiality," Cixous seeks to follow and invent poetic being, a writing that is at once an epistemology and an ontology: "In these violent and lazy times, in which we do not live what we live, we are read, we are forcibly lived, far from our essential lives, we lose the gift, we no longer hear what things still want to tell us, we translate, we

translate, everything is translation and reduction, there is almost nothing left of the sea but a word without water" (1997, 65). In this passage, we see that Cixous is well aware of the legacy of phallogocentrism in the West and the transcendental language of "the Law" that seeks to fix life/being in order to subjugate immanent materiality, to empty "the sea" of water itself. She invents/strives for poetic writing as a way of being-thinking-responding-relating capable of encountering being/s without foreclosing on immanent otherness. For Cixous, only the poetic can speak the register of lively being, where truth is not caged in the service of knowledge/power. To better grasp and expand on the ecological relevance of Cixous's poetic writing, I turn to the work of eco-poetical theorists Scott Knickerbocker, Don McKay, and Catriona Sandilands -- each of whom theorize "the poetic" beyond an object specific eco-literature. In other words, in expanding eco-poetics beyond Western metaphysics and linguistics of representation and domestication (eco-poetics as poems about trees, for instance), Knickerbocker, McKay, and Sandilands clear a space for reading Cixous's poetic writing as eco-poetics, and eco-theory. Each of these eco-theorists helps to push eco-criticism to a place where the crucial question is not how can we more accurately represent "nature," but how we can invent modes of engagement that collapse the dichotomies of word and world: an intensely Cixousian endeavour. Though she has not been called an eco-poet, and does not identify as such, my goal is to demonstrate how closely allied Cixous's poetic writing is with the larger metaphysical concerns and transformations of several important eco-poetic theorists. Cixous provides her own unique contribution to eco-poetic efforts to redefine what it means to "do" eco-poetry and to articulate the greater philosophical implications of important eco-poetical work. The chapter, thus, also illustrates the weakness of various critiques of post-structuralism as anti-real by showing Cixous's deep interest in

uncovering material truths. In drawing out connections between eco-poetry and Cixous's poetic writing, we are better able to see and consider the ecological implications of her work.

In Chapter 3, I offer my own reading of Cixous as leading us to the concept of immanent otherness. It is in her idea of otherness as *part* of a vibrant, seething, sensible immanence that, I argue, Cixous distinguishes herself from her fellow theorists of otherness and immanence, and makes her especially important to new materialist readings of post-structuralism. An appreciation of Cixous's deep and enduring engagement with Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector is essential to such analysis. It is through her encounter with Lispector, or "Clarice," as she calls her, that Cixous heightens her sensitivity to and interest in immanent materiality. And it is by way of Clarice that Cixous fashions a poetic "approach" to material reality that is intimate, tactile, and sensuous. In Clarice, Cixous finds an exemplar of *écriture féminine/naturelle*, a poetic thinker-writer who seeks/writes ways of engaging/encountering the world that simultaneously transform the relational being of self/other without foreclosing on the abiding otherness of immanence. In outlining a Claricean Cixous, I also clarify and emphasize Cixous's place within and contribution to explicitly feminist theories of immanence whereby being is understood to be an embodied, embedded, entangled and vibrant affair. And stronger still, Cixous conceives an immanent otherness that leads us to a radical relationality of "other-love": an onto-ethical mode of being in which "to love" is "to watch-think-see the other in the other ... a love that rejoices in the exchange that multiplies" (1976, 893). From such readings of her work, I argue that Cixous's immanent otherness is a concept with significant eco-ethical value.

In the fourth and final chapter, I extend Cixous's immanent otherness to develop an alternative approach to thinking and living "the Anthropocene." My position is that Cixous conceives an Anthropocenic space *avant la lettre* in making otherness immanent. Following this

claim, I propose that we ought to think about the Anthropocene as affective space of heightened awareness of always existing *and* intensifying immanent otherness. The Anthropocene, by such a reading, is useful as a philosophical concept -- distinct from its utility within geological and other scientific discourse -- to describe the revelation of immanent otherness. When "we" realize that transcendental signifying systems cannot fully account for material reality and that the othernesses of these systems of representation have been accumulating to the point of collapse, we have entered the affective epiphany of the Anthropocene. Such a reading exists in stark contrast to an understanding of the Anthropocene as a state of hyper-awareness and affirmation of the *power* of the human. The urgency, scale and perceived causes of the Anthropocene are, in crucial ways, reinforcing and reinventing discourses of meta-truth, one-world solutions and Western hegemonic onto-epistemologies and temporalities. Given the severity and urgency of the problems signified by "the Anthropocene," goes the recycled refrain, there is no time for decadent discussions of difference and otherness, or, even more outrageously, for new onto-epistemologies that recognize the agency of the non-human. To consider such a position I turn to noted environmentalist Clive Hamilton's *Defiant Earth: The Fate of Humans in the Anthropocene* (2017), a text that, I argue, is paradigmatic of this desire to return to a modern-colonial framework. "The story of humans-as-just-another-species," he writes, "cannot withstand the arrival of the Anthropocene. The new epoch is the ultimate demonstration that, however networked into the natural world we are (as the post-humanists have shown), humans do stand out" (Hamilton 2017, 97).⁷ Hamilton's refusal to recognize the disruptions and agency of othered beings within the Western myth of superiority, a refusal that extrapolates to othered-*humans* as well, is symptomatic of the desire among select environmentalists to reject once and for all post-structuralist appraisals of Western truth regimes. This renewed impatience with and refusal of

difference and otherness denies the *material evidence*, I argue, of the otherness that abounds. Arguing against these amplified voices of an Anthro-po-theos, the chapter carries Cixous into a series of interventions that seek to resist environmentalisms of unity, certainty, and purity and to uncover instead the incoherence, strangeness and impurity of immanent otherness.

Chapter 1: *Clearing Space for Cixous*

"What is interesting when you write is to imagine that your reader is not yet born, so someone writing in say 1824 might think 'my idea will be born in 1924'" (Cixous in Sellers 2008, xv)

In the following Chapter, I offer a brief sketch of the history of environmental ethics in order to clear a space for Cixous's contribution to contemporary eco-theory, and to better understand the discursive conditions that have resulted in her absence from new materialism and environmental humanities scholarship. Given the extent to which the Anglo tradition initially set the terms of environmental philosophy, a brief history of the field(s) helps us uncover past and enduring limitations. I begin by outlining the history of positivism within environmental ethics, and the ways in which a positivist bent helped inform the rejection of post-modernism in Anglo circles through the 1990s onward. This partiality for positivism is key to understanding the severity of the Anglo reaction against post-modernism, especially amongst those environmental ethicists who viewed speculative interest in questions of truth, structure, language and subjectivity as decadent and escapist in the face of "real" problems. The caricature of post-structuralism as advancing the position that we humans have *no* access to "the real," to material life, set the conditions for the late arrival of thinkers such as Derrida to the environmental conversation. Given the precarious status of Cixous within Anglo feminist theory, and philosophy, full stop, the likelihood of her being read by environmental theorists was small. Despite the efforts of deep ecologists, ecofeminists and eco-phenomenologists to "go deeper," that is, to consider the ontological, epistemological and socio-political dimensions of environmental problems, the seduction of positivism was, and in some ways continues to be, tenacious. Understanding the "forgetting of Cixous," therefore, helps to reveal "the order of things": the underlying discursive rules that continue to determine what counts, and doesn't count, as thinking ecologically.

Expanding the scope of environmental thought such that Cixous can be heard not only makes for a richer tradition, it is essential as we search for new solutions to our worsening environmental condition.

The Discursive Terrain of Anglo Environmental Ethics

The absence of Hélène Cixous from various branches of environmental thought is symptomatic of the ways in which environmental theory has been, and to some extent, continues to be discursively delimited. A cursory glance at Cixous's substantial oeuvre is sufficient to recognize her as a thinker relevant to new materialism and eco-theory. From her long-standing re-imagining of difference and otherness beyond heteropatriarchal, colonial and humanist logics of domination to the trees, gardens, flowers, seas, lakes, dogs, cats, wolves, cockroaches and many other more-than-human companions with whom she reads-writes and poetically-thinks, Cixous's potential contribution is vast. Why then has this contribution, if it is indeed *prima facie*, remained un(der)recognized?⁸ In the first half of the following Chapter I address this question by considering how 20th and 21st century discourses of environmental thought have helped to set the conditions for Cixous's omission. Such analysis is important, not only to help clear the way for a Cixousian contribution to eco-theory, but as part of what must be an ongoing effort to find and invent new ways to think about and better understand our ecological moment. What new pathways for environmental philosophy emerge if the discursive conditions of possibility are altered to make room for Cixous? How might changing such discursive limitations help us to expand and reimagine how we think about and thus respond, hopefully better, to environmental crises?

One key factor in explaining Cixous's absence from environmental thought is the enduring seduction of positivism. With its promise of direct, uncomplicated and apolitical access

to a "really real," the seduction of positivism has been strong among thinkers deeply attuned to the imminent devastation of material life. Anti-positivist branches of environmental thought, principally deep ecology, ecofeminism and eco-phenomenology, have had to consistently push against an Anglo North American environmental ethics enchanted by the positivist fantasy. When so enchanted, environmental philosophers are impatient with discussions of culture, politics, and metaphysics, as these are seen as indulgent, unnecessary detours on the way to a reality desperately in need of attention. As Neil Evernden explains in *The Social Creation of Nature* (1992), "those who raise such questions...regularly face charges of irrelevance and impracticality, for it is commonly expected that all worthwhile studies are to end with the optimistic provision of a practical solution" (x). Thinkers compelled by the positivist fantasy are also those most likely to reject post-structuralism as immaterial and too political, as siding with text *over* matter, as mired in abstract discussions of power rather than focusing on pragmatic answers. However, the *desire* for a "real" uncomplicated by politics, by the complexities of subjectivity and human constructs of meaning, does not a pure ontology make. In the second half of the chapter, I review the work of six ecological readers of leading post-structuralists, each of whom demonstrate the vital contribution post-structuralism offers eco-theory. Their work, which will serve as a model for reading Cixous ecologically, confirms that an interest in textuality, constructs of meaning, subjectivity, and politics is not only not antithetical to ecological thought, but vital to its success. More specifically, post-structuralist engagements with immanence are essential to a reconceptualization of reality as inescapably entangled and material, *and* fraught with relations of power. Cixous, in particular, helps us imagine what it means to seek out living truths within complex social and political *immanent* structures. Given the return to the positivist fantasy in recent new materialist work, Cixous's contribution is all the more urgently needed.

I turn then to a sketch of the positivist origins of environmental ethics in North America. In *Rethinking Nature: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (2004), editors Bruce Foltz and Robert Frodeman provide an account of the rise of positivist environmental thought in North America. The editors posit that Western-Anglo environmental discourse developed in the 1960s primarily as public policy debates built on a strong positivist scientific foundation.

The first stirrings of a widespread awareness of modern industrial society's effects upon the natural world appeared not in philosophical circles, but in scientific and political public debate. *Silent Spring* (1962), the Wilderness Act (1964), the creation of the EPA (1970), and the Clean Air Acts (1970) all predate a systematic philosophical exploration of our relationship to nature. Thus, not only the relevant problems, but the terms of the debate ("ecosystem," "habitat," "biodiversity," and so on) were defined by natural science. (Foltz and Frodeman 2004, 4)

As Foltz and Frodeman explain, contemporary Anglo-environmental thought emerged within the onto-epistemological nomenclature of the natural sciences, and "[t]his use of the scientific understanding of the environment as an unquestioned ground for thinking about nature was doubly important for what came to be called simply 'environmental ethics'" (4). From the founding Anglo-American perspective, the natural sciences provide an understanding of "nature," and the aim of environmental ethics is to decide "Man's" responsibility for, valuing and treatment of it.⁹ Questioning "human" and "nature" as concepts belonging to a particular cultural/discursive/material field is not necessary thanks to the "post-Kantian exclusion of any knowledge of nature outside that gathered by the sciences" (Foltz and Frodeman 4). Frodeman, this time alongside J Baird Callicott, in the editors' introduction to *The Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, confirms the point:

The earliest work in environmental philosophy is narrowly located in the area of environmental ethics, and the bulk of it still is...In today's prevailing worldview, the physical world is nothing but brute matter and blind energy devoid of purpose, a world that science can in principle fully describe. In the positivist spirit of the late twentieth century, metaphysics in the grand manner, aesthetics, and theology have become antiquated categories...In the 1960s, when environmental issues caught the attention of the public, these concerns were naturally expressed in the two languages most likely to get a hearing: science, which defined the real and ethics, which addressed questions of rights and obligations. (2008, xv-xx)

As a result, the primary concerns of the first generation of environmental philosophers, defined as such, did not involve questioning the very construction of "nature" as a *metaphysical* concept, but focused principally on the ethical relationship *between* the onto-epistemologically sound categories of human and nonhuman nature. While the nature of *the relationship* was being challenged, the nature of "nature" was not up for consideration.

Though positivist environmental ethics has dominated discourses of nature, it is important to note the committed efforts of anti-positivist eco-theorists fighting to break through this normative framework. Beginning in the 1970s, three schools of environmental philosophy – deep ecology, ecofeminism and ecophenomenology – emerged to challenge established conceptions of what counted as environmental research. The deep ecology movement, spearheaded by Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss in the early 1970s, argued for a *deeper*, more radical critique of Western industrial culture. Deep ecological thinking, Naess argued, "is not a slight reform of our present society, but a *substantial reorientation of our whole civilization*" (Næss 1989 45 [italics in original]). Deep ecologists took the conversation beyond ethics to

metaphysics, claiming that ontological boundaries between living things are illusory (Frodeman and Callicott 2008, 207). Naess stated explicitly that he was "not much interested in ethics or morals," rather he was "interested in how we experience the world" (Fox, qtd in Frodeman and Callicott 2008, 207). Deep ecologist George Sessions reiterates the point: "The [deep ecology] search...is not for environmental ethics but for ecological consciousness" (207). In Naess's seminal essay 'The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement" (1973), he presents his case for a non-positivist eco-theory. The "shallow" ecology movement is the name Naess gives to a positivist based approach to environmental issues in which reality/nature is perfectly described and understood by science, and ethicists are tasked with determining which policies will ensure a healthy nature. Naess takes things deeper, to the ontological, in order to shift eco-ethical discourse to questions of our very basic conception of being-the-world: "in so far as ecology movements deserve our attention, they are *ecophilosophical* rather than ecological. Ecology is a *limited* science which makes *use* of scientific methods" (99). Ecosophy, on the other hand, is the non-positivist exploration of the meaning of our human and more-than-human being. Importantly, Naess is careful to note that an understanding of what he calls "normative material" – social, political, ethical (100) – is equally essential to ecosophy as the science of ecology. In other words, Naess wants to push environmental ethics not only toward metaphysical and ontological questions about fundamental relationality, but toward appreciating the role that culture plays in determining and shaping such movements.

Ecofeminism developed in complementary spirit with deep ecology in challenging dominant Western systems of thought. However, ecofeminists extended such critiques to more explicitly epistemological terrain, naming the white supremacist, hetero-patriarchy and settler colonial knowledge-power matrix as a root cause of ecological distress, and inseparable from

industrial capitalism (d' Eaubonne 1974; Ruether 1975; Griffin 1978; Daly 1978; Merchant 1980; King 1981/83; Salleh 1984; Plumwood 1986; Warren 1988; Shiva 1988; Gaard 1993). Ecofeminists identified that the logic of oppression that places "humans" above "nature" functions similarly to and works in tandem with patriarchal structures that place "men" over "women." For ecofeminists then, broadly speaking, feminism is inseparable from environmentalism, and vice versa (Warren 2001). Ecofeminists also provided an important critique of and an alternative to the deep ecology understanding of anthropocentrism which tended to flatten all humans into one ontic category, failing to recognize that divisions *among* humans were part of the story of the domination of nature (Salleh 1984; Zimmerman 1987).

Building on the phenomenological recognition of sensuous, embodied experience as philosophically relevant, eco-phenomenologists understand human consciousness as deeply embedded in animate and sentient environments (Marietta Jr. 1982; Llewelyn 1989; Grange 1977, 1983; Seamon and Mugerauer 1985). Initial focus among proponents of this approach was on Martin Heidegger (Seidel 1971; Zimmerman 1977, 1979, 1983; Westra 1985; McWhorter 1992) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Abram 1988). Eco-phenomenologists rejected a positivist approach to environmental problems by arguing that our knowledge and valuation of nature are inseparable from our *experiences of nature*. In other words, presenting "the science" of environmental crisis in abstracted and de-personalized ways, as "carbon emissions," for example, erases the ways in which we always-already live in, with, and as nature; "[t]he consequence of this forgetting is that our experienced reality is supplanted by an abstract model of reality - a model that, for all its usefulness, cannot claim epistemological or metaphysical priority over the world as experienced" (Brown and Toadvine 2003).

Interest in these counter-positivist movements, with proponents more sympathetic to French Continental thought, plateaued and even waned through the 1990s and 2000s. With mainstream environmental ethicists committed to research on human management of and responsibility for a scientifically known nature, alternative approaches were stifled. Calls for "deep" structural change were muted by discussions of conservation biology (Meffe and Carroll 1994; Borgerhoff Mulder and Coppolillo 2004; Meine, Soulé and Noss 2006), biodiversity (Sarkar and Margules 2002; Magurran 2004), and sustainability (Norton 2002, 2005). Pragmatic methods oriented toward natural resource management and sustainable development were seen as ideally suited to the task of balancing the demands of humans and industrial capitalism with resource protection.¹⁰

One consequence of this discursive trend toward environmental positivism has been the near complete, at least until quite recently, treatment of Continental post-structuralism as, at best, irrelevant, and at worst, damaging to environmental philosophy. While eco-phenomenological work on Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty has been accepted and published in environmental ethics journals, French post-structuralists have consistently been maligned. As English translations of Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Luce Irigaray, and Cixous reached Anglo-American scholars in the 1980s and 1990s, a new discursive dichotomy emerged. While the work of these thinkers was deeply impacting across a variety of disciplines, from legal studies to cultural theory, for environmental ethicists "post-modernism"¹¹ became synonymous with anti-realism and anti-nature. Indeed, the term seemed at times to serve as a synecdoche for all theory said to be rejecting reality. Postmodernists, it was claimed, denied any unmediated access to reality, arguing, "all that we can know is what we say about the world

(Spivak 1990, 17)."¹² Paul Shepard, in his essay "Virtually Hunting Reality in the Forests of Simulacra," captures the heat of the rejection nicely:

Lyotard and his fellows have about them no glimmer of earth, of leaves or soil. They seem to live entirely in a made rather than a grown world...to be always on the edge of supposing that the words for things are more real than the things they stand for. Reacting against the abuses of modernism, they assert that life consists of a struggle for verbal authority...Misconstruing the dynamics of language, they are the final spokesmen of a world of forms as opposed to process, for whom existence is a mix of an infinite number of possible variations making up the linguistic elements of a 'text.' Under all narrative we find merely more layers of intent until we realize...that our role as human organisms is to replace the world with webs of words, sounds, and signs that refer only to other such constructions. Intellectuals seem caught up in the dizzy spectacle and brilliant subjectivity of a kind of deconstructionist fireworks in which origins and truth have become meaningless. The text — the only reality — is comparable only to other texts...[T]he postmodern high fashion of deconstruction declares that the text — or bits cobbled into a picture — is all there is. (in Lease and Soulé 1995, 20-24)

Shepard offers a clear, and eviscerating, articulation of the antipathy among environmental ethicists to "post-modernism," with Jean-Francois Lyotard, Derrida, Richard Rorty, Foucault, and Jacques Lacan named as the primary culprits. For Shepard, this way of thinking, with its emphasis on text and human constructs of meaning, leads to a "nihilistic ecology" (21), that "rationalizes the final step away from connection: beyond relativism to denial" (25). The most incensed moment finds Shepard accusing post-modernists of plotting, "with glee," to destroy all

faith in knowledge and progress, to turn reality into mere text, and disappear nature in the process (21). These reductive and careless characterizations of post-structuralism have delayed eco-theoretical readings of the field for many years.

Fortunately, the gradual recognition of the relevancy of post-structuralism to thinking materially and ecologically appears to be making room for Cixous.¹³ However, there has been a tendency in more recent new materialist literature to *again* construct post-structuralism as antithetical to materiality and ecology. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman's *Material Feminisms* (2008), Bernd Herzogenrath's *Deleuze/Guattari and Ecology* (2009), Diana Coole and Samantha Frost's *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics* (2010), Bruce Braun and Sarah J. Whatmore's *Political Matter: Technoscience, Democracy, and Public Life* (2010), and Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman's *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (2011),¹⁴ all identify "post-structuralism" as being "in the way" of thinking materiality anew. The texts construct their new materialist discourses, in part, through a critique of post-structuralism as fully subordinating materiality to culture, and thus leaving materiality remote and inaccessible. The case against post-structuralism is almost always punctuated with the "telling claims" of two major post-structuralist thinkers. The first returns us to familiar territory: Derrida's (alleged) statement that "[t]here is nothing outside of the text [there is no outside-text]; il n'y a pas de hors-texte" (qtd in Herzogenrath 2009 2).¹⁵ The second finds Judith Butler confessing: "I am not a very good materialist. Every time I try to write about the body, the writing ends up being about language" (Butler 2004 198; Alaimo and Hekman 2008 3; Herzogenrath 2009 2). The statements serve as "gotcha moments," used to confirm the new materialist assessment that for post-structuralists materiality has meaning only within the cultural constructs of language, text, semiotics, discourse, representation, and the symbolic. Post-

structuralism may be interested in materiality, the critique goes, but only insofar as it is shaped by discourse; discourse alone is the agent of this interaction. For new materialists that subscribe to this position, post-structuralism's subjugation of materiality renders it limiting and even ineffective for a range of material concerns, from corporeal studies to ecology. If new materialisms are required, Diana Coole and Samantha Frost argue in *New Materialisms* (2010), post-structuralism, or "the cultural turn," can't help: "Everywhere we look, it seems to us, we are witnessing scattered but insistent demands for more materialist modes of analysis and for new ways of thinking about matter and processes of materialization...the more textual approaches associated with the so-called cultural turn are increasingly being deemed inadequate for understanding contemporary society" (Coole and Frost 2). Herzogenrath underscores the point: "...the dominant version of post-structuralism in the guise of cultural/linguistic constructivism has ultimately dismissed the category of nature - the materiality of nature - by aiming to translate it without remainder (or only as negativity, as the impossible real) into the realm of representation" (2009 2). In the conception of a *new* discourse on materiality, we again find post-structuralism scapegoated, getting in the way of renewed efforts to properly address contemporary ecological problems.

In considering feminist contributions to new materialism, Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, in their collection *Material Feminisms* (2008), argue in favor of a "materialist turn" that aims to resolve the post-structuralist "retreat from materiality" (3). The feminist retreat from materiality, they contend, was, in part, a result of the essentialist debates of the 80s and 90s:

Materiality, particularly that of bodies and natures, has long been an extraordinarily volatile site for feminist theory – so volatile, in fact, that the guiding rule of procedure for most contemporary feminisms requires that one

distance oneself as much as possible from the tainted realm of materiality by taking refuge within culture, discourse, and language. (2)

Alaimo and Hekman argue that controversies over essentialism — defined as any claim to an immutable and unchanging feminine nature — "tainted" materiality for feminist theory, resulting in a situation where, following Butler's lead, we can only speak of bodies and natures as discursively produced (3). The authors argue that while "postmodern" and "poststructuralist" theorists have provided instrumental contributions to feminist theory, "it is now apparent that the move to the linguistic, particularly in its postmodern variant, has serious liabilities as well as advantages" (2). Stronger still, they propose that "postmodernism has not fulfilled its promise as a theoretical grounding for feminism" (2), as "postmoderns are very uncomfortable with the concept of the real or the material" (2). At the heart of their critique is a familiar position: "Although postmoderns claim to reject all dichotomies, there is one dichotomy that they appear to embrace almost without question: language/reality" (2). Of course, they always side with language: "the real/material is entirely constituted by language" (2). And siding with language as they do, the authors are clear, means turning against matter: "the discursive realm is nearly always constituted so as to foreclose attention to lived, material bodies and evolving corporeal practices" (3); "focusing exclusively on representations, ideology, and discourse excludes lived experience, corporeal practice, and biological substance from consideration" (4). The result delivers a final blow: "feminist theory is at an impasse caused by the contemporary linguistic turn in feminist thought" (1). And while the authors make passing mention of Irigaray in their introduction, noting her interest in materiality, Cixous is absent. In other words, in their indictment of post-structuralism as anti-material, feminist materialism has bypassed feminist post-structuralism almost entirely.

Here we arrive at another facet of the discursive silencing of Cixous. In order to make the argument that post-structuralism retreats from materiality it is especially necessary to leave the substantial contributions of French feminists Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva,¹⁶ and Cixous out of the discussion.¹⁷ Again, the history of post-modernism's entrance into Anglo-American academic circles is relevant. Because post-modernism was embraced largely by Anglo social constructivists, exemplified by Butler, the feminist side of French theory was often read as *too* materialist and *too* essentialist, to be useful to those interested in critiquing biological determinism.¹⁸ While there was a flourishing of interest in French feminism among Anglo and Quebecois scholars, this reception was "partial and selective" and "focused almost exclusively on one or two strands — the deconstructive and psychoanalytic — of a much larger, more variegated field" (Fraser and Bartky 1992, 1). As a result, Irigaray, Kristeva and Cixous have been read, loved, and championed primarily within English and French Literature Studies departments (2), while being dismissed or rejected within wider Continental circles, including feminist constructivist ones. Add the new materialist rejection of feminist post-structuralism to the picture and the situation grows stranger still. French feminists are critiqued for their materiality under the social constructivist gaze, and now it is their commitments to language, culture and structure, their *post-structuralism*, that leaves them outside new materialism; too material for cultural feminism and too cultural for material feminisms. Having been critiqued for their essentialism, for treating sexual difference as discursive *and* material,¹⁹ it is unfortunate to now see French feminism under-appreciated in Anglo-American feminists' effort to *return* to bodies and materiality.²⁰ Indeed, efforts to claim post-structuralism has nothing to offer new materialisms should be thwarted if the French feminists are fully considered. In response to

enduring arguments that post-structuralism neglects materiality, I argue that French feminism, fully acknowledged, significantly re-writes this narrative.²¹

Fortunately, just as the denigration of post-structuralism as resolutely against truth, reality and matter is abating in the environmental humanities, the dismissal of French feminism is also easing, primarily with regards to Irigaray. Eco-theorists such as Mick Smith (2001), Carol Bigwood (2007), Sally Fisher (2007), Astrida Neimanis (2012), Rachel Jones (2011), Emily Anne Parker (2015) and Allison Stone (2015), all make strong cases for Irigaray's contribution to environmental thought. While this interest in explicitly material and ecological readings of Irigaray is fairly recent and far from widespread across environmental thought, it nonetheless suggests an exciting turn toward post-humanist readings of French feminism. This work would seem to indicate that the discursive terrain is shifting such that ecological readings of Cixous will also be welcomed.²² What's exciting is that the discursive shifts required to render Cixous ecologically audible also make for a more robust and vibrant eco-theory. To hear Cixous, it is essential that we continue to challenge the normative boundaries of what counts as thinking ecologically. Neil Evernden makes this argument in *The Natural Alien* (1993), and urges theorists to push against normative discourses of environmentalism and ecology. For Evernden, addressing environmental crises means we must "set aside our usual assumptions about how we must approach environmentalism" (36-37). The position resonates with Astrida Neimanis, Cecelia Åsberg & Johan Hedrén's argument in "Four Problems, Four Directions for Environmental Humanities" (2015). The authors identify the *discursive* compartmentalization of environmental issues as an ongoing challenge for scholars and activists working in related fields (78). They suggest that "environmental," or "green" studies, should "no longer be 'a field of its own,' but rather a thread shot through all domains of life" (83). It is clear that several facets of

early environmental ethics must shift for Cixous to join, and further alter, the eco-theoretical conversation. In Chapter 2, I consider the ways that Cixous's expansive and enduring work on "writing" helps eco-critical efforts to rethink the materiality/textuality dichotomy such that an interest in language does not indicate a disinterest in "the real." Cixous offers us a vital and original path beyond the dichotomization of text and world. Further expansions of what counts as eco-theory must occur for Cixous's theories of immanence and otherness, work I address in subsequent chapters, to be read ecologically. Ultimately, I make the case for Cixous as offering nothing less than an *onto/eco poethics of immanent otherness*, a metaphysics that not only pushes our conceptions of language, and stretches what qualifies as "environmental ethics," but transforms our very understanding of material reality and the attendant complexities of our ecological moment. In addition to conceiving a material ethics *within* the poetic entanglement of beings. Cixous challenges us to think ontology and ecology *together* in ways that re-imagine what it means to be a human being in the world.

Forays into Ecological Readings of Post-structuralism

One of the central aims of this dissertation, then, is to help expand, and to some extent redefine, what counts as ecological thinking. Such a reinvention is necessary for ecological readings of post-structuralism, French feminism and Cixous to be possible. Fortunately, this work is already underway. Several key thinkers developing new material and ecological readings of post-structuralist thought are effectively subverting the reading of post-structuralism as antithetical to environmental concerns – and without falling into the positivist trap. The following section will explore the contributions of six of these theorists. I will begin with the work that Vicki Kirby and Cary Wolfe are doing to expand Jacques Derrida's post-humanism. Derrida serves as an ideal starting point given his status as the poster boy for post-structuralism as immaterial. I will then

turn to Elizabeth Grosz and Claire Colebrook's work on Gilles Deleuze before moving to the final section of the literature review in which I outline how Mick Smith and Emily Anne Parker articulate the ecology of Luce Irigaray. These six thinkers are part of a small but growing cohort of scholars offering such readings of post-structuralism's biggest names. As noted above, in addition to Derrida, Deleuze and Irigaray, eco-theoretical readings of Foucault, Lévinas and Guattari are also emerging. However, I am particularly interested in Derrida, Deleuze and Irigaray because of their proximity to Cixous's work. The connections between Cixous and Derrida and Cixous and Irigaray are, of course, well established. Kirby and Wolfe help make the argument that an interest in deconstruction and language does not necessitate a rejection of reality or nature. Smith and Parker, in demonstrating the ecological relevancy of Irigaray, offer important counter-analyses to the material feminist critique of French post-structuralist feminism. In subsequent chapters, I will elaborate the less commonly made connection between Deleuze and Cixous in order to discuss Cixous's approach to writing, and her metaphysics of radical immanence. Analyses of Deleuzian ontology provided by Colebrook and Grosz will help open this discussion. The six eco-theorists are each exemplary of how to make post-structuralism speak ecologically. More specifically, all six, rather than simply highlighting an existing materiality or ecological dimension in their respective theorist, *extend*, *elaborate* and *reform* poststructuralist thought into more ecologically relevant terms. In my consideration of Cixous, and in a larger effort to expand what counts as ecological thought, these six thinkers provide ideal models.

Vicki Kirby and Derrida

Vicki Kirby's reading of Jacques Derrida, as articulated in *Quantum Anthropologies* (2011), provides an important materialist re-casting of Derridean deconstruction, one that suggests that

the full implications of his work for ecological thought have yet to be sufficiently explored. Kirby argues that the localizing of Derrida within the disciplines of cultural criticism, rhetoric and language studies is part of an effort to reduce the difficulties of deconstruction to an "identifying signature of a certain school of criticism rather than provocations for an urgent reassessment of how we comprehend reality" (2). For Kirby, the consideration of "language" in deconstruction is a metaphysical project, one not compatible with theories of representation that "interpret the self-referentiality of language as the constitutive self-enclosure of Culture" (3). She is clear that her approach is one that begins sympathetic to the cultural constructivist position, and post-structuralism, and thus her goal is not to "repudiate the importance and complexity of [their] arguments" (3), but to demonstrate how such "interventions and insights have far greater reach than has yet been considered" (3). It is from this perspective that Kirby seeks to reformulate "current understandings of 'language,'" in ways such that it "might be said to have scientific and quantum implications" (3). In other words, Kirby does not set her work up *in opposition* to post-structural criticism, but rather offers a materialist reading of the field that seeks to re-draw the limits of its meaning and expression. Indeed, Kirby's aim is to "interrupt the complacency with which we view 'language' in all its forms" (5).

Kirby notes Derrida's concern that a conflation of "textuality" or "language in the general sense" (12) with cultural systems of representation will produce "a new idealism of the text" (1981, 66).²³ Of course, as discussed above, this is precisely how his work has too often been read. To return again to the critiques, Derrida is said to argue that human consciousness cannot reach nature directly as it will always be perceiving its own *representational constructions* of nature; there is no *unmediated* access to the real. For neo-materialists and ecologists, this conception of the text promotes an alienated relationship between humans and more-than-human

nature, and therefore Derrida cannot help us to think ecologically. Kirby argues against such a reading of Derrida, and suggests that it is contingent on a narrow and immaterial understanding of what he means by language and "textuality"; "Derrida has made it abundantly clear that 'language in the general sense' exceeds its enclosure within linguistics and its conflation with representational systems as we might conventionally conceive them" (13). Instead, under Kirby's scrutiny, deconstruction is understood to be an ontological observation and argument that proposes existence, including life, as never complete meaning-making, as "language in the general sense," precisely because there is no transcendental "outside" that can definitively pin down an immanent "inside": "[T]he stretch of deconstructive 'textuality' concedes no external perspective, no outside position against which to identify or define what might be unique to the strange vitality of this organism, this articulate enclosure without limits" (12). It is the play of differences that enables meaning – a meaning always *deferred*; "differencing is 'language'...there is no outside this genetic involvement...this involvement is the grammatical textile in all its expressions" (8). Derrida's work on "the philosophical canon" endeavoured to reveal such messy co-imbrications, the secret alliances that lie beneath the surface of any closed structure of Truth. He focused on philosophical *texts* because these have been the locus of "Truth" in Western culture. But studying language in these instances does not mean that Derrida sees language as exclusive to humans. Indeed, Kirby is clear that deconstruction is relevant across disciplines, beyond literary and philosophical criticism.

For Derrida, deconstruction is neither a rigid method nor a meta-concept.²⁴ It is a metaphysical position. It is the naming of and attunement to immanence wherein meaning is revealed to be forever incomplete, undoing and collapsing, rebuilding and enfolding; deconstruction "must pursue and consolidate whatever...has always already begun to exceed the

logocentric enclosure" (Derrida 1981, qtd in Kirby, 6). This version of deconstruction stands in stark contrast to proposals that Derrida isolates human culture from an external reality; "By assuming that an absolute breach separates Culture, or the intricate structures of agency, information, and its interpretation, from something that preceded it, two autonomous domains are inferred" (14). On the contrary, deconstruction *opposes* such dualism, *does not* recognize a metaphysical bifurcation between "Man" and "world."

[Deconstruction] begins with the assumption that the difference between interpreter, the interpreting apparatus, as well as the difference between the object or concept under investigation, is compromised. Method cannot be an operational instrument of determination (making the causal decision about where to cut, where to delineate, where to merge) because the entire scene or system is actively involved in its own decipherment. According to deconstruction, differences are cut from the same cloth — they are all of a piece. This means that deconstructive methodology is a mired business.... (7-8)

Read this way, deconstruction becomes a metaphysical recognition of the unending openness of sense making, in all life (at least), and the violence endemic to any foreclosure of meaning. The hierarchical binary thought of the West is built on foreclosure: this ends here, this begins there; this bit is nature, that bit is culture. It's a closed system designed to construct meaning not only through the play of oppositions but also through the subjugation of one term to the other. Deconstruction, on the other hand, exposes this power struggle at the heart of Western metaphysics and reveals that such "differences are cut from the same cloth." Kirby elaborates the point:

by taking Derrida's notion of an "open system" to its logical conclusion, the senses of particularism – whether individual subjects, objects, words, methodologies, or even systems – lose their identifying outlines as entities or atomic individuations that communicate, or relate to each other, with causal effect. Instead they can be read as different expressions of the same phenomenon.

(viii)

It turns out that Derrida's statement that "there is no outside-text" doesn't mean that we can only know "culture"; rather, by Kirby's reading, it means there is only nature, or more accurately, that nature *is* cultural, openly and endlessly communicating with itself.

Rather than considering him the poster boy for linguistic exile, then, Kirby reads Derrida's deconstruction as having much to offer new materialisms and eco-theory. "Textuality" or "language in the general sense" ceases to belong exclusively to humans and expands under deconstruction to include a myriad of representational structures, such as neuronal cell communication in stingrays and the speech acts of lightening:

[W]hat remains ungraspable even as it enables the questions of "language" and "who writes this text?" to be posed is that the identity and relational purchase of Nature, Culture, and their corollaries, substance and interpretation, are all alive to the same initial conditions that inform the clairvoyance of cellular communication and lightening strokes. In other words, these seemingly separate entities are the *différent* expressions of a unified field, a "general text." (13)

Here, Kirby is speaking as much to the mis-readers of deconstruction as to her fellow post-structuralists, cautioning against the desire to assume "language belongs to Culture so entirely that its complexity is synonymous with it (15). Instead, Kirby's Derrida proposes an "ontology of

language – systems of becoming whose relational imbrications do not separate out into ideality plus substance" (9). In upending the texts/reality (culture/nature) binary beneath poor readings of deconstruction, Kirby aims also to collapse the science-humanities divide, as the study of "language in the general sense" is *de*-humanized, and Man is "dethroned as the origin of language and reader of the world" (18). Humans might be thought of as an expression of an evolutionary language, one that is *as* interpretive and *as* structured as any of the human languages it engenders. Such a shift in understanding allows us to "think through the question of language not as loss of the referent, Nature, the world, but as their playful affirmation" (20). Our encounter with the world, then, is not an encounter with human interpretations of alienated objects; "deconstruction need not assume that the object that emerges is simply an interpreted object, a discursive *effect*, a *cultural* product – as if the reality of its identity is the meaning bestowed by an individual or collective (human) subject" (6). In this sense, as we relinquish our fantasies that only humans have language and produce texts we gain back the world: "[T]he investment in the identity of the limit, a limit that separates human exceptionalism (with its cultural misrepresentations) from the substantive reality that it can't know and can't be, has prevented us from appreciating that our corporeal realities and their productive iterations *are* material reinventions. Life reads and rewrites itself..." (Kirby xi).

Cary Wolfe and Derrida

Cary Wolfe is a key figure in posthumanist readings of post-structuralism, and his engagement with Derrida is central to such efforts. Wolfe is particularly adept at demonstrating the persistent humanist prejudices of Western thought: "most of us remain humanists to the core, even as we claim for our work an epistemological break with humanism itself" (2003 1). In the introduction to *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (2003a),

Wolfe draws on Derrida to outline the "pervasiveness of the discourse of species" (6) that has helped to institutionalize speciesism in Western culture: the institutionalized discourse of speciesism "relies on the tacit agreement that the full transcendence of the 'human' requires the sacrifice of the 'animal' and the animalistic, which in turn makes possible a symbolic economy in which we can engage in what Derrida will call a 'noncriminal putting to death' of other *humans* as well as marking *them* as animal" (Wolfe 6). The question of the animal, then, is as much about non-human animals as it is the questioning of how we think about human subjectivity and relations among humans, how violent actions are sanctioned through the species divide. Wolfe uses Derrida in order to engage speciesism at the "intersection of 'figure' and 'institution,' the former oriented toward relatively mobile and ductile systems of language and signification, the latter toward highly specific modes and practices of materialization in the social sphere" (6). In this sense, speciesism is at once a cultural phenomenon and its material effects. For Wolfe, a consideration of meaning, signification and language *is* essential to understanding the conditions for the institutionalization and *material effects* of certain ideas; animal rites determine animal rights. Thinking about culture, then, is also thinking about the *material effects* of various cultural meanings.²⁵ Rather than pushing to *add* non-human animals to the category of "human," the typical move of animal *rights* theorists, Wolfe follows Derrida and takes a deconstructive approach aimed at revealing that "the 'human,' we now know, is not now, and never was, itself" (9).

For Wolfe, Derrida is essential to posthumanism, "because no contemporary theorist has carried out a more searching, if episodic, investigation of the question of the animal" (54). Though Wolfe acknowledges Derrida's claim to have consistently engaged with discourses of animality throughout his career, he suggests that this interest intensifies in Derrida's later work,

particularly in the essay "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)." ²⁶ In Chapter 2 of *Animal Rites*, "In the Shadow of Wittgenstein's Lion," Wolfe draws on Derrida's essay to consider "the question of language in relation to the difference between human and animal" (10). In the essay, Derrida identifies twenty of his texts that engage the question of the animal, most notably in his reading of Heidegger and the figure of "the hand" (63). Derrida diagnoses a pernicious humanism in Heidegger's statement that apes "have organs that can grasp, but they have no hand" (63). For Heidegger, Derrida explains, this means that animals do not have language and therefore cannot transform the mere mechanical grasping into a *gesture* that can be *thought*. Heidegger draws a deep species boundary between *Dasein*, the (clearly human) being that asks the question of the meaning of being *as such*, via language, and animality *in general*. Or, as Wolfe says, drawing on the work of biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1992), only humans are capable of meta-cognition, of a language that thinks *about* thinking. But it is the idea of "animality in general" that makes Derrida particularly unhappy, for such a generalization, Wolfe explains, sits at the heart of *carnophallologocentrism* in the Western philosophical tradition:

[T]he Word, *logos*, does violence to the heterogeneous multiplicity of the living world by reconstituting it under the sign of identity, the *as such* and *in general* – not "animals" but "*the* animal." And as such, it enacts what Derrida calls the "sacrificial structure" that opens a space for the "noncriminal putting to death" of the animal – a sacrifice that (so the story of Western philosophy goes) allows the transcendence of the human, of what Heidegger calls "spirit," by the killing off and disavowal of the animal, the bodily, the materially heterogeneous, the contingent – in short, of *différance*. (66)

The construction of such ontological difference, as discussed above, is essential to the violent logic of binary thought, which for Derrida operates through a sacrificial economy that need not recognize the trace of the other in the self. "Derrida's insistence on the fundamentally ahuman character of language, on its erosion by its other, by *all its others*" (92), unravels the transcendental mechanism of Western metaphysics that denies such othering as violence. Derrida challenges Heidegger and others not by saying that animals *have* language (a move similar to the one made by Singer and others that aims to include animals in *human* rights, 69), but by emptying language of its graspability. In other words, Derrida moves, as expected, toward *différance*, toward questioning whether any species, including humans, can ever *possess* language without trace.

Rather than an additive approach modeled on a liberal humanist rights discourse – just add animals – Derrida takes a post-structuralist position and deconstructs the position of privilege that presumes language to be something humans *alone* "have." The argument is not, then, that animals can *have* language, *just like* humans, but rather that language, and the idea of "humanity" that it has historically upheld, is *always already* beyond our grasp. "But if one reinscribes language in a network of possibilities that do not merely encompass it but mark it irreducibly from the inside, everything changes. I am thinking in particular of the mark in general, of the trace, of iterability, of *différance*. These possibilities or necessities, without which there would be no language, *are themselves not only human*" (Derrida, qtd in Wolfe 73). For Wolfe, Derrida's understanding of language as more-than-human changes the conversation from one that asks "the question the animal" while assuming the ontological soundness of the human to one where the "question of the animal" asks that we re-imagine what is meant by "human." He restates this point in his introduction to *Zoontologies: the Question of the Animal* (2003b):

One can take the traditional equation of subjectivity and language at its word and then question the claim that only the human possesses language (which many contemporary language studies with animals seem to do more and more convincingly), which in turn reopens the entire problem of ethical obligation, but in more or less traditional terms. Or, rather than extending the ability of "linguaging" outward, beyond the human sphere, one can instead move in the opposite direction and erode the notion of language from the inside out to show that if animals never quite possessed it, neither do we, with the result that language, rather than simplifying the question of ethics by securing the boundary between the human and the rest of creation, instead now reopens it – permanently, as it were - by embedding us in a world to which the human *is subject*. This, of course, is Derrida's strategy.... (Wolfe 2003 xvii)

If, as Derrida suggests, we "humans" don't possess language after all, then the entire onto-epistemological, and thus ethical, scene of Western metaphysics dissolves.

Elizabeth Grosz and Deleuze

In *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflection of Life, Politics, and Art* (2011), Grosz traces an alternative philosophical trajectory, which she labels "the philosophy of life, the philosophy of biology, the philosophy of nature" (60). "Initiated to some extent by the pre-Socratics and developed in the writings of Spinoza," the philosophies of life, biology and nature are "fully elaborated primarily in the nineteenth century through the texts of Darwin, Nietzsche, and Bergson" (60). This trajectory connects to and overlaps with what Grosz calls the "trajectory of becoming," which includes Foucault, Derrida, Irigaray, Deleuze and Guattari. In mapping these trajectories *as* overlapping, Grosz makes an essential contribution to efforts to re-read certain

"post-structuralist" thinkers as materially and ecologically relevant, to rescue them from their perceived adherence to the semiotic over the material. In *Becoming Undone*, along with *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (2005), Grosz offers a reading of Darwin cast in the light of Deleuzian ontology.²⁷ Such a reading, Grosz contends, offers a new answer to the question of the meaning of being by radically altering our understanding of life, and putting into question all the ontological assumptions of Western thought. And if the surface beneath us is revealed anew then everything we've built on top of it needs rethinking as well.

Grosz puts Deleuzian ontology into direct conversation with Darwin through the idea of *difference* is an ontological category, rather than an exclusively ethical and political one. In this way, Grosz reveals a new Darwin, re-conceptualized by Deleuzian notions of differencing and becoming. Such a Darwin reveals that life moves both from and toward differentiation, variation and diversity. Life is possible not because of balance or hierarchy, ideas captured in terms such as the "circle of life" and the "food chain," but because of mutation, or what Grosz calls "ceaseless becoming" (2005 36). Deleuze's own ontology of difference and becoming arrives by way of Nietzsche and Bergson, both of whom engage directly with Darwin's theories.²⁸ In *Time Travels*, Grosz elaborates this ontology of difference and becoming wherein it is "*difference* that constitutes things, including subjects, and that structures the relations between things. Things undergo becomings, which transform them in ways which are unpredictable and irreversible. These becomings are the testament to the differences that constitute whatever identity things – including subjects, living beings – might have" (2). Differentiation, Grosz concludes from the Darwin-Deleuze assemblage, is revealed to be the engine of emergent life: "life as the ever more complex elaboration of difference" (2011 3). Difference, in other words, is not socially constructed from an ontology of sameness and stability, rather, it is *natural*. Elaborating this

relationship between difference and becoming, Grosz explains that for Darwin "difference generates further difference because difference makes inherent the force of duration (becoming and unbecoming) in all things, in all acts of differentiation, and in all things thus differentiated" (47). Time, or duration, is revealed to be essential in this process, rendering differences not static but always in flux, always seeking, always becoming *differently* different.²⁹

Darwin offers nothing less than a new conception of life, translated by Grosz into Deleuzian terms as "the ongoing tendency to actualize the virtual, to make tendencies and potentialities real, to explore organs and activities so as to facilitate and maximize the actions they make possible" (20). Grosz clarifies the implications of such a reconceptualization on the fundamental concepts of Western metaphysics:

Life, in Darwin's writings, is transformed from a static quality into a dynamic process, being is transformed into becoming, essence is transformed into existence, the past and the present are superseded and overwritten by the future. In Darwin's writings, life becomes definitively linked to the movement of time and the force of the unpredictable, even random, future. Life is this very openness to the dynamism of time, an active response to time's provocation to endure. In short, life is now construed, perhaps for the first time, as fundamental becoming, becoming without the definitive features of (Aristotelian) being, without a given (Platonic) form, without human direction or divine purpose...Life is no longer a unique quality, an essence, but a movement. (36-37)

This Deleuzian reading of Darwin radicalizes biology by demonstrating that life is not the *preservation* of sameness, of fixed traits passed identically down to subsequent generations, but is instead the generation of "endless variation, endless openness to the accidental, the random the

unexpected. Life is that which opportunistically, in an ad hoc fashion, utilizes the contingencies of the material world to endure and extend itself, to evolve into something other than itself" (37). Contrary to the fundamental principles of Enlightenment thought, life is not teleological, its rationality or logic is contingent and contextual, not transcendental, and human subjects *as life*, are embodied, embedded and entangled in this fabric, forever "becoming undone." In Deleuze's own words, "there is no being beyond becoming" (1983, 22).

Following this new conception of life, Grosz argues that Darwin, as much as Nietzsche, disturbs the classic culture/nature binary that founds, as discussed above, a Western metaphysics of transcendence (49). Darwin reveals that "the natural is not the inert, passive, unchanging element against which culture elaborates itself" (2005 47), a conception essential to the story of modernity in which human history moves across a mechanical backdrop. Instead, Darwin gives us nature as "that which enables and actively facilitates cultural variation and change, indeed that which ensures that the cultural, including its subject-agents, are never self-identical, that they differ from themselves and necessarily change over time" (47). In other words, the variety and fecundity of life is driven by *nature*, and not culture. Grosz takes this point further still, drawing on Bergson in the process, and suggests that we think of nature as *more* fecund than culture, not the other way around:

If biological evolution is the generation of an immensely productive machinery for the creation of maximal difference...then culture rather than nature is what impoverishes nature's capacity for self-variation and becoming, by tying the natural to what culture can render controllable and what it sees as desirable. Perhaps Bergson, following Darwin, is right to claim that our human activities diminish rather than augment the effects of the natural world in order that we can

discriminate its features and highlight only those that interest us. Culture is not the magnification of nature and its animation through human effort, but the selection of only some elements or facets of the natural, and the casting of the rest of it into shadow, a kind of diminution of the complexity and openness of the natural order.

(48)

Grosz connects this idea of nature as *more* complex than culture to Deleuze's notion of an Outside. The Outside, Grosz explains, is a world of forces, indistinguishably natural and cultural, which act on objects, systems, and organisms, guaranteeing their unraveling. The Outside is Deleuze's ontological term for the engine of change that drives existence, propelling all things *otherwise*. For Deleuze, existence is comprised of assemblages rather than stable self-same identities. Nothing ever remains itself because of the Outside forces that are both the possibility of all Form and subjectification, as well as its impermanence. The Outside is the guarantor of change:

The outside is the (successful or victorious) series of forces that impinge on structures, plans, expectations of the living: this outside appears to us in the form of events, natural and social, and events generate for us the problems that our inventiveness, above all our culture's ingenuity, attempts to address or resolve....

This outside, composed of competing forces, forces in the process of their composition, can be called by a number of different names: nature, time, events. It is the force of this outside that incites culture, that at a particular historical moment induces subjectivity, and that ensures that they endlessly transform themselves. (49)

Nature, for Grosz's Deleuze, is synonymous with the Outside: "the dynamic force of self-differentiation or emergence" (49). Nature conceived "as evolving, as alive, as subject to upheaval and transformation," nature as "unpredictable and open-ended, as a form of perpetual becoming," replaces nature as "passive, inert, unchanging, ahistorical" (49). With this Deleuzian reading, Grosz demonstrates that the Darwinian revolution not only transforms scientific assumptions about nature as predictive and rational, but also those presuppositions more common to the social sciences and humanities that take nature to be passive and irrelevant to culture.³⁰

If Darwin uncovers a new science of life as "ceaseless change," and Deleuze helps to interpret this science into a new metaphysics of differentiation and becoming, *Grosz* articulates the implications of this work across disciplinary boundaries: "Darwin's gift to the humanities and social science, a concept of life as dynamic, collective, change" (2005 36). Her work announces that understanding life *as change* means rethinking everything we thought we understood about knowledge, ethics, politics and aesthetics. Grosz reminds the natural sciences that Darwin saved them from a model of nature that is predictive and easily knowable, and she impels theorists in the social sciences and humanities to celebrate the discoveries of a Deleuzified Darwin that entangle nature within the social and the cultural: "The confrontation between endless, accidental variation and the more or less relentless and uncontrollable forces of natural selection is a machinery that explains the remarkable inventiveness of biological existence, and the endless generation of new species, each of which is adapted in its own ways to the necessities of survival its position in the world entails" (2005 38). Nature *is* the creative evolution toward futures unknown. Far from being "mired in the linguistic," then, Grosz's Deleuze helps to reveal the far-reaching philosophical implications of Darwinian nature.

Colebrook and Deleuze

Claire Colebrook, central contributor to the "blossoming of Deleuze-inspired scholarship" (Gottbreh 1170) of the last decade, has been a tireless translator of Deleuze for feminist, new materialist and eco-philosophical readers. Texts such as *Deleuze and Feminist Theory* (co-published with Ian Buchanan, 2000), *Gilles Deleuze* (2001), *Understanding Deleuze* (2003), *Deleuze: A Guide for the Perplexed* (2006), and the text that will figure prominently below, *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life* (2011), as well as numerous articles, comprise her substantial contribution to Deleuze Studies. In *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life*, Colebrook elaborates Deleuze's contribution to a new vitalist tradition development in step with new materialism. Neo-vitalism, though notably different than traditional vitalism which saw life animated by other-worldly forces, is a movement away from notions of matter and life as mechanistic used to uphold human exceptionalism.³¹ Neo-vitalists seek to re-animate non-human life and matter, to grant agency beyond the human.³² In turning to Deleuze's vitalism, Colebrook helps to articulate the posthumanism of his philosophy. She builds on readings of Deleuze that use his ideas "as a way of tying theory and philosophy back to living systems and as a way of finally taking thought beyond the borders of the organism" (3). Colebrook finds in Deleuze one of the strongest articulations of subjectivity and consciousness *before* the human or more-than-human organism. Colebrook's Deleuze, therefore, is essential to efforts to not only decenter Man from Nature, but to place man within (a very differently conceived) nature.

For Colebrook, "Deleuze draws on a vitalist tradition that puts sense before and beyond meaning, and before and beyond the organism" (3). Colebrook defines "organism" as "a system of relatively stable relations" (3), a "bordered structure of actions in relation to possible perturbances" (4). For Deleuze, "organisms are possible because they actualize or incarnate

sense, and sense is a pure potentiality" (4). Any actualization of materiality into event or organism — a particular structuring of matter and forces — is possible because there is the potentiality for such manifestations: "[F]or Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari, one cannot begin from the bounded organism and then consider the sense that it makes of its world; such a point of view begins from a constituted body and does not explain how that body emerges from a potentiality for orientation—a sense—that enables both bodies and meaning systems" (94). For Deleuze and Guattari, there is no bounded organism, human or otherwise, present *before* a field of sense making. Sense exists immanently, in the world, as "the potentiality for orientation." Sense, therefore, is not exclusive to human systems of meaning; it is ontological. And from this perspective, theirs is "a wilder vitalism that considers life beyond the membrane of the organism" (3). Sense *precedes* its organization, including its organization in the human.

The concept of "the virtual," Colebrook explains, is key to understanding sense-making in Deleuze and Guattari's vitalist ontology. Prior to the organism and its meaning making there is the virtual potential for the organism and meaning-making. Unlike Platonist or Christian notions of pre-figuration or *a priori* essences that determine *form*, Deleuze and Guattari's virtuality is *material* and *immanent* and without organization. With no pre-determined forms, once anything is actualized, it simultaneously represents that which has been generated and all that remains unactualized, all that remains *virtual*. This idea helps to connect virtuality to vitalism, in that the virtual is generative; indeed, the virtual, unlike the Platonic forms or Cartesian dualism, is very worldly. The virtual does not exist outside of existence. The virtual refers to all *real* potentialities not actualized, *not* generated, *not* animated. "This is in accord with passive vitalism: every idea, figure, proper name or event is strangely doubled, at once evidence of an expression of life and yet, in its very formation, also a path taken (an actualization) at the expense of other potentials"

(8).³³ And on this point we arrive at Colebrook's central argument that "passive vitalism," as conceived by Deleuze and Guattari, "presents us with a new way of approaching what it is to think" (7). The same forces that generate life also contain the potential to operate in contrast to any original aim. Passive vitalism posits that for every affirmative movement in a particular direction that life takes there is the simultaneous eruption of all other possible movements not taken. Life, which includes thought, does not *only* move toward ever greater coherence. Passive vitalism recognizes "the power of thought's self-fracturing" (8). Life is not the movement toward an ultimate synthesis, the collapsing of life's others into perfect fusion. We might say that life, including thought, undoes itself each time it makes itself. To relate the idea back to sense, we would describe the relationship between life and sense as virtual but nonetheless real.

If the vitalism that Colebrook is interested in begins with the recognition that all systems, originate in animating life, even if they come to ignore or dismiss this fact, passive vitalism affirms the otherness of such animation as an otherness that is not a by-product or pesky remainder. In this way, passive vitalism contradicts the teleological orientation of Western metaphysics, one repeated within *active* vitalism, that sees cohesion as the force of life. Passive vitalism, on the other hand, helps us address "life's capacity *not* to flourish, not to maximize its potential" (1). This consideration of life's capacity to turn against itself often moves into what Colebrook refers to as a regressive assumption, connected to the idea that man is alienated from nature, that there exists a primary fecundity which modern developments and technologies risk. Active vitalism looks to *reconnect* us to an originary exuberance. Passive vitalism has a different response to the question: how is it that humans create ideas — ideas that are *made possible by animating forces* — that then turn back against such vitalist forces? In other words, why does life produce "deadening structures that [preclude] us from feeling life in its complex intensity" (2)?

Colebrook argues that for Deleuze, following Nietzsche, this self-annihilating potential is part of life itself. It is the fracturing of life, its difference and otherness; "While accepting that all positions, figures and forms must have emerged from life, passive vitalism also confronts a malevolence, stupidity, self-mutilation and opacity that thought can never incorporate or master" (7). For the passive vitalist, Colebrook explains, this differing, this othering is the condition of creation and creativity, not its alienation.

The passive vitalism of Deleuze recognizes life's capacity, be it through human consciousness or otherwise, to conceive of itself in coherent arrangements at the same time that it deterritorializes such organizations; "a potentiality only discloses its most profound power when it encounters a counter-tendency of perversion, corruption, dissimulation and non-actualization" (12). Life, for the passive vitalist, gains strength as much from othering and divergent forces as from coherent, holistic and balancing forces:

[L]ife, precisely insofar as it is organic and embodied, possesses a tendency towards disorganization (becoming a body without organs) and dis-embodiment (become a virtual power liberated from any body whatever). That is to say, life has a power of creativity as organization that relies essentially on disorder and death. That power is revealed at those moments when life appears to be countered by an opposing and life-denying opposite: technology, capitalism, quantification.

(12)

Passive vitalism, then, suggests that life itself is life-denying, in the sense of being self-destructive and deterritorializing. But it is this capacity that is also the condition of its malleability and transformability. What appears as a destructive capacity in one context could be lifesaving in another. Colebrook uses the example of the human eye: "The organic eye of the

sensory motor apparatus can only proceed and be efficient with a high degree of not seeing, both in terms of editing out input and of fabricating or fabricating what is not perceived" (14). Seeing is also not-seeing. Creation is also destruction. There is the self-maintenance of active vitalism, but there is also dissolution and self-annihilation happening simultaneously. There is no maintenance without potential dissolution; this is the passive vitalist argument.

The transcendental capacities of the human, as conceived within the metaphysics of modernity, place the human mind outside of materiality in order to guarantee its absolute knowledge of things in-themselves. Active vitalists in the face of human alienation from life and nature remind the human of his vital and organic origins, but often while retaining a sense of coherence that can only be secured through a transcendental maneuver; "the human is the primary delusion of transcendence, the grounding substance that gives the illusion of a being that subtends becoming" (Colebrook 2011, 60). The active vitalist risks calling for a return to an original state of unity, coherence and symbiosis with life, as though life didn't itself produce the "alienated-from-life" human. Deleuze's passive vitalism, on the contrary, recognizes that any organization constructed from the virtual sense capacity of materiality, including the organization we call "human," is a particular formulation of life inseparable from its otherness. In this move, the human subject is returned to nature and is understood as immanent to a vibrant, animate world, a world filled with virtual sense potential that exceeds its manifestation in any particular human being. In other words, as Colebrook explains, Deleuze saves us from the alienation of transcendence which deadens the world so that man can guarantee his own absolute knowledge of it. And in place of this alienation we get to *return* to life –a sense making/unmaking force that is always more and less than we think it to be (26).

Emily Anne Parker and Irigaray

This idea of an otherness that is not seen as an unfortunate by-product, or a pesky remainder, an otherness that precedes *organization* for Deleuze, offers an ideal segue to materialist and ecological readings of Luce Irigaray. Guided by Emily Anne Parker and Mick Smith, we turn to Irigaray as the third major post-structuralist thinker whose work is helping to transform neo-materialism and ecotheory. Similar to Deleuze, one of the central concerns of Irigaray's work is to philosophize difference out of its position in Western metaphysics as deficiency. Irigaray wants to challenge historical conceptions of difference as the vexatious remainders of an otherwise absolute structure; difference as the necessary Other, subjugated in order to affirm the One, the Ideal. Irigaray maps hegemonic sexual difference onto this dynamic as both constitutive and a consequence of the asymmetrical, dichotomous binaries that subtend Western metaphysics, while at the same time she offers an ethics of *irreducible* sexual difference as the condition of life itself. In Parker's articulation, "Irigaray insists on sexuate difference as a way of appreciating an elemental belonging" (2015 89).³⁴

Where liberal feminism sought to de-emphasize or conceal sexual particularities in order to build a politics of gender "sameness" or neutrality, Irigaray's post-structuralist feminism pursues sexual difference as the opening onto crucial metaphysical, ethical and, for Parker, *ecological* questions: "Irigaray's philosophy of sexuate difference has always been an ecological-political insistence that there is no such thing as a neutral body." Irigaray's commitment to said questions takes her to Western conceptions of materiality as she maps sexual difference onto Enlightenment articulations of Rational Man as the master of woman/matter/nature. The modernist, Enlightenment project aimed to retain the divine transcendental of Christian theology by way of European Man's rational mind. Following

Descartes and Kant, rational consciousness was conceived as capable of transcending immanent materiality to guarantee absolute knowledge. Irigaray's work seeks to demonstrate the ways that this dynamic is gendered, whereby the mind capable of transcendental thought is masculinized, and the materiality transcended is feminized. "Woman" is body, matter, and unformed materiality to "Man's" mind, substance and form. "Woman" cannot access "Form", "Essence" or "Truth" because of her insistent materiality; she cannot overcome materiality to reach a transcendental outside; she cannot transcend her embodied embeddedness; hers is an "anatomic destiny" (Irigaray 1993 100). Thus, "Truth," for "Woman" is out of reach, precisely because she is too material. Irigaray, in contrast, performing a Nietzschean gesture, upends this logic. An ethics of sexuate difference begins not with the affirmation of "woman" as her own transcendental category, but with elemental difference *preceding* essence. Thinking "woman" outside of Western metaphysics means thinking beyond One, means thinking always at least two, which opens into a heterogeneous, transversal ecology, one requiring a much *different* ethics. Elemental difference, Parker offers, can therefore be understood as a "philosophical paradigm for thinking the political and the ecological together" (98). Indeed, for Irigaray, the ecological *is* already political precisely because it is always already at least two, already relational; "[t]hat these feel like and often are two separate discourses – ecology and politics – is an indication of the problem" (98).

An ethics of sexual difference is understood as an ethics of elemental difference because it "begins not in an overview that reveals a spectrum or a multifarious group as seen from above; it begins in the specificity of one's own body/matter which resists conceptualization and categorization" (92). Sexuate difference, therefore, doesn't have to mean an affirmation of *only* two, of sexual dimorphism, but the opening unto *at least two*. In other words, recognizing the queerness of one's own body/matter, of its singularity that is at once uniquely itself and

insistently other than itself, is incompatible with a metaphysics of transcendence that aims to organize, categorize and identify "from above." "To seek an alternative philosophy of relation to that of phallogocentrism's obviation...is to live differently with the other as well as with the other within 'me.' My own body is (not) the (only) elemental life that the ethics of elemental difference attempts to understand as mutually belonging to the other" (93). And if "we" are elementally *different* in irreducible ways then "we" are always exceeding and escaping categorization, which is antithetical to a modernist onto-epistemology, for no ecological hierarchy is possible without such "outside" guarantees. In this way, Parker argues, undoing dimorphic difference as the transcendental reduction of two into one, is equally relevant to thinking ecology, and "how elemental differences of all sorts might thrive," as "unapologetically variant bodies" (90). In this way, sexual difference is "understood as a term for the incalculable non-procreative alterity of bodies, without dimorphism" (91); "to care about difference is to care about life itself...this difference has always eluded in activity and in understanding the philosopher of the One" (93).

It is clear, then, that the difference of sexual difference, for Irigaray, is not a difference by degree but a qualitative difference. It is difference *for itself*, not difference *from* a set standard. Difference from and difference by degree are transcendental concepts that measure value according to a system that pre-exists particularities. Transcendental difference requires a transcendental "Ideal" from which things can differ. The legitimacy of the Ideal, and thus the verification of the differing from said ideal, must be affirmed outside the structure itself, otherwise what is said to be ideal is in fact contingent and variable. Because there is no transcendental outside there is no transcendental difference, only immanent difference, which is irreducible and always moving. For Irigaray, we should be clear, these are ontological claims: being must be understood as irreducibly (sexually) different and as a material becoming, each

engendering the other. A subjectivity that understands ontology as material difference is one that lives outside itself, and lives itself outside, and for Irigaray, such a recognition begins with a meditation of our own bodily differencing, our own elemental difference. It is from here that we move toward an ecological ethics. In "Cultivating a Living Belonging" (2015b), Parker interviews Irigaray with such connections in mind. In Irigaray's words:

If we are conscious and we respect the specificity of our sexuation, we cannot either conceive or reduce the entire world to ourselves because our own world represents only a part of the world. In this sense, sexuation is the first biodiversity to be taken into account, and this will allow us to respect all the other diversities without identifying ourselves with them, a thing which amounts to a sort of appropriation disrespectful to their specificity, their difference. (110)

Parker joins neo-materialists Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz and Astrida Neimanis in reading Irigaray's sexual dimorphism as an ontology of becoming, one that challenges Western conceptions of nature as static and culture as progressive. Read within a post-Darwinian framework in which nature is perpetually changing without transcendental purpose, Irigaray's turn to the elemental, the visceral, and the material ceases to be a turn toward essence or immutability and becomes an affirmation of difference. It is in this way that the disruption of Western metaphysics, essential to a new ecology, cannot be dissociated from a re-imagining of sexuate difference.

Mick Smith and Irigaray

Mick Smith returns us to the specific question of *ethics* in Irigaray's work and draws connections between her ethics of sexual difference and an environmental ethics of place. In his text *An Ethics of Place: Radical Ecology, Postmodernity, and Social Theory* (2001), Smith aims to move

environmental thought away from environmentalism as nostalgia for lost utopias of ecological dwelling, or environmental ethics as the incorporation of the more-than-human into liberalist rights paradigms through "axiological extensionism" (2001 15). As noted above, environmental philosophy developed in North America in the 1970s as a subset of applied ethics built on a positivist scientific tradition (Frodeman 2008). Within this paradigm, science provided the truth of nature and environmental problems, leaving ethicists to work out Man's obligations and responsibilities to his habitat. Postmodern theory, as elaborated above, has often been considered too deconstructive to be useful for real world environmental problems. Smith, perhaps because of his deep ecology roots, takes a different view. Recalling Lyotard, Smith recognizes postmodernity as the *crisis* of modernity (2001 12). Postmodernity doesn't take apart what is finely put together; it responds to the aporias and fissures built into the structure itself when they can no longer be hidden. And in doing so, Smith argues that postmodernity "offers much needed insights into the 'dark heart' that often lies concealed beneath modernity's superficial civility" (2001 13). Rather than plunging us into nihilism or resentment, an orientation from which little can be constructed, Smith recognizes postmodernity as a continuation of the insistent self-reflection of modernity itself: "Modernity has been marked by what amounts to an obsession with self-understanding" (13). As such, the environmental ethics that interests Smith draws on both modernity and postmodernity for its conceptualization, and refuses nostalgia, positivism and liberal individualism in the process.

Post-structuralism, under this reading, is newly useful to North American ethicists yearning for a comprehensive and *radical* critique of Western society as a whole. Smith arrives at post-modernism by way of radical ecology with precisely such commitments in view. For

Smith, environmental ethics requires a radical reappraisal of contemporary life; it is not sufficient to extend liberal humanist ethics to more-than-human concerns:

Radical ecology is an ethical and political protest against [the] seemingly irresistible hurricane of destruction, a protest against a mode of existence that has been largely insensitive to the environmental devastation "progress" has left in its wake. It is a protest that recognizes that the problems of deforestation, ozone depletion, urban smog, loss of biodiversity, and climate change, cannot be treated in isolation. They stem from, and are entwined with, our modern forms of life. For this reason the critique of environmental destruction necessarily becomes a critique of contemporary society. (3)

Here, Smith elucidates the affinity between radical environmentalism and post-modernism/post-structuralism in identifying the role of meta-structure – be it (Neo)Platonic metaphysics, instrumental rationalism, or (neo)liberal capitalism — in producing social and ecological injustice.

It is perhaps partly on account of this emphasis on an encompassing social critique, alongside his receptivity to both modernist and postmodernist thought, that Smith sees value in feminist social theory generally and Irigaray in particular for environmental ethics. From the outset, Smith recognizes the potential in Irigaray's "ethics of sexual difference" to "also illuminate our ethical relations to natural 'others'" (21). I would argue that Smith is also attracted to Irigaray's approach to ethics as a "way of being" rather than a set of precepts. In his words, "*a modus vivendi*...requires a learning to *be* and *let be* in natural places...[R]ather than looking for an abstract formula to encapsulate the morality of environmentalism, we should understand it as the internalization of an environmental ethos and the externalization of an embodied ecological

habitus" (21). For Smith, environmental ethics requires a new metaphysics. Irigaray develops a feminism that, much like environmental ethics for Smith, requires more than axiological extensionism, more than granting women access to some of the privileges of heteropatriarchy. While liberal feminism has had great success enabling white women within heteropatriarchal, white supremacist capitalism, relative to their privilege, it has done so within a metaphysics of identity and sameness that, as discussed above, maintains difference as deficiency. For Irigaray, so long as we are operating within a model that reads difference as deficiency, we remain tethered to a logic of violence. Sexual dichotomization, in her view, is the inaugural "othering" move of a Western metaphysics designed around the legitimization of arbitrary authority and violence. Irigaray, too, posed the problem of sexual difference as metaphysical.³⁵

Irigaray's ethics of sexual difference, Smith argues, when understood as a metaphysics rather than a rationalized system of rights, requires that Western culture radically rethink Being. Smith draws on Irigaray to conceive ethics as a metaphysical orientation, a way of being, rather than a set of rules to follow. Ontology, dwelling, space and place become the terms of ethics rather than rights, tenets, and statutes. Instrumental rationality, Smith explains, is built on autonomous individuality and clearly defined concepts that "cut the world 'into pieces whose equality or difference we shall be able to evaluate, compare, reproduce' (Irigaray, 1985: 112); they are the tools that allow humanity to grasp, take hold of, and hammer the world into shape," redefining the modern world "as a resource, a fixed and inert warehouse of materials awaiting manipulation (Smith 170). Within this model of instrumental rationality and autonomous subjectivity materiality becomes obstructive — a problem to be sorted — with its unbounded leakiness and relentless miscegenation. And humanist subjectivity loathes blurred lines; "the analysands of the modern social world are concrete and insoluble individuals each on their own

disparate trajectories, each with *particular* identities derived from their ownership of certain essential, quantifiable, and infeasible properties" (171). These subjects reject a "relational conception of ethics and the self that is sensitive to the vagaries and difference of sex and place" (173-174). What Smith demonstrates is that Irigaray's conception of ethics as "an asymmetrical and nonreciprocal relation of excess," "a relation that lets things *be*, conserving and sustaining them in love and/or difference" (184) is a radical reformulation of Western metaphysics within which the otherness of the Other, be it human or more-than-human, ceases to be a threat, and becomes a source of desire and wonder (Smith 184). It is Irigaray's shifting of ethics from an axiological system to ethics as a way of being, a dwelling, and an orientation to otherness, that Smith finds essential to a persuasive ecological thought.

Conclusion

The positivist influence on environmental thought delayed and slowed the Continental turn in environmental ethics. Surrendering the positivist project to get to "the *real* real" not only allows post-structuralism to speak to our ecological condition, but Cixous as well. As the above thinkers demonstrate, far from damaging to the ecological turn, we have much to gain from post-structuralism for new and renewed materialism and environmental thought. The work of these six theorists, part of a small but growing cohort, holding a variety of disciplinary alliances, represent efforts to make post-structuralism speak beyond the "linguistic turn." Rather than giving into the temptation of positivism or representative realism in the face of ecological uncertainty, post-structuralism can help us to think the political and the ecological simultaneously. Cixous represents a unique contribution to these efforts, one that attracts many earthly others in ways that other thinkers perhaps, as Haraway suggests, do not.³⁶ To consider

Cixous, as the subsequent chapters will show, requires an openness to new languages of ecology, new conceptions of our ecological moment, and ultimately, the creation of a new metaphysics.

The Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable. It is still unexplored only because we've been made to believe that it was too dark to be explorable. And because they want to make us believe that what interests us is the white continent, with its monuments to Lack. And we believed. They riveted us between two horrifying myths: between the Medusa and the abyss. (Cixous 1976, 884-885)

...But we are in no way obliged to deposit our lives in their banks of lack. (884)

the new history is coming; it's not a dream, though it does extend beyond man's imagination, and for good reason. It's going to deprive them of their conceptual orthopedics, beginning with the destruction of their enticement machine. (883)

Chapter 2: *The Écriture Naturelle of Hélène Cixous*

"I want to write *before*, at the time still in fusion before the cooled off time of the narrative. When we feel and there is not yet a name for it" (Cixous 1998, 141).

"I have never understood people who pretend that writing is not absolutely indissociable from a living and complete body" (Cixous 1997, 64).

"My writing watches. Eyes closed" (Cixous 1991b, 3).

In the following Chapter, I offer a first pass at reading Cixous ecologically, beginning with familiar territory: writing. My initial interest in the chapter is to recognize Cixous's disciplinary placement within literary theory while troubling the idea that such an envelope sufficiently contains her conceptions of "writing." While Cixous, over the course of her writing life, has continually engaged with meta-analysis on writing, her understanding of what counts as writing and what writing can do is highly enigmatic. But more than simply highlighting the ways that Cixous takes us closer to metaphysical inquiry than technical craft, I aim to demonstrate how Cixousian "writing" can be read ecologically, in new materialist terms, as embodied, embedded, and elemental. Further to this end, I explore Cixous's extensive use of homophonic "proetry" to accentuate the difference between sonic and graphic registers of signification and emphasize the inescapability of corporeality in meaning making and deciphering. Cixous's long-standing exploration of the body-in-writing/writing-the-body helps to dispel the fiction of "pure textuality," and the attendant mis-readings of post-structuralism. In turning to eco-poetical theory, I outline how, for Cixous, poetic writing is the principal avenue to uncovering truth as it lives in-the-world: seething, moving, breathing. Rather than "writing" as a closed human system of representation that "gets" the world/nature absolutely right or perfectly wrong, Cixous offers a

poetic writing more closely aligned with eco-theorists Don McKay and Catriona Sandilands, a poetic writing that can encounter wilderness/otherness without domesticating it into identity, representation and sameness.

A cursory consideration of Cixous might lead one to conclude that she is exclusively concerned with writing. From her conception of *écriture féminine* in the 1970s, the Welles Library Lectures *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* (1990), through to many of her best known works, such as *Coming to Writing and Other Essays* (1991), *Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing* (1997), and *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (1998), Cixous demonstrates a deep and abiding interest in writing. As Susan Rubin Suleiman offers in the introduction to *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, "What does H.C. stubbornly cling to?... the relations between writing, exile, foreignness, loss, and death...the relations between writing, giving, nourishment, love, and life" (1991, viii). From Suleiman's description alone, however, we can see that Cixous's understanding of "writing" is quite expansive, and that she moves far away from normative conceptions of writing as a technical aptitude or aesthetic exercise. Instead, as I will outline in the following chapter, Cixous imagines writing as a metaphysical practice that engages and usurps traditional categories of ontology, epistemology, ethics and aesthetics. Cixousian "writing" is a mode of being-dwelling-thinking-encountering, rather than a system of human bound representation. Cixous's poetic writing, as she often describes it, is therefore better understood in new materialist terms as a mode of being-responding that is inescapably relational and material. Poetic writing, for her, is at once an articulation of our embedded, entangled reality, a seeking of immanent truth, and a movement toward more ethical modes of response. In this way, I argue, Cixous's poetic writing is an imagining of what it means to be in the world eco-ethically, which means, to borrow Haraway's phrase, "staying with the trouble" (2016). It is only through poetic writing,

Cixous argues, that we can truly see the world: "what is most true is poetic...the world written nude is poetic" (1997, 3). In her thinking, talking and writing about poetic writing, Cixous not only helps to unravel dichotomous approaches to textuality and materiality, she offers us an onto-epistemological ethic-aesthetic that can recognize and respond to the complexities of these troubled times.

In the first section of the Chapter, I focus on the ways that Cixous's conception of poetic writing resonates deeply with recent ecocritical efforts to re-configure dichotomous conceptions of textuality and materiality. Ecocritics suspicious of enduring calls for a language that captures the "really real" are instead seeking "a new framework that can integrate ontological and epistemological considerations in ecocritical studies, so that it becomes possible to reframe...critical understandings of the relationship between signs, texts, languages, and world" (Oppermann 2011, 155). Ecocritical theorists effecting this shift upend both constructivist and realist positions that maintain text and material reality as distinct, and instead offer a vision of nature as "a material 'mesh' of meanings, properties, and processes, in which human and nonhuman players are interlocked in networks that produce undeniable signifying forces" (Iovino and Oppermann 2014, 1-2). Such reconfigurations, which seek to trouble ecocritical rejections of post-structuralism and discussions of text as intrinsically anti-material, anti-reality, and anti-ecology,³⁷ are allowing Cixous's contribution, with its emphasis on "writing," to become more audible to eco-critical and eco-theoretical ears.

An eco-critical reading of Cixous reveals the ways in which her work complements eco-critical visions of an agential, storied world, visions that muddy all neat distinctions between ontology and epistemology. But she does more than complement. Cixous helps to expand and complicate current approaches to the materiality of text. If all matter makes meaning then a key

epistemological challenge shifts from the modernist concern with human knowing the "in itself" (the non-human world) *absolutely* to asking what it means to think, communicate and know *through* and *across* difference. The fear that human knowledge only really knows itself and not the world as it "truly is," a fear that results from the desire to maintain human exceptionalism, disappears in a world where all beings, indeed all matter, can speak, is speaking. And in this world where everyone is talking, the work of eco-criticism necessarily shifts from a desire to confirm the really real in the text to a consideration of translation and exchange across multi-species languages. If meaning making and deciphering is done by all beings, and further still, if matter is itself hermeneutic, then the work of eco-criticism moves to a consideration of how we "humans" communicate with(in) the various languages that are worlding. Rather than working to affirm human exceptionalism through a dualist, transcendental structure, we instead ask: how do diverse (post)human languages interact and intersect with more-than-human (which are also human entangled) languages? What new inventions of translation are required to navigate this entanglement of linguistic fields? In the second section of the Chapter, I address the ways that Cixous conceives of "writing" as a practice in *translation* across and within ontologically entangled, yet expressively distinct speakers -- including those she intently calls "human": "[W]e are ourselves sea, sand, coral, seaweed, beaches, tides, swimmers, children, waves.... More or less wavily sea, earth, sky-what matter would rebuff us? We know how to speak them all" (1976, 889). Once we abandon all notions of a stable, objectifiable, inert world that can be "captured" by human language, we can also relinquish the obsession with getting the words "right" and enter instead a new onto-epistemology of encounter, exchange and translation. Cixous helps us theorize such communication and translation *across differences* such that lines of otherness are not collapsed into a mesh of sameness.

In addition to helping us imagine new ways of communicating across differences, Cixous is invaluable to ecocritical engagements with epistemology, and the relationship between language and truth. Cixous consistently states that truth seeking is the goal of "writing." In the third section of the Chapter, I will explore how Cixous's understanding of the poetic in relation to truth coheres with notions of poetic truth in the work of eco-poetical theorists Scott Knickerbocker, Don McKay and Catriona Sandilands. "The Poetic," for Cixous, is essential to uncovering truth within the jungle of non-stable human(ish) beings communicating with living, breathing, moving non-human(ish) life. For Cixous, only the poetic can attend to "living truth."

What is most true is poetic. What is most true is naked life. I can only attain this mode of seeing with the aid of poetic writing. I apply myself to 'seeing' the world nude, that is, almost to e-nu-merating the world with the naked, obstinate, defenceless eye of my nearsightedness. And while looking very very closely, I copy. The world written nude is poetic. (1997, 3-4)

In contrast to stock criticisms of poststructuralism as anti-truth, Cixous is deeply invested "in 'seeing' the world nude," which she describes here in acutely material terms as "naked life." But living, moving truth is a different matter than the solid, immovable truths of Western modernity. Naked life can only be "seen" myopically, Cixous tells us; the naked eye is nearsighted. This is not the same as saying that we are trapped in human representations of the world, unable to touch the real. There *is* a naked eye, for Cixous, there *is* truth, but only nearsightedness gives us the naked eye. Only through the nearsightedness of poetic writing can we access living truth. Though I will turn directly to the metaphysical implications of this approach to truth in Chapter 3, I begin this work below by considering how Cixous's poetic aligns with key eco-poetical theorists.

Cixous's enigmatic "writing"

"I note, I want to write *before*, at the time still in fusion before the cooled off time of the narrative. When we feel and there is not yet a name for it" (1998 141).

As noted above, it is Cixous's abiding interest in writing about writing that has placed her in eco-critical and other philosophical circles on the side of text and *against* materiality. With recent shifts in eco-criticism away from readings of post-structuralism as all text, no matter, the materiality and posthumanism of Cixous's work becomes more legible. "Writing," for Cixous, is at once an ontological, epistemological, aesthetic and ethical practice, which isn't to say that it is anything and everything. Cixous has very specific ideas about that "counts" as writing and what does not; not *any* putting of words to the page makes the cut, though she often employs the term in general ways that obscure such discriminations. In *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* (1993), Cixous offers some of the richest articulations of her enigmatic conception of writing. The text is organized into three sections described as both "moments of writing" and "moments of apprenticeship." "[T]he first moment of writing is the School of the Dead, the second moment of writing is the School of Dreams. The third moment, the most advanced, the highest, the deepest, is the School of Roots" (7). She begins with a statement that what she has learned about writing "cannot be generalized, but it can be shared" (7). Already we have a strong sense as to how she conceives the relationship between writing and philosophy, writing and epistemology. For Cixous, to speak about writing is to move out of the realm of generalization, representation, and the conceptual, the usual tools of Western thought, and into a relational space, an encounter, which cannot be abstracted. In this regard, Cixous is already subverting traditional conceptions of language as the realm of the conceptual, of representation, and marking a space for "writing" as something different, something other. She furthers this effort by stating that "writing isn't

given," but rather that one "[gives] oneself to writing," and this giving requires "digging," "unburying," and "a long period of apprenticeship," which means "going to school" (6). Writing, then, isn't something we possess or "have;" it is something to which we commit to learn, and it is a learning that never arrives at an end, at the acquisition of a discrete ability. "Writing" is an ongoing, endless process that one gives oneself to; it requires the transformation of the self from a contained being that aims to possess a particular skill, toward something *other*. Poetic writing is a literacy, but it is also an orientation, a commitment, a way of being, and a teaching.

[P]oetry addresses and moves toward the other. Eventually, it becomes a calling to the other. It is the hope of the other, the other in us, in despair. What will happen if we don't know the language in which the poem moves? We have to go to its encounter. Such is the poetic process, a move that becomes a political activity in an ethical mode. If we have a sense of the delicacy of the world, this is exactly what we have to do... We have to put our ears to the ground and listen in order to make the poem advance. (1991a, 149)

Cixous's conception of poetic writing bleeds through the boundaries of ontology, epistemology, phenomenology, pedagogy and ethics. Writing is a mode of becoming-learning-relating-responding; it is not a becoming of the self as individual, however multiple such becomings may be. It is a mode of becoming-in-relation. Writing is a turning toward and a giving of oneself to the unknown, to the other, which lies both within and outside the self. "When we climb up toward the bottom...we're searching for something: the unknown..." (1993, 6). Or, we might say, writing is the condition of possibility of *selfness* and *otherness*, it is the porous membrane that allows for each by permitting more than "one."

Cixous speaks of "writing" as a force that can be accessed by human writers, but that exists outside of individual writers. This configuration confirms her blurring of onto-epistemological boundaries as "writing" is seen to be both a human and more-than-human force. Cixousian writing lives in-the-world, rather than solely as an instrument in humans. There are writers, human writers, that "direct their writing toward *truth-other-there*" (1993, 6). But she also speaks of things that "writing" wants: "[the truth] is what writing wants" (6); is it its own desiring force. Writing is therefore not something perfectly owned and controlled by humans; we cannot really say that writing, for Cixous, is something humans possess; "writing isn't given" (6); one gives oneself to writing (6). At the same time "writing" is oriented toward a human "us": "Writing, in its noblest function, is the attempt to unerase, to unearth, to find the primitive picture again, ours, the one that frightens us" (9). Here, Cixous draws a distinction between generic writing and writing "in its noblest function," and she tells us that noble writing is an unerasing, an unearthing. This is crucial, for though noble writing is connected to an "us," an "our," what it seeks pre-exists this "us/our" such that it need be unearthed and unerased, which suggests an outside of "us/our." Noble writing is a practice that seeks to discover something deep, something we don't want to see: "giving oneself to writing means being in a position to do this work of digging, of unburying," (6). And, again, if the "*truth-over-there*" is what writing wants, then this work of unearthing and unburying is both a human and more-than-human effort. Noble writing is a tool of self-world discovery; it is revelatory. It is clear, then, that *all at once* Cixousian writing is possessed and not possessed by humans. In this way, we see clearly that Cixous's "writing" is useful to ecocriticism in the ways in which it swims in an out of human subjectivity and worldliness. Cixous expands on this conception in *Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing* (1997):

One must not be afraid because when one sets oneself in writing, or sets oneself to writing, one sets off, without brakes, without harness, etc.; this phenomenon which always remains disturbing will be produced: the manifestation of a force expressing itself much more powerfully and more rapidly than ourselves...we are not the master of this writing which gallops well ahead of us, and we tend to be wary of it. To tell ourselves that it is completely airy, insignificant, because after all we do not know it. Or perhaps it is crazy because we do not control it. It is frightening. One must be able to: let oneself make one's way; not prohibit oneself. One must trust in: that is to say be in a sort of passivity, of faith. And also, to let oneself go to exceed oneself. To exceed oneself in all ways. (1997, 39)

Here, we can see clearly that for Cixous "writing" is a force that is entangled but not co-extensive with the human. The agency is dispersed, restricted to neither the "writer" nor the "writing" side of the equation. "...[W]e are not the master of this writing which gallops well ahead of us..." It exceeds us, yet we can learn to set ourselves to it. In order to be "in writing" one must "exceed oneself in all ways" (39). "...[T]he height of writing, the paroxysm is produced when one leaves oneself in freedom...When one has faith in what is not knowable: in the unknown in ourselves that will manifest itself" (39). To write, "we must vie in force and intelligence with a force that is stronger than ourselves" (40). Writing is a force that the human can learn to move toward, but the human is not the condition of possibility of "writing" and therefore the truth that writing wants is not exclusively human.

We can begin to see, then, that Cixous's choice to speak of "writing" (*écriture*), rather than text/textuality, language or representation, relates directly to her interest in an onto-epistemological, phenomenological, and pedagogical practice that weaves in and out of the

human, in between self and other. In doing so, Cixous also develops the term to expressly move beyond a textuality/materiality binary. Cixousian "writing" does not belong exclusively to either "the text" or "the world;" what she is interested in is finding ways of engaging-responding to reality that do not dampen its material vitality. Her "writing" knits representation and ideation with embedded worldliness. Writing, for Cixous, and not theory, is better suited to finding truth in a world that is "uncatchable," and "always in the process of seething, of emitting, of transmitting itself" (1997, 4). Theory, in the tradition of Western metaphysics, with its thirst for systems of representation that are absolute, fixes life in order to claim truth; "theory entails a discontinuity, a cut, which is altogether the opposite of life...[Theory] is indispensable, at times, to make progress, but alone it is false" (1997, 4). "Writing," always discussed in active form (*écriture*), as opposed to speaking of what it means "to write" (*pour écrire*), is consonant with a non-teleological, always different, always moving materiality. But most importantly, even with all this movement, hers is a writing that above all wants truth: "[truth] is what writing wants" (Cixous 1993, 6). Indeed, "without the word *truth*, without the mystery *truth*...there would be no writing" (6). And it is the writers who take the path of "writing" to find truth that Cixous follows: "all the people I love...are beings who are bent on directing their writing toward this *truth-over-there*, with unbelievable labor" (6). The goal is *truth-over there*, or what we might call immanent truth, grounded truth – a truth that one can never hold definitively, that is forever "over there," in the world, on the move. Impulses toward objectification – "the text" "the word" "logos" – are ill suited to immanent truth; "I circle 'the truth' with all kinds of signs, quotation marks, and brackets, to protect it from any form of fixation or conceptualization" (6). Writing is a becoming-in-relation toward unknown immanent truth. Writing is the seeking of living truth. Writing is an effort to live-think-respond to an immanent, entangled world.

The materiality of Cixous's poetic writing

"there is almost nothing left of the sea but a word without water" (1990, 65).

Staying with this notion of living truth, of a writing that can keep truth alive, I want to consider in more detail the materiality of Cixous's "writing." The first section of *Three Steps on the Ladder to Writing*: "The School of the Dead," and the third, "The School of Roots," each provide useful insight into how Cixous's "writing" engages, or better, understands its own materiality. Cixous tells us that that "[t]o begin (writing, living) we must have death" (1997, 7). Here we see not only her conflation of writing and living, we also learn that writing cannot begin without death. What does this mean? She gives us more clues. "Montaigne said philosophizing is learning to die. Writing is learning to die. It's learning not to be afraid, in other words to live at the extremity of life, which is what the dead, death, give us" (9-10). Thinking-writing, which she also refers to here as philosophizing, requires an intimate relationship with death, which is at once an intimacy with life, for death takes us to the threshold of life and non-life. At the liminal space of life/death, both are at their most conspicuous. For this reason, it is not just any death but "young, present, ferocious, fresh death, the death of the day, today's death" that we need for writing to begin (7). This is the death that "comes right up to us so suddenly we don't have time to avoid it...to avoid feeling its breath touching us" (7); this is the death that gives us writing. We might say, then, that "writing," for Cixous, is a state of response to the immanent conditions of our reality, no matter how frightening. We write, in the Cixousian sense, because we *must* respond to the conditions with which we are faced; writing is a way of "staying with the trouble." But Cixous's "trouble" isn't historical, but rather onto-epistemological. It is the evasion of death, of the material conditions of our reality, of the failure "to write," as it were, that has brought so much trouble. Noble writing does not turn from the stench of death, from the grim truths of

material reality. Noble writing is writing that affects us "like a disaster," that "wound[s] and stab[s] us," and acts as "the axe for the frozen sea inside us" (17). We experience noble writing "like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, like being banished into forests far from everyone, like a suicide" (17).³⁸ To say that writing is learning how to die is to say that it responds to the material conditions of reality *as they are encountered, as they are*, not as we wish them to be:

So [death] gives us everything, it gives us the end of the world; to be human we need to experience the end of the world. We need to lose the world, to lose a world, and to discover that there is more than one world and that the world isn't what we think it is. Without that, we know nothing about the mortality and immortality we carry. We don't know we're alive as long as we haven't encountered death... We can only receive "the world through having lost it... This is grace: death given, then taken back... We lose and in losing we win." (10)

The writing/writers Cixous loves, with whom she thinks-responds, give their lives to writing. They write as acts of war. They write at the end of the world. They write *knowing* that nothing short of death is on the line. Where Western metaphysics has tried to escape death by producing transcendental thought, Cixous offers writing as a careful, fragile response to unconquerable materiality, felt at its most intense in death. In the most deceptively succinct terms, writing, for Cixous, is a willingness to face the slippery, intangible impermanence of materiality: death. And it is in this way that writing is living.

Writing, for Cixous, is ontological in its materiality and its relationship to life and death, epistemological, in that it is primarily concerned with truth, pedagogical, since it requires

apprenticeship and education, and requires a posthuman ethic as it is made possible by a force that is both human and more-than-human. Writing is a mode of being-thinking-learning-responding-creating *and relating* ethically. It is not surprising then that in order to practice such a "noble" writing Cixous spurns almost every normative habit of articulation. Frederic-Yves Jeannet, her interlocutor/interviewer in *Encounters: Conversations on Life and Writing* (2013) calls this writing "Cixaldian" (9, 103). Cixous herself speaks at length about her singular relationship to language, which began early with French, German, Spanish, English, Arabic and Hebrew intermingling in her childhood home -- an ensemble that continued to expand, with Russian, Portuguese, Greek, and Latin later joining the group (Blyth and Sellers 2004, 6). Cixous carries this multitude into her tireless experiments with form, which she sometimes describes as "proetry," since she makes no distinction between prose and poetry (2013, 5). For Cixous, what we have now called poetic writing, noble writing or proetry, all seek a "writing" that can break ordinary habits of being, thinking and relating:

Organized discourse is of no use to me. Of course, what I do is nonetheless grammatical, but everyday language is no good for this. It's even bad for it. Indeed, *because* there is this everyday language, which is useful, too often one goes no further than the everyday – when one must go to eternity. (1997, 46)

Conventional forms of signification cannot adequately enact her metaphysical project, which seeks to trouble and upset the everyday "hierarchies and oppositions that determine the limits of most conscious life" (Conley 1990, vii). It is crucial to note that while Cixous recognizes the inadequacy of "organized discourse," she does not surrender to the limitations of language; rather, she works to bend and stretch and improvise with language to make new ways of being-thinking-relating possible. Such experimentations with language, it is often said, render Cixous

all but untranslatable.³⁹ However, as noted above, the notion of "untranslatability" is especially useful when challenging the position that eco-ethical language should capture the "really real," must "get nature right." The supposed "untranslatability" of Cixous highlights the inadequacy of all translation when understood in terms of perfect equivalence. All communication, whether it is *between* human languages, or human and more-than-human exchanges, is provisional and thus is always "in translation." Indeed, even communication within a single language, between humans, or with oneself, requires ongoing interpretation and translation. Cixous, as Mireille Calle-Gruber highlights in *Rootprints*, pursues a writing that is always in a state of translation, and therefore exists "in-between," or *entre-deux*:

Writing that refuses an assignable position is disturbing. Writing that chooses the interval space, the between, the in-between, the *entre-deux*, and that works in the place of otherness...you tear up conventions of writing; you tear up conventional literary images, ways of seeing-saying. You tear your reader, who finds himself or herself torn between received ideas/feelings that are dismembered by each word.

(1997, 8)

Writing that "chooses the interval space" is not concerned with absolute translatability. Writing "in-between" means to be always in a state of translation. The conceit of "everyday language" hides otherness, and gives the appearance that perfect commensurability is happening. And it is precisely this assumption of commensurability that sets up the problem of text and materiality in the first place, with coherent inter-human communication on one side and a possibly knowable, possibly unknowable nature on the other. Cixaldian renders explicit that no text is ever, even in its chosen language, perfectly stable, perfectly knowable. Cixaldian "writing" isn't a provisional capturing of a not-knowable-to-humans world, but rather a mode of relational engagement with

all the enunciations of a material, living/dying, seething world, which includes humans. One needn't go interspecial to encounter the enigmas of meaning making. I am no more absolutely certain, in a positivist, absolute sense, of what I myself am saying, than I am of what the white tailed bumblebee has to say. In this way, Cixaldian is an articulation and enactment of material immanence. Or, we might say that "writing," which is both human and ahuman, is the encounter with the immanent, material outside that is both in "us" and more than "us."

I write "a book" and this book lodges itself within me, a passerby, a guest, it exists in flesh and words; and I get to know this complex, composed but unique being, creature, I discover it as we go along. It's vital, animal part is very strong. Moreover it uses by body to make a body, member, for itself, to increase and divide itself into characters. As when I dream and people, at times complete strangers, populate me and I myself become a novel of a kind... There are always lots of animal, terrestrial, geographic bodies. And this is something that happens over and over again in my texts.... (2013, 141-142)

Writing, as Cixous conceives and practices it, is not trapped within a human bubble trying to reach the full truth of non-human reality – the outside, as it were; writing is translation, between human self and human others, human self as other, nonhuman self as other, human self and non-human others, nonhuman self and non-human others – and such is the condition of possibility of immanent discourse: "...there is no *invention* possible...without there being in the inventing subject an abundance of the other, of variety: separate-people, thought-/people, whole populations issuing from the unconscious, and in each suddenly animated desert, the springing up of selves one didn't know – our women, our monsters, our jackals, our Arabs, our aliases, our frights" (1986, 84).

One of the key ways that Cixaldian enacts an immanent, material discourse of "entre-deux," one that makes space for the eruption of otherness, is through tearing up "conventional literary images, ways of seeing-saying," and rendering explicit the aporias of language. While Cixous avoids the impulse among philosophers to create her own lexicon, she is no less innovative. She invents in the spaces of languages, turning normative rhythms inside out to show us the *multiplicity* and *otherness* that was always there. Rather than playing the master inventor of new terms, she shows us all the hidden meanings that we weren't seeing-reading-hearing-feeling. She plays with language such that we hear it anew, hear new notes in familiar registers. Cixous is especially interested in engaging materiality in this effort, which we see in her extensive discussions of "writing the body," an idea I will return to below, as well as in the ways that she plays with the sonic and graphic registers of meaning through her extensive use of homophones. Homophones, words that sound identical but are written differently and mean different things, allow Cixous to enact multiple meanings as once through different sensory registers. Cixaldian is replete with homophonic play. In the preface to *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, Cixous employs a homophonic phrase to emphasize the multiplicity of subjectivity:

This is why I never ask myself "who am I?" (*qui suis-je?*) I ask myself "who are I?" (*qui sont-je?*) – an untranslatable phrase. Who can say who I are, how many I are, which I is the most I of my I's?...We: are (untranslatable)...In French the phrase "who are I?" (*qui sont-je?*) also plays the music of the difference writing/voice; for our French ear hears, when I pronounce my question, the phrase "who muses?" ie. who dreams. Who are I when I muse? When I dream who dreams? In dreams am I not all the characters of my dreams?...We humans, in other words dreams by nature, we are almost wholly non-identifiable...In each

one of us our own contrary slumbers. Pure I, identical to I-self, does not exist....there is never one without the other...It is in this living agitation that there is always room for you in me, your presence and your place. I is never an individual. I is haunted. (xvii-xviii)

Here, Cixous uses a homophone to amplify the idea of "I" as multiple, and at the same time invites us to consider who invents or dreams this I, this us, taking us further out of subjectivity as singular and toward a material outside. It is this multiple subjectivity that begins, for Cixous, with sexual difference ("the charm of difference [beginning with sexual difference]...xviii), but which opens the door to more-than-human entanglement, to many hauntings. In one homophonic phrase, she is able to hover between an "I/us" and an immanent outside that dreams I/us. Cixaldian uses homophones, then, to reveal the infinite layers hidden in what is already close at hand. In "Tales of Sexual Difference," "*nous nous écrivons*," which plays on the concurrence of we write ourselves/we write each other, synchronizes with "we invent each other/we invent ourselves" (2010, 285). Writing the self is *at the same time* inventing the self; writing each other invents the other; the differences co-exist. Writing is creating, making, inventing, more than it is a passive *re*-presentation of reality, or a mainline to a separate "real."

Engaging the homophonic register is part of Cixous's enduring interest in returning *the body* to reading and writing, in returning the body to subjectivity.⁴⁰

I don't "begin" by "writing": I don't write. Life becomes text starting out from my body. I am already text. History, love, violence, time, work, desire inscribe it in my body, I go where the "fundamental language" is spoken, the body language into which all the tongues of things, acts, and beings translate themselves, in my

own breast, the whole of reality worked upon in my flesh, intercepted by my nerves, by my senses, by the labor of all my cells, projected, analyzed, recomposed into a book...What flows from my hand onto the paper is what I see-hear, my eyes listen, my flesh scans. I am invaded. I am pushed to the limit.

(1991, 52-53)

It is here that we find one of the most salient sites of Cixous's new materialism. For Derrida writing "resists and troubles [the] calling into presence of truth" (Bray 2004, 26), since "writing" as a system is founded on absence and "continually defers the arrival of presence" (26). Where Derrida, turning to the temporal register, emphasizes deferred meaning in order to challenge positivist approaches to language that rely on a metaphysics of presence, Cixous reveals the multitudes of latent meanings always *at once* present, particularly when we recognize that reading and writing are always embodied.⁴¹ By considering sonic registers of meaning, alongside the graphical, Cixous enacts a "writing" that does not forget the body, but rather animates and enlivens embodiment in the reader. What is especially "new material" in the homophone, then, is not just the multiple meaning but that such multiplicity is enacted materiality, through a body that hears differently than it sees. The body sees difference and hears sameness all at once. In "Coming to Writing," *deux mains* (two hands) doubles for *demain* (tomorrow): "You have two hands [*deux mains*]. If one hand can't live, cut it off. You have tomorrow [*demain*]" (1993, 8). Here, Cixous uses a homophone to connect the idea of being multiple to having a future, moving between the body, hands, and the idea of tomorrow. Where Derrida celebrates suspension and transience in the excesses of textuality, Cixous chases excess into the material, to the body, the sensible in-between: between sound and sight, hearing and conceptualizing. Homophones engage the body to illustrate the excessiveness of meaning by signifying differently on visual and audio

levels, doubling and tripling signifiers in the written form while sounding identical. Cixous stretches the homophonous capacity of language in order to pull the reader into her body, into her breath, to hear the legion of meanings contained in *every* utterance, *every* verse. Enacting the different meanings through different senses, returns the body to reading and writing, and helps re-write the Western logocentric emphasis on the presumed veracity of speech. Instead of a floating Cartesian mind that utters unmediated truth, Cixaldian returns to the embodied materiality of the somatic.

This idea of "writing the body" resonates deeply with new materialists and ecocritical understandings of matter as meaning-making, though it is also distinct. For Cixous, one need not "return the world to the text," for the worldly never left the text: the text is always worldly because "writing" is always a writing of/as a body: "language is a translation. It speaks through the body. Each time we translate what we are in the process of thinking, it necessarily passes through our bodies" (1988, 151-2). And this body that writes is insistently material: "I write with my whole body, so that it gets soaked up, inspired by breath and flesh..."(2013, 17). Cixous often employs language that draws writing away from traditional conceptions of dry, arid environments, brains floating in space: "When I begin to 'write,' I do not write, I snuggle up, I become an ear, I follow a rhythm" (2010, 59). In other words, this body is not contained, nor does it have perfect access to itself. It is elemental and unconscious. We might say that "the body," for Cixous, is a provisional and highly porous boundary that mediates the excesses of self and the excesses of world.

For me, in the beginning, there is nothing. I begin without words and with body. It is a letting myself go to the bottom, letting myself sink to the bottom of now, a collective together of the soul. Let us wait. This requires an unconscious,

unformulated belief in a force, in a materiality that will come, that will manifest itself, an underground sea, a current that is always there, that will rise and carry me. (59)

The body waits, listens for "a materiality that will come," that arrives from outside – an outside that, importantly, is never absolutely outside, as in the transcendental model. The body is not an object whose truth is easily captured and translated. The body is a threshold, a membrane that communicates with itself as world and itself in the world. Cixous's "body" is an elemental entanglement, resonant with the naturecultural knots of Haraway. Writing, less than the interaction between discrete objects, is a *practice* of relational being. Vastly different than conceptions of textuality as capturing transcendental truth, Cixaldian is an open, smoldering process in which the writer enacts forms of relational engagement. Cixous's emphasis on the body that writes, the "the body-in-writing" (2013, 17), collapses, with striking simplicity, the nature/culture legacy of materiality/textuality by reminding us that text is always writing and writing is always *of a body*, embodied. There is no writing without bodies. And bodies write. This is perhaps why she speaks of "writing" and not language. The body has no beginning or end, no final containment strategy. There is no "text," per se, just a body waiting, listening for "an underground sea, a current that is always there," "a force... that will come." Writing is the world talking to itself, (re)making itself. Cixous parallels ecocritical conceptions of texts as body: "Bodies, both human and nonhuman, provide an eloquent example of the way matter can be read as a text. Being the 'middle place' where matter enmeshes in the discursive forces of politics, society, technology, biology, bodies are compounds of flesh, elemental properties, and symbolic imaginaries" (Iovino and Oppermann 2014, 6). Cixaldian, or what we have also called

poetic writing, or noble writing, or poetry, begins when one *recognizes* that all writing is a body-in-writing.

The elemental entanglement of Cixous's approach to writing can also be seen in her conception of the relationship between writing and reading. Firstly, she makes it clear there is no writing without reading; "Writing and reading are not separate, reading is a part of writing. A real reader is a writer. A real reader is already on the way to writing" (1993, 21). In other words, writing is always a dialogue, a response, a relation. Cixous is especially unique among her contemporaries for the ways in which other authors -- "the ones whose music I hear" (1993, 5) -- are intensely present in her work. To read Cixous is to join a conference, ranging from Shakespeare and Kafka to Clarice Lispector and Marina Tsvetaeva. Cixous is *always* in dialogue with particular others. It is not a dry critique of argument, it is immanent and affective response to writers she loves: Kafka, Kleist, Montaigne, and Genet. Her habitats are populated by complex and singular figures, writers whose meaning endlessly overflows: "Reading, I discovered that writing is endless. Everlasting. Eternal" (1991b, 23). There is no writing without reading because, as Cixous tells us, writing is always a *response*; one does not conjure writing in a vacuum. To read-write, as Cixous intends, then, is to be in an eco-ethical space where writing is understood to be embodied, and therefore material and elemental, and deeply relational and entangled with others. Reading-writing, for Cixous, is ecological, *is* a material relationality that holds otherness at its center. Noble reading-writing seeks out and enacts ethical modes of dwelling within and responding to others, to otherness. And because this body-in-reading-writing lives in-between, in perpetual relationality, it offers neither an idealist nor positivist conception of "text" as either succeeding or failing to capture the "really real."

Cixous's embodied, elemental and entangled body-in-reading-writing is often described, by Cixous herself, as well as her readers/interpreters, as *écriture féminine*. Arguably the term for which she is best known in the Anglo world (Blyth and Sellers 2004), from its introduction in the 1970s the concept has been one of the most provocative and heavily criticized elements of Cixous's work. Many Cixousian scholars have worked hard to challenge interpretations of the concept as endorsing a "feminine nature."⁴² And Cixous herself has repeatedly discussed the ways in which the political moment to which she first offered *écriture féminine* erroneously determined readings of her work for decades thereafter.⁴³ Notable efforts among Cixousian scholars to un/re-write conceptions of *écriture féminine*, and to change approaches to Cixous herself in the process, reveal the extent to which the term engages materiality and even pushes toward the ecological. Verena Andermatt Conley, in her introduction to Cixous's *Reading with Clarice Lispector* (1990), explains that while *écriture féminine* is "fraught with the existential and historical position of the female in the world," the concept "offers anyone, male or female, a *living* relation with language and experience" (Conley 1990, viii). Non- *écriture féminine*, or carnophallologocentric language, freezes the world in a hierarchical structure, one that must remain immutable and stagnant if power relations are to be maintained. *Écriture féminine*, by contrast, is a creative practice that seeks to enact ways of being-thinking-dwelling that are alive, that is, open and fluid, always in motion. Such an orientation is incompatible with oppressive regimes that must continually work against the dynamism of materiality. Abigail Bray in *Hélène Cixous: Writing and Sexual Difference* (2004), elaborates Conley's point, emphasizing the role of the body/embodiment: "*écriture féminine* is not simply about recapturing an immediate connection to a body which has been colonized by phallogocentric language, it is about contemplating the material process of thought itself. Writing, in this sense, is inseparable from

the materiality of thought" (Bray 2004, 71-72). *Écriture féminine*, Conley and Bray argue, is not a call for all persons with vaginas to write a book. It is a concept that both names and creates a non-binarized interweaving of the material, denoted by *féminine*, and the textual, denoted by *écriture*. *Féminine* evokes body, materiality, nature, and immanence, *historically* and *culturally*, not essentially. And hopefully we now have a sense of how much "writing" or *écriture* means more than just dry, discrete "text." *Écriture féminine*, we might say then, is Cixous's agential realism, her *natureculture*. And just like *natureculture*, the terms contaminate each other: *écriture* is both inalienably material and conceptual; *féminine* is historical, political and carnal. We encounter *écriture féminine* when the body-in-reading-writing works to translate and affirm its worldliness as messy and unbounded, and relationally indebted. The sexgender of the author is relevant only insofar as the project aims to emancipate all subjects from rigid forms of sexual opposition. "Women's writing," or *Écriture féminine*, is chosen for the ways in which it evokes all that is denigrated, forgotten and abused in carnophallologocentrism: bodies, materiality, nature, and the more-than-human. Within the logic of hetero/humanist patriarchy, "women's writing" is quaint, domestic and impotent.

Understood from this perspective, *écriture féminine* becomes a visionary project that aspires to re-write the libidinal economy of Western metaphysics, to unravel the carnophallologocentrism that conceives of knowledge as a masculinized mind transcending a feminized, material immanent world, where knowledge acquisition is predicated on exclusion and subjugation. *Écriture féminine* seeks escape routes from dichotomous, asymmetrical sexual difference, as *one* of the most powerful manifestations of Western power structures. But it is a dynamic that swallows up the more-than-human as well: "We are all dog-killers of the dog you are, killers of others" (1993, 53). As Bray explains, *écriture féminine* is an ethical, political and

creative effort to transform relations among beings, to re-write the Western subjugation of otherness to sameness, a process that is at once conceptual and material: "*L'écriture féminine* is about providing a space for the material and ontological specificity and autonomy of the other to exist, be, shine forth" (Bray 2004, 71). *Écriture féminine* is a radical program that names the violence of Western metaphysics while inventing new ways of writing-creating that favour excess and incompleteness over possession. This concern with making room for excess over possession is clear from "The Laugh of the Medusa" forward, where Cixous states that "the point is not to take possession in order to internalize or manipulate, but rather to dash through and to 'fly' (1976, 887). The language of movement, dynamism, and flight, as I will discuss further below, is essential to Cixous's conception of *écriture féminine*. And again, from early on in her writing life, she is drawing connections between excess, otherness, dynamism and the living:

To love, to watch-think-see the other in the other, to despecularize, to unhoard.

Does this seem difficult? It's not impossible, and this is what nourishes life – a love that has no commerce with the apprehensive desire that provides against the lack and stultifies the strange; a love that rejoices in the exchange that multiplies...In one another we will never be lacking. (1976, 893)

In other words, to possess, to hoard, to reject strangeness, cuts us off not only from each other, but from the other of ourselves and from life itself. Read ecologically, *écriture féminine* becomes a metaphysical effort to "make room for the unpredictability and freedom of that which is 'living'" (Blyth and Sellers 2004, 68).

The Eco-poetics of Cixaldian

Might we think of Cixous's "writing," then, in eco-poetical terms? Scott Knickerbocker, Don McKay and Catriona Sandilands help expand conceptions of eco-poetics such that Cixous's

poetic writing, which is not obviously "nature poetry," can be thought of as ecological. In order to arrive here, the question must be considered: what is eco-poetics if it is not the accurate capturing of nature in words? Scott Knickerbocker, in *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language* (2012), makes a compelling case for moving away from mimetic conceptions of eco-poetics in which the goal of eco-poetry is "to be as faithful as possible to the real world 'out there,' beyond the page" (2). His argument echoes Iovino and Oppermann's similar call to push ecocriticism beyond mimetic and positivistic models, and it also speaks directly to Cixous's notion of *écriture féminine* as nature-culture. Instead of evaluating ecopoetry for how closely it approximates nature, a fool's game that inevitably leads to textual positivism and arguments over how to guarantee that the world *really has been* restored to the text, Knickerbocker argues that it is the *artifice* of language that has eco-ethical value. He posits that it is poetry's capacity to defamiliarize "everyday" language that can help engender more eco-ethical modes of human-being in the world. In place of mimesis, Knickerbocker offers "sensuous poesis": which employs artifice in the "process of rematerializing language specifically as a response to nonhuman nature" (2012, 2):

Poets who practice sensuous poesis...use formal poetic devices to enact, rather than merely represent, the immediate, embodied experience of nonhuman nature. The experience of the sounds of language, for instance, lies beyond conventional semantic interpretation involving signifiers and signifieds, words and nature. Sensuous poesis relies on the immediate impact on the senses of aural effects, such as alliteration, cacophony, and onomatopoeia, and visual effects, such as enjambment and stanza shape, even as the words simultaneously invite the reflective consideration of the intellect. (2012, 17)

In other words, literary artifice can be used to move us toward rather than away from material reality by engaging the body, taking us out of the conceptual or purely textual register and activating the senses. Knickerbocker emphasizes poetic forms that *rematerialize* language as one form of artifice or defamiliarization that is especially useful to eco-ethics. Quoting Charles Bernstein's *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word* (1998), he unpacks the argument: "the poetic mode synthesizes the speech mode of perception and the nonspeech mode of perception" (2). Or rather, the poetic mode, in defamiliarizing normative speech, returns *speech* back to *sound*, and thus reading back to the body, revealing the material excess of all meaning; meaning is *made from* materiality. Here, we return to Cixous's endless experiments moving between sonic and graphic registers of meaning as exemplary of this rematerialization through poetic device. Mireille Calle-Gruber in *Rootprints*, elaborates on this approach in Cixous and suggests that her work "sets up a relay, launches the one with the other, the voice with the letter, and vice versa. Before our eyes, in our ears, we have discourse in the process of becoming voice, becoming speech: what dominates is the impression of thought in movement. Text in movement" (1997, 41). Given her emphasis on writing the body, on the entanglement of reading and writing, and considering the ways that her poetical style of writing draw attention to both sight and sound, it is clear that Cixous is a practitioner of *sensuous poesis*.

Sensuous poesis is an especially useful concept in the effort to redefine what qualifies as eco-literature for it returns us to the material conditions of language *through artifice*, through the defamiliarizing of reality, rather than an attempt at mimesis. Strip language of its normative meaning and we return to the fundamental ingredients of communication: bodies, senses, environs. Indeed, for Knickerbocker, eco-poets "unapologetically embrace artifice -- not for its own sake, but as a way to relate meaningfully to the natural world... for them, artifice *is* natural"

(2012, 2). Human language, Knickerbocker asserts, *is nature*, which doesn't preclude it from distinctiveness. If this is the case then we can stop worrying about human language being severed from nature, of falling *out* of an embodied experience of nature when we fall *into* language (7). And with this shift, our interest in ecopoetry changes as well. Rather than trying to make language capture non-human nature perfectly, Knickerbocker advocates the use of formal poetic devices as a way to change normative relations between human and non-human being. Instead of idealizing or mirroring materiality, Knickerbocker's ecopoets use artifice to decompose everyday language, to render it bodily, material, earthly, particularly through devices that take us to sound: "Sound is language's flesh, its opacity as meaning marks its material embeddedness in the world of things...In sounding language we ground ourselves as sentient, material beings, obtruding into the world with the same obdurate thingness as rocks or soil or flesh" (Bernstein qtd in Knickerbocker 2012, 7). Again, this position is not dissimilar to Cixous's insistence that all writing is of a body, exemplified in her use of homophones. We *hear* sameness but *see* difference, which takes us out of a disembodied, purely cognitive *processing* and into the sensuous *reading* body. Meaning is returned to aurality at the same time that we are invited to explore difference in the visual form. And thus, the meaning of the words exists between these registers and cannot be isolated to one or the other. Knickerbocker heads in the same direction: by heightening the artificiality of language, we return it to its material origins, to sounds and grunts; "The power of language to make nature matter to us depends precisely on the defamiliarizing figurative language and rhetorical devices too often associated with 'artificiality'" (2012). Sensuous poesis, therefore, helps us grasp the material excesses contained in all language. Cixous, however, further complicates signification through homophonality by demonstrating that *multiple* meanings exist within the same sounds; otherwise, why use

homonyms? Knickerbocker clarifies for us that this technique is poetical, and that it moves us in the direction of materiality by stripping language of its purely conceptual disguise. But Cixous also helps *extend* Knickerbocker's theory by privileging *neither* the sonic nor graphic registers. While she elucidates his emphasis on sound, she retains the potential of the written at the same time. Or, more accurately, in moving back and forth between the registers, she not only refocuses the reader on the aural and visual aspects of meaning but also shows us that language is *at once* an embodied and conceptual experience: *écriture féminine* as natureculture. This idea helps explain Cixous's emphasis on *writing* over "language." If language holds us at the register of the abstract, *writing* brings us back to carnality, to becoming, to embodied process, but without relinquishing the conceptual or symbolic altogether.

This conception of ecopoetics as defamiliarization and rematerialization is echoed by eco-poet and theorist Don McKay in "Baler Twine," Chapter One of *Vis à Vis: Field Notes on Poetry and Wilderness* (2001). McKay offers an essential analysis of the process by which human culture erases elemental excess from being. Opposing a process he calls *matérialization* McKay considers how matter comes to be emptied of otherness, or *wilderness*, his preferred term. The process of erasing otherness from matter requires, as McKay sees it, two stages of appropriation. The first stage begins to transform matter into instrumentality, or pure utility, expunging all material excess or wilderness by fixing matter-meaning; "to make things into tools in the first place, we remove them from autonomous existence and conscript them as servants, determining their immediate futures" (2001, 20). However, as McKay explains, this first stage does not erase all excess, and matter is able to "retain a vestige of wilderness" (21), still existing in time, and thus with the potential for breakdown:

To what *degree* do we own our houses, hammers, dogs? Beyond that line lies wilderness. We probably experience its presence most often in the negative as dry rot in the basement, a splintered handle, or shit on the carpet. But there is also the sudden angle of perception, the phenomenal surprise which constitutes the sharpened moments of *haiku* and imagism. The coat hanger asks a question; the armchair is suddenly crouched: in such defamiliarizations, often arranged by art, we encounter the momentary circumvention of the mind's categories to glimpse some thing's autonomy -- its rawness, its *duende*, its alien being. (21)

McKay offers a singular understanding of wilderness here, one that moves the concept away from normative ideas of what counts as "nature." His "wilderness" is "not just a set of endangered spaces, but the capacity of all things to elude the mind's appropriations" (21). Wilderness creeps in or shows up whenever the human order of things begins to decay. McKay, like Knickerbocker, emphasizes the defamiliarization of normative human culture as a key element of an eco-ethical onto-epistemology.

Once epistemological possessiveness has extinguished all excess, all wilderness, it has reached what McKay calls "second order appropriation." From this space, things are "made permanent and denied access to decomposition, their return to elements" (20). And it is from here, he offers, that "[w]e inflict our rage for immortality on things, marooning them on static islands; and then, frequently enough, we condemn them as pollutants" (20-21). Such relegations help explain why "the fixed smiles on Barbie Dolls and Fisher Price toys [are] so pathetic" (20-21). Eco-poetry, as McKay conceives it, directly addresses the fixed plastic smiles of Western thought. Against plasticity and possession, McKay offers the concept of "poetic attention," which he describes as a state of mind, "a sort of readiness, a species of longing which is without

the desire to possess...a form of knowing [that] celebrates the wilderness of the other" (26). In art, McKay suggests, we cultivate such wilderness, or defamiliarization, where the banal everyday of normative existence is momentarily arrested, and its strangeness or potential to be "other" is revealed. In this way McKay's "poetic attention" emphasizes the role of *art-ifice* in eco-ethics.

The ecological dimensions of Cixous's poetic writing materialize if we follow McKay's understanding of eco-poetics as moving against the plasticization of life and toward a defamiliarization, or wilding, of normative human, or Western, culture. Indeed, McKay's idea of "poetic attention" as a readiness and longing for ways of knowing that do not mute life, perfectly describes Cixous's ethic, for, as she tells us, "living means wanting everything that is, everything that lives, and wanting it alive" (1976, 891). Cixous explains that writing for her is always a move toward the wild, *and* the substantive:

When I begin to write, it always starts from something unexplained, mysterious and concrete...And this questioning could be philosophical: but for me, right away it takes the poetic path. That is to say that it goes through scenes, moments, illustrations lived by myself or by others, and like all that belongs to the current of life, it crosses very many zones of our histories. I seize these moments still trembling, moist, creased, disfigured, stammering. When I write a book, the only thing that guides me at the beginning is an alarm. Not a tear [*larme*], but an alarm. The thing that alarmed me at once with its violence and with its strangeness. (1997, 42-43)

Again Cixous is distinguishing between philosophy and poetry. Philosophy, to borrow McKay's language, works to fix matter-meaning, to excise wilderness from meaning-making, whereas the

"poetic path" belongs to the "current of life," which is unruly and unbound. Poetic writing chases after the wild, the strange, that which exceeds the rigid structures of meaning of Western thought. If we want to say anything about that which is vibrant and alive, which Cixous defines, similar to McKay, as that which escapes strictly codified meaning, this "can only be done poetically" (1991a, 92). With "poetic attention" we are "trembling, moist, creased, disfigured, stammering." Following McKay, then, we can say that writing, for Cixous, is an encounter with wilderness, as she moves toward that which is excised within normalizing and domesticating processes: "It is what has been received for a long time, and never called into question, and dead for a long time, that I do not accept" (1997, 11). Life shows her the unknown, the strange, that which evades fixed meaning; Cixous hears the coat hanger's question and she responds: "I work on unknown events (because I find myself before them): what life brings me. The arrow that hits me in the face. The car that runs over the person next to me" (1997, 12). But for Cixous, like McKay, the goal is not to domesticate strangeness or wilderness; poetic writing is the attempt to speak to wilderness *as wilderness*, to hold alien being, to witness it, without moving into domestication and appropriation. This is the challenge that McKay's eco-poetics takes up: how to speak to the other without rendering her the same.

In conceiving of a "poetic attention," McKay aims to move eco-poetry away from standard definitions that require either the privileging of "some extra-linguistic condition as the poem's input, output, or both, " or a point of focus that is obviously ecological, from "front lawn to back country" (2001, 26). McKay is suspicious of these criteria, "since the poet may be focused on the wildness in a car, a coat hanger, or even language itself, as much as Kluane Park. (She might, in point of fact, be focused on Kluane Park as a tool.)" (26). In other words, one does not discredit oneself from eco-poetical circles the moment one focus on language itself, and there

is no eco-language that guarantees an eco-poetical space. And one does not automatically achieve "poetic attention" by being in or speaking of classically defined nature. "Poetic attention" can be as focused on the so-called artificial as it may be on non-human nature. Rather, eco-poetry, for McKay, is "a form of knowing [that] celebrates the wilderness of the other" (26), and that "other" can be language itself. This idea of moving toward the wildness of language itself resonates deeply with Cixous's "writing:" "At times it is in the fissure caused by an earthquake, through that radical mutation of things brought on by a material upheaval when every structure is for a moment thrown off balance and an ephemeral wildness sweeps order away, that the poet slips something by, for a brief span..." (1976, 879). Both McKay and Cixous, then, reject the idea that language either *can* or *cannot* contain "the real," and instead ask us to explore which kinds of writing function *as alive, as lively*; "The process of writing is to circulate, to caress, to paint all the phenomena before they are precipitated, assembled, crystallized in a word...it begins with this experimental annotation which...is always taken from life. That is to say always mobile" (Cixous 1997, 18). Rather than say that ecopoetic writing perfectly captures the wildness of nature, or, conversely, that text can *never* represent the real,⁴⁴ McKay and Cixous argue for a writing that is itself wild, is the wilderness of human expression, where the excess of matter-meaning still simmers.

We might say that for McKay and Cixous the poetic is a mode of writing-thinking-dwelling-responding that is able to engage life *as* life. Conceptual language fixes, renders the lively inert. In "poetic attention" we understand that in order to engage with the vibrant, immanent movement of life we too must be moving. And for Cixous, "life writing" as always-in-movement is made possible by, begins with the body:

I write texts that are very much in movement. *Mouvementés*...There ought then to be a metaphorical grouping, or collection that stems at once from the registers of transport, but also that always goes through the first of the means of transport which is our own body. What we are able to do as an exercise in translation with our body or as a translation of our affects in terms of the body in unlimited...The central interchange is the body in metamorphosis. (1997, 28)

Here, Cixous connects movement to embodiment as the condition of possibility for the infinite translation of being into meaning. Writing in "poetic attention," for Cixous, is an intensely embodied process, and it is the body that opens us to the limitlessness of an immanent world. If disembodied, phallogocentric thought seeks to arm itself with possessive hierarchies and static oppositions, a "poetic attention" disarms such desires and moves through the embodied liveliness of the wild other -- wild/other (wild/other of self). Where standard philosophical discourse works through disembodied possession, Cixous's poetic writing offers embodied release. Knitting Cixous and McKay, eco-poetics becomes the undoing of onto-epistemology as disembodied possession. Poetic attention, then, offers a very different onto-epistemology: "even after linguistic composition has begun, and the air is thick with the problematics of reference, this kind of knowing remains in touch with perception" (McKay 2001, 26-27); "It is as if I [try] to make a verbal portrait of this phenomenon that is concrete, and physical and spiritual. What do I do? I listen to this phenomenon, I listen to it with my eyes, with organs I do not know, that are in me. And then the activity of writing tries to transpose what I perceive" (44). Or, perhaps we can simply say, as Calle-Gruber does, that Cixous's "writing sides with life" (1997, 33). For both Cixous and McKay, writing in "poetic attention" is the only expression of thinking-knowing that is compatible with a seething, raging life. By way of McKay, we can see that Cixous's approach

to poetic writing, her work to attend, respond to and protect the strangeness and otherness -- the excess meaning -- of all being, is itself an ecological ethic.

In *The Good Natured Feminist: Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy* (1999), Catriona Sandilands draws a direct line of connection from *écriture féminine* to the invention of non-humanist languages and "the need to speak differently about the nonhuman" (194). In place of an ecofeminist ethics of identity, sameness and domestication, Sandilands champions the invention of *écriture naturelle* (194). Where *écriture féminine* aims to invent a language for femininity to redress the silencing of women within a phallogentric Symbolic order, *écriture naturelle*, Sandilands offers, is a "language of nature...that calls our attention to the 'elsewhere,'" that "undermine[s] its own ability to represent" and "point[s] to the spaces of Otherness that lie within it" (194). An *écriture naturelle*, in other words, recognizes what Sandilands terms the "wild": the "relations between humans and nature that cannot be expressed" (194). In opposition to the "identitarian fantasy," which renders "nature" and "femininity" as the same in order to bring nature into meaning, and into the political sphere, Sandilands argues for an ecofeminism that "gestures toward wildness as a moment of human/nonhuman life that permeates all linguistic relations" (194). Drawing on psychoanalytic theory, Sandilands explores how the wildness, or Otherness, of human/non-human relationality prevents it from total representation within the Symbolic order of Western culture. In proposing "an ecological ethics of the Real" (194), Sandilands extends Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to keep material otherness at the center of eco-ethics. Sandilands extols an eco-feminism that begins with "an experience of nature as traumatic encounter with the ineffable" (194). This ineffability, or wildness, marks the "moment of human/nonhuman life that permeates all linguistic relations" (194). For Sandilands, like Cixous, the ineffability of onto-epistemology is not tragic, and it certainly doesn't shut down the

conversation; "the best kind of human language around the space of unrepresentable nature is a democratic and politicized one that validates partiality and multiplicity and that can never claim to 'get it right'" (181). Cixous addresses the issue directly in *Three Steps*:

The natural word, the word *nature*, has a sad fate: it was taken up in the great disputes, aimed in particular at people like myself who work on the sexual scene and who have been accused by a certain group of unenlightened people of using this word to mean a feminine or masculine nature – something I have never been able to conceive of – as if "nature" existed in opposition to "culture," or there were such a thing as pure nature. These disputes come from continents newly plunged in darkness. For a while, to flee the field of these sterile disputes, I no longer used the word *nature*, even though I adore it. Then I adopted it again. As soon as I use it in the domain of writing it begins to move, to twist a little, because in *writing* this is what it's all about. As soon as there is writing, it becomes a matter of *passage*, of all kinds of passages, of delimitation, of overflowing. (1993, 128-129)

In the domain of writing, in *écriture*, the excess, or otherness of nature, is recognized; there is no effort to cap the overflow. For both Cixous and Sandilands, the impossibility of perfect equivalence *among* and *within* various human and non-human languages is not a risk; rather, it is the closing of this gap, be it in the name of Western transcendental rationalism or eco-critical realism, that marks a foreclosure on ethics. Taking this position, Sandilands, moves away from enduring efforts to define the project of eco-criticism as "returning the world to the text," and explores instead *écriture naturelle* as an encounter, at once onto-epistemological and onto-ethical, with otherness in which otherness is affirmed.

In *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, Cixous elaborates her conception of writing in terms deeply resonant with Sandilands's *écriture naturelle*. Cixous moves into a more explicit consideration of writing, materiality and nature through her transformative encounter with Clarice Lispector -- a relationship I will return to and detail further in Chapter 3. With Lispector, Cixous moves more explicitly toward materiality and nature in her considerations of poetic writing.⁴⁵ The impact of the encounter is well displayed in the final chapter of the book, "The School of Roots." Cixous describes the chapter as "the most advanced, the highest, the deepest," and begins by stating that she is "interested in a chain of associations and signifiers composed of birds, women, and writing" (1993, 111). To better understand the connections among birds, women and writing, Cixous turns to Lispector's *The Passion According to G.H.* (1964), a fictional work in which the narrator, G.H., recounts an event of the previous day when she accidentally crushed a cockroach. The incident effects in G.H. what Cixous describes as a "fantastic, total, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual revolution" (112), and "leads G.H. to completely revise her clichéd way -- our clichéd way -- of thinking: our relations to the world in general and to living things in particular" (112). In addressing the crushed cockroach and its oozing entrails, G.H. "must deal with the phobia, with the horror we have of so-called abominable things" (112), a horror that betrays particular relations to matter. G.H. confronts materiality as abject or "abominable" in the form of a white paste spurting out of the cockroach, and the text ends, famously, with her putting the substance into her mouth.⁴⁶ For G.H. to arrive at this "end" requires that she dissolve the established boundaries of "the law," determined by what Lispector calls, by Cixous's translation, "those He-Bible, those Bible" (113): those who divide the world into good and abominable, clean and unclean, safe and dangerous, contained and

abject. For G.H. to not see the cockroach as abominable requires a complete dissolution of her subjectivity and its onto-epistemological foundations.

Cixous ties birds, women and writing together, by way of Lispector, through this concept of the abominable, the viscerally excluded, or the *imund* ("in French *l'immonde*, in Brazilian *imundo*" [116]): "Let those birds be 'abominable': I associate women and writing with this abomination" (113).⁴⁷ The same logic machine that renders "women" and "writing" *abominable* places "birds and their kind" there as well:

those who belong to the birds and their kind...to writings and their kind: they are all to be found -- and a fair company it is -- outside; in a place that is called by Those Bible, those who are Bible, abominable. Elsewhere, outside, birds, women, and writing gather...Outside we shall find *all* those precious people who have not worried about respecting the law that separates what is and is not abominable according to Those Bible." (113)

Here, we can see how acutely Cixous resonates with central deep ecological and eco-feminist efforts to name and challenge the violently dichotomous logic of Western thought. But importantly, we see that Cixous's contribution is unique in its *inclusion* of "writing" among the excluded. It is not just "birds and their kind" but "writings and their kind" that find themselves left outside. Where prominent strains of deep ecology and eco-feminism argue for materiality *over* textuality, Cixous identifies "writing," though, as we've established, in a highly enigmatic form, as *among* the marginalized. Writing sits on the side of materiality, for Cixous. If text belongs to the law of "Those Bible," then writing is for the birds. And the writing that belongs with the birds, she tells us, moves *with* and not away from life, a writing that she calls *imund*, that is of the world (*mundus*), that is "unclean with joy" (117). It is a writing that she says is

prevented within the standard philosophical discourse of "Those He." And it is "writing," *not theory, or textuality*, that becomes the "imund book:"

The imund book deals with things, birds, and words that are forbidden by Those He. The imund book is the book without an author. It is the book that makes us experience a kind of dying, that drops the self, the speculating self, the speculating clever "I." It's the book of the Act of Writing. The book that takes life and language by the roots...It's the book stronger than the author: the apocalyptic text, whose brilliance upsets the scribe. How can it be written? With the hand running. Following the writing hand like the painter draws: in flashes. The hand leads to the flowers. From the heart where passions rise to the finger tips that hear the body thinking: this is where the Book *(Alive)-to-Live (le livre Vivre)* springs from.... (1993, 156)

Here, Cixous seems to be describing a writing that acts as a kind of immanent transcendental, the metaphysical implications of which I will return to in Chapter 3. It is a writing that transcends itself into an immanent world of birds, roots, flowers. The writing that fills the *imund* book is written by a "hand that leads to flowers," that is, a "self" that writes (the beyond of) the self that is nested in the world. A writing that *exceeds*, always, its writer. In writing *imundity* we join the birds. And women. The ecological nature of such writing is not determined by its subject or object of focus. It is ecological because it is a dark and soiled writing, full of death, which is to say full of life, and living "writing" always exceeds its apparent author. This *écriture naturelle* writes away the borders of Those Bible, writes out the Law of the Symbolic order that condemns birds and women. Writing the *imund* book is an eco-ethical act.

To imagine *écriture naturelle* as deeply connected to notions of impurity or "imundity" is to move eco-literature decisively away from romantic notions of nature. McKay draws out the distinction between romantic and "other" forms of nature writing in his discussion of what he calls the "aeolian harpism" of romantic poetry: "The romantic poet...desires to be spoken *to*, inspired by the other, so that perception travels into language (or slide show) without a palpable break. The paradigm for this ideal relation is the aeolian harp" (27). In romantic poetry, the aporias that mark relations between human and non-human disappear. Nature becomes woodlands and parks, dolphins and oak trees. At its most "other," romantic nature offers the exotic native, the thrilling mountain climb: encounters that do not, ultimately, shake us from our humanist subjectivities.⁴⁸ "Aeolian harpism relieves us of our loneliness as a species, reconnects us to the natural world, restores coherent reality" (28). While McKay appreciates the appeal of such romantic conciliations, he pushes instead for poetic attention, which "is based on a recognition and a valuing of the other's wilderness; [poetic attention] leads to a work which is not a *vestige* of the other, but a *translation* of it" (2001, 28). Here, crucially, McKay emphasizes that in poetic attention we endlessly translate otherness without ever desiring wholeness. In poetic attention we don't *settle* for a part, or a remainder, *over* the whole. To be in poetic attention is to see the simmering incompleteness of reality and to always be in translation of this infinite otherness. We do not stand separate from this infinite otherness; we are this infinite otherness. And so, poetic attention is as much a translation of humanness as it is of more-than-humanness. But most importantly, poetic attention "holds the break," that is, in poetic attention we recognize the *need* for translation; the space of incommensurability, of unknowability, is held open. Sandilands draws a similar distinction. Romantic nature is rendered pure, domesticated, and thus falls prey to what Sandilands calls an identitarian fantasy of nature as a return to origins

where problems of translation or communication disappear into sameness. Referencing eco-feminist discussions of nature as feminine, Sandilands warns against such conflation: "the emphasis on nature as intimately knowable...tends to obscure the Otherness of nature, the moment when nature is not female, is not human mother or sister" (1999, 197). The *écriture naturelle* that both McKay and Sandilands propose moves away from nature as familiar, or restorative, and toward nature as *imund*. They, too, seek out a poetics that is "unclean with joy."

By connecting otherness to *imundity*, Cixous and Lispector make explicit the starkly material dimensions of such logics. They work to both name the system that slices matter into pure and *imund*, while at the same time disrupting its logic by dwelling in the unclean, by finding joy in the unclean, to use Cixous's phrase. In the *écriture naturelle* of Cixous/Lispector, the ingesting of the cockroach is an emancipatory and even jubilant act. To eat the white paste is to confront and unravel the heart of Western metaphysics and to free oneself of the laws of Those Bible – laws that, Cixous tells us, have no legitimacy other than "because": "So why are those birds *imund*? Because. As you know, this is the secret of the law: 'because.' This is the law's logic. It is this terrible 'because,' this senseless fatal 'because' that has decided people's fate, even in the extremity of the concentration camps...It is this *because* that rules our lives. It pervades everything" (1993, 117). Writing, as Cixous conceives it, belongs on the side of the excluded because noble/poetic writing seeks to undo dichotomous binarism and therefore threatens the arbitrary law of Those Bible. But further still, noble/poetic writing finds joy with the unclean, with the excluded. And to find joy with the excluded is to threaten the law of Western metaphysics:

the reserved, secluded, or excluded path or place where you meet those beings I think are worth knowing while we are alive. Those who belong to the birds and

their kind...to writings and their kind: they are all to be found...outside. Outside we shall find *all* those precious people who have not worried about respecting the law that separates what is and is not abominable...Out there we shall be in the company of swans, storks, and griffons. (1993, 113-117)

Given the historical exclusions of "women" and "birds," to write, for Cixous, is at once a feminist and eco-ethical practice. But again, what's especially compelling here is that Cixous allies "writing" with living, with life, with *imund life*, or *imund/life*. Her *écriture naturelle* is not aeolian harpism, it is eating the white paste.

In Brazilian the word for cockroach is *barata*, and it is feminine. So a woman meets a *barata*, and it becomes the focus of a type of fantastic, total, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual revolution, which, in short, is a crime. The revolution leads G.H. to completely revise her clichéd way – our clichéd way – of thinking: our relations to the world in general and to living things in particular. She must deal with the phobia, with the horror we have of so-called abominable things...[G.H. has an] initially ordinary reaction to the *barata*: that is, she has almost "killed" it by crushing it. A kind of white paste spurts out of the *barata*...G.H. comes into contact with this paste; she starts thinking about what the white paste is and how to relate to it: "I had committed the forbidden act of touching something impure." (1993, 112)

G.H. doesn't simply ally with the *barata*, she takes it into her being. It is an epistemological revolution that must be enacted ontologically. The shift is not one that transforms the abominable into something that can be appreciated or valued from a distance, but taken into one's own body; the encounter engages and changes her very being. And the secret that one discovers,

Cixous/Lispector tell us, in "eating the white paste" is the arbitrariness of the laws of Those Bible: "he who partakes of the imund knowing that it is imund, must also come to know that the imund is not imund" (Clarice Lispector qtd. in Cixous 1993, 117). Cixous is clear: noble/poetic writing is the movement toward such transformations.

A Cixous/Lispector environmentalism, then, is not built on experiences of oneness. There is an ecology of abject difference, a dark ecology. The *barata* doesn't become G.H.; the ingestion describes G.H.'s capacity to take in "the other," without erasing otherness. She can ingest the materiality of the *barata* not because she has nullified its otherness and brought it back to the "right side" of Those Bible. She can ingest the white paste because she has found the joy in otherness. McKay and Sandilands move in the same direction. While each recognizes the seduction of reconciliation as an antidote to environmental alienation, both warn against the dangers of conceiving environmental ethics as a "return home." For McKay the "home" is the locus of first order appropriation, where wilderness is relieved of its "autonomy and anonymity" and "the thing is both owned and named" (2001, 22). We push material otherness or excess out as we "homemake," hiding our own excesses in the process, separating ourselves from "nature," or what McKay redefines as matter-meaning that remains out of grasp, uncontained, *other*. For McKay, homemaking is an onto-epistemological effort: "it is with the 'primordial grasp,' as Levinas calls it, that possession, including knowledge, begins. Home makes possible the possession of the world, the rendering of the other as one's interior" (23). Homemaking, by McKay's account, is the instrumentalization and domestication of nature. At the extreme, "homemaking" strips existence of all traces of excess and ferality, transforming otherness into sameness.⁴⁹ Sandilands expresses similar concerns: "In home imagery, we again have the implication that nature must be produced through discourses of similarity if it is to appear

politically" (199, 198); "home as a counterhegemonic representation may be useful in some situations, but the domestication of nature apparent in the representation cannot be mistaken for the truth of nature" (198). Instead, Sandilands argues that "it is possible to hold the view that emphasizes the specificity of nature...a moment where is it revealed as wild and beyond the taming of language" (198). In concert with the openness of McKay's poetic attention, Sandilands suggests that the encounter with nature as other, as mystery, both human *and* non-human, "bespeaks the need to develop and value a direct experience of wildness or strangeness" (1999, 199). It is for the same reasons, I would argue, that Cixous wants to go "to the root," rather than home. "Going to the root," which she identifies in *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, as the most important "school," is forbidden by Those Bible. Again, Cixous takes us here by way of an/other, Lispector: "As Clarice says, with stroke of genius, the point of Those Bible is that joy, jubilation, birds are forbidden because they are the root. So the purpose of Those Bible is to forbid the root" (1993, 117). Here, we get more than "because" as the rationale for the laws of Those Bible, we get an active denial of the root, which is connected to joy and birds. And "going to the root" is the joy of encountering the other *as other*: "perhaps that's what going to the root is, going toward the unverifiable" (1993, 146). The *écriture naturelle* that Cixous offers, not unlike McKay and Sandilands, cannot be identified by subject matter – trees, frogs, climate; Cixous's *écriture naturelle* is a metaphysical project to poetically write(live) non-destructive forms of relationality. Cixousian *écriture naturelle* does not demand a particular setting or an appropriately environmental object of contemplation – and here is where the poetic resides – it requires writing the unverifiable that is nonetheless true. At the heart of this project, for Cixous, is the effort to find joy in the imund: What is the goal of writing: "to be 'imund,' to be unclean

with joy" (1993, 117). Writing is the effort to enact/reveal the joy imundity – a revelation forbidden by Those Bible.

Rather than pit all modes of representation, all "language" and "text," against materiality, Cixous offers us *écriture* as the pathway out of the violence of the dichotomous binarism that founds Western metaphysics. This *écriture*, I argue, is as much "*féminine*" as it is "*naturelle*," though neither term is sufficient as Cixaldian is ill defined by object of consideration. In fact, offering an additive analysis in which we might say that Cixous is interested in "women" and "nature," doesn't quite capture the power of her ideas, either. Her *écriture* relates *at once* to feminism and ecology in that she seeks to transform dominant onto-epistemologies that seek to cage life, and the cage is the primary tool of dichotomous binarism and violent hierarchy. Cixous gives us poetic writing as a way for humans to seek out *living* truths. And her poetic writing is a profoundly philosophical – ontological, epistemological, ethical – endeavour. She asks: how can we find/follow truth without stifling otherness, which is life? If "[a]ll that advances is aerial, detached, uncatchable" (1997, 4), how do we keep pace with this vibrancy? By writing.

Chapter 3: Cixous's onto/eco-poethics of immanent otherness

"[W]e who so often use our booted feet to trample the world's belly" (Cixous 1991b, 130).

"All that advances is aerial, detached, uncatchable" (Cixous 1997, 4).

In this chapter, I extend my analysis of *écriture naturelle* into more explicitly theoretical terrain in order to draw from Cixous a concept I have named "immanent otherness."⁵⁰ In reading her work as explicitly theoretical, through the lenses of feminist new materialism and materialist approaches to French post-structuralism, we see that Cixous's *écriture naturelle* offers an onto/eco-poethics of immanence otherness. In other words, Cixous, in striving for modes of encounter that "let the other live," offers a vision of otherness *within* immanence, or even *as* immanence that, I will argue, is crucial to the revolution in thought that is new materialism signals and enacts.

Cixous and the Revolution of New Materialism

In Chapter 2, I considered Cixous's *écriture féminine* as *écriture naturelle*: an approach to writing-thinking-being defined not in terms of "proper" objects of ecological interest, but as a particular way of engaging/connecting the wild/otherness of (partly) human beings with the wild/otherness of (partly) non-human beings. Cixousian *écriture naturelle* attempts to invent language at an onto-register in which wild/otherness defines all beings, and, indeed, being itself. In this chapter, I want to deepen our understanding of the philosophical and metaphysical dimensions of *écriture naturelle* in order to paint a bigger picture of Cixous's onto/eco-poethics of immanent otherness. Immanent otherness is the term I introduce to describe Cixous's unique and essential contribution to new materialism and environmental post-humanities. However, in order to arrive at the various revelations of immanent otherness, we must (re)read Cixous

through the theoretical shifts signified by the term "new materialism." In other words, it is within the radically transformative framework of new materialism that we begin to recognize Cixous's greater metaphysical impact. Read exclusively through an Anglo defined post-structuralism, Cixous remains primarily a writer interested in writing. Read through new materialism, she is re-born as a theorist of immanent otherness.

In *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies* (2012), Iris van der Tuin and Rick Dolphijn describe "new materialism" as "a new metaphysics": a "revolution in thought" (85) that "traverses and thereby rewrites thinking *as a whole*, leaving nothing untouched, redirecting every possible idea according to its new sense of orientation" (13). What defines this new metaphysical orientation? A commitment to "not privileging matter over meaning or culture over nature" (85). New materialism thus explores a monist or immanent perspective that is "devoid of the dualisms that have dominated the humanities (and sciences) until today" (85). Naming Rosi Braidotti and Manuel De Landa as the co-founders of the revolution, Van der Tuin and Dolphijn contend that new materialism "engenders immanent thought and, as a consequence...breaks through...the mind-matter and culture-nature divides of transcendental humanist thought" (96). I think we can push their argument a touch further to say that immanence isn't *a* perspective within new materialism, but is *the* metaphysical revelation of the "new materialist" turn -- though, of course, there is much variety in *how* materiality and immanence are approached across various thinkers. Van der Tuin and Dolphijn are also clear that any objection to binaristic thought has eco-theoretical value: "New materialists open up the paradoxes inherent in [transcendental and humanist] traditions by creating concepts that traverse the fluxes of matter and mind, body and soul, nature and culture" (86). In short, a challenge to binaristic thought is *de facto* a challenge to the subversion of nature to culture. The relegation of materiality to transcendental human(ist)

thought is *the* metaphysical underpinning of ecological devastation. Of course, the argument against the subversion of nature to culture is not new, particularly for ecological feminism (Merchant 1980; Plumwood 1993, 2002; Haraway 1991, 2003), but what van der Tuin and Dolphijn offer is an explicit naming of the wider metaphysical implications signaled by various subversions. In other words, they state plainly: the very way we (mostly Western) thinkers understand reality has changed/is changing. Importantly for Cixous, Van der Tuin and Dolphijn recognize post-structuralism *within* new materialism. They note that in crafting the revolution of new materialism, Braidotti and De Landa offer a "rethinking of several French philosophers closely connected to May '68" (2012 95), namely "Michel Foucault, Luce Irigaray, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari" (95).⁵¹ In their view, there are key aspects of post-structuralism that, far from anathema to materialism, should be understood as constitutive of the materialist revolution. In this way, new materialism, as it is conceived by van der Tuin and Dolphijn, re-opens the conversation as to the role of post-structuralism within the "re-writing of thinking as a whole." Each of these points are vital to clearing the space for Cixous -- generally recognized in Anglo-theory as a post-structuralist -- to be read as a new materialist and theorist of immanence with eco-theoretical relevance.

Cixous, however, has yet to appear with any weight in the various manifestations of new materialism, despite the growing interest in her post-structuralist contemporaries. In this chapter, I will make the case for not only including Cixous in the story but for how much she transforms the new materialist conversation in crucially important ways. Discourses of new materialism and the metaphysical turn to immanence change significantly if we consider Cixous's unique approach to subverting binarism, to thinking-writing immanent being, and crucially, to bringing otherness *to* immanence. In Cixous, we have a rich and essential understanding of immanence,

one that figures embodiment, embeddedness and entanglement, in concert with feminist materialisms, without foreclosing on the "*ecstasis*" of difference and otherness. Instead of working hard to look beyond the tenacious humanisms of Heidegger, Levinas, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, we can turn our attention to a Cixous and discover an immanence that is not only resolutely feminist, but decidedly posthuman and complexly engaged with the *aporias* of materiality.⁵² Cixous gives us the strengths of post-structuralist immanence, of an ontology that doesn't lose sight of epistemology, textuality and politics, paired with a feminist commitment to living deep and dirty, as well as a unique interest to "letting *the other* live." Read through the new materialist revolution Cixous "the theorist" emerges anew with an onto/eco-poethics of immanent otherness, a metaphysics that traverses key insights of post-structuralist immanence whilst also creating something altogether exceptional.

I begin my articulation of Cixous's metaphysics of immanent otherness with a close reading of "Clarice Lispector: the Approach: Letting Oneself (be) Read (by) Clarice Lispector: The Passion According to C.L." (1991). This text is exemplary of the ways that Cixous's encounter with the celebrated Brazilian writer shaped her as/into a feminist materialist theorist of immanence. My reading of the piece turns on a series of concepts that I hope will function as entry points into understanding how Clarice helps engender Cixous's onto/eco-poethics. I begin with the idea of "the approach, " which will connect us to the concepts of slowness, nearness and a "rehabilitation of what is." My analysis of the essay will also highlight how Lispector helps Cixous invent a writing-being that allows "the other to be other" (Conley 1990, xviii), and as such, *lets the other live*. What I want to clarify here is the extent to which Clarice helps awaken Cixous to a new materialism. In the subsequent section of the chapter, I draw on a range of Cixous's texts to elaborate her contribution to both the immanent turn in post-structuralist

thought and feminist materialist conceptions of immanence as embodied, embedded, entangled and vibrant. Such analysis will help elaborate my argument that Cixous's work be read as a metaphysics of onto/eco-poethics. In the final section of the chapter, I further distinguish Cixous's contribution to various metaphysical turns in Western thought with the concept of "immanent otherness," a term I coin to describe one of Cixous's central philosophical concepts. Cixous brings otherness *into* being, and into a writing-experiencing of materiality as replete with others. Because Cixous's immanence is intimate, visceral, material and rife with others, her metaphysics has deep ecological relevance. One of my primary goals in this chapter is to sketch the intensely intimate, tactile and resolutely affirmative onto/eco-ethical vision Cixous offers, one starkly distinct from her contemporaries who often struggle to think otherness immanently, materially and positively.

A Vital Entanglement: Cixous's Clarice

"The orange is the nearest star" (Cixous 1994, 87).

The impact of Lispector on Cixous is well established. As Elena Carrera, in "The Reception of Clarice Lispector via Hélène Cixous: Reading from the Whale's Belly" states, "Lispector has provided Cixous with a frame, a name and a voice, an external authority, within which to speak of her own ideas, obsessions and dreams" (1999, 86).⁵³ What is less recognized and becomes more evident through the lens of new materialism is the extent to which Cixous's discovery of Lispector in 1978 pushes her work further into materiality and toward immanence.⁵⁴ Verena Andermatt Conley, in her introduction to Cixous's *Reading with Clarice Lispector* (1990), moves toward this idea, arguing that

One of the major questions common to both [Cixous and Lispector] is that of the proximity of writing to life, of programs that rewrite and reread the relation between art and life in such a way that art -- here writing and books -- does not merely function as sublimation. Cixous's and Lispector's effort consists in revalorizing life and the living as opposed to burrowing into books and bookish knowledge. (xvii)

Though Conley recognizes the effect of Lispector in terms of moving toward life and the living, a new materialist reading of the dynamic pushes the observation further. In her early writing, Cixous is focused on rethinking relationality and relational communication through/as embodiment. But discovering Lispector plays a crucial role in turning these interests into a more deeply entangled, embedded and posthuman project.⁵⁵ Clarice, in other words, helps translate *écriture féminine* into *écriture naturelle*, a place where one need not choose between words *and* truth-life. Cixous discovers through Clarice that "writing" can be an expression of and engagement with immanent, material, incarnate being. And she realizes that such a writing can be practiced, that we can apprentice at the school of *écriture naturelle*: "There is a time for listening to the vibrations that things produce in detaching themselves from the nothing-being to which our blindness relegates them, there is a time for letting things struggling with indifference give themselves to be heard" (1994, 89). With the arrival of Clarice, then, Cixous's conception of the ontological dimensions of *écriture féminine* are reimagined, her larger metaphysical concerns made more lucid. Post-Clarice, Cixous continues her interests in sexual difference, libidinal economies, the gift, death, fidelity, and other themes regularly attached to her name, but she begins to approach such ideas within a metaphysical framework of materiality and immanence.⁵⁶

In "Vivre l'orange/To live the Orange" (1979), one of first texts Cixous publishes on Lispector, she writes of how, pre-Clarice, her "writing-being was grieving for being so lonely, sending sadder and sadder unaddressed letters: *I've wandered ten years in the desert of books -- without encountering an answer*"(1994, 85). The letters grew "shorter and shorter 'but where are the amies?'" more and more forbidden, 'where the poetry,' 'the truth?'" (85). Cixous gives us some sense here of what she had been searching for: companions who can help her think poetry and truth *together*, writers for whom writing (creating/inventing/representating) and thinking (knowledge/truth) are not separate. Continuing in this vein, Cixous emphasizes the onto-epistemological nature of her loneliness: "I felt guilty that my writing was aside from reality, – busy searching for writings of the same age, of human origin, with which to learn how to call forth the tongues in which words still live, near by things, and listen to them breathe" (85).⁵⁷ Lonely, but also guilty that she remained attached to modes of writing-thinking that were "of the same age," and of "human origin," and as such could not write materiality alive. To learn to write materiality alive Cixous describes in this essay as learning to receive the orange: "A writing came, with gleaming hands in the darkness...a writing found me when I was unfindable to myself...[To] put the orange back into the deserted hands of my writing" (86). To receive the orange is to no longer dichotomize words and world, but instead to imagine new, non-dualistic possibilities for writing, thinking and being. Lispector helps Cixous realize that we don't have to go around or get outside of language in order to arrive at the world itself. "I sensed that Clarice closed her eyes to touch the orange better, to hold it more lightly, let it weigh more freely upon her text, she noted eyes closed to hear more internally the secret song of the orange. Every orange is original" (1989 18). We can thus endeavour to understand the textuality of being itself, and thus human writing as an expression *of* being, a pedagogy that I will elaborate below. What

must be noted is that the secret song of the orange is internal. Or, perhaps more accurately, Lispector helps Cixous see that the external world is always already internal, and so we can access the world itself because of such entanglement. Western metaphysics silences such melodies, but we can train our ear to hear them once again. For Cixous, Lispector invents a writing that listens to the song of the orange, that can hold the orange lightly enough to keep the world breathing. This is a writing-thinking-being that finds no value in the transcendental humanism of Western logos, a writing-thinking-being that chooses the fecundity and myopia of embedded being over intangible exceptionalism. Stuck inside Western metaphysics, Cixous was lonely. Lispector shows her another way: a mode of poetic-expression that is *fidelitous* to beingness itself.⁵⁸ Considered retrospectively, then, through the disruptions of new materialism, Cixous's encounter with Clarice takes on new significance, and allows us to see more plainly the extent to which Lispector's arrival transforms Cixous's metaphysical commitments into an onto/eco-poethics.

Learning to Approach

To elaborate on the ways that Lispector moves Cixous to an onto/eco-poethics I offer a close reading of "Clarice Lispector: the Approach: Letting Oneself (be) Read (by) Clarice Lispector: The Passion According to C.L." (1991). From the opening paragraph of the essay we learn that one of the key things Cixous discovers in Clarice is a writing that is nearer to life:

[Clarice] gives us not books but living saved from books, from narratives, repressive constructions. And through her writing-window we enter the awesome beauty of learning to read: going, by way of the body, to the other side of the self. Loving the true of the living, what seems *ungrateful* to narcissus eyes, the

nonprestigious, the nonimmediate, loving the origin, interesting oneself personally
with the impersonal, with the animal, with the thing. (1991 59)⁵⁹

By Cixous's reading, Clarice doesn't seek to impose structure on life, what she's calling "narrative," but rather, to develop reading and writing *as* an expression of ontological belonging. In Clarice, she finds a form of expression that teaches us how to read and write anew, a reading-writing that travels *through the body* to other parts of the self, to the self that's *of* the world. Recalling that, for Cixous, all writing is embodied writing we can begin to consider that what she is describing is a conception of consciousness as embedded in being, not a reflection upon it. And if consciousness it made *of* world than the process of writing "the true of the living" means learning to write from the "other side of the self," and not from a self that remains outside material life. There is no metaphysical chasm between self and world in this approach, even if being is recognized as rife with difference. Lispector, we might say then, helps Cixous invent reading-writing as a kind of eco-phenomenological practice.⁶⁰ "Clarice looks: and the world comes into presence. Born things are reborn. Gathered back" (61). In reading Clarice, Cixous realizes that it is possible to write from one's ontology, though the kind of expression required to do so is deeply poetic – indeterminate, sketchy, grasping – and bears little resemblance to the logos of Western thought. The conventions of Western logos find no truth in onto-immanent entanglement, which helps explain why Western philosophers have spent so much time obsessing about whether or not the human mind has direct access to the world itself: the body may be of the world, but this guarantees nothing. Though her encounter with Clarice, Cixous comes to realize that our epistemological constructs can never be fully separated from our ontological conditions, despite Western efforts to enact such severances. And so, rather than ignore, malign and reject this inescapable embeddedness, rather than treat it as an obstacle on the

path to truth, it is possible to develop a practice of reading-writing that expresses *from* a place of attunement to our onto-affinity. "What will we call 'reading,' when a text overflows all books and comes to meet us, giving itself to be lived" (59)? "Books" seek to enclose, to encircle and delimit. Books feign segregation from a rowdy and cacophonous materiality. Reading, by contrast, as she describes it here, needs no such illusion of order. And so, Cixous calls what Clarice offers "writing-living" (60), in order to signify the fact and nature of these differences. We need not write books as a way to (imagine we can) transcend our ontological belonging. We can, instead, cultivate writing as living: "Writing: touching the mystery, delicately, with the tips of the words, trying not to crush it, in order to un-lie" (1991, 134). Because, despite their claims, books don't achieve transcendental separation, nor do they bring us closer to being. If what we care about is a deeper understanding of our being, and Being itself, then books leave us in isolation and loneliness, disconnected from the things we so desperately seek to know. The revelation of Clarice, for Cixous, is the possibility of reading and writing as drawing living being nearer.

The practice of learning to read-write *from self as world* Cixous describes in this essay as "the approach": "At the school of Lispector, we learn the approach. We take lessons of things. The lessons of calling, letting ourselves be called. The lessons of letting come, receiving" (1991b, 60-61). To approach, she tells us, requires that we re-orient ourselves to our embedded environment such that we can recognize the ways that material being, or "things," are calling, or communicating with us all the time. To approach is to once again hear the delightful noise of existence that Western carnophallogocentrism teaches us to silence. In this way, to learn reading-writing-thinking as an approach requires new ways of understanding what texts are, what they do and what they can be. For Cixous, by way of Lispector, approaching describes reading-writing-

thinking as an inexhaustible process of attuning subjectivity to onto-entanglement. Rather than barreling out into the world, hungry to graft taxonomies of meaning onto materiality, approaching requires a different kind of movement, a going forth that is also a sitting back, a making oneself available for messages. To approach then is, perhaps counter-intuitively, a moving toward receiving, toward listening and allowing oneself to be called-forth. "Receiving is a science. Knowing how to receive is the best of gifts" (62). The approach is a way of reading-writing-thinking-living that enables a re-orientation of self to reality such that materiality becomes more palpable.

What else does an apprenticeship in the approach require? Cixous tells us that learning a living-reading-writing as approaching necessitates to shift into a different temporality:

Give us the lesson of slowness. Slowness: the slow time that we need to approach, to let everything approach, life, death, time, the thing...all the time we must put in to reach the thing, the other, to attain it without hurrying it, to come close to it. Her approach is political, Clarice('s) approach: it is the living space, the *betweenus*, that we must take care to keep. Having the humility, the generosity, not to jump over it, not to avoid it. (1991b 62)

To approach we need to slow down. We need to be willing to wait for the other to arrive, at an *other* time. We need to understand that bringing life nearer cannot be done on a schedule. We cannot decide when things will approach. It is this slowing down, this quieting of the self that desires structure and organization and is hungry to place everything into its established architecture that is required for the "living space," which is also the "betweenus" to be experienced. One cannot force the other to arrive. One must make space in the self for the other. One must invite. But "we live mass-mediatised, pressed, hard-pressed, blackmailed" (62). So, the

approach is political because this is the avenue and the process – the path itself and the walking of the path – that can keep otherness alive; "The approach that opens and leaves space for *the other*" (62). One person cannot establish the *betweenus* on their own. It is a possibility that must be formed relationally, even with the otherness of oneself. The living space of the *betweenus* demands a suspension of expectation, of regime, of consciousness as "the book already written and complete." Certain, resolute, totalizing forms of reading-writing-thinking cannot reach the world, the thing, the other. Learning the approach is learning the velocity of relationality: at what pace does other-being re-appear, does our always-already present relational embeddedness, the steady onto-chatter of living, become audible, readable, touchable? "Clarice's lesson is: by letting the thing recall something to us, we no longer forget, we un-forget, we recall the boundless other, called life" (62). Life *is* a boundless other. "The approach", then, teaches us to recognize that one is always-already being approached by a world, an other, even within the convergence we call "self": "If we know how to think, in the direction of the thing, letting ourselves be called to it, the thing leads us to a space composed of the thing and of us; of the thing and of all things" (62). In quieting the dichotomizing, logocentric machinery of Western thought, which tirelessly assesses and categorizes environments, we learn how to feel our way into a material known-unknown -- and the world itself it returned to us. But to get here we must become softly wide-open windows: "we must learn from things; we have everything to learn from them. How to let things make themselves known by themselves, before any translation, in the Clarice way, her way of being an open window, of being a hand full of soul, of being in front of each of the innumerable lives, of coming ahead softly wide-open to meet each thing" (64). We can have transcendental certainty of a dead world; the living world will only respond to a poetic touch.

To approach allows us to experience the world in its magnificent particularity: "restoring things to things, giving ourselves each thing for the first time, restoring the first time of things to ourselves, each time, restoring the lost first times to ourselves" (64). The approach doesn't absorb into a system. It nudges, grazes, and pets. In learning to read-write as a way of letting (our) material reality speak to us we become open to each thing's revelatory particularity.

Clarice's calls set out, out to find the thing that remains almost without being in the windowless space, that wanders almost without a face in the space without a look, giving it all the names that make it quiver outside the space without presence, making it come back to itself, it gathers itself into itself, petals itself, fills itself out around its own heart, blushes, hastily produces a first face. And comes to be rose. Names are hands she lays on space. (64)

In approaching, "names," or "words," become ways for us to "lay hands" and feel our way into material reality. This is not words as closed, transcendently determined signifiers: "There is a way of saying 'tulip' that kills every tulip (*tue toute tulipe*)...There is a way of taking a rose that would render all roses impossible: a sudden blind way of looking at it that blights it, scorches it, deroses it" (72). The words of the approach, by contrast, gather, grasp, and feel their way into being; they converse with being. Reading/being read by Clarice, Cixous asks: how can words help us gather and live the singular, extraordinary ordinariness of a rose? The "words" of a living reading-writing become prayers, calls, outstretched hands: "Calling it quietly, praying it to come, holding out a hand to it, the word" (63). On her own, Cixous says, she would not have figured out how to love flowers again, "they would have remained blurred, almost not flowers in my field of unvision" (72). But having been "lit up by Clarice," "they came to my eyes, and came to me still all wet with looking; they rose up looked-at, more clearly visible" (72). Clarice teaches

Cixous how to see flowers anew, how to know them alive: "Knowing how to see flowers: knowing how to live them" (72). "And suddenly I understood that I was reading by the light of flowers. I learned that, for a few hours, seen-flowers give out a luster of transparent milk" (72). In approaching, we desire not taxonomy but intimacy, and we come to understand the ways that codification begets estrangement.

By Cixous's interpretation, Clarice invents a reading-writing-thinking that keeps the world conscious, which renders the ordinary extraordinary. "Knowing how to 'see,' before sight, knowing how to hear, before comprehension, to keep the space of waiting open... What is open is time: not to absorb the thing, the other, but to let the thing present itself. Letting it produce its twenty-four faces" (62). In reading-writing-thinking the world through the approach, we become capable of experiencing the material rose as more than a confirmation of a pre-existing signifier: first I have the word rose and then I see roses and I know that I know them because I already have the word for them. The approach transforms the immobile rose as signifier into the always astonishing living rose:

[T]he rose spreads itself out in presence. It roses. It enters into the trance of its own presence and with all of its strength is there, with all of its contained roses, it makes the rose, for us, it delivers itself up to its I-am-a-rose in the flux of its own vitality. If we observe it in slow motion, we see that at each second the seemingly immobile rose is in full flight at the height of its presence toward our love, and enters in full radiance. (73)

The "seemingly immobile rose" is in fact a force. "It roses." It moves toward *us*. Learning to live at rose-time means being able to see/feel/touch the rose *rosing*, to see/feel/touch its striving, its vitality. The approach permits us to see the vibrant relationality already taking place. The rose

roses, it communicates; to approach is to learn the language of this vital, relational materiality. "Behind my own thought is the truth that is the world's. The illogic of nature" (Lispector qtd in Cixous, 75). The world doesn't exist outside my own thought, but behind it. We are always already entwined. I am indeed multitudes. *Behind* my structured thinking about the signifier rose there is a rose being-reaching out to me: "[i]n the space opened by [the rose's] coming, we live" (75). The more we practice the approach, through reading/being read and writing as listening to and responding to the particularities of being, the more we practice "learning to let things give us what they are when they are most alive" (65), and the more intimate we become with the truth of being.

To approach is to *try* to remain open to receiving material being in its immanent particularity, without agenda. "[W]e no longer hear what things still want to tell us, we translate, we translate, everything is translation and reduction, there is almost nothing left of the sea but a word without water" (65). To approach is to once again hear what things want to tell us, to hear what our immanent environments are saying to us at all times. "Clarice brings us first to the school of the nearest, in the kitchen" (68). And what do we so often find in the kitchen? Eggs. Cixous elaborates what it means to approach, to experience the world alive, to "bring forth claricely" (64), with a turn to Clarice's essay "The Chicken and the Egg," from *The Foreign Legion: Stories and Chronicles*, (Trans. Giovanni Pontiero 1986). She asks: how can we express/experience, through writing as a kind of phenomenological meditation/perception/contemplation/comprehension, "the splendor of an egg"?

To get us to discover the splendor of an egg in all of its strangeness takes a much greater force than getting us to admire a mountain: in the first lesson of the egg, we learn how to bring to a chicken's egg the attention that a mountain would

inspire us with. The approach to the egg is camouflaged by a veritable chain of calcareous habituations. (68)

It is more difficult to approach the egg than to appreciate the beauty of a mountain. Why? Because, Cixous argues, the egg is too close. So close, we no longer register the egg as something to contemplate. "[Clarice] saves the egg from the very-very-near. She brings it back from too near...[W]e go for years without seeing an egg come in...seeing an egg is impossible, with ordinary seeing" (68-69). Ordinary seeing hides the egg with a "veritable chain of calcareous habituations." We ensconce the egg in its "proper" semiotic environment, in its domesticated sphere, which we have already decided is not the realm of art, beauty or philosophy.⁶¹ How, then, do we make the egg strange such that we can approach its immanent particularity?

To once again see the splendour of the egg, Cixous explains, requires the patient writing-thinking-being *attention* of the approach: "An attention that is terse, active, discreet, warm, almost imperceptible, imponderable like a light rekindling of looks, regular, twenty-one days and twenty-one nights, at the kitchen window, and at last an egg is" (66). The approach is gentle but engaged. In approaching, we must *actively wait* for the egg to appear. We approach precisely but with warmth. We wait to see the egg the moment it appears, "within the moment when I see – and not to see through the memory of having seen in an instant now past" (69). The space of memory, which *recalls* the egg as signifier, returns us to habitual thinking, where the materiality and liveliness of *this* egg is eclipsed by its semiotic meaning. To write-approach the egg, then, is the most difficult task: "No sooner do I see an egg than I have seen an egg for the last three thousand years" (68). Learning the approach is a fragile, endless process. One never arrives at an enlightened place, free of memory and other sedimenting habits of mind. But to learn the

approach is to practice a different kind of embodied, embedded attention. And because Cixous understands the human to be part of an agential world, not merely an observer of an objectified, externalized world, we can practice attuning ourselves to what we are always already living. Approaching the egg is: "doing nothing, not upsetting, filling, replacing, taking up the space. Leaving the space alone" (66). Approaching the egg is "[s]urrounding it with discreet, confident, attentive questioning, attuning to, watching over it, for a long time, until penetrating into the essence" (66). Approaching the egg is cultivating a kind of love for the egg, to say "'egg' as I say 'love'; with astonishment and love; with contemplation" (68).

In approaching, immanent being becomes extraordinary. "[Clarice] designates nature as 'supernature,' a 'supernatural.' She stresses that there is nothing more supernatural than nature...there is nothing more marvelous than the ordinary" (1993, 129-30). Clarice doesn't *make* the ordinary extraordinary through her representation of it, Cixous explains, she seeks to use writing-thinking-being as a way to get closer, to experience the extraordinary that *is already* in the ordinary, *that is* ordinariness. "[Clarice] has the way of calling forth this object, at that particular moment, with that color of voice that permits the event; for it is possible to see to it that an egg looked at in a certain light is a work of art" (68-69). Writing as approaching, as expressions of materially embedded relationality, is a way to experience and relate to beings in their singularity, in the remarkable artistry of their being. It is a crucial shift as it moves the source of revelation from human culture to embedded human connection in an equally remarkable world.

From the approach to an onto/eco-poethics

In articulating the meaning of the approach in this essay, Cixous clarifies the extent to which Clarice helps her establish her own unique intervention into and rehabilitation of Western

thought. With Clarice, Cixous deepens and expands the materiality, phenomenology and immanence of *écriture féminine*, and puts Cixous on the path to thinking about writing as part of an onto/eco-poethics: a more comprehensive metaphysics that understands the potential in writing to express and communicate (with) enmeshed human existence. Clarice incites in Cixous a desire to write-think as a way to "let things give us what they are when they are most alive" (65). In short, Clarice brings Cixous to the invention of her own fundamental ontology *as* poetic communication within an entangled ecology:

We have forgotten that the world is there prior to us. We have forgotten how things have preceded us, how mountains grew up before our gaze existed, we forget how plants are called before we think to call them and recognize them, we have forgotten that it is plants that call us, when we think about calling them, that come to meet our bodies in blossom. (1991b, 65)

Nothing lives outside relation; there is always a being that precedes and determines a "me," an "us." Before Clarice, Cixous struggled with the loneliness of a dualist metaphysics that cannot collapse the chasm between self and world. She sensed the ways in which logocentric semiotic systems too often dim the vibrancy of life, constructing hyper-reality where we might otherwise have en fleshed encounter. "[W]e forget, we do not give the world life, we begin and do not finish, and the world without flowers, without animals, without geology, without things, is bored to death" (67). In relation with Clarice, Cixous comes to understand that the human mind doesn't live adrift in signifiers. "We" *begin* and *remain* in messy entangled relation. For Cixous, then, epistemology isn't collapsed into ontology, it is transformed when we recognize that the ontological cannot be separated from the epistemological: meaning is always made *in* material relation. If we understand ecology to be similarly naming a reality of embedded relationality,

then we move to a conception of ontology as being defined by a plethora of relationships among human and other-than-human beings: onto/ego. And because there is no transcendental outside to guarantee perfect correspondence among beings as they communicate/interact/co-produce, all truths are poetic. Codified semiotic systems can have many uses, of course, but they have too often been used to obscure *a priori* ontological affiliations. In approaching a model poetically, however, we recognize all truth to be contingent, and thus, in Cixous's words, alive. This doesn't render truth unreachable, but in fact the opposite. Truth can only be approached in its liveliness if we approach it poetically. And for Cixous, such ways of being poetically in/with living beings is simultaneously an ethic as it places relationality before all else: onto/eco-poethics.

Of her philosophical cohort, Cixous is exceptional in exploring immanent relational being *through* immanent relational forms of writing, in affirming the untapped potential of human modes of expression to communicate immanently. In other words, Cixous does not forego epistemology or aesthetics for the sake of ontology. As her interest in materiality deepens, she doesn't develop a taste for positivism. Rather than reject the potential of human language to relate to the real, or conceive of language as confirming our separation from material reality, Clarice shows Cixous what else writing can be:

There are attentions fragile and powerful like electronic retinas that reflect for a long time to let the promise behind the appearances of things dawn, imponderable attentions that allow things to happen or not happen, according to their own movement, before their names, before, preceding our thoughts of prey, before their images, preceding our buying visions, attentions that wait and abandon themselves to inspiration – so that things that have always been mutely present are able to make themselves heard. There is no silence. (1991b, 71)

There is no silence that must be crossed, no divide between self and world. We are never absent of world. And so writing can be a fragile, imponderable attention to life before proper names are assigned. We can practice a writing-thinking-living that circumvents "our thoughts of prey" and "our buying visions." We can po-ethically write-hum the music of being. To approach is not to *attempt* to reach being, but rather to un-mute, to near anew the beingness always already present, to invent new ways of singing the notes that were always there.

From onto/eco-poethics to immanent otherness

In reading-encountering Clarice, Cixous also clarifies for herself, in her own work, that the concern with egg-access, a worry deeply familiar to the Western mind, is irrelevant if we begin with a metaphysics of immanent embeddedness. It is not that I am egg and egg is me, the connection is not co-terminus. But there is entanglement such that it is possible to engage and communicate with egg on a shared plane. The transcendental mind asks: but how do we *know for sure* that we are communicating with egg? With Clarice, Cixous comes to realize that this is the wrong question. To begin with immanence, as Clarice does, is to begin with relationality. Relationality *is* existence, *is* essence. And therefore, it need not be confirmed or guaranteed. But this does not erase the otherness of beings, of being. In communicating across the panoply of *othernesses* that define immanent being, we come to understand that perfect, guaranteed certainty of communication, a kind of complete, co-extensive comprehension, is neither possible nor desired. Instead, the better we get at giving our attention without appropriating and imposing the more strangeness emerges:

To allow a thing to enter in its strangeness, light from the soul has to be put into each look, and the exterior light mixed with the interior light. An invisible aura forms around beings who are looked at well. Seeing before vision, seeing to see

and see, before the eye's narrative – this is not sorcery. It is the science of the other!" (66)

From Clarice Cixous uncovers the science of the other. She learns that it is the uncollapsible otherness of the egg that is the condition of possibility of its proximity. Carnophallogocentrism is the eye's narrative. To see with the eye's narrative is to not see seeing but to see narrative. The science of the other wants to get closer to beings and to do so, Cixous tells us, means we must see beings in their strangeness, as unfamiliar. It is *this* science that approaches the truth of beings. And thus, the truth of beings can only be approached poetically. It is the same with our "self", and with other humans. It may be easier to claim certainty within the semiotic habits of Western humanism, but Cixous tells us there is always excess in meaning. "[Clarice] wants the truth, the living, which has no meaning; the infinite endurance of the living" (1991b, 76). We are as connected and as other to each (human) other, and to our (other) self as we are to an egg. And so, the task of communicating, or approaching in order to move closer, to build intimacy with our enmeshed being, *traverses* the Western taxonomy of beings. In understanding metaphysics as an onto/eco-poethics of immanent otherness we come to realize that the truth of egg-human dialogue is as precarious *and as possible* as inter-human discourse. All communication takes place in simultaneous entanglement and estrangement.

Cixous as material feminist immanentist

"...it is not enough to put one's foot on the ground to come back to earth. It is an extremely difficult spiritual exercise, reintegrating the earthly, the earth, and the earth's composition in one's body, imagination, thought" (Cixous 1993, 150).

Having sketched out some of the crucial ways that Clarice helps move Cixous toward ontology, materiality and ecology, I turn now to a more focused consideration of how Cixous, to some

extent before, but particularly *after* the epiphany of Clarice Lispector, develops as a metaphysician of immanence. My aim for the following section is to clarify and elaborate the argument for reading Cixous through new materialism and environmental posthumanities as contributing to *and* transforming post-structuralist approaches to immanence. This analysis will lead into the final section of the chapter where I return to and elaborate on Cixous's crucial metaphysical insight that otherness is *part of* not exterior to immanent being. To make such arguments, I focus most of my attention on a set of Cixous's texts that are, in my reading, especially theoretical. My intention is to showcase a consistency of concerns across her work that lead us to seeing her first as a philosopher of immanence and secondly as contributing the vitally important idea of immanent otherness. In the more recently published *Abstracts and Brief Chronicles of the Time. I. Los, A Chapter* (2016), Cixous describes the text as "the master, the double, the prophet, almost the messiah of all the books I write at its call" (vi). While I don't engage with this text specifically, I do follow her in this idea that her writing is connected by a kind of through line, expressed in a myriad of ways. As such, I do not attempt a literature review of her vast oeuvre, but instead work to connect various key texts through a particular set of ideas. The ideas, in other words, provide the framework through which I will argue these many texts, and many others not discussed, can be read.

Immanence is an essential concept for an onto/eco-poetical reading of Cixous for several reasons. The concept has a long history in Western thought, most prominently as the metaphysical "other" to transcendence. "From Plato onwards, the western imaginary has typically figured immanence pejoratively in terms of the limits of matter, the body, sensibility, being, worldliness, etc. (Haynes 2012, 1).⁶² There has been, however, a "turn" among contemporary French theorists away from transcendence and toward a theorization of

immanence outside a binaristic model, or even *as the end* of binaristic thought.⁶³ What, then, is immanence if *not* the subverted other of transcendence? John Mullarkey, in *Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline*, notes the wide range of interpretative possibilities contained within the term, and the challenge of such potential: "[i]mmanence is everywhere, but its meaning is completely open: that is our problem (2006, 7). However, before considering how Cixous expands the potential of immanence, we ought to establish how the term is generally understood. In the broadest terms, immanence means "[e]xisting or remaining within'; being 'inherent'; being restricted entirely to some 'inside'; existing and acting 'within the physical world'..." (Mullarkey 2006, 7). An immanentist, in other words, conceives reality as inescapably material, and ontology as monist, or "flat," which is to say that there is only one dimension of being.⁶⁴ Nothing exists outside material being. In recognizing immanence as deeply concerned with material conditions, we promptly upset Anglo Western assessments of French post-structuralism as uninterested in or even hostile to materiality. The "post-structuralist" interest in immanence is necessarily an interest in materiality. Mullarkey makes this very point, arguing that French immanentism "amount[s] to a rekindled faith in the possibility of philosophy as a worldly and materialist thinking" (2). Such re-evaluations of the key investments of post-structuralism, of course, also help reconfigure the meaning and significance of Cixous. Reading Cixous within a larger "turn" to immanence reframes her writing and helps reveal the ways in which she redefines the boundaries of what counts as materially and ecologically relevant work. Though Cixous doesn't employ the term explicitly, a choice keeping with her general tendency to avoid official philosophical concepts, I hope to demonstrate the extent to which she is revealed to be a theorist of immanence when her work is read through the lens of new materialism.⁶⁵ Cixous's conceptualization of immanence is not only essential for its treatment of language, but also for

the ways in which she affirms and extends *feminist* new materialist approaches to immanence as embodied, embedded, entangled, and vibrant. To such efforts, Cixous brings a reconsideration of dualist metaphysics, as well as an emphasis on being as a joyful contamination by otherness.

Embodied Immanence

"I am an astrophysicist of miniscule stars" (Cixous 1997, 89).

Spinoza, a fore-figure of the immanentist turn, often acknowledged as one of the first Western thinkers to name lived reality as embodied, states explicitly that "the mind and the body are the same thing" (van der Tuin and Dolphijn 2012, 94). Spinoza, thus, sets the course in the Western tradition to define immanence through embodiment, an effort continued, as the story is typically told, by Hume, Bergson, Nietzsche and Deleuze (May, 2005). Recognizing and conceptualizing embodiment, however, can also be traced through a feminist genealogy, and "[in] the last thirty years, feminists have produced pioneering theories of the body" (Wilson 2015, 3), Cixous among them. Read through new materialist conceptions of immanence, we begin to see that even in some of her earliest and best-known work, such as "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976) and "Sorties" (1986), Cixous is trying to figure out how to release the immanent *body* from a phallogocentric transcendental hold. "We've been turned away from our bodies, shamefully taught to ignore them, to strike them with that stupid sexual modesty; we've been made victims of the old fool's game: each one will love the other sex" (1976, 885). Her interest in writing our way out of sexual difference is motivated by the ways in which dualist structures ascribe masculinity to transcendence and femininity to a lifeless, subordinated immanence. In talking about the "body," "women's body," and the "feminine," Cixous is working to undo the subversion of immanence, to undo the violent erasure of difference into sameness. "[T]o believe

in sexual difference is to know that difference is the differential. It is precisely -- and this is wonderful -- that there can only be difference if there are at least two sources" (1997, 52). To think write-think-imagine immanence positively is to receive more than one; "when there is opposition, an awful thing but one that exists, there is only one: which is to say nothing" (52). Dichotomous, binary thought, therefore, reduces the world to nothing. Cixous means to write-think-imagine materiality as the gift of being, rather than as standing reserve, waiting for the human mind to "use it." "Woman," "body," "femininity," are just some of the words that represent the negation of immanent life, words written into/as flesh.⁶⁶ But does this choice not affirm sexual difference as a dualist power struggle? In "The Author in Truth," Cixous asks herself why she chooses to use gender marked language; "Why keep words that are so entirely treacherous, dreadful, warmongering" (1991b, 150)? And she offers an answer: "because I cannot do otherwise than to find myself preceded by words" (150). And more importantly, Cixous explains that while "we could replace them with synonyms," unless we transform the deeper metaphysical structure, the new words will become "as closed, as immobile and petrifying, as the words 'masculine' and 'feminine'" (150). These new words would simply lay down the same old laws (150). Instead, "we must shake them all the time, like apples trees" (150).

In re-writing femininity Cixous is trying to shake the apple tree, trying to make femininity and the body signify anew. The "feminine," "woman" and "body" are the sites of material devastation, where the transcendental mind has imposed its preferences for centuries: "ever since the Bible and ever since bibles, we have been divided up as descendants of Eve and descendants of Adam" (1991b, 149). Such segregations, ultimately, leave everyone impoverished: "[F]or the sons of the Book: research, the desert, inexhaustible space,

encouraging, discouraging, the march straight ahead...Logos opens its great maw, and swallows us whole" (1991b, 15). The sons of the Book acquire knowledge through separation, ingratitude, the negation of dependency, the negation of the body, of material life and its myriad others. To think immanent material being outside this structure takes us to femininity and embodiment as the desecrated ground that must be revived, the forest that must be rediscovered: "For the daughters of the housewife: the straying into the forest. Deceived, disappointed, but brimming with curiosity" (1991b, 15). The daughters do not get logos, but they get wanderlust, they get the forest, because the sons left it behind. Thus, Cixous works to implode binarism from within, to use what's at hand – binary sex/gender – to re-write/invent immanent being *out* of this model, to approach immanence on her own terms. Cixous takes the side of "woman," "body," and "feminine" within a culturally and historically determined web of meaning/matter in order to transform the power structure intrinsic to binarism. "Woman un-thinks the unifying, regulating history that homogenizes and channels forces, herding contradictions into a single battlefield" (1976, 882). To un-think/re-write feminine embodiment as lack, to imagine feminine embodiment in positive, life-affirming terms, is to re-write/think immanent embodiment in Western thought.

One of the crucial contributions Cixous makes to immanence as embodiment, as discussed in Chapter 2, is to think the inescapable embodiment of "writing": "This is why I have never understood people who pretend that writing is not absolutely indissociable from a living and complete body" (1997, 64). I want to return to the larger metaphysical implications of this idea. To recognize that wherever there is writing there is also a body is one way to say that wherever there is epistemology there is ontology. As such, Cixous's writing-body troubles binaristic models that separate human epistemology from a generalized ontology, including eco-

critical segregations of "reality" and "text." "Write your self. Your body must be heard" (1976, 880). Cixous conceives and practices writing as an intensely corporeal process: "Writing to touch with letters, with lips, with breath, to caress with the tongue, to lick with the soul, to taste the blood of the beloved body, of life in its remoteness; to saturate the distance with desire" (1991b 4). The body-in-writing refutes Western mind/body dualism wherein the active mind thinks *while* the body remains silent. For Cixous, writing does not operate on a transcendental plane of knowledge while the body remains immanent. Indeed, Cixous's descriptions of writing are always oriented toward the idea of writing as a material process that traverses embodied self and animate world. "It is as if I were writing on the inside of myself. It is as if the page were really inside. The least outside possible. As close as possible to the body. As if my body enveloped my own paper" (1997, 105). In Cixous's world, there are no lonely minds thinking in transubstantiated space. There are myriad bodies interacting. There is *her* body writing, sitting at her desk, hands moving, responding to a habitat, getting up to answer the phone. "When the telephone rang, I was alive in the moment, I had orange all over, the peaceful light running orange before my windows was my philosophical joy" (1994, 88). She describes herself writing *in writing*, describes herself trying to write immanent materiality, or what she calls, post-Clarice, "writing the orange." Writing the orange functions as another way to describe the approach, the effort to communicate with immanent, animate materiality, of which we are a part. And thus, to write the body is to also write the environment of the body. Embodiment does not end at the skin; embodiment is an experience of enmeshed being, and writing is a form of living with, or in relation to this reality. The body cannot be separated from her environment: the telephone rings: she is a person, in a room, with a body endowed with ears that can hear a telephone. And this habitat is as animate as the body: "I recognize that the telephone is also a living being" (89).

Cixous's approach to writing-as-embodied renders thinking not only immanent, but intensely intimate, that is, indissociable from a world filled with human and non-human familiars/others. The writing-body is her onto-epistemological argument. Truth can only ever be written (accessed/approached) from an embodied materiality, which is by definition, mundane: "In my text everything remains stubbornly concrete. The material for any text of mine is the raw stuff of everyday life. There are cars and very specific makes of cars, saucepans, jam jars, plane tickets – all the accessories of life, both as common objects and as metaphors" (2008, 9). Cixous is thus an essential contributor to longstanding feminist efforts to recognize that "quotidian embodied life experience generates philosophical insights, and philosophical practice is felt as (different kinds of) lived experience" (Sharp and Taylor 2016, 18). But Cixous pushes the point further. It is not simply that quotidian embodied life *can* yield philosophical sight, but rather, that immanent materiality is the *only way* we access knowledge and truth. Cixous's embodied immanence seeks to approach-write-know a world that is *alive*, and such onto-knowing is always relational and always in process:

What is most true is poetic because it is not stopped-stoppable...There is a continuity in the living; whereas theory entails discontinuity, a cut, which is altogether the opposite of life. I am not anathematizing theory. It is indispensable, at times, to make progress, but alone it is false...All that advances is aerial, detached, uncatchable. (1997, 4)

In this short passage, Cixous condenses her critique of transcendental Western onto-epistemologies that trap and kill "life" in the name of certainty. In the search for truth stillness is necessary, but the knowledge it reveals must be recognized as provisional and contextual. The frozen picture is never the full picture. And once we start desiring a solid, unchanging, *deadened*

world over a teeming, always moving *living* world, we have forsaken our immanent materiality.⁶⁷ And in onto-epistemological terms, Cixous tells us, we have left the realm of truth. To seek immanent, *relational* truth that makes room for otherness means to listen, interpret, and engage, to always be *in translation*, living between/within languages. Transcendental structures aim to stop the motion, to create a place that can exist outside the *harmatten*, free from the troubles of dynamism, relationality and spatio-temporality. Transcendental epistemology promises to remove all that pesky uncertainty, except that it can't because truth, Cixous makes clear, is always immanent. To say the truth is poetic, as Cixous does, is to say that truth, to *be* truth, must remain open to otherness. Only in the poetic can the vibrant truths of immanent reality be expressed without freezing matter-meaning. "I speak the truth. I speak: the truth, I speak the word: truth, and just then the earth trembles and tilts violently against my intention, the *harmatten* rolls me in its enormous winds of apocalypse" (Cixous 1997, 15).

It is perhaps this commitment to philosophy as a poetic engagement with immanent, embodied being that helps explain why Cixous is often thought primarily as a writer of fiction, even when she tells us again and again "I am only a poet" (1991 106). Philosophers, the legend goes, conceptualize ideas from the solitude of a mind. Fiction writers engage in descriptions of everyday life, which is where the body lives. Cixous bridges the two as a poet-philosopher of immanent life: "I would like to write to what is living in life; I would like to be in the sea and render it in words." (1991 105). And the poet of immanent life strives to bring the world closer by writing *as* it is lived: "I am someone that looks at things from very, very close up. Seen through my eyes, little things are very big. Details are my kingdoms...Flat on my stomach in the garden, I see the ants, I see each of the ants' feet. Insects becomes my heroes...What is beautiful is that such little creatures can be so big" (1991 109). Not only does Cixous think-write from the

ant's perspective, she imagines herself as an ant: "I always see myself as that ant, that little letter wandering through a book whose end one cannot see. And that ant, that little letter does not see the end of the book" (1997 33). The ant animates immanence as embodiment for us, both in thinking-writing the life of the ant and in thinking-imagining ourselves as ants. To be embodied is to at once recognize that we are small, that we cannot see all, that we cannot see the end of the book. This is one of the ways that Cixous tells us that we cannot think transcendently. Immanence: to not see the end of the book. Yet so much is gained; as ants, details become kingdoms. The ant, it turns out, can better see-feel-live the beautiful particulars of miniscule being. Embodied immanence is ant-life.

Embedded Immanence

"My nearsightedness is the secret of my clairvoyance" (1998, 140).

Against the phallogocentric "mind"(body) that requires tight containment and sharp boundaries to manage its privilege, immanent embodiment, as Cixous conceives it, is defined by what we might call joyful contamination: boundless, life-affirming overflowings of human bodies into other bodies, both human and non-human. In *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, Cixous is clear that the human body is the site of overflowings *beyond* the human:

Perhaps there is an animal virtuality or potentiality dozing and awakening within us. In love relationships we have a tendency to give each other animal names. But we don't call each other vegetables as often. It is more difficult to elaborate upon our vegetable side and our identification with vegetables. If I have referred to these contiguities and overflowings, it is to emphasize that none of this can be done without the body. Our body is the place of this questioning. And what about the flower part in our body? (1993, 132)

Not only does Cixous cross animality with the human, she pushes us to think the body all the way to its vegality, its flora; "Perhaps flowers are our last human stage" (1993, 151). The body is the condition of possibility for such embedded intermingling. And given the watery, vegetative, floweriness of Cixousian embodiment, we can see that it is impossible to think the Cixous "body" without immediately thinking posthuman *embeddedness* – another touchstone of feminist new materialist immanentism. New materialists posit "a nomadic vision of the body," defined "as multi-functional and complex," "a transformer of flows and energies, affects, desires and imaginings" (Braidotti, in Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012, 34). As we see above, Cixous writes the inescapability of embodiment in positive terms as the connective tissue of a tangled world of others. The body, then, is more akin to a field of varying resistances, or an osmotic membrane, than a discrete enclosure. Such a conception of embodiment radically alters Western conceptions of individuality and autonomy, for the boundaries of the embedded body are fractal, and nearly impossible to conclusively measure. To join the "race of waves," then, is to become something altogether *other* than a human being *in* an environment; "we are ourselves sea, sand, coral, seaweed, beaches, tides, swimmers, children, waves More or less wavily sea, earth, sky-what matter would rebuff us? We know how to speak them all" (1976, 890). By Cixous's immanent embodiment, we go from being "in the world," which requires an "out" of this world, to being *as* world. Cixous: "... I love what I see from my window, which doesn't seem in the least exterior to me, even if it's outside: huge stirring of the oak tree branches, a palm grove of winds, a flotilla of vegetable sailboats, and all that – swept, rained upon, flooded, lit up again – is not separate from my dreaming corporality" (2013, 141-142). Again we see Cixous figuring embeddedness beyond the human, complicating distinctions between "human" subjects and "non-human" objects in the world.

As we saw in her engagement with Clarice's approach, Cixous often conceives of immanent embeddedness through the notion of "nearsightedness." In "The Last Painting or the Portrait of God": "I am nearsighted...I write because I am nearsighted" (1991b, 109). She invokes the concept many times in *Rootprints*, to describe her onto-epistemological approach: "I apply myself to 'seeing' the world nude, that is, almost to e-nu-merating the world, with the naked, obstinate, defenceless eye of my nearsightedness" (1997, 3). The statement seems contradictory at first; how can you obtain truth with imperfect vision, while looking *too* close up, as it were? Cixous tells us that truth can *only* be obtained this way, making her affinity for immanence very clear. "I have never known the state of a person whose eyes see 'the world-as-it-is-supposed-to-be-seen-by-seeing-human-eyes'" (1997, 89). We might call this fractal sight, "a vision that is hyperattentive to details," what Cixous describes as the sight of "a scrutinizing ant" (89). This is embedded writing-thinking-seeing. The more closely one looks the more one sees, the more materiality is revealed. Where transcendental thought seeks a view from above such that the details are blurred and the picture can be said to be complete, Cixous's embedded thinking is not worried about the seemingly endless particularities of life. To the contrary, as we saw with Cixous's Clarice, these so-called mundane specificities are what comprise being-itself.

Entangled Immanence

Onto-embeddedness, for Cixous, is inseparable from onto-entanglement. The nature of our embeddedness is not as discrete beings, but beings, as noted above, that flow into and out of other beings, *are themselves* other beings: "Our interior identifications are innumerable: grandfather, granddaughter, brother...vegetable, animal, chemical, phonic, astral..." (2010, 68). For Cixous, subjectivity is a private/public phenomenon, one that takes us from the intimacy of familial relations all the way to the cosmos. "Inter-subjectivity" doesn't sufficiently capture the

depths of Cixousian entanglement. She describes, across many genres, the ways in which human subjectivity is indissociable from a myriad of others, of all shapes, sizes and colours. "[O]ur mothers, believed in trance, in transformation, in transition, in transfer: one species passed into another, one realm became another, from the human to the mineral to the vegetal, in a generalized, infinite, magnificent, and unbounded way" (1993, 129). Here Cixous emphasizes the Anglo Western origins of discrete, singular subjectivity, a curious development in a sea of axiomatic co-imbrication. Unlike cultures of transfer, Western thought prefers what Cixous regularly describes simply as "the Law": the imposition of arbitrary boundaries on the teeming plethora of tangled life. Critiquing "the law" is perhaps one of the most explicit ways that Cixous challenges the violent power structures of the transcendental and the ways in which it sinks its teeth into a happily cross-breeding materiality. "This is what the law wants to avoid at all cost. It does not want us to feel regret, or desire, for a mode of life that would take as an example not God and the saints, but animals" (1990, 12). The denial of onto-indebtedness, of deep integration that "the law" helps maintain is essential to maintaining societies of violence and oppression. First, Cixous states, we are embedded, entangled bodies; first, we are immanent. Only later does "the Law" work to "sum up," to assign "general and global names" to our immanent sentience.

First of all we are sentient beings. The most impassioned, the most passionate in us is the quantity, the flood of extremely fine and subtle affects that take our body as a place for manifestation. It begins in this way, and it is only belatedly, and to go quickly, to sum up, that we give general and global names to a whole quantity of particular phenomena. (1997, 18)

The problem is not in naming: "To name is one of a thousand gestures that one can make toward the other. It is like caressing, looking, silently calling" (1990, 12). Nor is the problem organized

language: "It is good to live in languages on the condition that they not lay down the law" (1990, 12). The problem is the construction of a transcendental system of "Law" that seeks to separate, divide and deny the material felicity of entanglement, to obscure and even deny the "floor of affects." Referencing the institution of transcendental law established for Abrahamic cultures in the Book of Genesis, Cixous argues that the denial of "the apple" is the denial of the immanent, material body. To embrace the apple is to return to the "other side of the law," where the pleasures of immanent sentience can be lived: "If we do touch, we will discover that the apple has an inside and that it tastes good. We will run over to the side of pleasure that goes through the mouth" (1990, 11). The secret of "the law" is that it protects nothing but itself, and keeps us from sensuous, libidinally rich life; "the system that puts a keeper before the law, the secret of which is life (the secret of which is that there is no secret)" (1990, 11). Our embedded, entangled bodies are sites for a deluge of sensations, sensations that pre/post-exist us as apparent individuals, worldly sensations that *take* our body, rather than emerging from within the body. The human subject Cixous conceives, then, is shot through with interruptions to her being; she only appears to have a name, a coherent identity, *later*, for pragmatic purposes. In immanent truth, titles are invented, but we belong to the race of waves:

Unleashed and raging, she belongs to the race of waves. She arises, she approaches, she lifts up, she reaches, covers over, washes a shore, flows embracing the cliff's least undulation, already she is another, arising again....She has never "held still"; explosion, diffusion, effervescence, abundance, she takes pleasure in being boundless, outside self, outside same... She doesn't hold still, she overflows. (1986 90-91)

Entanglement *precedes* identity; "we begin to be in such intersubjectivity that the subject is only intersubjectivity (1997, 77).

Cixous also exploits the ready-made availability of sexual difference to describe onto-entanglement, using the categories at hand to re-invent being-thinking. In "Tales of Sexual Difference," we find Cixous describing immanent onto-entanglement through a gendered lens: "...often a 'woman' is not a woman nor a 'man' a man...very often a 'woman,' a 'man' is an ensemble of x elements. I know a woman who is at second glance an ensemble of five little boys and one little girl" (2010, 57). Cixous scrambles the phallogocentric designations of sexual difference by telling us that in immanent reality beings do not obey the laws of binarism: "...hundreds of times we have heard a woman composed of uncle, grandnephew, big brother, etc., and at the same time we make do with the appearance" (2010, 58). It is well established within the secondary literature on Cixous that her discussion of sexual difference is connected to her commitment to challenging hierarchical gender relations, to raising the status of "women."⁶⁸ I don't wish to negate the recognition of such contributions; however, I do contend that a new materialist interpretation reveals new layers in said efforts. Instead of being exclusively interested in sex/gender, we might think of Cixous's work with sexual difference as her exploration and re-writing of one of the primary sites of ontological bifurcation, where the fantasy of separation is written into being. Phallogocentric investments in sexual difference, in other words, function as one of the principal sites of amputation from entanglement. We receive one of the first lessons of onto-segregation when we learn binary gender identification. Cixous yearns to re-write sexual difference out of segregation and into immanent entanglement. Cixous identifies in the fantasy of separation a particular economy, one that is closed and always returning to self. Against this economy she proposes an alternative, which she genders female,

invoking all of immanent life that has found itself silenced through segregation and bifurcation. She is not invested in maintaining sexual difference; she takes the pre-existing sexual difference-as-hierarchy and re-writes the terms of gender binarism in order to rehabilitate *all* of immanent life: "that *jouissance* of yours to which I am and I remain an enchanted and unknowing witness" (1997, 53).⁶⁹

Sharp ontological edges neatly separating beings are inconceivable in an immanent Cixousian universe where "the wonder of being several" overrides the security of the Law and the Book: "she does not protect herself at seeing, being, pleasuring in her gift of changeability. I am spacious singing Flesh: onto which is grafted no one knows which I – which masculine or feminine, more or less human but above all living, because changing I" (1994, 44-45). Living *because* changing. "She" does not protect "herself" from the grafting that abounds. To be entangled is to reject the lie of singular, isolated subjectivity, to recognize distinctions among entities as provisional, not absolute. This is the embodied, embedded and entangled (inter)subject of immanent materiality that Cixous seeks to describe/invent. And this entangled reality is above all a source of pleasure, the condition of the possibility of love -- not a source of anguish:

Heterogeneous, yes. For her joyous benefit she is erogenous; she is the erotogeneity of the heterogeneous: airborne swimmer, in flight, she does not cling to herself; she is dispersible, prodigious, stunning, desirous and capable of others, of the other woman that she will be, of the other woman she isn't, of him, of you.
(1976, 889-890)

Again we enter the race of waves. Elation is made possible not just through inter-*human* - subjectivity, a subjectivity that exists "in-between" human beings, but from subjectivity-

dispersed-in-the-world, swimming in air, a worldly subjectivity that is "desirous and capable of others."

This focus on entangled subjectivity as a source of joy, of elation, is unique to Cixous. Cixous offers a vision of entanglement that is both materially rooted and ecstatic:

I can go further than myself because there is further-than-myself in myself – as there is in all beings. This further-than-myself in myself can only be a mixture of others and myself. Traces of others, the voices of my others – but who? We are full of voices, like all islands. (1997, 56)

Here, she acknowledges the element of human consciousness that gives the illusion of separation, of "being island," but undoes the assumptions that accompany such being by reminding us that islands are always full of voices, an excess of subjectivity that is not exclusive to the *human* being, but rather "is in all beings." The joy of onto-entanglement lives in the immense possibility of the in-between, the relation:

Writing is precisely working (in) the in-between, inspecting the process of the same and of the other without which nothing can live... a process of different subjects knowing one another and beginning one another anew only from the living boundaries of the other: a multiple and inexhaustible course with millions of encounters and transformations of the same into the other and into the in-between. (1976, 883).

Immanent entanglement gives me more than a self, and gives all beings more than their own being. Through entanglement, we all *go further*. Rather than being "fixed in sequences of struggle and expulsion or some other form of death" (1976, 883), a struggle endemic to binarism, with immanent entanglement we get "a multiple and inexhaustible course with millions of

encounters and transformations," we get "the living boundaries of the other." Entanglement is the crossing of borders, of "the invisible lines that stir up war" (1993, 131). But the borders are illusory, "they are as incredible as unicorns" (1993, 131). Immanence as entanglement reminds us that "we are made of assemblings that hide their truth, their atomic side, from us" (1993, 139). To reach the wealth of entanglement we must be willing to tremble across the myriad borders that maintain so many taxonomies of power: "the person who doesn't tremble while crossing a border doesn't know there is a border and doesn't cast doubt on their own definition" (1993, 131). Cling to separation, to never crossing the border, and we lose materiality, we lose ourselves, we lose the other, "we forget *matter*, which we don't notice: which we live, which we are" (1993, 130). And when we forget our onto-entanglement, "we do not give the world life, we begin and do not finish, and the world without flowers, without animals, without geology, without things is bored to death" (1991b, 66-67).

Vibrant Immanence

"Each object is in reality a small virtual volcano" (1997 4).

"I resist fixation as I resist the title that will fix a text" (1997, 76).

The "living boundaries of the other" is a good place to begin a discussion of Cixous's conception of the *vibrancy* of immanent materiality. To build on earlier discussions, one of the clearest ways that Cixous articulates her material awakening through Clarice is with the notion of "returning the orange." Before Clarice, despite her best efforts to re-write/think Western binarism, Cixous remained estranged from materiality, unable to reach the orange:

Mute I had fled the orange, my writing fled the secret voice of the orange, I
withdrew from the shame of being unable to receive the benediction of the fruit

giving itself peacefully, for my hand was too lonely, and in such loneliness, my hand no longer had the strength to believe in the orange, I had in common with myself only the shame and discouragement, my hand had no more the goodness of knowing the orange's goodness, the fruit's fullness, my writing was separated from the orange, didn't write the orange, didn't go to it, didn't call it, didn't carry the juice to my lips. (1994, 86)

In Cixous's descriptions we hear both longing and relief. She reflects on the emotional toil of being disconnected from material being, and the loneliness of binarism that leaves us forever reaching for the world-itself, spending all our time with angiosperms. The metaphysical implications or onto-estrangement are described here in terms of deficit and revelation – the withdrawal and rediscovery of the orange. In carrying the juice of the orange to her lips, Cixous unveils the lie of Western binarism which tells us we should care more about representations of the orange than in drinking the juice itself. Or better put, binarism tells us that what matters *most* in the orange is its taxonomical meaning, and not its particularized radiance. What Cixous realizes more acutely through reading Clarice is that claims to transcendental authority are a lie, reality is immanent, and thus the obsession with trying to know a mischievous, elusive "world-in-itself" is irrelevant. And further still, the world itself, the orange itself is vibrant, which is to say, immanent reality is animate, always in process. "The orange is a beginning. Starting out from the orange all voyages are possible" (1994, 88). The transcendental conceit requires stability in order to maintain the illusion of absolute certainty. Transcendental epistemology requires a dead, mute ontology to stabilize its claims. But the vibrancy of immanent being tells us that such a science can only grasp pieces of the truth, the pieces frozen in time at the moment the picture is taken. We can either have (false) certainty about a dead world, or contingent,

dynamic truth about a living world. If all we have is the concept of orange, we do not have the truth of the orange, and "all of the sense relations that every orange helps keep alive and circulates, with life, death, women, forms, volumes, movement, matter, the ways of metamorphoses, the invisible links between fruits and bodies" (1994, 87) are lost. *Because* we are embodied, embedded and entangled beings, we can return to the immanent orange, for it was never not there. We just pretended we couldn't reach it in order to get into heaven. Immanence tells us that there is no heaven, so all we got for giving up the orange, for forsaking our vibrant immanency, is separation and loneliness; and lots of dead oranges. Understanding matter as vibrant intensifies and particularizes the orange, and all beings. Rather than fixating on squeezing being into mute and manageable units, immanence opens up the expressive materiality to which we belong. In Cixous's words: "Each body distributes in its own special way, without model or norm, the nonfinite and changing totality of its desires" (1976, 891). Yes, there is connection, but in (poetic, dynamic) truth, each orange distributes in its own special way. To say that materiality is vibrant, therefore, is also to recognize the extent to which humans live among agential others: "in the absence, in the effacement of the personal subject of enunciation, everything in the utterance becomes subject. There is a great mass of subjects: to live is subject, apple is subject, so is tiger" (1990, 22); orange companions.

In considering how Cixous approaches the vibrancy of immanence, I want to elaborate this idea that Cixous emphasizes of wanting to understand truth and life *as alive*: "living means wanting everything that is, everything that lives, and wanting it alive" (1976, 891). In *Feminist Philosophies of Life*, editors Hasana Sharp and Chloë Taylor note that the "need for a broader analytic of life has long been heralded by ecofeminists" (2016, 4). In what to my mind is one of the most essential paragraphs in all of Cixous's work, she states explicitly her onto/eco-poethics

of immanence through the idea of poetic truth as the only truth capable of knowing being in its vibrancy. Only the poetic can speak the language of life:

All that is stopped, grasped, all that is subjugated, easily transmitted, easily picked up, all that comes under the word concept, which is to say all that is taken, caged, is less true. Has lost what is life itself which is always in the process of seething, of emitting, of transmitting itself. Each object is in reality a small virtual volcano.

(1997, 4)

Cixous equates less *true* with less *alive*, again drawing epistemology and ontology into new levels of intimacy. The vibrancy of immanence is only kept lively if it is approached poetically, which is to say, approached without foreclosing on its incalculability: "It is the science of the other! An art in itself; and all the ways of letting all the beings with their different strangenesses enter our proximity are regions that ask to be approached, each with an appropriate patience" (1991b, 66). To approach each virtual volcano requires each appropriate patience. To be nearer to life, to truth, we must safeguard its vibrancy, and in safeguarding the vibrancy of being we recognize that no cage will suffice. "All that is caged is less true." The vibrancy of immanent being lives in the in-between-beings, the relation, the exchange, the movement, the circulation. We have returned to the *between-us* as "the living space," "the betweenus [is]...the approach that opens and leaves space for the other" (1991, 62). The *betweenus* is neither me nor not-me; it is not binary. Nearness and truth recede whenever we occupy the position of totalizing subject apprehending a perfectly knowable world. In the between, in the relation, life lives:

[I]t is a matter of receiving the lesson of things. If we know how to think, in the direction of the thing, letting ourselves be called to it, the thing leads us to a space composed of the thing and of us; of the thing and of all things. Clarice's lesson is:

by letting the thing recall something to us, we no longer forget, we un-forget, we recall the boundless other, called life. (62)

From *between-us* back to the approach, to the idea of learning, of an apprenticeship, a process of "learning to let things give us what they are when they are most alive" (65). We know what things give us when they are dead; what do they give us, and how do we know them, when they are most alive?

Cixous recognizes that we (privileged Westerners) are good at studying that which has been killed, constructing whole systems on the backs of dead things, beings emptied of their shimmery otherness, no longer able to surprise us by being *other* than we want/expect/predict. The transcendental outside only works epistemologically with a dead world: hence the incessant failures of Western practices of prediction. What we are not so good at, what Cixous says we must learn, is how to receive the lessons that arrive when things are at their liveliest. Naturally, it is Clarice who shows us the way: "For Clarice has the terrifying splendor of daring the real, which is not beautiful, which is not organized, of daring the living, which is not symbolized, which is not personal, of being in the kernel of the *is* that is without the self, of writing by the flow of signs without history" (1991b, 76). The "rehabilitation of what *is*" cannot occur through direct appropriation, taking the world as object *to* the mind of a human subject. If we want the world alive, then we must learn how to approach without erasing otherness. Perhaps we could say, then, that we need a *subject* oriented ontology, in which all of being is subjectified, *and other*, rather than an object oriented ontology.⁷⁰ Nearness, counter-intuitively, becomes possible only when that which approaches is not made to fully arrive. Or, more accurately, when we recognize that "the boundless other called life" (1991b, 62), can *never* fully arrive precisely because of its otherness, which *is* its liveliness, we grow nearer.

Immanence as Ecology

In considering the vibrancy of a Cixousian immanence, we gain a better sense of how Cixous's approach to re-writing/thinking being has intrinsic ecological relevance. In *Rethinking Nature* (2004), editors Bruce V. Foltz and Robert Frodeman work to re-configure general understandings of what counts as ecologically relevant theory in order to make the case for Continental thought as crucially important to environment philosophy. In line with such efforts, they contend that "[Continental] thinkers...can be taken as suggesting the possibility of something like a new 'metaphysics' of nature" (2004 6). In this regard, Foltz and Frodeman help clear discursive space for a post-deconstructive framing of "post-structuralism" through immanence. Van der Tuin and Dolphijn describe this new metaphysics as new materialism, explicitly acknowledging the turn to immanence as essential to these developments, but under-emphasizing the ecological connection. I contend that in conceiving immanence as embodied, embedded, entangled, vibrant, *and* defined by otherness, it is Cixous that gives us one of our most ecologically significant readings of immanence. Cixous's emphasis on relationality *as* immanent being is particularly resonant with ecological thought. In short, if ecology is the study of organisms in relation and in situ, and environmental ethics is the consideration of how to have good and just relations, then Cixous work has intrinsic eco-theoretical value. Cixousian immanence has ecological significance because it helps re-configure, as evidenced in the reading of the approach, our very understanding of human subjectivity embedded in material reality. Cixous brings to the discussion not only critique of what is unjust in the myriad oppressions of binarism, but also what is lost: "My hand was too lonely, and in such loneliness, my hand no longer had the strength to believe in the orange" (1994, 86). For Cixous, believing in the orange means recognizing the loneliness of Western transcendentalism, whereby we sacrifice our

immanent affiliation with the vibrant fecundity of material life in order to maintain (the illusion of) human exceptionalism. With Clarice, Cixous develops an *immanent* onto/eco-poethics that aims, among other things, to soothe the onto/eco-logical loneliness of Western metaphysics where the orange can only be reached by way of human representation of it. In finding a path back to the orange, her way of describing the invention of a metaphysics of embodied, embedded, entangled and vibrant immanence, Cixous finds a way to "put one's foot on the ground," without rejecting human processes of meaning making.

Cixous's onto/eco-poethics of Immanent Otherness

In the final section of the chapter, I want to bring more detail and clarity to the role that otherness plays in Cixous's onto/eco-poethical approach to immanence. Cixous makes her most critical and far-reaching offering to the new metaphysics of immanence by bringing otherness, a term typically associated in the Continental tradition with the transcendental (Agamben 1999), *into* immanence. Cixous is unique within both her phenomenological and post-structuralist cohort in her conception of otherness as not antithetical to but *of* immanence. Levinas, for example, in both *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1969), and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1978), is resolute that the other *isn't*, which is to say, that otherness is *not* of the order of being. For Levinas, it is the non-being of otherness, the impossibility of knowing the other, of making the other an object for the self, that is the condition of possibility for ethics. The encounter with the other, in other words, is irreducible to an immanent ontology. Deleuze, by contrast, rejects otherness in favour of difference (van der Tuin and Dolphijn 2012, 87), proposing difference as the constitutive element of immanence and the univocity of Being. Cixous has also dedicated her writing-life('s) work to challenging the treatment of difference and otherness in Western thought: "Philosophy has always wanted to think its other, to interiorize,

incorporate it. From the moment it thinks its other, the other is no longer other but becomes the same. It enters into the space of what can be thought, it loses its strangeness" (Cixous 1991a, 90). However, Cixous distinguishes a *kind* of thinking, not thinking itself, as erasing the other. Thus, she works to invent ways of writing-thinking-relating that do not foreclose on otherness. In this and other ways, Cixous forges a path *through* Levinas, Derrida and Lacan in conceiving otherness *as* material, or empirical, *and*, crucially, in contending otherness is constitutive of the self: "Like all living beings, who are sometimes invaded, sometimes populated, incarnated by others, drawing life from others, giving life. Who do not know themselves" (1991b, 83).⁷¹ Cixous recognizes being *as* entangled relationality wrapped up with otherness. No being is sovereign, including human beings. We are *all* among others. Otherness is not only the engine of onto-differentiation, in the spirit of Deleuze, it is the poetic at the heart of the machine. In other words, Cixous gives us an ethics, or poethics, of otherness within immanent being.⁷² Rather than the dualist structure of the other as that against which I form an "I," a self, Cixous argues for a constant play between self and other, a process that pervades both the self and the other, that is affirmative, that is to say, good:

[T]he other is so very much other. Is so very much not-me. The fact that we can say to each other all the time: here I am not like you. And this always takes place in the exchange, in the system of reflection where is it the other we look at – we never see ourselves; we are always blind; we see of ourselves what comes back to us through (the difference of) the other. And this is not much. We see much more of the other. Or rather, on the one hand, we see an enormous amount of the other; and on the other hand, at a certain point we do not see. There is a point where the

unknown begins. The secret other, the other secret, the other itself. The other that the other does not know. (1997, 16)

The other is inside me, both as my-other-self and my other-other. "I can only try to understand, I can only work on, or take note of *why* and how one is knocked off one's feet, I can only ask myself what that means, if I begin by noticing it in myself; myself as the first other" (1997, 90). Her other is gestating. There is no onto-other entanglement, for Levinas. Levinas's other is close, but inaccessible, beyond: transcendent. Levinas's other offers absolute alterity, infinity; Cixous's other offers the gift of vibrant, material co-imbricated immanence. Cixous's other is generative, her other *gives life*; "the living space, the betweenus...the approach that opens and leaves space for the other" (1991, 62).

With Cixous, then, we find ourselves nestled in the folds of otherness. The unknowable other isn't domesticated in the classic sense of the term as rendering known, and yet, Cixous's other is in the house, in my bed, sleeping beside me, seeping inside me. Levinas's other remains *exterior* to the self. Cixous locates the other *within* material embodiment, entanglement, and embeddedness, and so the self is full of others: "[w]e are full of voices, like all islands" (1997, 56). This is different than saying the self is multiple. It is possible, even if not plausible, to know one's multiple selves. Cixous wants a kind of knowing -- which is why she prefers philosophy as writing -- that protects the otherness of the other, that allows being to be *both* near and enigmatic, unfathomable. This is poetic knowing: "I call 'poet' any writing being who sets out on this path, in quest of what I call the second innocence, the one that comes after knowing, that one that no longer knows, the one that knows how not to know" (1991b, 114). In other words, we do not surrender to the otherness of the other. Otherness is the beginning not the end of the story. We search, as detailed in the sections above, for ways to approach the other *as* other. Cixous

seeks ways to achieve intimate relations with the other that allow the other to remain other. "It is the living space, the *betweenus*, that we must take care to keep. Having the humility, the generosity, not to jump over it, not to avoid it... We must save the approach that opens and leaves space for *the other*" (1991b, 62). Perhaps we need only say that Cixous seeks to paint the portrait of God.

In *Rootprints*, Mireille Calle-Gruber discusses "the staging of otherness" in Cixous, "one of the essential aspects" of her writing (1997, 8). Calle-Gruber suggests that Cixous's thinking-writing otherness is disturbing for readers who are "more comfortable being in an illusion of sameness" and therefore reject being "incessantly thwarted...by the other" (8). She reads Cixous's otherness as an event, an interruption to "my" being: "*I-prey-to-the-other. I in a bout of otherness -- as one would say about a fever*" (8). Cixous ruffles against this description, and clarifies that otherness, for her, never lets up, is part of the immanent fabric of being:

Otherness, yes. But are we not always prey to otherness? The fever only lets up in appearance. At the exterior floor, 'up above', at the floor of semblance -- of myself -- of order. Below, next door, we are always adrift. We respond straight ahead and think sideways. Always in the process of betraying (ourselves), of leaving (ourselves)."
(1997 9)

Rather than otherness as exception, as interruption – "a bout of fever" – Cixous conceives of *otherness* as a permanent state of being, a reality we hide from, somewhat necessarily, through the semblance of sameness/order. Beneath structure, "we are always adrift." And this *adriftness* defines both self and other/non-self, which are always shifting, being left behind. Where Calle-Gruber offers a picture of otherness that is closer to Levinas and Derrida, where the other arrives from and remains outside, Cixous counters with *an ontology* of otherness. There is no *present*

self and a *transcendent*, non-ontological other, as in the Levinasian conception. Self and other do not occupy different onto-planes. There is only immanent otherness: the nature of the aporetic exchange that *is* being a self *with* others, which, again and importantly, includes the self *as* other.

Cixous acknowledged the discomforts of immanent otherness for beings attached to the illusion of discrete being. In "Sorties," Cixous plays within the constructs of sexual difference to articulate two different orientations toward otherness. Describing the disturbance of immanent otherness as a "possession," Cixous notes that "[b]eing possessed is not desirable for a masculine Imaginary" (1986, 86). Whereas, "woman admits there is an other. In her becoming-woman, she has not erased the bisexuality latent in the girl as in the boy...It is much harder for man to let the other come through him" (85). To be possessed by otherness from the perspective of a transcendental masculinized Imaginary of sameness, stillness and immutability is a tyranny. Cixous acknowledges the way a particular concept -- possession -- is used to subjugate beings/life through its connection with "femininity" -- being possessed is a passivity, "a dangerous feminine position" (86) -- while also rehabilitating the subjugated term through an *affirmative* reading of the "feminine": "[t]hrough the opening that is her danger, she comes out of herself to go to the other" (1986, 86). Read upside down, from the perspective of femininity and the possession of otherness *as positives*, and the state of being possessed becomes a passageway for the immanent other, the space "from which all life soars":

Writing is the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me – the other that I am and am not, that I don't know how to be, but that I feel passing, that makes me live – that tears me apart, disturbs me, changes me, who? – a feminine one, a masculine one, some? – several, some unknown, which is

indeed what gives me the desire to know and from which all life soars. (1986 85-86)

If we read this discussion as Cixous's reworking of immanence, we see that to be possessed, from the perspective of transcendentalism, is to be unable to achieve the coveted "outside," god-like position of knowledge/authority/power. Historically, immanence as a possession by otherness/materiality was something to be conquered. But just as she wants to free femininity from its dualist meaning, Cixous reads possession-by-immanent otherness positively, as the source of life: the other that I am and am not is what makes me live, keeps living alive in the movement between-us. The reversal is a *dispossession* of self, a dispossession that is the condition of life itself: "questioning (in) the between (letting oneself be questioned) of same *and of other* without which nothing lives" (1986, 86).

In surrendering to this endless and unfixable play between self and other, what was once experienced as a possession, as being infiltrated and pervaded, is transformed into what Cixous calls "feminine light." Rewriting the traditional trope of "light" as transcendental, Cixous describes a "feminine light" that comes from below, from within the belly of materiality:

Feminine light doesn't come from above, doesn't fall, doesn't strike, doesn't go through. It radiates, it is a slow, sweet, difficult, absolutely unstoppable, painful rising that reaches and impregnates lands, that filters, that wells up, that finally tears open, wets and spreads apart what is dull and thick, the stolid, the volumes... This light doesn't plant, it spawns. And I see that she looks very closely with this light and she sees the veins and the nerves of matter. Which he has no need of. (1986 88)

To plant is to claim, to territoriatize, to domesticate. To spawn is to generate, to move outward, to desire *more* otherness, not less. Feminine light emanates from and spreads through the ground, rather than always looking up and out. And for Cixous, this is the light of immanent otherness, a light that fertilizes and animates. Cixous's immanent other *gives*: "The other in all his or her forms gives me *I*. It is on the occasion of the other that *I* catch sight of *me*; or that *I* catch *me* at: reacting, choosing, refusing, accepting. It is the other who makes my portrait. Always. And luckily. The other of all sorts, is also of all diverse richness" (1997, 13). Otherness, written by Cixous, is neither possession nor responsibility. It is the condition of possibility for fecund being.

Cixous is also clear that the gift of the other is both a human and worldly phenomenon. The other is not just the other-in-me, the other-not-me, or the other-not-me-in me, but also the other-world: "*Me* is thus the meeting place between my sighted soul and you? I raise the visor and behold: the world rises for me. Is given to me. The gift of the world. What is given to me in this sudden rising is at once the world and giving" (1998, 141). In *Rootprints*, Cixous describes the gift of immanent otherness-as-life-world in terms of the moon:

What I work on [is] the *passage*. In the passage *from the one to the other, de l'une a l'autre*...I think that when I write, it is because something goes from *l'une a l'autre*, there and back. But also, in play, I wrote: *de lune a l'autre*, from (the) *moon* to the other. It's a game, but a serious one. It is a way of dehierarchizing – everything. Being geocentric, because we are geocentric, we say: from the earth to. And the moon is the other. For a very long time I have felt myself to be in a poetic and fantasmatic relationship to the moon our other...to whom I always say – silently looking at her – excuse me for acting as if you were the other, where

you are *lune*....The earth seen from the point of view of the moon is revived: it is unknown; to be rediscovered. (1997, 10)

Here, Cixous is not *only* speaking of the moon metaphorically, as a re-writing of phallogocentrism, though this is part of "the play," but also she is talking about the actual moon. She has a relationship with the moon itself: she speaks to her, she thinks about her, she imagines herself/us from the point of view of *lune*. The *otherness* of immanence, which takes us continually from *l'une a l'autre/lune a l'autre*, for Cixous, gives us our material fecundity, our endless possibility: infinity *as* materiality.

Building on her understanding of otherness as immanent, material, more-than-human and generative, Cixous pushes all the way to the idea of "other-love." What does it mean to other love, for Cixous?

Other love...To love, to watch-think-see the other in the other, to despecularize, to unhoard. Does this seem difficult? It's not impossible, and this is what nourishes life – a love that has no commerce with the apprehensive desire that provides against the lack and stultifies the strange; a love that rejoices in the exchange that multiplies...In one another we will never be lacking. (1976, 893)

In other-love we find an ethics, but one very different from Levinas. This is a love that rejoices in the knowable unknowability of being, that finds a kind of carnal divinity where others find tyranny. It is a love that doesn't *endure* inter-subjectivity, and inter-dependency, but *revels* in the incessant exchange of immanent life. Other-love is a different libidinal economy, practiced among beings that are "complex, mobile, open" (1986, 84). Cixous wants a love that knows: "in one another we will never be lacking." Yes, there is an element in other-love of "we're in this together," a common new materialist refrain (Braidotti 2006, 16), but Cixous gives us a 'we'

defined by an ecstatic otherness, not a comforting unity. Other-love is a radical opening onto the unknowns of self and other, and other-self. Other-love is thus the wellspring of invention: "there is no *invention* possible, whether it be philosophical or poetic, without there being in the inventing subject an abundance of the other" (1986, 84). It is remarkable that Cixous, born into a world of "special cages,"⁷³ finds her way not to tolerance, not even to solidarity, but to the *love* of the other: "What holds me is the story of love, in other words the story of the other and the other's other" (1991b, 78).

Conclusion: Everything Breathes

In this chapter, I have detailed Cixous's contribution to the metaphysical turns signified by immanence and new materialism. From *écriture naturelle* to an onto/eco-poethics of immanent otherness, Cixous not only transforms Western conceptions of what writing is and what it can do, breaking through the dichotomy of textuality and reality, but she also forges a path through immanence and transcendence. Similar to her renewal of writing into a material practice, which I outlined in chapter 2, Cixous also finds a way to protect what is most precious, and most ethical, if we follow Levinas, of transcendence: the idea of otherness. With her onto/eco-poethics of immanent otherness, Cixous sits close to Levinas and Deleuze, among other big hitters of Continental thought. But where Levinas locates the transcendental *within* a phenomenological field, where it remains otherwise-than-being, and Deleuze describes his philosophy as transcendental empiricism (1968), but rejects the idea of otherness (van der Tuin and Dolphijn 2012, 88), Cixous offers *another* passage. Rather than renovate dualism in order to keep otherness, Cixous locates otherness *within* a reality that is univocal. She tells us that otherness isn't the opposite of life, matter, and materiality, but its essence, its force, its capacity for renewal and invention. It is because *is* is always more than *is* that it thrives.

Cixous's immanent otherness, which demands an *approach*, rather than knowing in the classical sense, is also distinct in that it defines not only the human-to-itself, as well as human-self and human-other relations, but *all* material relations. And, as we've seen, it is Clarice Lispector who plays a crucial role in bringing Cixous to the revelations of materiality, and material otherness. The Clarice effect means discovering that the other, that otherness *is* life. The emphasis on others, on a multitude of others, rather than the concept of otherness, or "the Other," is further evidence of the ways in which Cixous locates otherness *in beings*. Otherness lives in the movement *between-us*, the constant play that brings you and I to life. Relation *is* essence. Cixous conceives-approaches-writes immanence as an intimacy, a dwelling, a sustained and carnal being-with-vibrant-others. Her writing is brimming with others, from her menagerie of kindred poet philosophers, to flowers, eggs, oranges, telephones and so much more. By her pen, everything is alive. Everything breathes.

With Cixous's conception of an onto/eco-poethics of immanent otherness in hand, I will now turn to the final chapter of the dissertation where I present a socio-cultural reading of the Anthropocene as a state of being in which there occurs a heightened awareness of immanent otherness as reality. Cixous tells us that reality is defined by immanent otherness, and this is not a new development. However, I argue that Anthropocenic conditions *manifest* this reality in ways that are increasingly hard to ignore for those populations fortunate enough to have believed the world was stable, certain, and pristine. How we respond to this heightened manifestation requires a deep and ethical appreciation of the *jouissance* of uncertainty, disunity and contamination, an appreciation that Cixous makes possible.

Chapter 4: Immanent Otherness in and for the Anthropocene

"Woe unto you if you want the human gaze, if you want to know what's happening to you" (Cixous 1991b, 6).

"There has to be somewhere else" (Cixous 1986, 72).

In this fourth and final Chapter, I outline how Cixous's practice of *immanent otherness* helps better describe and address the onto-ecological condition increasingly referred to as "the Anthropocene." From the disappearance of "the weather" as a neutral, unchanging background, to the immense losses of biological life, and even the disturbance of the very notion of a knowable future, among countless other contaminations, alterations, and transformations, Anthropogenic reality is brimming with *immanent otherness*. A Cixousian reading of the Anthropocene, I argue, helps us understand this "moment" as describing a boundary event when *immanent otherness* becomes more intensely, and affectively sensed. When we myopically sense, to use a Cixousian phrase, the *immanent otherness* of our posthuman reality, the inescapably embodied, embedded, entangled, vibrant and poetic nature of being, we have "entered" the Anthropocene.⁷⁴ In this way, and consonant with feminist and Indigenous critiques of the Anthropocene as a totalizing term that erases ontological and temporal difference, *immanent otherness* helps us to think "the Anthropocene" as an asynchronous event, a moment that comes and goes, starts and stops. *Immanent otherness* doesn't begin to exist with the Anthropocene. As outlined in the previous Chapter, *immanent otherness* describes the nature of material reality. However, I propose that we should think of the Anthropocene as the state of becoming more aware of this reality. The line between pre-Anthropocene and Anthropocene, then, would mark a transition between a state of *presumed* stability, lucidity and rationality, to a recognition of being as it always was and remains: rife with otherness. In the Anthropocene,

(mostly those of us privileged enough to previously have not known differently) become increasingly cognizant of immanence as Cixous understands it: embodied, embedded, entangled, vibrant and tangled up in otherness. In the Anthropocene, in other words, "we" gain a deeper sense of such a metaphysics, which has been negated within Western transcendental frameworks of meaning-thinking-knowing.⁷⁵

By such a reading, the Anthropocenic "state" cannot be positivistically defined. To be "in" such a state is both the sensing of *immanent otherness* and the realization that such sensing is itself myopic *and* material, which, as I argue in Chapter 3, is not tantamount to saying that reality is inaccessible or unknowable. The Anthropocene can be understood, then, as an *intensification* in the awareness of an always already existing *immanent otherness*, the rejection of which having long served heteropatriarchal, industrial capitalist, and settler colonial expansions. And so, though she did not have the term at hand for much of her writing-life, Cixous's engagement with *immanent otherness* not only anticipates Anthropocenic conditions, it tries to fathom their poetics and ethics. And further still, Cixous's *immanent otherness*, quietly distinct from her post-structuralist cohort, helps clear a space in and for the Anthropocene that remains joyful, plentiful and generative.

In this chapter, in order to elaborate on these important ways that Cixous helps us to better understand, conceive and respond to Anthropocenic conditions, I offer three points of comparison between *immanent otherness* and current Anthropocenic thought. To introduce these intersecting lines and the ways in which Cixous builds on and challenges Anthropocenic literature, I begin with an assessment of Clive Hamilton's text *Defiant Earth*. Hamilton exemplifies current arguments that the Anthropocene demands a (re)new(ed) Anthropocentrism. Arguing against this position, I offer a brief sketch of where Cixous takes us instead, to an

understanding of the Anthropocene as a cognitive-affective state in which we come to more intensely think-feel the (always already) immanent otherness of being/life. I then turn to three ways that Cixous furthers and/or intervenes in Anthropocenic discourse to offer an ethics of otherness, or, more precisely, an onto/eco-poethics of immanent otherness. The first point of comparison that I consider challenges those voices calling for greater unity when facing Anthropocenic disaster. Against hegemonic and homogenizing calls for unified action, *immanent otherness* offers an onto-ethics of incoherence. Secondly, I demonstrate the ways that Cixous helps us resist the temptation to enact totalities in response to Anthropocenic distress. Against intensified insistences on absolute certainty, *immanent otherness* offers an epistemology of contingency. And thirdly, I turn to the ways in which Cixous, through the concept of *imundity*, seeks out ways to revel in the unclean. In other words, against a heightened desire for an eco-ethics of purity, *immanent otherness* seeks out joyful corruption. Reading "our" ecological condition through *immanent otherness* means recognizing and affirming the radical incoherence, uncertainty and diverse contaminations -- material, historical and ethical -- that mark the "event/advent" of the Anthropocene. While such an approach is allied with eco-feminist, queer ecological and anti/decolonial (re)imaginings of the Anthropocene, with *immanent otherness* Cixous also takes us places few others have travelled.⁷⁶ In the final section, I build on discussions in Chapter 3 of other-love to illustrate what is perhaps most remarkable in Cixous: the conviction that immanent otherness is not only what makes life lively, but what makes it ecstatic. If we follow Cixous into the Anthropocene we find ourselves in uncommon terrain, not only in uncovering new ways of thinking otherness that better define the "event," but also in searching for ways of living immanently other that orient toward *jouissance*, rather than elusive, or even punishing alterity.⁷⁷ As I will speak to briefly, the case for environmental melancholy

has been well made. Cixous doesn't negate such a response, and the importance of naming and contending with melancholic reactions to the cacophony of losses that proliferate. However, I surmise that Cixous offers us *other* ways to poetically and ethically meet the strangeness of the Anthropocene. First, in helping us to better name and identify the othernesses that are intensifying, and second, in offering ways of rethinking how to *be-think* immanently other that are oriented by fecund and pleasurable relationality. Indeed, Cixous is remarkable is her insistence on moving, without naivety, toward *immanent otherness as* pleasure, ecstasy and wonder. The Anthropocenic moment, read through Cixous, carries both an onto-epistemological demand that we recognize reality as immanently other, and an ethical insistence that we find joy in/as (our) *immanent otherness*. If indeed it is the rejection of both immanence and otherness that has paved the way to these troubled times, Cixous helps us to see that it is only in finding ways of affirming and living with *immanent otherness* that we will create a "somewhere else."

Anthropocenic Disruptions

"At times we are thrown into strangeness" (Cixous 1997, 9-10).

"There is no distant place anymore" (Latour 2014, 2).

Over the last decade, the Anthropocene has become an increasingly well-travelled term, inspiring a proliferation of research across many disciplines. The story of its origins is now well established: first coined by ecologist Eugene F. Stoermer in the 1980s, the term was brought into popular circulation in the twenty-first century by atmospheric scientist Paul J. Crutzen to name the "geological epoch in which humanity has come to play a crucial if often incalculable role in the planet's ecology and geology" (Clark 2012, v). However, the Anthropocene has been on the move since its inception, taking on many different, often contrasting, meanings. Richard Grusin,

in his introduction to *Anthropocene Feminisms* (2017), suggests that the concept has been taken up "even more enthusiastically," outside the sciences, "[catching] fire in the imagination of artists, humanists, and social scientists" (vii). Considering Steffen, Crutzen and McNeill's definition of the Anthropocene as a time when "human activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of Nature and are pushing the Earth into planetary *terra incognita*" (2007, 614), it is easy to see why the concept animates so brightly for environmental humanities scholars. But what does it mean to announce the arrival of this "now" unknown earth? Have we in fact moved from a *known* to an *unknown* earth, an *Eaarth*, in renown environmentalist Bill McKibbin's parlance (2010)?

Feminist and anti-colonial theorists have long worked to challenge the Western subject's presumed transcendental knowing of nature, and the concomitant violences of such a presumption. For many such theorists, this work has often led to affirming the ways that "the earth," or nature, remains unknown, or other, to Western systems of absolute, colonizing knowledge; "Thanks to feminist and postcolonial analyses, we have come to regard the human standard that was posited in the universal mode of 'Man of Reason' as inadequate precisely because of its partiality" (Braidotti, in Grusin 2017, 3). By feminist and anti-colonial readings, the "Man of Reason" hasn't suddenly met his match in the Anthropocene, his was *always* a partial view disguised as total.⁷⁸ Recognizing such enduring efforts to de-mystify and de-legitimize the authority of the (white European, heterosexual, hegemonically masculine) huMan subject, we can see the ways in which feminist and anti-colonial theorists, in positing non-absolutist onto-epistemologies, have long contended with "Anthropogenic" effects: "the concept of the Anthropocene has arguably been implicit in feminism and queer theory for decades" (Grusin 2017, viii). Rather than mark the Anthropocene as the *beginning* of the earth becoming

unknown, as McKibbin does, Cixous follows the path marked by feminist and anti-colonial theorists for whom the Anthropocene *should* be understood to signal the end of the *fantasy* of perfect knowability. Building on Grusin's claim, I posit that Cixous's onto/eco-poethics of immanent otherness, and particularly her argument that love and *jouissance* are made possible by otherness, are desperately needed in the strange and troubling times of the Anthropocene. By the light of Cixous, we see that the Anthropocene isn't the start of an unstable ontology, but rather, marks a new recognition of the always-already present instability of immanent life. The term has value, then, primarily as a description of such elucidations.

How, then, does Cixous help us think immanent otherness in and for the Anthropocene? For privileged Euro-Western subjects, thinking the Anthropocene as an estrangement from Holocenic fallacies should mean recognizing the ways in which humans *are* part of the *incognita* of being. Otherness is inside us; we *are* otherness. In the Anthropocenic moment "we" also face the strangeness or otherness of being that is changeable by "us" in ways we did not think possible. In other words, in the Anthropocenic state, many of us become further other to ourselves as we see more clearly how much change humans effect without understanding such power. And though this incalculable but certain influence is immanent, or materially entangled, we are again in otherness when we realize we can't determine where the human influence ends and begins. The "profundity of climate change in the Anthropocene," Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argues in *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory Beyond Green* (2013), is that it disrupts our confidence in knowing who caused what when: "Causes tend to be known retroactively when they are known at all, traced back ...through volatile knots of human and inhuman actors operating in alliance as well as at odds with each other" (xxiv). In the *immanent otherness* of the Anthropocenic space we realize that causal distinctions are impossibly indeterminate, fractal,

even as they are deeply effecting. By this reading, the Anthropocene names the disturbance of the ground that (Western-ized) subjects stand on, think with, and act from. As Michel Serres writes in *The Natural Contract* (1996), "the immemorial, fixed Earth, which provided the conditions and foundations of our lives, is moving, the fundamental Earth is trembling" (86). Nigel Clark, in "Strangers on a Strange Planet" (2017), draws on Anthropocenic science to argue that it not just the Earth as an idea that is being disturbed, but the material earth itself, which "is beginning to appear every bit as divisible, heterogeneous and non-self-identical as the social beings jostling on its surface" (133). Stacy Alaimo summarizes the idea: in the time of the Anthropocene "there is no stable background and nothing can be set straight" (2016, 11). Cixous's *immanent otherness*, in my assessment, more explicitly names the Anthropocenic process underway, one in which material reality is revealed to *have always been other* as a myriad of othernesses -- temporal, causal, climatic, geological, political -- intensify. The Anthropocene, in other words, names an affective state in which one myopically senses that "the world written nude is poetic" (1997 4).

Escaping the Reign Without Hesitation

Reflecting on the reality of immanent otherness, Cixous helps us ask: what does it mean to realize that "we" belong to the people who cannot see, to the race of the myopes; that we paint our portraits blind (2010, 58)? For Cixous, this recognition of myopia marks the beginning, not the end, of ethics. A Cixousian reading of the Anthropocene, therefore, affirms and moves *toward* the uncertainty, distortion and fragmentations afoot. Cixous shows us what it means to live brightly and ethically *in* myopia, rather than crumpling into nihilism or returning to transcendental conceit. The Cixousian approach remains radical within popular environmentalist discourse. Rather than recognizing a proliferation of otherness within the Anthropocenic state,

we are continuing to see responses that double down on older models. One of the loudest responses to the immanent otherness of the Anthropocene is to reject it, to invent Anthropocenic Man as an even more resolute version of his Holocenic progenitor. Instead of braving an unsettling confrontation with the always already and exacerbating myopias and aporias of material reality, there is a temptation among influential voices to move further into what Cixous calls in *Veils* (2001), a "reign without hesitation" (13). The reign without hesitation is a kind of shock doctrine (Klein 2007), in which calls for humility are silenced in the name of crisis and an urgent need to act. And such responses are coming not just from the usual neo-liberal voices, but from inside environmentalist discourse. To illustrate such reactions, I turn to Clive Hamilton's *Defiant Earth: The Fate of Humans in the Anthropocene* (2017). I spend some time with Hamilton, even though others offer similar approaches, mainly because he builds his argument so explicitly *against* new materialist scholarship.⁷⁹ As such, Hamilton's position better reveals the metaphysical claims that are being disputed in Anthropocenic discourse.

A Professor of Public Ethics at Charles Sturt University, Hamilton has been an important and long-standing contributor to public discussions of environmental issues in Australia and across the Anglo cultural sphere. In the book, Hamilton proposes that humans need to harness, not question, their exceptionality in order to solve the crises of the Anthropocene. Like most environmental ethicists, Hamilton recognizes that humans "are indeed embedded in nature and in recent decades in the Earth System itself" (99); however, he contends that "the embedding is not a destruction of [human] agency and subjectivity," but rather, what "allows their fullest expression" (99). Put simply, the Anthropocene "both undermines dualism *and* reaffirms it" (99). And therefore, "we need an ontology founded on human-distinctiveness-within-networks rather than an ontology that deprives humans of their unique form of agency" (99). Recognizing this

unique agency and power, is, for Hamilton, essential if we are to respond effectively to Anthropocenic conditions. We must resist the urge to become Dr. Frankenstein, running from his monster (99).

Hamilton is especially frustrated with post-humanist and material feminist efforts to emphasize our embodied, embedded and entangled ontology when we now have such indisputable proof that we stand out. Naming Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing explicitly, Hamilton lambasts those thinkers affirming onto-entanglements the new Anthropocentrism of the Anthropocene: "the post-humanist program of taking agency from the human monopoly and allocating it to processes or competing entities took place at exactly the time that in practice humans were accumulating and centralizing so much agency that we now rival the influence of the great forces of nature" (100). In other words, even if we were once deeply entangled with the fate of other beings in the world, the Anthropocene reveals the truth of our emergent exceptionality.

If the Anthropocene brings a message, it is that it's time to accept the obvious: humans stand out from nature as a whole...This natural-unnatural creature, the networked super-agent who straddles the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom, can exert enormous influence on nature, even if it cannot control it.

(Hamilton 2017, 99)

An ethics of embeddedness and entanglement is a liability, by Hamilton's account. And it is dishonest, since what the Anthropocene reveals to us is that we humans are in fact special: "the arrival of the Anthropocene ought to undermine all theories according to which the distinctions between humans and nature can be dissolved by abolishing the dualisms of modernity" (2017, 99). In the Anthropocene, dualism *becomes* geology. How ridiculous, Hamilton tells us, to push

deeper into a refutation of human distinction at the moment when the earth itself confirms this status.

For Hamilton, the Anthropocenic rupture should push us out of, not deeper into, an ethics of imbrication. Affirming and developing ethics of entanglement leave us disempowered and restrained: "in a world in which intentionality has been dissolved into networks or assemblages, there is no power, no freedom, and no morality" (100). And though he pays lip service to agency having always been "exercised within networks or associations (entanglements that constrain and condition the exercise of subjectivity)," Hamilton argues that an ethics for the Anthropocene requires that humans not only recognize their greater agency but *use it* to deal with the mess: "collapsing intentionality into an ontological flat-world of influences leaves us bereft of the categories needed to understand power and politics" (100). Only Anthropocenic Man can save us now.

Thinking the Anthropocene through *immanent otherness*, by contrast, means feeling and facing the strangeness, impurity, and ephemerality of the so-called "rupture." The Anthropocene marks not the moment when we realize just how much power we have, but how much immanent reality has *always* been strange and uncertain. In the immanent otherness of the Anthropocene, we begin to understand that it is the denial of this reality, by those whose perspective is most impacting, that has led us into Anthropocenic ruin. Cixous tells us that *we* too are unknowable, uncontrollable and unconquerable, which is the marvel of being. And further still, because immanent otherness we have life. Immanent otherness in and for the Anthropocene, then, contributes to the fracturing of the story of Western Man, to the destabilization of his identity and his assumption that the world is knowable, controllable and conquerable. In *Three Steps on*

the Ladder of Writing, Cixous describes this desire to think of life as a controllable territory as one premised on the rejection of the other:

People are swollen with *home-neid* (home-envy). This home-neid is not only the need for a land and a roof. It is primarily a need for the proper, for a proper country, for a proper name, a need for separation and, at the same time, a rejection of the other; it is less a need of difference than a distaste for difference, a desire to leave coupled with a desire to expel. A harsh, trenchant desire not to be you.
(1993, 131)

This is precisely what we hear in Hamilton's argument: a harsh, trenchant desire to not be other, to reject Anthropocenic disturbance rather than invent an ethics of otherness, which demands vulnerability, surrender and humility. Hamilton wants to return home to the comforts of Holocenic Man rather than face the otherness that proliferates.

But how can the *same* subject of Western dominance, the one Hamilton says we need now more than ever, address the state of things post-rupture? "He," by definition, has been cracked open, his conceits exposed as false. His errors, unknown to himself, have been written into the fabric of the planet. Deborah Bird Rose, in "Anthropocene Noir," makes the point:

The Anthropocene is now doing what decades of insightful critique never quite succeeded in doing: it is forcing the truth upon us. The Anthropocene is something of a mirror, and the image it is giving of human agency is grotesque—an agency that outstrips its capacity to manage itself, which wrecks, pillages, loots, and destroys, that has very little idea what it is doing, and that carries with it, in contradiction to all reason, an expectation of immunity. (2013, 3)

Hamilton hasn't followed his own argument far enough. He states, time and again, that the Anthropocene is a *material* break in the functioning of the Earth System, and that only such a break warrants a new name, signalling a new geological epoch. There is no going back. And he's right. The super-human of the Holocene is gone. He has been outed as *other*. If we continue to cling to him as our hope for the future we are simply grasping at a ghost. But where Hamilton finds the threat of the other defeated by Anthropocenic Man, Cixous finds possibility -- the possibility of desiring not greater separation, or heightened attachments to sameness and various god tricks, but the *unknown*. "[T]he person who doesn't tremble while crossing a border doesn't know there is a border and doesn't cast doubt on their own definition. The person who trembles while crossing a border casts doubt on their own definition" (1993, 131). In crossing the Anthropocenic border with Cixous, we tremble, and such trembling marks the incitement of an ethics of otherness.

Immanent Otherness in and for the Anthropocene

The *immanent otherness* of the Anthropocene as its disunity, incoherence and strangeness understands "the rupture" as one transforming not only earth systems but all the subjects toiling within them. Woven through Cixous, the Anthropocene is not a time of clarity but of myopia, a myopia defined by the intense desire to see, know, understand more without forgetting that we belong to "those who do not see" (2001, 13). With Cixous, then, we can think of the Anthropocene as a moment of realizing, or myopically sensing, *immanent otherness*. Whenever and wherever we confront Anthropocenic change, whether in the burning house, the absent animals, the evaporated water, the excessive snow fall, or any of the myriad *other* (anthro)turbations afoot, we are experiencing an intensified immanent otherness. Cixous helps us identify and conceptualize what is happening in such moments, *and* she helps move us toward an

ethics appropriate to such revelations. If, in the approach, we learn how to write-think-live immanent otherness in the mundanity of the kitchen, while making breakfast, the Anthropocenic space, as I am conceiving it here, requires new techniques. In the Anthropocenic state, we don't *approach* we plummet into immanent otherness. Rather than obsessively trying to escape such darkness, Cixous helps us invent new ways of seeing and feeling, *and* being joyful, without the light.

In conceiving the Anthropocene as a state of becoming more aware of immanent otherness, I follow Donna Haraway's lead in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016). Rather than think of the Anthropocene as an epoch, Haraway conceives it as a boundary event, one that "marks severe discontinuities," and helps us to understand that "what comes after will not be like what came before" (Haraway 2016, 100). With Cixous in mind, I think we should also think of the Anthropocene as an *affective* boundary, rather than a strictly temporal one, and therefore as one that can be crossed, uncrossed and recrossed. The Anthropocene should name the affective space where the recognition of *homo/terra incognita*, or *immanent otherness*, manifests. Being/nature/life/world didn't *become* incalculable, or other, with the arrival of the Anthropocene; a Cixousian metaphysics of *immanent otherness* states it has always been thus. The Anthropocene, then, describes the moment when *immanent otherness* materializes in new and often blindingly sharp ways, depending on where you are standing. For many (privileged) people, facing the immanent otherness of the Anthropocene is a new experience. For others, the Anthropocene marks an exacerbation of a much older state of being. By this reading, the Anthropocene "begins" when a subject or group realizes, in a more conscious and affective way, not just the lie that is (privileged) human control over the environment, but the poetic nature of life itself, the "trouble" that is *immanent otherness*. To

borrow Rose's words, it is the realization that we are "not just entangled in webs and networks of process, we are all tangled up in dynamics, edges, patches and zones of colliding uncertainties. Time and agency are troubled, relationality is troubled, situatedness is troubled. We are tangled up in trouble" (Rose 2013, 1). When "we" find ourselves facing/sensing the "trouble" that is *immanent otherness*, we've entered the Anthropocene.

Facing immanent otherness in and for the Anthropocene also means recognizing that the behaviour of *all beings and entities* remains beyond definitive calculation. Again, Clark's work show us that otherness is not a human phenomenon but a feature of geology itself: "instability and upheaval, rhythmical movement and dramatic changes of state are ordinary aspects of the earth's own history" (2013 xi). Contrary to notions of the Anthropocene as marking the *start* of a "capricious" and "crazily jumping" climate, Clark argues that given scientific findings these terms are "starting to sound like apt descriptors of the earth as a whole" (xii). Again, the shift in understanding is similar to the one we have with "ourselves" (as privileged Western subjects who believed we were in control of nature): from thinking that the earth has *become* unstable to realizing that it was never stable to begin with. Clark, in other words, shows us immanent otherness as intrinsic to our geology and climate. An ethics for the Anthropocene, in other words, cannot be nostalgic for a pre-Anthropocenic state of stability and certainty of outcome. We might say that we have left what turned out to be a period of mild instability and entered heightened instability, but there was never anything but instability and imperfect predictability, and the distinction is important when as we try to conceive of right actions. Acting, Cixous contends, with otherness before and within us, is starkly different than acting with presumed clarity. I turn, then, to a consideration of how Cixous's *immanent otherness* offers an alternative ethics in and for the Anthropocene.

Against Unity: immanent otherness and the incoherence of the Anthropocene

First, a detailing of how *immanent otherness* helps to name and conceptualize the *incoherence* and *disturbances* of the Anthropocene. For many environmental activists and theorists, addressing the intensified stakes of the Anthropocene demands the production of more assured totalities: unity over diffuseness or differentiation. In "Climate Change: Politics, Excess, Sovereignty," Nick Mansfield describes the prevailing and deepening totalized world picture within climate change literature as "the *Framework*." In "the *Framework*," "the world is a single total climatic system, which is the object of a human subject who lives within it but is capable of grasping it as a single totality, and acting on it in ways that will fundamentally remake it" (2016 221). We might describe "the *Framework*" as a transcendental approach to climate change, in which advocates proffer an absolute viewpoint, one sitting outside the thickness of immanent material reality, and thus one capable of knowing the system as a whole. Within such a model, Cixous's insistence on the political and ethical value of writing-thinking-imagining the excesses of *immanent otherness* can only be a liability. If thinking about difference and otherness was seen as decadent prior to Anthropocenic conditions, it is now, for supporters of "the *Framework*," outright dangerous. An insistence on protecting difference and otherness can only serve to prevent the globally co-ordinated responses we need to deal with the crises at hand. "Ours" is not the time for onto-epistemological otherness! Mansfield, however, in both acknowledged and unacknowledged congruence with material feminisms, challenges the totalizing eco-ethics that "the *Framework*" demands. Noting the obvious appeal of totalities given our ruinous conditions, he nonetheless argues that the totalized view, besides emptying the Anthropocene of its politics, is built on faulty metaphysics.

As living creatures, the totality is always beyond us, infinitely vast. To be able to think of the system as a totality is a very different thing from living inside of it, as a part of it. Being part of the system means the world is not reducible, as it is for thought, but always in excess of us. By emphasizing the ability to model, grasp and plan the world, the *Framework* must deny the necessary excessiveness of the world as lived by human beings. (179)

We may be able to *think* the world, to reduce the world to "one system" within certain habits of thought, but this does not make it ontologically true. "Our" *thinking* the planet as a totality does not erase the material otherness that defines human embeddedness in the world. Mansfield pulls together Nigel Clark's *Inhuman Nature: Sociable Life on a Dynamic Planet* (2011), specifically his work on Derrida, and Karen Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007), to make the case that both an ontology and epistemology of excess and otherness are more accurate, more true to being, than transcendental totalities. From Clark and Barad, Mansfield argues, we get confirmation that "human systems of truth and the truths that are their prize are apparatuses constituted in relation to that which exceeds them, materially, spatially, temporally and conceptually" (185). To return to the parlance of the discussion underway, Mansfield is moving toward a metaphysics of *immanent otherness*. But it is Clark, Mansfield notes, who weaves the thread through post-structuralism – specifically Derrida – otherness and Anthropocenic conditions:

The dynamism that inheres in material reality plays a part in the genesis of otherness...This is much more than a matter of occasionally recognizing that we or others might be thrown off course by exceptional natural forces. It is about acknowledging that the deterritorializing of the earth is the primordial condition of

our existence, that the instability of the ground on which we stand precedes, accompanies and will likely succeed any material fabrications or inscriptions of our own. (2011, 215-16)

Closed frameworks, such as those proliferating in Anthropocenic times, deny the excess of materiality, an excess, or otherness, that is the condition of possibility of being itself.

In connecting otherness to materiality, earth system science, and climate change, Clark helps clear the space for not only post-structuralism but Cixous's *immanent otherness* as decidedly not decadent anti-materialism. Anthropocenic science reveals Cixous's commitment to poetic truth is consonant with materiality itself. Read from this direction, we see that Cixous brings something to Clark in her articulation of "the human" within a deterritorialized earth:

[If] one remains open and susceptible to all the phenomena of overflowing, beginning with the natural phenomena, one discovers the immense landscape of the *trans-*, of the passage. Which does not mean that everything will be adrift...This [instability of human life] ought to oblige us to have an attitude that is at once rigorous and tolerant and doubly so on each side: all the more rigorous than open, all the more demanding since it must lead to openness, leave passage; all the more mobile and rapid as the ground will always give way, always...the necessity of only being the citizen of an extremely inappropriable, unmasterable country or ground. (1997, 52)

Rather than seek firmer ground, as one does with "the *Framework*," Cixous urges us to invent new ways of writing-living with/as unmasterability and groundlessness. And, as she states time and again, doing so does *not* leave us adrift. We must act -- we are "citizens," after all -- and our actions must be as rigorously committed to ethics as they are to remaining open to the

unmasterability of our onto-epistemology. Such a call takes on new layers of meaning when woven into the Anthropocene and the realization of the "disjuncture and mobility of the earth itself" (Clark 2017, 131). Though she doesn't put it in explicitly geological terms, Cixous is nonetheless clear: empty immanent materiality of otherness and you lose it, you lose "life itself, which is always in the process of seething, of emitting, of transmitting itself" (Cixous 1997, 4). Put simply, the lesson of the Anthropocene is not the *arrival* of the disunity of the earth, but the othering, the making strange, of the *totalized* earth-system that never was. What is decadent and dangerous, then, is to deny the evidence of disunities and incoherence manifesting in Anthropocenic conditions and double-down on totalizing frameworks.

Cixous helps us ask: what does it mean in the Anthropocene to have an attitude that always "leaves passage?" To be a citizen of a ground that cannot be mastered? How do we draw nearer without appropriating, without colonizing? Importantly, and in contrast to Clark, this unmasterability for Cixous is *inside* the human, as much as the human is inside such conditions. Mansfield and Clark maintain a material otherness that *exceeds* the human: "the 'world' is implicitly in excess of its own versions...'nature'...will always be larger than it is possible for us to grasp. In sum, a statement that purports to say something about the world as a totality contradicts itself" (2016, 181). Rather than saying that "nature is always impossible for us to grasp," Cixous understands nature -- matter, being -- as poetic, as immanently other, which *includes* humans. Cixous's *immanent otherness*, as outlined in Chapter 3, is personal, intimate, incarnate, saturated: *feminist*. We are full of the nature that cannot be grasped; it does not lie outside "us." The Anthropocene is an occasion to recognize the incoherence of *both* human and non-human nature. To do so means recognizing the inutility of fortifying "*the Framework*," which requires a closed, unwavering subject, operating inside "a stable system of sovereign

nation-states...all on a common trajectory of social development" (Mansfield, 185). Facing catastrophe, we may yearn for the alleged stability of unification, but in doing so we build our Anthropocenic ethics and politics on the same, tired mythical ground of Western transcendental thought. And this is precisely the counter-reading that Cixous offers: the Anthropocene is not the moment when human mastery is at its zenith, but rather the moment when it falls. No, it is the moment we realize that it has *always* failed. Counter-intuitively, for some, we must resist the desire to paint a complete picture of "the situation," an impossible picture because of the *immanent otherness* of not only the human but of nature itself, and figure out how to be good citizens of a ground that is poetic, that is unmasterable *by nature*. In other words, we need onto/eco-ethics that do not fight against the dynamism that *we*, in both human and planetary form, *are*?

The Anthropocene as *immanent otherness*, therefore, moves against popular discourses of unity and names "the event" as a diversity of diffuse phenomena. From this perspective, the Anthropocene becomes a concept signifying difference, not sameness: a breaking rather than a making of "the *Framework*," as it were. Such an approach, by emphasizing difference, also jettisons meta-unifying categories of "human" and "nature" in favour of multiple "biosocial becomings" (Ingold and Palsson 2013), or "geontologies" (Povinelli 2016). This emphasis on the Anthropocene as incoherence, as the accentuation of already existing difference, allies with Indigenous critiques of the Anthropocene as a totalizing concept. Zoe Todd, in "Indigenizing the Anthropocene," connects the critique that "not all humans are equally implicated in the forces that created the disasters driving contemporary human-environmental crises" (2015, 244) to the ways in which dominant discourses of the Anthropocene are colonizing how we think about and consider our onto/eco condition. Just as "not all humans are equally implicated" in the

Anthropocene, Todd argues, "not all humans are equally invited into the conceptual spaces where these disasters are theorized or responses to disaster formulated" (244). In other words, dominant environmental discourse erroneously names "all humans" as responsible for environmental problems, and yet not all humans are invited into discussions of potential solutions. The Anthropocene as intellectual concept, Todd offers, has begun to mimic the forces that it describes: "the Anthropocene narrative gathers discursive steam, dominating contexts where other discourses struggle to circulate" (246). An Anthropocene read through *immanent otherness*, on the other hand, finds a proliferation of difference, both in discourse and metaphysics. Rather than an Anthropocene of "we must forget about our differences in order to act against a common threat," which is always shouted from the same old colonizing places, *immanent otherness* in and for the Anthropocene is a suspension, an arresting, an opening, a listening, a rigorous commitment to going with the over-flow.

Todd's critique of the Anthropocene intersects with ecofeminist theorists questioning the utility, ethics and politics of a term that intends to describe the destructive forces of humans but nonetheless keeps humans at its imaginative center. In her piece titled "On the Poverty of our Nomenclature" (2013), Eileen Crist asks about the "shadowy repercussions of naming an epoch after ourselves," and the potential "reinforcement of the anthropocentric worldview that generated 'the Anthropocene' -- with all its looming emergencies -- in the first place" (129-130). However, Crist concedes that the term is now "widely and often casually deployed, partly because it's catchy and more seriously because it has instant appeal for those aware of the scope of humanity's impact on the biosphere" (130). To be sure, the Anthropocene as a "charismatic meta-category" (Reddy, April 8, 2014) is resolutely at hand, and Cixous has taught me that it is best to use what's at hand to transform one's immanent reality. Reading *immanent otherness* in

and for the Anthropocene as its incoherence means exploiting some of the appeal and ubiquity of the term in order to open and hold open more space for difference and otherness. Such a position refuses to concede coherence to the Anthropocene in order to resist any claim that difference is a liability when things are this bad. This refusal of the Anthropocene as either a unifying concept or phenomenon works alongside efforts to reveal and *affirm* the incoherence of the Anthropocene. Such refusals see fractures, disintegrations, and aporias where others see uniformity. The Anthropocene becomes a question mark, not a period. It is not the Anthropos *becoming ground*, but the *ungrounding* of the Anthropos, and its world-making conceits. From this angle, the concept of the Anthropocene has material-semiotic utility. If we think of the Anthropocene with Cixous as a myopic sensing of the *immanent otherness* of being/thinking then it is correct to have the "human" at the center precisely because it is "the human," as it has been thought within Western thought, that is myopically sensing anew, that is becoming other to itself, that is discovering its otherness. The term therefore has discursive suitability over alternatives such as Capitalocene, Chthulucene, Androcene, Corporatcene, Plasticene, Petrolcene, and Plantationocene (See Haraway 2016, 100; Schneiderman 2017, 172), if what we want it to name is the decomposing of the Enlightenment "Anthropos." And it is indeed the Western anthropos that needs othering.

Reading the Anthropocenic moment with Cixous as an intensifying of *immanent otherness* equally means recognizing how these conditions are lived and understood in vastly and importantly different ways by different groups at different times, and never foreclosing on the meaning of such difference. The *immanent otherness* of the Anthropocene, then, is also its temporal incoherence, and the elusiveness of trying to nail down a beginning to the forces of ecological change that now have "the white people's" attention. Decolonial theorists of the

Anthropocene challenge the temporal coherence of the era, noting that it is not the "end of the world," but the "end of the(ir) world": the end of the world as privileged white people know it (Mitchell Sept 27, 2017 - worldlyir.wordpress.com):

[E]cological disaster is premised on the twin-fold processes of accumulation by dispossession and chattel slavery that was at the heart of the settler-colonial project. In other words, the kinds of environmentally destructive processes that we are bearing the burden of now are not new phenomenon. Nor are they incidental to the larger frameworks of genocide [and] slavery. (Davis 2017, 15)

Again, Davis and Todd, among others, caution us that "the complex and paradoxical experiences of diverse people as humans-in-the-world, including the ongoing damage of colonial and imperialist agendas, can be lost when the narrative is collapsed to a universalizing species paradigm" (Todd 2015, 244). The *immanent otherness* of the Anthropocene as its incoherence resists singular, monolithic definition, and instead signifies a being thrown into new forms of encounter with difference, both intra and extra-human. The term becomes a fracturing of the Euro-Western, heteropatriarchal and neo-colonial myth of "humanity," rather than a return to universalizing. The Anthropocene, read with Cixous, as the myopic sensing of *immanent otherness* makes clear that the onto-eco ethical orientation this moment demands seeks and sustains a space of disunity, dissolve, and difference.

Against Certainty: immanent otherness and the strangeness of the Anthropocene

"I find my bearings where I have no bearings; I find my bearings where I become lost"

(Cixous 1997, 8)

Next, I want to extend the discussion of how we might understand *immanent otherness* as the incoherence of the Anthropocene to the ways that approaching Anthropocenic conditions as

immanently other also pushes us *against certainty*. The case for opposing intensified practices of unification is closely connected to epistemologies of uncertainty. One tends to beget the other: the more certain we are about the world picture the more confident we are lobbying for globally co-ordinated actions. The reverse, then, is also true: the more we recognize the Anthropocenic moment as one of ontic and epistemic strangeness, the less inclined we will be to push for centralized, neo-colonial, one-size-fits-all (even though not "all" are invited to the discussion) solutions. To explore the strangeness of the Anthropocene I begin with Cixous's essay "Savoir," her half of a collaboration with Derrida titled *Veils*. The piece offers a particularly focused example of how Cixous can help us turn against crude, totalizing certainty as we come to recognize the world, our relations and the future to be both immanent and other. Read through the Anthropocene, Cixous's meditation in "Savoir" on myopia and what it means to see or not-see the world we are in, to occupy a space *between* the continents of sight and half-sight, takes on new meaning.

Cixous's "subject" in *Veils* is an unnamed myope: "Strange: she could see that she could not see, but she could not see clearly...She was part of the obscure surreptitious race who go about in confusion before the great picture of the world, all day long in a position of avowal" (2001 3). Having lived with the partial, piecemeal, *veiled* non-seeing seeing of the world, "the woman," as Cixous refers to her, upon learning that "science had just vanquished the invincible," that is, "[i]n the list of invincibles promised to defeat, they had just reached myopia" (7), makes an appointment with a surgeon to correct her myopia. As Cixous describes it, the woman decides to undo her fate, "her own astral reversal" (7). The myopic woman, reveling at the prospect of a cure to her myopia, celebrates the promises of transcendental "Science," which claim that "everything impossible will be possible" (7). And, indeed, the woman has the surgery and it is

successful. "And so the world came out of its distant reserve, its cruel absences. The world came up to her, making its faces precise. All day long. It moved so fast she could see herself see. She saw sight coming...she saw the world's rising" (8). The experience of seeing, having not seen, or rather having seeing myopically in pieces, overwhelms the woman: "Is *seeing* the supreme enjoyment? Or else is it: no-longer-not-seeing?" (9). Each day, she sees a little more: "Slowly, rapidly, depending on the point of view, she was not-seeing a little less from hour to hour" (10). However, the transformation soon becomes not quite as expected. The woman can see, but the seeing she has acquired, as Cixous describes it, is not transcendental, but an embodied, entangled, embedded *seeing*, an immanent seeing: "She hadn't realized the day before that eyes are miraculous hands, had never enjoyed the delicate tact of the cornea, the eyelashes, the most powerful hands, these hands that touch imponderably near and far-off heres...the world is given to her in the hands of her eyes" (9). The eyes, for the woman, do not deliver a place of transcendental all-seeing. They allow her to touch the world; they reveal "the continuity of her flesh and the world's flesh" (9). And then, something even more curious arises. The woman panics at the thought of her receding myopia.

That's when she shuddered as an unexpected mourning stabbed through her: but I'm *losing* my myopia!...for this myopia that had chosen her and placed her apart was as undetachable from her as her blood from her vein, it was she, she was it, its inaudible incessant murmur. (11)

The woman begins to reflect on her partial-blindness as her own otherness: "her essential foreignness, her own accidental necessary weakness. Her fate...Myopia was her truth" (10). In losing her myopia she was not losing an affliction but something essential: "Suddenly myopia, 'the other,' the unwelcome is unveiled: the other was none other than her sweetheart, her modest

companion born. Her dear secret" (11). The woman realizes that myopia is not only woven into her ontology irreconcilably, but perhaps even a gift: the gift of her own internal or *immanent otherness*:

-- By going, my poor fairy, my myopia, you are withdrawing from me the ambiguous gifts that filled me with anguish and granted me states that those who see do not know, she murmured.

-- Do not forget me. Keep forever the world suspended, desirable, refused, that enchanted thing I had given you, murmured myopia. (13)

Myopia, Cixous tells us, gives us a world suspended, desirable, refused: enchanted. But despite such gifts, Cixous does not elevate myopia over seeing. The myopia of immanence does not suspend the search for truth, the desire to always see more, see better. The woman is exuberant as she sees more and more, as her myopia recedes. In other words, Cixous does not resolve the tension between the *loss* the woman feels in healing her myopia and the incredible force and desire "to see." In the final paragraph, Cixous offers an abridged description of the tension. The gift of the woman's myopia, her half-seeing, her otherness, can only be appreciated in its retreat: "But now its force, its strange force, was revealed to her, retrospectively at the very moment it was taken away from her" (16). And yet, at the same time, the woman is overcome by the experiences of truth, of knowing (*savoir*): "To see! We want: to see! Perhaps we have never had any other will than to see [*d'autre vouloir que voir*]?" (16). This is the necessary tension of *immanent otherness*: the yearning to always see more, to know more, to know better, but without forgetting our myopia, our *internal foreigner*, who demands that we hesitate, suspend, who keeps the world enchanted.

-- Ah! I see coming in place of my diffuse reign a reign without hesitation.

-- I shall always hesitate. I shall not leave my people. I belong to the people of those who do not see. (13)

Immanent otherness in and for the Anthropocene is an ethics of hesitation, of hungering to see/know more, but while also recognizing that to half-see is the gift of an enchanted world. Here, we begin to see what is especially remarkable in Cixous. The she of *Veils* isn't resolved to partial-seeing as unavoidable, as something to endure, as something that one would give up immediately were the option available. Rather, she finds a *gift* in myopia, the gift of a world, of which humans are a part, that is never fully revealed. From this reading, we see that in fact it is Cixous who is the post-structuralist companion Haraway longs for.

The risk, however, that we face, as Cixous names it, is in the "reign without hesitation" (13). Cixous's onto-epistemology of *immanent otherness* surrenders neither the gift nor the agony of myopia, of otherness, nor does it spurn the resolute desire for and seeking out of immanent truth. She leaves us in this paradoxical space where the gift of myopia exists only in its fading, in the light of seeing: "Only that myopia of a Tuesday in January -- the myopia that was going away, leaving the woman like a slow inner sea -- could see both shores" (16). To move *against certainty* in the *immanent otherness* of the Anthropocene is to sit inside such a space; "[myopia] opens the rein of an eternal uncertainty that no prosthesis can dissipate" (6). The Anthropocene as immanently other is the Anthropocene as the space of "[t]he blur, the chaos before the genesis, the interval, the stage, the deadening, the belonging to non-seeing, the silent heaviness, the daily frontier-crossing, the wandering in limbo" (12-13). But it is only in the (perpetual) receding of myopia that we see the miracle of "the world's rising" (8). In this paradoxical space where we must not-see to see we become more able to respond to the intensified experience of *immanent otherness* that defines the Anthropocene. Such not-seeing-

seeing, I would define, as a Cixousian onto-epistemology of deep integration to intense disruption. And as I will detail further below, Cixous is affirming of myopia, of the gift of myopia, rather than lamenting its unavoidability. The affirmation of myopia becomes all the more urgent in the deep disruptions of the Anthropocene.

Through Cixous and *immanent otherness*, then, we arrive at the inscrutability of the Anthropocenic moment, an approach that seeks company with feminist post-humanism, with those "dwelling in the dissolve," Alaimo's term for a time-place "where fundamental boundaries have begun to come undone, unraveled by unknown futures" (2016, 2). In *Rootprints*, Cixous describes a similar time-place, or space-time, and gives it the name *entredeux*:

When an event arrives which evicts us from ourselves, we do not know how to 'live.' But we must. Thus we are launched into a space-time whose coordinates are all different from those we have been accustomed to. In addition, these violent situations are always new. Always. At no moment can a previous bereavement serve as a model. It is, frightfully, all new: this is one of the most important experiences of our human histories. At times we are thrown into strangeness. This being abroad at home is what I call an *entredeux*. (Cixous 1997, 9-10)

With the concept of *entredeux*, Cixous helps us name and think about, or "write," what it means to be evicted from ourselves, to no longer comprehend, let alone know how to manage, the reality we are in. It is a term that works in tandem with her concept of *between-us*, but *entredeux* describes an ontological state of being estranged from the familiar where *between-us* describes subjectivity as inextricably entwined. Crucially, Cixous does not imagine *entredeux* as a space-time of relativism, nihilism, or melancholia, for though we no longer know how to live, "we *must*" (9-10). Cixous often writes (from) this space of impossible possibles. In "Savoir" she sides

neither with seeing nor myopia: she wants both. Cixous emphasizes that the violent evictions of *entredoux* are "always new," meaning that nothing that came before them can direct us as to what is happening or what is going to happen. This idea resonates with Elizabeth Grosz's material feminist reading of Darwinian time in *Time Travels* (2005). Through Cixous and Grosz we better understand that temporal-being is itself defined by being thrown into strangeness. By such a reading, the Anthropocene as *entredoux* describes not the one moment in the history of being when suddenly everything ceases to make sense, but the *next* moment that tells us, once again, that the stability of home is illusory. Hamilton names the Anthropocene as the strangeness that has *never* before existed. Cixous's *entredoux* moves instead with Alaimo, wherein the "catastrophic dissolve" underway is not only of "billions of tiny shelled creatures," but of human(ist) fantasies of control, security and futurity (Alaimo 2017, 98). Humanism, in other words, has always been fantastical, and the *entredoux* of the Anthropocene describes another moment in an asynchronous history of moments in which all is rendered strange. *Entredoux* describes a "true in-between - between a life which is ending and a life which is beginning...a moment in life where you are not entirely living, where you are almost dead. Where you are not dead. Where you are not yet in the process of reliving" (1997 9). In the Anthropocenic moment we are not dead; we are stuck in this space between two things: an old thing that is gone and a new thing that isn't yet realized. In *entredoux*, we are struck by the "loss of a being who is part of me -- as if a piece of my body, of my house, were ruined, collapsed" (10). Cixous compares the state of *entredoux* to learning one has a grave illness. The body has turned strange. The home that was the body has ceased to be welcoming; "bereavement between me, violently, from the loss of a being who is a part of me" (10). In this way, *entredoux* is an estrangement from self, from a habituated self.

Contemplating an Anthropocenic state of *entredeux* as finding ourselves "abroad at home" runs deeply counter to Hamilton's voracious insistence that humans embrace their exceptionality. Against such calls to accept "our" status as gods (Brand 1968; Dibley 2012; Kingsnorth 2013; Hamilton 2017), the *immanent otherness* of the Anthropocene as its strangeness describes the ways in which we (privileged Western subjects) are being forced to look at ourselves in unexpected and disquieting ways: "We ourselves are the wilderness destroying the very systems of which we were a part, in a role we utterly do not understand" (Durand 2010, 114-124). Understanding the Anthropocene as a space-time of *entredeux* helps us appreciate the impulse to grasp at certainty as a kind of coping mechanism when reality itself has become unknown, replete with known and unknown unknowns. And, of course, the Anthropocene is full of new, emerging half-knowns that, in bereavement, we desperately try to put together into a complete and certain picture. Because to not know, for Holocene Man, is to surrender, to be without power, as he defines it. But to think the affective space of the Anthropocene as the facing, sensing, reckoning of the other-within is to see through the false promises of godliness, of transcendental frameworks, and to discover the joyful disorientation of immanence. We need the concept of the Anthropocene, not to mark the sudden arrival of otherness, but to help us describe new kinds of *sensing* of immanent otherness that arrive when so many stark and comprehensive disruptions abound. The Anthropocene as an intensified appreciation of *immanent otherness* is tragic only for subjects habituated to the fictions of transcendental epistemology, and autonomous subjectivity. Cixous *begins* with the disorientation of *immanent otherness*, but her heart lies in the writing-invention of a post-*entredeux*: "what I work on does not take place in the violent interruption -- which opens up, and instead there is a sort of strange material which would be called '*entredeux*' -- but always in the *passage*" (10). If

entredoux is a kind of suspension between two, Cixous tells us that she is interested in writing the *movement* between two, "[i]n the passage *from the one to the other, de l'une à l'autre*" (10). If *entredoux* is the arrest of strangeness, the movement *de l'une à l'autre* is enlivening, breathtaking. In the passage, we *gain* rather than grow fearful of all the different ways of thinking and dwelling in the world; we become endless travellers to and from otherness. We are hungry to stay in the space-time of the passage, and to do so means seeking and searching, with humility, *more otherness*, not less. Once we arrive here, otherness ceases to be a risk. If *entredoux* is adrift, the *passage* is an onto/eco-ethics of drifting. Drifting we are not "off course," we are without course, we are seeking course. We are not aimless. We are wandering. Hamilton's absoluteness takes us to an eco-ethic of attack, locked in its certainty of where we are and what we need to do. *Entredoux* begins the disruption of such a position. It marks the arrival of strangeness, the moment of exile. But *the passage* is a space-time of exuberance from which we can both cognitively and *affectively* begin to understand that *immanent otherness* is what makes all life/being possible and plentiful.

The *immanent otherness* of the Anthropocene as its strangeness also means that it is many things for many people, that it is not, as discussed above, a unilateral and uniform condition. This is a position that, understandably, is counter-intuitive to a subject accustomed to and desperately clinging to fixed frameworks. Arriving against certainty and in *immanent otherness* therefore leaves passage, as Cixous would say, to *new* relations with human and non-human others, and other ways of being-thinking-dwelling in the world. The totality and certainty, or inflexibility, of Hamilton's position creates adversaries at every turn. Neshnabé (Potawatomi) theorist Kyle Whyte, in "Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now: Indigenous Conservation and the Anthropocene," explains that "Indigenous conservationists and restorationists tend to focus on

sustaining particular plants and animals whose lives are entangled locally — and often over many generations — in ecological, cultural and economic relationships with human societies and other nonhuman species" (2017, 209). In contrast, Hamilton can only "hear" the failure to recognize the power of the human *over* such relationships. In this way, emerging reactions to the Anthropocene that remain closed to difference, otherness, and uncertainty, exemplified by Hamilton, sit in intrinsic opposition to a wealth of other ideas, and are therefore neo-colonial in nature. Beginning instead with the strangeness of the Anthropocene means remaining resolutely open, to use Cixous's phrase, to what has not yet been thought, understood, tried, heard, encountered or imagined. In approaching the Anthropocene as rendering strange Western fantasies of "the human" we open more opportunities for meaningful dialogue and exchange among Euro-Western, feminist, queer, Indigenous and anti-colonial thinkers. What does it mean for those privileged subjects that took the "human" to be homogenous and in control to realize what marginalized subjects have long known, lived with, and fought against: that capital-colonial hubris is delusionary? Again, it is for these subjects alone that "the world we were born into no longer exists" (McKibben, qtd in Rose 2013, 2). Doubling down on the agency of Holocenic Man silences the views of non-privileged peoples whose "differences" we don't have time for. The *immanent otherness* of the Anthropocene is entered, by contrast, the moment the violence of neo-liberal, neo-colonial industrial capitalism is rendered material to a degree of discernibility that turns Euro-Western reality strange and unfamiliar. Only from such an estrangement do new worlds become possible.

Against Purity: immanent otherness as the imundity of the Anthropocene

Building on *immanent otherness* as incoherence and uncertainty, I return now to Cixous's Claricean concept of *imundity*, or finding joy in the unclean. The *immanent otherness* of the

Anthropocene as its *imundity* intersects with eco-theorists exploring dark and queer ecologies (Sandilands and Erickson 2010; Morton 2016; Rose 2013; Hird and Giffney 2016): ecologies that do not reify Nature as pristine wholeness, but instead move toward an affirmation of material otherness, which can include a rethinking, or even a celebration, of the unclean, the abject, and the monstrous. In other words, against the wholeness of "the *Framework*," dark and queer ecologists, generally speaking, seek to reconceptualise nature/life/being, including "the planet itself," as always already contaminated, cracked and disjointed. Extending darkness and queerness into the Anthropocene, such theorists ask: how does the pretense to purity and wholeness, including a "whole earth" that is "savable," or "restorable," promote flimsy, or even dangerous, eco-ethics? Against such pureness, to think the *immanent otherness* of the Anthropocene as its *imundity* is, firstly, to recognize that to live is to be ethically and politically contaminated. Immanence, Cixous tells us, means there is no escaping embedded complicity, and otherness means there is no determining *in absolute terms* the outer edges of one's response/ability. The damned spot will never be out; or, as Cixous offers in an interview with Bernadette Fort on her 1994 play *La Ville parjure ou le réveil des Erinyes* [*The Perjured City, or the Awakening of the Furies*], "blood spilt cannot come back." (1997 431). She elaborates:

[T]he blood cannot be stopped. One cannot go back in time. Fatality and forewarning. What has been done cannot be undone--an immense and simple lesson on mortality. A way of recalling the finite, the limit, fragility; and so prudence, respect...human "blood" has always been burdened with all the ambivalent fantasies of purity and impurity. The contradictory madness of mankind passes through the theme of blood... the anti-Semitic antihomosexual

antihuman reflex..All these "antis" cling to the myth of purity, and thereupon
some people dare to "cleanse ethnically. (1997 432)

The play confronts the question of what it means to respond *once blood is spilled*, which it always already is. To do so, Cixous resurrects Aeschylus' Furies, goddesses of vengeance, to avenge the death of two hemophiliac boys killed by HIV contaminated blood.⁸⁰ Returning to the scene of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy, which stages the creation of a court of justice in place of blood-vengeance, Cixous asks us to consider what justice and ethics look like from *within* contamination. In transforming the angry, vengeful Furies into the peaceful Eumenides, the story charts the transposition of retaliatory justice into a judiciary system through the silencing of affect and mourning. Cixous questions what is lost in a justice system that hides spilled blood beneath abstracted laws and verdicts. What might an *imund* justice look like, she poses, one that doesn't seek to resolve spilled blood because it does not believe it is possible to clear the docket. However, Cixous doesn't leave us with tragedy. She seeks a middle ground between endless vengeance and sanitized justice. She rejects both the impulse to cleanse and the impulse to lament, and instead asks: what if we could find a way to *live* our *imundity*, with brutal lucidity. And so, we might ask, what if we could *live* the contaminations of the Anthropocene with similar resolve?

Immanent otherness as *imundity* also means finding joy in the unclean, and marks the Anthropocenic moment as one that demands a re-imagining of onto/eco-ethics such that pleasure and *jouissance* are not supplanted by denial, indignation and melancholia. As discussed in previous Chapters, Cixous, with Clarice at hand, works to subvert the separation in Abrahamic Enlightenment thought between the "clean" and the "unclean" by seeking *joy* and *jouissance* in *imundity*. Again we find Cixous going further than merely an affirmation of materiality,

including materiality labelled "abject" or "monstrous" within the material-semiotics of Western thought. Sitting in stark defiance of persistent critiques of post-structuralism as "all deconstruction; no construction," Cixous has always moved toward invention and creation, toward "writing" new forms of relationality into being. Cixous asks: how might we go beyond the deconstruction of pure/impure to imagine the kinds of potential for pleasure that exist in conceiving subjectivity outside these constraints? Again, Cixous does not proceed with such commitments naively, as noted above. She is well aware of the blood still spilling in the name of "purity." But her work is exceptional in that this awareness doesn't arrest her in the deconstructive space as all that is possible, for now. And so, she lets us ask: how can *immanent otherness* as *imundity* help conceive a jubilant ecology for ominous times? How can we dare to imagine joy in the contaminations of the Anthropocene?

In "Clarice Lispector: the Approach: Letting Oneself (be) Read (by) Clarice Lispector: The Passion According to C.L." (1991b), Cixous explores Clarice's effort to not only rehabilitate the beautiful of "what is," but what she calls the ugliness of being. She quotes Clarice: "I have lost my fear of the ugly. And that loss is a very great good. It is a delight" (75). Clarice is naming and challenging the onto-order that carves up the world into good and abject in order to reject that which is deemed unclean, dirty, ugly, or other. In Cixous words: "Clarice has the terrifying splendour of daring the real, which is not beautiful, which is not organized, of daring the living, which is not symbolized, which is not personal, of being in the kernel of the *is* that is without the self, of writing by the flow of signs without history" (75). "The real," Cixous tells us, if we can attune to its frequency, radiates in such a way that does not result in a taxonomic system, a hierarchy of worthiness mediated by perceptions of beauty. To have lost her fear of the ugly is to have successfully undone the onto-training of dichotomous binarism. But perhaps more

importantly, Cixous's Clarice is also suggesting that to lose the fear of otherness that upholds Western systems of value is emancipatory, even delightful. The lesson of ugliness seeks to travel "through the horrible to Joy" (76). An onto/eco-ethics that finds joy in ugliness finds pleasure, therefore, in the beingness of beings; there is no being that doesn't communicate its being and therefore there is no being that does not offer the splendour of being. Cixous finds in Clarice a poet-philosopher who thinks-writes the brilliance of beingness itself: "Clarice can replace a rose with a turtle. But Rilke could replace it only with a unicorn or an anemone. But Clarice with a cockroach. But Rilke no. But Clarice with an oyster. But Rilke only lacework" (1991b 75). Where Rilke can only celebrate that which is seen to have beauty within Western constructs, Clarice, Cixous tells us, exalts the cockroaches, oysters and turtles. She shows us what it means to reach (for) the beauty of being as *immanent otherness*. To revel in *imundity* is to shed the machinery of discrimination that seeks only to separate, organize, hierarchize. To revel in *imundity* is to ride the "flow of signs without history," to see the magic of being in the cockroach.

In *The Passion According to G.H.* (1964), Cixous tells us, Clarice transforms "our relations to the world in general and to living things in particular" (1993, 112). Clarice writes-thinks G.H.'s onto-transformation from a subject who is disgusted and fearful of a crushed cockroach to a subject who can ingest, take into *her own* body, the entrails of the cockroach, in love and filiality. Why is the cockroach disgusting, and not the rose, Cixous asks? Because; "This is the law's logic. It is this terrible 'because,' this senseless fatal 'because' that has decided people's fate, even in the extremity of the concentration camps...It is this because that rules our lives. It pervades everything" (1993, 117). To be able to see/feel the radiance of the cockroach, to have the being of the cockroach transformed such that we could ingest the cockroach, is to refuse the arbitrariness of "the Law," to refuse the logics of Western(ized) power. Here we find

Clarice/Cixous's darkly queer ecology, where "the boundaries between "nature" and "culture" are shown to be arbitrary, dialectical, mutually-constitutive..."places where 'unnatural' and 'uncivilized' combine to produce questionable, shady, suspect, characters who are not comfortable inhabiting existing bifurcations" (Sandilands 1994, 22). What would it mean, following Clarice and Cixous, to build an onto/eco-ethics for the Anthropocene that begins from this place where the radiance of being emanates from everything? First, we can say what such an ethics is *not*. It is not an onto/eco-ethics built on experiences of oneness. The cockroach, or *barata*, doesn't *become* G.H.; the ingestion describes G.H.'s capacity to take in or commune with "the other," without erasing otherness. She can ingest the materiality of the *barata* not because she has nullified its otherness and brought it back to the "right side" of "the Law," but because she has found a way to delight *in* otherness, and otherness to delight in her, literally, to allow her ontology to be transformed such that otherness need not and does not exist "outside me." Cixous's Clarice is not offering a rote ontological flattening in which all being becomes indistinguishable and therefore nothing is distinct. G.H. comes to delight in the *immanent otherness* of the cockroach as part of an *immanent otherness* that is as much in her as in the insect, and this is what allows her to "take the other in."

Reading Clarice/Cixous in conversation with dark and queer ecology, we can better understand what it means to resist the seductions of purification and reconciliation as an antidote to environmental alienation. From a Western, Abrahamic standpoint it is perhaps easy to appreciate why eco-theorists have so often rejected queerness and darkness in the effort to "save" nature. Do not queer and dark ecologies risk the ethical since everything is justifiable when you revel in impurity? Why care about pollution, toxicity and extinctions if contamination is seen as a good? With Cixous's *imundity*, the *fantasy* of wholeness, of restoration, reconciliation and

purification is the greater danger. Rather than environmentalism as *undoing* the othering of nature by culture, such that we can "return" to nature, Cixous offer environmentalism as the transmutation of otherness from abject to pleasurable, joyous, and even ecstatic. With *imundity*, Cixous, in some ways, goes further than queer and dark entanglements. *Imundity* is dirtier, for it celebrates contamination. Rather than a transcendental ecstasy in which one desires to be outside oneself and moving toward the immaterial divine, Cixous offer an immanent ecstasy as a "standing outside oneself" *into* and *as* fecund materiality. Because purity is materially impossible, and therefore as a concept it is anti-reality, anti-being, to seek it means to begin the process of ignoring, hiding, and killing off "impurities?" In *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (2016), Alexis Shotwell elaborates a similar position:

Being against purity means that there is no primordial state we might wish to get back to, no Eden we have desecrated, no pretoxic body we might uncover through enough chia seeds and kombucha. There is not a preracial state we could access, erasing histories of slavery, forced labor on railroads, colonialism, genocide, and their concomitant responsibilities and requirements. There is no food we can eat, clothing we can buy, or energy we can use without deepening our ties to complex webs of suffering. So, what happens if we start from there? (2016, 3)

Cixous starts from here, and then she goes further. Where Shotwell is resigned to the truths of immanence, Cixous is *born* into the horrors of cleansing, and then spends a lifetime writing-being ecstatic life. Cixous asks: what happens if we start with rejoicing in *imundity*, with finding beauty and pleasure in "the dregs"? To do so is not to advocate *for* defilement as an ethic in itself, but to understand that we are always already compromised, always already dirty. It is the fantasy of purity that is the destructive and violent force, *not* the state of defilement, which,

immanence tells us, is unavoidable. We are, therefore, taught cockroach rejection – *against* our lived materiality. To fall in love with the squashed cockroach, in a Cixousian/Claricean way, is to undo this training. And falling in love is the right way to describe it because to love, for Cixous, is "to watch-think-see the other in the other"; this is "a love that has no commerce with the apprehensive desire that provides against the lack and stultifies the strange; [it is] a love that rejoices in the exchange that multiplies" (1976, 893). To become capable of "ingesting" the cockroach, of taking the other in, G.H. must transform the onto/eco-ethical order in which she exists. She does not *identify* with the cockroach through a process of domestication. She does not render the insect familiar in order to love it. Instead, G.H. transforms herself such that the cockroach ceases to be the impure to her purity, but it does not become "the same." The ethical order invented here is not predicated on likeness, domestication or sameness, but on a kind of intimacy made possible when we learn to sense-feel-materialize the affinities of *immanent otherness*. But this state of being-writing-relating, it is important to note, is *not* an experience of biophilia, of collective consciousness, of "oneness with the universe." This is no ontic collapse. G.H., as noted, does not erase all difference in order to ingest the cockroach, she falls in love with it. But this is a love that appears perverse to Western logics. What Cixous is describing-inventing is a love that *desires* otherness: not a love that seeks sameness, nor is it a love defined by lack, by a longing for that which will never arrive. The love of *imundity* revels in the not-arriving, experiences being in the midst of the not-arriving as ecstatic. This is partly why Cixous holds on to the word *imund*, rather than dismissing all logics of separation and distinction. In bringing otherness *to* immanence, Cixous shows us a path toward an onto-eco-ethic of embedded entanglement that doesn't necessitate the flattening of ontology.⁸¹ The intuitive reaction to impurity for a transcendental subject is to be aghast at the ruin. But a subject that has

apprenticed, as Cixous might say, at the school of life/being as *imund* begins with complicity, collusion, and contagion, and moves toward other-love -- *without* leaving ontology. G.H., in Cixous's reading, does not "face" the cockroach as *other-than-being*, in the Levinasian sense, which subordinates the ontic dimension to the ethical. Rather, G.H. basks in the revelation of the cockroach's *other-being*; and this is what Cixous calls love.

From *imundity*, we see how eco-fascism and melancholic withdrawal are partly responses to transcendental and therefore fantastical frameworks of understanding: one can only arrive at absolutist action or retreat if one is certain of the *purity* of one's perspective. Rather than environmental melancholy, the *imundity* of *immanent otherness* safeguards against both reactions because it recognizes that in the messiness is ceaseless otherness, and therefore infinite possibility. *Imundity*, therefore, helps us sit in the unprecedented madness of the Anthropocene, its acute *immanent otherness* that "we" transcendental subjects seeking Frameworks often experience as pathological. *Imundity* seeks to find joy in the mess of things, in the ugliness and impurity of "what is." *Imundity* revels in the mess, not as a perverse, defeatist or nihilist gesture but, as Clarice/Cixous offer, as a relief and a delight because it means a fuller experience of being/s, of "what is." To "rehabilitate what is" for the Anthropocene, then, is to cathect to the world as "we" inescapably live/know it: piecemeal, messy, broken, limping. But *imundity* goes further; it works to transform an abjectified nature -- the cockroaches of nature, the nature that never makes it onto a Greenpeace poster -- into a joyful encounter of *immanent otherness*. And to remember that there is always otherness in immanence, which means that "what is" is always more than what we think it is and more than what we can know, just as we/it (all being) is more than we/it know/are. Shotwell comes close to this position:

The world always exceeds our conception of it. Despite this, we can still pursue changed worlds. Living well might feel impossible, and certainly living purely is impossible. The slate has never been clean, and we can't wipe off the surface to start fresh – there's no 'fresh' to start....All there is, while things perpetually fall apart, is the possibility of acting from where we are. (2016, 4)

Not only does Shotwell maintain a distinction between "world" and "conceptions of it," but she also leaves her ontological observations at "things perpetually falling apart." So, while there is a strong affinity here between her ideas and Cixous's *imundity*, Cixous has no air of resignation. *Imundity* is not a reconciling to unfortunate impurities; it is celebratory, ecstatic, euphoric, orgasmic. And this is where few other theorists have gone, or are going, especially under Anthropocenic conditions. Cixous, like Shotwell, acknowledges the impurity of immanence, but she then seeks out *imundity*, which is epiphanic in its uncleanliness. *Imundity*, like an onto-ethics of impurity, guards against fantasies of transcendental absolutism, but it also offers a myopic pleasure rooted in the nourishing intimacies of *immanent otherness*. In other words, through Cixous, we can see that both sides of the absolutist response to Anthropocenic calamity, whether hyper or hypo active, remain tethered to a transcendental metaphysics of unity, certainty, and purity of "seeing." With Cixous, the Anthropocene can potentially be experienced as a kind of joyful myopia, which is an affective space far more conducive to the endurances ahead.⁸² Cixous shows us the melody of incoherence, the beauty of deformity and the delicacy of excrement. While many of us decry a lost paradise, Cixous has long been showing us how to find life underground, for she was born into exile, born into multiple camps, and wrote her own escape route: "Here are your laws: you will not kill, you will be killed, you will not steal, you will not be a bad recruit, you will not be sick or crazy (this would lack of consideration for your

hosts), you will not zigzag. You will not write. You will learn to calculate. You will not touch. In whose name would I write?" (1991b, 15-16). Against orders of death, she wrote, she still writes. If we are to face the unpredictability, frustrations, and monstrosities of the Anthropocene, and *not* seek new ways to "reign without hesitation," we should follow Cixous.

An (alter)Anthropocenic Ethic of Jouissance

"We need an ethics of the Anthropocene." (Jamieson 2017, 16)

"The world is mistaken. It imagines that the other takes something from us whereas the other only brings to us, all the time." (1997, 13)

Conceiving the Anthropocene through *immanent otherness* disrupts "the Framework" of globalized solutions as much as it does the standpoint of eco-disasterists who often proclaim with equivalent insistence and certainty that "[t]he ongoing collapse of social and economic infrastructures, and of the web of life itself, will kill off much of what we value" (Kingsworth 2012 – Retrieved Dec. 17, 2017). The response to an inflexible "Framework of certainty" is almost always resolute, whether manifesting as full-scale action or despondence. Kingsworth, for example, in considering our ecological condition for a piece in *The Orion*, advocates withdrawal: "withdraw because refusing to help the machine advance—refusing to tighten the ratchet further—is a deeply moral position. Withdraw to examine your worldview: the cosmology, the paradigm, the assumptions, the direction of travel" (2012). But immanence tells us that withdrawal *is* action because we can never remove ourselves from complicit entanglement. There is no public "over there" to either attend or exit. To affirm the incoherence, uncertainty and *imundity* that is Cixous's *immanent otherness*, by contrast, means recognizing that it is not possible to reduce the complex immanent mess of beings that comprise reality such that one can

claim to know absolutely the correct response to any conditions, including Anthropocenic ones. In this way, Cixous may help move us through our environmental melancholia.

In Kingsworth's withdrawal there are echoes of the kind of melancholia that Bruce Braun critiques in *The Intemperate Rainforest* (2002), whereby "mourning the loss of nature is a constitutive condition of capitalist modernity" (337). Building on Braun's argument, Sandilands, in "Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies," contends that there is something in the "fetishization and commodification of a lost, romanticized nature" that is part of the recuperative functioning of modern capitalism (2010 338). And while many privileged Western subjects partake in such romantic, faux withdrawals, at the same time, as Sandilands identifies, there is almost no social space afforded to real environmental mourning: "there is lots of evidence of environmental loss, but few places in which to experience it *as* loss" (338). There is no space for mourning because "the everyday relations we have with the more-than-human world are unmarked, unnamed, and ungrievable" (339). What *is* available, more and more, is the fetishized longing for nature *constitutive* of modernist subjectivity.⁸³ The Anthropocene is no doubt heightening such exoticized, even Orientalized, longings for "nature." And yet, there is hardly any public pedagogy on our immanent embeddedness in/as a more-than-human world. As a result, many people have little sense of what is being lost in us/as us/beneath us. Such embeddedness doesn't live "off the grid;" it is our immanent reality. This condition of not really knowing what is being lost leads to what Sandilands calls melancholy natures: "losses in which we cannot 'recognize what has been lost'" (339). We perform ritualistic mourning of "nature" in affirmation of modern/capitalism at the same time that we acquire melancholic natures for the losses that remain unnamed. How, then, "does one grieve in a context in which the significance, the density, and even the existence of loss is unrecognized?" (339).

Immanent otherness helps to describe the melancholia that results from various refusals to recognize the losses taking place, and it also helps capture the additionally curious Anthropocenic phenomenon of not fully knowing what is being broken, ruined and lost. We not only cannot mourn what we know to be lost, we increasingly cannot work out all that we are losing. This is the incoherent, uncertain, and *imund*, or, to use Hird and Clark's term, the "deep shit" we find ourselves in. Using the context of mass extinction, the authors shed light on this aspect of Anthropocenic conditions:

Even the practice of anticipating, documenting and mourning the passing of a species, the melancholic publicity so pivotal to contemporary environmentalism, falls short of embracing the fullness of extinction's loss. For, as Kathryn Yusoff (2012, 580) reminds us, a great many of the living lineages that are now likely to be "disappearing" have never appeared to us in the first place: their extinguishing takes place unattended and unannounced, beyond the reach of our technologies of presence. Too small, too obscure, too reticent to have graced our archives, these beings blink out of existence without ever making their presence felt. If there might be such a thing as a dark ecology, a green so deep as to emit no glimmer of light, perhaps it lies here, in the contemplation of the finality of a withdrawal from the ranks of the always already withdrawn. (Hird and Clark 2013, 45)

But what I want to highlight is that, most remarkably, Cixous's *immanent otherness*, in addition to describing this bizarre darkness in which we know that we don't know all that is being lost, also shows us how to get from melancholia to *jouissance*. Cixous helps answer the question: how do we conceive the material unknowability of immanent being such that it leads not to

withdrawal -- from a great abstract, transcendental unknowability that leaves us bereft, or theistic -- but to endurance, vigilance, and even *joy*?

What interests me is what I do not know. And it leaves me first of all silent. It strikes me with surprise, with a certain silence. But at the same time, it strikes my body, it hurts me...It is always what is stronger than I am that interests me...there are so many things that escape me. What we have still to discover is endless. I will only discover a thousand millionth, and I will be delirious with joy. (1997, 71-72)

In this passage, we can see that for Cixous the not-yet-known is firstly a sacred experience, one that leaves her arrested in surprise and silence. Living *immanent otherness* is first and foremost a suspension of the self, of the habits of familiar subjectivity, of all the "noise" that we use to feel comfortable in our certainties. We are struck; we are awestruck, and the experience produces a carnal form of pain, which is to say, that the affect goes deep. But then, in contrast to much of Western thought, Cixous tells us that she *wants* this experience, she craves that which overwhelms the comforts of her settled-self. There is *libido* here, not just resolve. And herein lies the revolution: the sensing of *immanent otherness* becomes ecstatic. The more she *knows* she *does not know* the more "delirious with joy" she becomes, that is, the more surprise, silence and pain *become jouissance*. Cixous walks alongside Lacanian *jouissance* as an "enjoyment beyond the pleasure principle," but she leaves his company in conceiving a *jouissance* that is without pain. Though he engaged with the concept in many different ways over the course of his intellectual life, Lacan consistently conceives *jouissance* to be in a fraught relationship to pleasure. As Žižek explains in *How to Read Lacan* (2011), in dealing with *jouissance*, "we are not dealing with simple pleasures, but with a violent intrusion that brings more pain than

pleasure” (1243).⁸⁴ *Jouissance*, in Cixous’s interpretation, is *reveling* in the excess of being, from the arrest to the intense overflowing of self. This is key to Cixous’s material feminist transformation of psycho-analytic notions of *jouissance*. She (re)writes-thinks-invents a feminized *jouissance* free from the trauma of the “big Other” that imposes a disembodied symbolic on a seething, immanent being.⁸⁵ For Cixous, it is possible to experience the undoing of the self in *jouissance* as a freedom, to revel in a psychology that knows and does not resist its material entanglement. Cixous’s insistence on *immanent otherness* as generous and generative, as an enfolded, material love, deeply upsets Western practices of producing otherness as deficient, which justifies domination, as abject, which justifies violence, or else as an immaterial and thus unreachable divine. Cixous’s *immanent otherness* doesn’t render otherness otherworldly; rather, she offers an otherness that “contaminates.” To find *jouissance* in *immanent otherness*, then, necessitates a radical re-ordering of Western onto-epistemology. Where the Western(ized) subject experiences pain with such affective dissolves, the subject Cixous imagines is orgiastic in the throes of immanent excess: “delirious with joy.”

Pushing this idea further into Anthropocenic literature, we might ask: what would it mean to pursue and support an onto/eco-ethics in which one of the central tasks at hand (principally for Western subjects) is not, in the face of disorder, to double-down on totalized frameworks of understanding but to imagine the “other-within” as a joyful exuberance, to cultivate *immanent otherness* as *jouissance*?⁸⁶ If indeed “the Anthropocene” marks what we might call an ego-disruption for “Western” cognition, if not consciousness, and if we also understand that the response to such disruptions, particularly for such egos, tends to be either fortification or (faux) surrender, both of which keep the same destructive machinery running, then a Cixousian *jouissance* offers a very different path. It is a path that Cixous has been writing-thinking-

inventing for five decades, a path that asks what it means to be a subject who can experience the *immanent otherness* of embedded entanglement as gift, not punishment.⁸⁷ If the Anthropocene exposes as fallacious the certainty, unity and purity of Western transcendental thought, Cixous is here to tell us that such exposures need not, as Hamilton fears, end in chaos. The disruption of the self by the other, which includes the other-self, is not a tragedy; "the world is mistaken...the other only brings" (1997 13). An onto/eco-ethics of *immanent otherness* may begin with excess as interruption, but always moves toward finding *jouissance* in such rupturing. This is not a metaphorical or semiotic lesson, as Clark reminds us, perhaps somewhat surprising, earth science increasingly reveals something very similar: "The quite ordinary eventfulness of the universe carves rifts in the continuity of life – chasms over which others meet without ever being as one" (2011, 115). The Anthropocene isn't *the* rupture; being *is* rupture. The Anthropocene is the coming to more deeply sense this always present rupturing.

I want to finish the Chapter with a reading of Cixous's essay "Without end, no, State of drawingness, no, rather: The Executioner's taking off" (1998), to further elaborate why it is Cixous that we need to help us find *jouissance* in the incoherence, uncertainty and *imundity* of rapturous and rupturous being. In her care we discover the rapture of rupture. In the essay, Cixous describes what it means to *desire immanent otherness* through her experience looking at a series of drawings, one by da Vinci, one by Picasso, and one by Rembrandt. She prefers these drawings-before-the-completed-painting, just as she prefers the writing notebooks of Kafka and Dostoyevsky, for their naked "in-the-middleness," their always on the way to something, their arriving before arrival; "I want the tornados in the atelier" (20). The notebooks and drawings more obviously tell of the openness of being that exceeds each of its moments. Art need not freeze being, but in a cultural environment such as the West's in which representation and

signification work in tandem with onto-epistemologies of transcendence, drawings and notebooks more easily resist the illusion of "completeness" and "finality" in meaning-making. She says: "I want the forest before the book, the abundance of leaves before the pages...I want the world of pulses, before destiny, I want the prenatal and anonymous night. I want (the arrival) to see arriving" (20). Cixous is describing a yearning for *immanent otherness*, for a space that is at once material -- forests, leaves, pulses -- and yet not-knowable in any conventional sense -- anonymous night, before arrival. She wants the world before it moves into rationalized, dialectical notions of linear progress, or "destiny." It is a state before transcendental form and rigid definition, a state of *emergence*: "The books that I love are not masterful narratives but journals of experiences. They are books that have recorded, and indeed left intact, *the emergence* of an experience that has been located or noticed for the first time" (1997, 57). To further the idea, Cixous connects writing to drawing as "advanc[ing] into the unknown, hearts beating, mad with desire," efforts she likens to a childlike state: "As soon as we draw...we are little, we do not know, we start out avidly, we're going to lose ourselves" (21). She tells us that "writing-or-drawing...are often twin adventures, which depart to seek in the dark" (21). Cixous pursues a writing-drawing that tries to reach/move closer to this "dark," the space of emergence, a felt but not known place, an otherness that is already inside, already in our bodies, in our sensational lived experience:

It's from inside the body that the drawing-of-the-poet rises to the light of day.

First it exists at the torment state in the chest, under the waist. See it now as it precipitates itself in spasms, in waves, the length of the arm, passing the hand, passing the pen...I write before myself by apprehension, with noncomprehension, the night vibrates, I see with my ears, I advance into the bosom of the world,

hands in front, capturing the music with my palms, until something breathes under the pen's beak.

Here, we find a subject fit for the affective ruptures of the Anthropocene: a child-poet that fumbles in the darkness, hands in front, uncertain, unsteady, and yet hungry for what their ears might see, anxious to follow the panting nearby. They are learning to see with their body in new ways. They are discovering how to access the before-myself that is in oneself, that spasms through them. On the other side of the rupture, Cixous might argue, we need subjects that can face the-other-within, the otherness that arrives when the falsity of absolute, transcendental certainty is revealed. Subjects who can say "what now?" Subjects who revel in humility, lick their wounds, start from scratch, and who know that "everything starts in the middle" (1998, 28). We need subjects that can move through the world with the recognition that "we are blind people who paint our own portraits, with bold, dangerously confident strokes" (2010, 58). Post Anthropocenic rupture, does not "*wisdom* begin with knowing that we cannot stop ourselves, being blind, from believing we are what we are while knowing that we know nothing of what we are" (58). This is the subject who knows the call of the other is coming from inside the house, the subject who *creates* from within such consciousness: "Now we turn on the lights, and lean over to see the work born. Then, surprise before what, passing through us, was drawn; and if it is *I* who drew this unknown child then who are I?" This is a subject who knows that truth, creativity and ethics are born in such unknowns. Because of course, as Cixous reminds us, we cannot separate "who are I" ("qui sont-je") from "who dreams" (qui songe) (1994, xvii-xviii). Here is the rapture of rupture that the Anthropocenic moment demands.

Conclusion

The Anthropocene marks the (tenuous, myopic) realization of reality as immanently other, of *immanent otherness* as defining all relations. Approached through Cixous's onto/eco-poethics, the Anthropocene can be seen to mark not a new phenomenon, but the arrival of a different kind of lucidity, an intensified awareness, particularly among privileged Western subjects, of the *immanent otherness* of being. In this sense, it is as much *homo* as *terra incognita* that many of "us" face in the Anthropocene. The earth hasn't *become* unknown; humans, namely those long enjoying the position of *cognita absolutum*, are becoming unfamiliar to themselves. "We" have become the dragons we cannot map. And this is why we need Cixous, because *incognita* is where she begins. And unlike her contemporaries who spend most of their time with others that cannot be touched, pleasures that induce pain, and ghosts who cannot be contacted, Cixous tells us that the ecstasy of life lives in the darkness. She is our Nietzsche for the Anthropocene. We have not suddenly fallen. We were never anything but fallen, and thank god.

Conclusion

...to consider the launching of a brand-new subject, alive, with defamilialization

(Cixous 1976, 890).

One of my central objectives in this dissertation has been to demonstrate the ways that Cixous opens up a path for eco-theory that wants, instead of harmony and compatibility, new ways of being-other. Cixous helps us conceive a material otherness whereby the otherness of immanent being is its incoherence, strangeness, and impurity, and, *because* of this undecidability, its fecund *jouissance*. Rather than an environmentalism rooted in nice-smelling biophilia, Cixous leads us to a darker ecology by placing great value in being as immanence shot through with otherness;⁸⁸ the fever of otherness "only lets up in appearance. At the exterior floor, 'up above', at the floor of semblance -- of myself -- of order. Below, next door, we are always adrift.... Always in the process of betraying (ourselves), of leaving (ourselves)" (1997 9). For Cixous, this revelation is good news. The myopias of embodied, embedded, and entangled being are what make material fecundity possible; a world that is less known the more that it is known is a poetic world that never stops giving. And this poetic epistemology of "knowing as always on the way to knowing" is also an ontology; immanent otherness is the engine of material-semiotic abundancy: "The world is mistaken. It imagines that the other takes something from us whereas the other only brings to us, all the time" (1997, 13). Beneath the transcendental structures that are taken -- often by those for whom such taking is the most beneficial -- to be rational and destined there is a vibrancy of otherness. And this is as true for bees, trees, and rocks as it is for humans. Up above there is "Language," or what Cixous calls the "Law." But, we got it wrong: the muck of immanent being isn't *devoid* of language and thought, it's poetic.

This is the ecology that Cixous taught me in writing this dissertation. She helped me see how much room there is for expansion within the conceptual markers of "ecology" and "eco-theory." What began as a hunch that Cixous, despite her never saying "I'm an environmental philosopher" or "I'm doing eco-theory," was nonetheless conjuring ways of thinking(about)being that were deeply relevant to ecological thought. As it turned out, the twists I needed to take to "hear" her new materialism, and her ecology, were turns worth taking in my general efforts to "see beyond green."⁸⁹ I have never felt green enough, never felt that I belonged to the properly dirty, khaki wearing, long hiking, carabining environmentalism that defined my first encounters with "environmental studies." I always thought that I was too seduced by the aesthetics of consumer capitalism to be a "proper" environmental philosopher. I mean, I enjoy the spectacle of a shopping mall; surely this fact alone disqualifies me? But once I understood, that, stripped bare, ecology can be understood as an effort to rethink ethics and metaphysics beyond structures of domination and exploitation -- what is reality and how can and should we live it such that all beings are granted value – I realized there was room for both Cixous and me. A few pivots in the right direction, thanks to all the fantastic environmental humanities work of the last two decades, and Cixous's onto/eco-ethic of immanent otherness begins to elucidate. Suddenly, I could see that when Cixous is writing about what it means to "live the orange," and when she writes that the phone rings, and when the cat appears, and when her mother wanders in, that she is removing the mask of transcendental authority; she is trying to tell the truth of being; she is "doing ecology." "There is," she writes, "a time for listening to the vibrations that things produce in detaching themselves from the nothing-being to which our blindness relegates them, there is a time for letting things struggling with indifference give themselves to be heard" (1994, 89).

Just writing about phones ringing and cats entering isn't sufficient to count as ecology, but what I've tried to show over the course of this dissertation is that when Cixous writes about these things, she does so as part of a metaphysical project to re-imagine relationality: what she has always been interested in is conceiving new ways of living our entangled being. So, when Cheryll Glotfelty writes in the forward to *Veer Ecology: A Companion for Environmental Thinking* (Cohen and Duckert 2017), that "one slightly unexpected verb that threads its way through the collection is *entangle*, along with the noun *entanglement*" (viii), she is helping us identify Cixous's ecology. Glotfelty notes that "although the essays [in *Veer Ecology*] are strikingly diverse in subject and style," entanglement seems to best describe the new eco-theoretical "paradigm emerging," one that is defined by the "reimagin[ing of] people as materially embodied, ecologically embedded beings with the capacity to enter into reciprocal relationships with nonhuman persons" (viii-ix). Cixous has spent five decades writing human/more-than-human entanglement. And yet, she is not mentioned in any of *Veer's* 29 essays, even as Derrida, Deleuze and Irigaray continue to take up space. This dissertation is my effort to articulate why we need Cixous in the conversation: because she helps us push deeper into the meaning of entanglement. Not only does she refuse to divorce epistemology from ontology in particular and important ways, but she also tells us that *otherness* traverses immanent entanglement. As a result, she gives us a complex and poetic entanglement that complicates the history of ecology as recognition, belonging and biophilia. She helps us sit with the discomforts of entanglement, the flush of otherness that never lets up, and from this feverish space she also redefines *jouissance*.

For this reason, I have argued, Cixous is an essential philosopher for the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene is most useful *as a concept* not to delineate a uniform and unifying

phenomenon, but to describe an intensifying awareness and sensing of the immanent otherness of being. This means that in thinking the "we are in this together" *ness* of the Anthropocene, we place otherness, and not sameness, at the forefront of our philosophical efforts. Thinking the Anthropocene through Cixousian immanent otherness reveals the consequences of denying otherness in hyper-colour, and it also shows us the "otherness" of being itself. We see the otherness of temporality through unpredictable futures (Bastian 2009; Braun 2015), of species being through known and *unknown* extinctions (Yusoff 2012). We more vividly "see" the violent othering of extraction capitalism, and settler colonial ruination (Todd 2015; Tallbear 2016), and the material otherness of the borderless, embedded, entangled posthuman and their queer miscegenations (Sandilands 2010; Tsing 2015; Alaimo 2016; Neimanis 2017). We can hear the otherness of non-Western ontologies, and of diverse and contested worlding practices (Vivieros de Castro 2014; Collard, Dempsey and Sundberg 2015), and the otherness of the "looming catastrophe that we have inadvertently allowed to pile up behind our backs" (Braun 2015, 239) -- and many *others*. Alongside its basic utility, then, in naming a new geological age, Cixous helps us to think the Anthropocene, in metaphysical terms, as describing the intensification of a range of immanent othernesses. The Anthropocene is both the "speaking up" of others unnamed in Western colonial modeling, from human to chemical, and the myopic sensing of the consequences of such violent denials of existence and value. In facing this sensing, we can begin to cultivate desires for poetic life. Poetic life: life in the messy middle, the sketch, the on-the-way, the in process, the naked becoming, the cusp, the threshold. An ethics and politics of immanent otherness in and for the Anthropocene, then, is one that begins with suspension and arrestment, with new forms of listening, and new modes of appreciating what it means to be entangled *in* so much radical difference. With Cixous, we come to understand that such

suspensions are the condition of possibility for finding better ways through the mess, and *not*, as Clive Hamilton tells us, the risk of greater calamity.

I have also realized, over the course of completing this dissertation, the extent to which Cixous has been hidden in plain sight as a philosopher because she embraces a lexicon of "writing" and literature, often against "theory," but that she did so as a way to keep the orange, the phone, the cat, and her mother in the story. Writing the truth of immanent being means writing a world overflowing with such (m)others, and this kind of writing has far more in common with "fiction" than with much conventional Western philosophy. Cixous taught me that writing has the potential to keep pace with life; it can transform to become an immanent and material expression of being itself. Not all human communication is restricted to signifiers and signifieds. In considering Cixous as an environmental philosopher, I could not only see the ways that *écriture féminine* has always been an *écriture naturelle*, but also that her plans for *écriture féminine* began as more than the deconstruction of sexual difference. She was reimagining the metaphysical framework of Western thought, and the *way* she was doing it was not yet recognizable to those still occupying the old frame. She was creating/inventing modes of being-thinking-writing-responding capable of uncovering *living truths*, modes of being that find/follow truth without stifling the vibrant, dynamic, wild/otherness that is the heart of being/becoming/life. She was always and continues to write in/as immanent otherness in order to refuse the killing machine of transcendental thought, in order to invent an ethics and politics that can keep the other-alive.

This effort to keep the other *alive*, and rapturous, I have argued, is unique to Cixous, at least within the context of Continental theory. Levinas gives us a phenomenological other, but one that ultimately is not of this world. Lacan offers material and symbolic others, but they

largely perturb and evoke anxiety in the subject. And Derrida spends most of his time with otherness as alterity. None of them convincingly goes beyond the human other. Aside from Irigaray, it is perhaps Deleuze who is most closely aligned with Cixous in his desire to think a transcendental *within* immanence.⁹⁰ But still, in my reading, it is Cixous who gives us an otherness that speaks most profoundly to our posthumanisms, new materialisms, and speculative realisms, and who brings a vital feminism to this work. Why? To reiterate: because she is mired, drenched in the immanent others of the world; they are not her *concepts*, they are her companions. Even at their most enigmatic, they are her beloved. And this is why she has been forgotten in plain sight: because she has always been too embedded in the visceral domestic, in environments of cats, mothers, gardens and visits to childhood: feminine haunts. But perhaps, if indeed the Anthropocene is an affective state of coming undone, of being thrown out of all comforts, all backgrounds, all frames of reference, we are now ready to read Cixous. Perhaps we have been thrown far enough from our habit(at)s to find her.

This is my hope: that we are posed for a Cixous moment, that we are finally ready to *fully* embrace the wealth she offers us. And thanks to the work of new materialism, material feminisms, and other expansions of environmental thought, including a willingness to consider ways of writing/speaking that don't immediately fit the "eco" mold, we are able to plumb her vast oeuvre anew, understanding, perhaps more than we ever could before, just how vital and transformative her efforts have always been:

The Fall is ridiculous. But in the Bible one does not laugh. The sense of sin keeps God from laughing. It is coming up against the limit that makes us laugh. In my Bible, one has the sense of the ridiculous. It is a great liberty. We enjoy it when we do not have the constraint of contrition. So chased from paradise, I go off

precipitately and concretely without having had the time to take my shower. Then I spend the whole day looking for a bathroom. In complete contravention of the sense of epic decorum. (1998 152)

ENDNOTES

¹As Vicente M. Diaz, in "Don't Swallow (or be Swallowed by) Disney's 'Culturally Authenticated Moana'" (Washington: Indian Country Media Network, 2016) states, "Disney has a long and demonstrable track record of racist and sexist depictions of minoritized and colonized peoples as part of a larger and intentional social engineering project of escaping the real world" (paragr. 8). Diaz argues for a reading of *Moana* as "a 21st century reanimation of a romanticized longing for the powerful story of purity and innocence of native culture and nature" (paragr. 16). In referencing *Moana*, my intention is not to suggest that Cixous engages directly with Polynesian and Pacific Island onto-epistemologies, but rather to highlight the use of sameness within this particular expression of Anglo environmental ethics.

² Such identifications under-pin the important work of deep ecological and eco-feminist branches of environmental thought, both of which emphasize various human/non-human similarities and what we could call biomimicries. I offer a comprehensive review of this literature in Chapter 1.

³ Though far from satisfactorily inclusive, I use the pronoun "we" throughout this dissertation to signify a largely Western, economically privileged subject position. There are times, however, when I hope that the "we" I invoke has more varied borders.

⁴ Cixous has worked with Mnouchkine's Théâtre du Soleil since the early 1980s, the two having collaborated on nearly 20 plays to date. In her efforts as a playwright, Cixous typically marries big political events with literary figures. For instance, in *La Ville Parjure ou le Réveil des Érinyes* (1995), a play I discuss in Chapter 4, Cixous has the Furies of Aeschylus' *Oresteia Trilogy* seek vengeance for the death of two hemophiliac children who die from tainted blood transfusions, invoking the real scandals that occurred in France in the 1980s. She has often stated that "the stage," for her, represents the scene of history and is thus distinct from what's possible in fiction (Fort 1997). Hélène Cixous and Bernadette Fort, *New Literary History* Vol. 28, No. 3, Critical Exchanges (Summer, 1997), pp. 425-456

⁵ Cixous first uses the term in *La Jeune Née* (1975).

⁶ Grant created a multi-faceted art project rooted in the idea of the forest as fecund relationality. The project included drawing sessions open to the public, contributions from a selection of artists, feminist reading groups, and an installation, exhibited in both LA and France. The work takes root in the forest as the model for an intensely shared space, and for imagining what it means to make room for immanent otherness

⁷ Here, I invoke the idea of modernity and coloniality as inextricably linked, an idea developed by various post and decolonial theorists, such as Aníbal Quijano (1999; 2000), Enrique Dussel (1995), Walter D. Mignolo (2002; 2013).

⁸ Of the English translations of her work, there are two pieces that consider Cixous and ecology with any degree of depth. The first is Verena Andermatt Conley's "Hélène Cixous: the Language

of Flowers," from her text *Ecopolitics: the Environment in Poststructuralist Thought* (London: Routledge, 1997), 106-121. The second, from Josephine Donovan, offers an ecofeminist analysis of Cixous's engagement with Clarice Lispector, "Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Reading the Orange," in *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*, eds. Greta Claire Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 74-96. Drawing on Donovan, Abigail Bray, in *Hélène Cixous: Writing and Sexual Difference* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 128-137, includes two short pieces titled "'Nature'" and "The Materiality of the Non-Human," which I will also return to below. Otherwise, Cixous receives very brief mentions in Patrick Murphy's *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 10, 79, 159, and Daniel White's *Postmodern Ecology: Communication, Evolution, and Play* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 26-27. More recently, Kari Weil's *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), offers several passages on Cixous's posthumanism that also suggest the opportunity for more analysis (101, 108-11, 112, 115, 149). And Mary Phillips offers the most direct application of Cixous to ecofeminism in recent years. She makes novel use of Cixous in "Re-Writing Corporate Environmentalism: Ecofeminism, Corporeality and the Language of Feeling" published in *Work & Organization* Vol. 21. No. 5 (2014): 443-458, and offers the most recent application of Cixous to ecofeminist theory in "Developing Ecofeminist Corporeality: Writing the Body as Activist Politics," included in her edited text *Contemporary Perspectives on Ecofeminism*, eds. Mary Phillips and Nick Rumens (New York: Routledge, 2016). Weil and Phillips work will be taken up in subsequent chapters.

⁹ In their assessments of value, Anglo environmental ethicists have focused primarily on issues of anthropocentrism and pragmatism. A variety of positions emerged during the 1980s and 90s, from objective and subjective, strong and weak non-anthropocentric intrinsic value theories (Taylor 1986; Rolston 1988; Hargrove 1989; Callicot 1989), to intrinsic and anti-intrinsic value pragmatism (Norton 1991; Weston 1994, Light 1996).

¹⁰ The emphasis on environmental policy and resource management across environmental studies programs in North America is a clear indicator of the marginalizing of the anti-positivist movements.

¹¹ Most of the French thinkers that were given the label of either post-modernist or later post-structuralist resisted the term as an accurate designation of a school of thought to which they belong (Harrison 2006). Over the last 10 years, Anglo academics have moved from post-modernism to post-structuralism as the preferred name for the disparate group of thinkers that includes Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Irigaray and Cixous (Bensmaïa 2005). I use the term post-modernism when discussing texts that used this vernacular, and switch to post-structuralism in step with more recent analysis.

¹² This statement is made by Geoffrey Hawthorn during a radio discussion with political theorists Ron Aronson and John Dunn, and post-colonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, titled "The Post-modern Condition: The End of Politics?" Published in Spivak's text *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (1990).

¹³ In addition to Bruce Foltz and Robert Frodeman's edited collection *Rethinking Nature: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (2004), several notable monographs, journals and collections exploring connections between Continental philosophy and eco-theory have emerged. Elizabeth Grosz (2008, 2011), Claire Colebrook (2010), Rosi Braidotti, Bernd Herzogenrath (2009), Gary Genosko (2009), and Verena Andermatt-Conley (2009) have been key figures in bringing Deleuze and Guattari into conversation with new materialism and eco-theory. And Braidotti (2002), Grosz (2005), Mick Smith (2001), Astrida Neimanis (2016), and Emily Anne Parker (2015), have made great strides in exploring the ecological implications of Luce Irigaray.

¹⁴ The assessment of post-structuralism offered by Bryant, Srnicek and Harman in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (2011), is especially damning: "In the face of the looming ecological catastrophe... it is not clear that the anti-realist position is equipped to face up to these developments." They name a "preoccupation" with "language, culture, and subjectivity to the detriment of material factors, an anthropocentric stance towards nature..." (4)

¹⁵ Serpil Oppermann outlines in "Ecocriticisms's Theoretical Discontents," that "Derrida himself, in *Limited Inc*, has made perfectly clear that the concept of text implies both the discursive and the non-discursive" (2011, 156). In Derrida's own words:

what I call "text" implies all the structures called "real," "economic," "historical," socio-institutional, in short: all possible referents. Another way of recalling once again that "there is nothing outside the text." That does not mean that all referents are suspended, denied, or enclosed in a book, as people have claimed, or have been naïve enough to believe and to have accused me of believing. But it does not mean that every referent, all reality, has the structure of a differential trace, and that one cannot refer to this 'real' except in an interpretive experience. The latter neither yields meaning nor assumes it except in a movement of differential referring. That's all. (2011, 156)

¹⁶ Kristeva has been considered relevant to ecology in a few key instances. Timothy Morton, in *Ecology Without Nature* (2007), explores how the concept of abjection can be used to describe "nature" as abject other in the production and maintenance of discrete subjects and objects (159). Kelly Oliver's *Animal Lessons* (2009) discusses Kristeva's account of how humans acquire identity through a separation from both the maternal and the animal (287-290). And Bert Oliver's essay "Nature as 'Abject', Critical Psychology, and 'Revolt': The Pertinence of Kristeva" (2007), explores the notion of nature as abject.

¹⁷ The classification of "French feminism" emerges with the publication of Elaine Mark and Isabelle de Courtivron's *New French Feminisms* (1980), which helped to introduce Irigaray, Cixous, and Kristeva, along with Monique Wittig, Christine Delphy, and Claudine Hermann, to an Anglophone feminist readership.

¹⁸ See Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* (1989).

¹⁹ Cixous and Irigaray have consistently been accused of promoting biological essentialism (see Fuss 1989; Gatens 1991, and Bray 2004), an accusation I will address directly, and challenge, in subsequent chapters.

²⁰ It is worth noting that there has been very little attention paid to French feminism among leading male scholars of post-structuralist materialism and ecology. Mick Smith's engagement with Irigaray in *An Ethics of Place: Radical Ecology, Postmodernity and Social Theory* (2001), and Patrick Murphy's ecocritical work, *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* (1995) on French feminism are notable exceptions.

²¹ Deleuzian neo-material feminists Rosi Braidotti (2012), Elizabeth Grosz (2005, 2011) and Claire Colebrook (1997) are important exceptions in the larger omission of French feminism, as they each draw heavily on Luce Irigaray in their work – Braidotti and Grosz in particular. It is perhaps because of the influence of post-structuralism that these thinkers turn to studies of matter without edging toward positivism.

²² I use "ecological reading" here as an aggregate term that includes a range of questions emerging from across many fields, from new materialism, ecocriticism, environmental humanities, post-humanism and many more. It is also important to note that I am assessing English translations of Cixous's work.

²³ Derrida is concerned that his formulation of "text" will be erroneously understood in an idealist sense as immaterial, existing only in the mind. Indeed, the many instances in which Derrida is said to claim that nothing exists outside the text indicate that his fears were warranted.

²⁴ Kirby clarifies in several instances that deconstruction is a neither a method nor a concept: Derrida refuses "to describe deconstruction as a methodology in any conventional sense" (7). She continues:

Derrida informs us...that deconstruction is not a method of inquiry through which an alien object might be ciphered. Nor can its implications be subordinated to the philosophical dialectic, whether Hegelian or Platonic, that pursues the self-experience of thought where truth promises to emerge as the accurate resolution of self-reflection. In other words, a Derridean intervention is not reducible to the Concept..." (5).

This understanding of deconstruction has often been refused: "Derrida's *nonconcept* 'textuality' or 'language in the general sense' has been taken up, knocked into disciplinary shape, properly and predictably contextualized, and inevitably, conceptualized" (12).

²⁵ Wolfe is clear that "the reopening of the ethical question of the animal is an event whose importance is named but not really captured by the term 'animal rights'" (8). He continues: "one of the central ironies of animal rights philosophy is that its philosophical frame remains essentially humanist in its most important philosophers (utilitarianism in Peter Singer, neo-

Kantianism in Tom Regan), thus effacing the very difference of the animal other that it sought to respect" (8).

²⁶ The essay was first "delivered as the opening part of a ten hour lecture at Cerisy-la-Salle in 1997 at a conference devoted to Derrida's work, titled "L'animal autobiographique" (62). The lecture was fully translated and published in 2008 as *The Animal that Therefore I Am*.

²⁷ In *Becoming Undone*, Grosz argues that Deleuze, drawing on Nietzsche and Bergson's analysis, elaborates a *new* Darwinian philosophy (19-20). I would add to this point and suggest that Grosz's analysis of Darwin is deeply inflected by Deleuzian ideas. Given Grosz's longstanding engagement with Deleuze, from "A Thousand Tiny Sexes" (1993) to the present, this infusion is not surprising.

²⁸ See *Becoming Undone*. In a 2007 interview with Katve-kaisa Kontturi and Milla Tiainen, Grosz suggests that Deleuze engages with Darwin not directly but by way of Nietzsche and Bergson, who are both "primarily Darwinian" (249). For Grosz, Deleuze is interested in a "queer-Darwinism" (250). I would add to this point by suggesting that Grosz, by way of Deleuze, also queers Darwin.

²⁹ Again, it is important to note that the language of difference and becoming arrives not directly from Darwin, but from Deleuze. Todd May argues in "When is a Deleuzian Becoming?" that "the concept of becoming is not only a central Deleuzian concept – one that has been part of his corpus since his book on Nietzsche – it can also be seen, from the right angle, to contain in germ the entirety of his philosophical perspective" (2003, 139). And May connects Deleuze's focus on becoming to difference in itself: "it is difference, then, that we need to understand in order to understand becoming...What Deleuze wants is not a derivative difference, but difference in itself, a difference that he believes is the source not only of the derivative difference but of the sameness on the basis of which derivative difference is derived" (144).

³⁰ Curiously, Grosz takes the usual swipe at post-structuralism, including Derrida, despite the fact that much of her work draws on Deleuze and Irigaray, key post-structuralist thinkers. She gives in to the discursive temptation to employ post-structuralism as the arch-nemesis of new materialisms:

If models of language and representation have dominated the ways in which we understand cultural life—which they have throughout the twentieth century with the dominance of structuralist and poststructuralist conceptions of the redundancy and irrelevance of the natural, the material, and what is nonstructured or outside of systems –it may be time to render such analyses more complex...We need to understand what is *outside* the cultural—indeed we need to understand, *contra* Derrida and following Deleuze, that culture and representation have an outside. (48)

³¹ As Colebrook explains, this traditional form of vitalism "would consist of positing, in addition to life as it is given, some mysterious extra principle or mystical life force – an irreducible

spirituality that would be required to explain the complexity of the world as it is. When vitalism is used as a pejorative it is usually this second (often mystical, anti-materialist and anti-scientific sense) that is operative" (4-5).

³² Contemporary neo-vitalists within the philosophical tradition build on the work of key thinkers such as Henri Bergson, who worked to articulate the ontological uniqueness of life and save it from purely mechanistic and atomistic models. Noteworthy neo-vitalist texts among the contemporary set are Rosi Braidotti's "In Spite of the Times: The Postsecular Turn in Feminism" (2008), Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010), and Ian Bogost's *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing* (2012).

³³ "In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari argue for a tradition of passive vitalism (beginning with Leibniz and extending to Ruyer) which counters the dominant tradition of vitalism, which runs from Kant to Claude Bernard" (5). Colebrook notes that "the active/ passive binary is also rather blunt, for it would seem to bring into play the very opposition of subject/ object or living/ non-living that the very problem of the vital order ought to question" (26).

³⁴ I will be drawing on Parker's work in the Special Issue of the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* "Luce Irigaray: From Ecology to Elemental Difference." Parker edited the issue and wrote the introduction: "From Ecology to Elemental Difference." I will also make reference to Parker's interview with Irigaray included in the issue.

³⁵ Irigaray begins *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, with the following statement: "Sexual difference is one of the major philosophical issues, if not the issue, of our age. According to Heidegger, each age has one issue to think through, and one only. Sexual difference is probably the issue of our time which could be our salvation if we thought it through" (1993 7).

³⁶ In the first chapter of *When Species Meet* (2008), Haraway offer a critique of the posthumanism of Derrida and Deleuze/Guattari. Her primary concern is that while these thinkers seem on the surface to be taking a seat at the posthumanist table, upon closer scrutiny, they seem disconnected, materially, emotionally, and psychically, from the other-than-human beings that they write about. Haraway argues that while Derrida and Deleuze/Guattari engage with species boundaries in their work in powerful ways that irreversibly transform the Western philosophical canon (20), their animals remain abstract concepts, rather than material beings. She does not feel "the knot of species coshaping one another in layers of reciprocating complexity all the way down" (42) in their work. I will return to this critique in Chapters Three and Four as I explore Cixous's metaphysics of immanence otherness.

³⁷ In "Ecocriticism's Theoretical Discontents," (*Mosaic* 44: 153-169), Serpil Oppermann offers an overview of ecocritical critiques of post-structuralism as anti-reality. She explains that "[s]ince one of its central rationales was to 'restore significance to the world beyond the page' (Rigby 154-55), ecocriticism confidently styled itself against the poststructuralist strand of contemporary literary theory that had conversely restored significance to the 'word'" (153). She continues: "by interrogating the possibility of unmediated access to reality, poststructuralism has

irrefutably challenged the realist notion of representation that presumes a natural link between word and world." (155). But Oppermann argues against this reading of poststructuralism: "For ecocritics, [the poststructuralist] challenge is often confused with reducing reality to linguistic constructivism, or with the idea that reality is only constructed in language. That is why we need to advance a critical perspective in which both discursivity and materiality (in other words, discursive practices and material phenomenon) can be integrated in a relational approach" (155). Cixous, as noted in Chapter 1 and as I will explore below, is especially unsuited to the reading of post-structuralism as isolating the world from the text. Indeed, I argue that Cixous's "writing" is far closer to the "earthly grounding" (155) of ecocriticism than any theory that sides solely with the text.

³⁸ Cixous is quoting Kafka here, from *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors*, tr. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken, 1978), p. 16.

³⁹ In *Hélène Cixous: Live Theory*, editors Ian Blyth and Susan Sellers confirm this assessment of the untranslatability of Cixous's form: "the fact that she is one of those 'writers who are adventurous in language' means that her texts, to a certain extent, are all but 'untranslatable'" (2004, 7). Cixous is clear "the texts of mine that are put into circulation are often texts that can easily be circulated and appropriated They were made for this, by the way. The others are not read...If you give a text that can be appropriated, you are acceptable. When the text runs far ahead of the reader and ahead of the author, or when the text simply runs, and requires the reader to run, and when the reader wishes to remain sitting, then the text is less well received" (Rootprints 7).

⁴⁰ From "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976) forward, Cixous interest in writing has been articulated as a commitment to "writing the body." In "Sorties," from *The Newly Born Woman* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), Cixous famously states: "We have turned away from our bodies. Shamefully, we have been taught to be unaware of them...Woman must write her body" (94). This idea of returning to the body is read as an ecofeminist concept in Mary Phillips' "Developing Ecofeminist Corporeality: Writing the Body as Activist Politics," (*Contemporary Perspectives on Ecofeminism*, eds. Mary Phillips and Nick Rumens. New York: Routledge, 2016). Phillips describes Cixous's "writing the body" in explicitly ecotheoretical terms: "[Cixous's] focus in on writing the body to find modes of representation that do not alienate us from nature" (59). For Phillips, a "return to the body" is directly connected to efforts to re-embed the body-in-the-world: "If we can embrace the materiality of our bodies, that we are organic beings embedded in nature, then perhaps we can overcome our alienation and estrangement from nature" (59).

⁴¹ In *Hélène Cixous: Writing and Sexual Difference* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillon, 2004) author Abigail Bray offers the following analysis of Derridean deconstruction:

For Derrida, Western metaphysics is logocentric, or based on the purity of a singular self-present truth as word or Logos. Within this system, meaning is presented as unmediated, uncontaminated, immediate, given. However, as Derrida

shows, the presence of reason, truth and meaning depends upon a series of exclusions...[identity is] something which only comes into being through an unacknowledged debt to difference. It is this careful attention to the dichotomous logics of exclusion which can be said to inform a deconstructive ethics of reading. The textual remains of this exclusion, the traces, excesses, supplements of the disavowed debt to difference...are the focus of deconstructive readings. (24)

She continues, expanding on the connection between writing and a critique of Western metaphysics:

In *Of Grammatology* (1979) Derrida argues that, with the Western philosophical tradition since Plato, truth has always been associated with the spoken word while writing has been associated with the falsification, or corruption, of truth or the spoken word...the division has its foundation in the privileged of presence over absence...Writing, however, resists and troubles this calling into presence of truth (as the good, the positive, the pure, the simple etc.) because writing, being a system which is founded on absence, continually defers the arrival of presence. Deconstruction attempts to show that the arrival of self-present truth in writing is achieved only by placing a limit on the process of signification...[But] each attempt to define the truth...is itself made within a potentially limitless signifying system so that in effect the truth of the statement...leaks into a vast and complex chain of signifiers. (25-26)

Bray aligns Cixous with Derrida on the idea of writing as "not simply words written on a page" (25), but as a direct critique of Western metaphysics of presence. However, as I argue below, where Derridean deconstruction reveals the provisionality of truth, Cixous's writing is an affirmative, rather than deconstructive, path to poetic truth.

⁴² Bray offers an overview of such challenges. Bray, drawing on other Cixous scholars such as Susan Sellers, argues against a reading of *écriture féminine* as dependant on an immutable feminine essence. She describes *écriture féminine*, instead, as a "deconstructive avant-garde textual practice which challenges and moves beyond the constraints of phallogocentric thought" (2004, 70). Cixous has also stated time and again that men can and do also engage in *écriture féminine* (1986). And given the number of male authors that Cixous has consistently read and celebrated, the accusations of essentialism seem weak at first blush. Indeed, as early as "Sorties," Cixous is talking about bisexuality as "the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes...[a bisexuality] which does not annihilate differences but cheers them on, pursues them, adds more" (85).

⁴³ In *Encounters: Conversations on Life and Writing* (Trans. Beverly Bie Brahic. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), Cixous, in conversation with Frédéric-Yves Jeannet, offers a candid reading of how the gender politics of 1970s France came to define her work for decades thereafter:

I hadn't chosen sides. So I chose (party and parcel for the first and last time in my life). Despite my philosophicoliterary reticence about the dichotomy, the

opposition, etc., and my refusal to set myself up against the father brother son figures, who for me in any case were and always had been unstable and undecidable (my father was a stork and not a phallocrat, my brother was the same dog as me), I had been without any hesitation on the side of, or beside, women since early childhood, thanks to my midwife-mother, thanks to my Algerian then Parisian experience. Since there was a struggle, I took part...(64)

In another passage, Cixous challenges directly the reading of her work as essentialist: "I consider that *Le Troisième Corps* was way ahead of the regressive considerations and arguments around sexual difference. And while I resigned myself to putting on the brakes, it always annoyed me to have to act less shrewd than I was" (60).

⁴⁴ Kate Rigby, in "Ecocriticism" (ed. Julian Wolfreys. *Introducing Criticism in the Twenty-First Century*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2015), outlines the standard approach among ecocritics to recognize nature as preceding and encompassing culture: "It is this insistence on the ultimate precedence of nature vis-à-vis culture, which signals the ecocritical move beyond the so-called 'linguistic turn' perpetuated within structuralism and poststructuralism" (153). Rigby highlights the extent to which ecocritics endorse a dichotomous between language and materiality by seeing each as separate and valuing the latter against the former. Ecocritics, she argues, push for the "reinstatement of the referent as a matter of legitimate concern" (154). And, in the now oft quoted line, Rigby offers a mini manifesto for ecocriticism: "while acknowledging the role of language in shaping our view of the world, ecocritics seek to restore significance to the world beyond the page" (154). Cixous and McKay seek, instead, to re-imagine forms of communication that break out of the configuration of non-human materiality on one side and human textuality on the other.

⁴⁵ Bray describes the impact of *Lispector* on Cixous in terms of moving the latter toward materiality, the non-human and nature (2004). Josephine Donovan is one of the first Anglo theorists to take note of the effect of *Lispector* on Cixous. In "Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Reading the Orange" (*Hypatia*. Vol. 11, No. 2, 1996), she notes that "Cixous sees *Lispector* as a writer who attempted to remain faithful to the literal by capturing immediate, unmediated, and sacramental encounters with the world" (169).

⁴⁶ For Cixous, the story exemplifies *Lispector* as "a writer who has dealt throughout her work...with this notion of the abominable in our lives, in all its forms" (1993, 113).

⁴⁷ From Leviticus: "don't eat eagles, ossifrages and vultures, owls, nighthawks, swans, pelicans and deer eagle, the stork, the heron, the lapling, the bat - all fowls that creep, going on all fours, shall be an abomination" (11:20).

⁴⁸ Willian Cronon in "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" (from *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995, 69-90), offers one of the first salient critiques of romantic nature. Bruce Braun's *The*

Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture and Power on Canada's West Coast (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), carries on Cronon's work and further problematizes dominant tendencies among environmentalists to represent nature as romantic, idealized and human free in contemporary struggles for conservation and preservation.

⁴⁹ Cixous makes the connection between dichotomous hierarchy and the violence of sameness in "The Laugh of the Medusa": "Opposition, hierarchizing exchange, the struggle for mastery which can end only in at least one death (one master-one slave, or two nonmasters = two dead) - all that comes from a period in time governed by phallogocentric values" (1976, 893).

⁵⁰ In reading immanence into Cixous I aim to do something not unlike what Andreas Urs Sommer offers in "Nietzsche: an Immanentist?" (*Performance Philosophy Journal*. Vol. 3, No. 3. 2017). Sommer argues for a reading of Nietzsche as making a significant contribution to theories of immanence despite Nietzsche showing no committed interest in the term itself.

⁵¹ John Mullarkey, in *Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline* (2006), offers a similar re-framing of French theory, placing "a four-way bet" on Alain Badiou, Michel Henry, François Laruelle and Gilles Deleuze as *the* thinkers offering philosophy a "materialist" renewal (10). Once again, however, the French feminists are seeming not in contention.

⁵² While there is a great deal of significant and useful work on these thinkers, as I outline in Chapter 1, it is still worth noting that many eco-readings of such theorists caveat their way around certain ideas. For example, Levinas makes clear in his work that "the face" of the ethical encounter is a human one. Ecological readings of Levinas have nonetheless found great meaning in his philosophy, *despite* this persistent humanism (see Edelglass, James Hatley, and Christian Diehm, Eds., 2012). As I note in Chapter 1, Haraway critiques Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari in *When Species Meet* (2008) for offering a dry, abstracted interest in "animality" and posthumanism. This isn't to say that Cixous gives us everything, or isn't vulnerable to serious critique, but rather that in the context of new materialism, she offers a more robustly posthuman immanence than many of her contemporaries, most of whom remain more considered than she.

⁵³ Though highly acclaimed in Brazil, as of 1978, one year after her untimely death at 57, few of Lispector's works had been translated into French and/or English. Anna Klobucka in "Hélène Cixous and the Hour of Clarice Lispector," argues that it is because of Cixous's interest, and more specifically her engagement with Lispector in Cixous's renown seminars at the Université de Paris VIII-Vincennes and at the Collège International de Philosophie, that lead to Lispector being read and celebrated in Franco-American circles. Lispector "has come to achieve considerable prominence in the Franco-American literacy and academic circuit due precisely to Hélène Cixous's passionately personal involvement in the propagation of Lispector's writings" (1994, 43).

⁵⁴ Josephine Donovan's article "Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Reading the Orange" (1996), is one instance in which Cixous's encounter with Lispector is read as explicitly materialist and eco-feminist. The essay explores "the possibility of an ecofeminist literary and cultural practice

whereby texts are reconceived as vehicles for the disclosure of being, rather than as mechanisms for its elision, thereby helping to reconstitute the 'objects' of discourse as 'subjects'" (161). Donovan proposes a literary style and criticism that aims to restore the "absent referent" to the text as a "thou" (162). Dorothy Wordsworth, Virginia Woolf and Cixous, specifically in her reading of Lispector, are offered as examples of authors that "...capture reality before it is transformed into an object by signifying texts...to render it as a living, real entity" (167).

⁵⁵ My readings, I should be clear, are of Cixous, not of Lispector. Because of the intimate style of Cixous's writing-with-others, the line between the two authors can easily blur. Klobucka highlights this tendency, stating that in American academia "Cixous and Lispector are clearly seen as almost one and the same" (1994 43). Klobucka is critical of this habit, though she notes that Cixous's own approach to otherness as irreducible should remind readers of their difference. Still, Klobucka asks the question: "Is Lispector's (Brazilian) foreignness respected or assimilated by Cixous and her commentators" (44)?

⁵⁶ Susan Rubin Suleiman, in "Writing Past the Wall, or the Passion According to H.C.," the essay that introduces Cixous's *Coming to Writing and Other Essays* (Jenson 1991), writes that the pieces contained in the collection present "not a single subject but a whole web of intertwined concerns and reflections: on the relations between writing, exile, foreignness, loss, and death; on the relations between writing, giving, nourishment, love, and life; and on the relations between all of the above and being a woman -- or a man" (viii).

⁵⁷ English text based on a translation by Ann Liddle and Sarah Cornell (Paris, des femmes, 1979), reprinted in *L'Heure de Clarice Lispector* (Paris, des femmes, 1989, 8-113).

⁵⁸ Susan Sellers, in her introduction to the essay "To Live the Orange," from *The Hélène Cixous Reader* (1994), argues that "Cixous's account of feminine writing can be fruitfully compared with the work of Martin Heidegger. In an essay entitled 'The Thing,' Heidegger describes how thought has laid claim to things with the result that 'the thing as thing remains prescribed, nil, and in that sense annihilated'" (83).

⁵⁹ The original French version of the essay was published in the journal *Poétique* in 1979. The English translation by Deborah Jenson was published in '*Coming to Writing*' and *Other Essays*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1991, 59-77.

⁶⁰ Eco-phenomenology draws primarily on the work of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty to extend phenomenology from an analysis of individual human consciousness perceiving the world to an understanding of human perception as the world perceiving itself (See Abram 1996). In *Eco-phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself* (2005), editors Charles S. Brown and Ted Toadvine read eco-phenomenology as "a study of the interrelationship between organism and world in its metaphysical and axiological dimensions" (xiii).

⁶¹ There is a political dimension to this investment, one with a rich history is feminist art and theory, that seeks to articulate the philosophical value of the everyday, of the domestic.⁶¹ As

Beauvoir reminds us, women have always been nearer to things, more immanent (1947). Feminist artists and writers in the 1960s and 70s were particularly interested in bringing philosophy and politics into the kitchen. Martha Rosler's "Semiotics of the Kitchen," (1975), for example, parodies the domestic roles assigned to women. Clarice, however, is perhaps more akin to Canadian painter Mary Pratt and her paintings of household artifacts, which help render the natural supernatural. (Moray 1989)

⁶² Haynes elaborates on how the terms transcendence and immanence first acquire meaning in Western thought within the context of theology. Divine transcendence was said to express God's radical otherness to an immanent, material reality. Humans remained *in the bounds* of the immanent, while God existed *beyond* lived materiality. Under Enlightenment projects, the terms begin to acquire secular status. From Descartes through to Kant, many of the most influential modern philosophers work to find a way to grant the human *mind* transcendental powers over its immanent, material "environment." In other words, immanence, by the Western tradition, has long been conceived dualistically as subordinate to a transcendental plane/mind. (2012)

⁶³ Certainly this "turn" is much older than 20th century French theory in its origins, and is often said to begin with Baruch Spinoza in the 17th century who opposed Descartes' efforts to maintain binarism in Western thought. The other crucial figure in the "line of immanence," at least in how the story is usually told, is Henri Bergson. Deleuze picks things up from here (see Agamben 1999).

⁶⁴ Manuel DeLanda introduces the concept of a "flat ontology" in *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (2002):

...while an ontology based on relations between general types and particular instances is hierarchical, each level representing a different ontological category (organism, species, genera), an approach in terms of interacting parts and emergent wholes leads to a flat ontology, one made exclusively of unique, singular individuals, differing in spatio-temporal scale but not in ontological status. 47)

⁶⁵ Though van der Tuin and Dolphijn mention immanent thought in *New Materialism* (2012), their conceptualization of this "new metaphysics" doesn't offer serious detail on the metaphysical complexities and specificities of theories of immanence. In order that Cixous's be recognized as contributing to new materialism and eco-theory, the connections between materiality and immanence must be further articulated.

⁶⁶ In Chapter 7 of *New Materialism*, titled "Sexual Differing," van der Tuin and Dolphijn argue for a "a new materialist theory of sexual difference as a practical philosophy in which concept and creation are considered as intertwined" (87). Cixous has been pushing us in this direction since she began writing about sexual difference.

⁶⁷ In "Attune," from the collection *Veer Ecology: A Companion for Environmental Thinking*, Timothy Morton states "Adaptation just is movement in adaptation space, and perfection would

mean the end of adaptation. So when we talk about how lifeform *x* is 'perfectly adapted' to the swirl of phenotypes...we are trying to *contain* or *stop* the veering of attunements of lifeforms to one another" (2017, 151-152). Morton offers an assessment of ontology here that, I would argue, Cixous has long considered and extended into feminist ethical terrain.

⁶⁸ Cixous addresses this interpretation of her work and the general use of "masculine" and "feminine" directly in *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*:

[T]he man-woman conflict is insufficient for me, in my time, in my place. It is a question of sexual difference, only sexual difference isn't what we think it is. It's both torturous and complicated...[W]e continue to say man and woman even though it doesn't work. We are not made to reveal to what extent we are complex...In order to defend women we are obliged to speak in the feminist terms of "man" and "woman." If we start to say that such and such a woman is perhaps not entirely a woman or not a woman at all, that this "father" is not a father, we can no longer fight since we no longer know who is in front of us. It's so destructive, so destabilizing that those of us who are conscious of what is at stake are often pushed toward a form of interdict. Only when we are posthumous can we place the earth in question; make the earth tremble. (50-52)

⁶⁹ Though not something I undertake here, I think renewing the conversation between Cixous and Irigaray, in light of feminist new materialism, and other environmental humanities work, would make for a very interesting project. For the most part, the two thinkers have been discussed in terms of their similarities, along with Julia Kristeva, under the banner of "French feminism" (see Moi 1987; Oliver 2000). Given the work being done to read Irigaray materially and ecologically, it is worth seeing what similarities and differences emerge between her and Cixous when viewed through these lenses.

⁷⁰ I am offering here a mere brush with some of the critiques of object oriented ontology considered in Katherine Behar's edited collection *Object Oriented Feminism* (2016). It strikes me that feminists such as Cixous can help us to flatten ontology at the 'subject' rather than the object register, given the significant efforts made by feminist theorists to problematize "objectification."

⁷¹ Despite the proximity of her ideas to Derrida, Levinas and Lacan, I would argue that there is an under-whelming amount of Anglo research that considers how Cixous overlaps with and from where she departs with these three monumental thinkers.

⁷² This brings Cixous closer to what Patrice Hayes terms "immanent transcendence" (2012). Hayes argues that Deleuze, Irigaray and Adorno all reject "the Wholly other" as "an otherworldly, supernatural transcendence" (5), a "divine otherness viewed as separate, independent and superior in relation to mundane immanence" (4). However, in her view, they re-imagine transcendence as the "movement, excess and creative transformations" (4) that occur *within* immanence.

⁷³ In "Coming to Writing," Cixous describes vividly what it meant for her to imagine writing, to imagine being allowed to write-think, to *live*, and how impossible a prospect it was for someone like her: Algerian, Jewish and female:

In the beginning, I desired.

"What is it she wants?"

"To live. Just to live. And to hear myself say the name."

"Horrors! Cut out her tongue!"

"What's wrong with her?"

"She can't keep herself from flying!"

"In that case, we have special cages." (1991b, 8).

⁷⁴ The utility of the Anthropocene as a name and concept has been extensively debated among both feminist environmental humanities and decolonial scholars. Eileen Crist in "On the Poverty of Our Nomenclature" suggests that the term affirms human power as it "delivers a Promethean self-portrait," of a "genius if unruly species distinguishing itself from the background of merely-living life, rising so as to earn itself a separate name" (131). Noah Theriault's work on the blog "Inhabiting the Anthropocene" is useful for outlining Indigenous and decolonial refusals of the term. However, rather than refuse the term, as some thinkers do, I want to build on Grusin's claim that "the concept of the Anthropocene has arguably been implicit in feminism and queer theory for decades" (Grusin 2017, viii), and elaborate a uniquely Cixousian way of finding utility and meaning in the concept.

⁷⁵ This idea of coming to differently sense, and thus differently think about and better understand immanent reality intersects with work in critical realism (Archer et al, 2016), critical phenomenology (Marder 2014), feminist materialism (Gatens and Lloyd 1999), speculative realism (Bryant, Srnicek and Harman 2011), and cultural anthropology (Viveiros de Castro 2014), among other (sub)fields seeking non-positivist approaches to ontology and epistemology.

⁷⁶ Cixous's work can and should be read in conversation with queer and Indigenous thought, particularly around questions of relationality and non-heteropatriarchal, non-Western conceptions of onto-epistemology, poetics and ethics. However, she herself does not identify as queer or Indigenous, nor does she identify her work as explicitly queer or Indigenous. It is therefore important to note that queer and Indigenous discussions of ecology, materialism and the Anthropocene exist in places Cixous does not. I wish to suggest complementarities among Cixous, Indigenous and queer scholarship, while maintaining both the specificity and otherness of queer and Indigenous engagements with eco-theory and discourses of the Anthropocene. Indeed, I would argue that Cixous's commitment to otherness includes as ethic of non-commensurability that tempers and challenges the colonizing habits of Western thought.

⁷⁷ Jane Gallup, in "Beyond the *Jouissance* Principle" (1984), notes the impossibility of translating "*jouissance*" into English, and thus the inadequacy of "pleasure" as the preferred translation (110). Gallup suggests that the eventual tendency among translators to leave "*jouissance*" untranslated became an "emblem of French feminine theory," even "a

synechédoche for the broader problems of assimilation" (111). Though the concept of *jouissance* is recognized as important for psycho-analytically influenced post-structuralism -- Kristeva (1982), Irigaray (1991), Deleuze and Guattari (1987) being notable examples, in addition to Cixous, of theorists that employ the term in significant ways -- it has received little attention within new materialist readings of the field. The concept warrants such attention, however, at the very least because it helps elaborate the materialism of post-structuralism.

⁷⁸ Vassos Argyrou's *The Logic of Environmentalism: Anthropology, Ecology and Postcoloniality* (2005), offers a particularly salient assessment of how "the environmentalist vision of the world could not have emerged without the underlying assumptions that constitute the logic of the Same" (x). He further explains: "Environmentalism repeats the historical gesture that marked the colonial enterprise and its civilizing mission. The rest of the world is once again presented with a new reality -- presented, that is, *fait accompli* -- and is expected, cajoled, encouraged, assisted, threatened to take a stance and come to recognize it as such a reality" (x-xi).

⁷⁹ In presenting such an argument Hamilton joins a not insubstantial group of environmentalists contending that the Anthropocene marks the moment when humans must recognize and embrace their god-life status. Deborah Bird Rose in "Anthropocene Noir" outlines this line of reasoning, naming Brand (2009), Dibley (2012), and Kingsnorth (2013) as notable proponents of an "astonishingly self-laudatory" (2013 3) response to radically humbling conditions.

⁸⁰ The play is a response to the mid-1980s scandal in France which saw thousands of people die from HIV-tainted blood, including many hemophiliacs. It was revealed that doctors, healthcare administrators and ministers in the French government were all implicated in the contamination and the cover-up, the effects of which still occurring when the play was written and performed. Anne-Marie Casteret's *L'affaire du sang* (1992), which Cixous credits at the end of the published *Perjured City*, further details the scandal.

⁸¹ In "No Representation without Colonization?" Astrida Neimanis argues, in conversation with Karen Barad, that "flat ontology should not necessarily mean flat ethics (where entities may differ, but these differences may not matter much)" (2015 137). Cixous, in opening up the possibility for otherness *in/as* immanence, complicates, in useful ways I think, the very distinction between ontology and ethics. Though I don't engage with Object Oriented Ontology, or Object Oriented Feminism here, I would say that perhaps where object oriented ontologists find elusiveness in objects, and object oriented feminists politicize such inaccessibility (see Behr 2017), Cixous asks how to conceive ethical encounters *as* ontology, *as* a fulfillment of desire.

⁸² I use the word "endurance" here on account of Elizabeth A. Povinelli's work in *Empire of Love* (2006), and *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism* (2011). Shifting the focus from biopower to geontologies, Povinelli argues that we ought to pay as much attention to the "anthropology of ordinary suffering" (2011, 11), or the struggle to *endure*, as we have to the biopower of "making live" and "letting die." To my mind, if we attend to the long days of endurance over the sharp moments of life and death, it becomes all the more

important that we follow Cixous and work to discover and cultivate any and all possibilities for joyful exuberance "in the ruins."

⁸³ There are ever expanding industries built on "escaping," or going "off the grid" of a privileged, very comfortable urban life. As Danish starchitect Bjarke Ingels attests, speaking about his work on the A45, a tiny and very expensive house designed to allow people "live close to, and comfortably in, nature": "Authenticity is somehow the new luxury" (architectaldigest.com, May 16th, 2018). Authenticity, of course, meaning proximity to an aesthetically valued "wilderness."

⁸⁴ It is clear that there is *at minimum* one other dissertation worth of material to be written on Cixous and Lacan in relation to new materialism and post-structuralist eco-theory. My intention has been to let Cixous's work stand on its own, despite her proximity to and transformation of so many influential figures, Lacan among them.

⁸⁵ We can perhaps think of Cixous picking up and expanding on Lacan's notion of a feminine jouissance, which Lacan describes as a jouissance that can *only* be other. See Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge: Book XX: Encore 1972-1973*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton, p. 73.

⁸⁶ In *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (2016), Alaimo argues for "an ethics of inhabiting" that "revels in the pleasure of interconnection and the joy of the unexpected," an ethics that "embraces the possibilities of becoming in relation to a radical otherness that has been known as 'nature'" (18). This is precisely the kind of work that Cixous has been doing for over five decades. Given their affinity, I would say that the conversation between Cixous and Alaimo deserves its own treatise.

⁸⁷ I would like to highlight that Deleuze has long been celebrated, particularly among feminists such as Rosi Braidotti, Claire Colebrook and Elizabeth Grosz, for a philosophy that is productive, generative, rather than merely deconstructive: a philosophy of becoming. I think Cixous should be read as equally committed to such creative efforts. But Cixous *also* gives us the kind of attention to aporia, lacunae, and otherness that Derrida does. It is therefore in this coupling of a generative ontology with an ethics of otherness that Cixous invents something altogether new and vital.

⁸⁸ Though not something I explore here, I think there is much to say in putting Timothy Morton's "dark ecology," which moves from melancholy to mystery to pleasure (2016), in relation with Cixous's conception of immanent otherness. I think the feminist immanentism Cixous presents relates to "darkness" quite differently than Morton's concept.

⁸⁹ This idea of defining environmentalism "beyond the colour green" has been in fashion within the environmental humanities for some time now. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's 2014 edited collection *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory Beyond Green*, focuses such efforts. I would also point to Astrida Neimanis, Cecilia Åsberg, and Johan Hedrén's discussion in "Four Problems, Four Directions for

Environmental Humanities" on "the compartmentalization of 'the environment' from "other spheres of concern" (2015 69).

⁹⁰ As I note at several points in the dissertation, a full consideration of the similarities and differences between Cixous and Irigaray when read through various new material and posthuman lens, warrants, at least, a dissertation length effort. A consideration of immanent otherness in conversation with Irigaray's "sensible/transcendental" (1993), would be particularly useful to re-assessing the materialism of the "French feminists."

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