PROVOCATION

Composting Feminisms and Environmental Humanities

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Abstract Composting is a material labor whereby old scraps are transformed—through practices of care and attention—into nutrient-rich new soil. In this provocation, we develop "composting" as a material metaphor to tell a particular story about the environmental humanities. Building on Donna Haraway's work, we insist "it matters what compostables make compost." Our argument is twofold. First, we contend that certain feminist concepts and commitments are foundational to the environmental humanities' contemporary emergence. Second, we advocate for more inclusive feminist composting for the future of our field.

We begin with a critical cartography of some of the field's origin stories. While we discover that feminism is named or not named in several different ways, what most interests us here is a particular trend we observe, whereby key feminist scholars or concepts may be mentioned, but their feminist investments are not incorporated as such. Following this cartography, we dig into the stakes of these missed opportunities. A failure to acknowledge the feminist context that grows some of our field's foundational concepts neutralizes their feminist politics and undermines the potential for environmental humanities to build alternative worlds. To conclude, we propose feminist composting as a methodology to be taken up further. We call for an inclusive feminist composting that insists on feminism's imbrication with social justice projects of all kinds, at the same time as we insist that future composting be done with care. Sometimes paying attention to the feminist scraps that feed the pile means responding to feminism's own potential assimilations and disavowals, particularly in relation to decolonization.

Like both the energy-saving domestic practice and the earlier social justice struggles that inspire it, composting feminism and environmental humanities involves messy and undervalued work. We maintain, however, that it is a mode of scholarship necessary for growing different kinds of worlds.

Keywords feminism, composting, environmental humanities, cartography, origin stories

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Figure 1. A domestic composting methodology and material metaphor for environmental humanities. Courtesy of Jennifer Mae Hamilton and Earlwood Farm

A top a kitchen bench rest three containers labeled "chickens," "worms," and "compost" (fig. 1). Those who live in this house learn how to cook and clean up in relation to these bins. They know what the chickens like best (leafy greens and human leftovers), what worms don't want (citrus and onions), and that the rest goes in the compost bin (rotten tomatoes, hair, dirt from the dustpan). Despite the different labels, each bin participates in a domestic methodology for material repurposing—composting. In one, the chickens appropriate and convert our scraps into eggs and poop; in another, worms digest our waste to make nutrient rich wee and castings; and in the third, bin-bound biota call on physics and chemistry to transform themselves into plant food in the generic backyard compost pile. While shit happens even without the interventions of human household composters, our attention to the turning and distribution of these matters figures us as facilitators in these tender alchemies.

In this provocation, we develop "composting" as a material metaphor to better understand the relationship between feminism and the environmental humanities. Composting is a multipurpose concept in this article; it both describes current scholarly practices in the field and proposes a strategy for the future. We argue, first, that the environmental humanities "composts" certain feminist concepts and commitments, and that these nutrients are foundational to the field's contemporary emergence—yet they are not always acknowledged as such. As Donna Haraway (following Marilyn Strathern) reminds us, it "matters what stories tell stories, it matters which concepts think concepts."[1] In our paraphrase, it matters what compostables make compost, and it matters if and how those nutrients are acknowledged. Second, we propose that feminist composting is a valuable methodology for the future of our field. In its implementation,

1. Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene," 160.

however, we also call for this composting to be done more inclusively, and with a more rigorous and intentional "politics of citation."[2]

This thinking developed in the context of a reading group started in 2015 in Sydney, Australia. Drawn to the catchy connotations of the word, we proposed *COMPOSTING Feminisms and Environmental Humanities* as an opportunity to read key feminist texts together with environmental humanities research. The first epigraph on our invitation to participants drew on Haraway's claim from an article in this journal that "We are all compost";[3] the second cited a haiku by queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: "Promiscuous we! / Me, plus anybody else. / Permeable we!"[4] With these inspirations, we wondered, what mucky but nourishing insights might emerge from these mash-ups? Moreover, might a more attentive or deliberate "composting" of ecological questions with feminist insights feed different kinds of hungry questions for the environmental humanities? What we discovered—and were driven to investigate further—was *both* an environmental humanities soil richly textured by feminist matters, *and* a strange lack of feminism as an acknowledged critical presence in the field.[5]

Just a year on from bringing Haraway's claim and Sedgwick's poem together (an affinity to which we will return below), we discovered that Haraway's latest book is, among other things, a love letter to compost. In *Staying with the Trouble* (2016), the figuration of compost works in various ways, with both ontological and ethical ambits. Another dimension of the figuration, however, concerns the actual practice of composting—that is, the "dirty work," grunt work, and care labor of cultivating "unexpected collaborations and combinations."[6] Taking both Haraway's prompt and the material metaphor of the domestic composting system as our points of departure, then, we suggest that composting as practice demands that we pay attention to what goes into the compost bin. It implores that we attend to our critical metabolisms—to notice not only what is being transmogrified, but also under what conditions, why, and to what effect.

More precisely still, thinking about the practice of environmental humanities as a kind of composting allows us to story our field as arising from feminist scholarship and praxis. The first section of our provocation ("A Feminist Cartography of Environmental

2. Ahmed, "Making Feminist Points."

3. Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene," 161.

4. Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love*, 106.

5. To make this argument we do not engage directly with ecofeminism as a named field. This is primarily because some of ecofeminism's leading figures—Ariel Salleh, Maria Mies, Vandana Shiva, for example—are considerably less cited within environmental humanities' origin stories. We instead focus our discussion on those feminist concepts and thinkers (e.g., Haraway and Plumwood) who are frequently cited within work that explicitly frames itself as environmental humanities, even and especially as their feminism is downplayed. The relation between ecofeminism and environmental humanities is thus another vital question to address in this context, but it sits to one side of our provocation. Greta Gaard's (2011) exploration of the troubled exchange between ecofeminism and other styles of environmental feminism in "Ecofeminism Revisited" is a useful point of departure for future work on this question.

6. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 5.

Humanities' Origin Stories") illustrates how certain feminisms have shaped the friability of contemporary environmental humanities soil in particular ways. Upon surveying how this emergent field is described and accounted for by its practitioners, we discover an interesting trend. Although feminism is acknowledged (or not) in several different ways, curiously often, feminism is *named but not claimed*. That is, although key feminist scholars or concepts may be mentioned, their feminist investments are not incorporated as such.[7] In another section ("The Difference that Feminism Makes"), we dig into the stakes of this disavowal. We ask: why does claiming the feminism in the compost *as such* matter? We argue that a selective use of concepts and theories without attention to or incorporation of the feminist commitments that underpin them risks exploitative extraction of those feminist labors. Given feminism's tested transformative ambit, it also impoverishes the potential of our field to materially change worldly relations. We are thus not insisting that every environmental humanities scholar must necessarily become a feminist (although, why not?), but rather that a rigorous understanding of feminism's legacy within the field might subtly or radically change one's questions, or their commitments.

Following from this assessment, the third section ("Feminist Compostables") proposes that feminist composting ought to be extended further. At the same time, our cartographic work also reveals that key feminist figures within contemporary environmental humanities mirror the field's general whiteness. Thus, as we call for more feminist composting, we also push for more inclusive feminisms that challenge impermeable borders between feminism and those perspectives and practices that take up concerns of race, coloniality, sexuality, ability, class, and their associated power asymmetries. The composting of these feminisms, however, must be done with care, and with consideration of feminism's own disavowals. We end the third section by addressing this concern with particular attention to feminism's colonial inheritances.[8] In light of this commitment to both inclusive and careful feminist composting, we are tempted to parse Sedgwick's invocation of a "permeable we," invoked above, as both kin to Haraway's always-multispecies self, but also as a resistance to political struggles as bounded or discrete; permeability invites us to be *both* a multispecies "we" and a "we" of solidarity with intrahuman struggles. Inclusive feminisms seek out regions of overlap and affinity, while also respecting important differences (permeability is not sameness).

Moreover, given the urgency of contemporary environmental crises, the last thing we want to do is to use the final bursts of energy from the fossil-fueled Anthropocene academy to call for always newer and more innovative ideas (after all, we are "writing

7. As will become clear in the next section, our focus on particular feminist thinkers, such as Haraway and Plumwood, is guided by the citational practices of *others.*

8. Our claims here resonate with DeLoughrey, Didur, and Carrigan, who argue that "a postcolonial dialogue is indispensable for establishing an effective base for the environmental humanities in the twenty-first century." We commit to deeper inquiry into how the post- and decolonial projects relate to one another, and to that of feminism. DeLoughrey, Didur, and Carrigan, *Global Ecologies*, 2–3.

the Anthropocene" in both figurative and material ways).[9] Without doubt, just as an apple core becomes-with newborn worm and produces fresh castings, the scholarly practice of composting also has a transformative mandate. Such transformations, however, cannot be innovation for innovation's sake; we need practices that counter a regime of disposability. [10] The earthy justice composting seeks—indeed, prioritizes—is energy saving: reduce, reuse, recycle, retrofit, compost. Composting explicitly values and deliberately repurposes extant matters—namely feminism—in the search for different kinds of worlds. Importantly, these are worlds in which such tactics are valued; drawing explicitly on the feminist ethos that is at the center of our provocation, we insist that composting's intellectual products cannot be detached from the material labors that produce them.

A Feminist Cartography of Environmental Humanities' Origin Stories

In this section, we survey various "origin stories" of environmental humanities to assess where, why, and how a debt to feminism is included—or not. Critical reading of origin stories is a well-established strategy in feminist epistemology. Indeed, in early writing on biology, Haraway identifies two main feminist strategies for doing so: first, a reinterpretation of the origin story "to get it right the second time"; and second, more rebelliously, the proclamation of a totally new story.[11] Here, we add another tactic to Haraway's list. Neither reinterpreting nor radically rewriting per se, we offer a critical reading *in order to notice and name what's already there*. In doing so, we align ourselves with posthuman feminist Rosi Braidotti's project of critical cartography. A cartographic method, according to Braidotti, "is a theoretically based and politically informed reading of the present" that aims at "epistemic and ethical accountability,"[12] both for the cartographer and the other positions she is tracking. Heeding Braidotti's call to account for both "difficult transitions" and "for some of the contradictions inherent in our current predicament,"[13] we seek to map the relationship between feminism and contemporary environmental humanities by paying attention to both the possibilities and tensions we find there.

In researching some of the ways in which contemporary environmental humanities narrates its emergence, a clear sense of feminisms as already part of environmental humanities' compost pile emerges. Feminism is not a special interest or an add-on (as is sometimes the assumption when disciplines make room for things like "women's writing" or "feminist philosophy" in a second-generation mode). Rather, we argue that certain feminisms are immanent and foundational to contemporary environmental

9. Boes and Marshall, "Writing the Anthropocene."

10. Puig de la Bellacasa similarly rejects scholarly ambits that privilege "critical insight" only when it "break[s] with the past" to offer something "novel." Puig de la Bellacasa, "Nothing Comes without Its World," 203.

11. Haraway, "In the Beginning Was the Word," 471.

12. Braidotti, "The Posthuman," 164.

13. Ibid.

humanities. We support Neimanis, Åsberg, and Hedren's claim that feminist conceptual tools "*provide the conditions of possibility*" for some of environmental humanities' key "lines of inquiry."[14] However, as we discovered in our survey of origin stories, this sense of feminism's immanence is not evenly recognized.[15]

Origin stories come in all shapes and sizes. They are also as compelling as they are dangerous: not only do they often order things neatly and chronologically (this *then* that), but they justify certain lines of thought (this *because* that) and often at the exclusion of other possible narratives (this *not* that). At the same time, they are important, even in their tenuousness, for many reasons—from community building, to opening possibilities for institutionalization, to securing audiences for a specific kind of scholarly work. Our point is therefore *not* that there should be one "correct" origin story behind which we all must fall in line. Rather, this provocation seeks to story the field through a specific tracing of its connection to feminism.

Drawing on a number of narratives where environmental humanities practitioners describe their own emerging field, we discover three rough kinds of relation to feminism. The first argues that feminism plays an important role in scholarship in this field.[16] Our provocation adds its voice to these positions. The second relation is a non-relation; a number of texts do not mention feminism at all, but nor do they smuggle in feminist scholars or concepts in unacknowledged ways.[17] While much could be said about this second type of relation, here we limit our response to a question in the spirit of our provocation: how might an addition of feminist concerns change these origin stories? We invite this scholarship to consider the tactic of feminist composting that we explore later in this article.

Most interesting to us here is the third kind of relation: where feminism is present (either as an orientation or through the avatar of one of its key thinkers or as represented in the deployment of key feminist concepts) but the mattering of that feminism is downplayed, or disavowed. In other words, the surprise is not an *absence* of feminism; it is rather that feminism is an unacknowledged presence—referenced implicitly but

14. Neimanis, Åsberg, and Hedrén, "Four Problems, Four Directions," 84. Emphasis in original.

15. In making this point, we amplify arguments made by feminist scholars such as Catriona Sandilands, Greta Gaard, Stacy Alaimo, among others, who have long stressed feminism's important place in environmental scholarship in various ways. For example, in the conclusion to *Exposed*, Alaimo engages a related debate with object-oriented ontology and the history of feminism, and traces what object-oriented ontology misses in passing on feminist insights (178–88). See also Gaard, "Where is Feminism in Environmental Humanities?" (81–98); and Sandilands "Some 'F' Words for the Environmental Humanities" (443–51). Our work in this article stands humbly on those shoulders!

16. For example, Neimanis, Åsberg, and Hedren, "Four Problems, Four Directions"; Åsberg, "Resilience Is Cyborg"; Oppermann and Iovino, "Introduction"; Nye and Emmett, *The Environmental Humanities*. There is substantial variation across these examples as to the extent to which feminism is described as immanent to the foundations of contemporary environmental humanities.

17. For example, Heise, "The Environmental Humanities"; Palsson, et al., "Reconceptualizing the 'Anthropos.'" Feminism is mentioned once in the latter, but not in relation to the field's roots.

not named; indexed through its ideas and thinkers, but not claimed. Why, we wonder? And more to the point, why does this observation matter? It is this (rough and ready) third category to which we primarily attend below.

When environmental humanities journals and programs were starting up and drawing attention from funding bodies, one of us jumped at an invitation from *The Conversation* to explain the field.[18] To do so, an analysis of the popular film *Grease* was used to illustrate the difference between a conventional and an ecocritical reading of a cultural text. Here, the ecocritical perspective was deployed as a synecdoche for the definitive and originary critical strategy in environmental humanities as a whole, whereby we expand the field of analysis from interhuman relations to include the whole material cosmos. The piece thus characterizes *Grease* not as a romance between two people, but as a love affair between an entire society and petroleum (think virginal country girl Sandy transformed into urban sex pot dressed as an oil slick, hot for the car-loving Danny). The cultural migration from rural to urban that accompanies the rise of fossil fuel exploration is embodied in Sandy's transformation too.

Of course, *Grease* is *both* high-school courtship *and* material metaphor for American society's romance with oil (not to mention a coded representation of postwar white Australia's eagerness to transform itself into potential lover to the United States). For the purposes of expediently illustrating how the environmental humanities project differs from earlier modes of humanist enquiry, however, the overtly gendered dimensions of this story (or, more accurately of both stories—Sandy and Danny *and* our rapture with fossil fuel) were set aside. But the two evidently work in lock step. In focusing on the specific *innovation* of the field (environmental humanities is this *not* that), that particular explainer missed the opportunity to show the imbrication of gendered logics of power and environmental desires. In other words, although gendered concepts and concerns were implicit in the analysis, this piece missed the opportunity to carefully compost feminism.

We begin with this example to underscore that our provocation is not written from a place of righteous infallibility. As Braidotti insists, the cartographer must assess how the lineaments of power that she maps also situate her in relation to the terrain. Our storying of environmental humanities here emerges from our own struggles against feminism's erasures, even as we note how various factors can entice us to participate in its disappearance. The banality of long-standing institutional "siloing" of feminism within academia, being in a certain institution at a certain time with certain mentors, a pervasive misogyny that is still the very air we breathe—all of these can subdue our feminism as often as it ignites it. We recognize the operation of unclaimed feminism in the formation of environmental humanities as a field in part because we can locate similar tendencies in our own intellectual trajectories. In naming our colleagues, mentors, and supporters as part of these disavowals, we are thus neither singling them out nor

18. Hamilton, "Explainer: What Are the Environmental Humanities?"

rejecting their work that has been crucial to our own scholarship and that of many others; we are rather hoping to unpick a peculiar and pervasive phenomenon in order to better understand its stakes.

So in this spirit of generosity and provocation, we turn to other origin stories that reveal similar misses. In the well-cited inaugural essay for this journal, our colleagues and friends Deborah Bird Rose, Thom van Dooren, Matthew Chrulew, Stuart Cooke, Matthew Kearnes, and Emily O'Gorman neatly theorize the rationale for the emergence of this field and highlight the "need for a more integrated and conceptually sensitive approach to environmental issues."[19] One of the piece's central claims regards the kind of knowledge generated by expanding the domain of the humanities to include the more-than-human. In their view, environmental humanities scholars are "able to articulate a 'thicker' notion of humanity, one that rejects reductionist accounts of self-contained, rational, decision making subjects."[20] We agree! But we are surprised that, with a short bibliography including citations from Donna Haraway, Myra Hird, Vicki Kirby, Annmarie Mol, Val Plumwood, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, and Anna Tsing—thinkers all working within feminist traditions—feminism is not taken up as an important, or even foundational, influence here.[21]

A similar sidestepping appears in an even earlier text by Deborah Bird Rose and Libby Robin that introduces, however still inchoately, environmental humanities in Australia. In "The Ecological Humanities in Action: An Invitation," Rose and Robin launch a special section of the *Australian Humanities Review* by outlining some central tenets, precursors, shifts, and opportunities that make space for ecological humanities. Rose and Robin note the contribution of feminist theory, generally speaking, to a turn toward situated and multiple knowledges.[22] However, elsewhere in this essay we again find the curious case whereby key feminist texts are cited for their foundational contribution to "the birth of the ecological humanities" but their feminism is left unsignalled.[23] For example, Carolyn Merchant's 1980 *Death of Nature* gets credit for inaugurating a key direction for new environmental humanities—namely, an analysis of the relationship between environmental imaginaries and material change. Yet, just as Merchant's book's subtitle, *Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, is not mentioned, the specific feminist problematics or concerns that inform Merchant's insights are left unaddressed. Plumwood and Karen Warren's important works on interspecies ethics of care are also cited, but, again, Plumwood's feminist frameworks and the "ecofeminism" found in the title of Warren's text are left out. To be clear, Rose and Robin's piece hardly practices

19. Rose et al., "Thinking through the Environment," 2.

20. Ibid., 2.

21. Ecofeminism is mentioned once in a list of Plumwood's concerns.

22. They write, "Critical social theory, in part under the stimulus of feminist theory, entails shifts from universal knowledge to situated knowledges, from monoglossia to heteroglossia, from centred hierarchies to decentred networks, and from structure to motion." Rose and Robin, "The Ecological Humanities in Action."

23. Robyn Eckersley, quoted in Rose and Robin, "The Ecological Humanities in Action," n.p.

neutral humanism; the important contributions of indigenous cosmologies to rethinking ecological connectivity are underscored at length. We are grateful for this acknowledgement, in particular its impetus to push Western thinkers beyond limited and limiting frames. We wonder also, though, how the origin stories of environmental humanities might change if the limiting and limited frames of patriarchy and androcentrism were foregrounded as well.

Another way feminism is sidestepped in many of these field-defining texts is by highlighting how the humanities adds value to the natural or "hard" sciences. We see this, for example, in David E. Nye and colleagues' "The Emergence of the Environmental Humanities"; in Ursula K. Heise's introductory essay to *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*; and in Sverker Sörlin's short essay on environmental humanities in *Bioscience*. Nye and colleagues' report contends that the field "builds bridges between scientific disciplines, as well as between research and companies, and other authorities and actors" and the report's authors provide a strongly value-based argument for exactly that.[24] In *The Routledge Companion*'s introduction the relationship with science figures centrally too; unlike Nye et al., who cite almost all humanities disciplines as having a stake in the development of the field, Heise describes the lineage of environmental humanities as having a clear disciplinary predecessor in environmental studies. Heise assures readers that this outgrowth is much more than an elaborate rebranding exercise and underscores how environmental humanities builds on environmental studies' collaborations with scientists and engineers, by way of a specific concern with *social* justice. Environmental humanists, she argues, "envision ecological crises fundamentally as questions of socioeconomic inequality, cultural difference, and divergent histories, values, and ethical frameworks."[25] And while Sörlin links the emergence of environmental humanities directly to the modern environmentalist movement stemming from American scholars such as Rachel Carson and Aldo Leopold, Sörlin similarly argues for the value-adding that humanities scholarship brings to the sciences.[26]

We note with interest, though, that while feminism has for decades provided key inputs into "the science question"—as Rose and Robin briefly note—these feminist perspectives remain practically unaddressed in these field surveys (although Nye et al. mention gender studies as one feeder field for environmental humanities). In this sense, these texts miss the opportunity to show how feminist ideas have been key drivers of this scholarly move. While feminist science studies are not the sole source of these arguments, their not-naming here repeats an invisibilization that informs the origin stories of the field.

24. Nye et al., "The Emergence of the Environmental Humanities." This report was commissioned by MISTRA (a Swedish funding agency) and resulted in a grant to *The Seed Box*, which among other things enabled the collaboration between us, the authors of this provocation. Cecilia Åsberg, founding director of the *Seed Box* has also played a key role in supporting feminist environmental humanities.

25. Heise, "Plant, Species, Justice—And the Stories We Tell about Them," 3.

26. Sörlin, "Environmental Humanities."

Undoubtedly, individual authors will justify their origin stories in various ways, especially as many of the field-describing texts are short, targeted pieces with a particular audience in mind. What we can notice, however, is the institutional work such disavowal does *even incidentally*, and what it means when feminism (among other fields) is overlooked to highlight the originality of the field or make a stronger case for new and necessary complementarity to science. By stating that environmental humanities is not just the usual kind of cultural analysis, but something shiny and different, the case is strengthened for its importance in an institutional context that rewards commodifiable innovation over the grunt work required to build more just and livable worlds. The purely "value-adding" story of the field risks building an institutional space not in collective collaboration (nor in a spirit of indebtedness), but in competition with and "moving on" from its named foundational voices, including feminism. This is also an evasion of the labors required to sort, mix, and turn these contributions with care.

Feminist concerns do find their way into Joni Adamson, William A. Gleeson, and David N. Pellow's introduction for *Keywords for Environmental Studies*, as among those texts that challenge the purported universality of science. They write,

> Building on the work of influential feminists, poststructuralists, sociologists, and science and technology studies (STS) scholars, including Sandra Harding, Donna Haraway, and Val Plumwood, and influenced by the convergent development of narrative, network, complexity and relationality theories in the social and natural sciences, contributors illustrate how the environmental humanities and sciences of nature are, in a sense, "recoding" each other, by blurring the lines separating humans, nonhuman animals, and machines, nature and culture, and the humanities and/the sciences.[27]

It is worth noting, though, that even Adamson, Gleeson, and Pellow's text names but still doesn't entirely claim the feminism here: although these feminist source texts "blur the lines" between nature and culture, Harding, Haraway, and Plumwood also make explicitly feminist claims about social politics and justice as integral to this blurring. While perhaps inferred, this aspect is not taken up by Adamson, Gleeson, and Pellow. Like our response to the inaugural essay to this journal, our provocation here specifically is this: a failure to acknowledge the feminist context that grows some of our field's foundational concepts neutralizes their feminist politics and undermines the potential for environmental humanities to build alternative worlds.

Environmental humanities has a legitimate claim to being a named, organized, and practiced field of research in its own right. Indeed, we see ourselves as part of this project. But we propose that the specific originality or ontoepistemological value of the field is compromised when a stated openness to intellectual inheritances of all kinds does not adequately engage with the rich history of feminisms (again, among other key

27. Adamson, Gleeson, and Pellow, *Keywords for Environmental Studies*, 3–4.

fields, such as anticolonial and black studies) wherein the category of the human has already been tirelessly debated, questioned, expanded, torqued, and rejected; wherein the role of science has been rigorously investigated; and wherein both of these are already inextricable from questions of justice.

Is the disavowal of inclusive feminisms really what is necessary to make an expedient case for humanistic ecological knowledge production in the neoliberal academy? We hope not. In her book *Matters of Care*, Puig de la Bellacasa suggests that if we are interested in extending an ethics of care to more-than-human worlds, then the seemingly dated feminist standpoint theory project of the early 1980s is a very useful place to begin. Puig de la Bellacasa's retro insights into domestic work remind us that there "has to be some form of care going on somewhere in the substrate of (anyone's) world for living to be possible."[28] Someone has to sort and empty the compost bucket, so to speak. This is why instead of only offering a (shiny! new!) critique of the origin stories of environmental humanities, we want our provocation to be primarily about rethinking our practice. We want to encourage the (sometimes drudgey, almost always undervalued) work of gathering up and sifting through what's already there, with care. We want to see how old feminist insights and contributions from cognate fields can grow new things, while explicitly honoring their contributions. On offer is our mucky methodology for doing so.

Drawing inspiration from Puig de la Bellacasa and others, in the next section we more specifically unpack the immanence of some specific forms of feminist thinking to the frameworks of contemporary environmental humanities. We expound why feminist contributions are not simply old ideas to be filed away, and we clarify the stakes of these politics of citation.

The Difference that Feminism Makes

One might argue that it does not matter whether feminist ideas are named as such or not, if they nonetheless nourish the environmental humanities soil in some way. Perhaps keeping track of all the scraps in a compost pile is an extravagant and unnecessary labor? In this section, we clarify why an inclusion of feminism needs to be more than a cherry picking of concepts or ideas. First, we examine interlocking oppressions, situated knowledges, and storying as specific feminist concepts that have been taken up within environmental humanities, and how they risk losing their founding meaning if pushed too far afield of their founding feminist commitments. Moreover, we argue that environmental humanities has much to gain by paying closer attention to the feminist roots of thinkers and frameworks it deploys.

To begin, though, we clarify more precisely the kind of feminism we are calling for in this provocation. Feminism is not "one," but manifold. We don't seek to parse its varieties using (always inadequate) categories (liberal, radical) or chronologies (we won't dip

28. Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care*, 5.

into those waves). Rather, in invoking its *inclusivity* we interpellate a feminism that understands gender as inseparable from experiences and discourses of race, sexuality, colonization, ability, age, geography, class, and species (at least). Although we might most commonly understand feminism to be about power relations among sexed and gendered bodies, inclusive feminisms view power relations as materialized in the context of other aspects of our embodied identities. The feminism we refer to here is therefore also attentive to racism, colonialism, heterosexism, ableism, speciesism and other power structures simultaneously. This doesn't mean that inclusive feminism *equals* decolonial practice, or queer activism, for example (see "Feminist Compostables" section below), but we strive to articulate it with these other perspectives in ways that are both responsive to and respectful of diverse politics. Relatedly, in promoting inclusive feminisms we don't want to insist on immutable borders between feminism and these other perspectives; we seek instead to include their regions of overlap in a broadly construed feminist territory—albeit with care. "We" are permeable, to quote Sedgwick again, but to paraphrase lesbian feminist Adrienne Rich, "we" are also many, and do not want to be the same.[29]

Feminism's interrogation of gender as a structuring logic of power is thus contiguous with other kinds of social justice projects that disrupt a humanist fantasy of a self-sufficient, neutral (read: male, straight, white, exceptional, European, able-bodied, and otherwise normative) subject. We stress the contiguity (overlap, mutual imbrication) of oppressions and reject the idea of analogy between them (e.g., sexism is "like" racism) because we wish to underscore how these structures of power provide each other's scaffold and alibi: they are the condition of possibility for one another. To stress the inclusiveness of the feminism is thus in part about defining the kind of feminism we wish to promote. At the same time, we recognize that feminism has participated in its own exclusions and erasures (discussed more below), and note that the key feminist figures within contemporary environmental humanities mirror the predominant whiteness of the field more generally. This underscores why we need to pay greater attention to interlocking forms of power, privilege, and oppression when we examine how feminism is intrinsically part of contemporary environmental humanities.[30]

Plumwood, whose considered challenge to the nature/culture dualism is often cited as a key concept in current environmental thought, is an interesting example in regard to these interimplicated oppressions. Too often, citations of her work fail to note that Plumwood's ecological feminism and her diagnosis of the "Master Model" embed this nature/culture critique in a far more expansive critique of binarisms. Male/female, civilized/savage, white/black, and so on, are, in her words, "mutually reinforcing dualisms."[31]

29. Rich, "Notes toward the Politics of Location (1984)," 225.

30. In Sandilands's words, "That ecological relations must always be understood in the context of colonialism, gender, race, sex, class, and ability is a crucial part of what the intersectional feminist humanities have long since offered back to ecology." Sandilands, "Some 'F' Words for the Environmental Humanities," 447.

31. Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 42. See also Gaard, "Women, Water, and Energy."

In other words, the dualisms that structure our human relation in the West to the more-than-human world are not "like" intrahuman oppressions; rather, they "reflect the major forms of oppression in western culture. In particular, the dualisms of male/female, mental/manual (mind/body), civilized/primitive, human/nature correspond directly to and naturalise gender, class, race and nature oppressions respectively."[32] To focus on the nature/culture dualism without acknowledging its connection to gender, race, and other structures thus evacuates from Plumwood's work its central insight. The way she brings contemporary feminist questions to bear on environmental concerns makes it impossible to address environmental harms without also addressing social ones. The latter are governed by similar logics of domination, even if these logics play out in specific and sometimes surprising ways.

In this regard, we return to the inaugural essay of this journal, discussed above. In their call to expand the domain of the humanities to include the more-than-human, the authors draw on Plumwood's work. They show how Plumwood identified two central tasks for the ecological humanities: "to resituate the human within the environment, and to resituate nonhumans within cultural and ethical domains. Both tasks aim to overcome the nature/culture binary that positions humans outside of nature and thus implicitly posits that we are free to control our own destiny within a broader 'natural' world that is devoid of meaning, values, and ethics."[33] This is a plausible summary of Plumwood's work and her contribution to the field. Edited out of this summary, however, is her important feminist work on mutually reinforcing dualisms, and the notion that "each of them has crucial connections to other elements."[34] As noted above, for Plumwood, overcoming the nature/culture dualism involves rethinking the ways in which all of the related dualisms "correspond directly to and naturalise gender, class, race and nature oppressions respectively."[35] While that inaugural essay is very short, citing the nature/culture binary without the nod to the larger structures of oppression central to Plumwood's work could be read as incidentally, or even accidentally, naturalizing other oppressions. Avoiding the ongoing erasure of this important dimension of Plumwood's work is a key reason why feminist composting matters.

A similar risk can be located in Heise's introduction to the *Routledge Companion*, also referenced above. When Heise points to Ortner's work "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" (1972) as an important foundation for environmental humanities, but without talking about the feminism that conditions it, what political commitments are sidestepped? Ortner's key point, similar to Plumwood's, was to unmask the ways in which a view of women as inferior was ineluctably tied to the subordination of nature.[36]

32. Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 43
33. Rose et al., "Thinking through the Environment."
34. Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 42.
35. Ibid., 41.
36. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?"

By citing Ortner, but failing to note the dual dimension of her essay's key premise, the nature/culture divide as a foundational question for environmental humanities becomes dangerously neutralized. This is particularly salient given Ortner states from the outset that her essay's aim is "more than academic" and seeks "genuine change" in the hegemonic order of gender inequality.[37]

We could similarly ask, what happens when Haraway's feminist impetus is skirted, even as her work is positioned as foundational for contemporary environmental humanities? Adamson, Gleeson, and Pellow cite *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991) as an index of Haraway's formative contributions to the field. This text includes the republication of two of Haraway's most influential early essays, on "situated knowledges" and "cyborgs"—which for us begs the question of how Haraway's key concepts, such as "situated knowledges," get taken up within our field. We need to remember that in Haraway's original articulation, situated knowledges were not about the neutral need to include all perspectives. It matters that the title of this landmark essay includes the word "feminism" ("Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective"). This essay had its own context—academically, the rise of poststructural epistemologies and a suspicion of positivism that left Haraway "still [wanting] to talk about reality,"[38] thus spurring her to develop her theory of feminist objectivity (alongside and in response to feminist standpoint theory). Materially, this context included the ongoing exclusion of feminist thinking from science and a devaluing of feminist knowledge, and Haraway's recognition of the ways in which false objectivities disproportionately impact the lives of women, colonized people, and more-than-human others. In short, her arguments in "Situated Knowledges" are not just neutral epistemological expansions; they are political and ethical maneuvers. Like Ortner's "Is Female to Male" essay, Haraway's vision of situated knowledges had a stated political goal, explicitly premised on a "solidarity in politics."[39] So we wonder aloud again, what happens when the idea gets taken up *in general*, without a necessary commitment to "solidarity" with the material politics at the heart of this work?

One answer might be again to quote Haraway (quoting Marilyn Strathern): "It matters what stories tell stories, it matters which concepts think concepts,"[40] alongside our own paraphrase: it matters what compostables make compost. "Storytelling," we know, is a key method for Haraway and one taken up across our field.[41] Haraway's version of storytelling is also instructive on the questions we are asking in this provocation. As she insists, storytelling refers to the "patterning of possible worlds"[42] as "crucial to the

37. Ibid., 5.
38. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 577.
39. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 584.
40. Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene," 160.
41. Influentially in Thom van Dooren's epilogue in *Flight Ways.*
42. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 31

practice of thinking."[43] But in stressing that stories matter,[44] Haraway underscores that stories emerge from specific histories, and they engender material effects. Hers is not a plea for storytelling "in general," but for stories that catalogue the effects of patriarchal, capitalist, and colonial nature-cultures, as well as vignettes of resistance to these hegemonies. Stories, then, not only describe but intervene in these worlds.

In "Sowing Worlds: A Seed Bag for Terraforming with Earth Others," Haraway theorizes different strategies for storytelling as modes of worlding. While Haraway's essay rethinks the role of the human in planetary dramas, it also asks: Who or what specifically is left out of these tales? Whose labors make these stories possible? It is not an accident that she explores this problematic in explicitly gendered terms: "In a tragic story with only one real actor—one real world-maker, the hero—this is the Man-making tale of the hunter on a quest to kill and bring back the terrible bounty. This is the cutting, sharp, combative tale of action that defers the suffering of glutinous [*sic*], earth rotted passivity beyond bearing."[45] In the classic hero narrative, the protagonist categorically fails to understand the systems that support his tale. The protagonist's poor understanding of his situation defines the generic conventions. While the environmental humanities underline this unacknowledged support system in order to take us beyond the human (recall Danny's failure to understand the petroleum wells that fuel his "greased lightning"), the human power plays (e.g., sexism) imbricated in this misrecognition need to remain part of the story too (for instance, Sandy's willingness to dress as a sexy oil slick in order to win Danny's affections and ensure the film's happy ending). A conventional story's emotional arc often *banks on* that dual forgetting. "All others in the prick tale" as Haraway notes (gendered double entendre almost certainly intended), "are props, ground, plot space, or prey. They don't matter; their job is to be in the way, to be overcome, to be the road, the conduit, but not the traveler, the begetter."[46] This "backgrounding" (to use Plumwood's term) of all others on which or whom the hero depends supports the foregrounding not just of the human but the specifically masculine hero.

Heroes are common in fiction and fantasy, but Haraway's notion of storying also concerns scholarly stories we humans tell ourselves about our place in the world. For example, Haraway turns to Ursula K. LeGuin's "Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction" as a concept with which to counter how foundational human stories—such as the story of human evolution—can also sediment as phallogocentric prick tales; LeGuin in turn discusses Elizabeth Fisher's carrier-bag theory of evolution that claims as the human's first tool invention not a sharp pointy weapon (as the evolutionary hero prick tale usually has it), but "a container to hold gathered products and some kind of sling or net carrier."[47] For LeGuin, this evolution story "grounds [her] personally" in her culture in a

43. Ibid., 39.
44. Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene," 160.
45. Haraway, "Sowing Worlds," 138.
46. Ibid., 138.
47. Fisher quoted in LeGuin, "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction," 166.

way that stories about "the use of long, hard objects for sticking, bashing and killing"[48] do not. In other words, storying evolution via a carrier bag instead of a pointed weapon is not just a *different* story; it is a story that accommodates bodies (read: women) who are routinely marginalized in these stories.

Our point is that a feminist tale is not just another story among many options; these stories inaugurate particular kinds of relationships between humans and with the more-than-human world.[49] Still drawing on LeGuin, Haraway points out that the carrier bag, or the seed bag, is especially useful for telling tales of terraforming or worlding in ecologically troubled times. To make this point, Haraway turns to another gendered metaphor, asking how containers—as "concave hollowed out things" generate "richer, quirkier, fuller, unfitting, ongoing stories, stories with room for the hunter but which weren't and aren't about him, the self-making Human, the human making machine of history."[50] Describing this receptacle image in feminist terms may seem critically redundant, but as Haraway stresses, "the details matter."[51] Even as this image might conjure an essentialized specter of Mother Earth, for Haraway the gendered connections are more nuanced: mother does not equal earth, and feminist politics do not necessarily equate to environmental ones. They are, however, necessarily coimbricated questions and connected political ambits. We argue that only by paying attention to the feminist substrate can we tease out the nuances of these relations and adequately explain their coimbrication.

Telling *certain* stories is about changing the world in specific, material ways. So, when as environmental humanities scholars we repeatedly cite Haraway's claim that it matters what stories tell stories, does it not behoove us to pay attention to the particular matters of her tales? Which stories matter for Haraway? If we uproot the theory from its feminist soil, what nutrients (opportunities, pathways of connection) are we leaving behind?

Like Haraway, we know that our attention to the unnaming of feminism can begin to sound like "paranoid fantasies and academic resentments," but we also follow her lead in explaining that our concern is not with some "invisible conspiracy" of individual scholars.[52] We are more concerned with what happens when a feminist foundation in environmental humanities is eroded by what Nancy Hartsock called "abstract masculinity"[53] and what Sara Ahmed has more contemporarily called "White Men" (noting not only the gendered but key racialized basis of this institution).[54] We repeat, our concern

48. LeGuin, "The Carrier Bag Theory," 167.

49. See chap. 3, "Fishy Beginnings" in Neimanis, *Bodies of Water*, for more discussion of evolution stories and their relation to feminism.

50. Ibid., 138–39.

51. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 116.

52. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 575.

53. Harstock, quoted in ibid., 578.

54. Ahmed, "Making Feminist Points."

here is that the value of environmental humanities is compromised when it does not acknowledge feminism's already extant thickening of the category of the human, its linking of the nature-culture dualism to mutually reinforcing dualist structures of power, its ongoing troubling of the way we think the relation between nature and culture, and its need for situated and entangled stories that acknowledge their own antipatriarchal roots.

About a half an hour into the recent documentary by Fabrizio Terranova, Haraway discusses feminist science fiction writers, feminist theorists, and books that have had a "huge impact on us." Shortly thereafter, she literally picks up Joanna Russ's book *How to Suppress Women's Writing* and critiques the ways in which women's writing is explained away. Moving on to talk about her own formative beginnings as a writer, she points out that "women have repeatedly understood that . . . our thinking is disappeared *fast*" by "the powerful apparatus of masculinist thinking, of masculinist practices both in institutions and at the level of individual people." In response, she advocates a feminist practice that, "deliberately and carefully," is "very precise about the history of ideas and the particular creativity and originality and importance of other women's thinking. And I know myself, from my own experience and from powerful women I know, that the speed with which we disappear from the citation apparatuses is breathtaking."[55] These concerns are distinctly related to what antiracist feminist scholar Sara Ahmed terms a "politics of citation." Ahmed describes citation as "a rather successful reproductive technology, a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies" and points to the ways in which feminist and critical race critiques are routinely "screened out" of the formation of disciplines via citational practices. Like the choice of readings on an undergraduate syllabus, citation is a "technique of selection" that makes "certain bodies and thematics core to the discipline, and others not even a part."[56] Thus the field is reproduced, rearticulated, and reaffirmed as "belonging" to certain writers and researchers whose work will be cited, engaged, and critiqued anew.

Fields of study, like species, are not natural categories with predetermined boundaries. They are made through patterns of reproduction and composted as intra-actions with an outside. These makings are not neutral, but are always caught up in operations of power. As feminist scholar Chandra Mohanty points out, this entails acknowledging that "knowledge systems are produced in histories that are shot through with differentially constituted power relations."[57] The game here is not to get out of power relations—as if that were possible—but to pay better attention to those at work in our own politics of citation, and being responsible for their effects. As Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang, and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández remind us, "Our practices persist without consideration of the politics of linking projects to the same tired reference lists"[58]—that is, too often

55. Terranova, *Storytelling*.
56. Ahmed, "Making Feminist Points."
57. Mohanty, cited in Wekker, "In the Arena of Disciplines," 57.
58. Tuck, Yang, and Gaztambide-Fernández, "Citation Practices Challenge."

we cite from a place of *inattention* to the politics at stake.[59] In our case, then, paying attention means being attuned to how the specific compostables that feed the growing heap of environmental humanities open (or foreclose) the trajectories of its ongoing development.

In response to the question with which we opened this section (why do we need to claim feminism if its traces still serve as nourishment for the field?), then, we would concur that soil made with feminist thinkers or concepts might be fertile with or without incorporating the feminist commitments that are the conditions of their possibility. The global flourishing of environmental humanities scholarship arguably evidences this. But we ask in return, what opportunities for apprenticeship in thinking, growing, becoming, are missed? Again, we are not arguing that all environmental humanities scholarship must place a named feminism at its front-and-center. We are suggesting that more attention to a feminist backstory can enable two complementary moves: On the one hand, it will refuse the neutralization of feminist commitments that have given rise to some of environmental humanities' most influential concepts. On the other hand, our wager is that this insistence will enliven the potential of the environmental humanities to "change the story" in more coherent ways and strengthen its alter-worlding potential. What other responses to environmental dilemmas might we occasion, we ask, if we were to attend more deliberately to environmental humanities' feminist substrate? We are also asking, somewhat provocatively, by refusing to name it and fully claim it, what else might we be avoiding?[60]

Feminist Compostables: Taking Stock and Taking Care

Considering the richness with which these insights have imbued an environmental humanities soil, in this section we briefly note other key feminist insights that have much to offer our field. The imbricated oppressions that Plumwood's master model stresses, however, also invite us to consider explicitly feminism's own erasures and the need for careful composting that respects solidarity in difference.

Just as feminism has offered valuable conceptual tools for addressing intrahuman questions of social justice, and just as feminisms have steadfastly pushed at the boundaries of what counts as "human" in the first place, it is a logical consequence that feminisms would emerge with concepts and frameworks fit-for-purpose for grappling with questions of multispecies flourishing in a climate-changing world. While an exhaustive

59. This claim resonates with Puig de la Bellacasa's analysis of Haraway's own "politics of quotation" as a form of care work, that "reveal[s] a commitment to a *collective* of knowledge-makers." "Nothing Comes without Its World," 202.

60. Here we acknowledge the need to explore the connection between disavowing feminisms in environmental humanities scholarship and the gender (and related) politics (including discrimination and harassment) in academic institutions. Sherilyn MacGregor reminds us that "hegemonic masculinity exists as an unmarked category in [the scholarly communities of] environmental studies." MacGregor, "Gender and Environment: An Introduction," 5. Greta Gaard has also spoken incisively about this connection (keynote panel, ALECC Biannual Conference, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay Ontario, August 2014).

list of these feminist insights might exhaust even you, dear reader, we nonetheless lay a few scraps on this kitchen bench for your further consideration.

The first is the concept of intersectionality, coined by black feminist and antidiscrimination legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1988 but since meaningfully expanded in various ways, including a consideration of speciesism.[61] Most importantly, intersectional analysis allows us to consider the ways in which certain oppressions might take precedence in particular situations, while always insisting that all axes of oppression remain in view. Environmental humanities will undoubtedly benefit from a more thorough application of intersectional approaches. A second concept, already at play in literatures of toxic embodiment, among others, is material intercorporeality whereby bodies (our own, and those of more-than-human others) are understood as permeable and interdependent; our wager is that the specifically feminist genealogy of this work has much to teach environmental humanities about unevenly distributed body burdens and the exploitation of care.[62] This relates directly to feminist interrogations of care labor and social reproduction,[63] and queer and feminist work on intimacies, erotics, and kinships,[64] all of which explicitly extend human norms about whom and what we should care for and how, but in ways that make necessary connections to capitalist heteropatriachy. These name only some of the ways in which feminist scholarship (broadly framed) has not only transformed our understandings of interhuman relations, but has begun to reshape our relations to the more-than-human world, imaginatively and materially, in pathbreaking ways.

As this partial list already suggests, separating out feminism "proper" from feminism that is ecologically oriented is difficult—and this is partly our point. As Sandilands underlines, many feminist concerns are at heart ecological and material—which is why they grow so easily into/within an environmental space.[65] While we cannot fully unpack all of the ways in which these concepts can make for a more robust environmental humanities, we can point to work already underway that provides valuable models for how inclusive feminisms can further enrich our field. These are part of a growing corpus of (what we like to call) "already composted" feminist environmental humanities scholarship. Indeed, in choosing texts to read in our *COMPOSTING* group, some of these examples intuitively surfaced, such as Elizabeth Povinelli's "Transgender Creeks and the

61. See Gruen and Adams, "Introduction." For coining of *intersectionality*, see Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins."

62. Here, the feminist embodied phenomenology of Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, Gail Weiss, Ros Diprose, and Margrit Shildrick meets more contemporary expressions of connected embodiment like Stacy Alaimo's transcorporeality and Astrida Neimanis's bodies of water.

63. Puig de la Bellacasa's *Matters of Care* has made significant inroads here. Other potential compostables include Ruddick "Maternal Thinking," and Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*.

64. A preliminary list includes Audre Lorde's "Uses of the Erotic," Judith Butler's *Antigone's Claim*, and Kath Weston's *Families We Choose*.

65. Sandilands, "Some 'F' Words for the Environmental Humanities."

Three Figures of Power in Late Liberalism."[66] Drawing together feminist, queer, and anticolonial insights enables Povinelli's broad retheorization of power in the Anthropocene. Kathryn Yusoff's "Queer Coal: Geneaologies in/of the Blood" politicizes both carboniferous matter and deep time by making surprising connections between labor activism, coal mining, and contemporary queer identity.[67] These are just two examples among many: Puig de la Bellacasa carefully describes how feminism informs her central claims in "Making Time for Soil: Technoscientific Futurity and the Pace of Care";[68] Carla Hustak and Natasha Myers's "Involutionary Momentum: Affective Ecologies and the Science of Plant/Insect Encounters" composts feminist insights with plants;[69] Mel Y. Chen's *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*,[70] published in a queer studies book series, brings feminist antiracist, crip, and queer knowledge to bear on environmental matters; Claire Jean Kim's *Dangerous Crossings* demonstrates the inextricable imbrication of race and gender in our attempts to find cross-species political affinities;[71] Sarah Ensor's "Queer Fallout" explores queer thinking on the intimacies of cruising as environmental affairs;[72] Michelle Murphy's "Distributed Reproduction, Chemical Violence, and Latency" is just one example of her scholarship that articulates a critique of contemporary toxicity with anticolonial and transinclusive perspectives.[73] This small sample is extended in the reading list of our *COMPOSTING* group—serving as both archive and methodological model for thinking feminisms and ecological questions together. This demonstrates what a well-composted environmental humanities can look like. This archive will continue to grow.

So even as we acknowledge a foundational relation between feminist and ecologically oriented thinking, we also encourage a more deliberate cultivation of their reciprocal influence. At the same time, as with one's literal compost pile, care also needs to be taken about the kinds of experiences, ideas, and matters that end up mulched together. Sometimes we need to plant parallel gardens and tend to their specificities.[74] For us, this is a particular challenge in thinking through the relationship between feminist and decolonial practice and scholarship, especially in the (predominantly white) environmental humanities space. We are helpfully reminded by scholars like Evelyn Araluen that "decolonial theory gives us what feminism, critical race studies and gender critiques cannot alone give us," but simultaneously, that "there is no protocol for settlers to

66. Povinelli, "Transgender Creeks."

67. Yusoff, "Queer Coal."

68. Puig de la Bellacasa, "Making Time for Soil."

69. Hustak and Myers, "Involutionary Momentum."

70. Chen, *Animacies*.

71. Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*.

72. Ensor, "Queer Fallout."

73. Murphy, "Distributed Reproduction."

74. The two row wampum that was suggested by the Haudensaunee to govern their relation to the Dutch colonizers is a useful image here. See Keefer, "A Short Introduction to the Two Row Wampum."

engage with the enormously confronting notion of decolonisation in any discipline."[75] As a result, we—white settler feminists—must not shy away from this challenge, even if we are bound to be clumsy. This is all the more reason to take care.

For example, recent scholarship and activism in the emerging area of feminist queer ecologies challenge the heteronormativity of Western kinship structures and suggest that our intimate relations might also be with nonhuman natures. A related area of art, activism, and scholarship known as ecosexuality (notably promoted by Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens) also calls to engage earth not as mother, but as lover.[76] One might wonder, then, about the compostability of ecosexuality with non-Western understandings of more-than-human kinship. But while a connection here might be exciting, it is neither simple nor straightforward. After engaging with Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkles's ecosexual activism, Dakota scholar Kim TallBear admits that the indigenous traditions she has encountered speak also of human and nonhuman close physical relations. At the same time, TallBear underlines that "those relations don't seem to be cohered into something, i.e. 'sexuality' as we know it in Western modernity." Composting these different kinds of physical relations to the earth, TallBear notes, would need to acknowledge that "there are no easy, literal translations between indigenous ontologies and ecosexuality, at least among the indigenous people I run with. Rather, there are careful conversations with much careful thought to be had."[77]

In a similar vein, Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee scholar Vanessa Watts points out that her society "conceives that we (humans) are made from the land; our flesh is literally an extension of soil."[78] As Watts notes, this digs into territory very similar to that of some feminist ecological materialisms, where soil is seen as coextensive—or, in Stacy Alaimo's terms, as transcorporeal—with our own bodies.[79] Yet Watts also warns us of eliding these views too easily: the quality of relationship between human and soil is parsed differently in both views. "In [Alaimo's description of our] relationship with dirt, humans are responsible to land the way an owner might be responsible for a pet. This type of dirt is not First Woman."[80]

In both TallBear's and Watts's comparisons, the issue here is not which relation is more "correct"; the point is rather about the care we need to take in presuming a translatability in the first place. In other words, even while composting suggests that many things merge productively in the muck, we resist any lure of homogeneity. We know

75. Araluen, "Resisting the Institution." While some might disagree that there is "no protocol," insofar as many are actively working on decolonial projects, and while these might seem complementary in theory to ecological ones, the practical realization of the politics is proving difficult. See Vincent and Neale, *Unstable Relations*.

76. Stephens and Sprinkle, "On Becoming Appalachian Moonshine."

77. TallBear, "What's in Ecosexuality for the Indigenous Scholar of Nature." Our thanks to Lindsay Kelley for bringing this reading to the composting pile.

78. Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency amongst Humans and Non-humans," 27.

79. Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*.

80. Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency amongst Humans and Non-humans," 29.

that muddy ground contains multiple worlds, and that the differences of these worlds also need tending.

Reading Métis scholar Zoe Todd's essay "An Indigenous Feminist's Take on the Ontological Turn," we note how her concern for the erasure of indigenous thought in the so-called ontological turn parallels our arguments in relation to environmental humanities and feminism. Todd laments the ontological turn's "spinning itself on the backs of non-European thinkers," and points out that those credited (in scholarly forums) for these "incredible insights into the 'more-than-human'" are not those people who have labored to build and maintain those knowledge systems. Todd writes how upon leaving a Bruno Latour lecture, "once again, I felt as though I was just another inconvenient Indigenous body in a room full of people excited to hear a white guy talk *around* themes shared in Indigenous thought without giving Indigenous people credit or a nod. *Doesn't this feel familiar*, I thought."[81]

Doesn't it, indeed. The disavowals of indigenous thought that Todd theorizes as structural and systemic (rather than always malicious or deliberate) resonate with some of our diagnoses here. It is not lost on us that the erasures that open Todd's essay—from the "dropping" of Inuit activist and leader Sheila Watt-Cloutier from the nominee double bill for the Nobel Peace Prize that she initially shared with Al Gore in 2007, to the ignorance of the work of activists like Watt-Cloutier and Rosemary Kupatana in Latour's discussions of "climate as a common organising force"—are simultaneously erasures of female voices. (Back to those interlocking oppressions . . .) Yet while our call for inclusive feminisms seeks territories of confluence with other social justice paradigms like decolonization, we also recognize that these cannot be simply collapsed, their important differences easily composted in a common pile.[82]

We also acknowledge that just as various feminisms have very problematically promoted some women's emancipation over others'—notably of indigenous women and women of color—some feminist environmentalisms have also been complicit in erasure and appropriation of indigenous voices. Careful composting is thus about paying close attention to what and how we compost, as environmental feminists. It is about refusing our own neutralizing of the commitments of those social justice movements with which environmental feminisms seek affinity—such as decolonization. Just as we ask environmental humanities scholars to heed the feminist commitments that engender the concepts we deploy, we must also remember that "decolonization is not a metaphor."[83] After all, anticoloniality is not here to serve our feminist objectives, even if as white feminists, we hope to learn from it and actively support these efforts; rather, as

81. Todd, "An Indigenous Feminist's Take on the Ontological Turn."

82. In *Is Racism An Environmental Threat?* Ghassan Hage explicitly names feminism's important contribution to meaningfully addressing the problem of environmental harm. Doing so also enables him to carefully critique Plumwood's theory of dualisms. Hage, *Is Racism An Environmental Threat?*, 113–14. We cite this because it also demonstrates that unless feminism is attentively recognized, a thoughtful critique of these positions remains elusive.

83. Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor."

Araluen insists, "The decolonial imagination should be there to serve the colonised in protest and solidarity."[84] The care we must exercise, in other words, has as its stakes not only our potential failure as "careful composters," but (in Araluen's words) the persistence of "those outside the sandstone walls of a colonial institution, mortared with [aboriginal] blood."[85]

Sometimes voices speak together, and sometimes they need to speak, and be accountable, on their own terms. Calling for more inclusive feminist composting in environmental humanities does not mean destroying all borders or limits between traditions, disciplines, and methodologies, but invites careful attention to how myriad environmental and social injustices, violences, and power asymmetries intersect—and don't—while just as carefully working to see which stories and concepts can help grow others into being.

Coming Back to the Compost Buckets

When asked why feminism is such a driving force in current environmental humanities, Alaimo underscores feminism's insight into "that dual sense of having been positioned as both a subject and an object." For Alaimo, "That sense of theorizing and thinking even while being a material being" is key for being able to rethink the challenges we currently face, where "this distinction between human and what we call nature" no longer holds.[86] While the field of environmental humanities holds at its heart a disruption of the separation of nature and culture, for scholars like Haraway (for example, in providing an early articulation of our more-than-human hybrid nature in the form of the cyborg) or Plumwood (particularly as she theorized out of being literal prey, in the jaws of a crocodile), the nature-culture divide as it connects to female-male, black-white, savage-civilized, or other binaries has never been just an intellectual exercise. For feminists, writing from the experience of objectification and instrumentalization as women (or trans, or gender nonbinary people) opens readily to being able to theorize *as* nature—rather than about it.

Understanding ourselves as always implicated in the problems we parse comes from a long lineage of feminist thinking. To name this ensures that we continue to recognize the inextricable entanglement of structures of oppression—from the objectification of nature to the objectification of women or colonized peoples. In the words of feminist antiracist and animal studies scholar Claire Jean Kim, "It may be that forms of domination—white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, human supremacy, mastery over nature, and more—are so intricately woven together, so dependent upon each other for sustenance, that they will stand or fall together."[87] Naming feminism in the compost is

84. Araluen, "Resisting the Institution," 10.
85. Ibid.
86. Boyer and Howe, "Ep. #39—Stacy Alaimo."
87. Kim, "The Wonderful Horrible Life of Michael Vick," 188.

part of refusing to hierarchize these oppressions, and rather committing to their concomitant dismantling.

If these are the stakes, it may sound like our compost fork is nothing more than an extended metaphor. In closing, though, we wish to reassert that this methodology is a matter of matter, too. Composting insists that environmental humanities scholarship emerges from and contours the world around us. This is because how we *think*, *speak*, *and write* the world can shape how we *act* in it and *make* it, as many scholars interested in radical imaginaries remind us. Even if composting as described in this provocation may traffic more in texts than in dirt piles, it is no less engaged in seeding possible futures. In the seminar room as in the community garden, we are writing the world-to-come with soil-stained fingers. The composting we promote is a direct descendant of a feminist lineage of recognizing the inseparability of theory and praxis; of the personal as the political; of the "shadow places" and entanglements that always undergird and make possible being and becoming as a certain kind of social reproduction.[88]

That brings us back to the scraps in buckets on the kitchen bench and the messy business of waste management. These bins at once facilitate an attempt to minimize landfill and represent the wish that the cumulative effect of small-scale actions can help sustain the planet. At the same time, they are the food scraps of unpaid domestic labors, which reminds us of prior struggles to transform the reproductive economy, reclaim and revalue the maternal body, rethink the heteronormative nuclear family, and remember other (classed, racialized, colonized) bodies and labors on which white social reproduction is built. In this regard, the triumvirate of tubs intersects with nascent strategies for making other kinds of kinship, politicizing home economics beyond the human sphere, and slowly cultivating different relationships with the more-than-human matters that are part of our daily lives. But it is in solidarity with earlier feminist struggles to similarly make new kinds of worlds to which this kind of inquiry is both deeply indebted and on which it hangs its hope.

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88. For "shadow places," see Plumwood, "Shadow Places."

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