Chapter 4

So Close: Writing that Touches

> (I won't bother arguing that I'm not praising some dubious 'touching literature.' I know the difference between writing and flowery prose, but I *know of no writing that doesn't touch*. Because then it wouldn't be writing, just reporting or summarizing. Writing in its essence touches upon the body.) (Jean-Luc Nancy)[1]

Does writing touch? For Jean-Luc Nancy, '*touching* – happens in writing all the time'.[2] Outlining the relationship between touching and feeling, this chapter examines the tactile quality of *So Close* by Hélène Cixous. Discussing the circulation of affect within the literary text, we explore some of the ways her writing generates new textures of feeling. Rubbing up against a number of works by Hélène Cixous, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy and Renu Bora, this chapter also investigates ways in which texts can touch each other without tampering. Through a tactful reading of Cixous's poetics in *So Close*, I hope to get closer to touching back.

On feeling

In *Touching: The Human Significance of the Skin*, Ashley Montagu notes:

> Interestingly enough, when one consults a dictionary for the various meanings of the word one finds that the entry under 'touch' is likely to represent the most extensive in the volume. It is by far the longest entry – fourteen full columns – in the magnificent *Oxford English Dictionary*. This in itself constitutes some sort of testimony to the influence which the tactile experience of hand and fingers has had upon our imagery and our speech.[3]

Touch, then, is a slippery term, and an intimate connection between touching and feeling is revealed in our everyday language; as Montagu notes, a 'deeply felt experience is "touching"'.[4] Montagu argues that

'although touch is not itself an emotion, its sensory elements induce those neural, glandular, muscular, and mental changes which in combination we call an emotion'.[5] 'Hence touch', he explains, 'is not experienced as a simply physical modality, as sensation, but affectively, as emotion.'[6] In other words, we experience touch through our feelings. This, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out, is played out in the 'dubious epithet "touchy feely," with its implication that even to talk about affect virtually amounts to cutaneous contact'.[7] The epithet 'touchy-feely' is often regarded with some suspicion in scholarly discourse. Too close for comfort, it carries with it an association with femininity as a 'soft touch'. Sara Ahmed notes that 'emotions are associated with women, who are represented as "closer" to nature, ruled by appetite, and less able to transcend the body through thought, will and judgement'.[8] Thus, emotion – and especially unruly feeling – is often overlooked in favour of reason or cognition. Moreover, in talking about feelings we are confronted with fundamental tensions that include divergences in how we perceive the relationship between the body and the mind, between the subject and his or her environment and between the ways that we both feel and are felt.[9] Yet, while we may be suspicious of all that is 'touchy feely', we cannot touch on one without feeling for the other.

Didier Anzieu addresses touch and feeling within the psychoanalytic context, noting once again the relationship between language and affect. Discussing his clinical practice with Gilbert Tarrab, he says, 'in ordinary language we say "make contact with someone" or "be in good contact with a person". This demonstrates very well that while the first origin of contact is tactile, contact is transposed metaphorically to other sense organs and other sensory areas.'[10] Establishing the link between language and contact, he argues, 'ordinary language actually puts it well, and our patients express it thus: "What you said *touched* me." One can in fact touch the psyche otherwise than by touching the body.'[11] Anzieu refers to this as a form of 'symbolic touching'.[12] Words, he says, have the power to touch us; they can function as symbolic touch experiences. Although Anzieu is referring to the spoken word and the role of touch in psychoanalysis, this holds significance beyond the verbal or therapeutic encounter. In what ways, this chapter asks, can literature touch us? And how does it make us feel?

On Cixous

The possibilities and limitations of writing touch are exemplified in the rich and complex work of Hélène Cixous. In an interview with

Cixous, Mireille Calle-Gruber remarks, 'it is the writer that I touch on in you. Where I touch down.'[13] Calle-Gruber is referring to a preoccupation with touch that pervades Cixous's writing. Even in her early published work, her writing is a call to contact. In 'The Laugh of the Medusa', for instance, she writes, 'touch me, caress me, you the living no-name, give me my self as myself'.[14] Verena Andermatt Conley notes that 'over the last half-century, the critique of sight in French theory has led to a renewed attention to touch'.[15] Touch, she says, 'is associated with a return to the body and to a writing that is closer to the unconscious'.[16] 'To write', Conley suggests, 'we have to close our eyes and focus on touch'.[17] This is made most explicit in 'Writing Blind: Conversation with the Donkey', where Cixous claims, 'I feel myself see. Eyes are the most delicate most powerful hands, imponderably touching the over-there. From over there I feel a self return to me.'[18] Again in 'Writing Blind', she recalls: 'An employee of Air France tells me on the telephone: I like your books because they touch me.'[19] Certainly, Cixous – well aware of the power of writing to 'move me, touch me, strike me with blows of the axe' – claims to write in order to actually touch the limits: 'I do not write to keep. I write to feel. I write to touch the body of the instant with the tips of the words.'[20] She reiterates, 'My business is to translate our emotions into writings. First we feel. Then I write.'[21] For Cixous, then, writing touch is inextricably linked to feelings. Her work creates new passageways between contact and affect.

The touchiness of Cixous's writing is especially evident in *So Close*, which not only demonstrates the desire to make contact, but also unsettles the relationship between distance and proximity. To touch, this work of autobiographical fiction suggests, is not necessarily to be as close as its title indicates. A deeply textured work first published in French in 2007, *So Close* recounts the narrator's return to Algeria after a more than thirty-year absence. This is a journey toward both origin and end – the place of her childhood and the location of her father's tomb beneath a cypress tree.[22] As the text opens, the narrator, known as H., is in France, admiring her mother's bathing suit. It is following the discovery of 'the funereal secret of the word *macaroon*' that she announces her return: 'That's when I said *I would perhaps be going to Algiers*' (pp. 5–6). She repeats her mother's reaction – '"What-is-this?"' – describing 'that warlike way she has of sticking all the syllables together in a single guttural apostrophe' (p. 30). By paying attention to the sensual and tactile presence of words, the clumping together of sticky syllables in *So Close* gives her mother's words a viscous, gummy quality. Words become 'strange

signifiers' (p. 30); they become palpable. The language that follows is one of pushing, pulling, smacking, kicking, and yet, apart from a spoon hitting the kitchen table, no physical contact is made. Her mother's fury has a 'violent nakedness' (p. 31): the words are 'sharpened' (p. 32); they inflict 'one good blow' (p. 34); they 'pierce' (p. 59). She 'stamps out the words I'venotf'gotten. She throws the verb *Ivenotfgotten* in my face':

> She looks for a way to strike me even harder. She finds it: There's not afffucking thing for me there. She slams down *FFFucking*, with the small satisfaction of feeling the word fuck around between her lips, that's new, she has never spurted out that word in her whole life. (p. 32)

The language leaves its impression on H.'s body: 'I trembled as if I had just allowed my arms to be torn off, to let be torn from my arms the adored body that all the same I had never embraced' (p. 33). Words clearly have a remarkable physical power: 'we are stripping each other and mutually, we are in the skin of nudes who have an astounding strength for their age' (p. 34). In the midst of this verbal tussle, Cixous dramatises the interconnectedness of bodies, feelings, language and the emotional and tactile resonances of writing home.

The tactile quality of language is the subject of Alice Fulton's *Feeling as a Foreign Language: The Good Strangeness of Poetry*. Here, she argues that a reader must 'consider the leafiness of books, the peeling that is reading. Consider the peeling that is writing.'[23] 'By the end', she says, 'I feel exfoliated.'[24] Words, for Fulton, 'have an unignorable materiality. It is not only the meaning of words that holds my attention, but their sensual, and especially tactile, presence.'[25] Thinking about the sensual and tactile presence of language in *So Close*, it is evident that, notwithstanding the physical force of her conversation with her mother, the novel handles language with infinite care. Moving images and tender feelings circulate through the text. Cixous writes, 'I was dreaming of sentences rising up to the clouds with their pointed tips constantly erased by the speed with which they moved' (p. 59). Finally finding her father's 'tomb without address' (p. 149), she writes: 'I embraced you. I lay down upon you. I fastened myself with all my strength to the Tomb I felt how living it was, its hardness supple at my call [. . .]' (p. 154). She calls to him: 'With my voice I hollowed out the stone in me, I opened the ground, with my body I saw your whole body [. . .]' (p. 155) until she is 'seized by an immense tenderness' (p. 156):

> I sensed that the blood of the call was running out. I called him my child. I said, my child, you are my child, you know? – I know, I know.
> And with the word *know* I set him back down. (p. 156)

Drawing attention to the materiality of the word '*know*' here, Cixous demonstrates the capacity of her language to touch us, to move us, to make us feel. Her work, as Derrida points out with reference to her essay 'Savoir', can be read as 'a poem of touch'; it 'holds, touches, pulls, like a lead, it affects and sometimes tears the skin'.[26] It is a body of work that performs its own tactility, making contact in strange and sometimes startling ways.

On music

In *Rootprints*, Cixous claims that 'the texts that touch me the most strongly, to the point of making me shiver or laugh, are those that have not repressed their musical structure'.[27] She argues that 'to write is to note down the music of the world, the music of the body, the music of time'.[28] Paying particular attention to the rise and fall of her mother's voice in *So Close*, she states, 'One has to imagine the music. Astonished voice, rising, come from the depths of time, attaining the high pitch of incredulity. Pause. Voice goes back down the slope' (p. 30). Here, Cixous demonstrates the connection between music, language and the body, also evident in Conley's observation, 'You try to write on the side of a language as musical as possible.'[29] If, as Montagu believes, 'in much music there is a very pervasive tactile quality', then writing touch invites us to attend to the music of the text.[30]

The relationship between music and touch is also examined by Ryan Bishop in his essay, 'The Force of Noise, or Touching Music'. Referring to a 'musical haptics', Bishop points out that 'sound is also already touch'.[31] He explains, 'sound itself is composed of waves that physically and invisibly touch our ears and bodies', and thus 'to touch a tympanum, to caress the cochlea, one needs the invisible touch of sound waves'.[32] This means that 'at its source, touch operates with and causes sound, and it is only through touch-at-a-distance that we have sound at all'.[33] He extends this to suggest that sound can touch parts of the body – and its interior – that physical touch cannot reach, enabling us to have a 'deeper' understanding of an object. If music is understood to be 'the art or science of combining vocal or instrumental sounds to produce beauty of form, harmony, melody, rhythm, expressive content, etc.', different musical sounds may touch us in different ways.[34] Bishop

focuses his discussion on the tele-touch of Stockhausen's 'Helicopter string quartet', arguing that 'we can safely say, also, that music is touch, and it is the gift of tele-touch (or telehaptics) that we encounter with any musical performance'.[35] Cixous's references to the musical structure of language suggest that the tele-touch of the literary text can reach us in ways we did not think possible.

Describing the 'music' that 'goes through the belly, through the entrails, through the chest' when she writes, Cixous draws attention to the role of the body in literary tact, suggesting that writing can touch its 'untouchable interiors'.[36] She makes it clear, however, that the musical structures that touch her most strongly are not to be found in formal technique. She writes:

> I am not talking here simply of phonic signification, nor of alliterations, but indeed of the architecture, of the contraction and the relaxation, the variations of breath; or else of what overwhelms me with emotion in the text of Beethoven, that is to say the stops, the very forceful stops in the course of a symphony.[37]

Cixous's account of the breath of writing – its contraction, relaxation and emotion – highlights, in particular, the music of the body. The rhythms of writing, she says in *So Close*, match the 'pulsings of my blood' (p. 38). She leaves us with the impression that for our writing to touch, we must listen to the body's music.

On the telephone

Hang on – there's the telephone.

In 'Writing Blind', Cixous insists, 'I owe books and books to the telephone and I will give at least one back to it. May it be this very one.'[38] *So Close* may be another. Here, she refers repeatedly to H.'s 'love for the telephone' (p. 4). It becomes a third party not only to her conversations, but also to her thoughts: 'That I give myself over, methodically and passionately, to the study of the life of these lives of life, I can say it only to you, I say, to the Telephone. I speak a lot to the Telephone' (p. 4). This telephone also features centrally in her relationship with Zohra (Z.), the young Algerian involved in the Milk Bar Café bombing of 1956 who was sentenced to twenty years of hard labour, but eventually pardoned by the French government following the independence of Algeria in 1962. She writes: 'So I telephoned. I said: Zohra? And the voice said No. Wait a second. I say *Huc Coeamus*. And it's over' (p. 79). Repeating Narcissus' call to Echo, '"Meet me here; I'm here!"' the telephone

exchange completes this impossible text: 'It is finished. The book in which we had never been able to speak to each other is finished. Ended. Here' (p. 79).[39] The telephone, then, puts H. and Z. back in touch. But what is it about the telephone that keeps us in contact?

In *The Medium is the Maker*, J. Hillis Miller notes the reference to tact in the old slogan of the US telephone company, AT&T: 'Reach out and touch someone.'[40] Drawing on Nicholas Royle's translation of Derrida's 'Telepathy' and his book *Telepathy and Literature: Essays of the Reading Mind*, Miller describes the telephone as 'a telepathic device', explaining telepathy as 'getting in touch at a distance'.[41] Royle suggests that 'the notions of telephone and telepathy are, however strangely, being put in touch', pointing out that the telephone offers up a voice that is 'always "tele-", and over a distance impossible to decide'.[42] The 'tele-' of the telephone is a distance that is simultaneously far away and uncannily close to home. Cixous plays on these uncanny relations between being in or out of touch, referring to the capacity of the telephone to unsettle notions of contact and distance. In 'Writing blind', she describes it as 'our donkey stopped and placed on the table near my hand', insisting 'there is no more living more ordinary more divine more adorable-and-terrifying more familiar and less familiar than this instrument-that-allows-a-conversation between two distant people'.[43] This is reiterated in *Rootprints*: '*One cannot imagine closer to farther*': the telephone is '*the far in the near*', '*the outside in the inside*'.[44] She goes on to compare the '*far near*' and '*outsideinside*' dynamic of the telephonic exchange to the relationship a '*pregnant (mother) woman has | With her child*', explaining, '*Cannot be closer, cannot be farther*'.[45] Talking as much to the telephone as on the telephone, Cixous upsets our understanding of long-distance love and extends the possibilities of tele-tact.

It is, as Derrida remarks in 'Envois', 'about time to speak of the voice that touches – always at a distance, like the eye – and the telephonic caress, if not the (striking) phone call'.[46] Addressing the voice and its 'inflection, timbre, and accent', not to mention its 'elevations and interruptions in the breathing, across moments of silence', Derrida argues that 'sound' touches from afar; it has the potential to reach those 'untouchable interiors' of the body: 'who would deny that we can touch with our voice – close or far away, naturally or technically, if we could still rely on this distinction, in the open air or on the phone – and thus, even to touch the heart?'[47] Here, and with all the telephones and telephone boxes of 'Envois', Derrida not only unsettles the relations of a long-distance telephone call, but also draws our attention to the capacity of the voice – and its various textures – to tend toward the heart of the matter.

On texture

In her exploration of the sensual and tactile presence of language, Alice Fulton turns to the importance of literary texture. '"Texture"', she writes, 'can be built, for instance, from sequined, woolly, stippled, flannel, marbled, glittery, or drippy linguistic registers [. . .] Passages can have an ultrasuede nap, like the velour finish of a petal, or they can feel prickly as hairbrushes.'[48] Like the skin, the text's surface might be wrought with wrinkles and bumps, it might be polished smooth or it might be sticky. And different textures, of course, touch us in different ways. Reminding us that the perception of texture involves not only touch but other senses too – visual or auditory, for instance – Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that 'the need to discuss texture across senses brings with it a need to think about texture across different scales'.[49] She observes that a single bump on a surface doesn't constitute texture, although 'a repeated pattern like polka dots might, but it depends on how big they are or how close you are', and concludes, 'texture, in short, comprises an array of perceptual data that include repetition, but whose degree of organization hovers just below the level of shape or structure'.[50] Furthermore, she points out, 'a particular intimacy seems to subsist between textures and emotions'.[51] The different surfaces of texts, then, leave us with different impressions. Addressing this word 'impression', Sara Ahmed argues that it allows us to:

> associate the experience of having an emotion with the very affect of one surface upon another, an affect that leaves its mark or trace. So not only do I have an impression of others, but they also leave me with an impression; they impress me, and impress upon me.[52]

She goes on to discuss 'emotionality in texts' in terms of a feeling that moves between subjects, objects and environments, rather than a static concept residing in a fixed location within the individual.[53] Literary texture, and its capacity to touch or move a reader, Ahmed argues, is neither an unchanging state contained within the body of a work nor confined to an individual reader or writer. Instead, it refers to the fluid movement of feeling between surfaces as different textures make contact.

And what of our impression of *So Close*? Rather than conforming to a single texture, Cixous incorporates the slipperiness, the shininess, the dampness, the hardness, the grittiness, the prickliness, the softness and the stickiness of language into her writing. She shows us the ways that a text can be folded and refolded, the ways it can be perforated or torn and the ways its protrusions and grooves shape the pattern of our reading. She highlights a process of texturisation, referring to 'that way

you have of moistening words, of silvering them to make them shine' (p. 152). Meditating on the word 'trace' and bringing together literary texture and an essential aesthetics of feeling, she writes, 'I liked to caress this word' (p. 59). Later, by mimicking a particular cry, she repeats the single word 'ashkoun'. In so doing, she demonstrates the effect of repetition on texture, highlighting how one word rubs up against another, creating its own internal energy, like static:

> *Ashkoun ashkoun ashkoun ashkoun.*
> Never heard a country cry so loud
> So many birds, so many voices
> France is so silent sitting
> Sitting in the dining room dining
> Everyone in their thoughts
> Who? who? who? who? (p. 102)

Cixous stretches the material surface of *So Close* to its limits. Devices such as repetition, fragmentation, stuttering and interruption demonstrate the processes of texturisation and detexturisation that circulate through her text. The rumpled surface of the writing generates ruptures in reading. For instance:

> With mybrother lacking, without legs, without feet to feel the floor of the shadowy entryway, without hands to feel in the dark the place of the staircase where the polished wood railing is
> there is no railing, there are no wooden steps
> with one eye closed and one ear cut off
> that's what, because of mybrother, I am obli
> at the last mi
> he refu
> because there are places where I am not half mybrother
> but 54 Rue Phil
> without bro (p. 138)

The stuttering slippages in this passage create cracks and folds in its surface. These interruptions are characteristic of other texts by Cixous, and are taken up by Jenny Chamarette in her essay 'Flesh, Folds and Texturality', which discusses Cixous's use of the ellipsis. For Chamarette, the absence of words is as important as their material presence. The ellipsis, she argues, foregrounds materiality and 'draws attention to our own (interrupted) perceptual apprehension and comprehension of the text'.[54] In *So Close*, these 'interruptions' are provided through omission, absence, repetition, space and supplementation. For Chamarette, interruptions such as these combine meaning with the materiality of writing, emphasising what she terms 'the *texturality* of text'.[55] Although in her

discussion of the neologism 'texturality' she draws attention to the visual dimensions of the text, her theory is equally relevant to its tactile dimensions. Thus, the moments in Cixous's work where 'printed ink is abandoned altogether, leaving enlarged white spaces on the page', highlight the dynamic texturality that simultaneously enfolds the reader and breaks up the surface of his or her reading.[56] The texturality of *So Close* confronts us with its refusal to define a beginning and an end, and, by exposing the ways that the text continually touches on itself, it explodes the possibility of sense-making.

On texxture

In his essay 'Outing texture', Renu Bora expands the concept of texture, arguing that it has 'at least two meanings' in the English language:

> What I will henceforth call TEXTURE, the first meaning, signifies the surface resonance or quality of an object or material. That is, its qualities if touched, brushed, stroked, or mapped, would yield certain properties and sensations that can usually be anticipated by looking.[57]

Supplementary to texture, is the notion of 'TEXXTURE', which 'refers not really to surface or even depth so much as to an intimately violent, pragmatic, medium, inner level (at first more phenomenological than conceptual/metaphysical) of the stuffness of material structure'.[58] The supplementary 'x' in texxture is added, he explains, 'to signal the way it complicates the internal'.[59] Thus,

> when a surface (a rock, or your face, for example) has certain properties, we often project these properties into its interior, and by this interior I mean not just a cavity, invagination, fold, or center, but the structure, consistency, or TEXXTURE of its inner matter that extends liminally, asymptotically, into the surface.[60]

Introducing Bora's essay, Sedgwick explains that while texture is that which 'defiantly or even invisibly blocks or refuses such information', thus performing 'the willed erasure of its history', 'texxture is the kind of texture that is dense with offered information about how, substantively, historically, materially, it came into being'.[61] Thinking about texxture and its internal complications thus demands that we take into account the ways that a text's own history shapes its surface.

Exposing its texxture, Cixous's *So Close* is wrought with the materiality of its own becoming. Drawing attention to the writing processes that

both reveal and conceal its own construction, her text touches repeatedly on another text – an 'unwritten' letter to Zohra Drif. In her 'Letter to Zohra Drif', published in English in *College Literature* in 2003, Cixous writes, 'I have not written this letter.'[62] In this 'letter' Cixous thus refers to the other letter – 'unwritten', 'held back', since January 1957 – and tells us what 'it would say'.[63] She explains, 'there are letters we do not write, that doesn't mean they don't exist'.[64] Her 'letter' – the one in which she writes of her unwritten letter – is thus haunted by what she would say. And, in writing of this letter in *So Close*, Cixous rubs one text up against innumerable others. In *So Close*, she reflects:

> *What-is-Zohra-going-to-say* is now one of the sentences of this book. It traverses it at regular intervals, floats, stops, moves on, among the upper branches of the pines, a little dimly luminous stellar formation, I see it to one side in the background behind me. I recognize it by its withheld breath, since it murmurs I can't hear the color of its intonation, it wavers, perhaps perhaps [. . .] (p. 43)

Cixous's absent letter, and her account of what it would say – moreover, what Zohra would say in response – thus transforms her narrative. Turning the text back on itself and drawing attention to the 'sentences of this book', as well as the sentences that are missing, *So Close* offers up its own texxture. This letter, however, is just one intertext of many touched upon in *So Close*; the work is woven from multiple narratives, its textual weave generating a new tact. In particular, *So Close* points beyond itself to the work of Jacques Derrida, highlighting the ways that these two writers continually touch on each other. Cixous repeats, for instance, Derrida's statement, '"This Garden still exists"', taken from 'From the Word to Life: a Dialogue between Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous', within which he writes of the *Jardin d'Essai*: 'We have never been there together, but it represents a sort of paradise lost' (pp. 64–5).[65] Citing Derrida and touching on so many other texts, *So Close* enables its interior construction to extend to its surface. Exposing the traces of language that shape its texture, Cixous's work is thus marked by the material and texxtural history of its making.

On tampering

Cixous shows us that texts do touch, over and over, and often in very unexpected ways. The issue, it seems, is not whether texts touch, but how, and what problems and promises this contact may offer. After all, as Derrida points out, to 'touch on' a work of literature, to analyse

it, may also be to 'tamper' with it – 'to change, to displace, to call into question'.[66] To return to the question I posed in the introduction, how do texts touch with tact? How might our own texts touch on the work of others? How do texts stick to each other and slide across each other?

For Zsuzsa Baross, a sur-text, a writing *on* the text of another writer, presents a risk. When, we must ask, is touching too much? She states:

> As offering, writing ineluctably risks giving offense, an intrusive *touch* (whose violence the biblical usage of offense as 'striking against the foot' [*OED*] so well preserves), sending off as it does in the direction of the other an unsolicited missive, a perhaps unwanted gift, and so far as writing, a 'false' present that would never give itself completely, without reserving something for itself.[67]

Thus, 'the ever-present danger of misappropriation by the way of the hand – unlawfully grabbing, taking hold of, (another's) writing, as though "property"' tampers with all attempts to touch with tact.[68]

In *So Close*, similarly, contact is perpetually withdrawn. Following H.'s journey from France to her father's tomb in Algiers, Cixous's destination always remains out of reach: 'And what if I didn't arrive, what if I didn't land, what if I didn't reach, didn't touch didn't feel, Algeria?' (p. 100). Beside her father's tomb, H. cries, 'I'm afraid that they will kill my sadness, don't touch me!' (p. 148). In an uncanny echo, Cixous – like Freud – repeats the words of Christ to Mary Magdalene following his resurrection from the tomb: 'Touch me not!'[69] So, despite claiming 'I am touched on all sides' (p. 67), a certain resistance, a certain tact, holds her back:

> When I said 'Algiers,' I didn't mean to say precisely Algiers, I don't know exactly what I wanted, the point was I think *to approach, as much as possible and as little as possible*, by way of metonymies, by intuitions, by detours, to approach, but what? (p. 37)

Approaching her destination, Cixous's arrival is always deferred. Furthermore, by referring to both her travelling and her writing in terms of such non-arrival, she points to the spacing that always intercepts the possibility of reaching this destination. Reiterating her point in 'Writing Blind' that 'writing is first of all a departure, an embarkation, an expedition', she explains in *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*:

> Writing is not arriving; most of the time it's *not arriving*. One must go on foot, with the body. One has to go away, leave the self. How far must one not arrive in order to write, how far must one wander and wear out and have pleasure? One must walk as far as the night. One's own night. Walking through the self toward the dark.[70]

Departing for Algeria and approaching her father's tomb, Cixous walks the self toward the dark, feeling her way forward. Blind, she says, 'I write on writing. I turn on the other light.'[71] Her journey thus leads us by the hand back to our point of departure: the co-implication of touching and feeling in the writing process. Once again: 'I do not write to keep. I write to feel. I write to touch the body of the instant with the tips of the words.'[72] To write is to feel. It is to touch upon the body, but perhaps without ever making contact.

In *Corpus*, first published in French in 1990, Nancy asks, 'How are we to touch upon the body?'[73] He responds, however, by saying that 'perhaps we can't answer this "How?" as we'd answer a technical question'.[74] It is not a set of guidelines we can pass on; thinking about writing demands, as Robert Sheppard suggests in his account of poetics, a move 'away from the expectations of the answers'.[75] And, despite claiming that '*touching* – happens in writing all the time', Nancy has to admit that 'maybe it doesn't happen exactly *in* writing, if writing in fact has an "inside"'.[76] Instead, however, touch happens 'along the border, at the limit, the tip, the furthest edge of writing'.[77] We must understand that this chapter has barely touched the surface. Feeling its way around affect, music, telephones, texture and texturality, I fear I am still at the point of departure. Attempting to touch with some tact, this chapter, too, is a departure in the dark. I am feeling my way.

Notes

1. Nancy, *Corpus*, p. 11.
2. Nancy, *Corpus*, p. 11.
3. Montagu, *Touching*, p. 102.
4. Montagu, *Touching*, p. 6. Josipovici points out that to say '"I am touched" means: I am moved. But "he is touched", now an archaic expression, means that he is not quite normal. Touched by what then? Fate? God? Ill-luck?' (Josipovici, *Touch*, p. 140).
5. Montagu, *Touching*, p. 103.
6. Montagu, *Touching*, p. 103. This notion is supported a number of theorists, including Sue Cataldi, who claims: 'Because the logic of touch also belongs to the order of carnal ideality, emotions can theoretically be placed back "in touch" with feelings – not as "inner realities" but in their tangible dimensions' (Cataldi, *Emotion, Depth, and Flesh*, p. 104).
7. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 17
8. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 3.
9. Jameson refers to the 'waning of affect' in the postmodern condition. Despite this, theorists such as Sianne Ngai argue that the study of affect and emotion remains 'a long standing intellectual project', burgeoning

across disciplines in recent study (Jameson, *Postmodernism*; Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, p. 6). One area of contention, however, is caused by the fact that the terms of the debate – emotion, affect and feeling – remain sites of ongoing disagreement. Rei Terada, for instance, argues that these concepts are 'entangled in the mysteries of consciousness, [their] history locked inside the classical histories of mind and will' (Terada, *Feeling in Theory*, p. 6).

10. Anzieu, *A Skin for Thought*, p. 79.
11. Anzieu, *A Skin for Thought*, p. 74.
12. Anzieu, *A Skin for Thought*, p. 78. This also resonates with Montagu's account of infant development, whereby the original sensation of being held by the caregiver is gradually replaced through language: 'The rhythm of this kind of tactual stimulation that the mother conveys to the child in her arms is almost universally reproduced in the lullabies sung or hummed to lull children to sleep' (Montagu, *Touching*, p. 119).
13. Cixous, *Rootprints*, p. 7.
14. Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', pp. 875–93 (pp. 881–2).
15. Conley, 'Making Sense', pp. 79–88 (p. 79).
16. Conley, 'Making Sense', p. 79.
17. Conley, 'Making Sense', p. 80.
18. Cixous, 'Writing Blind', p. 187. The association of seeing with feeling is also explored in 'Savoir'. Here, Cixous describes 'the delicate tact of the cornea'. Having 'touched the world with her eye', she writes of the eyes as 'miraculous hands', and concludes that 'the continuity of her flesh and the world's flesh, touch then, was love, and that was the miracle of giving' (Cixous, 'Savoir', pp. 1–16 (p. 9)).
19. Cixous, 'Writing Blind', p. 188.
20. Cixous, *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, p. 36. Cixous, 'Writing Blind', p. 195.
21. Cixous, 'Writing Blind', p. 189. This point is also emphasised by Conley in 'Making Sense', p. 81.
22. Cixous, *So Close*. Further page references to this edition appear parenthetically in the main body of the text. Note that the title of this text, translated from the French *Si près*, is haunted by the name of the cypress tree (*cypress*). According to translator, Peggy Kamuf, 'these homonyms provide a principal key to the fiction'. Kamuf, 'Translator's Note', in Cixous, *So Close*, pp. 162–3 (p. 163).
23. Fulton, *Feeling as a Foreign Language*, p. 38.
24. Fulton, *Feeling as a Foreign Language*, p. 38.
25. Fulton, *Feeling as a Foreign Language*, p. 77.
26. Derrida, 'A Silkworm of One's Own', pp. 17–92 (pp. 34–5).
27. Cixous, *Rootprints*, p. 64.
28. Cixous, *Rootprints*, p. 46.
29. Cixous and Conley, 'Voice I. . .', pp. 50–67 (p. 62).
30. Montagu, *Touching*, p. 135.
31. Bishop, 'The Force of Noise', pp. 25–40 (pp. 28, 26).
32. Bishop, 'The Force of Noise', pp. 26, 25.
33. Bishop, 'The Force of Noise', p. 26.
34. *The Oxford English Dictionary* [*OED*].

35. Bishop, 'The Force of Noise', p. 27.
36. Cixous, *Rootprints*, p. 46.
37. Cixous, *Rootprints*, p. 64.
38. Cixous, 'Writing Blind', p. 189.
39. Ovid, 'Book III: Echo and Narcissus', p. 77.
40. Miller, *The Medium is the Maker*, p. 2.
41. Derrida plays on Freud's comparison of telepathy as 'a psychical counterpart to wireless telegraphy', *SE* 22, p. 55. See also Derrida, 'Telepathy', pp. 226–61 (p. 242); Royle, *Telepathy and Literature*; Miller, *The Medium is the Maker*, pp. 4, 9.
42. Royle, *Telepathy and Literature*, pp. 168, 166. See also Royle, 'Top 10 Writers on the Telephone'; Ronnell, *The Telephone Book*. The role of touch and the telegram is addressed in Chapter 3, and is extended to other communication technologies in Chapter 7.
43. Cixous, 'Writing Blind', pp. 192–3.
44. Cixous, *Rootprints*, p. 49.
45. Cixous, *Rootprints*, p. 49.
46. Derrida, 'Envois', pp. 1–256 (p. 112).
47. Derrida 'Envois', pp. 112, 204.
48. Fulton, *Feeling as a Foreign Language*, p. 77.
49. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 15.
50. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 16.
51. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 17.
52. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 6.
53. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 12.
54. Chamarette, 'Flesh, Folds and Texturality', pp. 34–49 (p. 35).
55. Chamarette, 'Flesh, Folds and Texturality', p. 39.
56. Chamarette, 'Flesh, Folds and Texturality', p. 42.
57. Bora, 'Outing Texture', pp. 94–127 (pp. 98–9). Bora examines 'queer texture' in Henry James's handling of Chad in *The Ambassadors*.
58. Bora, 'Outing Texture', p. 99. These distinctions, Bora explains later, are related to Deleuze and Guattari's definitions of 'smooth' (or haptic) and 'striated space'. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004), Deleuze and Guattari take these terms from the composer Pierre Boulez, who used them to describe differences in musical space. Whereas smooth space is characterised by the texture of felt – it is unlimited in every direction – striated space is characterised by a woven fabric, delimited on at least one side. In practice, connections and passages exist between these oppositions (Deleuze and Guattari, '1440: The Smooth and the Striated', pp. 474–500 (pp. 539, 532, 525)).
59. Bora, 'Outing Texture', p. 99.
60. Bora, 'Outing Texture', p. 101.
61. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, p. 14.
62. Cixous, 'Letter to Zohra Drif', pp. 82–90 (p. 82).
63. Cixous, 'Letter to Zohra Drif', pp. 82, 88.
64. Cixous, 'Letter to Zohra Drif', p. 88.
65. Derrida and Cixous, 'From the Word to Life', pp. 1–13 (p. 5).
66. Derrida, *On Touching*, p. 25. See Introduction.
67. Baross, '*Noli Me Tangere*', pp. 149–64 (p. 150).

68. Baross, '*Noli Me Tangere*', p. 150.
69. John 20: 17. For a fuller discussion of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene, with particular reference to its appearance in H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud*, see Chapter 3.
70. Cixous, 'Writing Blind', pp. 184–5; Cixous, *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, p. 65.
71. Cixous, 'Writing Blind', p. 189.
72. Cixous, 'Writing Blind', p. 195.
73. Nancy, *Corpus*, p. 11.
74. Nancy, *Corpus*, p. 11.
75. Sheppard, 'Poetics as Conjecture and Provocation', pp. 3–26 (pp. 7, 4).
76. Nancy, *Corpus*, p. 11.
77. Nancy, *Corpus*, p. 11.