

POSTHUMAN



FEMINISM

ROSI BRAIDOTTI

Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

[Introduction Feminism by Any Other Name](#)

[A Posthuman Feminist Agenda](#)

[Notes](#)

[Part I Posthuman Feminism as Critique](#)

[Chapter 1 Feminism Is Not \(Only\) a Humanism](#)

[The Man of Reason as the Image of Humanism](#)

[Disenchantment with the Humanist Figure of 'Man'](#)

[Feminist Liberal Humanism: Gender Equality](#)

[Feminist Socialist Humanism: Class Equality](#)

[Feminist Black Humanism: Race Equality](#)

[Queer and Trans Inhumanism: Equality and Diversity](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Notes](#)

[Chapter 2 The Critical Edge of Posthuman Feminism](#)

[The Contradictions of Neoliberalist Feminism](#)

[Political contradictions](#)

[Reproductive contradictions](#)

[Neo-socialist Feminism and the Mutations of Capitalism](#)

[The Transhumanist Delusion](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Notes](#)

[Chapter 3 Decentering Anthropos: Ecofeminism Revisited](#)

[Is Culture to Nature as Man to Woman/Native/Others?](#)

[The Ecofeminist Critique of Anthropos](#)
[Feminist Critiques of Ecological Reason](#)

[From Animal Rights to *Zoe*](#)

[Against Environmental Racism](#)

[Post-secular Plateaus](#)

[Indigenous Critique of Anthropos](#)

[The Posthuman Acceleration](#)

[Conclusion: But 'We' Are in *this* Together](#)

[Notes](#)

[Part II Posthuman Feminism as Creation](#)

[Chapter 4 New Materialism and Carnal Empiricism](#)

[The Materialist Turn](#)

[Bodily Materialism and Carnal Empiricism](#)

[Politics of Locations](#)

[Critical Feminist Spinozism](#)

[Symbiotic Matter](#)

[Elemental Feminist Materialism](#)

[Racialized Feminist Materialism](#)

[Heterogeneous Assemblages](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Notes](#)

[Chapter 5 Technobodies: Gene- and Gender-editing](#)

[Posthuman Bodies Are Back with a Vengeance](#)

[Cyberfeminists and Other Bad Girls](#)

[Gaga Feminism](#)

[Critical De-naturalization: Feminist Technoscience Studies](#)

[Combining Re-naturalization and De-naturalization](#)

[Genealogy of Feminist Technoscience Studies](#)

[De-naturalization Re-naturalized: Dolly the Sheep](#)

[Naturalizing Queerness, Queering Nature](#)

[Disability Studies](#)

[Queer Kinship](#)

[Strategic Re-materialization of Technobodies](#)

[Placenta Politics](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Notes](#)

[Chapter 6 Sexuality Beyond Gender: A Thousand Little Sexes](#)

[The Moth Shaking Its Wings in Me](#)

[Shimmering](#)

[Sexuality Is Not Gender](#)

[Beyond the Sex-Gender Distinction](#)

[The Principle of Not-One](#)

[Elemental Sexualities](#)

[A Genealogy of Transgression](#)

[Transversal Desires](#)

[The Positivity of Desire](#)

[Ethics of Eros](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Notes](#)

[Chapter 7 Wanting Out!](#)

[Feminist Figurations in Scholarship](#)

[The Feminist Speculative Genre](#)

[Feminist Techno-utopianism](#)

[Afrofuturism and Black Posthumanism](#)

[Intergalactic Feminism](#)

[Notes](#)

[Epilogue 'Get a Life!'](#)

[References](#)

[Index](#)

[End User License Agreement](#)

Dedication

For Anneke

Posthuman Feminism

Rosi Braidotti

polity

Copyright Page

Copyright © Rosi Braidotti 2022

The right of Rosi Braidotti to be identified as Author of this Work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published in 2022 by Polity Press

Polity Press

65 Bridge Street

Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Polity Press

101 Station Landing

Suite 300

Medford, MA 02155, USA

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

ISBN-13: 978-1-5095-1807-4

ISBN-13: 978-1-5095-1808-1 (pb)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

by Fakenham Prepress Solutions, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 8NL

The publisher has used its best endeavours to ensure that the URLs for external websites referred to in this book are correct and active at the time of going to press. However, the publisher has no responsibility for the websites and can make no guarantee that a site will remain live or that the content is or will remain appropriate.

Every effort has been made to trace all copyright holders, but if any have been overlooked the publisher will be pleased to include any necessary credits in any subsequent reprint or edition.

For further information on Polity, visit our website: politybooks.com

Acknowledgements

This book would not have been possible without the loyal support of my publisher John Thompson; I truly thank him for his friendship and his enduring commitment to my posthuman project.

I had the honour and pleasure of completing the research for this manuscript at the University of Cambridge, where I was invited as Diane Middlebrook and Carl Djerassi Visiting Professor in Gender Studies in the Autumn term 2019. My sincere thanks to Jude Browne, Lauren Wilcox and Holly Porter for their warm and collegial support during my stay. My heartfelt thanks to Joanna Bush for all her precious professional assistance. In the same period I was honoured to be a visiting fellow at St. John's College, Cambridge. My sincere thanks to my sponsoring fellow, Ulinka Rublack for her friendly advice and mentorship, to the interim President of the College, Steve Edgley, and the deputy master Tim Whitmarsh for their warm welcome.

During the research phase of this book, I also greatly benefited from the discussions with colleagues from several academic institutions I had the honour to visit. My special thanks to Eléonore Lépinard and the Gender Studies Programme at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland, and to Marianne Hirsch of the Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality at Columbia University in New York.

Sections of this book were published in my chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory* (eds. Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth, 2016) and in *Anthropocene Feminism* (ed. Richard Grusin, 2017). I acknowledge them warmly here. Some earlier drafts were also published in the

Posthuman Glossary that I co-edited with Maria Hlavajova (2018).

My sincere thanks to Genevieve Lloyd and Donna Haraway for their unflinching support and enlightening criticism. They are precious multi-species travelling companions of my writings. Thanks to Simone Bignall and Matthew Fuller and for their generous insights and theoretical advice.

I am much indebted to Emily Jones for her generous and informed reading of the manuscript and her rigorous comments. Warm thanks also to Beth Lord, Celia Roberts, Djurdja Trajkovic, Maureen McNeil, Christine Daigle, Nina Lykke and Maurita Harney for their comments and support. Thanks also to Premesh Lalu, Sarah Nuttall and J. Halberstam for lively and necessary conversations. Thank you Linda Dement for the stunning image for the cover.

I am grateful to Marlise Mensink and Mischa Peters for their warm friendship. I also wish to thank my personal research assistants Gry Ulstein, Evelien Geerts, Lauren Hoogen Stoevenbeld and especially Onessa Novak for their unfailing logistical and organizational assistance.

Finally, my gratitude to my life partner Anneke Smelik for her intellectual, emotional and moral support, and for the joy of our life together.

Introduction: Feminism by Any Other Name

‘Don’t agonize, organize!’

Flo Kennedy, 1971¹

What a time to dare to take on the present, defined as the record of what we are ceasing to be, and the seed of what we are in the process of becoming!

Flashback to 1992: at the physical site of the watershed art exhibition *Post Human* (Deitch, 1992), a giant female figure of an Armani-clad business woman confidently welcomed visitors to the show. This cutting-edge exhibition displayed multiple variations of the new micro-femininities being constructed at that moment in technological culture. The curator Jeffrey Deitch captured the avant-garde spirit of the age by foregrounding the role of technology in blurring the binary boundaries between subjects and objects, humans and non-humans. The exhibition showed that body improvement and the embrace of artificiality were becoming the norm: plastic surgery, dieting, exercises, mind-altering drugs and other practices enhance the humans beyond their dreams. The *Post Human* showed also that art assumed a much more central role as it merged with science, computerization and biotechnology in further re-shaping the human form and perfecting a flair for the artificial. The message was clear: the pleasures of the inorganic have become second nature, producing a deeper intimacy with technological artefacts. And the contradictions surrounding the female bodies were at the heart of this very first exhibition on the posthuman.

Fast forward to 2013. During her 'Mrs. Carter Show World Tour', American singer Beyoncé flashed the word 'Feminist' in shining letters across the stage and sang her feminist anthem 'Flawless' from the hit album *Lemonade*.

Throughout this performance, Beyoncé repeated, like a mantra, the following definition, taken from the work of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: 'Feminist: a person who believes in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes.' Simple and to the point, who could quarrel with that?

Well, some actually did. Celebrated black feminist bell hooks, for instance, voiced criticism of celebrity media culture and of the explicitly sexualized nature of Beyoncé's performances (hooks, 2016). This stirred quite a controversy (Gay, 2014c; Plate, 2019). But what is striking is that a mega-star like Beyoncé is actually entering the feminist debate at all. She is defending the equality-minded feminist agenda and interrogating her own politics of locations as a black woman, a sexed female and a passionate professional. And she is not alone. Media mogul Oprah Winfrey is also up there while other feminist celebrities today include Hillary Clinton, Emma Watson, Michelle Obama, Ellen de Generis, Caitlyn Jenner, Laverne Cox, Lady Gaga and many more (Hamad and Taylor, 2015). There is no aspect of contemporary popular culture where feminists, emancipation-minded, anti-racist and LGBTQ+ people have not made their mark. What was blasphemy thirty years ago is banality today, livestreaming from our home screens.

In this book I unravel the deep imbrications between the two 'isms' that are so dear to my heart: feminism and posthumanism. The claim of this book is that mainstream posthuman scholarship has neglected feminist theory, while in fact feminist theory is one of the precursors of the posthuman turn. *Posthuman Feminism* aims to fill that

missing link and argues that they are two sides of the same coin. This intellectual endeavour is urgent because we live in times of what I have called the posthuman convergence in the two predecessors to this book, *The Posthuman* (Braidotti, 2013) and *Posthuman Knowledge* (Braidotti, 2019). The present book builds on and expands from the two previous volumes, exploring the consequences for feminism of thinking through and with posthuman theory. In keeping with my approach, I refer to the posthuman as both a marker of present conditions and as a navigational tool. In both cases the term aims to assist in reaching a more adequate understanding of the challenges confronting us in today's world and in steering a course across them. More specifically, I want to detect and assess emergent trends in contemporary feminist theory and practice.

Feminism is by now an established social movement, greatly diversified across multiple constituencies and locations. It is therefore not easy to give a comprehensive definition, other than pointing to a broad range of feminist positions. The spectrum includes the quest for equality between men and women, the recognition of multiple genders, the abolition of gender identities altogether, the intersectional connections across gender, race and class, and more. Feminism is the struggle to empower those who live along multiple axes of inequality. It involves empowering the dispossessed and impoverished, not only women, but also LGBTQ+ people, people of colour, Black and Indigenous peoples. In that sense, feminism is not just an egalitarian movement for the mainstream, but also a transformative decolonial and radical struggle to affirm positively the differences among marginalized people(s). These differences of material location express different life experiences and also multiple ways of knowing. The radical spark of the feminist project for me lies in its subversive

politics. It means creating the alternative visions of 'the human' generated by people who were historically excluded from, or only partially included into, that category. It means creating other possible worlds. This transformative edge assumes that no emancipatory process, however partial, is ever completely subsumed or incorporated into the dominant socio-economic life conditions, to which it is attached by critical opposition. Margins of intervention remain available, albeit as virtual potential. The trick is how to activate them.

By posthuman convergence I mean to indicate the present historical condition of the Anthropocene - not a utopian future - that is marked by three momentous and interconnecting changes. First, at the social level we witness increasing structural injustices through the unequal distribution of wealth, prosperity and access to technology. Second, at the environmental level we are confronted with the devastation of species and a decaying planet, struck by climate crisis and new epidemics. And third, at the technological level, the status and condition of the human is being redefined by the life sciences and genomics, neural sciences and robotics, nanotechnologies, the new information technologies and the digital interconnections they afford us.

The COVID-19 pandemic that is raging as I am writing is emblematic of the posthuman convergence. It is a human-made disaster aggravated by undue interference in the ecological balance and the lives of multiple species. The pandemic foregrounds the importance of human/non-human interaction and its destructive, as well as generative, potential. Paradoxically, the contagion has resulted in an increased use of technology and digital mediation, as well as enhanced hopes for vaccines and biomedical solutions. It has thus intensified the humans'

reliance on the very high-tech economy of cognitive capitalism that caused the problems in the first place.

Living with these internally contradictory developments is part of our historical deal. Thinking adequately about them is an urgent task for feminist thought, all the more so because the posthuman turn is marked by fundamental disruptions of received understandings of what it means to be human. The blatant inequalities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic such as the disproportionate loss of lives among women, LGBTQ+ and ethnic minorities and socially underprivileged people, brings home a reality that feminist, postcolonial and race thinkers had already voiced: that the 'human' is neither universal nor neutral but shot through with power relations organizing access to privileges and entitlements (Hammonds, 2020).

Advanced capitalism is at the core of the disruptions that characterize the posthuman convergence, its advanced technologies barely concealing the brutality of the social injustices it enforces. The combined pressures of these power mechanisms are simultaneously uniting humanity in the threat of extinction and dividing it by controlling access to the resources needed to meet the challenge. The economically dispossessed and impoverished are missing out on the advantages and profits of advanced capitalism and are in fact the most exposed to the lethal effects of ecological depletion and global pandemics. The posthuman convergence thus makes for polarized socio-economic divergences, as well as manic-depressive swings of moods and emotions. Excitement and exhilaration in view of the advanced technologies and automation that drive the 'Fourth Industrial Age' (Schwab, 2015), alternate with exasperation and fear at the thought of the damages inflicted by the 'Sixth Extinction', the potential mass extinction of both human and non-human inhabitants of this planet (Kolbert, 2014). The affective economy of the

posthuman convergence is characterized by suffering interchanging with hope, fear unfolding into resilience, and anxiety flipping into action.

A pandemic on the scale of COVID-19 brings home to the Western world an ancient truth, carried by Indigenous philosophies and cosmologies: that 'we' are all in this planetary condition together whether we are humans or others. It is high time for this heterogeneous and collective 'we' to move beyond the Eurocentric as well as humanistic habits that have formatted it, and to dislodge the philosophical anthropocentrism they entail and enforce.

This shift of perspective underscores the need for posthuman feminist theory. In this book I will address questions such as: how do emancipatory political movements position themselves within the posthuman convergence? How do these already complex intersections between advanced technology and accelerating environmental crisis affect the feminist agenda for intersectional social justice, transnational environmental justice, and women's and LGBTQ+ people's rights?

In a concomitance of events that marks the extraordinary period we are going through, the voices, experiences and perspectives of multiple others are bursting all around us. The power of viral formations has become manifest in the pandemic, stressing the agency of non-human forces and the overall importance of Gaia as a living, symbiotic planet (Lovelock and Margulis, 1974). At the same time a global revolt against endemic - and indeed viral - racism took off in the fateful year 2020, led by the 'Black Lives Matter' movement. The feminist mass mobilization epitomized by the #NiUnaMenos and #MeToo movements continues to fight globally. As these multiple crises unfold, the politics of sexualized, racialized, naturalized minorities - the 'others' -

are moving centre stage, pushing dominant 'man' (or Anthropos) off-centre.

Posthuman feminism is thus a critical intervention in some of the most controversial and urgent contemporary debates about the ongoing transformations of the human. The feminist agenda of the posthuman convergence is the analysis of the intersection of powerful structural socio-economic forces, led by technological development, in combination with equally powerful environmental challenges, centred on the climate crisis. These multiple factors join forces in dislocating the centrality of humans and require new definitions and practices of what being human may mean.

Posthuman feminism revives the radical tradition by offering an updated analysis of advanced capitalism – not only its sophisticated technologies but also its brutal environmental deterioration. In this book I argue that posthuman feminism offers a more adequate analysis of contemporary relations of power, because it has relinquished the liberal vision of the autonomous individual as well as the socialist ideal of a privileged revolutionary subject. Whereas liberal feminism is perfectly attuned to capitalism and socialist feminism dialectically opposed to it, posthuman feminism attempts a more nuanced position while keeping a critical distance from both. Building on the radical insights of ecofeminism, feminist studies of technoscience, LGBTQ+ theories, Black, decolonial and Indigenous feminisms, posthuman feminists stretch in multiple, rhizomic and tentacular directions. A posthuman feminist framework encourages a different notion of political subjectivity as a heterogeneous assemblage of embodied and embedded humans.

The posthuman turn is about the becoming-otherwise-human of feminist and critical theory. The converse is

equally true: those who do not fully occupy the position of human subjects, in the fullness of the rights and entitlements that notion entails, have a unique vantage point about what counts as the unit of reference for a re-definition of the human. My argument will remain what it has been all along in my work on critical posthuman theory: the posthuman turn can result in a renewal of subjectivities and practices by situating feminist analyses productively in the present.

It may be difficult for people who have never been considered socially and politically fully human to adopt an affirmative relation to the posthuman predicament. Women, LGBTQ+ people, the colonized, Indigenous peoples, people of colour and a multitude of non-Europeans who historically have had to fight for the basic right to be considered and treated as human, have at best an ambivalent relationship to the humanity they were and continue to be denied admission to. But my point is that this dominant, exclusionary notion of the human is precisely what is challenged by the posthuman convergence. While multiple new scenarios are circulating about the transformation of the humans, it is crucial that the voices of the marginals should be heard. The insights and critical knowledge of those who are considered less than human is urgently needed in the debates on the posthuman, both for their own sake and for the common good. The vital and more democratic project is to combine social justice and bottom-up, community-based experiments with transforming the ways in which we are becoming (post) human. These processes imply dense webs of interaction with and through the new technological universe, but also demand awareness of their environmental groundings and responsibilities.

My argument cuts both ways: first, feminist theory and practice are a major factor in defining the contemporary

posthuman predicament. Some strands of feminist theory – not always the more dominant ones – are generative hubs that have inspired critical posthuman insights. I want to urge contemporary feminist theory to engage more actively with the public debates on the posthuman convergence and with mainstream posthuman scholarship. I will highlight throughout the book the original contributions of feminism to the making of distinctly posthuman ways of understanding the world and redefining politics.

Second, mainstream posthuman scholarship must make an effort to move beyond its self-referential insular tendencies and engage openly with feminist theories, including the minoritarian strands that may not be as central to the canonical Anglo-American tradition. Posthuman critical theories cannot continue to indulge in their masculinist and Eurocentric solipsism. It would be mutually beneficial if feminist theory and posthuman theory would exchange and dialogue more systematically.

Feminists working on the posthuman convergence have to confront another fundamental tension: ‘we’ feminists may well be confronting the threats and challenges of the third millennium, together, but ‘we’ are not One or the same. We are differently positioned in terms of the very historical conditions of power, entitlement and access that define us: not only are we not the same as Man, but ‘we’ feminists have never been a homogeneous, unitary notion among ourselves: we are otherwise others. This book does not take the feminist community for granted as a pre-constituted and institutionalized entity; instead, I formulate the ‘we’ as: ‘we’-are-not-one-and-the-same-but-we-differ.

The context points to the necessity of rethinking subjectivity as a web of interconnections, acknowledging that ‘we’ – all living entities – share the same planetary home, though we differ in terms of locations and access to

environmental, social and legal entitlements, technologies, safety, prosperity and good health services. The materially embedded differences in location that separate us do not detract from our shared intimacy with the world, our terrestrial *milieu*. 'We' are in *this* together. This leads me to the sentence I developed in *Posthuman Knowledge* (2019), and that will recur throughout this book as well: "'we"-who-are-not-one-and-the-same-but-are-in-*this*-together'.

Posthuman feminists aspire to nurture and implement the ongoing process of unfolding alternative and transformative paths of becoming. We need to work together to reconstruct our shared understanding of possible posthuman futures that will include solidarity, care and compassion. We need to do so while rejecting universal and fixed notions of who 'we' are, respecting differences of locations and power. The politics of immanent locations allows for a non-oppositional mode of critique and enables affirmative engagement.

To those who fear that emphasizing the 'post' in the posthuman may result in short-circuiting the process of emancipation of the devalorized others who were not considered fully human to begin with, I reply that I share their concern. But I would add that it is becoming painfully clear that those who are marked negatively as the dehumanized and marginalized 'others' are currently missing out on the profits and advantages of the fourth industrial revolution, while being excessively exposed to the ravages of climate change and pandemics. Mindful that 50 per cent of carbon emissions are produced by the wealthiest 10 per cent of the population, one can only concur with Greta Thunberg that 'the people who have contributed the least to the crisis are the ones who are going to be affected the most' (2019: 24). This is the cruel imbalance that posthuman feminism wants to address. In other words, the posthuman condition is neither post-power

nor post-injustice. The emphasis on 'post' in the posthuman rather implies a move forward, beyond traditional understandings of the human, so that the analyses of contemporary power and knowledge become an essential part of the feminist posthuman project.

A Posthuman Feminist Agenda

Posthuman Feminism is an intergenerational and transversal exercise in constructing a discursive community that cares for the state of the world and wants to intervene productively in it. Intergenerational, because the book reconnects to different feminist genealogies, archives and counter-memories across space and time and does not stay within the contemporary or dominant theories. By transversal, I mean a relational way of thinking by cross-referencing through categories and disciplines. It desegregates the domains of knowledge production, by creating connections and cultivating resonances among positions that may at first sight appear incompatible. Intergenerational and transversal thinking helps create the collective 'we' that makes for a chain of solidarity between the 'others', while respecting the different perspectives and lived realities of each. Intergenerational and transversal subjects are allied but differentiated, and all other differences notwithstanding, they affirm that 'we' are in this together, but we are not one and the same.

The book inscribes the feminist subject in a social context framed by multiple mediations in the posthuman convergence we live in. I propose that feminism is a relational ethics that assumes one gives enough of a damn about the world to look at the broader picture and try to minimize the fractures. Affirmative relational ethics is the value that can support the task of telling the difference between profit-minded, entropic flows of self-interest and

generous, empowering flows of solidarity. This is where the collective praxis of constructing social horizons of hope and affirmation becomes essential.

To address these complex questions, I will present the building blocks of posthuman feminism and analyse the distinctive features of its agenda. The book has two parts: the first offering a critique of humanism and anthropocentrism and the second outlining the creative theoretical and practical aspects of the posthuman feminist agenda. Throughout the book I will highlight the contributions of different strands of feminism as forerunners of posthuman ideas and methods across several generations of feminist scholars and multiple fields of research and activism. This means I will offer large amounts of explanatory material, a critical selection of key texts and a rich bibliography to honour and preserve the memory of the diverse genealogies of feminism.

[Part I](#), 'Posthuman Feminism as Critique', starts with the chapter 'Feminism Is Not (Only) a Humanism', in which I outline the feminist critiques of humanism as an exclusive practice that supports structural inequalities and forms of social and symbolic disqualification. Humanism upholds an implicit and partial definition of the human, while claiming to provide a universal and neutral representation of all humans. This dominant idea of the human is based on an assumption of superiority by a subject that is male, white, Eurocentric, practising compulsory heterosexuality and reproduction, able-bodied, urbanized, speaking a standard language. This subject is the hierarchical 'Man of Reason' (Lloyd, 1984) that feminists, LGBTQ+ people, anti-racists, Black, Indigenous, postcolonial and ecological activists have been criticizing for decades. At the same time humanism historically supported a political programme of emancipation that benefited some of the sexualized and racialized minorities. The chapter carefully traces the

contradictions and the limitations of the humanist legacy as well as its lasting appeal.

In [chapter 2](#), 'The Critical Edge of Posthuman Feminism', I look at contemporary elaborations of different schools of feminism, notably the liberal and the socialist traditions. Situating them in the posthuman convergence, I analyse neoliberal and neo-socialist feminisms in terms of their respective relationships to humanism, power and politics. I single out their interaction with the mutations of advanced capitalism, in terms of technological developments on the one hand, and investment in living systems on the other. Adaptable in its pursuit of profit, contemporary capitalism perpetuates old inequalities while inventing some new ones. The capitalization of living matter through technological intervention is embraced by transhumanists as a way of enhancing the human, but meets with sceptical receptions by posthuman feminists. It calls for more complex frames of analysis of the interaction between capital, science, technology and social justice.

In [chapter 3](#), 'Decentring Anthropos: Ecofeminism Revisited', I argue that human exceptionalism needs to be challenged from within by decentring anthropocentrism. It is not only the case that not all humans are the same to begin with, but also that the entire category of humans is distinct from all, and assumed to be superior to other, species. The naturalized others are excluded categorically from the realm of subjectivity and rights. Appeals to 'nature' can be discriminatory as they create structural distinctions and inequalities among different categories of beings, always favouring the humans. Posthuman feminism is innovative because it extends the analyses of sexualized and racialized hierarchies to the naturalized differences of non-human entities. It calls for the recognition of species equality and a more collaborative sense of interdependence between humans and animals, plants, the earth and the

planet as a whole. The chapter examines in detail ecofeminism and Indigenous feminisms as the precursors of the post-anthropocentric turn in feminist theory and as a crucial building block of the posthuman turn.

[Part II](#), 'Posthuman Feminism as Creation' brings together the creative writings of theorists, artists and practitioners of posthuman feminism.

In [chapter 4](#), 'New Materialism and Carnal Empiricism', I argue that while a specific form of situated materialism is central to feminist theory, it has been slightly overshadowed by an emphasis on social-constructivist methods. New-materialist feminism is a precursor of the posthuman turn because it stresses the embodied, embedded and sexuate roots of all material entities, humans included. The strength and relevance of new-materialist feminist thought is to defy binary oppositions by thinking through embodiment, multiplicity and differences. Posthuman feminism challenges the opposition of nature versus culture and argues for a 'natureculture' continuum to enable a better understanding of the mutual interdependence of human and non-human others. Many appeal to a critical Spinozist perspective to strengthen this claim. I analyse these approaches as a strategic form of re-naturalization. In the context of the climate change crisis, posthuman feminism shows the extent to which women, LGBTQ+ people and Indigenous people are exposed to risks and hazards. It also proposes new relational practices and ethical values to strengthen cross-cultures and cross-species collaboration.

In [chapter 5](#), 'Technobodies: Gene- and Gender-editing', I claim that mainstream posthuman scholarship has marginalized or even obliterated the material bodies of all entities, humans included, through an emphasis on technological mediation and enhancement. But, as feminist

new materialism confirms, bodies matter – even though nowadays bodies have mutated into complex relational nodes. Human bodies are in a continuum with the non-human on two fronts. The first is animal life (*zoe*) in its diversity, aware of their grounding on an endangered planet (*geo*). The second is the sharp awareness of being fully immersed in technological mediation (*techno*). Hence the assemblage of what I call ‘*zoe/geo/technobodies*’. I see this approach as a critical form of de-naturalization. Bodies are neither natural nor cultural but in constant process between them, as a heterogeneous assemblage of complex relational components. The corporeal empiricism at work in posthuman feminism is the source of counter-knowledges, methods and values. The chapter examines in detail feminist technoscience studies and disability studies as the precursor of the post-anthropocentric turn in feminist theory and as a key building block of the posthuman turn.

In [chapter 6](#), ‘Sexuality Beyond Gender: A Thousand Little Sexes’, I examine the implications of the new-materialist, posthumanist and post-anthropocentric approach for the analyses of contemporary formations of sexuality. I argue that posthuman feminism implies a redefinition of sexuality as an elemental and cross-species force that precedes and exceeds the inscriptions of a binary gender system. I will examine the implications of this position for a reappraisal of the elemental pleasures of materialist posthuman flesh – the powers of Eros – beyond gender dualism. Reference to Indigenous cosmological systems will illuminate the generative power of sexuality and its profound relational ethics. A feminist genealogy of transgressive sexual radicals contextualizes contemporary queer and trans sexualities. The chapter examines the work of feminist literary and visual artists, including Virginia Woolf as the precursor of a molecular sensibility in posthuman feminism.

In [chapter 7](#), 'Wanting Out!', I address the creative, imaginative and speculative strands of posthuman feminism. Arguing for the importance of the radical imagination to the feminist posthuman project, I look at different examples of this specific style, ranging from figurative thinking in academic feminist scholarship, to science fiction, fantasy novels, utopian texts of a political or fantastic nature, through Afrofuturism and black space-travel narratives. The speculative genre voices the transversal alliance of sexualized, racialized, naturalized others against the dominion of Man/Anthropos. It combines dystopian and utopian elements in envisaging alternative feminist futures. The chapter ends with a feminist assessment of the economics and politics of the contemporary race for new materials in far-away regions and in outer space.

Finally, in the short Epilogue, 'Get a Life', I concentrate on the ethical implications of the feminist posthuman agenda in a world damaged by the tensions and contradictions of the posthuman convergence. I argue that the radical feminist imagination can be a source of inspiration for new scenarios of endurance and reconstruction. This is all the more relevant for a world haunted by a lethal pandemic and the need to reconstruct communities in highly divisive and painful times. An affirmative posthuman ethics entails the composition of communities sharing the same imaginings and values. It involves imagining a collective subject as the 'we' who are not one and the same, though we are in *this* posthuman predicament together.

Posthuman Feminism aims to be a navigational tool as well as a conceptual toolbox: it offers a series of roadmaps into and out of the posthuman convergence. This is a book that longs to be active outside the written page. It wishes to be out there with the other entities that are trying to negotiate

an affirmative path amidst the speed and the paralysis, the boom and bust, of the posthuman convergence.

The book connects to and works across different temporalities. Crucial to feminist politics is the memory of oppression – of the injury and pain of exclusion and injustice. That kind of memory is made of repetitions of often traumatic events and ideas that we do not so much remember but rather refuse to forget. Activist time is made of zigzagging detours that bring productive repetitions to bear on the ethical orientations and the political praxis of the present. Feminists today are struggling through the contemporary posthuman turn with concern, but also with curiosity, wondering what's in it for them. What is the posthuman future of those who were never fully human? And what is the time measure of the posthuman feminist cause? Now, forever, and all at once is the time of feminism.

For feminist activists it is always the year zero, even after thousands of years of oppression and struggle for liberation across many feminist plateaus of movements and counter-movements. What is at stake in feminism is human freedom. This is the process of liberation as the ongoing eventualization of many virtual pasts, of many radical ideas that never quite made it, but never quite died either. Feminism is an affirmative gesture, a leap of faith in what humans may still be capable of. The positive becoming of posthuman feminism expresses a trust in the future, which allows not so much a flash-back nor a flash-forward, but a 'back-cast'; casting paths of becoming from the future back to the now. The agenda of feminism is truly present, but still unfulfilled, and truly past, though highly relevant to a present that is trying to become an actual, sustainable future. Inexhaustible and always about to self-combust back into life, feminism, by any other name, endures.

Notes

- 1 This is a legendary quote that has become part of popular culture. The source is attributed to: Steinem, Gloria. 1973. The verbal karate of Florynce R. Kennedy, Esq. *Ms. Magazine*, March.

Part I

Posthuman Feminism as

Critique

Chapter 1

Feminism Is Not (Only) a Humanism

He he he he and he and he and and he and he and he and
and as

and as he and as he and he.

He is and as he is, and as he is and he is,

he is and as he

Gertrude Stein, *If I told him*, 1923

The main tenet of posthuman feminism is that the notion of humanism needs to be reviewed and assessed critically but not thrown away entirely. The posthuman predicament assumes the relative success of equality-minded feminism. This chapter lays the groundwork by first briefly explaining the masculinist roots of Eurocentric humanism as well as its philosophical critiques. It will then proceed by giving a genealogy of the historical ties that bind Western feminism to humanism. Humanism is the backbone of the women's emancipation project carried out in three major bodies of thought proclaiming universal human rights: classical liberalism; socialist humanism; and Black, anti-colonialist, anti-racist and Indigenous voices. The chapter ends with an evaluation of how LGBTQ+ theories and practices are positioned in the aftermath of humanism. They pursue a similar project of emancipation with claims to equality and struggles for recognition and justice, but they radically move away from the normative idea of the human built into humanism, 'queering' it into *inhumanism*.