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For Moderna muséet

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The Posthumanities Hub: Feminist Posthumanities for a More-than-Human World

The environment is in us, and we humans are fully in the environment. That much is clear in this new planetary era of uncertainty some call the Anthropocene. This new geological period, the environmental Age of Man, is often defined by unparalleled human disturbance of the earth's ecosystems, climate, and biological systems. For instance, half of the wildlife on Earth has been lost in the past forty years but we have also soon perhaps more synthetic biologies or artificial intelligences than we asked for. In the age of the Anthropocene, humans have become a 'force of nature', making nature in its classical sense over. Yet then so is also the human, especially in its classical and imagined sense of a bounded individual, safely zipped up in a white skin of his own, guided by rational thought rather than desires. Emerging now are the many embodied subjects we thought were less-than-human, nonhuman or ahuman; insects, media ecologies, CRISPR Cas9 technologies call for attention. The Anthropocene, as the death of nature mirrors the death of Man, and evokes curiosity over the postnatural and the posthuman forms of life now available to us.

If the humanities can be said to be broadly concerned with the self-reflection and understanding of the human species, the posthumanities comes about when we recognise drastic ecological change and rapid species extinction rates, that growing computational systems, security terrors, new biomedical forms and synthetic biologies, amongst other factors, impel us to recognise the wider forms and constituents of the condition that is no longer nameable simply as humanity. The universalisation of humanity into the figure of Universal Man, denying sexual differences and social inequities following along the lines of race, gender, ability, age and other morphological norms have long been a pinnacle of feminist critique. Feminist theory-practices mark thus a particularly critical form of the posthumanities; an analytics of formative relationalities in emergence that asks who gets to die, who gets to live and play, and to the benefit of whom. Furthermore, recent feminist works

are drawing attention not only to creativity and potentiality, but also to that which delimits or wounds conditions of life on earth. And importantly, how we may learn to live with those wounds and limitations with some grace together. Mutualism, companion species, cyborgs and symbiont ethics are keywords for such feminist posthumanities. Postdisciplinary practices and queer methodologies are of course especially salient in this regard; a brute necessity. This is evidenced in fields like new feminist science studies, bioart and eco-art, somatechnics, new media studies, post-continental philosophy, anthropocene studies or transcorporeal humanities, multispecies studies, in medical humanities, transgender studies, xenofeminism, cyborg- or techno-humanities, ecological or environmental humanities, queer death studies, critical veganism, and a mounting range of posthumanisms, inhumanisms and ahumanisms. Feminist posthumanities, covering such postdisciplinary practices and new materialist ontologies, labels thus now a wide-spread and growing effort to rework the role of the humanities and their relation to science, technology, art and contemporary society on the basis that our idea of the human is fundamentally reaching its limits and changing. It responds to a need for a more-than-human humanities.

Accordingly, the feminist posthumanities of the postconventional research group The Posthumanities Hub at Linköping University and KTH Institute of Technology at Stockholm, focuses on critique and creativity of embodiment, death, computation, security, environmental health, media ecologies, infrastructures and waste, technocultures, multispecies relations, and the nourishments and toxicities of the anthropocene as crucial points of methodological and topical intersection and intervention.

The assumption behind this bold mission is that feminist and other kindred forms of the posthumanities are already creating institutional changes, providing novel insights for researchers and civic society, and new sets of post- or trans-disciplinary practices. This wide-ranging research has already changed narratives about, for instance, the role of gender and eating habits on climatic impact, the extent of toxic embodiment in daily life; the impact of digital mediation on our social practices and processes of self-representation; the planetary impact of Anthropos; as well as the future of life on Earth. Moreover, new research in our international networks explores the ecosophical continuum between naturecultures; the global infrastructures of technological surveillance; the multiplex processes of translation characteristic of new media; and, last but not least, process ontologies at work in both the life sciences and philosophies of subjectivity.

The feminist posthumanities of The Posthumanities Hub aims to map out and chart, but also provide deep insight into, pursue and develop a partly novel and inventive agenda, which stems from, but is not limited to, either humanism or anthropocentrism. Instead, it

interrogates and expands both with feminist analytics and more-than-human humanities. At present, there are a plethora of new research initiatives and individual scholars testifying to effervescent activities of a new field. This embarrassment of riches is evidenced all over the academic landscape with new research groups, networks and art-science communities popping up like mushrooms in the soil on a rainy autumn. The Posthumanities Hub, one of the first of its kind in the world, supports the establishment of these new research environments, their novel collaborative practices, bold postdisciplinary methodologies, and collaborations between senior and junior scholars. It is only through strategic alliances across differences we can survive, in academic settings as on the planet.

The question of the posthuman, pioneered by feminist scholars such as N. Katherine Hayles, Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti, is explored and implicitly posed in the wildly diverse yet connectivity-searching discussions of human-animal relations, in ecoliterature and in biohacking, feminist continental philosophy and nature-oriented epistemology, in feminist cultural studies of technoscience, in art and design practices, in anti-racist activism and practices of the decolonial option, in software studies, cognitive science, and the computational turn cognitive science, in animal behavior science and epigenetics research, in the environmental humanities and the diffusion of ecological thought, and of course in the humanities' involvement with the life-sciences. We are currently witnessing a genuine proliferation of new feminist or pro-feminist work on the posthumanities. Perhaps because of this wealth of options, there is, however, no consensus either in terms of terminology or key-concepts.

With the critical, creative and curious activities of The Posthumanities Hub we underline that this situation does not constitute a crisis, but an opportunity for the arts and humanities and their reinvention. It may lead to the generation of new ideas pointing in the direction of the overcoming of anthropocentrism, eurocentrism, androcentrism, etc, while preserving the legacy and sophistication of primate visions, companion species or colonial cyborg-theory put forward by Donna J Haraway, the critical posthumanism of Rosi Braidotti, and the art activism, citizen science, and ecological awareness of a thousand tiny anthropocene studies initiatives in theory and practice from all over the world. Our thesis is that it is crucial for the contemporary posthumanities to generate the networked communities, literacies and the methodological schemes needed to establish productive dialogues with these new developments and predecessor imperatives of "oppositional consciousness" as Gloria Anzaldua would call it, within the arts and humanities. Building on the historical emphases of the humanities, we want to keep questions germane to embodied subjectivity at the core, but must ask what the status of the subject and of subjectivity is today with the change of relations between technology, institutions and society. These themes crystallise some of the

most pressing and general forms in which questions of knowledge production and ontology fuse with those of power, and how they affect the notion and practice of objectivity in science as well as converge in issues of process ontology in technoscience, society and the production of subjectivity. Such themes also impel the renewed questions of social responsibility and societal relevance of the arts and the humanities. But for the arts of expanding our limited humanist imagination and exploring practices of conviviality, how else can we imagine enlivened art-science continuums of democratic and graceful co-existence in this human and more-than-human, posthuman and postnatural world? Curiously, critically, creatively.