

## About *The posthuman*

The main questions I want to address in this book are: firstly what is the posthuman? More specifically, what are the intellectual and historical itineraries that may lead us to the posthuman? Secondly: where does the posthuman condition leave humanity? More specifically, what new forms of subjectivity are supported by the posthuman? Thirdly: how does the posthuman engender its own forms of inhumanity? More specifically, how might we resist the inhuman(e) aspects of our era? And last, how does the posthuman affect the practice of the Humanities today? More specifically, what is the function of theory in posthuman times?

This book rides the wave of simultaneous fascination for the posthuman condition as a crucial aspect of our historicity, but also of concern for its aberrations, its abuses of power and the sustainability of some of its basic premises. Part of the fascination is due to my sense of what the task of critical theorists should be in the world today, namely, to provide adequate representations of our situated historical location. This in itself humble cartographic aim, that is connected to the ideal of producing socially relevant knowledge, flips over into a more ambitious and abstract question, namely the status and value of theory itself. Micro-political interventions are more necessary than ever.

In my view, the common denominator for the posthuman condition is monism as a political ontology. This implies a vision of living matter as vital, self-organizing and yet non-naturalistic, because in our world you cannot separate nature from technological mediation. This nature–culture continuum, resting on a monistic neo-spinozist philosophy is the starting point for my take on posthuman theory. By adding to my analysis the effects of global technological mediation, I am better placed to defend a materialist, secular, grounded and unsentimental alternative to the opportunistic commodification of Life that is the logic of advanced capitalism : bit the bio-political and the necro-political governmentality of our times. I see the posthuman not as the enemy of the human, but as its extension amidst the contradictions and the social conflicts of the contemporary world.

This conviction is supported by my political location as a feminist, a pacifist and an anti-racist , which makes me aware of the schizoid coincidence of diametrically opposed social effects. I live in a world marked by overconsumption and depletion of the world's reserves of biodiversity in seeds, grains, plants and water supplies, which however celebrates the politics of 'Life itself' – meaning the informational code of all that lives. I live in a world where anti-abortionists kill pro-abortionists in the name of 'the right to life'.

Opposites coexist and also clash in my world: the epidemic of anorexia/bulimia alongside poverty-induced starvation express the spasmodic waves of expansion and shrinking of the body-weight in different sectors of the population. In Los Angeles there are diet clinics for pets as well as for humans. Welcome to capitalism as schizophrenia!

'We' – the dwellers of *this* planet at this point in time – are confronted by a number of painful contradictions: an electronically linked pan-humanity which however is more fragmented than ever and split by convulsive internal fractures, economic disparities, xenophobic fears and violence. 'Humanity' is re-created as a negative category, held together by shared vulnerability and the

spectre of extinction, but also struck down by environmental devastation, by new and old epidemics, in endless 'new' wars that innovate on ways of killing, in the proliferation of migrations and exodus, detention camps and refugees' centres. The staggering inequalities engendered by the global economy make for violence and insurrection; the appeals for new forms of cosmopolitan relations or a global *ethos* are often answered by necro-political acts of violence, destruction and assassination.

I am worried about hasty celebrations of a new sort of humanitarianism, or corporate humanism, which loudly proclaims that "we" are in this together! But who are "we" and do we share the same political project? What we need is precise critical cartographies of the new power relations that are emerging from the current geo-political and post-anthropocentric world order. Yet, considering the global reach of the posthuman problems we are facing today, in the era of the 'Anthropocene', it is nonetheless the case that 'we' humans are indeed in *this* crisis together. Such awareness must not however obscure or flatten out the power differentials that sustain the collective subject ('we') and its ethical and political endeavor (*this*). Labouring towards a non-unitary posthuman subject, 'we' need to acknowledge that there may well be multiple and potentially contradictory projects at stake in the complex re-compositions of 'the human' right now: many complex, nomadic and contested ways of becoming-world together.