‘Humanist Methods’ in ‘More-than-Human’ Times?

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One departure point ...

Sarah Whatmore (2006)

"Materialist Returns: Practising Cultural Geography in and for a More-than-human World."

_Cultural Geographies_ 13(4): 600-609.
Whatmore: ‘Materialist Returns’

‘... the urgent need to supplement humanist methods that rely on generating talk and text, with experimental practices that amplify other sensory, bodily and affective registers and extend the company and modality of what constitutes a research subject.’

(Whatmore 2006: 606-607 my emphasis)
A second departure point ...

Ken Plummer’s

An Invitation to a

Critical Humanism
Still, human/posthuman is much too easily appropriated by the [...] ‘Let’s all be posthumanists and find our next teleological evolutionary stage in some kind of transhumanist techno-enhancement.’ [...] The reason I go to companion species is to get away from posthumanism.

(Haraway in Gane 2006:140)
Feminism as already posthumanist or feminism as never been human/ist

I never wanted to be posthuman, or posthumanist, any more than I wanted to be postfeminist. For one thing, urgent work remains to be done in reference to those who must inhabit the troubled categories of woman and human, properly pluralized, reformulated, and brought into constitutive intersection with other asymmetrical differences.

(Haraway 2008: 17)
two versions of ‘high posthumanism’

• ‘the first concerns the philosophical post-humanism of the post-structuralist generation;
• the second is a more targeted form of post-anthropocentrism that is not as wide-spread’

(Braidotti 2006: 197)
Post-structuralism as posthumanism

‘The defining characteristics [of being post-human] involve the construction of subjectivity, not the presence of non-biological components.’

(N. Katherine Hayles 1999: 4)

‘It is not the addition of some prosthesis or the ability to use technologies (extensions of our selves) that make us posthuman, *it is the ability to be subjective in the view of the self.*’

(Barrow, 2010)
Ecofeminist and post-anthropocentric posthumanisms

a critical posthumanism [...] should not necessarily be seen as radically opposed to all variations of humanism. Indeed specific expressions of critical posthumanism such as certain ecofeminisms [...] undermine the temptation to equate all accounts of posthumanism with misanthropy.

(Twine 2010: 180)
Eco/feminist Activism
Crayoquot Sound, Vancouver Island, 1993
so anyway, we got to the camp, and that evening, yeah, I went for a walk, just up, just you know, we were just camped in the truck, in the overflow place, and just, went for a walk on my own that evening, and just seeing ... just all that devastation, and [...] I was trying to think when A---- was born, she’s just five now, so she was just one, and, I guess, I just, just the whole thing of just being a grandmother, and realising my, this is my responsibility, and how important she was, and what a mess we had made of the world, and just wanting, just wanting a world for her, and so that’s really ... what I did it for. (Jane)
I haven’t asked you if you would describe yourself as a feminist?

I really enjoyed being a mother and Patrick didn't enjoy his job very much. Actually I thought I had the better deal. I thought I was lucky, because it was just before, because I had my children, starting in the mid-sixties, and there was, the mothers that came after me, even five or six years after, they were starting to get the feminist message, that women were hard done by, that it was rotten being stuck in the house, have kids and things, and I think it did them a real disservice, because I saw them being quite, being really dissatisfied, and I saw marriages breaking up because of it, and for me [...] it was one of the happiest times of my life. (Jane)
I really sort of got it [feminism], that, and I'm still trying to teach my husband, he doesn't really get it yet, hard for men to see it, because they feel guilty and defensive and don't really see where they fit in. He helped make the goddess [a sculpture standing in Jane’s kitchen where we were sitting]. I think, well, he was afraid of losing me, so he's come a long way, and done a lot of work on himself too, and that’s pretty amazing [...] and I think just because, we were together 30 years, and had a strong family too, it wasn't something I could chuck very easily, he's, because he has showed willingness to do things himself, and it’s been, a whole other thing. I see myself as a feminist, but I also see, I'm not anti-men or, I couldn't be, I had three sons, and I think they are victims too, it’s the system ... (Jane)
Beginning in the middle

because, actually, ah, it was, yeah, for me it was just totally tied in with where I was in life ... that I was working on my own early sexual abuse [...] so, it was a period when I was really aware of my powerlessness with the male system and all that stuff. And then, the summer of Cla ... I knew that Clayoquot was going on, but I didn’t, I was too much in my own stuff, I was just too involved in my own stuff, I didn’t really have any energy, or anything outside of that, you know, just dealing with it. (Jane)
I haven’t asked you, you would say, ‘I need a feminist’? so anyway, we got to the camp, and that evening, yeah, I went for a walk, just up, just for a walk, just up... for a walk, just up...

I wasn’t really expecting to see you, you know, you would say, ‘I need a feminist’? so anyway, we got to the camp, and that evening, yeah, I went for a walk, just up, just for a walk, just up... for a walk, just up...
‘and for me, just because I had a very lonely childhood, not being able to relate to people, so, for me sort of nature, and being alone with nature was really important’ (Jane)
My argument is that the most important difference (a big claim I know) in the ‘something/happening’ in cultural geography’s materialist recuperations is that this return to the livingness of the world shifts the register of materiality from the indifferent stuff of a world ‘out there’, articulated through notions of ‘land’, ‘nature’ or ‘environment’, to the intimate fabric of corporeality that includes and redistributes the ‘in here’ of the human being.

(Whatmore 2006: 602)
‘... the urgent need to supplement humanist methods that rely on generating talk and text, with experimental practices that amplify other sensory, bodily and affective registers and extend the company and modality of what constitutes a research subject.’

(Whatmore 2006: 606-607 my emphasis)

‘Theoretically the language has turned to ‘discourses of the subject’, ‘decentred identities’, ‘polyvocal voices’ but rarely these days to the living and breathing, embodied and feeling human being; this is an idea that has had its day.’

(Plummer 2001: ix my emphasis)


