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Introduction: Figuring Bodies of Water

Water is what we make of it.

–Jamie Linton (2010: 3)

We are in this together.

–Rosi Braidotti (2006a: 16)

The problem was that we did not know whom we meant when we said ‘we’.

–Adrienne Rich (1986: 217)

Blood, bile, intracellular fluid; a small ocean swallowed, a wild wetland in our gut; rivulets forsaken making their way from our insides to out, from watery womb to watery world:

we are bodies of water.

As such, we are not on the one hand *embodied* (with all of the cultural and metaphysical investments of this concept) while on the other hand primarily *comprising water* (with all of the attendant biological, chemical, and ecological implications). We are both of these things, inextricably and at once – made mostly of wet matter, but also aswim in the discursive flocculations of embodiment as an idea. We live at the site of exponential material meaning where embodiment meets water. Given the various interconnected and anthropogenically exacerbated water crises that our planet currently faces – from drought and freshwater shortage to wild weather, floods, and chronic contamination – this meaningful mattering of our bodies is also an urgent question of worldly survival. In this book I reimagine embodiment from the perspective of our bodies’ wet constitution, as inseparable from these pressing ecological questions.

To rethink embodiment as watery stirs up considerable trouble for dominant Western and humanist understandings of embodiment, where bodies are figured as discrete and coherent individual subjects, and as fundamentally autonomous. Evidence of this dominant paradigm underpins many if not all of our social, political, economic, and legal frameworks in the Western world. Despite small glimmers of innovation, regimes of human rights, citizenship, and property for the most part all depend upon individualized, stable, and sovereign bodies – those ‘Enlightenment figures of coherent and masterful subjectivity’ (Haraway 2004 [1992]: 48) – as both a norm and a goal. But as bodies of water we leak and seethe, our borders always vulnerable to rupture and renegotiation. With a drop of cliché, I could remind you that our human bodies are at least two-thirds water, but more interesting than these ontological maths is what this water does – where it comes from, where it goes, and what it means along the way. Our wet matters are in constant process of intake, transformation, and exchange – drinking, peeing, sweating, sponging, weeping. Discrete individualism is a rather dry, if convenient, myth.

For us humans, the flow and flush of waters sustain our own bodies, but also connect them to other bodies, to other worlds beyond our human selves. Indeed, bodies of water undo the idea that bodies are necessarily or only human. The bodies from which we siphon and into which we pour ourselves are certainly other human bodies (a kissable lover, a blood transfused stranger, a nursing infant), but they are just as likely a sea, a cistern, an underground reservoir of once-was-rain. Our watery relations within (or more accurately: *as*) a more-than-human hydrocommons thus present a challenge to anthropocentrism, and the privileging of the human as the sole or primary site of embodiment. Referring to the always hybrid assemblage of matters that constitutes watery embodiment, we might say that we have never been (only) human (Braidotti 2013: 1; Haraway 1985, 2008). This is not to forsake our inescapable humanness, but to suggest that the human is always also more-than-human. Our wateriness verifies this, both materially and conceptually.

Moreover, as Virginia Woolf (2000: 124) reminds us, ‘there are tides in the body’. Or in the words of Syilx Okanagan poet Jeanette Armstrong (2006), ‘water is siwlkw’ and *siwlkw* is ‘coursing / to become the body’ – ‘waiting’, ‘over

eons/ sustaining this fragment of now'. Water extends embodiment in time – body, to body, to body. Water in this sense is facilitative and directed towards the becoming of other bodies. Our own embodiment, as already noted, is never really autonomous. Nor is it autochthonous, nor autopoietic: we require other bodies of other waters (that in turn require other bodies and other waters) to bathe us into being. Watery bodies are gestational milieus for another – and for others often not at all like us (Chandler and Neimanis 2013). Our watery bodies' challenge to individualism is thus also a challenge to phallogocentrism, the masculinist logic of sharp-edged self-sufficiency. Phallogocentrism supports a forgetting of the bodies that have gestated our own, and facilitated their becoming, as some feminist philosophers have long argued (see Irigaray 1991, 1992; Cixous and Clement 1986). But crucially, this watery gestationality is also decidedly posthuman, where human reprosexual wombs are but one expression of a more general aqueous facilitative capacity: pond life, sea monkey, primordial soup, amphibious egg, the moist soil that holds and grows the seed. As *themselves* milieus for other bodies and other lives that they will become as they relinquish their own, our bodies enter complex relations of gift, theft, and debt with all other watery life. We are literally implicated in other animal, vegetable, and planetary bodies that materially course through us, replenish us, and draw upon our own bodies as their wells: human bodies ingest reservoir bodies, while reservoir bodies are slaked by rain bodies, rain bodies absorb ocean bodies, ocean bodies aspirate fish bodies, fish bodies are consumed by whale bodies – which then sink to the seafloor to rot and be swallowed up again by the ocean's dark belly. This is a different kind of 'hydrological cycle'.

Watery embodiment thus presents a challenge to three related humanist understandings of corporeality: discrete individualism, anthropocentrism, and phallogocentrism. We also note that these three 'isms' are all deeply entangled, mutually enforcing the claims of each other. The work of bodies of water is thus in part to remind us of this still-pervasive ontological Old Boys' Club. To imagine ourselves as bodies of water is to stage a clubhouse break-and-enter, a direct-action protest that floods up from the basement.

Such a refiguring of our (always more-than-human) embodiment is thus the primary aim of this book. Beginning with our bodies' mostly watery constitution, these chapters present an understanding of embodiment as both a politics of location, where one's specific situatedness is acknowledged, and

as simultaneously partaking in a hydrocommons of wet relations. I call this a posthuman politics of location. This version of embodiment draws on feminist theories of subjectivity, but parses them through contemporary feminist and posthuman understandings of agential realism, transcorporeality, and queer temporalities. I unfold these ideas through phenomenological descriptions of the various ontologies of watery bodiedness. Posthuman gestationality – that is, the facilitative logic of our bodily water for gestating new lives and new forms of life, never fully knowable – is, again, fundamental to these logics. This gestationality challenges the primacy of human heteronormative reproductivity as the cornerstone for proliferating life, yet without washing away a feminist commitment to thinking the difference of maternal, feminine, and otherwise gendered and sexed bodies. Posthuman gestationality is expanded by exploring evolutionary science and related stories of embodied indebtedness, where past and future bodies swim through our own. In a rejection of a binary logic of either/or, posthuman gestationality stresses that as bodies of water we are *both* different *and* in common; water calls on us to give an account of our own (very human) politics of location, even as this situatedness will always swim beyond our masterful grasp, finding confluence with other bodies and times. In the end, my wager is that bodies of water as specifically gestational can help us think against current understandings of water as an exchangeable and instrumentalizable resource – what geographer Jamie Linton has called ‘modern water’ and ‘global water’, and what I expand in Chapter 4 as ‘Anthropocene water’. To figure ourselves as bodies of water not only rejects a human separation from Nature ‘out there’; it also torques many of our accepted cartographies of space, time, and species, and implicates a specifically watery movement of difference and repetition (Deleuze 2004). Always aswim in these explorations is a call to consider our ethical responsibility towards the many other bodies of water we are becoming all the time.

Bodies of water (a genealogy of a figuration)

The promise of feminist theory, suggests Elizabeth Grosz (2012: 14), is its ability to generate concepts that allow us ‘to surround ourselves with the

possibilities for being otherwise.' I am strongly drawn to the idea of the concept as something that makes radical change possible, and enables our own becoming-other (15). Indeed, this torquing of our imaginaries so that matter can matter differently is what I hope 'bodies of water' as a concept might do. But in Grosz's reading (following Deleuze and Guattari) concepts are 'the production of immaterial forces that line materiality with incorporeals, potentials, latencies' (14). They are (Deleuzian) 'virtualities of matter' (14) and 'excess over matter' (15), where 'materiality does not contain this incorporeal' (15). Instead of sticking with the Deleuzian concept (see also Deleuze and Guattari 1994), I therefore prefer the posthuman feminist understanding of concepts as 'figurations'. I suggest we might understand figurations as *embodied concepts*. Donna Haraway (2007: 4–5) calls them 'material-semiotic' knots, referring to their conceptual power, but also to their worldliness. Similarly, Rosi Braidotti (2011: 10) refers to figurations as 'living maps' that acknowledge 'concretely situated historical positions' (90). Figurations are keys for imagining and living otherwise, but unlike a concept unfettered by the world we actually live in or as, figurations are importantly grounded in our material reality (I have never been entirely convinced by theory that frames anything as wholly 'immaterial' – more on this in Chapter 1). I like the idea that our best concepts are already here, semi-formed and literally at our fingertips, awaiting activation. Never conceptual fantasy or metaphor, these imaginative 'interventions' (Braidotti 2011: 14) describe what we already are, but *amplified*.

Moreover, as Braidotti underlines, figurations are not arbitrary, but arise in response to a particular contemporary question or problem. Clearly, our planetary waters and water systems are wounded in many ways. Worsening droughts and floods, aquifer depletion, groundwater contamination and salination, ocean acidification, as well as commodification and privatization schemes that too narrowly seek to direct water's flows, all speak to this. My contemporary figuration of bodies of water is a direct response to these issues. Our bodies are also of air, rock, earth – even plastic at a growing rate – but figuring ourselves specifically as bodies of water emphasizes a particular set of planetary assemblages that asks for our response *right now*. Figurations can also be a mode of feminist protest: a 'literal expression' of those parts of us that the 'phallogocentric regime' has 'declared off-limits' and 'does not want us to

become' (Braidotti 2006: 170) – and bodies of water, in my imagining of them, underline this feminist impetus. And finally, in Haraway's (1992: 86) words, 'feminist theory proceeds by figuration at just those moments when its own historical narratives are in crisis'. In this sense, bodies of water also take up the challenge of a feminism potentially circumscribed by its attention to humans, as I outline below. Bodies of water are about 'resetting the stage for possible pasts and futures' (Haraway 1992: 86) – here, in terms of environmental waters, feminist theory, and our corporeal implication in both.

Figuring embodiment as watery, then, is a deliberate extension of feminist theories of embodiment into distinctly posthuman waters. This work finds me keeping intellectual company with many notable feminist theorists who are rethinking bodily matters beyond a humanist imagination – Stacy Alaimo, Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Mel Y. Chen, Elizabeth Grosz, Donna Haraway, Myra Hird, Jasbir Puar, Elizabeth A. Wilson, Kathryn Yusoff, Cecilia Åsberg ... the list is much longer, but this might do for a start. It is within this emerging conversational feminist space that my work finds its closest and most comfortable affinities. But all stories have several ways of being told, and tracking the trickle of these bodies of water back to their source is neither linear nor simple. Figuring bodies of water, for me, did not start in a place called 'posthuman feminism' but rather made its way there. (Or, you could say that like so many awkwardly fitting beings, I found there some conceptual company that responded well to the beating heart of my project.) I'll say more about posthuman feminism later. *Bodies of Water* actually began (as much as anything ever simply 'begins') in three places simultaneously. In theoretical terms, one of these was embodied phenomenology, learned primarily through Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The second was the rhizomatics of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, whose work initially spurred me to consider what a posthuman or rhizomatic phenomenology might look like. The space that combusted between Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze and Guattari – that is between phenomenology and posthumanism – in terms of a methodological orientation for this book, is plumbed in Chapter 1, and I return to the significance of posthuman phenomenology as a way of conceiving this project later.

But French *écriture féminine* – the third starting point – is for me the most significant, and seduced me long before phenomenology and rhizomatics fluttered for me their fine pages. Despite appearing in English translation

in the last decades of the twentieth century, namely at the height of Western feminist theory's concerns of 'biological essentialism', these French feminist philosophers refused the terms of this debate from the outset. Literally writing a new kind of embodiment into being, thinkers such as Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous instead affirmed the materiality of embodiment in its fleshiest, most material sense, at the same time insisting that these bodies were still unknown, still becoming. The bodies of *écriture féminine* were certainly susceptible to cultural discipline and containment – these bodies were lived materialities under the regime of phallogocentrism, after all – but as these philosophers averred, this same materiality offered a way of experiencing the sexual difference of bodies differently. (Choosing a temporal orientation for this story is difficult – the past tense isn't quite right, as these writers and their texts still very much animate discussions within feminism and beyond. Yet it seems nonetheless important to signal the precociousness of their theory, somewhat out of step with the time in which it was written and translated, yet prefiguring some of our most significant contemporary feminist theoretical 'breakthroughs'.) Water and fluid embodiment is a particular anchor here. In these works, the wateriness of bodies is always more than metaphorical, and watery matter is recognized as a literal wellspring for new ontological and ethical paradigms. Luce Irigaray's work on water and sexual difference is a particular touchstone for my work here. This is not only because of her book-length treatment of water bodies in *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, but also because of her direct engagement with phenomenology, alongside a mounting re-evaluation of her role in prefiguring what some now call material feminisms and/or new materialism.

This is not to say that Irigaray provides, fully formed, the theory of bodies I am looking for. Her work has been critiqued on the grounds of an implicit heteronormativity, and her limited interest in more-than-human bodies (despite heightened attention to these questions in her recent writings) cannot sustain an ecological ethics or politics on its own. Both of these are issues that I return to in Chapter 2. But in tracing the arc of my project, this French feminist philosophy is a vital spark that ignites much of the theoretical development that follows. Precisely because of its attention to materiality, embodiment, imaginaries, and corporeal relational ethics *that begins to extend beyond the individual human*, this work must be acknowledged as an important precursor

to posthuman thinking in general, despite seldom being acknowledged as such outside of more circumscribed feminist conversations. Part of my objective in this book is to sketch out the relationship between French feminist *écriture féminine* – and the work of Irigaray on bodies of water in particular – and an ecologically oriented posthuman feminism to follow. In doing so, I am keen to draw on these key feminist insights into intercorporeality and sexual difference, but also push them into queerer waters. Here, human, cis-gendered, female reproductive bodies become but one source of life proliferation, in a posthuman world of facilitative bodily seas.

The question of origins is still a prickly one (something our bodies of water illuminate, as I discuss in Chapter 3 in relation to evolution stories). Just like bodies of water, stories are rarely autochthonous; they usually begin in many places at once, with many unspoken debts. I am also compelled to recognize the ways in which other kinds of feminist thinking seep into the development of this book's principal proposition. Not least, I do this because there is a pressing need to acknowledge feminist, anticolonial, and queer thinking more generally as facilitating much of our 'new' ecological thinking, and 'new' materialisms particularly (see Ahmed 2008; Sullivan 2012). For four decades, ecofeminism in particular (e.g. Gaard 1993; Kheel 1993; Warren 1997) has been encouraging us to recognize the connections between the derogation of certain kinds of human bodies, and a mistreatment of environmental bodies, including other animals; queer feminisms (e.g. Ahmed 2006; Chen 2012; Gaard 1997; Sandilands 2001; Seymour 2013) have asked us to pay attention to those bodies – *both human and more-than-human* – which challenge teleological norms and straight stories of proliferation and fecundity; anticolonial feminisms have asked us to resist human exceptionalism in our valuations of worlds that sustain us – which connects strongly to feminist approaches to environmental justice that argue that when it comes to intercorporeal vulnerabilities, some skins are more porous than others (e.g. Andrea Smith 1997; LaDuke 1999). Some versions of feminist technoscience studies have encouraged more critical and creative views of the matters that corporeally make us and connect us (see Åsberg 2013). Black feminisms, and other women of colour feminisms, above all, have taught us about difference – as a prerequisite for justice, and as a source of empowerment and strength (see Anzaldúa 1987; hooks 2000; Lorde 1984). Meanwhile, while not necessarily concerned with the

more-than-human, corporeal feminist strains within continental philosophy (sometimes overlapping with the above) have significantly questioned the idea of bodies as autonomous and as stopping at 'one's own' skin (see Gatens 1996; Grosz 1994; Kirby 1997; Probyn 2000; Shildrick 1997). I'll come back to some of these inheritances in later chapters, but it is crucial to note from the outset that feminist theory *very broadly speaking* has long challenged the autonomous phallogocentric notion of embodiment. Whether through the material implications of pregnancy, lactation, and placental relations, or through non-reprosexual theories of care, inherent technologization, political solidarity, and social reproduction, an ecologically oriented posthuman theory of bodies draws from a deep well of inheritance.

A feminist politics of citation (Wekker 2007) is about recognizing debts, but more importantly about allowing certain bodies to continue flourishing – not unlike the logic of bodies of water themselves. Just as my own body is a citation, a repetition, of many myriad bodies of water that proceed me and bathe me into being, so to are my writings and intellectual labours drawn from the wells of many others that have created the conditions of possibility for this work. So, if the above is beginning to sound like an unruly acknowledgements page, I apologize. But in a book that argues for the relationality necessary for living well with all measure of embodied others, it seems important to press the point that no one ever thinks alone, and that gratitude is worth deliberately, even meticulously, cultivating. 'Bodies of water' as a figuration might have emerged from these other kinds of feminism (Greta Gaard's 'Explosion' [2003] and Jeanette Armstrong's 'Water is silwkw' [2006] show, for example, that such figurations are already there within ecofeminism and anticolonial thinking). But because mine is also an explicit intervention in phallogocentric history of philosophies of bodies – both challenging and drawing from the thinkers whose work I inherit as a Western feminist theorist – I situate my work deliberately within posthuman feminism.

Posthuman feminism for the Anthropocene

Posthuman feminism can be understood on the one hand as a response to other contemporary ideas and theories of posthumanism. In popular

discourse, the 'posthuman' often indexes a belief in modern technological progress, where technoscience might save us from our bodily vulnerabilities – 'even from death' (Åsberg 2013: n.p.). This kind of posthumanism morphs into a transhumanism that seeks an escape from worldly embodiment and its presumed limitations (the best packaging of this idea is surely the trademarked name 'Humanity+'. For an earlier version of a feminist critique, see Midgely 1992). In Åsberg's (2013: n.p.) view, such circulations of the term uncritically celebrate 'Enlightenment ideals of anthropocentric humanism' and 'translate into a form of super-humanism [...] working to *complete* the mind-body split'. Feminist posthumanisms, as both Åsberg, Braidotti, and others argue, explicitly counter this popular version of posthumanism that desires *disembodiment* and the overcoming of worldly bodily difference. Alongside this rejection of technophilia, feminist posthumanisms also provide a counterpart for technophobic posthuman theories, that is, those that seek to safely cordon human bodies off from 'a bioengineered assault on our fundamentally pure, sacrosanct human nature and our essential dignity', as Åsberg describes Fukuyama's (2002) dystopian vision in *Our Posthuman Future*. Feminist posthumanisms refuse such a self-evident split between a 'natural' and 'cultural' human bodiedness; Donna Haraway's (1985) celebrated figure of the cyborg reminds us that bodies have been technological (and racialized, and gendered, and hybrid assemblages of naturalcultural worlds) all along.

But taking Haraway as a case in point, we should note that feminist posthumanisms have not only been reactive; they also have a deep genealogy of their own. In many ways, as Åsberg (2013: n.p.) argues, 'feminist critiques of androcentrism already put feminist theory firmly in the posthuman line of thought' – suggesting that feminism has always been posthuman, *even avant la lettre*. In Braidotti's (2013: 24–26) assessment, feminist critiques of abstract masculinity, triumphant whiteness, and a colonial drive to mastery and European universalism were all criticisms of the humanistic ideal and its unitary subject – which cannot be said about all contemporary forms of the posthuman 'turn'. In Zakiyyah Jackson's (2015) important critique, she warns that some of these 'appeals to move "beyond the human" may actually reintroduce the Eurocentric transcendentalism this movement purports to disrupt, particularly with regard to the historical and ongoing distributive

ordering of race' (215). These appeals for a posthumanism are authorized by a racism, which may even, Jackson suggests, overdetermine their appeal. This problem is compounded by gestures towards the 'post' or the 'beyond' that ignore or assimilate critiques of humanism by black people (216).¹ The kind of feminist posthumanism that interests me is one that strives to connect to the many subjects of feminism that were never granted access to the designation of 'human' in the first place. These feminist posthumanisms emerge from, include, and learn from black and anticolonial (as well as queer and crip) feminist critiques. This politics of citation moves ahead and circles back.

Finally, as Åsberg, Braidotti, Haraway, and Jackson all stress in their own ways, a feminist posthumanism is a deeply ethical orientation. The kinds of ontologies it inaugurates – connected, indebted, dispersed, relational – are not only about correcting a phallogocentric understanding of bodies, but also about developing imaginaries that might allow us to relate differently. Relating differently as bodies both different and in common seems a particularly pressing question, as scientific evidence mounts that we have indeed entered the post-Holocene geological age of the Anthropocene. First suggested by biologist Eugene Stoermer in the 1980s, but popularized by Nobel prize-winning chemist Paul Crutzen at the beginning of the millennium, the Anthropocene refers to the proposition that human beings have become a significant factor in the Earth's geological, lithospheric, and biological systems. From climate change to biodiversity loss, to even altering the Earth's rotation with the filling of the Three Gorges Dam, a growing consensus suggests that humans are leaving a planetary mark that will be clearly legible in the planetary archive of the future – and that this territorialisation may be very bad news for many earthly inhabitants, ourselves included.

While the Anthropocene raises many important questions about our callous interference with the planet, the concept itself is also troubling. If the Anthropocene arises from a kind of human exceptionalist approach to life, how can we address this with a term that puts humans right back in the centre (see Crist 2013)? What kinds of license for further marking of the Earth – in geoengineering, for example – might Anthropocene talk inaugurate (see Steffen et al. 2011; Minter 2012)? The undertone of 'Anthropocenomania' seems at times to be less a plea for curbing the Human, and more an insistence that we *do* matter, and always will. These are ethical questions that feminist

posthumanism is well suited to engage, particularly as these issues concern anthropocentrism and a continued binaristic phallogocentrism of Man versus Nature. As for bodies of water specifically, one key critique of Anthropocene discourse concerns what Lesley Head (2014) calls the ‘species-error’. What erasures of *intra-species difference* are at work here, if we humans are apparently all in the same boat? Critiques of these anthropocentric, androcentric, and white hegemonic premises are gathering steam (see Chakrabarty 2012; Crist 2013; Head 2014; Malm and Hornborg 2014; Mitchell 2015). A feminist figuration of bodies of water, I argue, offers a way of confronting these differences, but it also extends the key critique of an Anthropocene talk that pits Man against Nature ‘out there.’ *Bodies of water* insists that if we do live as bodies ‘in common,’ this commonality needs to extend beyond the human, into a more expansive sense of ‘we’.

Yet, despite the seeming usefulness of posthuman feminist approaches to thinking through contemporary human relations to more-than-human worlds, it may be fair to say that this area of scholarship is not exactly taking the world by storm. Resistance to feminist modes of thinking within masculinist-dominated posthuman thought and new materialisms is not much of a surprise, given a long tradition of erasure of feminist voices from philosophy canon-building. Even as we acknowledge notable exceptions, the status quo in this emergent field is still ‘white men’ (as an institution replete with mechanisms for ensuring its own reproduction, if not necessarily attached to white male bodies, as Sara Ahmed argues (2014)). The very recent critical work on the Anthropocene is a telling case in point of such institutional reproduction. When in 2014, UK journalist Kate Raeworth offered us the *#Manthropocene* Twitter hashtag, she was specifically referring to the relative absence of women, save five, from the thirty-six member Anthropocene Working Group – a subset of a branch of the International Commission on Stratigraphy charged with deciding whether or not the Anthropocene should be designated a ‘bona fide’ geological era. As Raeworth (2014: n.p.) puts it, ‘leading scientists may have the intellect to recognize that our planetary era is dominated by human activity, but they still seem oblivious to the fact that their own intellectual deliberations are bizarrely dominated by white northern male voices.’ Raeworth’s argument is primarily an ‘outcome-based’ one, where the inclusion of diverse, more representative voices will lead to the

application of a broader range of experience and better collective insight to the task at hand – giving us ultimately a better result.

The point here is not to rehearse old debates about the correlation – and lack thereof – between female bodies at the table, and the inclusion of feminist perspectives; of course, one doesn't guarantee the other. This red herring could happily swim away, if we were actually able to point to sustained recognition of long-standing feminist critiques of humanism within these debates, regardless of the author's gender. Until then, counting kinds of bodies around the table is another way of putting a question on the table: what does telling the story of humans in relation to more-than-humans in one way, rather than another (here – either acknowledging feminist contributions or invisibilizing them) mean for how these stories will unfold? While Raeworth notes similarly abysmal diversity among Nobel sciences and economics laureates, we too might raise an eyebrow at the tables of contents and bibliographies that accompany recent interdisciplinary critical theory scholarship on the subject. For example, a full text search of the first four issues of the *Anthropocene Review* – a new explicitly transdisciplinary journal whose 'overall aim is to communicate clearly and across a wide range of disciplines and interests, the causes, history, nature, and implications of a world in which human activities are integral to the functioning of the Earth System' – yields one hit for 'feminism' – a reference by Lesley Head to Val Plumwood's 1993 monograph *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. My specific concern is not about recognition per se (although we know the politics of recognition also has very material consequences), but about openings and closures for future stories – stories according to which some of us will thrive, and others will not. I suppose that too could be called an 'outcome-based' argument.

This book is an oblique response to these omissions, and at one level, it can be read as a sustained argument for why feminist work is so crucial within posthuman thought, particularly as this dovetails with environmental humanities in relation to the Anthropocene. For one, if the dominant posthuman scholarship is anything to go by (here, I am thinking as well of Object-Oriented Ontology that has engendered some infamous debates on the subject of its tense relation to feminism²), I share the very legitimate concern of others that a lack of acknowledgement of feminist contributions to these issues transmutes into a lack of attention to intra-human difference, and a

concomitant levelling of matter, things, and objects altogether. This is feminist theory's important contribution: while 'we' might be more like other animals than our Enlightenment forefathers would like us to think; while 'we' might be part of, rather than separate from, the mud at our feet and the rain whipping our faces; and while 'we' might have become 'a geological force capable of affecting all life on this planet' in the Anthropocene (Braidotti 2013: 5), in the words of Adrienne Rich (1986: 217), 'the problem was we did not know whom we meant when we said we'. This is the academic face of the 'species-error' noted earlier: although much has been made in this general scholarship of the idea of human exceptionalism within Anthropocene studies and environmental humanities more generally, much more needs to be made of the fact that 'we' is probably the most fraught word in the English language.

Yet, we can hardly *not* use the word 'we' – you've been tripping over it constantly since you began reading this! How can I denounce it, then, just as I pull it swiftly back into circulation? 'Yes, *we*', writes Robyn Wiegman (2012: 13). 'That towering inferno of universalism. That monstrous display of self-infatuation. That masterstroke of white-woman-speech.' Like Wiegman, I too hear 'voices warn[ing] me away from the danger' – my own among them. But like Wiegman, I too persist: 'if the protocols of critical speech have taught us to avoid the risk, it is just as true to say that identity knowledges rarely take political or critical aim without some measure of hope that *we* will struggle into existence – partial and contingent to be sure, but resonant and agential' (13). As Wiegman notes, the alternative – a safe refuge in the 'small cave of the I' – is not an option for her, for the *I* is hardly a safer bet (being just as conditioned by scripts of power and belonging). In the context of bodies of water, that cave of self-secureness, moreover, dissolves in the dissident facticity of transcorporeal flows. Bodies of water, from a feminist perspective, insist that I find a way of challenging the myth of the 'we' within a *nonetheless mutually implicating* ontology. I explore these questions at length in relation to a posthuman politics of location in Chapter 1. For now, Wiegman says it best: 'in the taut space between the *we* that must be disciplined and the *we* that is desired ... my strategy [...] is to inhabit the error, not to avoid it' (13).

Particularly in the Anthropocene, with its growing indices of stratification, we need to unpick and confront the slide into homogenization – of women, of humans, of objects in general. The waters that we comprise are never neutral;

their flows are directed by intensities of power and empowerment. Currents of water are also currents of toxicity, queerness, coloniality, sexual difference, global capitalism, imagination, desire, and multispecies community. Water's transits are neither necessarily benevolent, nor are they necessarily dangerous. They are rather material maps of our multivalent forms of marginality and belonging. The idea of the Anthropocene, in its most useful sense, places some demands upon humans to account for past actions and recalibrate present ones; *Bodies of Water* offers some imaginative tools for rising to this challenge. Yet, while an ethical self-help quick-fix may seem appealing, I orient my work more in line with Haraway's (2007: 15) claim that 'outcomes' are never guaranteed: 'there is no teleological warrant here, no assured happy or unhappy ending, sociologically, ecologically, or scientifically. There is only the chance of getting on together with some grace'. In other words, this book does not seek a romantic vision of watery repair, nor does it imagine ecojustice through a naive invocation that 'we are all the same water' – even if our joint implication within a hydrocommons is one of its key themes. Living ecologically demands more attention to difference, and any theory on the relationality of bodies of water must readily answer this demand. Again, as bodies of water, 'we' are all in this together (Braidotti 2002), but 'we' are not all the same, nor are we all 'in this' in the same way.

Living with the problem

Dominant theories of posthumanism and the Anthropocene underplay the important contributions of feminism to these issues. At the same time, feminist work on non-human worlds has also been met with a certain resistance within feminism itself. This tension can be phrased in a number of ways: what does a concern with environments or non-humans have to do with feminism's (even feminisms's) 'core mission'? Why think about non-humans and the environment when there is so much *human* suffering? Isn't the non-human a bit of a *distraction*? And not least: if this is indeed a *feminist* theory, isn't there something important still to say about human *women*?²³

Resistance is easy to feel, but not always easy to 'empirically' substantiate (why didn't she get that grant? Why was that candidate chosen over that other

one? Is a corridor comment after a conference paper a citable critique?).⁴ But since finger-pointing and defensiveness never get us very far, it is more useful to think about the basis for the resistance to posthuman orientations within some feminist academic circles, and what might be at stake in these tensions. For example, if posthuman embodiment encourages us to challenge the idea of a discrete and autonomous body, we might recall how various kinds of feminisms have also (wittingly, unwittingly, or even strategically) supported a version of the dominant neoliberal paradigm of normative embodiment – discrete, zipped-up, free. From reproductive rights to anti-violence campaigns, for many feminist social justice movements, claiming autonomous control over one's 'own body' has been a hard-fought battle: 'get your laws off my body', 'our bodies, ourselves', 'my body, my choice'.⁵ So, in turning to the posthuman, what might we forfeit by troubling this idea of a body as 'mine'? In decentring the human, what other centres – of action, of responsibility, of gravity – might we lose?

These are serious questions. Political theorist Anne Phillips offers a thoughtful critique of feminist posthumanism. Wary about where all this 'decentring the human' might lead, she eloquently states: 'If we are troubled by hierarchies, we should warm to the critique of anthropocentrism. If we are additionally troubled by failures to act, we may worry about what gets lost in this' (Phillips 2015: 130). While sympathetic to critiques of 'species-narcissism', Phillips (drawing on the work of Iris Marion Young and Hannah Arendt) is concerned that a posthuman orientation risks weakening our specific human responsibility to act politically, and to urgently address structural inequalities as identified by feminist critique.

Yet we've already noted that feminist philosophy has long argued that our bodies depend on one another for their literal survival – not only through entanglements of gestation, childbirth, and lactation, but also through networks of care, and material and affective patternings of bodies, subjects, communities, and worlds, that encompass far more than the female reprosexual womb. So, while Rosi Braidotti (2013: 3) announces posthumanism as a response to a new paradigm brought about by the 'effects of scientific and technological advances', we also need to stress that new advances in technoscience only underline a distributed vulnerability and collaborative ontology that were there all along. Phillips's main concern is not so much the relationality of

bodies as it is what happens to equality once we decentre the human – the risk that we will just be too overwhelmed by all of that distributed agency, all that ‘vibrant matter’, in Jane Bennett’s terms, to *do* anything, anymore. Indeed, she points out that distributed agency is already there in the feminist politics on the *human* – in Iris Marion Young’s work, for example. But, as Phillips (2015: 129) puts it, ‘in Young’s account, it remains humans who are the agents, humans who need to assume their responsibility for the systems in which they are enmeshed’. But it is unclear to me why this enmeshment would stop at the species boundary. In fact, I read Young here as calling for precisely the kind of posthuman responsibility that I hope *Bodies of Water* might encourage. I agree that taking responsibility in the context of what Alaimo (2010: 20–21) calls the ‘swirling landscape of uncertainty’ engendered by a world of often ‘incalculable’ material agency can be overwhelming, and we may indeed lose our centre. But posthuman ethics may depend upon pushing against the borders of comfort. I’m not sure if any real gains for social and ecological justice, in the broadest of senses, have ever been achieved any other way. The challenge is to assume responsibility, even as we stay with the trouble.

Imagining ourselves as bodies of water, I argue, provides a vector for at least partially mapping these responsibilities. When we pee antihistamines into waterways, the ‘distributed agency’ of those drugs on hydroecologies, on riparian flora and fauna, and on weather systems, drips from our bodies, too. When we get bored of fossil fuel talk and become complacent with ineffectual government policies, we too let out our hot breath onto the thawing tundra that grounds Arctic communities. I do not mean this as an appeal to a neoliberal individualism where the onus would shift away from structures and onto supposedly free, autonomous individuals – quite the opposite. (Nor, I should note, is that the kind of responsibility that Phillips calls for.) A posthuman feminist ethics commits to understanding our multivalent implications in these questions, as a place to begin.

In other words, even as a priority within some dominant strains of feminist theory has been to argue for bodily autonomy (particularly as it was withheld from specific kinds of bodies – female, black, gay, disabled, colonized), feminist thinkers have also been at the vanguard of challenging the humanist and masculinist notion of bodies as coherent wholes – and importantly, sometimes in the same breath. Luckily, feminist theory is known for having

‘only paradoxes to offer’ (Scott 1997), and the question of embodiment is no exception. Thus, the paradox of bodies – bodies that we are willing to defend to the death, even as we know they are falling apart at the seams – is not, as Elizabeth Grosz would say, a problem to be solved. Most big problems, Grosz (2012: 14) reminds us, ‘like the problem of gravity, of living with others, or that of mortality, have no solutions’; instead we need to seek ‘ways of living with problems’. In other words, the challenge is not to solve the feminist paradox of bodies, but rather to experiment in how to live this paradox, and live it well. My conviction is that negotiating paradox is one of feminist theory’s best plays, and my proposition in this book is that the figuration of bodies of water might be one means for such experimentation.

This is all to say: the posthuman feminism of *this* book is not a rejection of social justice-oriented feminisms that continue to struggle, in quite human terms and in very human contexts, for the ability of human bodies to be allowed to be. Given the proliferation of versions of posthumanism that tend towards an erasure of the specificity of human difference, and that are quick to entrench the species error in response to (or really, in the *ongoing instalment of*) an Anthropocene discourse, it is no wonder a feminist scepticism towards a posthuman turn abides. Indeed, it is but an updated version of the question that Donna Haraway asked a quarter century ago around the ‘death of the subject’, so heralded within ‘nonfeminist poststructuralist’ theory at the time. Isn’t it funny, Haraway (2004 [1992]: 57) muses, that ‘the breakup of “coherent” or masterful subjectivity’ emerges ‘just at the moment when raced/sexed/colonized speakers begin “for the first time”, (...) to represent themselves’? As Jackson (2013) reminds us, this irony also echoes the arguments of black scholars such as Lewis Gordon, who explains why certain subjects might be unwilling to give up the ‘humanist prize’, after being excluded from humanity for so long.⁶ In the Anthropocene, when the stakes are nothing less than clean water to drink, a home above sea-level, and relative safety in the eye of a perpetual storm, these elisions are not just an ironic question, but an urgent demand.

Bearing these sleights of hand in mind, I am not quite on board with Grosz’s suggestion that the future of feminist theory – through the work of concepts, or even figurations – is to move beyond what she calls feminism’s obsession with the politics of representation towards something quite ‘new’. In order

to accomplish this moving beyond, Grosz suggests, we need to displace questions (even critiques) of identity politics, the primacy of epistemology, the human subject, and current understandings of oppression within feminist thought. Grosz is right: we need to think about difference, ontology, the inhuman, and new understandings of oppression. But what do we suggest by staging this as a flight *from* some kind of passé feminism, or its overcoming? I prefer to understand anything 'new' as a rearticulation of and with (in the sense of 'fitting together') feminist work already waged, and still ongoing. This is not to dismiss crucial disagreements about the efficacy of a posthuman politics, nor to claim that there is *nothing* new going on with current feminist posthumanism, but rather to remember that we are the condition of each other's possibility (another lesson of water, as we'll see). In this very specific sense, I *do* think we are all in this together.

Water is what we make it

The primary aim, then, of *Bodies of Water* is to reimagine embodiment along feminist and posthuman trajectories – but it is just as much about *reimagining water*. Put otherwise, changing how we think about bodies means changing how we think about water.

As geographer Jamie Linton (2010: 14) convincingly demonstrates, the idea of water as something that 'can be and should be considered apart from [its] social and ecological relations' is a relatively new phenomenon. Water was first expressed as the chemical formula H_2O only as recently as the eighteenth century, and recognized as a substance that animates the hydrological cycle with the rise of the hydrological sciences in the nineteenth – at which point we became able to conceive of it as abstracted from bodies and environments. Linton calls this 'modern water' – indexing both a historical view but also the Enlightenment scientific positivism that this understanding of water espouses. In Linton's genealogy, modern water is 'the dominant, or natural, way of knowing or relating to water, originating in Western Europe and North America, and operating on a global scale by the later part of the twentieth century' (14). On this view, water is deterritorialized, rendered 'placeless' (18). 'All water is made known as an

abstract, isomorphic, measurable quantity,' all reducible to that fundamental unit 'H₂O' (14). And, as Linton (drawing on the work of David Harvey) reminds us, like all hegemonic discourses, the 'naturalness' of modern water as abstraction reproduces itself through the same ideas, institutions, and mechanisms that it installs in the first place (9).

The key aim of Linton's book-length genealogy is to help us understand the reasons for the current water crisis. 'Water' constitutes one of the so-called Anthropocene's most urgent, visceral, and ethically fraught sites of political praxis and theoretical inquiry. Our reshaping of this planet is occurring not least through the rechorography and rematerialization of its waters: ancient aquifers are being rapidly depleted; rivers that once ran fast are now exhausted before they reach the sea; dams, canals, and diversions undermine many vital waterways. Large-scale extraction such as in the Tar Sands of Alberta, Canada pollutes more water, volume-wise, than the quantity of energy resources removed from the earth. Oceans are acidifying, and the composition of life they sustain seems to be shifting at breakneck speed. Simultaneously, markets in water rights and bulk exports commodify and further deterritorialize this substance and attempt to profit from scarcity and pollution. Linton's important point, however, is that the water crisis is also a social crisis. He does not mean that people will suffer – although many are clearly suffering – but that this crisis is largely precipitated by a social imaginary of what water is. In Linton's words, 'water bears the traces of its social relations, conditions, and potential' (7). Or, in Karen Barad's (2007) terminology of mutually emergent intra-actions, we could say that the water crisis is *worlded* from the entanglement of material water scarcity and pollution *with* our idea of water.⁷ From hydroengineering to global water management regimes, Linton demonstrates how our watery imaginaries directly impact how we treat water – how we think it should serve us (limitlessly), and what we think we can make it do (anything we need).

Pointing to these water crises underlines the pressing ecopolitical context of my argument. As I noted above, reimagining our embodied relation to water seems particularly important now, as the man-made currents of the Anthropocene pull us increasingly further away from any 'safe operating space for humanity' (Rockstrom et al. 2009). Linton's argument also helps me understand why my own project of thinking bodies as watery, and water as

embodied, is perhaps more challenging than it might seem on the surface. Bodies of water as figuration goes against the imaginary of 'modern water', consolidated now for centuries, that sees water as something 'out there'. The task of this book, then, is to intervene in, and disturb, this hegemonic worldview. That said, I'm not suggesting that 'modern water' can be – or even should be – entirely undone. Thinking water as a vast generality has indeed engendered some worrying consequences, as Linton outlines, but it also opens up to new kinds of thinking that can be empowering, and useful, in our current situation – for example in thinking about water as a universal human right. It also opens to one of the principal questions of this book – namely, of how to think our commonality as water bodies alongside, rather than against, a more specific politics of location. In any case, paying closer attention to how we imagine water, and attempting to forge alternatives to our dominant imaginaries, is not just a thought experiment. It is a means for cultivating better ways of living with water *now*.

So I agree with Linton: 'water is what we make it'. In the first place, 'water' is our idea, our imaginary, our naming of matter in a way that corresponds to our worldviews. In this sense, our 'making' of water as an imaginary is necessarily forged in the entanglement of our values with the very material matter at hand. It follows that our 'making' of water also includes all of the problematic ways we currently *remake* it and *unmake* it – as dirty, depleted, deterritorialized, for example. From the polluted tailings ponds of the Alberta Tar Sands to the extremities of the Californian drought, these waterscapes are certainly material, but they would not be worlded without a certain aqueous imaginary that delimits what we think water should be, and should do. But water is also 'what we make it' quite literally. Since we human and more-than-human animators of life are all bodies of water, we give material form, shape, and meaning to that which exists in the abstract in only a very circumscribed way. As a part of our lifeworld, water must take up an expression in some body, and human embodiment is one of these particular expressions. Water is thus also specifically what *we* make it, in the sense that it is not simply something 'out there' – environment, resource, commodity, backdrop – but also the stuff of human bodies, and never separate from our own incontestable materiality. Crucially, in understanding the ways in which we give shape to water, we can't slip into a naïve constructivism, as though this wet stuff were

somehow conjured by human minds. Water – whatever we call it – calls to us too, from a realm of materiality that is also, simultaneously, more-than-human and beyond any kind of intentional grasp. As I argue in Chapter 3, dissolution of knowability, or containability, or mastery, is part of water's ontologic. And, inasmuch as it is what we make it, water is always making us too.

The possibility of posthuman phenomenology

Just as corporeal figurations are never 'immaterial', rethinking water demands a position that is never 'just' metaphoric. We might, for example, note a 'fluid turn' in social, political, and cultural theory in the last decade or so, where fluidity serves as a trope for poststructuralist and anti-atomistic thinking *par excellence*. (The plethora of recent calls-for-papers whose main theme is thus designated could be a case-in-point.⁸) Yet, from Zygmunt Bauman's turn-of-the-millennium books on our 'liquid' situation (*Liquid Love*, *Liquid Life*, *Liquid Times*, *Liquid Fear* ...) to James L. Smith's recent chapter on the 'Fluid' in a new publication on *Inhuman Nature* (2014), we see that liquid and fluid are not necessarily synonymous with *water* as a worldly substance. Here, these terms might refer rather to a certain physics whose purpose it is to inform a certain metaphysics.

The 'mechanics of fluids' (as Irigaray calls them in her 1985 essay of the same name), and the ways in which they impact our possibilities for thinking, is certainly a question that pervades these pages. But I distinguish my work from these other theoretical currents on fluidity in two important ways. First, water is not only fluid. Its behaviours and logics are multivalent. In this book I thus also attend to watery logics (or 'mechanics') of milieu, dissolution, and differentiation, among others. If my aim is to think *with* water, and even learn *from* water, then keen attention to its chemistry and physics quickly reveals a phenomenality beyond fluidity. This brings me to my second point: in this book I am not interested in fluidity or any other watery logic *only in the abstract*. When we focus on actual waters, rather than water-in-the-abstract, the reduction of water to fluidity is really just a good old-fashioned stereotype (i.e. based on some aspect of a material reality, but far more complex when you pay closer attention). If this book is to make a worthwhile contribution

to rethinking our relations to the waters with which we live and upon which we depend, then it seems important that we pay attention to the specific ways in which water travels, and the specific kinds of bodies that certain waters comprise, transform, and dissolve. As Janine MacLeod (2013) has argued, this is part of our ethical obligation to the increasingly vulnerable waters that give metaphors of fluidity their traction in the first place.

One way to be attentive to the complexity and specificity of water(s) is through close ‘naturalcultural’ and multispecies ethnographies,⁹ or other kinds of interdisciplinary ‘case studies’. Excellent examples of this include Veronica Strang’s (2013) work on the Murray-Darling river in Australia, Rita Wong and Dorothy Christian’s (2013) embodied and embedded research on Vancouver’s ‘invisible’ waters, Margaret Wooster’s (2009) richly layered natural history of the Great Lakes watersheds in New York State and Quebec, Canada, and the collection of artists who collaboratively reimagine Western Australia’s Lake Clifton in the ‘Adaptation’ project (SymbioticA 2012), among many, many others. My methodological approach in this book, however, is somewhat different. I propose a posthuman phenomenology.

Phenomenology has sometimes been read as antithetical to, or at least a poor fit with, posthuman or new materialist understandings of matter (a position I unpack in more detail in Chapter 1). I argue, however, that this presumed dissonance rests on a certain ontological view of body-subjects as both practitioners and objects of phenomenological inquiry. As I’ve suggested, posthuman feminism provides understandings of bodies as operating simultaneously across different interpermeating registers, from the biological or chemical to the technological, social, political, and ethical. Bodies – including bodies of water – live both above and below the level of the human individual as classically conceived in liberal humanism, and as scaled to a human spatiotemporal sensibility. Alongside posthuman feminist theory, the work of Deleuze and Guattari has been a key contemporary force for rethinking what we mean by ‘bodies’. While our bodies (the body of the phenomenological practitioner, in this case) are clearly human, *we are also* more-than-human bodies in ways that question the boundedness, autonomy, and coherence of the humanist subject (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; see also Protevi 2001: 3–4). According to Edmund Husserl’s (2001: 68) famous dictum, phenomenology goes ‘back to the thing itself’ in order to account for things as

they appear *in experience*. My wager, however, is that our experience as bodies is not only at the subjectivized human level. These convictions provide the condition of possibility of a posthuman phenomenology.

In *Bodies of Water*, my explanation of this possibility is inflected by a Deleuzian reconsideration of bodies, but importantly, it begins with the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. His work offers a detailed theory of embodiment, in which he argues that the body is not something we ‘have’, but is rather something we inescapably *are*. For Merleau-Ponty, going ‘back to the things themselves’ is necessarily an embodied undertaking – but significantly for my project, Merleau-Ponty’s extraordinary understanding of embodiment arguably already moves in a posthuman orientation. Merleau-Ponty draws us towards ‘an image of nonhuman nature’ and reminds us that ‘nature outside of us must be unveiled to us by the Nature that we are ... We are part of some Nature, and reciprocally, it is from ourselves that living beings and even space speak to us’ (Merleau-Ponty 2003: 206). William Connolly (2011: 45) has suggested that such insights invite us to disclose and investigate ‘preliminary affinities’ between human and non-human natures, leading to the ‘organiz[ation of] experimental investigations to uncover dimensions of human and nonhuman nature previously outside the range of that experience’. The practice I propose and develop in *Bodies of Water* is one such ‘experimental investigation’. I draw deliberately on such lessons learned from Merleau-Ponty as I attempt to both describe and enact a phenomenological practice of deep description and knowledge-creation through an amplification of multimodal and posthuman embodiment. How is water in and of my body? When I drink a glass of water, where does it go? How does it animate me? Where does it come from? How does water ask me to move, what sensations does it evoke, what affect does it engender, in me and the bodies it connects me to?

Such description begins by necessarily bracketing the understanding of ‘the body’ that I have inherited from a dominant Western metaphysical tradition (that is, as a bounded materiality and individual subjectivity, and as universally *human*), and becomes curious about the ways in which bodies exceed these strictures, both conceptually and materially. This is a posthuman phenomenological exercise, but as this book insists, it must also be a feminist one – that is one that is also committed to feminist situated knowledge and its

careful attunement to difference. Thus, although posthuman phenomenology is scaffolded by the work of Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, it necessarily relies on feminist theory to resist phenomenology's own tendency towards the 'species error' and an undifferentiated human experience. Chapter 1 thus begins with Adrienne Rich's politics of location as the condition of possibility for posthuman phenomenology, rather than as a mere supplement or optional add-on. As I argue, if phenomenology asks us to understand the world as lived, we can only begin from a situated politics of location – albeit one whose spatiotemporal scale is torqued through posthuman relationalities and becomings.

In a very practical sense, the applicability of the tools of an embodied phenomenological analysis for describing experiences that are below or beyond human-scaled perception may not be immediately clear. How do we experience and describe the workings of our sputum or our watery fascia? How do we hone our attention to the dissipation of our perspiration into a humid forest atmosphere, or of our psychopharmacologically enhanced urine that flows downstream to find a home in new bodily hosts? My discussion of posthuman phenomenology in Chapter 1 therefore also includes an outline of strategies for *enacting* it: I begin with a practice of embodied intuiting and deep attunement and description drawn from my 'apprenticeship' under the late Sam Mallin, an eminent Merleau-Ponty scholar who was fiercely committed to the value of doing phenomenology, rather than merely studying it. As I argue, however, some aspects of our lived experience – subterranean affect, prehistoric transcorporeality, or planetary toxic dispersals, for example – require proxy stories to amplify the experiences of our wateriness that are latent, too quiet, or too vast to easily grasp. I pay particular attention to science stories as a helpful proxy, and I draw on new materialist feminist engagements with science, and the work of Elizabeth A. Wilson in particular, to help make this case.

Importantly, though, this book does not insist on the 'correctness' of posthuman phenomenology. Whether or not my argument sufficiently deals with phenomenology's ties to subjectivity and intentionality that some argue inseparably tethers it to humanism will likely remain an open question. More interesting to me than whether I am 'right' or not is the question: *what might be activated by calling my practice a kind of phenomenology?* What happens when

we claim that dispersed embodiment is also lived embodiment? How might we rethink the history of phenomenology, and the genealogies of posthumanism, by audaciously suggesting that phenomenology might have always been posthuman? In short: *what will it do?* Moreover, while posthumanism pulls us out of the mire of anthropocentrism, my aim in holding on to phenomenology (at least as a starting point) is to insist on our own situatedness as bodies that are *also still human* – insisting that without this close attunement and politics of location, a responsive ethico-politics towards other bodies of water will likely elude us.

As glaciers melt, deltas flood, and we row our lifeboats down the middle of the River Anthropocene, it seems we need any valuable tool we can muster to negotiate the rising tide pushing in from the sea. Bodies of water – as lived embodiment, as figuration, as hydrocommons in difference, and as feminist protest – may not be the paddle that will guide us out of this planetary mess. But I am wagering that this figuration might just help us learn to swim.