

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.

## Embodying Water: Feminist Phenomenology for Posthuman Worlds

### A posthuman politics of location

*I have no means of knowing the human body other than that of living it.*

–Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962: 108)

*The human body is the first and the most immediate cultural location  
of water.*

–Margaret Somerville (2013: 78)

We are the watery world – metonymically, temporarily, partially, and particularly. Water irrigates us, sustains us, comprises the bulk of our soupy flesh. Yet it isn't easy to begin with a 'we'. Granted, its inclusions are intentionally abundant; counted here are not only humans and other animals, plants, fungi, protists, but also geological and meteorological bodies such as oceans, rivers, aquifers, subterranean streams, clouds, storms, swamps, and soils – all dripping or tidal or damp. With this list, the idea of *what a body is* becomes productively, posthumanly, torqued. But in literal terms, this 'we' is too (erroneously) encompassing; there are bodies that it does not admit. Hydrophobic substances such as bitumen, for example, come to mind. In our current age of fossil fuel addiction and concomitant climate change, this antipathy speaks volumes.

But 'we' is not only a question of constitutional accuracy. In feminist political terms, this 'we' goes against much feminist labour to insist on difference and disaggregation. As Adrienne Rich (1986: 225) argued in her (still highly relevant) 1985 essay on the politics of location, 'we' are many, and 'we' do not

want to be the same. Rich learns these insights from Audre Lorde, and other black feminists and feminists on the margins of a largely white, largely middle-class, largely straight feminist movement that was claiming the 'we' of women too readily. In Audre Lorde's (1984: 112) words, the idea that our differences did not exist, or that they could be shed, was nothing more than a 'pathetic pretense'. Claiming a 'we' too hastily risks misrepresentation. Thus, to write 'the body' is too abstract a gesture, notes Rich. Her choice is instead to claim the body as *my body* – as specifically hers, with its own politics of location: 'To write "my body" plunges me into lived experience, particularity'; it 'reduces the temptation to grandiose assertions' (215). 'Begin with the material' (213), invites Rich.

Consider, for example, the materiality of the waters that you are. We could refer to these as intracellular fluid (all of the waters that buoy your trillions of cells) and extracellular fluid (plasma, interstitial fluids, lymphatic fluids, transcellular fluids), or we could name them more specifically: cerumen, chyle, sebum, sputum ... In a different register, we might speak of your humours (black bile, yellow bile, phlegm and blood), or simply of things like spit, and joint lubrication, and pee. At one level, such lists can be Rich's 'grandiose assertions' in another guise, but if you pay attention, these waters also situate you very specifically. *Begin with the material*. Are your synovia too septic? Is an accumulation of angiogenic growth factors in your pericardial fluid causing you heartache? Does your blood clot too easily, or too obstinately? (Or: Does it contain that monumental 'one drop' of racialization that will situate you in sometimes incomprehensible ways? Is your blood spilled too readily?) And also: do your tears flow too freely? Did your eyes water upon finding that old letter folded in the pages of a book, long forgotten? The saliva that floods your mouth when your teeth pop the peel of a juicy kumquat; the sweat slowly dampening the fabric in your armpit, or at the small of your back as you sit on this bus, on this day, in this too-hot town ... All of these waters are about a specifically situated you.

Rich's (1986) own account of her location is similarly grounded in an embodied materiality, inflected with an affective and political subjectivity. Her white skin is not just an idea that grants her privilege but also a surface that has been stretched and disfigured, and which becomes the sac of progressively arthritic joints; she has bones that have been 'well nourished

from the placenta' and the decent 'teeth of a middle-class person' (215). ... significantly, the waters that situate Rich in her specificity do so because of their interpermeation with waters and matters beyond her 'own' body: Jewish blood and white skin passed on from other watery bodies; healthy amniotic waters that bred those strong bones. And while the waters that may have spilled down her cheeks, or moistened her sex, may be of 'her' body, they are also symbiotic condensations of bodies beyond hers: a homophobic culture, a long-sought lover. Rich avers that 'the problem was that we did not know whom we meant when we said "we"' (217). Here she underlines the bad feminist habit of including too many bodies in a cosy togetherness – but her descriptions of her own body also suggest that the 'we' *may not extend far enough*. While the 'we' is insufficient, it is also in many ways inalienable.

In other words, claiming 'I am a body of water' as an alternative to the 'we' personalises and individualizes the claim in a way that is equally inadequate. Bodies of water puddle and pool. They seek confluence. They flow into one another in life-giving ways, but also in unwelcome, or unstoppable, incursions. Even in an obstinate stagnancy they slowly seep and leak. We owe our own bodies of water to others, in both dribbles and deluges. These bodies are different – in their physical properties and hybridizations, as well as in political, cultural, and historical terms – but their differing from one another, their differentiation, is a collective worlding.

An adequate understanding of embodiment, then, is not given by simply asking what 'a body' is. Instead, we need to be more curious about our politics of location: Where is my body? When is it? Why is it – that is, thanks to what, and whom? What are the membranes that separate it or differentiate it from others? Where and how do those membranes break down? Where and when does that body cease to be? And then: in what ways does it repeat? Rich already demonstrates that an understanding of one's body – even a rigorously situated one – is multiscalar and mutigenerational; porous and palimpsestic. It is a congeries of the personal and the political; of the material and the semiotic. It is biological and cultural, and it is never only one thing, in only one place, or only 'itself'. While Adrienne Rich wrote these notes over three decades ago, in many ways they model a feminist posthuman understanding of embodiment, and a feminist subjectivity that

is thoroughly materialist. Rich's body thus also suggests the possibility of a posthuman politics of location, watered.

My first objective in this chapter is to suggest how embodiment, and bodies of water in particular, can be understood from the perspective of a feminist posthumanism. This clarifies some key conceptual scaffolds for this book, but also traces a certain trajectory through body-thought. While terms like feminist posthumanism or new materialism may sound very avant-garde, they amplify and orient particular currents in feminism that pre-exist these terms (in a refrain that I come back to more deliberately in Chapter 2, this is difference and repetition; these new trajectories of feminist thought repeat older ones, but differently). Tracing this genealogy is on the one hand a feminist politics of citation: an acknowledgement of theoretical debts as an ethical practice. On the other hand, I want to make a specific argument: that thinking about difference and subjectivity – a key question in contemporary feminist thought – is productively developed when the materiality of the body, and its various porosities, flows, points of stagnancy, and scalar complexities are brought into focus. Furthermore, this attention to bodily materiality connects questions of feminism more directly to environmental concerns – not only as something we deal with, but also as something we embody, intimately and diffusely. The meaning of water as a particular kind of embodied and environmental materiality – with its unique properties and audacious promiscuity, with its spiritual significance and utter banality, as a specific planetary habitat and a species-specific boundary – unfolds in this book's ensuing chapters.

My second objective in this chapter is to insist that posthuman bodies are *lived*. The body that Rich describes is not just an idea but the material substrate that allows that idea to be. Even as intimacy does not confer mastery or transparent access to a body, Rich knows her body (partially and through different kinds of sensory apparatuses and amplifiers) because she *is* that body. Watery embodiment, as I offer it up, is neither speculative fiction nor thought experiment, but a complex description of the ways in which we live as bodies, and specifically as wet and spongy ones. The feminist posthuman figure of 'bodies of water' surfaces from a deep attentiveness to the ways in which I am embodied, and to how this corporeality matters in/as the world. I fill out this figure in the chapters to come by drawing on a variety

of resources – philosophical, scientific, storied, artistic – but parse these all through the sensory apparatus that is our watery, never-quite-contained, flesh. What results is a thick, saturated description of lived embodiment unfolding over the course of this book. Like the bodies it describes, this story emerges from multiple directions. My aim in drawing on these sources is to discern how 'bodies of water' as a political-ethical feminist figuration can be activated as a way of living these bodies.

These descriptions are grounded, moreover, in the conviction that all theory is material. Concepts only make sense to us because we can experience them, bodily, even when these experiences are too distant, too small, too large, or too intensive to readily grasp at the surface, where we take up what phenomenologists would call 'the natural attitude'.<sup>1</sup> Our bodies as sensory apparatuses must sometimes stretch and contract in order to access the lived materiality that a concept or a theory proposes, yet we live these concepts nonetheless. To describe the world as it is lived is the work of phenomenology, but in order to account for the ways in which an aqueous perspective torques our understanding of embodiment, we need a different kind of phenomenology – one that can divest itself from some of its implied and explicit humanist commitments. What I propose is a feminist posthuman phenomenology. Elaborating this – as a theory, as a method – takes up the latter parts of this chapter, where I also draw on the conceptual resources of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gilles Deleuze. Before turning there, let us return to feminist posthumanism, and bodies of water.

### Milky ways: Tracing posthuman feminisms

In 1985 Adrienne Rich's body is lesbian, Jewish, white, feminist, aging, healthy – in different orders, all at the same time, in both more and less metastable becomings. In terms of identity, Rich (1986: 215) acknowledges that 'even to begin with my body I have to say from the outset that body had more than one identity'. She notes how her race and her gender are materialized in concrete ways; she acknowledges where her white skin has taken her, and places it did not let her go (216). She acknowledges her age, her sexuality. She notes the geopolitics that situate her, and the historical flows of global power that

imprint upon her skin. While these subject-forming lineaments materialize her very concretely, they also index her multiple belongings, and anchor her subjectivity in multiple places. For Rich, the body is always multiple. In what follows, I want to further explore this multivalency in a posthuman feminist orientation in ways that both amplify and extend Rich's insights.

Rich's body is also situated as a maternal body. In Rich's extended exploration of motherhood in *Of Woman Born*, she describes nursing as a vector of powerful and sometimes uncanny affect: 'the act of suckling a child, like a sexual act, may be tense, physically painful, charged with cultural feelings of inadequacy and guilt; or, like a sexual act, it can be a physically delicious, elementally soothing experience' (36). Breastfeeding connects her directly to her infant, but also to other bodies across time, where the entwining of bodies might stir 'the remembered smell of her own mother's milk' (220–221).

Rich thus describes the transit of waters between bodies as a matter of fact, but also as a matter of feeling, of memory, of gendered and sexual embodiment. The intercorporeal flows of breast milk are also a matter of privilege, and a matter of racialized reproductive politics. Novelist Toni Morrison (1987) taught us that breast milk is yet another matter to be usurped from black women, while long histories of slavery, economic disadvantage, and reproductive classism reveal that breast milk flows through materialisms of nation-building, imperialism, and colonization (Bartlett 2004; see also Gaard 2013). The practice of wet nursing is also steeped in discourses of human privilege and speciesism; science writer Florence Williams (2012: 163) remarks that in certain contexts, wet nurses are 'transformed into virtual dairy cows'. This statement, while intended to (rightfully) incite concern for human milk machines, should move beyond speciesist analogy to direct our compassion towards our ungulate kin as well. Breastfeeding connects Rich more generally to a deep evolutionary past of mammalian adaptation, even if the deep time explanation for lactation has been mostly washed away, and will only ever surface through speculative waters. As Greta Gaard (2013: 603) also notes, the industrialized dairy system 'replace[s] breastfeeding's gift economy and sever[s] the nursing relationship between mammal mothers and offspring'. In the process, Big Dairy also extracts wealth from animals and nature, and concentrates it in the hands of capitalist-speciesist producer

owners – thus forging other kinds of subjectivities around labour and class. In all of these ways, nursing is a materialization of a particular but multiply-sited politics of location – of both a 'my body' and various kinds of collective 'we's'.

These politics are moreover shaped by the material composition of specific milky waters. Consider that in addition to fat, vitamins, lactose, minerals, antibodies, and other life-sustaining matters, North American breast milk also likely harbours DDT, PCBs, dioxin, trichloroethylene, cadmium, mercury, lead, benzene, arsenic, paint thinner, phthalates, dry-cleaning fluid, toilet deodorizers, Teflon, rocket fuel, termite poison, fungicides, and flame retardant (Williams 2012: 238). Recent studies (Morgensen et al. 2015) also reveal a troubling transit of perfluorinated alkylate substances – used primarily (and ironically) as a waterproofing synthetic agent – in breast milk, possibly leading to interference in the immune system of the suckler. As Williams notes, if breast milk were sold at the grocery store, in some cases it would exceed allowable levels of chemicals in foods on the shelf next to it (238). Phenomenologist Eva-Marie Simms (2009) echoes these concerns, arguing that the material bond between a lactator and an infant must be understood in the context of the toxic world in which we live, as a matter of embodied ethics.

Not all transits are life-affirming, then. Nor are all poisonous threats new. Historical vectors of (colonial, classed, raced, gendered) power once placed opium on a mother's nipple so that an unwanted child could suckle itself to death (Rich 1986: 261–262), for example. But contemporary forms of environmental pollution that pool in mothers' milk increasingly foreground the need to think about bodies differently – as not at all those discrete, zipped up skins of Enlightenment individualism. In the first place, these toxic transits highlight what Stacy Alaimo (2010) calls our transcorporeality. Transcorporeality refers to 'the literal contact zone between human and more-than-human nature' (2) and insists that bodies are never fully autonomous.

The flows of biomagnified toxins in breast milk also remind us that bodies are both nature and culture, both science and soul, both matter and meaning. As Elizabeth A. Wilson (2015) has compellingly argued, engaging with the biology of bodies is not an alternative nor even a complement to humanistic, cultural, or social constructivist theories; these different processes are rather all inextricably tangled up: attempting to understand one facet without

engaging the others will result in an impoverished analysis. Bodies are always, as Donna Haraway claims, natureculture. Trained well in Western dualisms, we might try to parse out the 'real' biological flows of milky intercorporeality (DDT, antibodies, flame retardant, calcium) from affective, even metaphoric ones (bonding, love, revulsion, fear), but such divisions falter. Psyche and soma, biology and affect, dwell in and as our bodies in what Wilson (2015: 61) (after Sandor Ferenczi) calls 'amphimixis', where seemingly disparate bodily factions are nonetheless communicating with each other in empathic relations. Wilson does not claim that our various embodied means of knowing the world (digestively, neuronally, culturally, etc.) are indistinguishable from one another, but rather that there is no 'originary demarcation' between these kinds of organic knowledges. Once we read Williams's shopping list of breast milk toxins and hold a child to our bodies, arguing for a definitive quarantining of feeling from fact would be very difficult, indeed. We could say, using the language of Haraway or Karen Barad, that these various bodily interfaces – biology and mood and culture and context – are always co-worlding the phenomenon we come know as our bodies. Rather than two separate entities interacting, they intra-act; they become what they are only in relation. Co-worlding is always a collaborative process, and always emergent. The thing called 'the body', as Rich has already suggested to us, is a congeries of other bodies, and always on the move. Nonetheless, it also settles down enough to be accounted for, and to give an (always provisional) account of itself. As we shall see, without such accounting, building an ethical relation to the world would be impossible.

While an insistence on amphimixis and naturalcultural worldings denaturalizes a separation between matter and meaning, integrating these orientations with a more common feminist understanding of subjectivity is not without its difficulties. Alaimo (2010: 117) points out, for example, that transits of toxins do not necessarily recognize the divisions of bodies according to race, class, or gender – a challenging insight that sometimes leads to critiques of posthumanism as apolitical, and uninterested in ethics. We might worry that so much attention to the flows that connect bodies begins to dissolve the ways in which these bodies are different in terms of race or sexuality or gender. We could call this a concern about flat ethics that might follow on from such flat ontologies.<sup>2</sup> Feminist posthumanism can attend

to these concerns by acknowledging decades-old work in environmental justice. Feminist and anticolonial campaigns for environmental justice clearly demonstrate that while flows of toxic matters and currents of gendered, racialized, and colonial biopower are not synonymous, if we trace both we note important patterns of reverberation. For example, we might consider the differences between Rich's breast milk, and that of women living at Akwesasne Mohawk (Kanien'kehá:ka) reservation a few hours drive upstate from where Rich's children were nursed. Until 1978 when polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were banned, all of the sludge generated by General Motors' massive automotive industry was contained in pits on the 258-acre property adjacent to the Kanien'kehá:ka reservation. Like all bodies of water, those sludge pits were porous; like all bodies of water, the bodies of women, and fish, and infants, were porous too. The Mothers' Milk project spearheaded by Mohawk midwife and activist Katsi Cook revealed that women living on the reservation and eating fish from the St Lawrence River had a 200 per cent greater concentration of PCBs in their breast milk in comparison to the general population (La Duke 1999: 10–23).

The direction of these kinds of toxic flows is not only a human project. In Akwesasne, human decisions resulted in the dumping of PCBs, but the permeability of the ground, the path of the river, the appetites of the fish, all become caught in these currents. And anthropogenically created pollutants such as those that Rich's own breast milk may have harboured travel further still, but thanks to more-than-human travel agents. Hitching a ride on atmospheric currents cycling from more temperate regions to the polar north, many persistent organic pollutants (POPs) settle in the Arctic. Here, thanks to the Arctic's cold climes, these toxins do not readily break down; instead, they concentrate, and they enter the food chain – from plankton, to fish, to large marine mammals. (We should pause here. It is important to note that while the blubber of whale bodies keeps them warm, this insulation also attracts and then magnifies fat-soluble toxins, over the course of a long cetacean life. In the words of Rebecca Giggs (2015: n.p.), 'levels build up over many seasons, making some animals far more polluted than their surrounding environment'. Toxic breast milk, in other words, is also a multispecies issue.) Sea mammal fat is then consumed by humans in Arctic communities as a traditional dietary staple. As a result, the breast milk of

Inuit women in the Canadian Arctic contains two to ten times the amount of organochlorine concentrations of samples from white women hundreds of kilometres to the south; PCB levels are also alarmingly high (Trainor et al. 2010: 146–147). Importantly, this ‘body burden’ manifests in multiple ways; Trainor et al. remind us that for Inuvialuit, Gwich’in, Dene, Inuit, Innu, and other groups in the Canadian Arctic, the local ecosystem provides physical sustenance, but ensures cultural sustenance, too (145). While health risks are well documented, the psychological and spiritual effects of contamination also inundate these lactating bodies, and the bodies they in turn nourish (147–148).

Posthuman feminism amplifies the politics of location that Rich and Lorde and others have already elaborated. The falsely touted ‘faceless, raceless category of “all women”’ does not hold for a materialized politics of location any more than it does for other kinds of identity politics (Rich 2003: 219). But instead of only particularizing the body through a closer materialist investigation, feminist posthuman orientations also multiply and expand it. When an Inuit woman nurses her young, her transcorporeal gift is laced with a specific colonial politics of location – but one where the effects of colonial incursion do not require direct proximity to a colonizer. Colonialism is carried by currents in a weather-and-water world of planetary circulation, where we cannot calculate a politics of location according to stable cartographies or geometries.

Time, moreover, is disturbed and redistributed too. Planetary breast milk highlights the uncanny overlap of slow violence (Nixon 2011) and intergenerational violence with the singularity of an infant’s hungry yelp that is always insistently *now*. In these milky ways, time is also unevenly metered – now rushing forward, now seemingly stagnantly still. In her recent work on Chemical Valley (not far from Akwesasne), Michelle Murphy (2013: n.p.) describes contemporary toxic transits as structured by a latency, a temporal lag. ‘In temporal terms’, she writes, ‘latency names the wait for the effects of the past to arrive in the present... [it] names how the past becomes reactivated. Through latency, the future is already altered’. In the context of our water bodies, latency might also be an affirmative capacity to gestate life in the plural; the ‘not yet’ of latency can also be the unfolding of possibility – a ‘potential not yet manifest’ that is not necessarily apocalyptic (Murphy 2013: n.p.).

We’ll return to this life-proliferating possibility in Chapters 2 and 3. But here, latency describes a more ominous temporality hovering on a threshold between ‘maybe not’ and ‘just wait’. For a posthuman feminism, embodiment is therefore not just about more biologically robust detail. It is about paying attention to the complication of scale, where a familiar deictics of ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘mine’ and ‘ours’, even ‘local’ and ‘global’, or ‘now’ and ‘then’, which might have once seemed relatively securable, are now queerly torqued. Time, place, and bodies are all caught in the warp and woof of planetary colonialities that are naturalcultural and diffracted, but still racialized and gendered, all the same.

As Wilson (2015) also cautions, taking a materialist orientation towards bodies does not mean that biological data should be accepted uncritically, as some kind of full and final arbiter of truth. In the context of our contemporary epistemological paradigms, there is a sense that through scientific knowledge, things (like bodies, like water) might finally become knowable. When described through vectors of performativity, or social construction, or affect, or even a more conservative politics of location, knowing our bodies still seemed like a somewhat (comfortingly, even) speculative endeavour. Once biological materiality enters the flow, however, we might think that the depths of our corporeality can be finally fully plumbed – that we might finally become transparently knowable, to ourselves and others. Yet, as Stacy Alaimo (2010) notes, transcorporeal threats (as well as gifts) are often invisible, and, drawing on the work of sociologist Ulrich Beck, she reminds us that risk is incalculable. How, for example, do we calculate the risks of toxic breast milk, when these flows cannot be dissociated from cultural questions, and other kinds of flows? From an amphimixic perspective, and in a water world of queer time and space, we can never track the trickle, definitively, back to its source. Milky fluids cannot be disentangled from Arctic currents or gastric juices, from amniotic seas or cisterns full of our liquid waste. As Alaimo (2010: 62) puts it, the complexities of transcorporeal embodiment are ‘difficult – if not impossible – for individuals to apprehend without access to scientific technology or institutions’. In other words, productive relationships with the natural sciences are necessary in order to map these transits with rigor – for example cultivating literacy in biological data as Wilson suggests. Later we’ll explore how these relationships can play out in terms of a phenomenological practice. Importantly, though,

such engagement does not aspire to an epistemology of scientific certainty. It rather enacts a tentative collaboration of knowledge projects where any final 'truth' is always elusive (Alaimo 2010: 20). In this context, knowing a body is never an exercise in certainty – certain boundaries, certain relations, certain transits, certain outcomes. A posthuman politics of location must give up the will to mastery, even of our own subject-selves.

As noted however, even within this 'swirling land[water]scape of uncertainty', we still need to give an account (Alaimo 2010: 20). Aqueous transcorporeality therefore demands of us a posthuman feminist ethics – a way of being responsible and responsive to our others, despite (or even because of) this 'ever-changing landscape of continuous interplay, intra-action, emergence, and risk' (21). Before turning to matters of method, then, we might return to the question of 'we', and an account of commonality that still insists on difference.

The politics of location of Rich's body, those of an Inuit woman's in Arctic Canada, or of someone involved in Katsi Cook's activist research in Akwesasne, are all differently assembled. They do not all merge in an amorphous flow. Nancy Tuana describes this as the membrane logic of 'viscous porosity' where viscosity draws attention to 'sites of resistance and opposition' rather than only 'a notion of [porous] open possibilities' that might suggest, again, that undifferentiated 'we' (Tuana 2008: 194). Difference is key to a feminist posthumanism, but at the same time, differentiation is never a decisive severing. We began with the objective of 'describing the geography closest in', as Rich recommends, and we have paddled a great distance while never really leaving this body that is 'mine'. These bodies are all caught up in one another's currents – as they are with the whale's body, the body of the rain cloud, and the body of the increasingly toxic sea. As bodies of water, we are always, at some level, *implicated*.

My point is that these bodies are all collaboratively worlded. For some readers, breastfeeding and breast milk – both literally and semiotically – might represent the quintessence of a humanist, even biologically reductive feminism that implicitly romanticizes and reveres the mother–infant bond as an exclusionary model of ethics, care, or distributed embodiment. For some readers, these bodies and practices might meld too easily with a prioritization of reproductive sexuality, and even a heteronormative one that privileges the

cis-gendered feminine body. When paired with concerns about toxic waters, this example also veers perhaps too close to transphobic environmentalist discourses of sex panic, where toxic waters are a harbinger of feminized men and queer amphibians (di Chiro 2010). Even if my example of breast milk does not take up the question of endocrine disruptors, the increasingly discussed transcorporeal pathways along which those chemicals are transmitted are sometimes framed in a similar manner: global flows, latent accumulation, dispersal, and diffraction into and through bodies of the 'innocent'. As Mel Y. Chen (2012) has powerfully argued in a similar vein, toxic panics are also laced with fears both of disability and racialized invasion, and carry troubling undertones that suggest a fabled return to (racialized, non-disabled) purity is desirable. These are not the affiliations that a posthuman feminism welcomes. Nor do I court ways of telling these stories that frame indigenous women as exotic, naively vulnerable Others somewhere 'out there'<sup>3</sup> – another version of the subaltern brown mother-and-child.<sup>4</sup>

I understand these associative risks, but I stick with breast milk all the same because I want to press an understanding of human reproduction and maternal nourishment as part of a broader logic of posthuman gestationality – one that can also be explicitly queer, and anticolonial. My proposition is that specific bodily waters – breast milk here, or amniotic waters as I discuss in the next chapter – are material metonyms of a planetary watery milieu that interpermeates and connects bodies, and bathes new kinds of plural life into being. Human reproductivity is not at the centre of a gestational logic; it rather repeats an ontologic that it *learns from water*. As watery milieus for other bodies, we are always gathering the debts of the myriad watery bodies that are the condition of our possibility. Eventually, we all give ourselves up to another wet body. We all become with, or simply just become, other bodies of water.

A posthuman feminism reminds us that the waters that we comprise are both intensely local and wildly global: I am here, and now, and at least three billion years old, and already becoming something else. I unpack this understanding of watery gestationality in the following chapters. But acknowledging this broader, more-than-human understanding of gestation is no reason to ignore a specific kind of watery body – a human maternal one, also raced and gendered and subject to colonial logics. Especially given the ways in which these maternal bodies have been scientized, monitored, instrumentalized, and

contained across various cultures and times but particularly in the modern West, a specific response to these bodies is demanded. Understanding our transcorporeal implications in the bodily waters of others – human and other animal, but also oceanic, riparian, estuarine, meteorological – should not dilute a feminist politics of reproduction or breastfeeding; it should rather allow us to see how all of us are swimming in these milky seas.

My hope is that by imagining ourselves as all bodies of water, we realize that (in a manner of speaking) ‘we are all breast milk’. As Michelle Murphy and her colleagues in the ‘Engineered Worlds’ project remind us, industrially produced chemicals are found in the blood and breast milk of every single living subject. They persist across generations, forward and back, while the transcorporeal lineaments of accumulation and distribution mean there is no place or time of pure refuge. In this context, the imperative cannot be segregating lactators into ‘that’ kind of feminism, while the rest of us get on with other pressing environmental problems. We may not all be lactators, but we are probably consumers, or settlers, or policy makers, or actants that are in other ways co-worlding an emergent planetary situation of changing climates, warming currents, and chemical accumulations. While the nursing of an infant begins as a matter of fact for lactating human females (and even some males) as a way to situate that specific body – marked by the pleasures, or burdens, or pains, or scars that accompany that practice – it is evidently a much more dispersed matter of concern. These waters gather and distribute the liquid runoff of a global political economy and techno-industrial capitalism that produces vastly divergent body burdens, but which nonetheless gathers us all. Breast milk is no longer (and has never been) an issue for the biologically essentialized, lactating woman alone. In the words of Karen Barad (2007: 384), a posthuman feminism has an ethical responsibility to take ‘account of the entangled materializations of which we are a part’.

### How to think (about) a body of water: Posthuman phenomenology between Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze

Posthuman feminism thus provides the theoretical scaffold for articulating what it means to be a body of water – to be always only precariously contained

in a skin sac, and instead profoundly distributed, inherited, gestational, differentiated. Concepts like transcorporeality, naturecultures, amphotixis, and co-worlding provide a lexicon for this uncanny mode of living both particularly, with a specifically materialized politics of location, but also collaboratively, as part of an always emergent planetary hydrocommons. Concepts, as Elizabeth Grosz (2012: 14) has argued, are moveable bridges that help us imagine an otherwise; they don’t solve problems but provide a way of orienting ourselves towards them.

Concepts might be primarily tools of thinking (Grosz [2012: 14], following Deleuze and Guattari, refers to them as ‘immaterial’) but thinking is also an embodied act; concepts are also embodied. We understand them because our bodies as finely attuned sensory apparatuses live them, in one way or another. Following this proposition, we have to understand these conceptual frames as somehow also arising from lived experience. Indeed, the figuration of bodies of water also surfaces from a deep attentiveness to the ways in which we, like all living earthly entities, embody water. Such description needs to suspend, or bracket, the understanding of ‘body’ that we inherit from a dominant Western metaphysical tradition (a bounded materiality that houses an individual subject), and become curious about the ways in which bodies exceed these strictures, both conceptually and materially. If our bodies are mostly water, where does this water come from? Where does it go, and what does it make possible? How does our wateriness condition how we live as bodies, and how we become implicated in the bodies of others? To ask these questions, much less answer them, we need to divest from the idea of bodies as only human, as contained within our skin, as beginning and ending in the ‘I’. We have to seek out, in our own modes of living and engaging the world, the ways in which that humanist conceptual apparatus (even as we also ‘live’ it as a comfortable default) falters. In these ways, tapping bodies of water as figuration is a *phenomenological* exercise – one that, taking heed of Edmund Husserl’s (2001: 68) famous dictum, goes ‘back to the thing itself’ in order to account for things as they appear in experience, once sediments of the natural attitude have been scraped away. Phenomenology is ‘a matter of describing, not of explaining or analysing’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962: viii); it is achieved through ‘a direct description of our experience as it is’ (vii). In this accounting, language stretches to accommodate experience. New concepts arise as a result of this



grappling. This kind of phenomenological attunement, amplification, and description can loosen what we know and open to what we do not.<sup>5</sup>

Posthuman feminism should not be understood, therefore, as an alternative to phenomenology. I propose instead that these two projects might be brought productively together. Of course, it is possible (and even likely) that like Sara Ahmed's (2006: 2) work in queer phenomenology, the posthuman feminist version I propose here 'is not "properly" phenomenological'. But I persist because this posthuman phenomenology is a way of insisting that our bodies – even and particularly in their posthuman contractions, expansions, diffractions, and collaborations – are nonetheless lived. I want, in other words, to expand how we understand what it means to live as a body in this planetary context. This is not only an ontological imperative, but also an ethical one. Insisting on a posthuman phenomenology means that the hard-to-grasp scales of living in which our watery bodies participate become less abstracted, potentially more sensory. In a context where popular apathy and hopelessness are fuelled by an inability to connect with the more-than-human scales of planetary distresses (Duxbury 2010; Neimanis and Walker 2014), a posthuman phenomenology can put us in better contact with our bodies as implicated in those hard-to-fathom phenomena – climate change, ocean acidification, aquifer depletion, and toxic transits half-way round the world – which we are co-worlding all the same. By deliberately embracing phenomenology I want, moreover, to underline the need to cultivate a phenomenological 'wonder in the face of the world' (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xiii) and a desistance from the mastery of more analytical approaches. I also hope that phenomenology, as attunement, listening, and observation might somewhat temper all the language of agency and acting that infuses much new materialist writing, feminist and otherwise (for sometimes our bodies are quieter than all that). Conversely, I hope that phenomenology might also be reconfigured, so that both description and the world we purportedly describe are productively torqued – where humans are not at the centre of it all, after all. We can't – and I would argue we shouldn't – take ourselves out of the picture, but we can cultivate ways of imagining our lived experience as decentred, if always transcorporeally implicated.

Feminist phenomenologists have been at the vanguard of questioning what 'the body' is and means. Trailblazing feminist philosophers – Simone de

Beauvoir (2010, Luce Irigaray (1985b), and Helene Cixous (1976) – building on and intervening in the phenomenological tradition have long challenged the discrete individualism and phallogocentrism of a neutral body. Phenomenology has also contributed to important, more detailed feminist analyses by thinkers such as Elizabeth Grosz (1994), Margrit Shildrick (1997), Gail Weiss (1999), Rosalind Diprose (2002), Lisa Guenther (2006), and Sara Ahmed (2000; 2006), among others, of bodies as indebted to other bodies—leaky, permeable, and intercorporeal, in terms of both their matters and meanings. This feminist phenomenological work articulates with the posthuman understandings of material, interconnected body-subjects I described earlier, traced through the work of Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde into more contemporary thinkers such as Karen Barad, Elizabeth A. Wilson, Nancy Tuana, Mel Y. Chen, and Stacy Alaimo. Feminist thinking on bodies, in various guises and forms, thus establishes a fertile culture for elaborating a posthuman feminist phenomenology. In the next chapter, I explore Luce Irigaray's phenomenology of bodies and water as an early articulation of a posthuman orientation. First though, I want to draw additional sources into this feminist conversation.

As a key thinker of both phenomenology and embodiment, French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty and his work represent one of the most thorough philosophical attempts to understand what it means to be embodied in the context of a shared world. Merleau-Ponty thus provides a compelling way to imagine phenomenology as compatible with a posthuman feminist project. As various commentators have argued, despite his association with existential humanism, Merleau-Ponty offers a 'radical revision of the body's ontological sense' (Barbaras 2004: xxiii). His situation within a project of philosophical humanism is in fact what makes his openings to an intercorporeal, environmentally situated and contingently becoming body so remarkable. Merleau-Ponty (1968, 2003) rejects dualisms in which humanist understandings of embodiment are usually mired, and instead presents us with a body that emerges from various debts and connections to other bodies, whereby bodies are always chiasmically entwined with the world. For Merleau-Ponty, what we can know about things resides neither in a transcendent platonic realm of ideals nor solely in our solipsistic imaginings; it emerges in the ineluctable imbrications of body and world in a lived experience that is necessarily somewhere, sometime, and somehow.

We can understand embodiment as a concept, moreover, because our bodies – watery, fleshy, and otherwise – are a key resource for figuring this out. For Merleau-Ponty, corporeal existence is central: going ‘back to the things themselves’ is necessarily an embodied undertaking. Merleau-Ponty’s detailed theory of embodiment avers that the body is not something we ‘have’ (‘the body is not an object’ [Merleau-Ponty 1962: 198]), but is rather something we inescapably *are*. We only have a world because we live as bodies that know the world as an extension of the body’s ways of being (‘we are in the world through our body’ [203]). Merleau-Ponty is thus not only a helpful source for developing a posthuman understanding of corporeality, but also offers a method for getting back to the body through the resources of our bodies and their various kinds of experiential knowledges.

A second source I turn to here is the work of Gilles Deleuze, sometimes in collaboration with Felix Guattari. Deleuze is certainly a major source for contemporary posthuman and new materialist thinking. Despite a sometimes fraught uptake by feminist phenomenology (Deleuze’s work does not refuse a feminist politics of location, but neither does it do much to cultivate one), his writings nonetheless provide a rich supporting conceptual apparatus for my experiment in posthuman phenomenology – namely, through the innovative and evocative ways he invites us to think about bodies differently. In Deleuzian rhizomatics, a ‘body’ is not defined by notions of liberal humanism but rather refers to any metastable entity that has a threshold of endurance, beyond which it ceases to be. We as human bodies do not sit atop and apart from the entanglements of the material world; we are instead consistently pulled out of our place of privilege by our symbiotic relationality to other bodies. For Deleuze, bodies are congeries of all kinds of physical, material, cultural, and semiotic forces, and how they *become* is more interesting than what they are. Particularly useful, as will become clear, is Deleuze’s attention to the various strata that a body simultaneously inhabits, or moves across.

So, in many ways, both Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze offer helpful conceptual footholds for thinking what it means to be a body of water, but articulating their work together is not an obvious or seamless task. Deleuze is critical of the phenomenological tradition generally and Merleau-Ponty in particular for being too humanist, where meaning only emanates from a human vantage point. Immanence here can only ever be immanence to a subject (Deleuze and

Guattari 1994: 149–150).<sup>6</sup> It is possible to read Merleau-Ponty, and certainly the larger phenomenological project, in these terms. Indeed, where Merleau-Ponty (1962: viii) claims that ‘all of [his] knowledge of the world ... is gained from [his] own particular point of view’, a suspicion of Merleau-Ponty as human-centric is understandable. But I think there is also a possibility for cultivating a certain space between these thinkers;<sup>7</sup> I am interested in how each provides a way to read the other otherwise. My specific wager: if to be human means also always to leak beyond the limits of that humanity, then our embodiment affords the possibility of more-than-human contact with the world. Put otherwise, if consciousness is embodiment (Merleau-Ponty) and embodiment is more-than-human (Deleuze, feminist posthumanism, and – as I will argue – Merleau-Ponty), then we can also access and live a world that exceeds the bounds of a comfortably human-scaled experience. We will get to the ‘how’ of this proposition shortly. Before that, let’s look to see how Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze help make this case in more detail.

Deleuzian rhizomatics is critical of the metaphysical tradition of individualistic humanism, and of a human subject whose perspective is totalizing. Yet, Deleuze nonetheless acknowledges human subjectivity as one expression, or one capture, of bodies. In Deleuzian rhizomatics, a body is defined primarily by what it ‘can do’ and what can be done to it, while still maintaining the body’s metastability as a whole.<sup>8</sup> While human bodies certainly differ from one another, they are a particular kind of body that exists because of certain thresholds for affecting and being affected; humans are humans because of what, in the most generalized sense, they can do, how they endure, and what it takes to kill them (or dissolve them, to be recomposed as something else). Although more-than-human transfections with more-than-human bodies in various kinds of symbiotic becomings comprise a key element of Deleuzian philosophy, generalized thresholds of affectability are what make humans humans (and not frogs, or glaciers, or can openers). The problem for a Deleuzian view is not the instalment of the human; it is rather the instalment of the human at the centre, with his coagulated, sedimented subjectivity as the ‘measurant of all’ (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 249).

Another key to Deleuzian thinking on bodies is the fact that these thresholds are determined by myriad forces, which include the ‘molar’ sedimenting processes of subjectivization. Molar subjects (or the body as a

whole, the spatial or temporal aggregate) are forged from and stabilized by social, political, cultural, biological, physical, historical, and other kinds of flows. But a body's persistence is just as dependent on its molecular stratum – a super- or subcutaneous molecularity (the disorganizing parts or pieces) that infuses the human body at every turn: the churning and flowing, the intake and effluence, the trickles that transit into assemblages with other bodies beyond the coherent human subject-self. Bodies demand both processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization (1987: 57–59, 211).

Our human bodies of water serve as a helpful illustration. As a human body, I am somewhat organized, with seemingly discrete borders and boundaries. My skin gives the illusion of a hermetic seal that keeps my intricate plumbing mostly from view, and thus from my explicit attention. From my human subject point of view, this body appears to me as whole, separate, and organized. But my body of water also breaches the skin sac – regularly, imperceptibly, and also in periodic demonstrative gushes. This might be, as described earlier, in the nursing of an infant; it might also be in an involuntary milking at the sound of a baby crying, or simply when too much time since last nursing has passed. A watery body sloshes and leaks, excretes and perspires. Its depths gurgle, erupt. A body of water also extends, transcorporeally, into other assemblages: watershed, cistern, sea; and other bodies that are human, vegetable, animal, and hydrogeological. My consumption becomes viscera to become, perhaps, toxic breast milk, thousands of miles away. While the individual body might seek to bracket, subdue, or tame these channels and flows, the body could not live without them. They sustain a sense of subject-self as much as they challenge that subject-body's coherence.

In one sense, we can think of this interruptive body of water as Deleuze and Guattari's (1987: 153) *Body without Organs* (BwO) – that site of experimentation populated by 'non-stratified unformed, intense matter'. Uncontrollable eruptions correspond in some ways to the BwO as escape route, or release valve, for our bodies that are otherwise corralled and contained. This kind of subversive and destabilizing sense of embodiment is perhaps what Deleuzian rhizomatics is best known for, but in Deleuze's view, bodies must also be more than this. Even if Deleuze and Guattari want us to 'make [ourselves] a *Body without Organs*', they also know that we need to keep some part of our subjectivity intact, or else risk total dissolution.<sup>9</sup> The

human body could not survive without this double articulation. The BwO and its molecularities provide us with the possibilities for change, subversions, and partial dissolution (for better or worse); but they also serve as a substrate for an organized or molar body, which is necessary to keep annihilation at bay.

The human nursing body becomes a particular kind of symbiotic assemblage with a nursing infant. While Deleuze is less helpful in terms of illuminating the ways in which this becoming-together of bodies is raced, classed, and gendered, he does provide a helpful conceptual frame for thinking about how this watery body also escapes and repeats differently, its latent potential selected elsewhere, becoming something else: human body becoming weather current, becoming whale body, becoming nursing mother thousands of miles away, downloading organochloride compounds into her nursing becoming-child – or perhaps becoming entirely differently. What Michelle Murphy (2013) describes as latency – that unknowable temporal lag that keeps the materiality of bodies in a suspended and uncertain unfolding – Deleuze elaborates in the concept of virtuality. Bodies, as in part virtual, are also extensive through time. Virtuality, in Deleuze's terms, is that 'indeterminate cloud' that surrounds and coexists with actualized bodies. Virtuality is a body's could-have-been and might-become; it is the zone of potentiality from which bodies are selected, and actualized.<sup>10</sup> Because of their virtual potentiality, 'we do not know what a body can do' – this is Deleuze's oft-cited paraphrase of Spinoza. But nor do we fully know what bodies can withstand, or how they will continue to affect others. The bounds of a body – not only spatially or even temporally, but also in terms of its effects and affectability – can never be fully determined. This virtuality is also another way of describing our bodies of water as always also more-than-human, and human bodies in general as always more-than-coherent, bounded, subjects.

A Deleuzian view of embodiment does not deny human subjectivity, or the existence of human bodies; indeed, it is according to these bodies that we most commonly make sense of the world. But Deleuze's project encourages us to remember that our bodies do not stop at our skin; they are also molecular, extensive, and virtual. This helps us account for the micro-scale hydraulics upon which our molar subjectivity depends, as well as for the oozing, leaking, absorbing, and fluvial ways in which this subjectivity is also disrupted. But when read alongside Merleau-Ponty's understanding of bodies, these multiple

strata of embodiment – as is evident in a Deleuzian breast milk posthumanism, for example – refuse theoretical abstraction; this ineluctable more-than-human-bodiedness is necessarily part of our lived experience. Let's go back to Merleau-Ponty to flesh this out some more.

As noted earlier, when Merleau-Ponty (1962: 61) describes his project as 'a study of the advent of being to consciousness', this is always an embodied consciousness. For Merleau-Ponty, embodiment *is* consciousness. But is embodiment for Merleau-Ponty synonymous with the coherent body that Deleuze insists we need to disorganize – the stratified despot and the humanist view of 'Man', that 'molar entity par excellence' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 292)? Clearly, for Merleau-Ponty, the body has a tendency towards organization. There is a 'unity and identity of the body as a synergetic totality', he avers, that enables consciousness to comprehend the world and make sense of what we encounter in a synthesized way, across and through all of our various bodily modalities (1962: 317) – cognitive, affective, motor, and perceptual.<sup>11</sup> Without this 'loose unity', our experience of the world would be fragmented and largely incomprehensible. In other words, like Deleuze, Merleau-Ponty (1962) acknowledges the necessity of some organizing subjectivity. We can see this in the many ways that a disorganized body strives to 'right' itself – a phantom limb that still asserts its presence (80–89); a spatial awareness that insists on 'righting' an inverted room (243–254). But what these analyses also reveal is the ways that our bodies are also always disrupting and disorganizing; if they weren't, there would be no reason to strive for (relative) 'rightness'.<sup>12</sup> Planetary breast milk transits and intercorporeal becomings, for example, remind us that we live our bodies not only via a secure command centre that keeps us all together; we live our bodies even as we are falling apart.

Merleau-Ponty (1962: 198) agrees that the phenomenological body is 'always something other than what it is'; it is 'never hermetically sealed'. Bodies are open and permeable, permeated. For Merleau-Ponty, the same operations that enact an embodied consciousness also guarantee that the body is never a static or stable entity; it is constantly transforming. This understanding emerges most strongly in what Merleau-Ponty (1968: 149) calls the flesh of the world – a 'mesh' of elemental being in which all beings participate, entangle, and entwine. Merleau-Ponty (1968: 123) also refers to this intertwining of

bodies as chiasm – not a 'fusion or coinciding of' body and world, but rather, an 'overlapping or encroachment' such that 'things pass into us, as well as we into the things'. This, we could say, is Merleau-Ponty's version of worlding – a co-labour of body and world.<sup>13</sup> Flesh, as 'a possibility, a latency', also reveals that for Merleau-Ponty, bodies are not predetermined, but rather emergent in/as incalculable potentiality (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 133).<sup>14</sup>

For Merleau-Ponty, all of this is phenomenologically evident, and part of the body that we can 'go back to', and describe. Our extension into the world, our latent potentiality, our molecularity, and all of the micromodalities that allow us to become subjects, but also become otherwise, are all part of the lived embodiment that serves as our 'pivot' or 'medium' for knowing anything in the world, at all (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 82). Earlier, I insisted that the idea of watery embodiment is neither an abstract concept nor mere metaphor nor an overlay of scientific fact gleaned from an outside; watery embodiment is something we live, and as such, it is also something that can be *accessed*, *amplified*, and *described*. But clearly, some of the ways in which we, as bodies of water, exceed a molar, organized understanding of bodies are more available to us than others. Indeed, as steeped in a latency, or virtuality, in Alaimo's 'swirling world' of uncertainty, our bodies will never fully reveal themselves to us either. My proposition is that we can nonetheless access, amplify, and describe a posthuman embodied experience. This, as I've suggested, is not only a methodological experiment (although it is that as well). In an aqueous world where the waters that we are and the waters in which we corporeally traffic are increasingly turning away from us, situating ourselves and describing our implication within a posthuman bodyscape is also a question of ethical accountability. The question remains: how?

### How to think (as) a body of water: Access, amplify, describe!

We have a specific politics of location as bodies of water, but as watery, we also disrupt our own sense of embodied self. In the face of fear, the welling up of water in our affective and visceral bodies can result in the sudden and unexpected elimination of tears, or pee, or shit. Such eruptions might seem beyond the control of the disciplining processes to which we usually

subject our visceral selves. 'Excuse the outburst', we might say after a tearful breakdown. We might consider involuntary evacuations from below a sign of our animality: 'how unlike me', we apologize. A pressing thirst can similarly disorient the organizing project of our subject-selves. Thirst diffracts me, I lose my focus. I cannot concentrate on the words on the page, or keep my thoughts trained. My throat searches for some forgotten cache of saliva and the incessant attempts to swallow distract me. ('What did you say? What was that again?') In extreme dehydration, the molar body may altogether recede; we edge towards a desiccated sort of bare life. In cases where I pass on my water deliberately and intentionally, what meanings and materialities do I pass on with it? These dissolutions of my self into a watery world may reside below or beyond my direct contemplation, but they extend my body all the same. Or: the tide is rising, we are caught in the waves. Even though our bodies are mostly watery, we hit a plunging threshold that we cannot bear: too much destratification, a flooded thingification.

But is this elimination, withdrawal, transfer, or deluge something other than me? We could call these experiences of our aqueous becomings a *more-than-human* embodiment. They interrupt a comfortable human sense of a bodily self, while also amplifying our very human vulnerabilities – in this sense, human *all the more*. In opening us up to the droughts, seepages, and inundations that are also animal and elemental, we are reminded that our humanness is always more than the bounds of our skin. By tuning into these bodily molecularities as lived, we might also attune ourselves empathically towards other bodies of water, beyond us. This includes those of us for whom our subjectivity has always been situated in/as a more-than-humanness: one might be subjected to a chronic illness that means one's visceral body is perpetually unruly; or one may be dependent on a water source too distant, too polluted, or too costly to respond to one's bodily needs. In these instances, one's assemblage of watery bodiedness can spill beyond the discrete comfort of the human, and in doing so reemphasize the flimsy membrane that just barely holds this conceit together, but which is patrolled all the more for it. Such attunement could also include empathy towards the ocean, forced to carry too much plastic, too little oxygen; or a whale turned toxic vector; or a river, redirected and drained such that it cannot fulfil its responsibilities to provide for its human kin, it is forced to turn away (Povinelli 2015). Or, we could say

that in these molecularities, we tune into an originary elemental empathy that is always there, latent, swimming below the surface.

Posthuman phenomenology moves athwart our body-subject's tendency to perceive time, movement, speed, size, and distance as scaled to its own molar experience, even where such extension may seem difficult for our modest human perspective to grasp. In some ways, this project goes against Merleau-Ponty's suggestion of the proximal distance of things. This is the specific distance between the perceiver and the perceived that achieves an optimal tension between the inner horizon and the outer horizon of the thing – for Merleau-Ponty, optimally revealing the thing in its essence. To increase or decrease this distance would mean that we would begin to lose our comfortable grip on things (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 302) – standing too far away from a painting, or trying to listen to the radio with the volume too low. While Merleau-Ponty discusses this proximity spatially, we could also extend this phenomenological proposal to an optimal temporality. A nanosecond may not even seem to 'exist' to us, while deep time is equally hard to fathom. Proximal distance expresses a zone of relation between body and thing that allows the various modalities and interpretive capacities of the body to remain optimally (although always loosely) unified. In other words, for Merleau-Ponty, proximal distance facilitates the cohesion and organization not just of the thing in the world, but of the body as well – its various capacities (movement, perception, cognition) can gear into each other, comfortably. We have already seen, however, that our bodies also experience themselves as falling apart, dissolving, extending into things, and eventually going beyond their own reach. A posthuman phenomenology seeks to acknowledge our sense of comfort with this proximal distance *while at the same time* continuing our investigation of our lived experience beyond this point. When we slip beyond our comfortable proximal distance, we can better attune ourselves to our more-than-humanness.

In the case of our bodies of water, we may perceive the 'time' of this water as immediate, synchronized with our own molar human lifespan. We might anticipate that the water that constitutes our body will cease to exist in time with our flesh and its capacity to imagine a past and a future. Some cosmologies with a stronger sense of intergenerationality clearly challenge such an imaginary, but those of us steeped in a Western atomized ontology – according to which we, for the most part, *live* – find this tricky; it is a stretch to fathom the time

of our bodies of water as extending beyond our proximal comprehension. Yet we know that our planetary waters have persisted – nothing added, nothing lost – for several billion years. This water holds in it a past as remote as that gaseous primordial soup, as well as a future, unforeseeable. Similarly, we most comfortably perceive the ‘size’ of water in relation to our humanist body’s relation to it: it is something we drink, in which we bathe, or expel from our systems in relatively predictable (and graspable) quantities. We might, with a little more attention, experience the spatial scale of water at the visceral level, as that which irrigates our own bodily systems and carries away our waste. But what more might we learn about our bodies of water if we could stretch or shrink this proximal relationship?<sup>15</sup>

Posthuman phenomenology suggests that such ancient events, unforeseeable futures, or water too big or too small to easily comprehend, may not necessarily be as distant as one might think. Japanese researcher and thinker Masaru Emoto (2005) takes high-speed photographs of water that capture the unique and revealing structures of water crystals at their moment of freezing, just as the water molecules are crystallizing. His photographs reveal the molecular affectivity of water and its capacity to embody emotion: when water in a glass beaker is exposed to the word ‘happiness,’ Emoto’s photograph shows a crystal that is symmetrical, delicate, exquisitely balanced, and beautiful. When exposed to ‘unhappiness,’ the crystal appears out of balance, only partially formed. Exposure to different music – melancholy, discordant, joyous, threatening – similarly results in differently affected crystals. Just a good story? Perhaps. Or perhaps Emoto’s photos reveal an intercorporeal (or, following Barad’s [2007] insistence that *relata* do not precede relations, an intra-corporeal) embodiment of affect, experienced at a more-than-human scale. These torqued scales of watery connection appear in a very different, but equally provocative register, in Elizabeth Povinelli’s (2015) story of Tjipel, a creek in Northern Australia, but also a young woman, possibly transgender. Despite embodying an entirely more-than-human spatiotemporal scale, Tjipel engages in a relation of responsivity with the human bodies that live beside her and with her. Povinelli describes how some of Tjipel’s aboriginal human kin seek to be responsive to her, and how they are certainly affected by Tjipel’s own capacity to alter her arrangement of existence (drying up, turning away) as a response to human actions. This too is a kind of more-than-human,

inter- or intra-corporeal affectivity. In order to understand Tjipel’s capacity to be affected, human bodies require a sensibility of water at a more-than-human scale.

This manipulation of our proximal relationship to things also brings us back to the question of the virtual – that is, a body’s indeterminate potentialities that according to Deleuze accompany all of its manifest actualizations. The virtual also relates to those unknowable or ungraspable times and spaces that have not been taken up by our bodies of water – those potential routes that our particular bodies of water did not take, but might have, in a prehistoric past, in an unknowable future, or in a body of water that is too near or too far to seem a part of what I consider my actualized body. All of the potential expressions of a body are latent in one of its actualizations. As such, the virtual is neither *fully* graspable nor describable. But if we apply this idea to our bodies of water, the distinction between the actualized body and this idea of virtuality blurs: are the nanoscopic or prehistoric watery expressions of my body *actual* but ungraspable (by me)? Or are they *virtual*, precisely because they are ungraspable (by me), and because they seem to me more of a ‘might have been’ than an ‘is’? In an open-closed system such as water, where the materiality of water endlessly cycles and repeats, yet all the while becoming ‘different’ (a point to which I will return in detail in the next chapter), the distinction between ‘was’ and ‘might have been,’ or ‘is’ and ‘could be’ is not clear. If I share one molecule of water with a tsunami that occurred thousands of years ago on the other side of the world, is that tsunami bound up in my own body of water’s virtuality, or its actuality? Molecules of material actuality channel through this potentiality. The point is not to quibble with Deleuze’s terms. Rather, if we understand Deleuze’s posthumanism within a frame of lived bodily experience, the distinction between virtual and actual-but-ungraspable may become less important. Both demand a stretching of my comfortable human scales of spatial and temporal proximity. Both demand a way of tapping into a bodily more-than-humanness that is lived, even if our molar selves have difficulty grasping these experiences. I propose that a practice of posthuman phenomenology can help us contact these experiences, even if only ephemerally, several molecularities removed.

But again: how? A good place to start is embodied attunement. Eminent phenomenologist Herbert Spiegelberg (1965: 659) refers to ‘phenomenological

intuiting' – the act of utter concentration on the thing 'without becoming so absorbed in it to the point of no longer looking critically.' We might consider this as remaining open to the wonder of a phenomenon, of bracketing the 'natural attitude', yet at the same time sensing a phenomenon's contours, limits, movements, and speeds. This intuiting demands that we tap into a lived experience, albeit one that is mostly covered over or simply taken for granted (and thus dismissed from our attention) by our comfortable corporeal imaginaries. In a practice he calls 'body hermeneutics', Samuel Mallin (1996) adopts this idea as a way of finely honing an embodied attunement to the world and our own bodies, according to the bodily modalities of cognition, perception, affect, and motility.<sup>16</sup> According to these methodological leads, we might begin the business of 'how' by asking: what does the body of water look, feel, or taste like? How do these movements change when we are excessively lubricated, or excessively thirsty? What affect is elicited in our watery expulsions? How do we respond to dehydration affectively, or through our moving bodies? How does a visceral need to pee make the body move? For example, I can try to home in on my molecular body's changes as I drink a glass of water. But at some point, this attention will become strained, and it will probably seem as though the water has moved into the invisibility of what Drew Leder (1990) elaborates in terms of our 'recessive body' – those subcutaneous processes that escape our explicit attention. Perhaps. But what if we pay closer attention, and fine-tune the sensory apparatuses of our bodies more keenly? Don't I also sense a wet weight at my centre? A certain tension in my skull eases. My step is less sluggish. Such techniques require perseverance and repetition. According to Mallin, anything useful or interesting needs to be teased out, poked, prodded, and coaxed through a descriptive practice.

Body hermeneutics and other versions of phenomenological intuition can be a good starting point for thinking *as* a body of water. *Access, amplify, describe*. But in a very practical sense, it is not immediately clear how the tools of an embodied phenomenological analysis would be applicable to experiences that are below or beyond human-scaled perception. How do we grasp the virtual? How do we trace the wateriness of our distant pasts, our unknowable futures, or of our body's own microscopic internal seascapes? How do we map transcorporeal transits that happen out of view or out of focus, beyond the comfortable proximal relation of our body to its parts – the workings of

the cerebral spinal fluid that occupies my subarachnoid space, or the journey of my SSRI-laced urine into estuarine communities downstream, or the dissipation of my perspiration into a humid forest atmosphere, to exchange wet breaths with the causerinas? When we move deeper, or further back, or more extensively out, things get complicated.

In these cases, our molar thinking, imagining, and sensing bodies need help. I suggest that 'proxy stories' can be avenues for de-sedimenting our human-scaled perspective. These stories are not substitutes for embodied experience; they are its *amplifiers* and *sensitizers*. Art, for example, is an amplifier. One experience of water might go like this: between two rooms hangs a curtain – hundreds of strings of crystalline blue beads, plummeting freely but in unison to the gallery floor, looking for the lowest place, the path of least resistance. I position myself in the middle of the curtain, and let this cataract pour itself over me, a baptism of string and glass. I can't move. Beneath its persistent pressure, I am prevented from floating away. I feel the weight of water – the way it grounds me, pulls me down, pulls me under. Even though this 'water' – an installation by Felix Gonzalez Torres in the Koffler Gallery in Toronto, on a summer afternoon in 2002 – isn't 'wet', it activates and amplifies in me the lived experience of water as undertow, as stronger than my own measly self.<sup>17</sup> Or, projected behind a wall of cascading water, Rebecca Belmore gathers the sea in a bucket, and grunting and struggling throws its contents at me, the viewer: a thick rosy red runs down the screen, and I feel the waters of my white settler body flow into the colonized waters of Turtle Island (also known as Canada). Belmore's video installation *Fountain* (2005) allows me to access, and amplify, my own watery politics of location, channelling through my corporeal seas.

Writing, images, objects, and other art forms can work in these ways, giving us access to an embodied experience of our wateriness that might otherwise be too submerged, too subcutaneous, too repressed, or too large and distant (or even too obvious, mundane, and taken for granted), to readily sense: a drought experienced at the back of a parched throat, a fishy ancestor swimming up my unfolding vertebrate body, a glacier melting felt in my gut. The desire to draw on these stories does not represent a failure of phenomenology to get 'back to the things themselves'; it is rather an affirmation that these stories too are pulled from a material world – but then condensed, concentrated, and given back to us such that we can more readily access and amplify them, anew.

I return to art as amplifier of an embodied politics of location (and Rebecca Belmore's work specifically) in Chapter 4. Here, though, I want to explore how science can serve as a different kind of amplifying proxy story.

While notable exceptions persist and proliferate, phenomenologists are critical of the scientific-empiricist view of things. Natural scientific explanations of bodies do not – at face value, anyways – appear to be particularly congruent with attention to *life as it is experienced*. Merleau-Ponty (1962: viii) himself asserts that the reliance on phenomenological description over analysis and explanation is 'from the start a foreswearing of science', even as he engages scientific stories as useful starting points or complements to his own investigations. But posthuman phenomenology affirms that scientific and phenomenological views are not necessarily incompatible. As Ulrich Beck (cited in Alaimo 2010: 19) notes, many of our contemporary embodied experiences 'require ... the "sensory organs" of science – theories, experiments, measuring instruments – in order to become visible or interpretable'. Alaimo further suggests that 'syncretic assemblages' of knowledge are needed to understand the ways in which our bodily matter is implicated in a world that cannot be adequately grasped through one mode of inquiry alone (Alaimo 2010: 19). Even if Alaimo (2009: 23) elsewhere insists that the 'trans-corporeality' she describes is '*not* a phenomenological...stance', perhaps this surmises gives short shrift to the value of phenomenological description, and also instates too wide a gap between the attunement of phenomenologists and that of natural scientists to the wonder of the world. I propose that scientific knowledge and phenomenology can be one of these syncretic assemblages.

As I've argued, experiences below and beyond the individual humanist scale – planetary breast milk, but also a gurgling gut, a sweaty dispersal into the fog, even the effect of our ablutions on riparian life and other human life-at-a-distance – are also strata of our lived experience. If some scientific findings – such as those of evolutionary biology, organic chemistry, or molecular physics – may seem too abstract, imperceptible or distant for verification through lived embodied experience, this is mostly a case of the hegemony of a human-centred and human-scaled perception. To assume bacterial life, meteorology, or multispecies biochemistries are not *lived* in some way in and through our human bodies either underestimates the actualities and potentialities of our embodied dispersals or misunderstands what it

means to live. Interestingly, despite Merleau-Ponty's (1962: viii) distrust of the hegemony of scientific perspectives, he also states that 'all my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless'. This is an opening to posthuman phenomenology, where our bodies parse the findings of scientific knowledge through their various sensory apparatuses.

Even science that seems at the furthest possible distance from our embodied experience – for example science from the oceanic benthos – 'makes sense' because of our embodied capacity to feel, to know, and to understand. As artist Rona Lee (2012: 16) notes, 'despite the seemingly scopic emphasis of much ocean science and its apparent alignment to what might be called an epistemology of distance', 'conversations at NOCS [National Oceanography Centre Southampton] have revealed the extent to which sensuous understandings; emotional response and imaginative projection inform oceanographic study'. She continues:

One colleague told me of how the sight of small jellyfish, floating weightlessly along at a depth of 30,000 meters, had led him to reflect on the impact of gravity, as symbolized by the return to earth of death, in shaping our consciousness and how, had we evolved in an aquatic medium, buoyancy would have given rise to an unthinkable different metaphysics. Another of an instance when the temperature of a black smoker (undersea hydrothermal vent) was brought home to him not by the gauges on his instrument panel, but the experience of watching a length of ducting tap, attached to a piece of external equipment, melt away; activating an imagined sensation of the extreme heat involved. (16)

Relationships and processes that govern the world we inhabit, and which are described by various scientific discourses, are all in some way lived – directly or intensively, virtually, and imaginatively – by us. In line with Merleau-Ponty, the world makes sense to us, in all of its wonders, because we are embodied.

Like our bodies themselves, our embodied knowledge of our bodies is always becoming, moving, changing. Advances in the domains of science and biotechnology alter the way in which we experience embodiment, and what a body in fact is.<sup>18</sup> How we exist and understand ourselves as embodied beings is



not some inert, static, enduring sort of truth.<sup>19</sup> In these contemporary times, we are increasingly living our bodies as fragmentable, augmentable, extendable, and intelligible in ways that are mostly new, or new incarnations of old tricks. Organ transplantation, biobanking, and assisted reproduction, for example, fragment our bodies in new ways, putting pressures on commonly held notions of bodily integrity (Blackman 2010). At the same time, we are becoming increasingly aware of our embodiment as intimately imbricated in and visited by environmental others – animals, bacteria, and toxins (Alaimo 2010; Simms 2009). The insides of our viscera are now available to us in microscopic detail, and we can trace chemical markers of our psychopharmacologically enhanced urine, dispersing through our local watersheds. Planetary breast milk transits may not be fully trackable, but we do have access to various kinds of sensory apparatuses that can begin to sketch out these journeys, between species and across geographies and generations.

Again, these changes are not extraneous to our lived embodiment. The ways in which we understand what it means to be a body, the cartographies that our bodies chart, and our inextricability from complex webs of relation are all *lived* by us, in phenomenologically relevant ways. (Put otherwise, it would be absurd to think that our ‘bodies’ somehow change, while our faculties and means for knowing those bodies – a mind? a tongue? a language? – are somehow untouchably static.) The miniature videocamera inserted down one’s throat creates a new relation to one’s stomach (Sawchuck 2000); the implantation of another person’s kidney shifts and radicalizes the experience of intersubjectivity in significant ways (Waldby 2002); 3D ultrasonography inaugurates new configurations of the maternal ‘T’ (Mitchell 2001).<sup>20</sup> Could we not imagine a similar sort of reconfiguration – one that stretches and disperses our bodies – when we read how our human wastes and emissions are transforming entire oceanic ecosystems? By paying attention to the measurement of water levels in aquifers, reservoirs, or lakes, might our own thirst be imagined as a more extensive, collaborative gullet? Our bodies of water clearly demonstrate the ‘T’ as both technological and ecological, connected up with other bodies of all kinds, and lived at diverse levels of sensory perception. The sensorium that opens to us through technologies and other types of monitoring and assessment apparatuses *changes* how we actually experience our bodies because we take on these schematizations, and integrate them into

our ways of being in the world. In other words, once the mediating tools of science and technology are brought into our sphere of experience, they cannot help but impinge upon the ways in which we experience ourselves and our bodies. Information gleaned from these tools does not ‘interfere’ with our knowledge of bodies, as though that knowledge were a stable and determined thing; this information participates in the worlding of bodies, and our ongoing, unfolding, experience of embodiment. Merleau-Ponty taught us that existence *is* embodiment – that we only know the world through our experience of being embodied. But as that experience shifts – as it inevitably does – our methods (and epistemologies) for understanding that experience need to be adequate to that shifting.

The use of biological, chemical, or other scientific tools and information to amplify and extend more human-scaled experiences not only reconfigures our understanding of ‘embodiment’ and ‘the lived,’ but also makes available to us resources that can help us access and describe our posthuman corporeality. Because scientific accounts either stretch or shrink our human proximal relation to certain matter or forces, by grappling with such accounts we can nudge ourselves closer to appreciating those dimensions of experiencing the world that do not easily conform to a human-centred one, but which we nonetheless live, skimming across, journeying through, gathering up, and nestling inside our own lived embodiment. What scientific perspectives teach me about the mechanics of fluids, the chemical composition of water, the ecological hydrological cycle, and the necessity of water for the gestation of all life can facilitate contact with my posthuman corporeality. For example, while it may seem that I lose my grip on the water that I drink from a glass as it travels deep into my viscera, pharmacokinetics helps me perceive the mechanisms, times, and processes of absorption. Or, while the fleshy buoyancy that cushions my bones has little need for words such as *intracellular fluid (ICF)* and *extracellular fluid (ECF)* to experience the fluvial passages and watery buffer zones that facilitate every movement my body makes, scientific explanation can nonetheless help me understand the workings of my motile body’s water as I bend to lift a book or bump my hip into a chair. Or, evolutionary biology can amplify the time of my waters far beyond my proximal grip on them. A mammalian diving reflex allows me to dive to depths much greater than most animals, thanks to a marked reduction in heart rate and cardiac output

that reduces my body's consumption of oxygen (Morgan 1982: 77). Scientific explanation of this reflex does not *invent* the sensory experiences of my body in a transition from land to deep water – these are embodied knowledges, too. Such scientific stories, however, help me to tap into the phenomenon, already there, swimming in my waters and burrowed in my flesh.

These conversations, these reciprocal but always imperfect dialectics between scientific knowledge and phenomenology, reaching towards greater understanding, are tools of phenomenological attunement. Again, when such 'wonder' is brought together with the serious acknowledgement of the biological substrata that one finds in science, this can shift the experience of our own humanness. The edges of our discretely bounded selves begin to blur, and our skin becomes increasingly transparent. While phenomenology may not *require* this amplification, these amplifiers can enhance, rather than annul, phenomenology's insights into what it means to be human.

Posthuman phenomenology's feminist orientation also reminds us that engaging science is not without risk. Scientific schematizations can overtake the body-as-lived, in all of its fluctuating and interpermeating complexities. (Science, after all, is not a 'God Trick', as Donna Haraway (1988) would say, but articulated by situated bodies.) As explicitly feminist, posthuman phenomenology must also be attuned to criticisms of specific aspects of applications of biological and other scientific thought on additional terms, namely, that it can wrest this knowledge and power from us, by congealing, reifying, or essentializing aspects of our embodiment in ways that oppress. We know that treating science as the new, all-knowing god can have disastrous effects, not only epistemologically but also practically, in the lives of women, people of colour, indigenous peoples, queer people, people living with disabilities, and others.<sup>21</sup> In this context, a feminist posthuman phenomenology does not simply hand the reigns over to scientific data. While phenomenologists in the tradition of Merleau-Ponty distinguish their work from empiricism because of the latter's claim to absolute and unambiguous truth, the feminist tradition I am invoking here is concerned with the false objectivity of empiricism, and the power of the purportedly 'neutral' scientific knower to determine the fate of those bodies it marginalizes.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, as I mention above, while Elizabeth A. Wilson (2015) cautions strongly against failing to engage with scientific data (this will only lead to impoverished

feminist analyses, she argues), she is equally as critical about simply accepting science at face value – as a final arbiter or truth. She advocates instead for taking scientific data 'seriously but not literally, moving them outside the zones of interpretive comfort that they usually occupy' (13).<sup>23</sup> While Wilson's method is not phenomenological, posthuman phenomenology shares this objective. In a feminist posthuman phenomenology, to amplify is neither to corroborate nor justify – nor certainly to set the bar. It is rather a rendering of an experience more accessible, more graspable, more intelligible, in a desire to experience more deeply, more subtly, more intercorporeally.

If phenomenologists are troubled by the use of proxies and syncretic assemblages such as science as ways of getting to 'experience' or going 'back to the things themselves', it bears remembering, as Donna Haraway (1988) taught us many decades ago, that all vision is prosthetic; all knowledge is mediated. We only know the world through the mediation of prosthetics – there is no 'pre-mediated' state to get back to. In this sense, no less than the specific powers of our primate retinas and optic nerves mediate what we are sure we perceive, microscopes and telescopes similarly give us access to certain visions while they hold others at bay. Both a tongue and a water quality autosampler, both a sensitive fingertip and a DNA sequencer, are sensory apparatuses that give us information about the world. *This holds for all sensory apparatuses.* Language, cosmology, ideology, and corporeal imaginaries equally serve as mediating prostheses that open certain experiences for us, but foreclose or restrain others. All such apparatuses create an interface of experience; all are fallible, variable.

This realization brings a key point home: phenomenology always comes from somewhere. Our own politics of location, and our bodies in all of their prosthetic interfaces, co-world the phenomena we describe. Again, this does not mean that phenomenology fails to engage 'the thing itself'; it only underlines what Merleau-Pontian corporeal phenomenology and feminist posthumanism have already stressed: that all 'things' are co-worldings, all essences provisional, and that as bodies, we are always chiasmically making the world. This is not solipsistic relativism; this is 'feminist objectivity' in Haraway's (1988) words. Or put otherwise, this is the only world there is. Insisting on Haraway's prosthetic vision as a way of approaching phenomenology reminds us that our embodiment and becoming-with other bodies are an inescapable

co-constitution of nature and culture, of imagination and matter. On such a view, we might even say that *phenomenology has always been posthuman*. All existence is cyborg. Any 'thing' we 'get back to' – in a humanist or posthuman orientation – can be accessed only through mediated perception.

A posthuman phenomenological method exerts a two-way pressure: first, upon phenomenology to understand that all perception is mediated, and getting 'back to the things themselves' will always require something like Haraway's prosthetic vision. But secondly, a posthuman phenomenology also reminds posthumanists that the embeddedness of bodies within contexts, within specific possibilities and matrices of power, cannot be transcended. A posthuman method can no more easily escape the situatedness of the practitioner than a phenomenological one can. Here, as noted earlier, feminist and anticolonial corporeal phenomenologies are particularly instructive in reminding us how the differences of racialized, colonized, and gendered bodies need to be specifically traced, not erased (see Fanon 1986; Ahmed 2006; Shildrick 1997; Irigaray 1985a; Trinh 1989; de Beauvoir 2010). Flight from one's specifically situated human body is not feminist posthumanism, but rather an arrogant fantasy (Åsberg 2013). Situated knowledges and politics of location *condition* the kind of posthuman phenomenology I am advocating. The problem with phenomenology was never *description by a body*, but rather the assumption that description only issues from certain kinds of bodies, and is only about certain kind of bodies. A feminist posthuman phenomenological method must insist on describing the (social, morphological, cultural, biological, structural, imaginative) conditions that enable certain experiences for some bodies, but foreclose others for other ones. To do so, we begin with our (situated, posthuman) bodies. Recall Rich's imperative: begin with the material; describe the geography closest in.

Not only do we require the syncretic assemblages of science to find our posthuman phenomenological bearings, we also need to attune ourselves critically to the differences of bodies that together world our planetary hydrocommons. The kind of posthuman phenomenology I am advocating must be committed to feminist, but also anticolonial, anti-racist, queer, and crip futures. Even – *especially* – as our bodies molecularize and de-stratify, and defy and interrupt our sense of coherently bounded self, the flows of power and re-stratification are hardly washed away.

## Posthuman ties in a too-human world

Importantly, a posthuman phenomenology does not dispense with the human; this is neither possible nor desirable. Accessing, amplifying, and describing the body of water as a feminist figuration – like any critical-creative undertaking I engage – is still something I do with my very human body. But that doesn't make this figuration, or this method, irredeemably humanist. Theory, concepts, description: all these are made by human bodies for human bodies, even if these bodies are also more-than-human, and even – especially – as they are sometimes rendered inhuman. This posthuman methodology (of scholarship, maybe also of living) asks the phenomenologist to activate and amplify the more-than-human modes of living *that are also always part of existence and part of our 'own' corporeality*, and which emerge from our particular politics of location. A feminist posthuman phenomenology is a methodology that challenges a too-easy 'we', but won't remain tethered to a bounded 'I', either.

While the human body is indeed a convenient 'resting place' from which to engage in philosophical practice,<sup>24</sup> the refusal to abandon one's human molarity is not only a question of ontological adequacy; it is also an ethical consideration. To ignore or discount ourselves as specifically human bodies would mean that we would also have to ignore or discount those many ways in which we as humans act upon other bodies in specific ways. (A body, remember, is defined not only by its capacity to be affected, but also by its capacity to affect.) If we consider our world's water-related ecological crises, inextricably linked to our other human projects of dam building, factory fishing, and the theft, capture, and sale of ancient aquifer stores as privately owned commodities (to name only a few), the urgency of acknowledging how human projects affect other bodies of water in the world becomes clear. This imperative intensifies the more we account for our posthuman politics of location: as white or brown; as male, female, or otherwise gendered; as settlers, as travellers, as migrants, as deeply rooted in place. The ways in which specific bodies are seriously implicated, while others bear the heaviest burden in relation to our planet's troubled waters, requires ongoing and increased attention. A close attunement to our posthuman embodiment of and as water reveals that 'responsibility' is not a simple thing to allocate,

nor an easy thing to shoulder. We need to keep looking for ethical responses that can be adequate to these questions.

A feminist posthuman phenomenology also helps us realize that this kind of accountability, or response, is not merely a question of 'the right thing to do', as some kind of categorical moral imperative. Our human bodies are *materially* composed of water in ways that inextricably link our human, specifically situated bodies to other bodies – sea, whale, human in the distance. Our human projects – fossil fuel burning, plastic consumption, infusing all things in our homes with flame retardant – may be dreamt up and executed by our human subject-bodies, but all of us as an embodied hydrocommons materially live these effects, in one way or another. The planetary hydrocommons is not outside of us, but quite literally channelling and cycling through us. Even if it may seem as though I have little to do with multi-million dollar hydroelectric dam projects on the Peace River in northern British Columbia, or the water of the Flint River travelling through corrosive lead pipes and into the taps of residents in Flint, Michigan, or indeed, with biomagnifying levels of toxins in Arctic human and more-than-human animals, we need to torque this proximal distance. This is the ethical imperative.

If the aim of feminist posthuman phenomenology is to attune ourselves differently to a world in which we are implicated, and to experiment in modes of worlding *otherwise*, then the question remains: what do these descriptions do? What can they change, and how can they illuminate and produce more ethical accounts of living well together? Posthuman phenomenology can be a tool for thinking with environmental matters, such as water, in order to transform the contours and limits of humanist modes of inquiry, but also of its ethics. Refiguring ourselves as bodies of water is thus not only an experiment in human embodiment, but also a feminist commitment to following the flows of marginalization and injustice, as well as those of connection, empowerment, and joy that our watery corporealities collaboratively engender.

## Posthuman Gestationality and Water's Queer R

*So remember the liquid ground.*

### Hydrological cyc

Our bodies are hydrophilic, through and through a surprise. It is almost too cliché to say these bodies is constituted of water, but perhaps it is. I start this chapter. About the same percentage of blue. Water infiltrates and inhabits the vapour of the animal, vegetable, meteorological and other share this planet. As embodied beings, we are, watery world.

Yet our bodies of water are neither stagnant in some kind of impermeable sac of skin. They are imbricated in the intricate movements of water on our planet. We all feel these movements viscerally: the acute paucity, or mere banality of the rain, sleep weather reports; we have all learned of the cycle of evaporation and condensation to which these precipitous while we might understand such traversals as a hydrological cycle upon the Earth according to a high-school science textbook, this water is in fact engaged in a complex, co-implicated cycles, about which more nuan