War on the Human

War on the Human:

New Responses to an Ever-Present Debate

Edited by

Theodora Tsimpouki
and Konstantinos Blatanis

Editorial Assistant
Rachele Dini

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INTRODUCTION

WAR ON THE HUMAN: ALWAYS ALREADY POSTHUMAN OR NOT QUITE HUMAN YET?

THEODORA TSIMPOUKI

> L'homme est le terme unique d'ou il faut partir, et auquel il faut tout ramener.
> —Denis Diderot, *Encyclopédie*

This essay collection takes as its point of departure Denis Diderot's claim that "man is the unique concept from which one must start and to which one must refer everything back."[1] Diderot's encyclopedic text proposed a theory of knowledge as an exclusively human product, grounded in sensory and mental operations and to be judged in terms of its usefulness to humanity.[2] The *Encyclopédie's* aim was to advance an epistemology centered on mankind—what Charles Taylor, in his seminal study, *A Secular Age,* terms the "anthropocentric turn."[3] As Taylor argues, this profoundly anthropocentric point of view facilitated the emergence of a "buffered self": that is, a self that understands itself as autonomous, fundamentally distinct and disengaged from other selves and the supernatural. The "buffered self" places all power of meaning making in the human mind; human reason enables "the ambition of disengaging from

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[1] Denis Diderot, "*Encyclopédie*" [1755], in Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. VII *Encyclopédie* III, Paris: Hermann, 1976, 213. Diderot and other encyclopedists viewed man as master of the natural world. Long before the Enlightenment, however, in Ancient Greece, Plato recorded Protagoras's famous pronouncement that "Man is the measure of all things." This view was based on the fact that human beings possess reason and cognition, which animals instead lack.

[2] Denis Hollier, ed., *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 447-54.

[3] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 222.

whatever is beyond the boundary, and of giving its own autonomous order to its life."[4]

This human-centered modern order has by and large endured in the centuries since, and—if one leaves aside criticisms of philosophers such as Heidegger—it has only recently come under sustained attack. In "Letter on Humanism," his first major work following the end of the Second World War, Heidegger denounced the understanding of the essence of man presupposed by humanism as metaphysical.[5] He called for a rethinking or a "thinking for the first time" of the relationship of man and Being and claimed that it is this kind of thinking that befits man's dignity. Further deconstruction of the humanist subject took place in the mid-Sixties, and, in Francesca Ferrando's words, "turned into an academic project in the Seventies, and evolved into an epistemological approach in the Nineties."[6] In France, the controversy surrounding humanism was closely associated with anti-humanist thinkers such as Levi-Strauss, Lacan, Althusser, Foucault and Derrida.[7] More specifically, it was associated with debates surrounding the primacy of man as an epistemological starting point (which is to say, the subject as the foundation of all possible knowledge), and regarding the validity of an Enlightenment-inspired, optimistic view of history as the result of the progress made by autonomous human beings. Of particular controversy were Foucault's claims that man is an "invention of recent date" sure to suffer imminent "death" and threatened with erasure like a "face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea."[8] Anti-humanist thinking in the United States, meanwhile, took hold through organized opposition to the Vietnam War. Here, the civil rights and anti-colonialist movements contributed to a growing perception of the humanities as largely "apolitical, unworldly and oblivious" to the changing socio-political

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[4] Ibid., 39. Taylor opposes the "buffered self" to the older, "porous self," a self that perceived meaning as arising from the "enchanted world" outside the human mind.

[5] Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, in *Basic Writings*, ed. David F. Krell (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1977), 193-242. One can go even further back, to Nietzsche, who laid the foundations for the demise of humanism, pointing out simultaneously that "we cannot cut off the [human] head" through which we "behold all things." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 15.

[6] Francesca Ferrando, "Towards a Posthumanist Methodology. A Statement," *Frame, Journal for Literary Studies* 25.1 (2012):12.

[7] See Kate Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism* (London: Hutchinson, 1986).

[8] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, ed. R. D. Laing (New York: Pantheon, 1970), 387.

landscape and fundamentally divorced from reality.[9] Anthropogenic impact on the environment and biodiversity further fomented this critique of human exceptionalism.

The contemporary attack on the human, however, stands apart from its earlier instantiations, and it is the ramifications of this attack that are the subject of this book. Each essay in this collection takes up the question of the human, both as a contested concept and as it relates to, and functions within, the wider global conjuncture. At the most basic level, this book seeks to explore the theoretical underpinnings of the term "human." But it also invites readers themselves to reflect upon our contemporary human condition, to identify opportunities and threats in the changes ahead, and to determine what aspects of our species—whether that species be human or a techno-human hybrid—we should abandon or strive to maintain.

This volume, then, argues that the "human" is better understood as a concept perpetually undergoing revision, and necessarily subject to scrutiny. For this reason, it asks: What does it mean to be human, or to have a self? What is the current place or status of the human in the contemporary world, and what are its defining traits? Under what circumstances are our ingrained notions about human life refuted and our understanding about subjectivity challenged? Moreover, given that technological development has started to interfere explicitly with human nature, how can we improve our understanding of human nature—and to what extent should we modify it? Nick Bostrom, Director of the Future of Humanity Institute, at Oxford, UK contends:

> All techno-hype aside, it is striking how recent many of the events are that define what we take to be the modern human condition. If compress the time scale such that the Earth formed one year ago, then Homo sapiens evolved less than 12 minutes ago, agriculture began a little over one minute ago, the Industrial Revolution took place less than 2 seconds ago, the electronic computer was invented 0.4 seconds ago, and the Internet less than 0.1 seconds ago – in the blink of an eye.[10]

Likewise, the ramifications, for humankind of the most recent wave of technoscientific development only became apparent to scientists in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The so-called "posthuman turn" in the

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[9] Edward Said, "Humanism's Sphere," *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 13.
[10] Nick Bostrom, "The Future of Humanity," in *New Waves in Philosophy of Technology*, eds. Jan Kyrre Berg Olsen, Evan Selinger and Søren Riis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 193.

humanities can be seen as a direct response to such developments. Many computer scientists today would agree with Daniel Dennet that "[o]ur minds are our brains and hence are ultimately just stupendously complex 'machines.' The difference between us and other animals is one of huge degree, not metaphysical kind."[11] Posthumanist thought extends this view to challenge human sovereignty, emphasizing instead impersonal interconnections and networks of relations. In one of the first major publications in the posthumanities, *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), Katherine N. Hayles argues: "In the posthuman, there are no essential differences, or absolute demarcations, between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot technology and human goals."[12] And she concludes: "Humans can either go gently into that good night, joining the dinosaurs as a species that once ruled the earth but is now obsolete, or hang on for a while longer by becoming machines themselves. In either case […] the age of the human is drawing to a close."[13]

Contesting Posthumanism and Reclaiming the Human

Hayles and other posthumanists posit a symbiotic relation of the (embodied) human with other entities (animate, inanimate, informatic). The question of how to think of the posthuman subject and the posthuman condition thus arises as a result of the increasing intermingling of humans and intelligent technology on the one hand, and the dissipation of differences between humans and other species on the other. A note of clarification regarding the terms "posthuman" and "transhuman" is required at this point, however. Despite the fact that they are often used interchangeably, and despite their shared technophilia, the two approaches are in fact diametrically opposed. "Transhumanism," also known as celebratory posthumanism, advocates a faith in incremental human progress and technology (and is often criticized for its adherence to a type of humanism that valorizes the human's unlimited capacity for self-realization).[14] By

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[11] Daniel Dennet, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 370.

[12] Katherine N. Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 3.

[13] Ibid., 283.

[14] Transhumanism has been defined by Nick Bostrom as "the intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition through applied reason, especially by using

contrast, critical posthumanism—which is the focus of this essay—posits a symbiotic relation of the (embodied) human with nonhuman others, providing a reflective view on humanity's distinct and special place in the world. In particular, posthumanists reject transhumanist aspirations of technology-aided disembodiment (as exemplified by the concept of uploading one's mind to a computer), focusing, instead, on the material effects of human embodiment and lived experience.

The above being said, while this volume addresses issues pertaining to the "posthuman turn" as it relates to advances in biology, computing and neuroscience, that is not our central aim. Rather, as the title suggests, our aim is to advance a fresh understanding of the *agonistic* nature of humanism—to explore both the human's right and its limit(s). To be sure, as Hayles succinctly argues, "the humanities have always been concerned with shifting definitions of the human," so "the human has always been a kind of contested term."[15] Hayles notes for example that ideas about the posthuman underpin the tremendous impact that technological progress has made in "fundamentally transforming the conditions of human life."[16] Likewise, in his "Posthuman Manifesto," Robert Pepperell maintains that "[a]ll technological progress of human society is geared towards the transformation of the human species as we currently know it" and that "[c]omplex machines are an emerging form of life."[17] The term "human" itself would thus appear to be both continuously in flux, and the human continuously *en route* to mechanization. The intention here, however, is not so much to embrace or espouse a technologically-enhanced posthumanity, but to foreground the debate around the very category of "human" and to explore the potential to re-conceptionalize the human in light of technological advancement.

Furthermore, we aim to acknowledge the many ways in which the category of "human" has been withheld from particular individuals or peoples, thus sanctioning their abuse and exploitation. More specifically,

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technology to eliminate aging and greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities." Bostrom, "The Transhumanist FAQ," in "Transhumanism and Posthumanism," *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, Encyclopedia.com, http://www.encyclopedia.com.

[15] Hayles, "Preparing the Humanities for the Posthuman," interview by Don Solomon, *News of the National Humanities Center* Fall/Winter (2007): 14, http://onthehuman.org/archive/more/interview-with-n-katherine-hayles.

[16] Ibid., 15.

[17] Robert Pepperell, "Appendix II. The Posthuman Manifesto," *The Posthuman Condition. Consciousness Beyond the Brain* (Bristol and Portland: Intellect, 2003), 177.

the essays in this volume recognize "humanness" to be a vexed issue that needs to be rethought and reconsidered. The historical contortions of humanism notwithstanding, it seems imperative at this critical moment to expose the hypocrisy of humanists, philosophers, policy makers and others committed to principles of human rights and human dignity which are in practice only available to a select few. It would be arguably problematic— if not altogether unethical—to claim the emancipatory potential of a technoscience that jeopardizes human freedom, or to call for a wider conception of the human comprising man and other species, without endeavoring to balance socioeconomic inequality. Likewise, the need to advance human self-understanding is all the more urgent in the contemporary neoliberal context, wherein the primary commodity is the human person, and when advancements in the prolongation of life offer opportunities to commercialize life itself.

The ethics of technological advancement, and its ramifications for the human, thus forms a recurring strain in the essays—although we challenge the arguments of bioconservatives such as Francis Fukuyama, for whom biotechnology threatens to change "human nature," which he defines as "the sum of the behavior and characteristics that are typical of the human species, arising from genetic rather than environmental factors."[18] Appointed by George W. Bush to the President's Council on Bioethics in 2002, Fukuyama argues for state regulation of technology, which, left to its own devices, could become so powerful—he argues—as to have "possibly malign consequences for liberal democracy and the nature of politics itself."[19] The contributors to this volume oppose this explicitly technophobic stance, taking their cue, instead, from the more affirmative politics of Rosi Braidotti. Operating within a Spinozian framework, Braidotti views the technologically-mediated human body as an important component of a politics of "life" as a generative force, and proposes a post-anthropocentric shift toward inter-relational and fundamentally affirmative models of subject formation (as we shall see in the following

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[18] Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (London: Profile Books, 2002), 130. Neil Badmington and Andy Miah criticize Fukuyama for relying on universalist, homogenizing notions of the human and without sufficiently clarifying the term "human nature." Badmington, "Mapping Posthumanism," *Environment and Planning* 36.8 (2004): 1341-63; Miah, "A Critical History of Posthumanism," in *Medical Enhancements and Posthumanity*, eds. Ruth Chadwick and Bert Gordijn (New York: Routledge, 2007).
[19] Ibid., 7.

pages).[20] This book, then, resists any claims to the superiority and pre-eminence of the human, while seeking to reclaim the rights and freedoms of all humanity,[21] and to reframe present understandings of the inextricable entanglements of human, nonhuman, nature and culture. Seen from this perspective, the past is equally relevant to the future, as is the biological and the technological, the old and the (post)modern. All of these can help shed light on what it means to be human in the present moment.

Re-engaging with Humanism:
Accounting for Race, Gender, Species

While many posthumanist scholars are eager to affirm a decisive rupture with humanism and in fact deem the posthuman turn a "paradigm shift," the contributors to this book, as already mentioned, take a more modest stance. They do so in an attempt to re-engage with humanism; to reveal both its internal contradictions and unfulfilled potentialities; and to allow themselves to remain "exposed"—to paraphrase Jean-Luc Nancy—to the full force of encounter with humanism's failures and defeats.[22] The crucial question then is: Is humanism outmoded? Can a common humanity that is *not* naively thought to exist independently of any conflict or contestation be invoked and performed at this historical moment? Has humanism exhausted its course? Can we leave it behind? Or, does "to be human" mean, to slightly paraphrase Judith Butler, "being in a predicament that one cannot solve?"[23] While Butler's argument is concerned primarily

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[20] Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

[21] For example, as crafted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Even though newly decolonized African, Asian and Latin-American states endorsed the declaration, adding self-determination and anti-discriminatory rights to the agenda, several postcolonial critics argue that human rights are the artifact of Western thought, whereas for posthumanist thinkers, human rights are expressive of human singularity and human exceptionalism. The ongoing debate over human rights and the danger of normative assumptions on what it is to be human is proof of the lack of consensus as to which attributes are common to all of us as human beings.

[22] Jean-Luc Nancy, *After Fukushima: The Equivalence of Catastrophes*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 8. "We are being exposed to a catastrophe of meaning," Nancy asserts, adding, "Let's not hurry to hide this exposure under pink, blue, red, or black silks. Let us remain exposed, and let us think about what is happening [*ce qui nous arrive*] to us: Let us think that it is we who are arriving, or are leaving."

[23] Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 103.

with ethical responsibility, acknowledging that the human incapacity of "giving account of oneself" simultaneously undermines both the category of the human and the demand to transcend it, it relates to the current discussion insofar as it contests the ontological and epistemological certainty of subjecthood. Butler envisages becoming human as a "double move" necessitating a prior "destitution of our humanness."[24] Indeed, it is the unresolvable nature of the predicament that invites more challenging questions, resists hasty closures, and enables us to view humanity not as an all-encompassing, totalizing essence but as open-ended possibility.

Edward Said's writings on the irresolvable contradictions inherent to humanism on the one hand, and the infinite potentiality of the human on the other, bear close relation to the ideas just discussed. Indeed, Said's work on the shortcomings of an ethnocentric humanism appears uncannily prescient in its call for us to "expand our understanding of human history to include all those Others constructed as dehumanized, demonized opponents by imperial knowledges and a will to rule."[25] For Said, who *could* "imagine paradoxically a nonhumanistic humanist,"[26]

> Humanism is not a way of consolidating and affirming what "we" have always known and felt, but rather a means of questioning, upsetting, and reformulating so much of what is presented to us as commodified, packaged, uncontroversial, and uncritically codified certainties [...].[27]

Nevertheless, even though Edward Said himself repeatedly acknowledged his vexed relationship with humanism, describing how the "very word" human caused him "mixed feelings of reverence and revulsion,"[28] a number of theoreticians have criticized his valorization of the humanist pronoun "we," which is to say of a humanist common denominator. For example, James Clifford points out a contradiction at the heart of Said's *Orientalism*: that the "universalist power that speaks for humanity" to which he aspires in shedding local cultural codes is, in fact, "a privilege invented by a totalizing Western liberalism."[29] According to Clifford, by

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[24] Ibid., 19, 106.
[25] Edward Said, Presidential Address 1999 "Humanism and Heroism," *PMLA* 115.3 (2000): 291.
[26] Ibid., 290.
[27] Edward Said, "Humanism's Sphere," *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 28.
[28] W.J.T Mitchell, "Secular Divination: Edward Said's Humanism," *Critical Inquiry* 31.2 (2005): 462.
[29] James Clifford, "On Orientalism," *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

frequently relapsing into the essentializing modes that his work attacks, Said becomes "enmeshed in the totalizing habits of Western humanism."[30]

A number of posthumanist thinkers follow a similar line of reasoning in their criticism of humanist postcolonialism as a whole, although they acknowledge the reciprocity between postcolonialism and posthumanist thought in the rejection of the (Western) subject's privileged position. Rosi Braidotti, for instance, acknowledges Said's contribution in developing "a reasoned scholarly account of Enlightenment-based secular humanism," which would take into account the colonial experience.[31] Moreover, she invokes Said's indictment of Western humanism's exclusionary practices, citing Said's own words: "It is possible to be critical of Humanism in the name of Humanism and that, schooled in its abuses by the experience of Eurocentrism and empire, one could fashion a different kind of Humanism."[32] At the same time, she moves beyond Said's commitment to thinking difference and proposes a shift away from the parameters of anthropocentrism and a return to the primacy of life itself. More specifically, she rejects the species supremacy of *anthropos* in favor of a "zoe-centred egalitarianism"[33] that seeks to re-inscribe human life within the context of animal and nonhuman life. Braidotti's affirmative zoe-egalitarian turn invites us to overcome speciesism and to engage in a more equitable relationship with nonhuman life forms. However, it should not be confused with cross-species bonding, which simply extends the privileges of humanist values to other categories and anthropomorphizes them, and which Braidotti defines as "post-anthropocentric neo-humanism."

Press, 1988), 263. Similarly, Robert Young, argued that "the idea of the human which Said opposes to the Western representation of the Orient is itself derived from the Western humanist tradition." Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), 131. More recently, R. Radhakrishnan has questioned Said's "soft handling of humanism" which he contrasts with Merleau-Ponty's "indictment of humanism." According to Radhakrishnan, Said adamantly refuses to acknowledge "the illness of humanism as such, tout court." *History, the Human, and the World Between* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 176.

[30] Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 271.

[31] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 46, 47.

[32] Said, "Humanism's Sphere," 11.

[33] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 60. Braidotti develops her argument into three interrelated fields of anthropocentric enquiry. She labels them as "becoming-animal," "becoming-earth," "becoming-machine." It is also significant to note that Braidotti's understanding of the term "zoe" differs considerably from what Giorgio Agamben calls "bare life." Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

This approach differs from the posthumanist stance which sees "the interrelation human/animal as constitutive of the identity of each," transformative or symbiotic "that hybridizes and alters the 'nature' of each."[34] Moreover, taking the post-anthropocentric path also entails a rejection of a culturally specific notion of humanism and the human/machine divide in favor of a "vitalist" and "monistic philosophy of becoming."[35] This implies, according to Braidotti, "the open-ended, interrelational, multi-sexed and trans-species flows of becoming through interaction with multiple others. A posthuman subject thus constituted exceeds the boundaries of both anthropocentrism and of compensatory humanism, to acquire a planetary dimension."[36]

Braidotti's posthumanist formulations are shared by other posthumanists who seek to do away with a traditional speciesist hierarchy.[37] Indeed, for many posthumanist scholars, the incipient promise of eliminating violence directed toward nonhuman animals, "dehumanized" social and political others, and the environment, depends on repudiating our allegiance to humanism. Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner argue that posthumanists reject humanism, as this was characterized by endowing man with a special status and assumed that man differs not just gradually but categorically from all other natural beings.[38] Cary Wolfe accuses humanist "discourse of species,"[39] which is based on human subjectivity

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[34] Ibid., 79.

[35] Ibid., 166.

[36] Ibid., 89. Braidotti's posthumanism provides, to my knowledge, the most thorough and sustained analysis of the field to date. Not only does she account for the diverse meanings and associations of the term and affiliations of the movement as well as poignantly criticizing contemporary capitalist exploitation based on "humanistic" hierarchical values, but, through a deconstruction of the life-death dichotomy, she calls for a renewed emphasis on life itself that can engender affirmative politics. In her own words: "the end of classical Humanism is not a crisis, but entails positive consequences." Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 51.

[37] The term "speciesism" was conceived by Richard Ryder (1970), for whom "speciesism describe[s] the widespread discrimination that is practiced by man against the other species." Ryder, "All beings that feel pain deserve human rights," *The Guardian*, August 6, 2005. Peter Singer, who popularized the term, defines speciesism as "a prejudice or attitude of bias toward the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species." Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 6.

[38] Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, eds., *Post- and Transhumanism: An Introduction*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2014).

[39] Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rights: American Culture, The Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 2.

and autonomy, of performing discriminatory practices such as racism and sexism. He argues that "as long as this humanist and speciesist *structure* of subjectivization remains intact,"[40] violence against the excluded Others will continue without end,

> and as long as it is institutionally taken for granted that it is all right to systematically exploit and kill nonhuman animals simply because of their species, then the humanist discourse of species will always be available for use by some humans against other humans as well, to countenance violence against the social other of *whatever* species – or gender, or race, or class, or sexual difference.[41]

Pramod Nayar, too, focuses on the demise of the master-category of the autonomous, self-willed individual and emphasizes the impossibility of a radical distinction between human/animal and human/machine. He denounces "the exclusionary nature of the allegedly sovereign human,"[42] suggesting the re-delineation of the human as an "assemblage" co-evolving with other forms of life, "an instantiation of a network of connections, exchanges, linkages and crossings with all forms of life."[43] He contends that:

> [b]y rejecting the view of the autonomous subject and instead proposing a subject that is essentially intersubjective and intercorporeal, posthumanism refashions the very idea of the human. The human is a node, one that is dependent upon several other forms of life, flows of genetic and other information, for its existence and evolution.[44]

Braidotti, Sorgner and Ranisch, Wolfe, and Nayar evidently address different key concerns of "posthumanism," but their work nonetheless shares an insistence on the displacement of the anthropocentric model of thinking and the speciesism connected to it.

The idea of overcoming speciesist discourses, however, has been met with skepticism by theorists of race, feminists and philosophers alike. The posthumanist insistence on the demise of the human versus the postcolonialist emphasis on gender and race's importance in the construction of subjecthood, for example, has generated and informed contentious debates in postcolonial and feminist studies. When certain people—colonized peoples, women, minorities of all kinds—have not been considered and

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[40] Ibid., 8.
[41] Ibid., (emphasis in original).
[42] Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 30.
[43] Ibid., 5
[44] Ibid., 76.

treated as humans, posthumanism paradoxically serves as "an alibi" for further denial of humanity to these same people, this time by objecting to speciesism because it allegedly violates the principle of transpecies equality.[45] Besides, doing away with our species status and the fact that we are culturally marked as human does not explicitly lead to our gaining admission into the category of the posthuman, nor does it lead to overcoming the structural inequalities that trouble humanity at the present moment.

In this regard, it is worthwhile considering Zakiyyah Iman Jackson's question: "What and crucially *whose* conception of humanity are we moving beyond? Moreover, what is entailed in the very notion of a beyond?"[46] Jackson calls for a more critical interrogation of posthumanism's premises. This would involve extricating posthumanism from the Eurocentric structures of rationality that it claims to have transcended, and not allowing it to bypass the analytical challenges posed by the categories of race and gender. She contends that "a call for movement in the direction of the 'beyond,' issued in a manner that suggests that this call is without location, and therefore with the appearance of incognizance regarding its situated claims and internal limits, returns us to a Eurocentric transcendentalism long challenged."[47] Similarly, Joshua Labare recognizes the significance of Cary Wolfe's challenge of the "discourse of species,"[48] but at the same time considers that it is "a grave oversight on Wolfe's part to ignore the ways that feminist theory, critical race theory, and queer theory have already unsettled and reconfigured the subject."[49] Just as

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[45] Shu-mei Shih, "Is the Post in Postsocialism the Post in Posthumanism?" *Social Text* 30:1 (2012): 30. One of the writer's goals in this article is to show that within posthumanism there have been "inventive reappropriations" "to serve as theoretical support for the humanist pursuit of recognition, identity, and agency in such fields as postcolonial studies, ethnic studies, and gender studies." Shu-mei Shih mentions among others, Spivak's "strategic essentialism" to mitigate the anti-humanist thrusts of postcolonialism; Sylvia Wynter's "overrepresentation" of the human in the term "Man," that pretends to be the very human itself which is to say, the normative measure of all humanity; Abdul R. JanMohamed's cautionary note not to conflate humanism with "the pseudo-emancipatory liberal humanism," etc., 29.

[46] Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, "Outer Worlds: The Persistence of Race in Movement 'Beyond the Human'," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21.2-3 (2015): 215.

[47] Ibid., 217.

[48] Wolfe, *Animal Rights,* 2.

[49] Joshua Labare, "Review of Cary Wolfe's *What is Posthumanism*?" *Science Fiction Film and Television* 4.1 (2011): 138.

importantly, attempts have been made to deconstruct posthumanist premises related to "the rhetoric of temporal and historical rupture [with humanism] […], the critical ascendancy of the term 'posthumanism' itself," and, above all, for the purposes of our argument, "the logic of dialectical reversal, the effacement of human/animal difference."[50] In particular, with regard to "posthumanism's democratic mission of expanding equality," Christopher Peterson makes two interrelated observations: first, that even if capacities traditionally attributed to humans are extended to animal others (and to non-animal entities, I would add), it is impossible to fully avoid ''theorizing about humans,'' since such capabilities are first identified by us as "ours" before they are "given" to other species. Second, in addition to ineluctably assuming a humanist approach, it is equally impossible for posthumanism to efface the limit that secures the included from the excluded, to answer the irresolvable question of where to "draw the line" in terms of the human/animal distinction. The epistemological endeavor of posthumanism to eliminate all previous faults and eradicate all traces of humanism leaves it helplessly wanting.[51]

A particularly fruitful line of thinking has been opened up by scholars *in favor* of speciesism: these regard species-membership as a morally relevant fact about human nature. In "The Human Prejudice," philosopher Bernard Williams counters the objection by critics of speciesism that privileging the human species is a form of prejudice. Williams uses the term "humanism" to refer to this "prejudice," arguing that being partial to one's own kind does not imply reverting to a belief in the absolute importance of human beings, nor is it necessarily an endorsement of humankind's sense of entitlement and domination over the Other. In Williams's words:

> They suppose that we are in effect saying, when we exercise these
> distinctions between human beings and other creatures, that human beings

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[50] Christopher Peterson, "The Posthumanism to Come," *ANGELAKI Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 16.2 (2011): 128.

[51] In his deconstructive analysis of several posthumanist concepts and methodologies (which I here summarize at the risk of oversimplifying), Peterson reveals the blind spots of posthumanist thought that seem to replicate the logic of humanism that posthumanism seeks to eschew. Peterson extends the Derridean concept of autoimmunity and democracy to come to posthumanism, arguing that "the advent of the posthuman always remains to come." Yet, if the fulfillment of democracy's promise is always deferred, one wonders why the analogy between posthumanism and democracy cannot be equally applied to humanism and democracy, especially a kind of humanism that is exonerated from universalist assumptions.

are more important, period, than those other creatures. That objection is simply a mistake. […] These actions and attitudes need express no more than the fact that human beings are more important *to us*, a fact which is hardly surprising.[52]

While he certainly advocates reducing violent treatment of other living things, Williams does not believe we ought to think worse of ourselves for putting our humanity first in certain cases: "Personally I think that there are many things to loathe about human beings, but their sense of their ethical identity as a species is not one of them."[53]

As previously mentioned, Edward Said was always critical of humanism, professing an admiration for the great monuments of humanism as well as a "disgust at humanity's underside of suffering and oppression."[54] Like Williams, however, he never doubted the centrality of humankind and the idea of human development. Said's humanism affirms "the power of human beings to shape the world through their will and efforts," as Matthew Abraham eloquently put it, at this historical moment "when so much about the potential of the humans remains diminished and uncertain, even belittled by those who have moved beyond the human" and "so much within contemporary culture seeks to deny the power and efficacy of human action and individual effort."[55] For Said, "it is possible to be critical of humanism in the name of humanism."[56] In fact, he urges both skeptics and advocates of humanism to continue "to exercise our intellectual energies with the heroism and personal stake that have distinguished the best work in our field for so many years. May our critical models for the years ahead combine the richness of the past with the skeptical excitement of the new. One must not only hope but also do."[57]

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[52] Bernard Williams, *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 139, (emphasis in original). I owe thanks to Dionysis Kapsalis for bringing this essay to my attention.

[53] Ibid., 152.

[54] Mitchell, "Secular Divination," 462.

[55] Matthew Abraham, "Edward Said and After: Toward a New Humanism," *Cultural Critique* 67 (2007):12. See also Yumna Siddiqi, "Edward Said, Humanism, and Secular Criticism," *Journal of Comparative Poetics* 25 (2005): 65-88. See also Anthony Alessandrini, "Humanism in Question: Fanon and Said," in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, eds. Henry Schwartz and Sangeeta Ray (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000).

[56] Said, "Humanism's Sphere," 10.

[57] Said, "Humanism and Heroism," 291.

Methodology: The Case for Literature, and for an A-chronological Approach

In keeping with this book's guiding principles of heterogeneity and multiplicity, the contributors to this volume approach the above-mentioned questions from a myriad of perspectives. In particular, while each essay seeks to challenge deep-seated assumptions about humanity's place within a more-than-human world, they abstain from either rejecting humanism outright or fully endorsing posthumanism's teleological narrative of accelerated progress and perfectability.[58] For this reason, the articles' range of reference in the humanities alternates among philosophical analysis and literature, critical theory and criticism. The collection comprises an eclectic and evocative mix that extends from ensuring the realization of human rights and advocacy of ethical engagement to considering the possible obsolescence of the human.

A more privileged space in the volume is offered to literature, however. As a dynamic, discursive art form, literature has the capacity to both reflect dominant discourses and ideologies as well as to generate and even anticipate social change; to critique and refine conventional ideas and existing cultural modes as well as to envision new possibilities for the future.[59] Each essay in this volume, moreover, serves as an implicit challenge to Alex Rosenberg's dismissal of literature and textual analysis as mere "fun and games masquerading as knowledge and wisdom."[60] Indeed, each contribution to this collection is premised on the assumption that unlocking and understanding the "fun and games" of literature—

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[58] This last aspiration is espoused by advocates of transhumanism. For a concise explication of the trans/posthumanist divide, see *Post- and Transhumanism: An Introduction*, ed. Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner. See also, Cary Wolfe's Introduction, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[59] Literature, particularly fiction, is the focus of Mads Rosendahl Thomsen's book *The New Human in Literature*: *Posthuman Visions of Changes in Body, Mind and Society after 1900* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013). The author distinguishes the term "the new human" from "the posthuman" (while the latter refers to a break with the human species, the former also covers ideas of change "in human mindset and culture," 2) in order to trace "the new human" not just in (contemporary) science fiction but in other genres of literature, namely works of twentieth century literature, such as works by Virginia Woolf, William Carlos Williams, Louis-Ferdinand Celine, Chinua Achebe, Mo Yan, Orhan Pamuk, and Olaf Stapledon, Philip K. Dick and Octavia Butler.

[60] Alex Rosenberg, *The Atheist's Guide to Reality. Enjoying Life without Illusions* (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), Ch. 12.

which is to say, the pleasure we derive from both creating great works and contemplating them—is pivotal to the humanities as a whole. More to the point, the humanities are better placed to take up this endeavor than any other field. In his essay "In Praise of Pleasure," Geoffrey Harpham notes that no scientific account has so far managed to give an adequate explanation of the pleasure humans take in art that "challenges, disturbs, or affronts us."[61] While Harpham eagerly embraces the "intimate and dynamic" human-nonhuman engagement,[62] he nonetheless identifies the human capacity to experience a wide and complex range of pleasures. "I cannot know what it is like to be a bat," he notes, "but I am certain that no bat would willingly subject itself to a bat-version of *King Lear*."[63]

Similarly, in his discussion of evolutionary progress and the advent of artificial intelligence, Theodore Roszak contends that there will always remain enclaves of human endeavor to which artificial minds simply cannot aspire: "Left to their own devices, can one imagine computers creating dada art or the theater of the absurd?"[64] In this respect, literature has the potential to facilitate our understanding of our evolving humanity, in whatever guise it manifests. As Toni Morrison has noted, speaking of the creative arts in general, "[a]rt's appeal is humanistic and helps us think about and recall the ways we are indeed a singular species."[65]

In order to embrace the complexity of the concerns involved, this collection comprises two trajectories, or axes. The essays in Part One,

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[61] Geoffrey Harpham, "In Praise of Pleasure," *On the Human*, *National Humanities Center*, http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/on-the-human/2012/02/in-praise-of-pleasure. Harpham served as director of the National Humanities Center until 2015.

[62] Harpham, *Shadows of Ethics: Criticism and the Just Society* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), x.

[63] Harpham, "In Praise of Pleasure." In the same essay, he notes: "The extremely high value we place on difficult or deferred or complex pleasures reflects our singular capacity to extract pleasure from pain, often in the name of some other, perhaps "higher" reward associated with aesthetics, ethics, or science, all of which reward our arduous labors with distinctive forms of pleasure. This capacity does not represent a denial of our instinctual nature. It is part of our instinctual nature: human instincts include the ability and the drive to negate primate or organismal instincts out of obedience to our own complex nature."

[64] Theodore Roszak, "Alfred Russell Wallace's dilemma: Evolution and Transcendence," in *Writing the Future Progress and Evolution*, eds. David Rothenberg and Wandee J. Pryor (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 15-16.

[65] Toni Morrison, "Guest Column: Roundtable on the Future of the Humanities in a Fragmented World. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Ngahuia Te Awekotuku," *PMLA* 120.3 (2005): 717.

entitled "Always Already Posthuman," implicitly challenge the very parameters by which we define posthumanism, focusing specifically on the association of posthumanism with new technology. While new technologies such as the Internet, genetic modification, "cyborgization," and cloning have, indeed, radically altered the course of human life, it is also true that that course has been shaped by technology from the start.[66] Put differently, our concept of the human has developed alongside, and to an extent as a result *of,* new technologies. Thus, if technology, in the form of rubbing flint against stone to make fire, or firing gunpowder to kill more efficiently, has always been our "prosthesis," then perhaps technology is also what "made" us human in the first place. For philosopher Bernard Stiegler, for instance, there is a correlation of the human subject (the "who") and the technical object ("the what"). He contends, in *Technics and Time*, "neither the who nor the what, but their co-possibility," the movement of their "mutual coming-to-be" is what constitutes the human.[67] Nevertheless, posthumanism's decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, informatic and biogenetic networks has increasingly led some to discomfort over the supposed threats to human agency and authority while it was embraced by others precisely for transcending the boundaries of anthropocentrism. Thus, the essays in this section look to identify what distinguishes the recent technical, informatics and biogenetic developments that we generally associate with posthumanism today from human beings' longstanding imbrication in technology. Relatedly, they investigate the ways in which these developments might change our sense of what human beings are, what humanism entails, and what the humanities can achieve. Part Two, entitled "Not Quite Human Yet," comprises essays that

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[66] For example, for Ferrando, humans are inextricably linked to technologies and any attempt to demarcate technology as some "other" non-human extension is counterintuitive. Ferrando, "'The Body,'" in *Post- and Transhumanism: An Introduction*, eds. Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner.

[67] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus,* trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 141. Although a detailed discussion of Bernard Stiegler's work is beyond the scope of this essay, I would like to emphasize the philosopher's conception of the "originary prostheticity" of the human, that is the process of becoming human as ontologically intertwined with the technical. From a different perspective, Donna Haraway's image of the cyborg as hybrid of human and non-human aspects, testifies to the irreducible coupling of technology and the human. "For us," she declares, "machines can be prosthetic devices, intimate components, friendly selves." Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 178.

undermine the validity of the term "posthumanism" itself, as they question, in different ways, whether or not humanity has even reached its full potential.[68] Put differently, before we can consider the posthuman we must first have "done" with the human. Regardless of whether we follow Giorgio Agamben's formulation that "all potentiality is impotentiality" and that we are human to the extent that we are capable of our own potential to not-be, so to speak, it is still possible to envision a more just and fulfilled humanity, a hoped-for future for all.[69] After all, if potentiality was always corresponding with its potential existence, everything potential would always already have been actualized, achieved, and potentiality in-itself would never exist as such. [70]

Even though the markers of temporality to an extent dominate the classification of the corpus gathered in this volume, the texts are not organized chronologically. On the contrary, a reverse movement is applied (which is to say, the *post*-human precedes the human) in order to emphasize the interconnectedness, uncertainty and artificiality of such

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[68] This should not be confused with Habermas's claim that modernity is an "unfinished project," a project that still calls for (and is capable of) completion. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," trans. Seyla Ben-Habib, *New German Critique* 22 (1981): 3-14.

[69] Agamben argues that what separates human beings from other living beings is that "human beings are the animals who are capable of their own impotentiality." Parting company with a long philosophical line of thought founded on the premise of the primacy of actualization (from Kant to Hegel to Marx), Agamben argues that we ought not to measure our humanity according to the teleological movement from potentiality to actuality, but enable potentiality to exist apart from actualization, and impotentiality to deny itself for the sake of actuality. Says Agamben: "[I]n its originary structure, dynamis, potentiality, maintains itself in relation to its own privation, its own steresis, its own non-Being. This relation constitutes the essence of potentiality. To be potential means: to be one's own lack, to be in relation to one's own incapacity. Beings that exist in the mode of potentiality are capable of their own impotentiality; and only in this way do they become potential." Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed., trans. and intro. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 182. Underlying Agamben's formulation, "[t]he absolute desperate state of affairs in the society in which I live fills me with hope," Elizabeth Balskus argues, is his conviction that "in all of its injustice and atrocity, society contains within it the means to transform itself into a more just, desirable world." Elizabeth Balskus, "Examining Potentiality in the Philosophy of Giorgio Agamben," *Macalester Journal of Philosophy* 19.1 (2010): 177.

[70] In a similar line of thought, Judith Butler contends that becoming human is "no simple task, and it is not always clear when or if one arrives." Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 103.

divisions. Indeed, not only do we resist equating the *post* of posthuman with a developmental stage or temporal succession but in placing the section devoted to posthumanism first, we also seek to underline the complex web of relations between the post-human future (or present) and the past. In the words of Neil Badmington (following Derrida), "humanism is forever rewriting itself as posthumanism," and therefore posthumanism cannot rid itself from humanism's ghost.[71] In short, we are loath to reduce the posthuman to a temporal phase connoting futurity, progress, and mechanization, and we consider it more productive to explore how these terms might be seen, instead, as co-existing, or even co-mingling.

War on the Human: Chapter Overviews

Our first contributor, Domna Pastourmatzi, opens this volume with a vociferous defense of the human—"both concept and creature" against its posthumanist assailants. Pastourmatzi reads Bruce Sterling's short story "*Homo Sapiens* Declared Extinct" (1999) in relation to the posthumanist strands of the Anglophone science fiction tradition. Noting that "technophilic Anglophone science fiction produced fantasies and images of the posthuman long before cultural theorists and academics adopted it as an icon to stand for a worldview allegedly more compatible with the current global technopolis," Pastourmatzi demonstrates how these depictions of humankind's demise have both shaped cultural and literary theorists' conceptualization of the post and transhuman, and have been appropriated by techno-idealists to espouse frankly dubious political visions.

Following this exploration of the war on the human in science fiction, Christina Dokou introduces us to its representation in the comic genre—a genre characterized by narratives in which the distinction between human and nonhuman is incessantly undermined. Dokou focuses on the categorization of "human" and "superhero" in Andy Kaufman's *All My*

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[71] Neil Badmington, "Theorizing Posthumanism," *Cultural Critique* 53 (2003): 16. Although Badmington sees the impossibility of getting "outside" humanism and abandoning "established anthropomorphic thought" (14), his take differs from the one articulated in this essay: building on Derrida's work and on Lyotard's adoption of Freud, he proposes a "*working-through* of humanist discourse" (22), a constant questioning of the old humanist tradition until the new posthumanism is born. In his review of Braidotti's book, *The Posthuman*, Stefan Herbrechter is quick to recognize Braidotti's similar hesitancy to leave a "certain humanism behind." Herbrechter, "The Roar on the Other Side of Silence... Or, What's Left of the Humanities?" Review of Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, *Culture Machine Reviews*, April 2013, www.culturemachine.net.

Friends Are Superheroes (2003), a print novella that deploys superhero metaphors to blur the boundary between both realism and fantasy, and human and superhuman. In its blending of disparate and seemingly divergent narrative modes and genres, not to mention undermining of category distinctions, she argues, Kaufman "incorporat[es] a new normativity into the posthuman that belies its own definition, thus assuaging our fears that the posthuman is an impending 'war' against the human."

Peggy Karpouzou's essay on the spatial topographies of posthumanism in science fiction extends these ideas to examine how the spatial conception of human subjectivity might, in turn, inform our understanding of posthuman subjectivities. Karpouzou focuses her attentions on one topographical space in particular: the island, an entity rich in metaphorical associations pertinent to the construction of the posthuman. Her essay traces an "insular complex paradigm"—the interrelation of islands, seas, and living beings (humans and non)—in H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896) and M. Houellebecq's *The Possibility of an Island* (2005) and *The Elementary Particles* (1998). In these texts, the relationship between human beings and human clones, actual islands and metaphorical, suggests fruitful ways of reconceiving the posthuman in spatial terms.

From the spatial conceptualization of the posthuman subject, we move on to the reconceptualization of the reading subject in the digital age. Tatiani Rapatzikou examines Amaranth Borsuk and Brad Bouse's poem *Between Page and Screen* (2012) to consider digital technology's potential to transform the roles of writer and reader, if not the definition of poetry itself. Through the use of QR codes (labels requiring a digital device capable of "reading" the encrypted information, or text, they contain), *Between Page and Screen* involves reader, printed page, and machine in a collaborative creative act. Like the preceding contributors, Rapatzikou is specifically concerned with the relationship between posthuman subjectivities (however contested the term may be) and the new literary forms and genres to which these might give rise. She extends these discussions however to consider how the medium itself might become an "actant"—to adopt Bruno Latour's term—in the creative process, and whether poetry is better positioned than other forms to benefit from such collaborative multi-medial methods.[72]

Aristi Trendel builds on these discussions of the (post)human, techno-scientific progress, and literary form through a textual analysis of a novel

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[72] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern,* trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 55.

paradigmatic of critical posthumanism: Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* (2003). The novel's protagonist Erik Packer, Trendel contends, embodies the most deleterious, and dehumanizing, effects of cybercapitalism. Its plotline— which follows Packer on a Joycean *flânerie*-on-wheels across New York City, during which he systematically loses billions of dollars on the stock market—renders acutely palpable the effects of globalization and digitization on "our understanding of what 'being human' actually is," while the role of algorithmic trading in the market collapse towards the novel's end undermines traditional understandings of human agency.

The penultimate essay in this section, by Ruth Parkin-Gounelas, further disturbs conventional categories in its analysis of Jacques Derrida's work on the "animal (or species) question"—very simply, the malleability of the boundaries between humans, animals and inanimate things. In Parkin-Gounelas's own words, Derrida's work on the animal question demonstrates that "[t]he 'limit between human and animal […] takes us to that 'abyssal' space where the animals' refusal to be conceptualized necessarily drags any conceptualization of the human down with it." A different "war" on the human than those enumerated thus far, Parkin-Gounelas's reading of Derrida lays bare the speciesism inherent to humanist discourse. Crucially, she proposes a human-animal continuum— a concept that aligns her with posthumanist thinking.

"Always Already Posthuman" concludes with Sean Homer's essay on Alain Badiou's anti-humanism and Slavoj Žižek's Lacanian criticism of it. Together with Parkins-Gounelas, Homer comes closest to espousing posthumanist thought. Through a series of careful readings, Homer shows Badiou to ultimately grant the individual more agency than either Žižek or Lacan precisely due to his anti-humanist stance. Homer argues that, by defending the Real, Žižek—and Lacan—implicitly assume the individual to be governed by determinism. Badiou, by contrast, through his espousal of the occurrence of the event, effectively grants the individual autonomy while affirming posthumanist notions.

From these investigations into the category of the posthuman and the literary forms and critical responses such a category engenders, we move to Part Two, "Not Quite Human Yet." In the opening essay, Efterpi Mitsi explores the (literal) "killing of the humanist," Petrus Ramus, in Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris* (circa 1592), a play based loosely on real events. Mitsi's focus on Ramus's humanist thought helps provide a more nuanced interpretation of the play that in turn complicates established accounts of the role of humanism in the early modern state, and the legacy of humanism in European thought. Moreover, Mitsi's attention to the Renaissance period reveals just how longstanding the

"war" on the human actually is—and suggests, more importantly, that this "war" has been integral to the evolution of the concept itself. The contestation and refuting of humanism and the human has, in short, been pivotal to their development.

Zoe Detsi—like several others in this section—in turn focuses on those deemed undeserving of the label human, and the extent to which such exclusion is in fact a hallmark of the humanist tradition. Noting the "inescapable internal contradictions" of institutional racism in liberal democratic nations, Detsi focuses her attention on the racist strains of late-19th century US labor and immigration policy. Her analysis of Henry Grimm's *The Chinese Must Go* (1879), shows the play to be an "index of how American theatre negotiated images of Chinese 'Otherness'," reflecting prevailing views of the Chinese as "unassimilable" and therefore less-than-human. It is a stark reflection, in short, of the extent to which the category of human itself has been used to exclude.

The following essay, by Greg Zacharias, shifts track instead to explore the representation of liberal humanism in the work of Henry James, which he relates to a broader analysis of the crisis in the humanities under neoliberalism. Following an American definition of liberal humanism that places emphasis on individualism, Zacharias argues, helped James achieve success as a writer, but led also to his isolation. The paradox of the liberal hero, James discovered, lies in his reliance on others—the clubs to which he hopes to gain access; the friendships and connections he must foster to promote his novels; even the readership he must cultivate for those novels to gain popularity. James's moral dilemma, Zacharias shows, is also a paradox characteristic of liberal humanism itself: the liberal hero's individualism exists in direct opposition to, and in conflict with, his reliance on other human beings.

Effie Yiannopoulou extends the discussions thus far with an exploration of different visions, by contemporary black British writers, of a multicultural utopia in which cross-cultural coexistence is re-imagined in terms of "a new humanism-to-come that is supranational and cosmopolitan in character and which rethinks the human as a fundamentally contingent category whose future must remain open to the unexpected." Through readings of Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004), and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), Yiannopoulou explores the extent to which Gilroy's concept of a "planetary humanism" might serve as a counter to posthuman thought, and as a means to reconceive the human itself in global, transnational terms that take into account "human precarity and generalized vulnerability as a precondition for 'global cooperation'."

Next, Konstantinos Blatanis shifts our attention to the politically fraught ramifications of posthumanism's devaluation of the human body through readings of two American plays written in the 1990s, each of which contends with the dehumanizing effects of the Great Depression-era socio-economic policies. Both August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* (1990) and Naomi Wallace's *The Trestle at Pope Creek* (1998) challenge the disembodying tendencies of late capitalism by reclaiming the human body at the level of both plot and form. In attending to the human toll of the 1930s crisis on the very bodies of African Americans and the white working poor, Blatanis argues, the plays oblige their audiences to "assess identified historical, social, cultural, and political issues through modes of embodied awareness." In rendering the spectators conscious of their own embodied engagement in the actions taking place on stage, moreover, they re-affirm Jacques Rancière's definition of theater as "the place where an action is taken to its conclusion by bodies in motion in front of living bodies that are to be mobilized."[73]

Angeliki Tseti builds on this discussion of embodiment in her exploration of how trauma is inscribed on the body, through an analysis of Suzanne Khardalian's documentary, *Grandma's Tattoos* (2011). Khardalian's film takes its name from the tattoos with which female survivors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1917 were branded before being forced into prostitution. "[S]igns of ownership during their captivity and markings of trauma thereafter," these bodily wounds are reclaimed, in Khardalian's film, and used in the dissemination of the stories of their bearers. Like Blatanis and the contributors to the first section of this volume, Tseti is acutely concerned with the relationship between human bodies and artistic form. In particular, she shows how the focus on personal rather than historical accounts—as exemplified by the tattoos themselves—effectively serves to "humanize" these forgotten women.

The last essay of the collection, by Maria Pirgerou, extends the discussions of human "precarity"—in the sense that Butler uses it[74]—thus far to explore the human cost of corporatism. More specifically, Pirgerou uses Naomi Klein's critique of neoliberalism in *The Shock Doctrine* (2007) and Butler's theory of precarity to analyze the effects of the European economic crisis, arguing that the fiscal austerity measures imposed on European countries since 2009 have come at the cost of civic and human rights. In its erosion of civil liberties and divestment of public

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[73]Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009), 3.

[74] Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004).

assets, austerity is itself a "war" on the human, and paradigmatic of humanism's failure to protect the public good. In keeping with the central premise of this book, then, Pirgerou's essay is at once an indictment of humanism as it stands and a call for its radical reconceptualization.

In lieu of a conclusion to this introduction, I offer a little anecdote: I have the good fortune of being a member of the local community that surrounds the remarkable Aixoni Quarry Sculptured Theater created by Nella Golanda. Built at the foot of mount Hymettus on the remains of an old and deserted quarry, this site-specific work is made of vertical concrete walls faced with unevenly marble slabs of various colors that are arranged in a semi-circle around an inclined terrace that resembles a stage of a theatre.[75] Forking and swelling in response to varying light conditions, adorned by sculpted water streams that erupt in unlikely places to create motion and a rushing sound, the theater is conceived as a site-specific network composed of the artificial topology of the architecture and the natural landscape enhance. The natural and artificial mutually complement each other in a synergetic correspondence with the environment and the greater city. Here, the painterly, the sculptural and the architectural merge, the rawness of the existing stone quarry contrasting sharply with the elegant man-made structure. While all objects of art exist insofar as they are available for human viewing and understanding, in the case of site-specific art works, the viewer is not just "a pair of eyes floating though space"—rather, s/he is participant in an embodied experience.[76] The site—itself a fusion of natural and constructed matter—is a stage for the body to perform. The work of art, in turn, is composed of the interplay between animate and inanimate matter, and natural and manufactured. Simply by roaming on the stage or climbing the stone rows, the spectator is involved in "a choreography without fixed script," participating in "the spatiality and materiality of the site, literary activating space."[77]

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[75] I would like to thank Nella Golanda for granting us permission to use a picture of the Aixoni Quarry Sculptured Theater image on the book's cover. The relevance of the theater to my argument was enhanced the night of 15 June 2016, when the *apomechanes* artistic team (derived from "από μηχανής," literally "from the machine) employed computational techniques to create a nonlinear computational design event. For more information on the exhibition event, see: http://nella-golanda.blogspot.gr/2016/07/apomechanes-exhibition-event-in-aixoni_81.html

[76] Philip Ursprung, "Presence: The Light Touch of Architecture," *Sensing Spaces, Architecture Reimagined* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2014), 47. Ursprung devotes a large section of his essay to Flisvos Sculptured Quay, another very important site-specific artwork by Nella Golanda.

[77] Ibid., 48.