Thanks Yu Fang, and with that we come to Braidotti’s final thesis: that sexuality is a force beyond gender. Now, before I detail Braidotti’s thesis statement, let’s think about what Braidotti’s motivation behind this 4th thesis is. She is trying to attack the notion that sexuality is a primitive, simple or crude instinct in us and that gender is a somehow more transcendent construct, that gender is somehow more liberatory and agentic as it allows humans an escape from sexual roles. This notion was held by feminists who felt that the feminine gender had to liberate itself, and gain equality with the masculine gender. But Braidotti combats this with her common theme of affirming difference as a positive source of affirmation, politicization and identity.

Let’s see how she develops her argument. She begins with an analysis of the present, and in particular of advanced capitalism, arguing that it commodifies all living beings universally, and reduces them to just microscopic specks of information and utility. This implies a difference in the way we view difference. We now look at difference at the invisible microscopic level, which is a far cry from the traditional way of viewing difference as visibly macroscopic, that is, on the basis of visually verifiable and easily apparent physiological differences between sexes and races, such as physical size, the colour of your skin, and so on.

Braidotti then claims that this newly differentiated system renders the world to be post-gender and post-racial since it blurs boundaries between dualistic hierarchies such as male-female, white-non-white, and so on. Braidotti then warns the reader that this isn’t a cause for celebration and a conclusion of the feminist project, because a post-racial world doesn’t imply a post-racism world, and a post-gender world doesn’t imply a post-patriarchal world – it just means that the hierarchies are more obfuscated and harder to see. Thus Braidotti writes “Ever mindful of Lyotard’s warning about the political economy of advanced capitalism, I think we should not trust the blurring effects and states of indeterminacy it engenders.”

Braidotti then asks the question “What does a postgender world imply for feminism?” and answers it immediately by stating that feminist theory should refocus itself on sexuality and sexual difference. She states that sexuality is beyond gender in basically two ways: first, it is deeper than gender since sexuality is a tangible lived experience of a woman, and it is also “above” gender because it is a superior political tool for women to liberate themselves from patriarchy. She provides a refreshed view of gender as superficial, as “just a historically contingent mechanism of capture of the multiple potentialities of the (female) body” i.e it is just a superficial social construct that ignores the depth of sexuality.

Braidotti argues that sexuality is a deeper way of looking at the problem since it is “both post- and pre- identity, as a constitutve force that is always already present and prior to gender.” However, one might argue that this definition of “sexuality” might be essentializing the female sex. Braidotti contends this by introducing a notion of “becoming-nomad” or “becoming-woman.” Becoming-nomad or nomadic thought is way of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour, such as gender, and appreciating the myriad differences within and among subaltern groups. Braidotti argues that this becoming-nomad involves stripping away the chains of gendered identities, and revealing the potentially diverse sexed identities that woman can take on. In other words, she is arguing that celebrating sexual difference as male-female is not essentializing women because no such male-female sex binary exists. On the contrary, women have an infinity of sexual Identities that they can potentially embody, which she calls the “virtual feminine.”

This means of subverting binaries by highlighting infinities, differences and spectrums of identity is what leads her to define feminist posthuman politics as “an experiment with intensities beyond binaries that functions by “and-and”, not by “either-or.”

Braidotti then carefully explains the nuances or the difference between sexuality and sexual difference. By sexuality she refers to a “generative ontological force” or an abstract potential that can lead a woman to have multiple identities, even maybe at the same time,, and sexual difference as the physical and social manifestation of the interactions between her identities. Together, the two can subvert gender binaries (such as between man and woman, heterosexual and homosexual) because the chaos of sexuality cannot be adequately contained within a dichotomous view of gender, rather it deterritorializes or strips away gender identity and institutions.

Braidotti recognises that this view of sexuality as a chaos of difference as politically powerful for feminists. She suggests that women need to experiment with intensity to find out what posthuman sexed bodies can become. Thus she says “Because the gender system captures the complexity of human sexuality in a binary machine that privileged heterosexual family formations and literally steals all other possible bodies from us, we no longer know what our sexed bodies can do.” However, she qualifies this call to experimentation by saying that the choice and agency of experimentation does not mean that in today’s world, women have been liberated, and that hierarchical differences do not matter. Rather this experimentation is the very process that will cause women’s liberation. She points out the hierarchical sexual differences in the world, by speaking of “homo-nationalism.” Homo-nationalism is the favourable association between a nationalist ideology and LGBT rights i.e making LGBT-friendly politics a part of nationalism. Some academics call it “pinkwashing” as some Western countries use their LGBT-friendly policies as a cover to obfuscate oppression of other communities. For example, the Israeli government is accused of embarking on pinkwashing in a deliberate strategy to conceal the continuing violations of Palestinians' human rights behind an image of modernity signified by Israeli gay life." Braidotti warns that an association of LGBT-rights with rationality and Western thought might lead to a clash of civilizations where a new kind of toxic universality or humanism emerges calling it a “pawn in contemporary international relations.”

Nevertheless, even though sexual differences can be perverted for illegitimate purposes, Braidotti affirms that viewing sexuality as a generative force, and sexual differences as positivity, entails a flow of encounters, interactions, affectivity and desire. Braidotti concludes that such a situated, grounded approach to differences is better than “a flight into an abstract idea of a new humanity.” This can lead to a productive virtuous cycle that can aid feminists in their fight against patriarchy.

[Critical Analysis … and appreciation!]

I will now look at the Braidotti’s 4th thesis through a critical lens.

There is an unexplained tension between Braidotti’s 3rd and 4th theses. While viewing “sexuality” as a powerful force beyond gender helps in subverting the oppression of women, it doesn’t cohere perfectly with her posit that non-human life, or *zoe*, is the ruling principle.

* + - 1. Braidotti proves that a microscopic zoe-infused view helps us in celebrating sexual difference as a key source of human agency and identity. However, it does not explain how non-sexualized subaltern groups such as nature or “cyborgs” can be viewed as agentic. This leads to a perception that her 4th thesis is perhaps too anthropocentric in its political approach.

However, I would also like to introduce an element of critical appreciation to Braidotti’s text. As analysed by Catherine Stimpson, Braidotti often uses advanced and deeply technical terminology from both the sciences and humanities, as exemplified in this sentence

“..innovative adaption of Guattari’s schizoanalysis and Lynn Margulis ‘ concept of endosymbiosis produce a schizogenesis of sexual difference as an organic variable of autopoiesis.” I argue that she deliberately does so to infuse her theme of context and situated knowledge in her arguments – her thesis simply cannot be read as a closed-text, and it must be prised open, referred to and quoted from to understand it. This is an interesting rhetorical tool.

Application to “The Hunt”

Mary’s liminal role in “The Hunt” is perfectly indicative of the various identities (both sexed and non-sexed) that a woman can take on. Mary is free from gendered constructs because of her mixed-race – she does not conform to the gendered roles of an Oraon, uses position as a female to seduce Tehsildar - and succeed in her hunt. She embraces her position as a female, and manoeuvres Tehsildar (enforces her own rules). Different from the conventional Oraon woman.

**Analysis of Critical Reading: “Four Theses on Posthuman Feminism” by Rosi Braidotti**

*Summary and Critical Analysis (pages 35 to 41) : Thesis 4 and Conclusion*

Having cartographed the theoretical and political position of posthuman feminism in a world of advanced capitalism, anti-humanism and climate change, Braidotti applies her central thesis of connecting subaltern humanities to *zoe* to benefit from the latter’s vitality, generative chaos and self-regulation – features that are sought by feminists in a post anthropocentric world. Her chosen point of application is of course, sexuality and sexual difference, a common thread in her writing influenced from Freud, Irigaray and Spinoza. In a break with this paper’s structure, I will be weaving in the summary and critical analysis together, to mimic Braidotti and Irigaray’s political approach of contextualizing and mimicking their chosen texts.

Braidotti introduces her thesis that “sexuality is beyond, beneath and after gender” with a realization that advanced capitalism, with its trained focus on the bio-cellular realm, quantizes every living being to just their informational utility, functioning as a “biogenetic cognitive system of commodification of all that lives.” This universal commodification paradoxically democratizes difference as a matrix of power, whose signifier now virtually invisible and microscopic, a “long way” from the macroscopic and “visually verifiable” markers of difference between sexes, races and species. Braidotti now reaches her motivation for the thesis: while advanced capitalism is a post-gender and post-racial system that “significantly blur[s]” boundaries, it isn’t post-sexism and post-racism. How should an embodied lens of posthuman feminism then tackle an attack on gender in a world devoid of it? Braidotti retorts with a call to appreciate the depth of sexuality and a “need to think of sexuality without genders.” Rather than flee from the female sex and body, she advocates for appreciating its “generative powers… which have not been appraised sufficiently by feminists” who wish to liberate women along the axis of gender.

Braidotti then deconstructs the relationship between gender and sexuality, positing sexuality as a “generative force … of multiplicity,” of an infinity of identities that one can potentially take on. Gender is cast as a constantly morphing chain, a metaphorical chastity belt or “a historically contingent mechanism of capture” of sexuality. She opposes gender as a feminist praxis (a view held by those subscribing purely to social constructive accounts), arguing that since gender is “historically contingent,” it is an inadequate axis to subvert the “transhistorical matrix of power.” Instead, she posits sexuality, as an innate characteristic of the human body that exists “prior to gender” as a more pertinent tool.

Braidotti finds a ripe ground for the application of her “nomadic vein” in her rejection of gender as a social shackle, and her introduction of “becoming-woman.” In *The Nomadic State,* she considers nomadic thought to entail a “critical consciousness that resists settling into socially-coded modes of thought and behavior.” Becoming-woman is then nothing but a nomadic resistance to gender as “socially-coded.”

Having illustrated the interaction of sexuality and gender, Braidotti then details its expediency to the body and the body politic.