

REVIEW

*Posthuman Ecologies: Complexity and Process after Deleuze*. Edited by ROSI BRAIDOTTI and SIMONE BIGNALL. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019. x + 294 pp.

This volume of essays aims to stake out a post-Deleuzian turn in the humanities in light of the notion of the ‘posthuman’ as theorized (chiefly but not exclusively) by Rosi Braidotti, one of its editors. Co-edited with Simone Bignall, the volume brings together a number of contributions across a broad range of topics — from the visual arts and architecture to politics and law — taking the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze (and Félix Guattari) as their key point of departure. As the title suggests, this conceptual lens challenges both essentialist accounts of the human and anthropocentric treatments of the non-human through an emphasis on notions of complexity, mediation, and becoming that undermine or exceed the confines of the human subject. This ontological decentring is accompanied by an epistemological ungrounding of the humanities as a field of enquiry organized around various ideals of humanity and institutionalized into disciplines and discourses that reflect these ideals. The essays enlist Deleuzian-Guattarian terms such as ‘assemblage’ (*agencement*) and ‘ecology’ to reorganize this field in a posthumanist vein, while also building on recent trends in contemporary philosophy such as the feminist materialisms of Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, Donna Haraway, and others. The volume is presented as a critical response to contemporary real-world phenomena, such as climate change and globalization, which outstrip human beings in scale and complexity despite their origins in human action. All the contributions in the collection seek to address the consequences of this displacement and argue in favour of a posthumanist ethics and politics that does not simply reaffirm the ‘inhuman’ otherness of these effects. Following Braidotti’s own proposals, the authors look to expand and diversify our understanding of moral agency beyond its classic anchoring in juridical or metaphysical notions of individual autonomy, rationality, and intentionality, and their historic association with Western racial and gender hierarchies. One notable and recurring example of this problem within the volume is the now popular notion of the Anthropocene, designating a new era marked by the collapse of natural into human history. Several authors endorse it as a useful critical term, which they see as highlighting a condition of planetary-environmental feedback in line with their more general diagnosis of posthumanism. However, they also question its dependence on a unitary definition of the human ‘anthropos’ that would erase economic and geographical differences in responsibility for the effects of climate change, such as those that historically have been determined by colonialism. Many of the authors also adopt constructivist and pluralist approaches to knowledge, allowing them to foreground the ways in which different material systems, discourses, and institutions can be said to constitute objects or representations according to specific norms and logics. This approach does raise important questions for the academic humanities themselves — a sphere of human practice that, in a posthuman world, must compete for legitimacy with the sciences and their standards. On this score and others, the volume is a necessary and timely intervention, demonstrating the continuing impact of twentieth-century and contemporary French thought in the interdisciplinary humanities.

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