

Christine Daigle and Terrance H. McDonald (eds.), *From Deleuze and Guattari to Posthumanism: Philosophies of Immanence*

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Daigle, Christine and Terrance H. McDonald (eds.) (2022) From Deleuze and Guattari to Posthumanism: Philosophies of Immanence. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Emerging out of poststructuralism in the late 1990s,^[1] theories of ‘posthumanism’ have grappled with the technological, biological, and ontological problematization and overcoming of ‘the human’ and classical humanism. While initial developments drew upon anti-humanistic elements of Foucault, Derrida, and cybernetics,^[2] the early 21st century explosion in Deleuze scholarship set the stage for Rosi Braidotti to bring together posthumanism with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.^[3] *From Deleuze and Guattari to Posthumanism: Philosophies of Immanence* works from Braidotti’s development to apply Deleuze-Guattarian concepts such as ‘assemblage’, ‘becoming minoritarian’, and ‘lines of flight’ to phenomena like plants, polyps, film, and the cosmos. This collection offers a phenomenological and constructivist reading, evidenced by an opening allusion to Beauvoir— “One is not born; one becomes a human” (2022, 1)—and the promotion of ‘critical posthumanism’. This latter category, outlined in Daigle and McDonald’s introduction, promotes an alternative to trans-human renderings of the posthuman. Critical posthumanism starts, instead, by recognizing that an autonomous rendering of the ‘human’ as sovereign subject is already a work of fiction. Emphasizing immanent entanglement and relationships, the posthuman is always already immanent

to present reality. Overall, the collection offers an important first step in a discourse ripe for theoretical inquiry, namely Deleuze, Guattari and Posthumanism. These theorists should be applauded for their sustained critique of Humanism and Anthropocentrism.

This collection is organized around three main sections focused on philosophical genealogies, film theory, and politics. The tone is set by Daigle and McDonald's introduction and Braidotti's opening chapter. The construction of the human *qua* posthumanism is founded in notions of 'relationality' and 'manifold intermingling' (2022, 3) that recall other authors in critical posthumanism and feminist posthumanism.^[4] Daigle and McDonald understand Deleuze's 'plane of immanence' as ontological entanglement prior to individuation. Methodologically, this volume resonates with thinkers such as Donna Haraway almost more than it does Deleuze and Guattari, given the insistence on 'thinking with' the titular figures rather than explicit exegesis on their work (2022, 11). Echoing her recent scholarship, Braidotti's opening chapter argues in favor of an 'affirmational ethics' and 'transversal subjectivity.' Thinking 'assemblage' as the 'plane of immanence' (2022, 24), Braidotti considers subjectivity as 'transversal' or 'in-between' binary categories (such as individual and collective). Because of the subject's apparently immanent entanglements in the 'unity of all living matter,' Braidotti argues for what she terms an 'ontological pacifism' (2022, 25) with both 'compassionate aspects of subjectivity' (2022, 30) and 'ethical sustainability' (2022, 35). Her use of 'affirmation' extends to both the ontological and political, arguing that this unity or relationality undoes political antagonism. The second chapter, written by Daigle, draws heavily upon Braidotti to transform images of subjectivity through the figure of the polyp. Daigle adopts the term 'transjectivity' to refer to 'our' polyp-being within a flat ontology (2022, 41). This chapter offers an explicitly phenomenological understanding of the self, which, it is argued, provides a 'minimal agent' against Deleuze and Guattari's 'de-subjectification' (2022, 42). Both Braidotti and Daigle are interested in 'ethical flourishing' for subjects within relational (and in Daigle's case flat) ontological intermingling. An example of the ramifications of these positions can be seen in the fourth chapter, by Karen L.F. Houle, which works to consider the 'immanent relational intensities' present in the 'ontogenesis' of concepts (2022, 85). Drawing from the interconnection and co-constitution of plant life, Houle offers 'becoming-plant' as a mode of relationality that might lead to more ethical engagements with non-human others. Houle's chapter is curiously bookended by Bruce Baugh's third chapter, which offers an important

contribution defending Deleuze's reading of Spinoza against Pierre Machery, and Alain Beaulieu's fifth chapter that explores the understudied yet crucial area of Deleuzian cosmology, comparing it to Husserl's Ark-Earth. This closes off the philosophical section of the book.

The middle of the collection features four chapters examining Deleuze's *Cinema* texts and films exploring posthumanism. The most effective of these is the eighth chapter, by William Brown, which offers a critique of Braidotti from subaltern and post-colonial perspectives. Brown suggests Braidotti's posthumanism reproduces neocolonial practices by mining post-colonial and racial theory for conceptual tools while maintaining their subordination to the posthumanist project. Looking at subaltern rendering in science fiction, through *Enthiran* and *CHAPPIE*, Brown maintains the subaltern remains subaltern even in posthuman futures. The final four chapters offer political insights at the intersection of Deleuze and Guattari and posthumanism. These involve discussions of biopolitics, disability studies, racial theory, and truth and reconciliation commissions. Among these, the most relevant to Deleuze and Guattari studies is Colebrook's twelfth chapter, which examines potential resonances between *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* and Afro-Pessimism. Colebrook offers an insightful critique of tendencies towards flat ontology and relationality (present elsewhere in the collection) due to Afro-Pessimism's formulation of "impossible" worlds. Among other aspects, Colebrook clarifies the understudied influence of Fanon on Deleuze and Guattari.

This volume should be commended for its continuing critique of anthropocentrism and its aim of bringing the rich corpus of Deleuze and Guattari into a more prominent position for posthumanism. There are, however, some issues that I would like to address. First, while there is coherence within the three sections, and the volume contains strong individual essays, the totality lacks clear direction and consistent trajectory. For instance, while Baugh and Beaulieu both offer critical insights in their respective discourses, it is unclear how their essays on Deleuze's Spinoza and Deleuzian cosmology fit within the thematic stressed by Daigle, McDonald, and Braidotti. Additionally, there is little bridging the three separate sections beyond the concept of 'posthumanism' that could be more strongly and consistently defined. While this might be by design, it runs the risk of a collection that often feels disconnected. Second, as a scholar interested in Deleuze, the

emphasis on a phenomenological and constructivist reading can be perplexing. Deleuze is critical of phenomenology throughout his career, including the work with Guattari.^[5] This could have been solved by grounding the phenomenological use in Deleuze and Guattari's work,^[6] but this collection largely side-steps the issue. This would not be a problem in a collection dedicated to posthuman subjectivity, but here it is in danger of undermining the title and focus of the volume. Finally, the most mystifying concern, given the title of the collection, is a general lack of emphasis on Deleuze and Guattari's collective works. The strongest thread of coherence is the work of Rosi Braidotti, rather than Deleuze and Guattari. Two examples: Despite offering an entire chapter on subjectivity, Daigle never once mentions Deleuze's own concept of 'larval subjects' or 'passives selves', nor does she emphasize their possibilities for posthumanism. Furthermore, the ninth chapter, by Sherryl Vint, does not cite Deleuze and Guattari once. Prioritizing Braidotti's reading of Deleuze and Guattari's work is not, itself, negative, but it limits possible threads of scholarship to a reading focused on 'relationality' and 'affirmation.' Both together and separately, Deleuze and Guattari offer a range of concepts that would be fruitful for posthumanism that go beyond this interpretation. Deleuze has, for instance, been influential on both speculative posthumanism^[7] and renderings of the posthuman through Nietzsche's Overhuman.^[8] Certain authors get closer to these possibilities, with some of the strongest chapters in the collection—those offered by Brown and Colebrook—questioning the overall thematic of the volume, but their substantial criticism of the overarching theme is never adequately dealt with.

This collection is likely of less interest to Deleuze and Guattari Studies than it will be to those working in critical posthumanism and feminist phenomenology. While the collection lacks a clear trajectory, individual chapters and sections will be useful in their specific discourses: for instance, Baugh and Beaulieu's chapters will be of interest to those working on Deleuze and Spinoza and Deleuzian cosmologies, respectively; the middle chapters are notable for those working on Deleuze and film; and the political chapters will be relevant to disability studies, Afro-Pessimism, and truth and reconciliation. The applications of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts are interesting, but there is still much work to be done in grounding a posthumanism in their collective, rich philosophical corpus.

References

1. In works such as N. Katherine Hayles (1999) *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.
2. See Carey Wolfe (2010) *What is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
3. Most notably in Rosi Braidotti (2013) *The Posthuman*, London: Polity Press.
4. Most notably Karen Barad's (2007) *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.
5. For two examples, see Gilles Deleuze (1994) *Difference and Repetition*, Translated by Paul Patton, New York: Columbia, 51-2; Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1994) *What is Philosophy?* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchnell. New York: Columbia, 149-150.
6. For instance, by drawing upon the work of Joe Hughes' (2008) *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation*. London: Continuum.
7. David Roden (2014) *Posthuman Life: Philosophy at the Edge of the Human* London: Routledge.
8. See Nandita Biswas Mellamphy (2016) The Overhuman, in *Critical Posthumanism and Planetary Futures* Edited by Debashish Banerji and Makarand R. Paranjape, Springer India, 13-32.

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