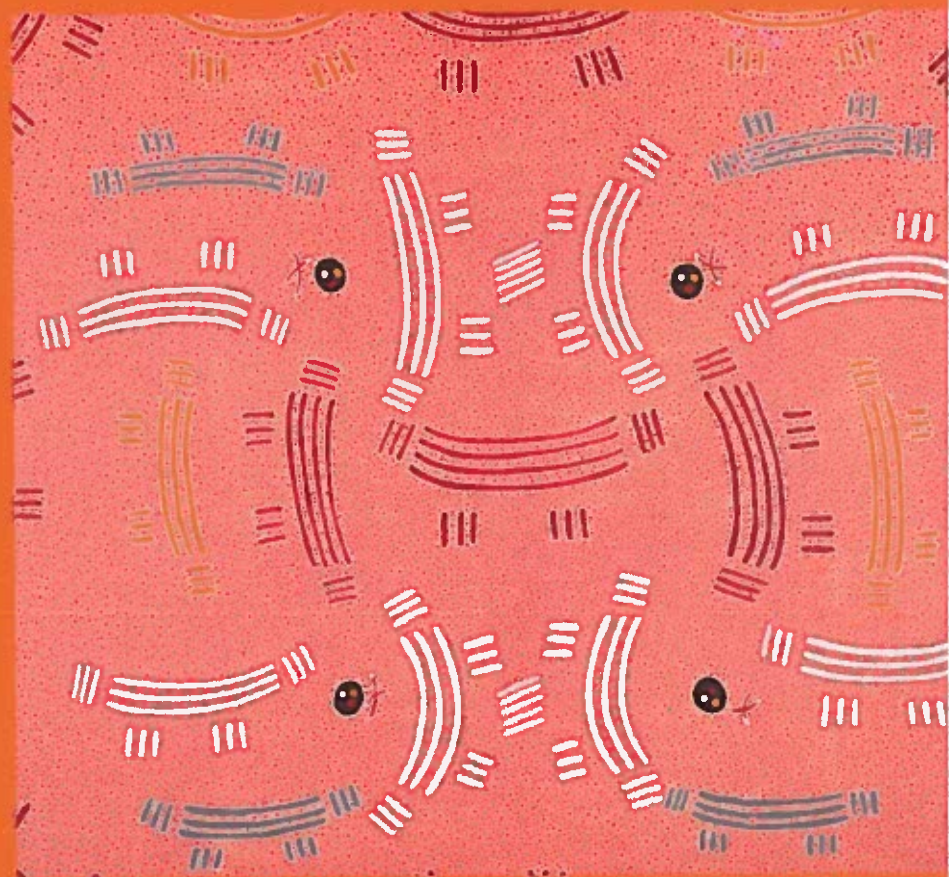


# DELEUZE AND THE HUMANITIES

East and West



EDITED BY **ROSI BRAIDOTTI,**  
**KIN YUEN WONG** AND **AMY K. S. CHAN**

**Deleuze  
and the  
Humanities**

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

Rosi Braidotti, Amy Kit-sze Chan and  
Kin Yuen Wong

If Foucault's prediction that 'one day, the century will be Deleuzian'<sup>1</sup> is to gain any credibility in our globally interconnected and mediated world, the question of the inter-relations between Western and Asian philosophies needs to come centre stage. It is less a question of developing comparative perspectives – which would inevitably raise issues of common standards, hierarchies of values and power relations – than of composing together margins of overlapping concerns and webs of shared cultural and ethical passions. This is why we wanted this book to happen as a trans-disciplinary philosophical event. Deleuze's philosophy is very well known across Asia, as testified by the large number of scholarly conferences dedicated to his work, and his theory of subjectivity has been discussed at length in contemporary scholarship across the world. It is however the case that not enough attention has been paid to the specific relationship of Deleuze's philosophy of Life and difference, to the naturalistic and holistic traditions of Asian and notably Chinese philosophy. While carefully avoiding any attempt at a cultural synthesis, this volume stresses the multiple convergences between Buddhism and Daoism on the one hand and Deleuze's ecosophy and vital materialism on the other.

Our volume pursues these lines of encounter and enquiry in a rigorous, critical and yet creative way. First, it gathers leading scholars in the trans-disciplinary field of Deleuze scholarship, in full respect of the tradition of academic excellence. Second, it brings in scholars from Europe and other regions who have not yet been heard very much in Asia, and vice versa, so as to contribute to the growth and expansion of the international academic debates. Third, it contributes to a critical evaluation of the reception and creative adaptation of Deleuze and of other continental philosophers in the Austral-Asian region, with special focus on China.

The project took off from Deleuze and Guattari's idea that the task of thinking is to create new concepts, an idea which we consider as a great source of inspiration not only for critical theory but also for the humanities in the contemporary world. This definition further supports the parallelism between philosophy, science and the arts, dear to Deleuze and Guattari's hearts. The equal worth attributed to these domains, however, is not to be mistaken for a flattening out of the differences between them but should rather be seen as a way of stressing the unity of purpose among the three branches of knowledge. Deleuze and Guattari take care to stress the differences between the distinctive styles of intelligence that philosophy, science and the arts, respectively, embody. They also argue, however, that they remain indexed on a common plane of intensive, self-transforming life energy. This continuum sustains the ontology of becoming, that is, the conceptual motor of both nomad and critical posthuman thought.<sup>2</sup>

In so far as science has to come to terms with the real physical processes of an actualized and defined world, it is less open to the processes of becoming or differentiation that characterize Deleuze's monistic ontology. Philosophy is at an advantage, being a subtler tool for the probing intellect, one that is more attuned to the virtual plane of immanence and the unstoppable force of a generative universe, or 'chaosmosis', which is nonhuman and in constant flux.<sup>3</sup> The arts, however, have a head start in sustaining intensities and creating affective territories of encounter with the virtual potential of life.

For Deleuze, as a radical neo-Spinozist, thinking is the conceptual counterpart of the ability to enter modes of relation, to affect and be affected. The point of thinking is to equip us with the capacity to sustain qualitative shifts and creative tensions, in a manner that echoes the artist's approach and matches the intensive prerogative of art. Critical theory therefore has a major role to play in helping us enter into these encounters and, just as importantly, to sustain them. In other words: the monistic ontology that sustains this vision of life as vitalist, self-organizing matter also allows the critical thinker to reunite the different branches of philosophy, the sciences and the arts in a new alliance. We believe such a transversal re-composition of knowledge is necessary in view of the staggering advances in knowledge production that are occurring today and not only in the sciences and the technological fields but also right across the social and cultural spectrum. We also think that they can be inspirational for the contemporary university as a whole and for the humanities in particular.

The edited volume we are presenting here is the result of sustained creative relationality: it is the product of intensive intellectual cooperation and conceptual affinity that propelled us in the direction of productive and hybrid cross-pollination. The co-operation culminated in an international conference that took place in Hong Kong<sup>4</sup> and focused on the engagement between Asian

thought and Deleuzian philosophy. It gathered multiple, situated East-West scholars and explored several applications of nomadic thought. This diverse, but focused, assembly was able to compose and reflect a privileged site of intercultural exploration with a range of interlocking themes, privilege in the sense of both the unique location of Hong Kong and its timeliness in the twenty-first century and beyond.

This collection of chapters is consequently framed by an ongoing international dialogue about the multifaceted ways in which Deleuze's philosophy offers key navigational tools to confront the intellectual and institutional challenges of our times – both in the East and in the West. One of the transversal lines of enquiry of this book is the question of how the traditional humanities may be revitalized specifically through an emphasis on a nomadic encounter between the East and the West. The volume therefore contains many contributions that aim at mapping and/or recreating the cultural boundaries and intellectual trading zones between these vast and complex regions. In this regard, the nomadic approach provides a productive methodology that allows researchers to open up the boundaries of their expertise and vested research interests and to encounter new perspectives. This opening up of relational exchanges allows for experiments with new concepts so as to create inter-assemblages between them: a mutual en- and unfolding of possibilities. It is this volume's mission to dislocate any sense of unitary disciplinary identity and cultural centrism, while relocating the very boundaries and areas of these encounters or interfaces within the context of a globalized, intercultural and sustainable nomadology in the twenty-first century. Let us rhizome together!

The chapters gathered here therefore offer zig-zagging itineraries across a thousand plateaus of East-West encounters within the classical humanities – notably literary theory, comparative literature, art history and criticism. They also move across interdisciplinary and more recent fields of scholarship, such as cultural, media and performance studies, to touch on issues of gender, sexuality and multicultural identities. This double movement opens towards over-arching concerns about the mission of contemporary cultural criticism and even more broadly towards the critical function of the humanities in today's world.

This transversal cross-disciplinary approach marks the Deleuzian signature of this volume, which explores the resonances and interconnections of nomadic themes and posthuman approaches across the humanities, in order to elaborate new collaborative strategies. The questions that organized this aspect of our enquiry are as follows: How do contemporary discourses and practices in the humanities East and West interfere with each other? What are the potentials as well as the limits of trans-disciplinary connections and methods? Considering the immense imaginary force of literature and the arts, to what extent can the minor/minoritarian turn in literary and cultural criticism, and revitalize the practice of the contemporary humanities?



Furthermore, assuming that we have entered the era of the 'Anthropocene',<sup>5</sup> which combines staggering technological advances with the depletion of resources and earth species, threatening even human survival, how does the project of working towards a sustainable posthuman and nomadic subjectivity help redefine a post-anthropocentric notion of inter-dependence without hierarchies? What kind of discourses and institutional practices could do justice to the affective and transformative alliances involving both human and non-human (both organic and technological) actors? How can we re-imagine the academic humanities as a community constructed through the method of 'transversal intercultural assemblages'? Last but not least, what are the specific contributions of feminist and post-colonial theorists and activists to the debate on Deleuze scholarship in Asia, about the 'New' humanities and concerning the posthuman turn?

The volume contributors profile themselves at the background of ongoing theoretical and methodological discussions guided by a posthuman, global and transformative perspective that is re-defining the ways in which we experience and represent the relation between the human and the non-human agents. This displacement of methodological anthropocentrism unfolds differently in the Asian context than within the European tradition and it has deep consequences for the humanities. We humans are representational beings, having the habit of saying 'I', and we tend to rely on an assumption that the world is constructed through our language and culture. We do not think of plants, molecules and machines to grant them some kind of culture or a world of their own.

The material presented in this volume proves that the humanities in the posthuman era of the Anthropocene are not sticking to the human – let alone 'man' or 'anthropos' – as its proper object of study. On the contrary, the field is benefitting by being free from the empire of humanist man, so as to be able to access in a post-anthropocentric manner issues of external and even planetary importance, such as scientific and technological advances, ecological and social sustainability and the multiple challenges of globalization. Such a change of focus requires assistance from other social and scientific actors as well as the research community.

This volume actively argues that Deleuze's philosophical critique of European Humanism opens up new perspectives for the academic practice of the humanities. Because Deleuze's philosophy engages extensively with the nonhuman – events, actors and time-frames – it has the ability to renew the agenda of the humanities in a productive manner. Questions of humanism, but also of anti-humanism and of posthumanism, but also post-anthropocentrism add a critical dimension to Deleuze's thought. How is Deleuze's thought contributing to the debate on the value of the 'human' and of 'humanism' in the humanities, in the East and the West?

What comes after the humanist subject of knowledge? How do Deleuzian 'becomings' help sustain alternative processes of subjectification? What are their implications for globalized and sustainable higher education towards nomadic subjectivity? What are the methodological premises?

The implications of these new approaches are explored in the different contributions of this volume, in a variety of disciplinary fields, from literature to the arts, media and cultural criticism, politics and ethics. This is how the volume is organized:

In his opening and agenda-setting chapter, 'Defamiliarization and the Act of Reading World Literature', Grant Hamilton outlines a confronting new post-human critical theory, which has the potential to renew not only the function of criticism itself but also the mission of the humanities today. The features of posthuman criticism according to Hamilton, inspired by Braidotti, are as follows: ethical accountability, methodological trans-disciplinarity and the imperative of bringing together critique and creativity, the championing of non-linearity and the associated sites of memory and the imagination. A crucial tool is the productive act of defamiliarization, which in the work of Deleuze is rendered as 'stuttering'. Hamilton applies this notion to the analysis of 'world literature' and more specifically to the literary terrain of Singapore. This is an experience which is likely to throw the readers out of their expected comfort zones. Far from being a negative state, defamiliarization is defended as an unanticipated and undirected becoming and shown to be the genesis of 'the new' – new understanding, new perspectives and new ideas.

In 'Transversally Yours: Deleuzian Love and Taoist *Qing*', Sebastian Hsien-Hao Liao addresses the relatively under-discussed issue of love in Deleuze, that is to say the encounter with the otherwise Other, which 'expresses a possible world'. As a disruptive, but productive, force, love breaks up the stabilized identity, the boundaries between subject and object established by the Western philosophical tradition and provides the possibility of creation and novelty. This relational and transversal ethics connects all entities while fully respecting differences. The distinction between the human and the non-human forms of love compares fruitfully with the Taoist concept of *qing* or feeling, which also distinguishes between the 'human *qing*' and the non-human or transhuman 'Tao *qing*'. In both the Deleuzian and Taoist systems, the non-human or transhuman form of love (or 'schizo love') belies the naturalness and stability of human consciousness and its accompanying values and allows access to an ontological truth, often called 'life' by Deleuze, that facilitates deeper connections between singularities. This transhuman form of love also ensures constant becoming of the individual and enables animate as well as inanimate others to become.

Tony See in 'Deleuze and Ikeda: Two Concepts of Revolution' seeks to bridge the chasm between Deleuze's theory of the subject and notions of

subjectivity in Buddhist phenomenology. Both approaches deny a permanent substance in favour of a becoming subject that is 'representation-only' (*wei-shi*: 唯识): instead of a unitary and unchanging subject, there is an assemblage of heterogeneous and changing elements that is always under construction. By exploring the resonances between Deleuze's theory of subjectivity with the idea of 'self' or subjectivity in Mahāyāna Buddhism, Tony See argues that there are deep resonances particularly between Deleuze's idea of revolution and the idea of a 'revolutionary subject' in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The author aims to contribute towards a thoughtful and mutually informing discourse between Deleuze Studies and Buddhist Studies, thereby bringing about a revitalization of the humanities in an age of capitalist domination and technological possession.

Evelyn Wan in 'An Encounter with Lufsig: Political Affect Meets the Nomadic Post-Colonial Subject' focuses upon the affective force of Lufsig in its encounters with the political subjectivities of Hong Kong's resisting citizens. The IKEA doll is taken as an assemblage of symbols, narratives, locations and languages – from a Swedish company, with a French/European fairy tale narrative, a (badly) translated Chinese name and so on, which turns into an agent of affective force and humour as well as anger and frustration. Wan studies the stuffed toy as a symbol for Hong Kong's political subjecthood and activism and a rhizomatic site of solidarity and resistance. Lufsig thus becomes a political figuration, like Donna Haraway's cyborg, or Braidotti's 'nomadic subjects' that acts a performative figuration for unlikely encounters and creative becomings, and also reflects the complex power configurations in the post-colonial/metropolitan/multilingual city. By arguing that the highly popular IKEA doll composes an assemblage of forces beyond the subject/object divide and that it activates an affective politics, the chapter explores the mutual imbrication of the social and somatic in forming a transversal body politic.

In 'Deleuze, the Image of Thought and Art: Representation and the Meaning of Art in Henry James's "The Real Thing"', Jason Cham Sum Leung reflects on Deleuze's idea of 'image of thought', from the perspective of art and brings it to bear on a cross-analysis of Chinese art forms and the concept of *hua yi*. Leung argues that Deleuze's critique of the representational theory of thought is foundational not only for his philosophy of positive difference but also as a redefinition of the role of art itself. This case is illustrated firstly with a discussion on Henry James's short story 'The Real Thing', in which the dilemma of the artist in creative production reflects more fundamental issues in art, namely, the tension between the artist's awareness of the rigidity of representation and the powers of difference. It is further explored in the analysis of Chinese art in the form of classical paintings, through a discussion of the concept of *hua yi* (畫意), which literally means the meaning of a

picture but can be seen as a way of perceiving art and connecting the artist and the viewer. The author concludes that this transversal relationality is what art itself aims at, as a compound of sensations which open up new ways of seeing and generates new images of thought.

Lia Wen-Ching Liang in 'Staging *Attempts on Her Life* in Taiwan: Kimmy Liu's Production at Nanhai Gallery' explores the reconstitution of 'man' and the social, in contemporary theatre, especially in the body of works called postdramatic theatre. The latter is exemplified by Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* (1997), which is an explicit attempt to reinvent the form of British Theatre. The author connects this anti-realistic and non-linear theatrical genre to Michel Foucault's analysis of the death of 'man', which Deleuze further elaborates into affects, assemblages of information, communication and media, which can become also the object of power (*potestas*). The play *Attempts on Her Life* resonates in many other societies and geopolitical locations and has been staged successfully in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The chapter discusses a recent Taiwanese staging of Crimp's play, directed by Kimmy Liu (Jung-Chun Liu) for In-Yer-Face Festival, and assesses the shifting affects brought about by the different cultural and social contexts in which the performance is staged.

Gregg Lambert, in 'Two Meditations on "Becoming-Animal", Territory and the Origin of the Artwork', explores the relationship between an environment, a 'territory', affect and a world created by the work of art, through a series of mediations. The notion of a territory is not addressed in geopolitical terms, but as an intensive state that explores dynamic trajectories of becoming a 'voyage' that is specific to art. What kind of active affect composes the specific formation that belongs to literature or painting? How does one make a territory with a work of art? What is a 'territory' that is specific to the work of art and which would go beyond mere metaphorical equivalence? The chapter concentrates on Korean landscape painting as its case-study and refers especially to the early Korean landscape artist, Kim Hong-do, who belonged to the 'true view' movement during the period of the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910). It concludes with some reflections on the relationship between establishing a territory in the artwork and the origin of national and/or cultural understandings of style.

Amy Kit-sze Chan in 'Classical Chinese Medicine and the New Humanities' reads Deleuze's philosophy of life alongside traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and its approach to the body. Chan departs from the classical Greek distinction between *ZOH* (*Zoe*) as distinct from *bios* and builds on Braidotti's further distinction between human (*bios*) and non-human life (*zoe*). She argues that TCM also adopts the view that human life is *zoe* instead of *bios*, the human body is a Deleuzian machine and the human species is an assemblage. Chan starts with an analysis of the *Compendium of Materia*

*Medica* (本草綱目), a sixteenth-century compilation of medical materials about the formation of human life. She then explains how the concept of *qi* 氣 and the principle of *yin-yang* in *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine* constitute human life as *zoe*. The chapter also forcefully argues that Deleuze can be compared to TCM in terms of his holistic approach but also through the notion of 'machinic assemblage'. Not only is the human body viewed as a holistic organism, but it can also be seen as a machine, in relation to the large machine that consists of other organic and inorganic life forms. In the conclusion, the author proposes that TCM can provide an exemplary paradigm for envisioning a future for the academic humanities today.

Kin Yuen Wong in 'The *Yin-Yang* Assemblage and Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism: How Daoism Became Posthuman' proposes a new concept of inter-assemblage between the Chinese *yin-yang* cosmology and Deleuze's transcendental empiricism. This is accomplished by drawing up an encounter between Deleuze and Guattari's 'collective assemblages of enunciation' (*ATP*, 504) and a number of Chinese concepts; for instance, Kin Yuen Wong makes the *yin-yang* cosmology resonate towards systems of active material agents, embracing astrology, mathematics, biology, ecoethics and sociology. He then delves into the implications of the later separation of *yin* and *yang* under Confucianism and Daoism, respectively, within a dualistic structure of hierarchical ethical and social values. The alliance between the *yin-yang* assemblage and Deleuze's transcendental empiricism also opens productive connections to posthumanism, which Chinese Daoism upholds as a *yin* principle, including second-order systems theory, all of which form the backbone of the contemporary philosophy of posthumanism itself. The chapter concludes that the *yin-yang* assemblage, particularly the Daoist part of it, can be activated to dislocate any sense of cultural centrism and for the emergence of a new humanities in tertiary education worldwide.

Clara Hei Man Tang and Cynthia Wing Nga Lam in 'Getting *In* and *Within*: Matter-Realist Feminism, Deleuze and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*' revisit the children literature classic, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, from a matter-realist feminist perspective alongside the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Daoism. Building on classical feminist criticism, the authors argue that *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is about a female protagonist defeating threatening enemies, hence it expresses acts of female empowerment. Relying on Deleuze's analysis of this literary masterpiece, they also analyse the *Wonderland* with Deleuzian concepts of Body without Organ. This foregrounds the ideas of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, which they then bring into an inter-textual encounter with Daoist ideas about feminine power. Chinese Classics,

including *Daodejing* 《道德經》 (*Classic of the Way and the Power*) and *Soushenji* 《搜神記》 (*In Search of the Supernatural*), offer insights to analyse *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* from an Asian perspective.

In the chapter that concludes this collection, 'Bringing Them into the Fold: Deleuze, Francis Bacon and Three Images for an East-West Humanities', Michael O'Sullivan revisits Deleuze's notion of the 'Fold' as a conceptual space for imagining how cross-cultural interdisciplinary work in the humanities, in the age of open access, 'parasitic cross-talk' and the MOOC. The author brings the notion of the Fold close to the Chinese existential concept of 'perfect harmony'. Even though Deleuze barely references the Asian perspective in *The Fold* he does begin to suggest a possible opening out of his Fold to a harmonious East-West humanistic experience. This chapter therefore reads Deleuze's work on the Fold and on 'perfect harmony' in the light of both new expressions of the body as machine and in the light of recent attempts to bring East and West humanities together around the notion of harmony. Harmony is also what is needed in the university more than ever as the old academic 'machines' of the United States and the United Kingdom are challenged by Asian academies. The recourse to natural imagery, pantheism and a rejection of 'soul' – what are typically Chinese substitutes for a Western logocentric and Judeo-Christian worldview – allows us to re-imagine how East-West humanities might begin to conceive and what modes of harmonious relation may be set up between them.

This edited volume presents these zig-zagging itineraries as a set of critical and yet creative modes of encounter. The emphasis of our project falls on the relation itself, the relational mode and the force of that relational interaction across vast distances of space, time and cultures. In this respect, this book composes a plane of academic immanence, that is to say a shareable working-bench as the space of academic becoming. Our collection expresses the desire to go out into the world and help compose one of the thousand and many more plateaus, where critique joins forces with creation to make the unthinkable into reachable ideas and tangible projects. We – scholars in the field of Deleuze scholarship from multiple backgrounds, continents, ages, classes, genders and sexualities – want to actualize the virtual into materially embedded and embodied, affective and relational entities, practices and institutions.

We hope that our attempts to contribute to a critical evaluation of the reception and creative adaptation of Deleuze and of other continental philosophers in the Austral-Asian region, with special focus on China, will resonate with readers across the spectrum. The best we can do is to go on becoming-Deleuzian, in an intensive, nomadic manner that empowers us to act affirmatively together.

## NOTES

1 Michel Foucault (1983). 'Preface' to Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. [1972], *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, editions, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1983; London: The Athlone Press, 1984; New York: Penguin, 2008.

2 See Rosi Braidotti (1994, 2011). *Nomadic Subjects*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994 and 2011; and (2013). *The Posthuman*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

3 See Felix Guattari ([1992] 1995). *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

4 This was the international conference: "*Deleuze's Cultural Encounters with the New Humanities*", was held on 9–12 June 2014 in Hong Kong and was jointly organized by the editors of this volume.

5 The term 'Anthropocene' was coined in 2002 by Nobel Prize winner Crutzen to describe the current geological era as dominated by human action through technological mediation, consumerism and destruction of planetary resources. The Anthropocene was officially adopted as a scientific term by the International Geological Congress in South Africa in August 2016.

Philosophy

## CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY IN AUSTRAL-ASIA

Series Editors: Simone Bignall, P. Diego Bubbio, Joanne Faulkner and Paul Patton

*'Deleuze and the Humanities: East and West creates flowering, dynamic dialogues that elucidate the rhizomatic reaches of Deleuze and the gift his philosophy brings to both understanding and creating new heterogeneous global connections.'*

—**Patricia MacCormack**, Professor of Continental Philosophy, Anglia Ruskin University

*'It is an intellectual adventure of the first order to join these zigzagging East-West journeys, as new encounters that split open the assumed world come to seem possible, and affective voyages remake the gestures composing territories. A fresh and eye-opening take on the meaning of the Asian century, reimagined as also a Deleuzian century.'*

—**Fiona Jenkins**, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Australian National University

*'A sharp and timely collection like no other. Each chapter sets up a fascinating interaction between the trio of Deleuzian and Deleuzo-Guattarian theory; inventive approaches to aesthetics, politics, ethics, culture and knowledge, and East Asian contexts of thought and practice.'*

—**Matthew Fuller**, Professor of Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London

*'This volume is an indispensable reading for all those interested in the transversal relationship between Deleuze's philosophy of life and difference and the Asian naturalistic and holistic tradition; in a joint East/West effort to displace anthropocentrism in favour of a sustainable, nomadic subjectivity; and in a transcultural attempt to revitalize the traditional humanities, inside the new alliance between philosophy, science and the arts, capable of regaining the trace of the Deleuzo-Guattarian itinerary.'*

—**Constantin V. Boundas**, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Trent University

*Deleuze and the Humanities: East and West* is inspired by Gilles Deleuze's philosophical project, which builds on the critique of European Humanism and opens up inspiring new perspectives for the renewal of the field. This volume gathers leading scholars from Europe, North America and Asia in order to create a lively academic debate and contribute to the growth and expansion of the field.

**ROSI BRAIDOTTI** is Distinguished University Professor and founding Director of the Centre for the Humanities at Utrecht University. Her most recent books are *The Posthuman, Nomadic Subjects* and *Nomadic Theory*.

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