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Anthropocene Feminism

Coined by Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen at the inception of the 21st Century, the concept of the Anthropocene postulates a new geological epoch defined by overwhelming human influence upon the earth beginning with the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth century. The concept has since been picked up and expanded by other scientists, chiefly but not exclusively geologists and planetary ecologists. More recently the Anthropocene has caught the imagination of humanists, artists, and social scientists for whom it has provided a powerful framework through which to account for and depict the impact of climate change in a variety of media forms and practices.

In many ways, however, the Anthropocene is a strikingly resonant iteration of the problematic forcefully articulated in Donna Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto,” which sees the human, nonhuman, culture, and nature as inextricably entangled, and warns that the consequences of attempts to dominate human and nonhuman nature can be at once devastatingly successful and productively perverse. Indeed, the concept of the Anthropocene has arguably been implicit in feminism, critical theory, and queer theory for decades, a genealogy that is largely ignored, or worse, erased, by the masculine authority of science.

By the same token, while feminists have long argued that humans are dominating and destroying the earth, turning it into standing reserve, capital, or resource to devastating ends, it is also the case that this recent articulation of the Anthropocene, even as it affirms those arguments in many ways, deprives feminism of some of the normative ground upon which such indictments are based. This tension has been anticipated in ecofeminism and feminist science studies, but now, in the 21st century, the articulation of a post-natural condition in the form of a new geological age demands rigorous and sustained attention to global, ahuman forces of ecological change as well as to local spaces of vulnerability and resistance.

To this end, C21’s conference on Anthropocene Feminism will consider the ways in which feminism has long been concerned with the Anthropocene, and what current interest in the Anthropocene might mean for feminism, in its evolving histories, theories, and practices. More to the point, the conference seeks to highlight both why we need an Anthropocene feminism and why thinking the Anthropocene must come from feminism. We begin with two sets of questions.

First, how has feminism anticipated the concept of the Anthropocene, and what might it yet have to offer: how can feminism help us to historicize, challenge, or refine the concept of the Anthropocene? What do new materialist feminism or ecofeminism (to name just two) add to (or detract from) current humanistic understandings of the Anthropocene? What does feminism have to say to the claim that humans now act as a geological force in ways that are independent of or indifferent to social, cultural, or political will or intent?

Second, and equally important, is there (or should there be) an Anthropocene feminism? Put differently, does the claim that we have entered a new epoch in which humans are a major geological force on the planet call for a reconceptualization of feminism? Does feminism require a new formulation specific to the age of the Anthropocene, a new historical or period designation? How
should feminism in an anthropogenic age take up an altered relation to—an increased attention to or concern for—the nonhuman world?

We seek proposals for critical, historical, and theoretical papers or creative presentations that address the questions posed by the concept of “Anthropocene feminism.” We encourage participants to investigate and analyze the anticipation of this concept in feminism and other related theoretical paradigms and, in turn, to speculate upon its implications. We are also interested in work that pays attention to the place of the nonhuman in feminist theory and practice, in order to offer some suggestions about how the humanities, arts, and social sciences might best treat the Anthropocene as we move forward in the 21st century.

Topics we imagine proposals pursuing include but are not limited to:

- feminist genealogies of the Anthropocene
- queer nature, queer ecologies, queer Anthropocene
- new materialism
- quantum entanglements and agential realism
- feminism and dark ecologies
- ecofeminism
- environmental racism and transnational feminist approaches
- the Anthropocene and the commons
- feminist science and science studies in the Anthropocene
- Anthropocene feminism after capitalism
- feminist reflections on environmental ethics and aesthetics in the Anthropocene
- cyborg futures, geo-engineering, speculative ecologies
- feminism after the non-human turn
- ecosexualities
- feminist epistemologies
- feminism and climate, geo- and environmental sciences

Anthropocene utopianism/dystopianism and their antecedents

We invite contributions from theorists and practitioners of humanities, arts, and the social and natural sciences, or any others interested in the relation between feminism and the Anthropocene.
Plenary Speakers

Stacey Alaimo

UT-Arlington, English

Biography

Stacy Alaimo, Professor of English and Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of Texas at Arlington, has published widely in the environmental humanities, science studies, and feminist theory, on such subjects as environmental literature, film, art, architecture, performance art, and activism; feminist theory and nature; gender and climate change; and “queer” animal studies. Her recent work develops models of new materialism for feminist theory, posthumanism, and the environmental humanities.

References


“Sustainable This, Sustainable That: New Materialisms, Posthumanism, and Unknown Futures.” *PMLA (Publication of the Modern Language Association)*. 127.3 (May 2012): 558-564.


Claire Colebrook

Penn State, English

Biography

Claire Colebrook is Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of English at Penn State University. She has written on contemporary European philosophy, literary theory, feminist philosophy and poetry. She has written articles on visual culture, poetry, literary theory, queer theory and contemporary culture. She is completing a book on human extinction.

References


(A follow-up co-authored volume, “Twilight of the Anthropocene” is to be published by Open Humanities Press in 2014.)


Myra Hird

USC, Media Arts and Practice

Biography

Myra J. Hird is Professor and Queen’s National Scholar in the School of Environmental Studies, Queen’s University, Canada. Professor Hird is Director of the general Research Group (gRG), an interdisciplinary research network of collaborating natural, social, and humanities scholars, and Principal Investigator of Canada’s Waste Flow, an interdisciplinary research project focused on waste as a global scientific-technical and socio-ethical issue. Hird has published eight books and over fifty articles and book chapters on a diversity of topics relating to science studies.

References


Natalie Jeremijenko

NYU Steinhardt, Art and Art Education

Biography

Natalie Jeremijenko directs the xdesign Environmental Health Clinic, which develops and prescribes locally optimized and often playful strategies to effect remediation of environmental systems – coordinating diverse projects to effective material change. She has a permanently installed Model Urban Development on the roof of Postmasters Gallery in Chelsea, featuring a small community powered by food waste. Her experimental design work explores the opportunity new technologies present for non-violent social change. Her research centers on structures of participation in the production of knowledge, and information and the political and social possibilities (and limitations) of information and emerging technologies. Her individual work has been exhibited in the MASS MoCA, the Whitney Museum, and the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, and she is part of an artists’ collective called the Bureau of Inverse Technology.

References

2012 HowStuffIsMade online

2010 x:Airport San Jose, CA

2004 Clear Skies: FaceMasks

1999 Tree Logic MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA

1998 One Tree San Francisco, CA
**Elizabeth A. Povinelli**

Columbia, Anthropology

**Biography**

Elizabeth A. Povinelli is Franz Boas Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University where she also teaches in the Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality. Povinelli is the author of four books and multiple essays which explore the governance of the otherwise in Late Liberalism. She is also the co-director of the short film, “Karrabing, Low Tide Turning,” selected for the 2012 Berlinale International Film Festival, Shorts Competition. From 2000 to 2004, she was editor of Public Culture

**References**

*Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism.* Duke University Press. 2011


Juliana Spahr

Mills College, English

Biography

Juliana Spahr edits the book series ChainLinks (with Jena Osman), the collectively funded Subpress (with nineteen other poets), Commune Editions (with Joshua Clover and Jasper Bernes). With David Buuck she wrote *Army of Lovers* (City Lights, 2013), a book about two friends who are writers in a time of war and ecological collapse.

References


Marina Zurkow

NYU, Tisch School of the Arts

Biography

Crossing multiple disciplines with her practice, Marina Zurkow builds animations and participatory environments that are centered on humans and their relationship to animals, plants and the weather. Zurkow’s recent series “Friends and Enemies” mines the intersection of bias, inclusion, and kinship in our relations with other species. “Necrocracy” reconstructs the role of hydrocarbons in contemporary landscape and questions the inherited Romantic-era division between the natural and the human. “Crossing the Waters” focuses on climate change and considers catastrophe, picturing ways to imagine nature within us, and nature without us

References

2013 Necrocracy, Rice University, Houston, TX (forthcoming)
   Oil and Water, Young Projects, Los Angeles, CA
   Outside the Work, 808 Gallery, Boston University, Boston, MA
   Necrocracy, bitforms gallery, NY
2012 Necrocracy, Diverseworks, Houston, TX
   NeoGeo, Aurora Picture Show/Flicker Lounge, Houston, TX
   Slurb, Weights + Measures, Oklahoma City Museum of Art, OK
   Not an Artichoke, Nor From Jerusalem, The Artist’s Institute, NY
2011 Friends Enemies and Others. New Directions, Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ
   Slurb, Legion Arts, Cedar Rapids, IA
2010 Elixir III, gray)(area, Korcula, Croatia
   Elixir I-IV, Catharine Clark Gallery, Media Room, San Francisco, CA
   Slurb, Women and Their Work, Austin, TX
   Crossing the Waters, Usdan Gallery, Bennington College, Vermont
Extended Bibliography


