CALL FOR PAPERS: ATMOSPHERES OF VIOLENCE

Film and Visual Studies Graduate Student Conference

Harvard University

May 3-5, 2023

Keynote Speakers: Yuriko Furuhata (William Dawson Scholar of Cinema and Media History, McGill University), Pooja Rangan (Associate Professor of English in Film and Media Studies, Amherst College), and Colectivo Los Ingrávidos

In a world teeming with images of brutality and destruction, how can we look away from spectacular violence and toward the atmospheres that produce its representations?

Historical and structural violence haunts and sutures so-called reality, binding together the world as it is. Frantz Fanon named such violence “atmospheric.” Often anesthetic in itself, atmospheric violence is rendered sensible by the ways in which it ceaselessly produces and circulates evidence of its existence: images and traces that gesture toward, but never fully depict, its underlying and enabling conditions. How might visual studies and media theory help us to parse seemingly banal spaces—civic and institutional, local and global, biological and geological—as atmospheres of violence? What perceptual, critical, and creative modes are required to not only apprehend atmospheric violence, but to address it? What practices might help to stall or stop its reproduction and repetition?

Recent scholarship in visual and media studies reconfigures dominant conceptualizations of affective atmospheres. For example, Yuriko Furuhata maps Neo-Imperial violence in geographically transposable techniques of climate control, while Pooja Rangan charts the juridical and forensic tendencies underpinning documentary listening. Similarly, film practices such as that of Colectivo Los Ingrávidos stage the perceptual experience of a
violence that is literally inhaled and manifests as sensory derangement or, as Fanon called it, bodily “petrification.”

Whether a Transpacific media infrastructure too large to grasp, or a plastic, petrochemical, or heavy metal molecule too small to perceive, atmospheric violence both animates and decimates bodies in its proximity, inflicting real corporeal harm. Under such conditions, acts of protest like rioting and looting appear less as “senseless” and more as sensible communiques that actively resist atmospheric violence’s insidious order.

This conference aims to foster exchange and discussion among a diverse set of participants across fields that include, but are not limited to: film and media studies; the histories of science, technology, and computing; the history of art and architecture; visual culture; critical studies of race and ethnicity; disability studies; critical security studies; and postcolonial studies. We invite proposals for scholarly papers, audiovisual presentations, installations, experimental writing, and performances that engage with, as well as extend beyond, the areas listed below. We welcome proposals from thinkers and makers working outside academia.

Please submit a 300 word abstract, a list of 3-5 bibliographic references, and a 100 word bio to fvsconference@gmail.com by January 15, 2023. Please mention any audiovisual accommodations that you might require in your submission. Presentations should not exceed 20 minutes. Presenters will be notified in February 2023. Need-based travel grants will be made available to select participants.

- Abolition
- Agitation
- Algorithmic violence
- Asymmetrical relations
- Betrayal
- Biometrics
- Black geographies
- Borders
- Conflict (as it relates to, and departs from, violence)
- Debility
- Debt
- Disability
- Ecocriticism
- Environments and/as media
- Epistemic violence
- Erasure
- Extinction
- Capitalocene/Plantationocene Extraction
- Infrastructural Space
- Logistics
- Opacity/Transparency
- Ontological violence
- Plantationocene
- Practices of apprehension and perception
- Prisons and other carceral spaces
- Redaction
- Security
- Sedimentation
- Sensing technologies
- Scalar Violence
- Power and power mapping
- Resistance
- Transformation