Theorizing Corporeality in the Climate Change Era

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Theorizing about the body has never been more urgent than in our current era of climate change. Stacy Alaimo has compellingly argued that “potent ethical and political possibilities emerge from the literal contact zone between human corporeality and more-than-human nature.” In the decade or so since she first penned those words, these ethical and political possibilities have become even more urgent, and the borders of the contact zones themselves have become more blurred. Climate change has had increasingly intimate corporeal implications (especially in the Global South), and the widening gap between the rich and the poor has only exacerbated these matters, as has the global rise in right-wing extremism. And while exciting advances in genetic research, stem cell technologies, and silicon-based prosthetics offer startling rewards of comfort and longevity, they also prompt concern about corporeal borders and boundaries—physical and ethical.

New materialist theories about agency and matter have led to productive analyses of intersections among gender, race, food, sexuality, class, and species as they relate with corporeal issues and climate change (what E. Ann Kaplan refers to as “border events” of extreme weather, such as Hurricane Sandy or Typhoon Haiyan). What this Forum Kritika seeks are theoretical understandings of literary and cinematic corporeality in the Climate Change Era.

— How can we discuss from literary works and film the ways in which various natural materials threaten human corporeal integrity? What, for instance, are the microbial threats we face as the organisms our vaccines and antibiotics control become immune? If Ed Yong is correct in asserting that we have been, are now, and always will be living in an age in which microbial organisms determine virtually everything (hence prompting Yong to prefer the term “Microbiocene” over “Anthropocene”), how might we talk about “human” corporeality (given the fact that we are genomically only a fraction human, most of our bulk consisting of symbiotic nonhuman microbes)?

— What are the relationships between violence (ecological, cybernetic, psychological, physical, symbolic, and so on) and the imagined integrity/dis-integration of the body as both an ontological and material space, and how are these relationships impacted by climate change?

— How can we theorize about the ways in which our phobias (ecophobia, transphobia, germophobia, homophobia, and so on) compromise modalities of the production and transformations of bodies?

— How can we theorize about corporeality in the Global South?

— How important are matters about food and why?
— What can we gain from literary investigations of corporeality?

Submissions must address climate change in some way and may include but are not restricted to the following topics:

- corporeal borders and boundaries, visible and imagined
- the migrating body
- race
- multicultural and multiracial bodies
- trauma, violence, or terror
- queer and transgender citizenship
- monstrous bodies
- disability studies
- body art (implants, painting, piercings, tattoos, scarification, sculpting, shaping) and body modifications
- vegan studies, food, and meat
- coloniality, postcoloniality, and tribal sovereignty
- cyborg bodies, post- and transhumanism, and ecocriticism
- interdisciplinary studies and intersectional scholarship
- biopolitics and medical engineering of reproduction, sexual identity, and gender
- the evolution to silicon-based bodies
- technologies of development and sustainability
- eco-feminism
- age and agism
- #metoo, sexual harassment, gendered audiences

Submission guidelines

Please send essays in the form of a Word document attachment to Dr. Simon C. Estok (estok@skku.edu; cc: kk.soh@ateneo.edu; subject: Theorizing Corporeality) by Jan. 31, 2020. Submissions should contain 7,000 to 8,000 words; include an abstract (200 to 250 words) and keywords (5 to 7; should not be repeated in abstract and title). Kritika Kultura’s anonymous peer-review process requires that the electronic version of the essay contain no information that would identify the author. An author bio (100 to 150 words) should be included as a separate electronic file with the submission.

Papers will undergo a double blind peer review by specialists in the field, and the results will be announced by June 2020. At this time, the authors will receive the complete transcripts of the anonymous readers’ reports. Revisions of accepted essays will be due by Sept. 2020, with a final copy due date of Nov. 2020. The Forum Kritika on Theorizing Corporeality in the Climate Change Era will be published in Kritika Kultura issue no. 37 (Aug. 2021).

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