Call for Papers

Decolonial Conversations in Posthuman & New Material Rhetorics
Editors: David M. Grant and Jennifer Clary-Lemon

Given the interventions that scholars in rhetoric and composition studies are making in the areas of decolonial methods and new materialist lines of inquiry, we invite essays that contribute to a volume on the constellations, collaborations, and conversations between cultural rhetorics and the broad array of ontological theories often shorthanded as new materialisms. While many fields in the humanities and social sciences have reframed debates through lenses of the ontological and posthuman, this move has also been seen as reproducing an inequitable status quo. Zoe Todd (2016) famously pronounced her dissatisfaction with Bruno Latour for his failure to cite or even acknowledge contributions of indigenous people who have co-existed with Arctic ecosystems for millennia. Similarly, Alison Ravenscroft (2018) argues that at the interface between posthumanist and postcolonial theory, the operative binary ceases to be nature opposed to culture and shifts instead to colonizer and native with all its implications for whose theories can count. Importantly, these voices are not focused on condemning the questions posed by posthumanisms or new materialisms between nature and culture, but on firmly stating how such questions are products of Eurowestern thinking and that the binaries they purport to question have never made sense to many non-Western people.

Interdisciplinary scholars of new materialisms, posthumanisms, and material agency are increasingly seeking ways to work through the binaries set up by such thinking, whether through imagining human and non-human intra-actions (Barad 2007), trans-corporeality (Alaimo 2010), tentacular thinking (Haraway 2016), or fostering cross-species interdependence (Tsing 2012). The fact that questions between nature and culture, animal and human, or ontology and epistemology are uniquely rooted in a Eurowestern trajectory of thought has similarly not gone unnoticed. Scholars are currently working to unseat such a bifurcation in their close engagement with a variety of nonhuman others, as may be seen with Kim TallBear’s (2015) work with Dakota pipestone; Robin Wall Kimmerer’s (2014) work with sweetgrass; Marty Holtgren, Stephanie Ogren, and Kyle Whyte’s (2015) work with lake sturgeon and the Anishanaabe people; Cleo Woelfle-Erskine’s (2017) work with beaver and the Karuk people. More recently, Rosi Braidotti (2018) has called for a robust framework to support a “critical post-humanities” which might provide some ethic for moving and working between reciprocal knowledges to tackle contemporary technosocial problems. Thus, we see the questions posed by such scholars as poised to take on Eurowestern limitations in ways that acknowledge reciprocity, thereby furthering dialogue, aiding decolonial efforts, and helping create a new locus for tackling wicked problems. Further, we see scholars who are increasingly positioning themselves between the juncture of rhetorical new materialisms and/or posthumanisms and cultural rhetorics as those who are particularly well suited to take up this challenge.
Similarly at our moment, scholars in rhetoric, composition, communication, literacy, and writing studies are beginning to explore and intervene in crises of both equity and environment, contributing to the creation of a better world in all its relations, not merely in a narrowly defined, Eurowestern sense of discourse. For example, Malea Powell and the Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab (2014) understand rhetoric to be a process of weaving cultures out of “constellated” relations, a materiality and reciprocity underscored by Jenny Rice’s (2017) use of the same term to discuss agency in rhetorical ecologies. Such ecologies manifest relationships between emplaced and vulnerable humans, nonhuman others, and things, and rhetorical scholars are increasingly doing the work to reveal such constellations. Angela Haas (2007) and David M. Grant (2017) both trace indigenous technologies of communication to offer culturally specific alternative models of communication unrecognized by settler colonial epistemologies. Kristin Arola (2017) and Qwo-Li Driskill (2016) draw our attention to the ways that material crafting practices—working with things—allow for an opening into embodied and storied worlds. Kristian Bjørkdahl and Alex C. Parrish (2017) and Caroline Gottshalk-Druschke (2017) draw our attention to the ways that animals persuade. Jodie Nicotra’s (2018) work with human-microbe relations and gynecology and Sarah Hallenback’s coverage of bicycles’ invention of the “new woman” (2016) note the complex meaning-making activities that come with the acknowledgement of the entanglement between marginalized communities and specific objects in the world. Amy Propen (2018) draws our attention to visual-rhetorical material artifacts and the difficulties of compassionate conservation when visibility itself often represents vulnerability, while Jennifer Clary-Lemon (2019) notes a new material environmental rhetorical frame that may invite us all to think beyond Eurowestern visions for new material rhetorical theory.

This collection strives to consider how we in the field might be positioned to put forward a vision for a more equitable new materialisms or posthumanisms. How do we see such work in tandem with decolonial efforts? What are the perils and promises of engaging in such constellating practices? We especially invite essays that address one or more of the following questions, or use them as a generative basis to form their own:

- Recognizing different, often incompatible exigencies between new materialisms, posthumanism, and cultural rhetorics, how might rhetorical scholars work ethically across, between, and among both colonized and colonizing trajectories of thought and inquiry?
- How might work weaving new materialist, posthuman, or ontologically focused rhetorics with indigenous, racial, queer, or other subaltern views positively address contemporary technosocial concerns?
- What case studies of working with nonhuman others (plants, animals, things) best represent uniquely rhetorical interventions into reconceptualizing a more just and ethical new materialism?
- How do citation practices and chosen methodologies recreate colonial thinking between new materialisms and cultural rhetorics? How might we reimagine more just practices of attribution and research?
- What infrastructural or systemic material networks hinder or help address the rights of ecosystems, land, or animal nations and what rhetorical interventions help give voice to them?
• What are best practices for a careful and nuanced decolonial new materialism and/or posthumanism that might translate into writing and literacy pedagogy?
• How do decolonial new material practices contribute to a more robust understanding of bodies, agency, political action, and social justice?
• What limits or challenges must be recognized at the fluid borders between these areas? What are the politics of recognition here and how might they suggest ways to expand our notions of knowledge production?
• What are the ontologies of decolonization? Can posthuman or new materialisms aid decolonial projects?

**Specifics:** We ask for proposals of 300-400 words to frame essays no longer than 10,000 words.

**Timeline:**
Proposal due by May 31, 2019
Notification of acceptances by July 15, 2019
Chapters due by October 1, 2019
Feedback by December 31, 2019
Chapter revisions due by March 15, 2020

Proposals, questions about the volume or its timeline should be directed at both David M. Grant, david.grant@uni.edu and Jennifer Clary-Lemon, jclarylemon@uwaterloo.ca.