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Making Matter Matter: Page, Stage, Screen

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If there is one discernible trend after the dissolution of the Age of Theory as it flourished under the impact of the linguistic turn, it seems to be a renewed focus on matter. While Theory (with a capital T) marked the climax of a longstanding development that refined the representational paradigm of Western culture after the linguistic turn of the early twentieth century, recent developments reformulate the modern triad of objectivity, subjectivity and reflexivity in terms of materiality, affect and mediality in order to acknowledge the 'force of things' and the 'vibrancy of matter' (Jane Bennett) in the 'entanglement of matter and meaning' (Karen Barad). The emergent new epistemological and ontological framework has often been subsumed under the bracket term 'New Materialisms', which also covers parallel developments like 'Speculative Realism' (Quentin Meillassoux), 'Object-Oriented Philosophy' (Graham Harman, Timothy Morton) or 'Actor-Network-Theory' (Bruno Latour). Of late, works by Donna Haraway (*Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene* 2016) and Bruno Latour (*Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime* 2015/2017) in particular have claimed the practical and political urgency of the new mode of thinking against the backdrop of climate change and social upheaval as ultimate outcomes of the old paradigm. The interrelated analysis of matter and affect challenges traditional mind/body- and nature/nurture oppositions and, instead, highlights the complexity of oppressing linguistic signifying practices and forms in literature, theatre, and film. In this, literature, performance, art, and popular culture are seen as subverting such representations. Interrelating affect and matter, thus, accentuates sensations, intensities, valences, and interior movements that are generated and shaped by energies which are themselves embedded in diverse forms of embodied human life (see i.e. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Brian Massumi, and, more recently, Sarah Ahmed, Lauren Berlant, Eugenie Brinkema, Brian Massumi, Gregory J. Seigworth/Melissa Gregg, Diana Cool/Samantha Frost, Patricia Clough, Nigel Thrift). Literary texts and textures can thus be viewed as a nexus of such matter/affect interrelation as they externalise mental activity (no matter whether in stone or papyrus or on paper or electronically).

The panel 'Making Matter Matter: Page, Stage, Screen' invites contributions which clarify the concepts and assumptions at work in this paradigm. At the same time, however, it suggests that this be undertaken with recourse to aesthetic practices. (Literary) texts, performance(s), and their complex aesthetics can be regarded as complex explorations of mind/body activities which readers and spectators participate in beyond their respective cultural and historical differences. This suggestion is based on the observation that literature with its performative overcoding or repurposing of representational language use at least since Romanticism as well as modern theatre, film, music and arts have developed independently and have at times anticipated recent theoretical concerns by making matter matter beyond representation on levels of affect, process, involvement etc.

Contributions to the panel could thus address

- Matter into words – words into matter
- Bodies-as-matter
- Circulation of affects
- The affectivity of bodies
- Flows and intensities that produce power, resistance, and desire
- Material practices of reading, writing, performing and seeing
- Process and meaning
- Natureculture and literature/art
- Eco-criticism and material practices
- Abstraction and matter
- Material spiritualisms
- ...

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