

## ***Outer Spaces: Imagining the Ends of the Earth***

*Elizabeth DeLoughrey*

*Outer Spaces: Imagining the Ends of the Earth* argues that climate change discourse relies on the visual and narrative production of three extraterritorial or ‘outer spaces’ to imagine our ecological futures: the atmosphere, the ocean, and the poles. I connect the cultural production of these spaces to Cold War science, which was fundamental to imagining a new epoch of anthropogenic climate change termed the Anthropocene. Turning to artists, writers, and photographers who helped produce an ecological imaginary of these outer spaces, I draw from indigenous and postcolonial methodologies to argue for the importance of the environmental humanities in helping us understand the mapping of the planet. Building upon my recent publications in the environmental humanities, my work speaks to the necessity to engage multiple disciplines while foregrounding the importance of humanities methodologies to understanding visual and narrative representations of radical planetary change. *Outer Spaces* engages literature, visual arts, environmental studies, and the history of science to demonstrate how our current ecological crisis has been imagined and measured in ways that are attributable to a new conception of the planet brought about by the Cold War. My book project seeks to theorize how the “age of ecology,” as historian Donald Worster has it, has been imagined by writers and artists through extraterritorial spaces that are thought to represent the ends of the Earth.

Climate science insists that we read three specific extraterritorial or “outer spaces” in order to understand a rapidly warming planet: the atmosphere, the ocean, and the poles. These three spaces are uninhabitable for the majority of humans on the planet, calling attention to the disjunction between our embedded experience of the Earth (weather) versus the extraterritorial indicators of planetary change (climate). This is why the visual and written narratives of spaces outside the orbit of most humans have become so integral to understanding climate change, from the Apollo space mission photographs of the Earth to the images of polar bears on ice flows. My book is organized around these three spaces, theorizing how literary and visual media work to bring immediacy to a climate crisis that is imagined outside of the ordinary places of human habitation. While many scholars have emphasized the newness and novelty of the Anthropocene, arguing that its visual, narrative, and material effects are unprecedented, *Outer Spaces* argues that there are vital Cold War origins to how we both understand and represent this new geological epoch.

While this is a story for the history of science, it is also one for the arts and humanities. Since the Cold War, authors and visual artists have been engaged in bringing extraterritorial spaces into public consciousness, whether to foreground the nuclear radiation of the planet’s atmosphere or its suffusion with CO<sub>2</sub>. The earliest human explorations of the poles, outer space, and the deep sea were funded by militaries, and almost always included photographers who were expected to bring back images of extraterritorial spaces for national consumption. With the territorial

scramble for these outer spaces in the Cold War, these images and narratives helped naturalize uninhabitable space as national territory.

Extraterritorial spaces, such as the deep sea, Antarctica, and outer space, are imaginatively, historically, and juridically interconnected. Their international legal regimes are derived from the concept of the “peaceful” global commons as it developed in the midst of the Cold War. The 1950s scramble for Antarctica which led Article 1 of the Antarctic Treaty to declare that this continent “shall be used for peaceful purposes only” was derived from the Law of the Sea and adopted for the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. While environmental studies has generally focused on national topographies, my concern in this book is how we imagine the Earth through visual tropes of the extraterrestrial. Mapping these ‘outer spaces’ within and outside of the earth were key to our modern understanding of the planet, and to visualizing the global environment.