

## ***Infrafauna: Ecological Intimacy in a Post-sustainability Context***

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This project takes, for its central themes, **ecological intimacy**, **eco-sex**, **technology**, and the **erotics of multispecies affect** in contemporary literature and art. The project looks at how writers, theatre makers, and visual artists have responded to an array of environmental sensations in a post-sustainability context, a time when structures of attachment between industrial activity and many ecological systems prove intractable. Counter to those modern environmental movements that implore us to “tread lightly” on Earth, this project selects a corpus of works that take, as their starting point, the extant reality of extensive, material interpenetration; seepages that pass between humans, wild places, and other species. These works explore how ecological intimacy is (or could be) configured, refusing the disembodiment of austere restraint and the queasiness of disgust or dejection. Such works tread *deeply*. The bounded unity of the human body, the autonomy and agency of the sensual self, and the disciplining of an unbeautiful, hybridized nature are challenged throughout.

With its foundations in literary studies, the project begins with a genealogy linking texts that problematize the adage of being “too close for comfort.” Guiding questions include: What are the sexual politics of tactile experience in an environment trammled by anthropogenic byproducts, such as carbon dioxide and discarded plastic? Does life in a polluted body register only as painful, or might there subsist an aesthetics of pleasure and other subtler affects rendered legible in literature? How might a consciousness of parasites and bacterium shape the appetites, resources, and responses of protagonists, as well as narrative conflict? Can a new ethics of arousal form in the wake of collapsing environmental systems, and how might visual and written texts explore and animate those values? How might animals “speak” of their immersion in life-worlds that are materially altered, passively or actively, by human activity? Finally, how is creative and critical distance conceived of in post-sustainability environments?

*Infrafauna* spans subjects as diverse as the use of leeches in histories of weather prediction; robotic falconry; shifting perceptions of organisms from the trench oceans; the use of drones, microtagging, and satellites to gather big data on animals; and the history of microbial life as infection or somatic co-becoming in characters’ inner lives in contemporary fiction. Texts for analysis include literary works by authors Lauren Groff, Claire-Louise Bennett, Rebecca Curtis, and Eva Hornung, as well as visual and performance art.