2024 50 HRC

Humanities Research Centre

ANU Gender Institute

Presented in collaboration with the ANU Gender Institute

Cavendish and the Aesthetics of Beating Spacetime

The 2024 HRC - Gender Institute Distinguished Lecture

Margaret Cavendish (1623-73) is newly relevant in all kinds of ways, as even a cursory glance at recent scholarship in philosophy or literature will indicate. However, with few exceptions, we have not yet acknowledged Cavendish as an aesthetic thinker. Here, I address that oversight by showing how her later philosophy and her fiction, *Blazing World* (1666), advocate a radical materialism that nearly outpaces the limits of the body and demands a concomitant bio-poetics that can adequately register organic matter's cogent, ongoing transformations. Despite her materialist commitments, the author advances early aesthetic thinking precisely when she leans away from the spatiotemporal properties of thinking bodies and resists the creaturely dissolution that time brings. Indeed, in *Blazing World* and *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* (1668), Cavendish offers the final iteration of her career-long interest in a material consciousness that strives to slip free of the body and time.

Anne M. Thell

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Anne M. Thell is an American scholar and literary critic. Her work ranges across the humanities, with special focus on eighteenth-century literature, science and literature, travel literature, early English fiction, the history of philosophy, and early women writers. Thell has published widely including a monograph, *Minds in Motion: Imagining Empiricism in Eighteenth-Century Voyage Literature* (Bucknell 2017), and the first critical edition of Margaret Cavendish's *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* (Broadview 2020). Thell is Vice President of The International Margaret Cavendish Society.

↑ Free Event.
Register via Humanitix

HRC 2024 Annual Theme – Time, Place, *Everywhen*
2024 marks the 50th year of the ANU Humanities Research Centre (HRC).
To celebrate, the HRC is supporting research into different ideas of time and place and paying respect to Indigenous people through the theme of 'everywhen'.

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