

# Fluid

SLSA 2014 | SMU, Dallas, TX

## Schedule of Panels

Final - Sep 21, 2014

Session 1 - Thurs 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm

Session 1A

### **Digital Technology and the Intersection of Internet Activism**

Chair: [\*Amanda Sparling\*](#)

As digital technology advances society is faced with the tangible application of widespread connectivity including both the positive and negative ramifications of networked technology. Our panel includes three papers focused on how the internet is used to rally individuals behind a cause, with each paper exploring a different topic within the realm of internet-based activism. Amanda Sparling's paper focuses on WikiLeaks and the dangers inherent in the extreme polarization of perceptions and reactions to internet activism, arguing that a more comprehensive understanding is needed, armed with laws applicable to the new digital age, in order to tap into the positive power of society's high tech activists. Amir Alabbas investigates how the internet is used to carry out the process of radicalization amongst young adults, and how it contributes to the rapid spread of terrorism. Norma Martin's paper explores the digital-repression case of Turkey banning Twitter in March 2014 along with the repercussions of social-media sites as targets for government censorship.

[\*Amanda Sparling\*](#).

### **Fighting for Information Freedom**

As technology advances, the presence of networked technologies increase the speed at which information can travel and create vulnerabilities in secure systems, exposing information to potential security breaches which pose extreme risks for populations around the globe. However, the protection of information required by these organizations must also be balanced with limitations to the levels of control that powerful institutions can impose upon the Internet to ensure the spirit of the system remains uncompromised. The Internet is a system

which impacts people in every area of their life, increasing access to universal information, knowledge and communications around the world. This paper seeks to explore the dangers inherent in the extreme polarization of perceptions and reactions to internet activism, arguing that a more comprehensive understanding is needed, armed with laws applicable to the new digital age, in order to tap into the positive power of society's high tech activists. Following the events of the 2010 WikiLeaks disclosures I have studied how internet users from around the globe participated in the fight for information freedom, and demonstrated the disruptive authority of the internet. Much like the battle around WikiLeaks and its inflammatory disclosures, future whistleblowers and hacktivist organizations will face ramifications by some of the most powerful institutions in the world. This paper will explore how WikiLeaks has exposed the inadequacies in the control and flow of data and that as society, technology and the political landscape evolves, so must the regulations and laws governing the Internet and information freedom.

*Amir Alabbas.*

### **The Internet and the Third-Wave of Terrorism**

Following the unfortunate events that took place on September 11th, 2001, there has been a worldwide interest in understanding terrorism, from how it starts to how it can be defeated. With the internet playing a major role in our lives, including the lives of teens and young adults, the scope of terrorism has grown. I argue that the internet has become a very influential tool for radicalization, and is the primary means in which youth get into terrorism. It is vital to investigate how the internet is used to carry out the process of radicalization amongst young adults, and also how it is used to spread terrorism. Through these understandings, we can obtain the necessary knowledge that would allow us to prevent terrorism from being introduced at an early stage of someone's life. I have studied the different waves of terrorism that have occurred, specifically the terrorism related to Islamic extremism. I have also examined the shift of radicalization from offline methods to online methods. My targeted age group in which I focused my research on is peoples aged 10 to 25. In supporting my argument regarding the internet's influence on radicalization and terrorism, I bring up examples from previous terrorist attacks in Europe and the current Syrian war that are parallel to my insights and findings. One of the biggest findings I came across is the fact that terrorist groups have increased in number

with the utilization of the internet, and thus have become out of control and nearly impossible to halt.

*Norma Martin.*

### **Turkey Bans Twitter: A Case of Digital Repression in the Crosshairs of Internet Freedom**

Prevailing archetypes of government censorship in cyberspace are China, North Korea and Iran. However, in recent months, mostly democratic-styled governments in Ukraine and Turkey are just as active in their use of digital repression tactics. The free market of ideas always has limitations on public access of information because governments have tried to control the words and thoughts of their citizens for centuries. Nowadays with an IP address, a domain name and/or technology devices that unlock password encryptions, governments can download an entire digital network of political activists within seconds, monitor people's digital footprint across multiple platforms at a glance, or block thousands of global websites deemed "undesirable" with a keyboard click. Social-media sites are often targets for government censorship, and authoritarian-style governments, such as Iran and China, are masters. But what does digital repression mean when it comes to censorship in regards to Internet freedom of a democratic government? What are Internet freedom fighters doing to circumvent the censorship tactics of such governments? What is the role, if any, of global technology companies when it comes to the conflicts between Internet freedom fighters and a government's digital-repression tactics? All three questions are explored in the digital-repression case of Turkey banning Twitter in March 2014.

Session 1B

### **Metacritical Humanities**

*Adam Zaretsky.*

#### **Bipolar Flower**

Bipolar Flower, Bipolar (manic-depressive), Double Dipped, Zinc Fingered (ZF), GMO Arabidopsis Thaliana plants. These are plants who have been 'whole genome fracked' in a bipolar duet of two artificial transcription factors (activating and repressing) competing for the 524 GTA GAG GAG binding places on the arabisopsis genome. Inserted in the lab of Dr. Ir. Bert van der Zaal (in

collaboration with David Lourier and Neils van Tol), by means of floral double dipping, the vector *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* has infected buds with protein therapeutic interrogative alterity. These buds became bipolar flowers from which the seeds to the plants you see in front of you have been born. The plants are named after their floral wombs and the romantic birth defects they carry from our heavy-handed work. The competition inside the plant's genome is for the up or down regulating of expression patterns of all 524 of GTA GAG GAG downstream genes in the *Arabidopsis thaliana* (mustard weed). These genes are either turned on and off or regulated up and down according to the chance play of falling activation and repression domain inserts running heedless in an intensive virulence minuet claiming limited space in the plant's resultant bipolar disordered (mood, energy, and ability to function) mixed episode gene expression, decanalization swinger response mechanisms. Due to up regulation of atavistic genes and resurgence (ancestral gene recapitulation) of deep time traits unrepressed by suddenly down regulated paternalist genes (upstream), the Biopolar Flower may no longer be accurately classified simply as a plant.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IoL5hQjJZ6o>

*[Chris Wildrick](#)*.

### **Dinosaur Aesthetics: Fluid Public Perceptions of Dinosaur Appearance and Behavior**

The public's idea of what dinosaurs looked and acted like comes from scientific and popular culture sources, both of which have varied widely. Since everything we know about dinosaurs is based on fossils, and since fossils rarely preserve animals' exteriors, our scientific knowledge of dinosaur aesthetics is an epistemological challenge in itself; the scientific conception of dinosaur appearance and behavior has evolved over time, based on new discoveries. Meanwhile, dinosaurs in popular culture sometimes reflect the current science, but are often decades behind, or they are simply re-imagined from scratch in order to maximize their entertainment value. There is a complex and dynamic web of cause and effect between dinosaur scientific discoveries, scientific illustrations, and pop cultural depictions. I have been doing public interactive projects about people's knowledge and perception of dinosaurs for many years, in tandem with scientific, art, and education venues. Recent examples of my projects on this topic include surveys of the public's knowledge of dinosaurs' relative sizes and time periods; games that pit various dinosaurs against each

other in battle; diagrams of dinosaurs' aesthetic family trees; a survey of dinosaur name pronunciations in children's books; and creative projects in which people tell stories about or make drawings of dinosaurs, based on various prompts. In this talk, I will present the results of several of my interactive projects, examining the fluid cultural dynamics behind the public perception of dinosaurs, as artifacts of our science and imagination. [www.chriswildrick.com/paleontologymain.html](http://www.chriswildrick.com/paleontologymain.html)

Session 1C

### **Activism Performed: Fluidity of Genre in Text and Theater**

[Amanda Horowitz.](#)

#### **Horizontal Ideas for Open Ended Bodies**

Horizontal Ideas for Open Ended Bodies is an in-progress ebook and lecture series. The book includes parts under the following titles: *1. We Are Lesion: A Socio-Political Fairy Tale* *2. Im A Ballad* *3. Vampires Reproduced in Consumer Desire* *4. Stomach of a Hacker* *5. Jane Doe Rape Kit* For the SLSA conference I will be presenting the introduction, and in-progress state of the project. The work as a whole explores the body as a polysemic device, a linguistic tool or policy that marks an intersection/opening with deep political implications. The individual body: a subjective geography of flesh under constant self-surveillance. The social body: an economic whole swayed in participatory desire. And a body of artworks/texts: an abject form that is always speaking of it's own making.--*To be at the center of any one of these bodies is to be simultaneously at the center of all three.* -- I've designed the work to take you through divergent pathways and parts. Treat this book like a kit, all parts are individual, active, and together assemble a heterogeneous body (the third body of the polysemic device). The writing I've included is not limited to one trope- you will find an amalgamation of project statements, scripts, notes, found imagery, video and theoretical texts. I've collected all these forms with the intention to collapse the micro-body with the macro-body into the lateral, digitized space of the e-book.

[Anne Marie Stachura.](#)

#### **Art, Activism, and Health in the Borderlands: The Theatrical Interventions of *Frontera Líquida***

“Through art we reframe experience, offset prejudice, and refresh our perception of what exists so that it seems new and worthy of attention...Learning to think like an artist and an interpreter is basic training for our volatile times. Together with professional artists, interpreters are cultural agents when we explore art as ‘our greatest renewable resource’ for addressing the world’s fundamental challenges of disease, violence, and poverty.” Doris Sommer, *The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency and Public Humanities*. Founded in 2006 by Edna Ochoa, a Mexican playwright and Spanish professor at the University of Texas-Pan American, the theatre group Frontera Líquida (Liquid Border) strives to make theatre productions accessible to the largely low-income, predominately Spanish-speaking community of the Rio Grande Valley on the U.S.-Mexico border. As a project in engaged public humanities, the work of Frontera Líquida aims to open a space for public dialogue about issues of importance to the local community outside of the university; as such, it relies on techniques of Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed to invite spectators to participate in the creation of the event. This paper analyzes the work of Frontera Líquida regarding women’s health in the Rio Grande Valley, situating this project within the history of artistic political interventions in Latin America and theories developed by the Situationists. In Frontera Líquida’s project, the “liquid border” between the artists and the public allows the community to consider solutions to concrete problems.

[\*Sofia Varino.\*](#)

### **Becoming Water: Performing Fluid Urbanism with Harmattan Theater**

Harmattan Theater, where I am associate director, is a New York based environmental theater collective devising site-specific performances concerned with global water politics and climate change. In this paper, I use the concept of fluidity to analyze five of our recent projects, drawing in particular from Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* (2010) and *Fluid New York* (2013) by Harmattan's artistic director May Joseph. Employing a critical framework informed by performance studies, environmental theory, hydrology, and interdisciplinary water research, I examine how our performances re-imagine the water-bound city as a multi-layered environment where geographical, biochemical, and historical events collide in real time. Paying special attention to the element of slow, flowing choreography in conjunction with improvised live sound, I discuss

in detail works presented between 2011 and 2014 at the cities of Amsterdam, New York, Lisbon, Cochin, and at the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. I highlight the scenic elements of music and choreography, conceived to generate a vivid flow between the past and present time, to contrast the concrete materiality of performance with the multiple archives these five works simultaneously interrupt and re-enact. Shaped by the waterscapes that contain and support it, the fluid city then appears as a performative environment, a site of interaction and mobility, of regeneration and becoming, of aesthetic activity and civic engagement. Dynamic encounters with landscape and architecture continuously produce the daily embodied experiences of collective urban life, as city dwellers become actants, playful participants in this permeable, volatile habitat.

Session 1D

## **Fluidity in Contemporary Fiction**

*[Srikanth Mallavarapu](#)*.

### **On Shapeshifters and the Fluidity of Identity in Joe Haldeman's *Camouflage***

In the Nebula and James Tiptree Jr. award winning novel *Camouflage*, Joe Haldeman uses the plot device of two shapeshifting aliens to allow for a broad exploration of human evolution and history as well as a more specific engagement with the various markers and characteristics that constitute the “human.” This novel engages with the problematic boundaries that separate the human and animal as well as the human and nonhuman. Ursula Le Guin has described Haldeman’s handling of the theme of gender in this novel as “skillful, subtle, and finely unpredictable.” This paper situates Haldeman’s novel in a long tradition of texts in the sf genre that explore the question of what it means to be human by employing elements of cognition and estrangement, using the theoretical framework provided by Darko Suvin in his definition of the genre. Haldeman deploys specific elements of human history (for example, the Bataan Death March and Auschwitz) and specific locations (Samoa) in order to explore large philosophical questions about curiosity and violence, while also introducing markers of identity that are dependent on historical and cultural context. This paper examines the tension that exists in this text between a model of the human that relies on forms of essentialism in contrast to a performative model that sees



identity as more fluid and takes into account the importance of historical context and location.

*Alice Bendinelli.*

**Liminal Beings and Affect: The Shared Lives of Nonhuman and Other Animals in Neil Abramson's *Unsaid* (2012)**

Discussions about “the Animal” – a philosophical oversimplification against which “the Human” is measured – are “asinine” for Derrida, who laments the loss of heterogeneity among (nonhuman) 'animals' erased by that definite article. However, he also warns that humans are part of the same continuity. Recent scientific scholarship, from de Waal's studies on empathy to Bekoff's research on cooperation as a relational paradigm, has pointed out how empathy, fairness and morality are not exclusively human. Animal studies also question facile and anthropocentric human/animal binaries, thus bridging the gap between scientific knowledge and philosophical assumptions. On the other hand, discussions about “Nonhuman animals” and the lives they share with humans are both challenging and fruitful, as in Neil Abramson's novel, *Unsaid*. Here the boundaries between species are blurred/questioned. Should Cindy, a 4-year-old bonobo, be granted personhood rather than being treated as “property”? Do language, sentience or affect determine legal personhood? Is an almost mute child affected by Asperger's syndrome truly a telepathic vessel between life and death? Why is the disembodied narrator, a guilt ridden veterinarian struck in a limbo between death and afterlife, witnessing the collapse of her supposedly idyllic human/nonhuman family? This paper investigates the representation of these different human/animal liminal beings in *Unsaid* and provides a framework within which the differences between them can become meaningful/productive rather than exclusionary/divisive. I argue that Neil Abramson's novel follows the anthropological tripartite structure of rites of passage (separation/liminality/reintegration) and provides fertile ground for a more peaceful interspecies coexistence/continuity.

*Lauren Kilian.*

**“Pretend You're Discovering Something”: Narrative Desire and the Invention of Discovery in Allegra Goodman's *Intuition***

As any reporter knows, ambiguity doesn't sell. This presents a problem for science journalism because much of what deserves reporting in the sciences is, as



media critic Brooke Gladstone puts it, “all middle.” To create a narrative arc, Gladstone observes, science writers sometimes make results “appear more conclusive than they really are.” While we might assume scientists themselves are immune, Allegra Goodman's novel *Intuition* suggests that competition and lack of recognition can test even the most virtuous. The book is a crucial study of the pressures, conflicts, and indeterminacies in the scientific research community, but has received little scholarly attention. Popular-press consideration alternates between praising Goodman's portrait of lab culture and debating whether Goodman's protagonist, Cliff Banneker, is guilty of fraud. In my paper, I argue that Cliff embodies the “narrative desire” that Peter Brooks locates in “our stubborn insistence on making meaning in the world.” Hungry for fame and fighting for his position, Goodman's protagonist has every reason to hide data that doesn't tell the story he wants. But Goodman never explicitly reveals whether Cliff is guilty. By novel's end, every character—the accused and those who do the accusing—appear motivated by expectation and bias. In and out of the lab, the lines between discovery and imagination blur. Taking Goodman's lead, my paper sidesteps the did-he-or-didn't-he question to ask, instead, how different imagination is from fraud—and to argue that the realistic portrait Goodman draws is not of the lab but of a public that harbors its own narrative desires.

#### Session 1E

### **Fluid Change: Activism in the Age of Apps**

*John Tinnell.*

#### ***Vita Activa* and the Rise of Civic Apps**

Hannah Arendt's revival of the ancient notion of “*vita activa*” is regularly acknowledged as a preeminent contribution to modern political theory, and it remains central to ongoing debates about the evolution of deliberative democracy in the digital age. Against the tenor of many philosophical traditions, Arendt insists that action (rather than contemplation) marks the highest actualization of freedom and the most worthwhile end of existence. Action, as Arendt rigorously defines it, is fundamentally unpredictable, catalytic, unconditioned, boundless—fluid. This presentation explicates Arendt's theory of action, while also making sense of Bernard Stiegler's claim that Arendt's work is flawed, in that she neglects the constitutive role of technicity when she states that action is “the only activity

that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter.” If technicity conditions the possibilities of action, then what impacts might the recent surge of mobile apps designed to cultivate an active citizenry have on political life? Working between Arendt and Stiegler, the presenter adopts *vita activa* as a framework for gauging the efficacy of “civic apps” as an emerging form of deliberative rhetoric unique to cities now experimenting with the affordances of ubiquitous computing.

*Shamim Hunt.*

### **Cultural Change and Fluidity through Art**

According to Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism replicates the logic of late capitalism. Postmodernism gives illusion of choice, but one only chooses from the already given. Postmodernism follows the model of capitalism because the cultural ideas are based on the economic system of the country. In capitalist societies consumers don't have real choices, they choose from the given, but they have to choose nonetheless. This logic of not having the choice not to choose is also found in existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir. Simone de Beauvoir suggests that women's psyche needs to be changed by being artists and philosophers, and by being a certain way even in make belief. I argue that both the women's psyche and their condition will only change if the attitudes towards women will change. Deepa Mehta is such as artist whose films have actually brought change in the society. Her characters certainly choose from the given situation; yet they are choosing in a culture where women don't have choices in certain situations in reality. Mehta's trilogy *Fire, Water and Earth* are influenced by Western values, yet situated in the Indian culture who take radical stances against the patriarchal culture of the East bringing voice to the subaltern. Being frozen in traditions can be overcome because tradition is fluid because humans, as existing beings, are free to think and choose.

*Hannes Bend; Sherri Mason.*

### **'Cultural Engineering' as a fluid process**

Fluidity is essential for emergence in creativity and culture. Creative practices can benefit from interweaving different fields (science, philosophy, architecture) to examine perspectives communicating assembled knowledge and methodologies. The emerging outcomes of research, networking and collaboration channel the contemporary human capacities for insights and impacts within culture, society

and ecology. As a current participant of the Third Culture Projects I collaborate with scientists of the University of Oregon for novel creative outcomes- [http://www.oregonartscommission.org/sites/default/files/news/file/2014-05-26\\_Third%20Culture.pdf](http://www.oregonartscommission.org/sites/default/files/news/file/2014-05-26_Third%20Culture.pdf) Following an art exhibition in 2012 in collaboration with environmental organizations and the local diving community, - <http://inhabitat.com/hannes-bends-eclipse-installation-opens-our-eyes-to-the-artificial-reef-catastrophe/> - <http://charestweinberg.com/exhibitions/hannes-bend-eclipse/> I am presently developing a project with scientists and architects from the School of Natural Resources and Environment (UofM) to transform an ecological catastrophe in the Atlantic Ocean. [http://www.snre.umich.edu/current\\_students/masters\\_projects/reef\\_recreation\\_%E2%80%93\\_designing\\_with\\_nature\\_to\\_redevelop\\_an\\_ecological](http://www.snre.umich.edu/current_students/masters_projects/reef_recreation_%E2%80%93_designing_with_nature_to_redevelop_an_ecological) In 2013 I accompanied scientists on one of the first intense surveys on plastic pollution in the Great Lakes. <http://panexplore.com/eternity-escaped-first-a-blog-from-hannes-bend/> Subsequently I initiated the program ‘Macrobeats,’ a network of over twenty international scientists, scholars and artists, to examine water as a transformative essential resource, phase transitions, infiltrations of solid matter in fluid ecosystems and human waterways, and equilibrated systems by focusing on the greatest freshwater reservoir on earth, the Great Lakes. <http://www.macrobeats.info/> The term ‘Cultural Engineering’ emerged as a term describing the artistic and scientific collaborations with the objective of impactful changes for more fluid, dynamic and sustainable processes. The talk will combine scientific studies, experiences of artistic and curatorial practices and scientific and philosophical papers on states of matter.

Session 1F

## **Medical Narratives**

*Angelika Potempa.*

### **To Tell or Not to Tell? – The Mentioning of Medical Errors in Doctors’ Memoirs**

Readers grant autobiographies a suspension of disbelief and expect an interesting story with new insights and disclosure of very personal experiences. The humanity of the writer interests them, not just his/her successes, but also errors and failures and how they were overcome. When sharing his/her memories, the

medical doctor, though, is similar to members of other professions, in that he/she must take into consideration public, private, and professional audiences. The medical doctor will not only have to take into account the voyeuristic expectations of the general reader, but also must carefully consider the feelings of his/her family as well as the family's close circle of friends. In addition, the medical doctor is obliged to protect the social and moral prestige of the profession as well as any vulnerabilities to possible litigation. The reader of such memoirs, therefore, can expect an interesting balance of what is admitted, omitted, alluded to, and presented. The examination of whether medical errors were conceded and, if so, how and within what framework, will be at the center of the proposed paper. Both famous and less-famous twentieth-century American physicians will contribute to the discussion such as Drs. Th. E. Starzl, R. Selzer, and P. Austin. Their input will be analyzed with regard to the moral issues at stake, such as avoidance of wrongdoing and harm by the good doctor as well as relevant values and duties, like truthfulness, trust, and disclosure.

*Fan-chen Huang.*

### **Becoming Real: The Fluidity of Objects in Magic**

This paper seeks to sketch out how the boundary of real/unreal and real/hyperreal becomes blurred in the performance of magic, and from this, calls for the speculation on impossible objects and the connection with human subjects. Since time immemorial, magic has been an art that, by manipulating human perception and simulating the real, alternates the passivity of objects and disturbs the stable relationship between man and things. As magic creates a real that surpasses the realm of common knowledge and becomes more real than the real, our recognition of objects undergoes a distortion in this hyperreal, oscillating between the disclosure of magic tricks and the resistance of unreason. With reference to Quentin Meillassoux's anti-correlational discourse, this paper aims to maintain that as objects seem to be able to deviate from their normal course of thing-for-us in magical illusions, shattering our affirmation of perception and the scientific absolute, a different relationship with objects can be constructed. Moreover, by reviewing the history of modern magic and its engagement with the development of technology, we find a more and more perfect control over objects in magic that allows less possibility for their taking place (*avoir lieu*) of contingency, a way that objects reveal themselves in the actual space out of the epistemological realm. This "enframing" (*Ge-stell*) on

technicity indexes the ambiguity of objects in magic: objects remain subject to us as well as distance from us. And magic, as the location of this ambiguity, serves to manifest the becoming of objects and the dis-articulation of the a priori order of things.

*Lia Min.*

### **Contemplating on Brain Research Methodology through 17th Century Dutch and Chinese Landscape Paintings**

Upon close examination, one can learn a lot about the cultural values and the lives of people reflected in a piece of artwork. Here, I look into how people of different cultural backgrounds perceived nature during the 17th century by analyzing and comparing landscape paintings of the West and the East. The focus is to compare how artists from the two cultures, mainly the Dutch and the Chinese, understood and depicted body of water in their paintings differently from each other. Water plays an essential role in human survival, and it holds great importance across cultures. By looking at the various ways in which water is technically handled in landscape paintings from different traditions, it is possible to surmise how people relate to this important natural resource in each culture. In addition, the way water is physically handled in cities and villages as an architectural element in Eastern and Western traditions is also studied. Understanding the relationship that is built between people and nature is a critical point of understanding the contrast between Western and Eastern system of thought. To study the mind and its anatomical counterpart, the brain, presents a unique challenge. Unlike other topics of natural sciences, which concern problems of matter, the mind cannot be fully understood by examining physical properties alone, nor can it be considered as being independent from matter. Here, I would like to re-examine our contemporary approaches in understanding the mind by taking into account the way nature is perceived in the traditions of Eastern and Western cultures.

Session 2 - Thurs 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Session 2A

**Geo-Archaeo-Engineering**

Zach Horton.

### **Geoengineering as Particulate Imaginary: Russ George and Haida Narrative**

This presentation will explore the cultural imaginary of geoengineering as crystallized in a single event: the world's first act of “rogue geoengineering.” Disgraced “eco-engineer” Russ George after misadventures at the Vatican and the Galapagos Islands, takes refuge in Haida Gwaii. Here, in one of the world's most remote ecological preserves, tended by the Haida people for thousands of years, he improbably convinces the Village Council of Old Massett to fund his geoengineering scheme to the tune of \$2.5 million, and subsequently dumps 120 tons of iron sulfate in their waters, causing an international furor. I will suggest that George's enrollment of the Haida is misunderstood when analyzed as the psychological dynamics of individuals (a confidence game). The geoengineering imaginary is marked by a multi-scalar articulation, or mediation, of three “geo-substantial flows”: particulate, discursive, and economic. A closer look at the case of Russ George reveals that his remarkable transformation of iron dust from pollution into the substance of life itself turned on the appropriation of an ancient Haida narrative about a human boy who is transformed into a salmon and then back. George retells this story of species fluidity as a neoliberal myth, eliding the original nature and tragic consequences of Salmon Boy's interspecies knowledge. Geoengineering's horizon of complete technocratic control over the earth's climate is, paradoxically, only authorized by a concomitant *particulate imaginary* that mediates and recombines flows of matter, capital, and narratives in a multi-scalar engineering imaginary.

Elena Glasberg.

### **Roni Horn's Icelandic Geopower**

Roni Horn's Icelandic Geopower Elena Glasberg, NYU Iceland is an island nation, a relative latecomer to European modernity, known for its genetically homogenous population, geothermal system, and its spectacular financial meltdown in 2008. In this presentation I approach Iceland not as a traditional geopolitical entity or even as an ecosystem, but rather as an expression of what philosopher Elizabeth Grosz calls geopower, or the “relation between earth and its life forms and . . . the inhuman precondition for biopower.” Roni Horn's

installation in Stykkishólmur, Vatnasafn, Library of Water (2009) challenges humanist cognition in its exchange of water for words and involutes "the water in us" flowing among and through human and non-human objects and networks. Horn's concept of "inner geography" disaggregates bodily and species integrity, and complicates and expands notions of political collectivities of body, region, or even earthliness. Extending Horn's fascination with Jules Verne's 1864 *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, and through Verne's uncanny indication of the Iceland's Snæfellsjökull crater, my discussion of geopower involutes surface and depth models of earth as well as the linguistic-material framings of matter to forge a new materialist uptake of human-centered 1970s Earth Art.

*John Hay.*

### **Adventures in Geo-Archaeology: The Lasting Marks of Ambrose Bierce's "For the Ahkoond"**

Ambrose Bierce is known today for his gruesome Civil War tales, his supernatural horror stories, his *Devil's Dictionary* (1911), and his mysterious disappearance and presumed death during the Mexican Revolution. Bierce's humorous sketches and political satires have been generally overlooked, but S. T. Joshi and David Schultz have recently argued for their importance by stressing the author's ongoing engagement with "future histories," tales that suggest the fluidity of historical possibility by describing the present through the perspective of a writer living centuries later. The most interesting of Bierce's future histories is "For the Ahkoond" (1888), a postapocalyptic account of an archaeological expedition across a desolate American continent in the year 4591. I argue that this tale, ignored even by Bierce scholars, significantly anticipates contemporary geological views of human activity—particularly in regard to current debates surrounding the Anthropocene, the proposal that humans have altered the earth so drastically that a shift in the geological record will be perceptible to interested observers eons from now. "For the Ahkoond" follows just such an observer at a future date when all written records of the United States have vanished. The narrator, an archaeologist, discovers details of American history not through recovered documents but through "instrumental observation." As Craig Carey has recently shown, Bierce's experience as a topographer during the Civil War profoundly affected his formal techniques as a writer; I argue that Bierce's postapocalyptic fantasy historicizes topography by imagining human traces still visible in the rocks after thousands of years of environmental change.



## Session 2B

**Bodily Fluids**

Chair: *Kate Martineau*

Urine and semen are often fraught and taboo subject matter, popularly evidenced by the debates surrounding Andres Serrano's iconic/iconoclastic 1987 photograph, *Piss Christ*. Yet there has been surprisingly little critical discussion of the politics of representing bodily secretions, leaving many lacunae within understandings of art and visual culture. This panel seeks to dispense with the discourse of shock and contentiousness that has silenced investigations of these universal acts that are understood differently within various cultural contexts. Instead, the three papers will trace the complexities of representations of bodily fluids within Modern and Contemporary art and visual culture.

*James W. McManus.*

**"Whipping Up a Naughty Work: Marcel Duchamp's *Paysage Fautif*"**

The erotic owns a prominent place in Marcel Duchamp's thinking and work. The subject assumes a variety of forms – e.g. describing himself as a “cunning linguist” and the slight of hand references and inferences to the taboo subject masturbation that permeate his work. The *Chocolate Grinder in the Large Glass* and attendant notes (e.g. “The Bachelor Grinds His Chocolate Himself”), along with the 1911 painting *Sad Young Man on a Train*, serve to demonstrate the artist's fixation on the subject of masturbation early in his career - a fixation that continued. The big splash came in 1946. The masturbatory act and resultant semen were united in the panel, *Paysage Fautif*, included in the deluxe edition of his *Boîte-en-Valise*, that was presented to his paramour Maria Martins. Martins, who entered Duchamp's life a couple of years earlier, was affecting seismic changes – drawing the célibat into conflict with his devotion to secrecy and privacy. *Paysage Fautif*, seems a private expression intended for one person, and likely one that Duchamp never imagined on public display, much less the revelation of the mysterious material used to make the work. This paper asks us to consider whether we can read *Paysage Fautif* as a cloistered exposition addressing two taboos – masturbation on the one hand and his illicit affair with the married Maria Martins on the other?

*Andy Campbell.*

**“Archival Thinking: Yellow”**

Histories of gay and lesbian leather communities and their attendant visual and material cultures have yet to be understood as a valuable component of broader US LGBTQ cultures and histories. The archives of leather history are diffuse and messy, as much of the material associated with these communities has been destroyed, abandoned, or passed into the care of other personal collections. The only institutional archive dedicated solely to leather cultures is the grassroots Leather Archives & Museum in Chicago, Illinois. This paper considers the process of gathering and narrativizing archival material in the LA&M connected to historical gay/lesbian leather communities via the choice of an arbitrary device: the color yellow. In tracing the appearance of the color yellow across the archives, this paper arrives at a scattershot sampling of the stabilized subcultural meanings associated with the color yellow; connecting practices of signaling (the hanky code) with particular bodily acts (golden showers/urine play) and stimulants (poppers)/depressants (beer). Such a tactic suggests a method of approaching once-taboo subjects, such as piss play, in a way that is self-reflexive of the conditions of radical archives, and further addresses the particular challenges of presenting leather sexualities as a facet of broader histories of art and visual culture.

*Kate Martineau.*

**“Getting Pissy with Ray Johnson”**

Ray Johnson’s collages and drawings are full of images of urinating snowmen or “Buddhas” sometimes labeled with names of his friends and art world personalities. The temporary nature of the snowmen suggests Johnson’s interest in the continuous cycle of water and perhaps with the fickle nature of fame. The act of urination could have sexual overtones while also referring to Jackson Pollock’s infamous urinating in public places such as Peggy Guggenheim’s fireplace and Andy Warhol’s Piss Paintings. While fascinated by all bodily fluids, Johnson very rarely addressed semen in his work while the other fluid which emanates from a penis, urine, is ubiquitous. I will argue that this emphasis on a counter-reproductive act, particularly in its defiance of the art world parlance surrounding the abstract expressionists, fits with Johnson’s complicated relationship to productivity in general. Johnson continually challenged the links

between commerce and art. Refusing traditional gallery representation, he preferred to hawk his wares like a traveling salesman and made negotiations over price a part of the art work itself. He further defied the commodification of art and the gendering of creation by toying with the question of authorship. Who is to say who the true “father” of a piece of Correspondence Art is when it has traveled through multiple hands and evolved over time? This paper will focus on Johnson’s views of creativity through an investigation of several of his works featuring urine.

#### Session 2C

### **Humans and Other Urban Animals: Considering Constructions of Species in/and the City**

Chair: [\*Alan Rauch\*](#)

When visualizing the city, animals are not usually the first image that comes to mind—perhaps only the pigeon or rat scurries forth as an urban animal, or rather, an urban nuisance. Instead, the imagination conjures tightly paved streets, glistening sky scrapers, and the green of constant commerce. And yet, however imaginatively marginal, animals do emerge as functional beings within urban spaces. Whether they complement the urban environment or function as transgressive participants of that space, the animal and all its symbolic baggage has always been part of the matrix that we call the city. It is this set of complex, fluid, symbiotic relationships—city-human-animal—that inspires these projects. Presenting historical narratives and ethnographic data, the papers in this session employ critical race theory, visual analysis, and semiotics to explore such questions as: How does the context of the city impact the relationship between human and animal?; How do human-animal relationship impact the city?; and How does the symbolic imaginary function as part of the fluctuating human-animal relationship? These projects posit that human-animal relationships are contingent on context, on species, and on categories of race, class, and gender. The speakers will thus explore how such readings inform our understanding of humans and other animals in urban spaces.

[\*Alan Rauch\*](#).

#### **The Urban Squirrel**

The functional space that we call “The City” is a conceit that sets one space against others that are variously called: suburban; provincial; rural...and in Raymond Williams’s famous formulation “the country.” The city/country divide in animal narratives can be traced back at least as far as Aesop, but of course Aesop’s allegory (and all subsequent allegories) reflect human angst about the city. Of course we rarely beg the questions: Where is the city? Where (and how) does it begin? In what ways is its *umwelt* discernably different from the country? These are important questions for us, pedestrians in a landscape of our own making. But are the questions similar for animals that traverse the city through the tree canopy rather than by thoroughfares? We rarely think of squirrels as denizens of the urban environment, but surely they are urban. They have adapted and in some ways are evolving in response to new environmental elements (telephone poles, rooftops, etc). Our tendency to want to dismiss the squirrel as comic misses an important point about the city-country divide: that is that the divide is a construction entirely of our own making. Does the squirrel know that it’s urban? To venture a guess misses the point entirely (though the answer must surely be “no”); it does address a conundrum (perhaps even a pitfall) in our approach to framing environmental questions. Ultimately, those questions are not well served by zoocentric formulations (however important), but require specific attention—paradoxically enough—from an anthropocentric perspective.

*Erica Tom.*

### **Unstable Horses: Exploring the Unsteady Lives (and Symbols) of Equines in the Newark Mounted Police Unit**

"The horses...they create connection, people will approach an officer on a horse before a cop on foot, or in a car. I guess people think, we're different...being with a horse." "They are the best tactic against crowds...people are fearful...they respect the horse." - Officer Luis Camacho Since the winter of 2013, I have been conducting an ethnography with the Newark Mounted Police Unit. Traversing multiple settings and utilizing different research approaches, I have observed the officers in the enormous green warehouse-turned-stable, photographed them on the streets of Newark, conducted formal interviews, as well as participated in officer training riding lessons. Gathering field notes, transcripts of interviews, photographs and videos, in this project my exploration wends two paths, surveyed first separately—then entwined. The first focuses on the rhetoric of the police officers, how their narratives construct the horse. And further, how the

horse as symbol, functions fluidly—transmuted by the context in which the officer is speaking. Officers consider the horse “connective” and “calming”, and yet, at other times as sources of “fear” and “respect”. The second path follows the living horses. Employing ethology, and my personal experience working with horses, this project seeks to examine the ever-shifting environments the police horses experience. Moreover, it will illuminate the impact upon the horses: their cooperation, resistance, and adaptability. Utilizing semiotics, rhetorical analysis, and animal science—this project explores the unstable function of the symbolic and living horse as part of the Newark Mounted Police Unit.

*Daniel Vandersommers.*

### **Runaway Wolves, Rabid Dogs: Animal Metonymy in Progressive America**

This paper will tell the story of how a runaway wolf and a rabid dog both wreaked havoc in the nation’s capital on an autumn day in 1902. The mania sparked by the episode will shed light upon the fears that turn-of-the-century Americans held toward wild animals. Although zoological parks, for some, symbolized the domination of Nature and the subjugation of wild natures, in reality, zoological parks only held wildness at bay. Occasionally, and possibly inevitably, this wildness broke free of captivity as animals acted out, attacked, escaped, and ran away. Zoo animals meant many different things to many different people. All zoo animals lived multiple symbolic lives simultaneously. However, when they ran away and acted out, the lives of animals, literal and rhetorical, were pushed to the brink. When zoo animals ran away, they often confronted injury or death, yet at the same time, their rhetorical power exploded as zoo directors, zoogoers, journalists, and citizens harnessed the agency of animals for many different purposes. Runaway animals revealed two important lessons. First, zoo animals possessed agency. They ran away all the time. Second, urban publics took zoo animals, runaway or not, seriously. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Americans invested animals with many, fluid meanings, yet no matter how metonymic animals were bounded, they always escaped.

*Ned Weidner.*

### **“Trash” Communities of the LA River: An Interspecies History of Los Angeles**

Human perceptions of animals are dependent upon time and place. As such, understandings of animals can take on a particularly local tenor. With its maddening jigsaw of freeways, snow-capped mountain backdrop, cookie cutter suburbs, sunny beaches, and cemented waterways, most histories of Los Angeles whether presenting a dystopic or utopic narrative, focus on this complicated space from an anthropocentric perspective. This history of Los Angeles interjects nonhuman animals as actors in the development of the city by playing a role in urban politics as well as race and class relations. Animals that occupy this complicated space have played a number of roles in the development of the region. Because of the diversity of roles animals play in Los Angeles, Angelenos perceptions of animals are bound not only in time and place but race and class. This paper gives readers a glimpse into the fluid perceptions of hogs, mules, and carp in Los Angeles by focusing on spaces (communities) along the Los Angeles and Santa Ana river systems where humans live(d) alongside these animals. These communities served as a marker for the transformation of Los Angeles from organic to modern city. They also served as a place where race, class, and species politics played out and continue to be rehearsed. Through historical narrative this project explores the transformation of these human-animal communities from bucolic spaces to “trash” communities and offers speculation on the future of said communities.

#### Session 2D

### **Affective Flows and Environmental Bodies**

Chair: [\*Shilyh Warren\*](#)

This panel forges timely connections between human, technological, and celestial bodies, focusing on the flows of meaning and feeling that characterize their crucial interdependence and delicate coexistence. Centering our analyses on the shifting material and metaphoric appearances of nature, we highlight diverse media engagements at the nexus of technology, gender, capital, and culture. From 19th century photographs of a lush, wild Brazil in illustrated newspapers to 21st century discourse on clouds of information, “nature” consistently marks a distant realm of desirability and danger. Crucial to the immaterial circulation of nature, however, is the invisibility of its imminent demise, whether by colonial expansion projects, corporate chemical pollution, or technological hegemony. In these papers, flow and fluidity characterize both a lack of possible stasis and fixity, such as in the desire to fix the otherness of a foreign landscape, as well as a

irrefutable force, such as the melting Arctic ice caps, which unwittingly release decades of accumulated chemical pollution into the rising seas. If technology is both part of nature and a threat to nature, how can art, technology, and media offer a new paradigm for the future? How can we think the affective binds and traps of discourses that appeal to our sense of the natural at the same time as we keep an eye on the material and economic threats to the environment?

*Jennifer Rhee.*

### **A Return to Nature: Clouds, Computing Metaphors, and Ecological Materiality**

This paper will examine the metaphor of the cloud in cloud computing technologies. I will suggest that the cloud metaphor evokes an ethereal immateriality that belies the material technological processes that sustain cloud computing and storage. Further, I will propose that the metaphor's appeal to the natural obscures cloud computing's not insignificant energy and environmental costs. Drawing on scholarship in media studies, science and technology studies, and ecocriticism, I will examine the technological materialities that undergird cloud computing, including the large server farms that require massive amounts of power and extensive cooling systems. I will also complicate the cloud metaphor by turning to the mid-twentieth century, when a very different kind of cloud – the nuclear mushroom cloud – became an iconic image of massive harm, environmental catastrophe, and fears about the power and scale of technology. By bringing this recent history of the cloud into conversation with the technological materialities of cloud computing, my paper will seek to complicate the work that the cloud metaphor, in its ostensible return to nature, performs in cloud computing.

*Shilyh Warren.*

### **Flows of Crisis and Inspiration in Environmental Documentaries**

As Paula Willoquet-Maricondi explains, ecocinemas share a commitment to environmental concerns writ large, from environmental justice, to nature, and nonhuman species; and they span cinematic modes from documentary and fictional shorts and features, to experimental films and videos. Ecocinemas tend to raise awareness, inspire action, and impart knowledge about the troubled ecosystems we inhabit; they also offer new modes of perception and feeling.



However, environmental discourse and ecocinemas often resort to the construction of a crisis to motivate ecologically sane thinking and behavior toward a vulnerable planet. My concern is that the production of social and political crises often colludes with neoliberal imperatives contrary to the goals of environmental activists. Taking Roz Mortimer's *Invisible* (2006) as its primary example, this paper draws attention to films about the human cost of chemical pollution, particularly on women and children. Mortimer's film consolidates an awareness of the insipid effects of chemical pollution through audiovisual metaphor, evidence, and interviews, deploying and yet challenging ethnographic and scientific discourses at the heart of the documentary tradition. I explore the ways the film both alarms and enchants, offering an affective mode of spectatorship that aggregates connective possibilities between ethical thinking and ethical behavior.

*Beatriz Balanta.*

### **Seascapes and the Transformation of Rio de Janeiro into Modern Paradise**

Oceans have been intrinsic to the construction of national identities yet the representation of waterscapes remains marginal to art historical accounts of nationalism. In this paper, I analyze a group of photographs of the port-city of Rio de Janeiro that circulated in material supports such as newspapers and illustrated publications and as art objects in World's Fairs. I argue that in the mid-19th century the Brazilian monarchical state used these photographs as part of a specular campaign designed to legitimate imperial authority at home and to refurbish the symbolic status of Brazil abroad. In my interpretation, visual compositions of Rio de Janeiro that highlighted the sea, Guanabara Bay, the Harbor, and sailboats served to cleanse the country's maligned reputation as a jungle populated by savages and provided a visual lexicon that could obscure the plantation. In these visual allegories, Rio de Janeiro—anchored at the edge of sea—becomes an amenable seascape brimming with a trimmed and controlled nature and saturated by the signs of modernity: stone buildings and merchant ships. The ocean becomes the stage for an invigorated imperial nation-state.

Session 2E

### **Science Fiction I: Subjectivity**

*Kazutaka Sugiyama.*

**To Whom Language Belongs?: Heidegger's language and disjointed communication in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go***

In this paper, I examine Heidegger's notion of language and read Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as a refutation of Heidegger. In so doing, I focus on two distinct characteristics of Heidegger's notion of language: the proper use of language as a means to manifest the truth of being and the improper use of language as a means of communication. I argue that Heidegger fails to understand that communication is a means to manifest the truth of language as a technology that does not belong to humans. To make this case, I turn to Ishiguro's novel, which illustrates a dystopian future in which clones are systematically created as reserve organs for "real humans." Narrated by one of clones, Kathy H, many tend to read the novel as a critique of Agambenian biopolitics because of the fact that clones remain submissive to the inhuman system throughout the text. However, looking at the constant disjointed communications between human characters and clones, as well as that between clones and the reader, succinctly articulated as the concept of "being told but not told" in the novel, shows that each of them uses language as a means to express their own world for themselves. Illustrating the disjointedness as the nature of communication, Ishiguro echoes the posthumanist model of language advocated by scholars like Cary Wolfe, Bruce Clarke, and Niklas Luhmann and depicts language as an independent medium which, as opposed to Heideggerian notion of language, does not belong to humans.

*Janet Wirth-Cauchon.*

**The Ontological Politics of Affect: From Empathy to Event in Ursula Le Guin's "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow"**

This paper considers the "ontological politics" of what Annemarie Mol calls "the body multiple," which is concerned the enactment of objects as events, performances enlisting human and nonhuman materialities. Drawing on the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead as well as the work of Jane Bennett, Timothy Morton, and Mol, I read Ursula Le Guin's science fiction story, "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow," as an occasion for examining the potential of a materialism that attends to the liveliness and agency of nonhuman objects of

many kinds— affect, technologies, and sentient plants. In the story, affect is a dynamic force, resonating through its human protagonists, their technical instruments, and the plant life form they encounter on a distant planet, that appears to be sentient and that seethes with the fear that it feeds on from the human. Le Guin’s story stages encounters with alien others, both human and nonhuman, as events, with affect as a force that reflexively constructs the minds that feel it. While Le Guin proposes empathy as a resolution of the estrangement of human and world/nature, I will examine the potential of Whitehead’s ontology, and specifically the concepts of prehension and concrecence, to consider nature as created through perceptive events and encounters.

*Adam Haley.*

### **The Futures of Work and Self: Fluid Humanity and Laboring Identities in Contemporary Science Fiction**

In a historical moment that responds to economic crisis and widespread un- and underemployment by normalizing the imperative for job-seekers to be all things to all people, the capacity to move fluidly between and across identity categories becomes legible primarily as another vector of exploitation. As communication technologies make “work/life balance” seem a naïve and ahistorical fantasy— enabling workers to labor from home, vacation, transit, or other ostensibly non-work environments and thereby making inevitable the expectation thereof—the imagined relationship between labor and self is recalibrated for maximum efficiency. These technological regimes, mediated and propagated by capital, re-tether work and self not by facilitating a personal investment in work on the part of workers with intrinsic reason to care about that work, but by collapsing the boundaries between spaces of work and non-work life, and thereby the boundaries between working and non-working selves. Recent science fiction, I argue, articulates the years in the immediate wake of the 2008 financial crisis and its attendant economic catastrophes as a pivotal moment in this particular history. From the 2009 American television series *Dollhouse*, in which a company hires out “blank slate” human beings temporarily imprinted with specific identities and skill sets for short-term engagements with clients, to the 2013 Canadian show *Orphan Black*, in which a set of human clones become aware of what they are and of the corporate-technological networks in which they are bound up, science-fictional discourse diagnoses the instrumentalizing of fluid

humanity by technocapitalist regimes of just-in-time, on-demand, perma-temp labor.

Session 2F

Session 2G

## **Fluidity in American Literature**

*Emily Waples.*

### **“The fluid which we breathe”: An Ecocritical Consideration of the American Gothic**

From Lawrence Buell’s concept of “toxic discourse” to Rob Nixon’s “slow violence” and Stacy Alaimo’s “trans-corporeality,” ecocritical discourses exploit the fluidity of boundaries between bodies and the environments they inhabit. While critical attentiveness to the body’s inextricable, and often precarious, situatedness in its environment may seem like a hallmark of late modernity—in an era after Chernobyl, Bhopal, and Silent Spring—contemporary ecocriticism, as this paper aims to show, in fact reanimates many of the older concerns articulated by humoral theories of embodiment. In particular, the ecocritical consideration of the incorporation of polluted air harks back to early modern miasma theory, which postulated the presence of pestilential agents in the atmosphere. This paper considers what I call the “miasmatic imaginary” of the American Gothic as instantiated by Charles Brockden Brown in his 1799 plague novel *Arthur Mervyn*. Drawing from contemporary medical theories of physicians like Benjamin Rush, Brown engages with atmospheric disease etiology as a way to expose the ways in which bodies may be shaped and reconstituted by the imposition of “air”—and, as defined in Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary*, “air” may signify “[t]he fluid which we breathe” as well as “utterance abroad; publication; publicity.” Taking into account these dual meanings of antebellum “air”—as a biological and a print medium—this paper accordingly considers the way miasma theory and the American Gothic novel, read in conversation, can theorize the related practices of reading bodies and reading texts.

*Wael Salam.*

### **“Things, things unmentionable”: Objects and Waste Matter in William C. Williams’ Poetry**

Objects are always present in literary works, not as dead matters but as vital things endowed with force, vitality and vibrancy; they are not inert, but actants glazing with energy and life. Literary critics have recently regarded these objects as active and agential in literary works (Bannett 2011; Latour 2004; Brown 2001). The advent of “Thing Theory,” which is derived from Heideggerian tradition, provides a fresh and up-to-date analysis to the objects and things scattered here and there in literary works. This paper investigates the full presence of these objects, and how they speak despite their muteness, dictate morality despite their amorality, animate humans despite their inanimation (Burno Latour 2004). By examining William Carlos Williams’ objects and things, this paper underlines the hidden power of, say, “The Red Wheelbarrow,” “The Yellow Chimney,” or “The Attic which I Desire.” The question that is worth asking is: How do these objects affect Williams and readers simultaneously? With reference to “Thing Theory” promoted by Bill Brown and the power of the assemblage proposed by Burno Latour, does Williams’ poetry teem with vital matters and things that are agential and energetic enforcing their laws on readers? There is a potential power and a force residing in things; this power has the capacity to affect, change and guide humans in a certain direction.

*Kristopher Mecholsky.*

### **"Worse Than Any Enemy": Conscription, Mutiny, and Character Fluidity Across Adaptations of *Billy Budd***

I have argued in other essays that the expressions of a seemingly invariant narrative in different media (i.e. adaptations) tangle with each other in the minds of the audience to form a dynamic, open system of great complexity. Thus, in interpretation, adaptations of a narrative act like interdependent particles in a dynamic and open fluid system, such as a trickling of sand on a sandpile. As such, the accumulation of adaptations can lead to sudden, catastrophic re-evaluations of the conception of a narrative. Indeed, dissimilar to linear systems, even small fluctuations and disturbances in such systems of high dimensionality can lead to massive reformations of the system, while large disturbances might be re-absorbed. In this talk, I discuss how the logic and demands of media and genre significantly influence adaptations, and I illustrate how slight discursive "noise" in a source narrative can evolve into a critique through later adaptations. The

"discursive noise" created by certain nineteenth-century historical events, as well as the constraints and freedoms generated by narrative shifts via adaptation, illustrate how the central concerns of *Billy Budd* adaptations are the problem of Claggart and Vere's motivations and relationship to each other. What was once background information to the novel emerges with substantial interpretive importance due to necessary demands of medium and genre. The narrative noise focuses the adaptations on a critique of authority, emphasizing and strengthening Melville's understated subversion of his own narrator, who attempts to exonerate Vere and turn Billy and Claggart into moral caricatures.

Session 2H

### **Altered States**

Chair: [\*Erin Siodmak\*](#); [\*Benjamin Haber\*](#); [\*R. Joshua Scannell\*](#)

An altered state may be physiological, administrative and political, affective, or datalogical. We desire to be altered, to alter, and also already exist in a state of "altering". If we imagine an altered state as relational rather than absolute, nearly anything can be understood as altered relative to an imagined norm or baseline. It becomes a question of standard deviations from a bulging bell curve center inhabited by no one. Affective heightenings and states of divergence are in many ways the opposite of a generalized malaise at the end of days on the brink of apocalypse. We are always in altering states, such as that often used to describe the Millennial generation. They are both over-excited and easily distracted but at the time numb, desensitized and devoid of real experience. In this panel we rethinking subjectivity in relation to materialism through a framework of performativity, datafication, and hallucination. A key consideration is the processes through which states of being are altered materially and immaterially. How might we alter our understandings of subjectivity to encompass new experiences produced through neoliberalism, surveillance and incarceration, or performance art? Threaded throughout the papers of this panel is a concern with materiality and its boundaries via data, affect, space, and bodies.

[\*R. Joshua Scannell\*](#).

### **Carceral Life Itself: Datafication and the Incarceration of Liveliness**

Developments in the technical capacities to accrue and store massive amounts of data, and shifts in programming logics and aims, have produced a generalized

datafication of sociality. Daily life has transmuted into a ground that solicits the development and distribution of digitized data ecologies and “quantified selves”. Although much thought has been given to our interaction with emergent logics of digitized liveliness, the work is normally framed through a logic of the body's encounter with the digital. This paper contends that, rather than an encounter, the “digitization of everything” rests on an onto-epistemological shift in our relation with the body, in which informatics enacts a digital mysticism - a radical reformulation of the relationship between the corporeal and the virtual. This reformulation in which embodiment sublimates into capacities to be maximized, manifests within a post-biopolitical regime of governance. On the one hand, capital proliferates the quantification of capacities and potentials, and bends towards the derivative and the “post-economic” as the privileged site of producing value. On the other, carceral institutions proliferate the quantification of capacities and potentials, and bend towards the massive policing of liveliness. Rather than see these trends of bodily dematerialization and profligate incarceration as simply at odds with one another, or as inevitable contradictions of capitalist political economy, this paper contends that technics and fantasies of a datalogical turn necessitate this dual move in which dividuated selves are an engine both of near-infinite possible value and near-infinite possible detention.

*[Benjamin Haber](#)*.

### **The Hallucinogenic Turn**

The drive to ingest hallucinogenic drugs speaks to the pleasure of losing yourself through sensory overload, dissociation and reframed experiences of time and space. The turn to affect too speaks to the pleasure of critically undoing the dominance of the cognitive rational actor in social theory, but as works like Steve Goodman's *Sonic Warfare* attest, affect can be a bad trip, creating new ground for state control and capture by capital. While the promise of affect theory is that it might provide an epistemology for understanding modes of sociality classically ignored by the social sciences, in what ways do the affective turns actually facilitate the bringing of the indeterminate to calculation? Especially in light of recent moves towards academic “making” in an increasingly “object-oriented” culture, how can critical scholars resist neoliberal incorporation and instead play to make pleasures and ruptures more affectively sticky? This paper looks to explore resonances between the desires mobilized through taking psychotropic drugs and the interventions of emergent forms of technical and economic logics.



In particular I look to the spaces opened up through the modulations of the digital - the making and unmaking of bodies through data. While the feedback loops of affective experience and affective data can be comforting or dissociating or both, it is often uncanny, decentering cognition from the body and producing a sense of openness to the environment. This paper ends then with an attempt at a new politics for our affectively and sensually hallucinogenic times.

*Erin Siodmak.*

### **Altering Streets and States in Detroit**

This paper is part of a larger project on performance and installation art, and changing geographies and socialities, in New York, New Orleans, and Detroit. The focus of this presentation is The Heidelberg Project (1986-present) in Detroit, an almost thirty-year-old, ongoing neighborhood installation by artist Tyree Guyton. Installation, similarly to performance (particularly when participatory), rearranges spatial and affective relationships in order to elicit and produce new forms of sociality that may be at times indicative of or collusive with contemporaneous tendencies of capital or governance. For example, in a political Catch-22, autonomy from existing political and economic structures, something socially-engaged and participatory art often aspires to, is necessary but also exactly what neoliberal anti-state, self-reliant ideologies desire. Additionally, Detroit itself is in flux politically, economically, and, possibly, in its very boundaries and spatial definition. What is it to live in an altered state of time and place, via media discourses of Detroit's auto-industry history, the city's "failure", and its "post-apocalyptic" (presumed) abandonment? What type of affective changes result from altered political states and spatial or geographic shifts and how so? Affective potentiality changes us, but an event or space that allows for a realization of affective becoming or imminence alters collective states as well. What is altered in such artistic and political encounters? From what original or beginning do we imagine ourselves to be altered? This presentation examines some of the "back then" from which an spatially produced "we" has become removed.

Session 3 - Thurs 3:45 pm - 5:15 pm

Session 3A

## Fluid Recordings, Recording Fluids

Merry Jett.

### **Electrifying Injustice: Electroconvulsive Therapy as a Trope in American Film**

In 1938, Cerletti and Bini, two Italian physicians, popularized electroconvulsive therapy in the mental health community. These two physicians believed that the flow of 110 volts administered to a patient for half a second could treat depression and schizophrenia. Patients reported side effects such as headaches and memory disturbances, but by the end of the treatments the majority of patients reported that the treatments helped them to feel whole again. ECT has the potential to treat mental illness, but the public vilifies it because of how American film depicts the treatment. Beginning with *The Snake Pit* (1948), fear flowed into spectators until they were saturated with the concept that ECT was a signifier for dehumanizing treatment. Film scholars argue that the iconic ECT scene in *The Snake Pit* (1948) was the first time filmmakers used ECT to represent the inhumane conditions of mental institutions. While this reading is valid, it is shortsighted and overlooks the positive message of the film. *The Snake Pit* is not the beginning of a trend to use ECT to represent injustice, but rather the end of an era of trust in doctors and the state. This paper argues that the film *Shock Corridor* (1963) better illustrates the fluid transmission of fear from the screen to the spectator and is a more logical starting point for the construction of ECT as a trope for injustice.

Amy Rust.

### **"Going the Distance": Steadicam's Ecological Aesthetic**

This talk argues for Steadicam as an ecological aesthetic by exploring contradictions that animate its development amid neoliberalism and the modern environmental movement. Supplying a mobile aesthetic that navigates intimate spaces and "participatory" experiences, Steadicam obfuscates traces of the camera operator's own mobility, navigation, and participation through its uncanny fluidity. In this regard, the device opposes spheres of production and reception, human and non-human, even as it entangles these registers. It secures dominant relationships between living and non-living entities while at the same time potentially re-articulating their arrangement. Salient in this context is

Steadicam's inaugural appearance in the 1976 adaptation of Woody Guthrie's autobiography, a film about the land, its devastation, and the working-class people who suffer by and sustain it. Indeed, with its simultaneous integration and separation of operator, apparatus, and environment, Steadicam expresses Guthrie's irreconcilably complex geographic and economic fluidity as well as some of the more troubling environmental and economic schisms of the late 1970s. Among these are divides between middle-class efforts to preserve natural spaces and typically working-class concerns for public health in urban milieus. I suggest, in fact, that Steadicam's use in geographically class-conscious films such as *Rocky* and *Marathon Man* expresses an ecological aesthetic that irreducibly joins human and non-human, capitalism and activism, middle and working class.

*Peter Falanga.*

### **Flow and Technics: The Sacralization of Life in Cinema**

In this paper I examine flow as a cinematic affect in three contemporary films. *Russian Ark* (2002), *Irreversible* (2002), and *Children of Men* (2006) convey differing philosophies of fluid and flow through their use of the extreme long shot. Instead of cutting time with a knife or scissors as might the typical filmmaker, Alexander Sokurov, Gaspar No  , and Alfonso Cuar  n unveil how the extreme long shot, as made possible by digital cameras, can foster newer and more holistic experiences of time, movement, and space. Many film scholars such as David Bordwell and Steven Shaviro have recently focused on the shift from classical/logical to "post cinematic"/discontinuous editing in Hollywood films, arguing that this new, intensified process of editing and its ensuing dislocation of time and space are a symptom of how digital technologies have increasingly affected social and cultural domains. If discontinuity editing reflects a societal technophilia, then the extreme long shot, I argue, reflects the sacralization of organic life. In these films, the extreme long shot functions to preserve notions of mysticism, transcendence, and otherworldly magic. As a synthetic rather than analytic tool, the extreme long shot compromises judgment and evokes a feeling of ecstasy in the disembodied subject. This fluid filmmaking resists Hollywood's visceral, cinema-as-machine vision and, instead, cultivates a mode of looking that posits the human as divine medium.

Michael Miller.

**Avant-Garde Autobiography, or Stan Brakhage's Autopsy: *The Act of Seeing With one's own eyes***

In the early 1970s, Stan Brakhage made a trilogy of "document" films in Pittsburgh in order to confront his lifelong fears. Hailed by critics as a moment of aesthetic rupture in Brakhage's oeuvre, these films represented for them a departure from his earlier, purely subjective style of filmmaking toward "the external, phenomenal universe...in which he could more effectively bridge the experiential space between the material world and the perceiving self of the artist" (Kase). *The Act of Seeing with one's own eyes*, third in the trilogy, documents a coroner at work examining, slicing, and peeling away the flesh of 4 bodies. Its documentary form assumes a discursive claim to some kind of truth, or, as Testa suggests, "the coroner is a stand-in for Brakhage ...[as] an ideal stand-in for everyone... a collective witness to death." Upholding earlier critics' arguments, we fail to acknowledge that the film's documentary form is always autobiographical and reflexive. There is an inherent tension between the film's form, subject, and layers of observation. While the earlier films experimented with the creative violence the artist inflicted upon the medium, *The Act of Seeing* concerns itself with witnessing the act and effects of another kind of metonymic violence inflicted on corpses acting as metaphors for the artist's corpus of work. *The Act of Seeing* is a reflexive autobiographical document that does not, as critics have argued, witness death for us all, but instead provides a deeply personal account of the filmmaker seeing himself.

Soyo Lee.

**A Dying Art: Aesthetics of Fluid-preserved Human Anatomical Specimens at the Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia**

*A dying art* is a research-based art project completed in 2013. The work involves artistic intervention and analysis on the fluid-preserved, historical human anatomical specimens at the Mütter Museum, Philadelphia. As a fine artist without formal training in natural history conservation, I restored and/or re-created 33 fluid-preserved specimens in six weeks. Artifacts from *A dying art* were presented as both natural history museum displays and fine arts

exhibitions. The project was also incorporated into my PhD dissertation at the Arts Department, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 2013. *A dying art* deals with the theme “fluid” as follows: 1) In this project, ‘fluid-preserved specimen’ is defined as anatomical material that is dissected, chemically treated and stored in a liquid preservative for the purpose of visual study and presentation. Even if the bodily fluid is replaced with a sterile and stable fixative, the biological material ends up developing into a new vivarium which needs constant artificial intervention. 2) The tradition of preserving human body parts have mostly been dissociated with contemporary clinical medicine. Instead, the physical, social and ethical status of preserved bodies is continuously redefined according to changing social and cultural norms towards public display of human body parts. 3) The Mütter Museum started as an institution which gathered orphaned medical artifacts for circulation as public resource. Therefore, the anatomical collections at the Mütter Museum are handled, altered, and recontextualized not only by professionals in related fields, but also by museum visitors, interns and students, in lieu of meticulous historical solidification.

*Christy Tidwell.*

### **“Dead But Not Gone”: Taxidermy, Horror, and Animacy**

In *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, Rachel Poliquin describes taxidermy as “turbulent, category-shattering, awe-inspiring, intoxicating.” Samuel J. M. M. Alberti says taxidermy mounts “are intended to be ‘resurrections’, as close to life as possible (although to many they are far more redolent of death...)” Taxidermy is a seemingly static form that is nonetheless fluid, calling into question ordinarily distinct categories. Is taxidermy dead or alive? Art or nature? Animal or object? Most academic work on taxidermy thus far has focused on museum taxidermy and its role in our understanding of the natural world, but taxidermy also has a recurring place in horror film. This connection raises further questions: Why does taxidermy recur in horror film? What is its role in a genre that is, according to Jason Colavito, devoted to “blurring the lines between fact and fiction and challenging our knowledge and confidence in what is real”? What does its presence in this particular genre say about animal life in contemporary culture? The monstrosity that is part of both taxidermy and horror film threatens familiar ways of seeing the world and requires viewers to remain open to possibilities beyond and between life and death, art and nature, animal and object – even subject and object. This

openness, while frightening, presents a space for questioning the animacy hierarchies at play in these relationships (cf. Mel Y. Chen's *Animacies*) and for developing a posthuman ethic that is potentially more complex and productive.

### Session 3C

#### **Rhetorical Fluids: Sweat, Spit, and Shit**

Chair: [Steven LeMieux](#)

Human bodies are leaky objects. Any belief in a whole, pure, sovereign body has to be held up against our utterly porous skin. Humanism imagines a solid frame, a steady body, a mind and set of muscles in control of our excretions; wrapped in a prosthetic, technologic and imagined exoskeleton we work to contain a self that we project and solidify through speech. How does our trust in and work to maintain a solid body hold up against the cascade of excretions just beyond our control? It might go without saying that rhetoric is deeply connected to what comes out of people's mouths. That is, rhetorical theory has historically cultivated ways of inventing and stylizing speech. This panel explores the elements that emerge from and in some of the body's other ends and orifices, questioning what it might mean to think about these fluid elements--specifically sweat, spit, and shit--as rhetorical. How do these elements, which so often defy human attempts to arrange and present themselves as unified, trouble the limits of rhetoric, rhetorical agency, and the subject of rhetoric? What might we make of their traditional exclusion--whether implicit or explicit--from the cultured, controlled realms of rhetoric?

[Kendall Gerdes](#).

#### **Fluid Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Sweat**

Sweat signifies a certain masculinity, the capacity or power to do work, in such idioms as "sweating bullets," "by the sweat of one's brow," even in "no sweat!" But sweat can also signify something emotional and feminized, as in "blood, sweat, and tears," or "a cold sweat." Sweating is a passive excretion: we can't summon it and we can't stop it. Sweating reminds us that the body has an agenda of its own. This project explores the trope of sweat in Beatriz Preciado's *Testo Junkie*. One part theory of the gendering power of drugs and pornography, one part narrative of Preciado's autoexperimentation with testosterone, *Testo Junkie* sweats out the problem of the subject of feminism. What is the future of a

feminism no longer stabilized by the category "woman"? Preciado provokes this line of inquiry by scrambling the coordinates of her own gendered identities, writing as a woman, a lesbian, a transgender person, a subject doping herself with testosterone gel. Testosterone leaves the body through sweat. This paper argues that sweat is the site of a pore/aporia, an opening of the body and the subject through perspiration. The scent of testosterone-laced sweat pours off Preciado's text, and this paper follows it like a moth, tracking the stink of masculinity and a certain chauvinism that shades Preciado's post-feminism. But the passivity of sweating undercuts the rhetoric of masculinism. Tracing this passivity exposes a radical femininity flowing underneath the hard surface of masculinity, eroding the solidity of the rhetorical subject.

*Steven LeMieux.*

### **Spit Take**

Saliva is a salve that we make ourselves, that we touch ourselves with, that we taste through and speak through and digest with. We speak through a mouth full of spit, the saliva--involuntarily produced through Pavlovian response--is always a step ahead. It is produced prior to our conscious desire, it begins to digest food prior to our tasting, and it becomes spit prior to expectoration. We name it anticipating our distaste and it becomes the medium for an action, a message to others. But before that it addresses us; through it we feel our mouths, and our body becomes present. In its absence and presence we feel our speech. In this project I explore how spit occupies our bodies across multiple dimensions; it acts as a connective substance between our body and others', between the body and itself, between the body and speech. It also straddles the border between conscious and unconscious action. We might spit it or swallow, but its presence, as its absence makes even more manifest, isn't our decision. And when it interrupts our speech it acts as the dash in the anacoluthon. It forces a break in our discourse that we're forced to contend with, diverting our attention away from what and how we say to our embodied rhetorical situation.

*Eric Detweiler.*

### **The (Other) Ends of Rhetoric**

We end at the other end: specifically, rhetoric's deep connections with what emerges from the human digestive tract's tail end. Here we might consider a historical trajectory running from the fart and poop jokes in



Aristophanes' *Clouds*--largely directed at a sophistic Socrates and his pupils--to such recent work as James Fredal's 2011 *College English* article "Rhetoric and Bullshit." And yet, even in these cases, what comes out of the bottom is often positioned as a metaphor for what comes out of the mouth: that is, "shit" still means "speech." In this paper, the speaker considers what one might learn by considering rhetoric in relation to poop qua poop. Drawing on the psychoanalytic tradition that has already informed much of contemporary rhetorical theory, and particularly on Avital Ronell's "The *Sujet Suppositaire*," the speaker asks how mucking around with rhetoric to/at other ends--in neither a purely metaphorical nor a primarily disdainful manner--can butt up against traditional conceptions of rhetorical agency and rhetoric itself, and open up humbling ways of thinking about how a rhetor's power is (de)composed.

#### Session 3D

### **Written in Water: Fluid Exchange Between Poetry, Prose, and Science**

*Francis X. Altomare.*

#### **The Hitheringandthithering Waters of Thought: Fluid Dynamics, Complex Systems Theory, and the Cognitive Poetics of *Finnegans Wake***

Fluidity occupies an important conceptual niche in both literary studies and cognitive science. Fluidity functions as a trope in every world literature, genre, and epoch—but fluidity is particularly prominent in modernist texts that attempt to represent mental processes. In cognitive science, fluid dynamics underpin sophisticated models of the mind~brain. These two domains are perhaps bridged most radically by James Joyce, who in *Finnegans Wake* co-opts fluidity to re-situate his epic as a project at once aesthetic and epistemological. Critics have recognized various manifestations of fluidity throughout the *Wake*, both formally and thematically; however, except for the liquid characteristics of stream-of-consciousness, they have largely ignored the connection between Joyce's use of fluidity and the broader aim of his project to depict consciousness. My paper draws upon contemporary research in dynamical systems theory to examining how Joyce's use of fluidity parallels (and perhaps prefigures) similar findings in complex systems research and cognitive linguistics. Following work by Thomas Jackson Rice on complexity in Joyce, I trace the patterns in the *Wake* as

isomorphic with nonlinear dynamics—and by doing so, clarify the connections between these fluid patterns and theories of cognition gaining momentum in the cognitive-scientific community. Furthermore, I draw connections between complex systems models and a Lakoffian manifold of the conceptual metaphor THOUGHT IS FLUID to explore how Joyce plays with and develops this metaphor. I hope to draw dynamical systems theory into closer dialogue with literature and criticism, highlighting how Joyce's work might contribute to a comprehensive cognitive poetics of dynamic complexity.

*Michael Handley.*

### **The Cognitive Sonnet: Blurring the Senses in Romantic Poetry**

The sonnet is firm and rigid, quite unlike the realm of human cognition, which is a fluid, never static, domain. The neuroscience behind cognition and the human brain and the theory involved in literary studies were once considered separate; however, recent scholarship by cognitive theorists such as Alan Richardson and Lisa Zunshine look to dissolve preconceived boundaries and envelope the two areas into each other. Poetry, and more specifically the Romantic-era sonnet, is a key site of this collision between cognitive and literary studies. Although less mainstream than perhaps film or television, poetry “affects us more than do the other arts because...of its distance from concrete imagery and its evocation of complex networks of verbal and conceptual associations” (Richardson 40). Instead of relying on tangible images, poetry insists on utilizing the written word to affect our senses on a more cognitive level. John Keats, in his sonnets “Sonnet to Sleep” and “When I have fears that I may cease to be,” employs the use of multiple senses, to the point of mental ecstasy. Keats achieves such a mental ecstasy through the coalescing of senses in his sonnets. I argue that, through his use of sense coalescing in the sonnet form, Keats creates a dichotomy between the sonnet's rigid poetic form and the sense experience the poem enables in the brain, creating a cognitive event unique to poetry.

*Tyler Easterbrook.*

### **"Image, Translation, Representation: Curious Parallels between Frege and *The Meaning of Meaning*"**

This paper proposes a relationship between 19th-century German mathematician Gottlob Frege and I.A. Richards and C.K. Ogden's book *The Meaning of Meaning*. Despite the significant intersections in their work, these thinkers' ideas

and the intellectual traditions that stemmed from them--logic and analytic philosophy for Frege, literary theory and criticism for Richards and Ogden--are rarely put into conversation. This paper seeks to rectify this gap by examining the similarities between Frege's and Ogden/Richards's use of triangles as representational devices for the interplay between language, reference, and thought. I explicate the oft-forgotten connection between early literary criticism and analytic philosophy and then show how Frege's and Ogden/Richards's triangular schemata engage with puzzles of identity and denotation that cross disciplinary boundaries. I argue in closing that the parallels I outline suggest new connections between literary studies, logic, and analytic philosophy and also pose new questions about the puzzling fluidity of translation and representation.

Session 3E

## **Science Fiction II: Touch**

*Rebekah Sheldon.*

### **Narrative, Database, Epiphany, Detection**

This presentation examines the aesthetics of haptic media and ubiquitous computing through comparative attention to three contemporary transmedia universes: the BBC's *Sherlock*, SyFy's *Alphas*, and the now-cancelled Fox show *Touch*. While much has been written about each show's neuroatypical characters, my work focuses instead on the genre of detection and its play of epistemic propulsion and affective intensity. More specifically, I argue that each of these shows uses the emerging conventions of neuroatypicality in order to make visible and render as story the data streams whose omnipresence cannot be experienced as such by the human sensorium without first becoming meaningful. This difficulty is solved, I contend, through *Sherlock*, *Gary*, and *Jacob*, and the structure of affective impingement they instantiate for us. By the same token, these characters intimate a new form of epistemic mastery and concomitant subjectivization.

*Christina Nadler.*

### **Fragmented Fluidity: Rape and Biopolitics**

While embraced as a theoretical model in a variety of contexts, fluidity appears more difficult to work with as a political strategy. The sovereignty and autonomy

of the political subject are more popular political tactics. When discussing things theoretically, gender for example, fluidity is more embraced. Why this disjuncture between theory and politics? This paper will specifically explore this question through rape—an issue where rigid boundaries become politically more important than embracing fluidity. How might we negotiate the limitations of fluidity? At which point does fluidity become fragmented or politically unviable? Just as water can turn to ice, there is a moment of differentiation where something becomes contained. Though not permanent nor essential, there is an emergence of contained materiality, an individuation or fragmentation out of the fluidity of matter, time and life. Rather than a return to the sovereign subject, this paper will explore containment, fragmentation, individuation and autonomy in a biopolitical context. Biopolitics, in its Foucaultian context, emphasizes the regulation of populations over the discipline of a subject. In my paper, biopolitics is rearticulated and expanded to include all life outside of the subject. Drawing on biopolitics, we can speak of political objectives without predicating them on a political subject. In this way we may still include a discussion of movement, matter, and bodies while simultaneously addressing individuated becomings that do have boundaries that can be violated.

*Ela Przybylo.*

**Sticky Touches: On the Flows of Love in Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood* Trilogy**

This paper examines the interterrestrial relations in Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood* Trilogy (1987-1989) as an alternative model to thinking about love and touch. In the trilogy, Butler, a black lesbian feminist science fiction writer, stages the moment of colonization, post-world apocalypse, in which human beings are disciplined into new kinship systems by the tentacular Oankali culture. At once a commentary on colonial relations, cyborgian realities, and environmental devastation, Butler imagines an alternative system of touch that compromises boundary integrity and subject wholeness. This is a “sticky touch” that alters the surfaces of the skin and the boundaries of the self, centralizing interpersonal flows as the basis of subject-formation. Employing psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger's work on intersubjectivity, including her articulation of “subjectivity-as-encounter” (2006), and Frantz Fanon's (1952, 1961) thoughts on the body under colonial relations, I will unfold the ways in which Butler imagines a sticky touching that (1) expands and alters the contours and textures of the skin, (2)

reimagines kinship while preserving heterosexuality and colonial systems, and (3) is embroiled in embodied and toxic asymmetries, which plague us with the impression of love while disguising undercurrents of colonial and gender-based hatred. Elaborating on the fluid but sticky terrain of subject-making, this paper ponders: what forms of subjectivity does Octavia Butler's touch make possible, and what can it teach us about the flows of love that discipline us, in various ways, into gendered and colonial orders?

[Lina Kuhn](#).

**“Fluid Bodies: Posthuman Identity in Octavia Butler’s *Dawn*”**

Octavia Butler's science fiction novel *Dawn* presents the human species after a nearly apocalyptic war and chronicles how a race of extraterrestrial aliens, the Oankali, save humanity through coerced inter-species procreation. My paper concentrates on the negative reactions of the humans to this forced transition into a posthuman state. The Oankali define their biology through fluidity, as they incorporate genetic material from every new species they encounter. The humans, however, remain inflexible in their emotional identification as human, even when some allow changeability in their bodily structures. Through an exploration of the humans' fear and anger against losing a rigidly-defined identity, and the fluidity that allows the primary human character, Lilith, to survive, I show how Butler's novel uniquely illuminates contemporary anxieties about conforming to externally-enforced notions of humanity. In particular, the Oankali control of bodies echoes current troubling biopolitical realities. My paper addresses how debates surrounding genetic mapping and 'designer babies' rely on a notion of species 'purity,' and lead to complicated questions regarding the impacts of changing human physicality through biotechnology. Butler's novel thus illustrates the ways in which science fiction can be seen as a philosophical resource in understanding concerns about aberration and what it means to be human during a time when scientific advances open up possibilities for shaping identity in previously unimaginable ways.

Session 3F

**CROSS-DISCIPLINARY FLUIDITY: ART-SCIENCE-HUMANITIES  
CURRICULA AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL**

Chair: [Roger Malina](#)

This panel will discuss best practices and the creation of university-level instruction bringing art, science and the humanities together in the university classroom and on line. This panel draws on a three year initiative to compile examples and create a comprehensive resource for cross-disciplinary curricula: Curriculum Development in the Arts, Sciences and Humanities (CDASH), available at <http://www.utdallas.edu/atec/cdash/> . The importance of curriculum development as a tool for enabling new forms of collaboration between science, engineering, arts and design was highlighted in the NSF funded Network for Science, Engineering, Art and Design (SEAD) report (<http://seadnetwork.wordpress.com/white-papers-report/>) which also motivated this work. In the 21st century, investigators are finding that there are often tools, information, resources and even points of view from other disciplines that can elucidate and even answer the problem they are studying. A necessary step in training the scholars and scientists for the future is to encourage the flow of information across the boundaries of traditional disciplines. What is the state of art-science-humanities curriculum that encourages this kind of inquiry? What kinds of cross-disciplinary courses should be proposed/created/designed? What paradigms and models can be used to create such courses? What resources can be drawn upon to create exciting and effective courses? This panel will present successful and sustainable examples of art-science-humanities coursework as well as discuss the creation of courses and programs in new contexts.

*[Kathryn Evans](#); [Roger Malina](#).*

### **CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICES IN ART-SCIENCE-HUMANITIES CURRICULUM**

There has been discussion for some time about the value of creativity and innovation and the need for art-science curriculum to foster such activity, but to date there has been no comprehensive resource for those instructors interested in teaching cross-disciplinary courses in the arts-sciences-humanities. The CDASH (Curriculum Development in the Arts, Sciences and Humanities) website at <http://www.utdallas.edu/atec/cdash/> was started in 2012 to analyze the state of such curriculum in institutions of higher learning, at the undergraduate and graduate level both in the United States and abroad. Current analysis yielded that art-science curricula are highly variant and often singular in their inception and situation. There is a need for best practices in this area and a resource for

instructors in order to facilitate and improve such curricula. We suggest that cross-disciplinary curriculum should draw on the work already developed in the well-established field of interdisciplinary studies; address the need for high-level content knowledge in all areas by incorporating either team-teaching or drawing on knowledge experts to act as guest speakers; draw on the work of other instructors by examining syllabi and course content from previous instruction; and use best high-leverage teaching practices. We include three case studies from both the United States and abroad as examples of best-practice curriculum. Future research will include further development of the CDASH website as a resource for art-science-humanities curriculum instructors; create a point of advocacy; and encourage instructors to do meaningful assessment of such curricula in order to document the value of cross-disciplinary education.

*Wendy Silk.*

### **Engaging Learning of Environmental Science via the Arts**

More than ever in human history, global environmental problems inspire us to seek better public access to scientific knowledge and new paradigms for collaboration. This paper will review two programs to enhance science learning via music: the course “Earth Water Science Song” at the University of California at Davis, and a larger networking project to explore incorporating music into biology curricula. The goal is that artists will acquire scientific literacy, while scientists will access art as a means of expression and communication. In the undergraduate course students hear lectures in environmental science; and in a studio setting they work in groups to compose, discuss and perform songs to communicate their understanding of the scientific concepts and natural history. The final exam is a public performance in a local art gallery. Student response to the course has been enthusiastic. Pre- and post-tests showed excellent learning. Furthermore, the students became teachers to the community. Students increased their understanding of scientific and artistic methods and how the two intersect. Students were able to communicate science knowledge and concepts across disciplines. The NSF-sponsored networking project created a consortium involving several educational institutions. Biology and music faculty engaged in dialogue, practice, and reflection to improve the teaching of undergraduate biology through arts-based methods. Faculty members worked across the disciplines of biology and music and across the campuses to develop curriculum, teach and improve Art/Science courses, and evaluate student learning outcomes.



*Meredith Tromble.*

### **Ideas that Overflow: Energy, Emergence, Evolution**

"Ideas that Overflow" discusses general principles of creating art and science courses organized around "big ideas," grounded in examples from a decade of developing curriculum at the San Francisco Art Institute. "Energy," "Emergence," and "Evolution" are examples of courses that address generative concepts with multiple meanings and complex histories. Each concept covers considerable intellectual territory and might be thought of as a "site" of general cultural interest, with streams of artistic and scientific thought flowing through, shaping and reshaping the terrain. Juxtaposing the different images and understandings that artists and scientists bring to a concept, without privileging one of the spheres of knowledge, spurs the development of historical and critical awareness and forwards general cultural literacy. In the talk, material from each of the three courses is used to illustrate a particular aspect of developing such integrated literacy: examples from the "Energy" class focus on conveying research methodologies; examples from the "Emergence" class focus on comparing social structures; and the "Evolution" class material demonstrates thinking with images. The pedagogical challenges discussed include developing meaningful cross-disciplinary comparisons, acknowledging limits to expertise while encouraging curiosity, and articulating varying (and possibly clashing) notions of "rigor." In an art school context, the pedagogical rewards include developing creative fluency, fostering critical thinking, and supporting new career paths for artists in research.

*Robin Kingsburgh.*

### **Opening the Universe: Teaching Astronomy to Art & Design Students at OCAD University**

Showcasing artwork by students at the Ontario College of Art & Design University, "Opening the Universe" will discuss the teaching of science to art and design students, and the value of incorporating artmaking into the teaching of science. In designing science courses for artists, visual and experiential learning in the classroom and in assignments is primary. Astronomy, with its visual splendour and expansive conceptual nature, is a highly evocative science elective for undergraduate art students. Making art is incorporated within each assignment, where creatively rendering a scientific idea facilitates understanding,

and provides an alternate way for an artist to learn about science. The art produced can range from a response to ideas at a visceral and emotional level, to visualizations that effectively integrate text and image to convey scientific meaning. This science/art making practice deepens students' understanding of the topic at hand, as the choice of how to render an idea visually greatly clarifies thought, and encourages abstract and metaphorical thinking. Art created by students has ranged from painting and video, to Haiku and a 24-hour sound installation simultaneously echoing the movement of the Moon and tracing key moments in a personal history. Science, in particular astronomy, thus serves as a springboard for broader social, cultural, or political commentary, and can lead to a greater reflection on the individual's context within, and relationship to, our Universe as a whole.

#### Session 3G

### **Children on the Edge**

Chair: *Julian Gill-Peterson; Marissa Brostoff; Leon Hilton*

This panel examines the centrality of the child-figure and children's bodies to the definition of socially valued life and the securitization of ontological and epistemological coherence across the humanities, literature, and the medical sciences. By foregrounding the entanglement of the child's body and mind with categories of race, gender, disability and reproduction, each of the papers accents the strangeness that the child implants and infects within even the most rigidly fixed biopolitical, capitalist, and cultural orders. If a domesticated degree of fluid mobility and plasticity are desirable in the child's body as a potentiality for mature, governable, future stability, then this panel asks, What happens when the child wanders, without rational explanation, too far from the linear trajectories built by her pedagogical guardians? When difference--neurocognitive, racial, endocrinological, sexual, or technological--inhabits and is inhabited by the child, what (re)productive ends are served or dissolved? Each of the three presentations on this panel uniquely diffract the common question of the will to rationalize and functionalize the child through literature, history, medical science and technology since the mid twentieth century. The implications of the child for critical projects of feminist, transgender, racialized and disability politics emerge from the recognition that at the same time as the child so frequently serves as the unthought ground of logics of governance, normativity, security and

reproduction, the child's leaky ontology tends to overflow any economy of rationality that presents itself as the consolidation of the human.

*Marissa Brostoff.*

### **Escape from the Child World: Patriarchal Antinatalism and Feminist Critique in 1960s America**

This paper argues that 1960s critiques of baby-boom era pronatalism in literature, social theory, and popular culture often reentrenched patriarchal social organization by pitting the political status of women and children against each other and pitting both against masculine subjectivity. These premises, I argue, were upended by radical feminism's insistence that women and children were in fact, as Shulamith Firestone put it, "in the same lousy boat" of compulsory reproductivity anchored by the nuclear family. Despite the obvious stakes for women in challenging the Fifties cult of motherhood, many of its first and most audible detractors were male writers who described it—often with more than a tinge of misogyny—as a threat to masculinity. Film historian Karina Wilson argues that evil-child movies like *Rosemary's Baby* dominated the horror genre because, as sex became increasingly separable from conception, "children...became monstrous aberrations." By the same token, I argue, novelists like John Updike and Richard Yates rendered pregnant women monstrous, telling their reproductive horror stories from the perspective of men fleeing their wives' grotesque bodies. Male writers similarly critiqued the suburban nuclear family, contending, as social theorist Paul Goodman did, that the suburbs functioned as a "child world" governed by women, which infantilized men and stunted boys. This context underscores the importance of Firestone's dual claims, in *The Dialectic of Sex*, that "pregnancy is barbaric" and that "childhood is hell." Women and children, for Firestone, are distinct political classes locked into a biological family structure that renders them not essentially but intersubjectively monstrous. Women's liberation, then, entails children's liberation, and vice versa—and liberation, for each, entails the right to be free of the other.

*Leon Hilton.*

### **Neuro-fugivity: Autism, Racial Childhood, and Cartographies of Survival**

This presentation considers historical and theoretical conjunctions of autism and neurological disability with race and racial formation. The paper reflects on the disappearance and death of Avonte Oquendo, a 14-year-old African-American middle-school student with autism whose escape from Riverview Public School in Queens in October 2013 prompted one of the most extensive and widely publicized urban search efforts in recent memory. If race and racialization are inextricable from the educational, psychiatric, and biomedical matrices of expertise through which autism and other neurological disorders have attained social coherence, I argue we must account for Oquendo’s status as a racialized and disabled subject of a biopower whose capillary reach has, since the 1960s, become increasingly “neuromolecular”—saturating not only populations and bodies, but also brains, nerves, and synapses. This presentation grapples with Oquendo’s disappearance and death by employing two theoretical concepts: the diagram (by way of Gilles Deleuze), and fugitivity (by way of Fred Moten). I use these concepts to draw attention to the role of cartographic modes of activity in the production of both racial and neurocognitive difference. I argue that the various forms of cartographic spatialization generated in the wake of Oquendo’s disappearance were far-reaching; I particularly consider claims that the purported tendency of autistics to “wander” allowed Oquendo to elude the techno-political apparatuses of capture put in place to secure his physical well-being. To pursue the resonances of autistic “wandering” alongside the racial dimensions of neurological disability, the presentation asks whether Oquendo’s disappearance and death can be situated within a deeper archive of black fugitivity.

*Julian Gill-Peterson.*

### **The Invention of the Transgender Child: On The Mechanics of Fluids**

This paper articulates a genealogy of the transgender child by returning to the invention of “gender” through endocrinology and experimental hormone treatment in the mid twentieth century medical sciences and psychiatry. Until the late 1990s, it was difficult to imagine a transgender subject who affirms a gender identity at odds with birth-assigned sex during childhood. And although contemporary puberty suppression therapies and changes to the DSM-V are producing a medicalized transgender child’s body subject to a diagnostic matrix for transition during childhood, its presentist and futuristic orientation neglects the centrality of the child and childhood to endocrinology in general and

transgender medicine and psychiatry in particular since the 1950s. This presentation historicizes the centrality of childhood as the somatic, endocrinological ontogenesis of “core gender identity” in the work of the two central clinics in the United States for Sex Reassignment Surgery and gender psychotherapy in the postwar era. At both the Johns Hopkins Hospital and the UCLA Gender Identity Research Clinic the undecidable overlaps between gender variance, trans/gender identity, and homosexuality were derivatives of a larger redefinition of the human body’s somatic difference and plasticity. It was, however, ultimately not psychological depth models, but the always mysterious promise of hormones to affect, enhance, and modify the gendered body, that enabled the later invention of the transgender child. The allure of such a “mechanics of fluids” (Luce Irigaray’s phrase) continues to structure how the human body and mind are considered actionable fields of rational, yet indeterminate, intervention.

Session 3H

### **Leaky Cities: The Fluid Urban Space**

*Eric Laursen.*

#### **Powering the Soviet City-Machine: Biomechanics and the Fluidity of Human Energy**

In this paper I discuss Soviet efficiency expert and poet Nikolai Gastev and his “folk energetics” or biomechanics. In keeping with the conference theme of “Fluid” I show how Gastev and other early Soviets depicted the Soviet people in terms of streams--of electricity, water, and bio-energy. I then show how the ideal Soviet city was envisioned as a mechanism through which the human “fluid” would flow and in its movement power the city-machine in its movement toward the communist future. In his essay “Electrification and Folk Energetics” (1922) Gastev envisions the machine as a self-replicating entity that gradually spreads to create an electrified planet. Unlike dystopian visions of a mechanized reality, in his matrix-metropolis, the machine does not rule human beings, nor does it take the place of people. Instead people are reengineered to become compatible with the machine-earth on which they will live. Gastev proposes a science that will study the current version of the human-machine, the beta version, with the goal of producing a perfected mechanism of efficiency. Gastev writes about electricity

as a jolt that will “resurrect” Russia, creating a truly New Person who has an “urbanized” psychology. He calls for a “thousand professors” to dedicate their investigative talents to uncovering the secrets of the urbanized psychology of the mechanistic human: “In an age when there are chronoscopes able to measure ten-thousandths of a second, when there are ammeters and voltmeters, we will need to ‘meter’ human energy.”

May Ee Wong.

### **City as Flow: looking at metabolism in urban theory**

This presentation examines the recent emergence of urban discourses that articulate the city as a complex organism. These discourses include physicist Geoff West's scaling law-based theory of urban metabolism, architect Michael Weinstock's *The Architecture of Emergence*, and Michael Batty's *The New Science of Cities*, and urbanist Matthew Gandy's work on urban metabolism in relation to infrastructure and nature. Which describe the workings of the city in terms of complex flows of information and energy. Situating the emergence of these theories with respect to contemporary concerns of climate change and urban sustainability, my presentation attempts to provide a survey of some of the critical possibilities and limits that these theories offer in their employment of the notion of 'metabolism' to the city.

Hyaesin Yoon.

### **Feral Bodies and In/secure Borders**

In this essay, I discuss how (bio)technological intervention into animal bodies refigures the political and ecological boundaries at the intersection of sex, race, nation, and species. In particular, I focus on the ferality of animal bodies – which can be turned into border-securing technology on one hand but potentially overflow those borders and therefore enhance the sense of terror on the other – by examining two distinct sites of research. First, I explore the interlocking between population-control technologies for macaques in Southeast Asia and the increased use of primates from these countries for biowarfare experiments in the post-9/11 United States. The irony of this use of macaques is reflected comically in much-ridiculed news articles about the Taliban training monkeys as combatants. Second, I discuss the South Korean film *Howling* (2012), in which a wolf-dog hybrid appears as a serial killer – trained for the purpose of vengeance against exploiting schoolgirls as prostitutes. I especially examine how the wolf-

dog's feral violence is connected with the question of sex/gender in the film. In conversation with biopolitical discourses on "who counts as a member of the political community" and environmentalist discourses on "what deserves protection and care," I argue that the trans-species biopolitics (re)shapes the boundaries of political and ecological communities. I propose "the feral" as a forceful human-animal figure of the biopolitical subject that addresses the dynamics between capturing power and escaping bodies – disturbing the dichotomies of culture/nature, domestic/wild, and belonging/exclusion in an age of "War on Terror" and "biosecurity."

### Session 3I

## Plants

*João Paulo Guimarães.*

### **Genesis Embodied: Lila Zamborlain's mauve sea-orchids and the Pursuit of a Psychosomatic Post-Humanist Cosmology**

In mauve sea-orchids, Lila Zamborlain sets out to redefine a state that we deem to be highly subjective – that of maddening love – as a force subordinated to nature's creative principle, "the impossible air that expands the globe into existence" (61). When in love, bodies are dragged back to "a state [they] should never have abandoned", becoming "smooth like water" (61). "Spreading [themselves] open completely" (61), these bodies liberate themselves from the shackles of memory and subjectivity and become mere "surface[s] [within] this vain surface that envelops [them]" (87), a state that allows them access to the forms that "have been and [those that] will be" (15). Although Zamborlain's depiction of this process of dissolution that reconnects bodies to a pre-supposed cosmological matrix does not, by itself, bring anything new onto the table (her thoughts on this matter being clearly indebted to Platonism-fuelled Romanticism), I will argue that by pushing to foreground the emotional, somatic and psychological transformations that the process of morphing from the one into the many triggers in individual bodies, the poet succeeds in giving us a glimpse of what a thoroughly post-human (or "supra-human", to use her terms) phenomenology could be and feel like, something that cutting-edge artists that try to grapple with the topic of transgenic bodies – and here I will be addressing the oeuvre of Eduardo Kac in particular – frequently fail to do, their work



lapsing, despite of their attempt to affectively draw us closer to nonhumans, into the dry terrain of the didactic.

*Kelly Jaclynn Andres.*

**Tracing the Radicle: Illustrating a Trajectory of Plants from Place to Space (Extraterrestrial) Andres is an artist and researcher in the Interdisc**

To transplant the plant subject, from site to container, from outside to inside, from earth to space, is a transformative gesture that could, through some effort, produce a traceable trajectory of human to plant encounters throughout different and overlapping epistemes. Through transplantation, numerous systems of representation and interpretation have emerged: Taxonomy, physiology, stylized renditions of plants in art, craftwork and textiles, experiments with vegetal sensitivity, intelligence and electrophysiology, selective breeding, micropropagation, architectures and containments, landscape architecture, bioprospecting, and patented GM organisms. Alongside these acts, events and occurrences are a number of philosophical concepts that have developed through the study of the plant subject in relation to the sciences and philosophy: Natural philosophy as intuitive observation, Goethe's gentle empiricism, truth-to-nature versus mechanic observation, the vegetable genius as an alternative to the Cartesian metaphor of the individuated and self-contained animal (Elaine Miller), nature as fixed/culture as dynamic (Elizabeth Grosz), the commingling of things, holistic vision of reality (Spinoza), rhizomal (Deleuze & Guattari) or networked modalities (Latour, Bennett). My presentation will explore a survey of concepts related to the plant and speculative acts; the nonhuman, and site, as well as the inverse, the way there is often a collective projection onto physical environments suggesting the possibility for different kinds of interactions. The severity and unwelcoming attributes of places such as the extraterrestrial, the wasteland, the sea, or the subterranean serve as a kind of receptor to contemplate aspects of being-human-being-other. The presentation will feature vignettes from four different artistic-research projects; Extraterrestrial Biorepository: Rogue Plant Space Program; In Search of the QRebra Plant: Transgene Escapisms; Micro-Architecture and Mycology: 3D Printing Fungi; and Disco for Darwin: Plant-Human Co-Choreography. Each section introduces artistic acts and draws examples from additional ficto-literary sources.

Reception - Thurs 5:45 pm - 7:30 pm

Reception

Session 4 - Fri 9:00 am - 10:30 am

Session 4A

### **Modern Arts, Science, and Occultism I: Transformist Aesthetics and Neo-Lamarckism**

Chair: [serena keshavjee](#); [Fae Brauer](#)

The importance of alternative evolutionary theories to modern artists in Europe at the fin-de-siècle, particularly those deriving from Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and Ernst Haeckel, as much as those from Charles Darwin, cannot be over-estimated. The fluid lines and "informé" dominant in so much Modernist art, as well as philosophies of "becoming", can be related to the evolutionary concept of *Transformisme*. These relationships will be examined in a series of multi-disciplinary papers by scholars from the histories of art and science. [This session is the first session in a three-panel stream, "Modern Arts, Science, and Occultism," with the third panel being submitted by Linda Henderson.]

[serena keshavjee](#).

#### **Contextualizing Transformism in fin-de-siècle French Art**

Nineteenth century art critics, including Camille Mauclair, Gabriel Mourey, and Elie Faure described paintings that had a formal fluidity, as being influenced by *Transformisme*, the French term for neo-Lamarckian evolutionary theory. In 1907 art historian Elie Faure referenced the "foi transformist" to explain the dematerializing art of Eugène Carrière, and the non-finito of Auguste Rodin. The term fell out of scientific usage along with Lamarckian evolutionary theory, and was also forgotten by art historians. In *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology and Style*, Debora Silverman formulated Transformism as an aesthetic, defining it as "the unity of being and the continuum of matter, which joined human and other forms of being in a single metamorphic flow" (1989). Silverman used Transformism in her discussion of Albert Besnard's *La Vie*

*renaissant de la mort*, highlighting a Romantic iconography, as well as formal characteristics of “flux.” Odilon Redon has been associated with Transformism, and I would add Emile Gallé’s vases, that utilize close up or microscopic views of biological processes, as being influenced by Transformism. Recently Richard Thomson has described this “organicism” as an “unspoken aesthetic” in paintings engaged with science and modern life. For this paper, I will begin to outline the links between art and evolutionary science at the fin-de-siècle in France and lay out the formal and iconographic elements of the “Transformist aesthetic.”

*Fae Brauer.*

### **"L'élément fluid": Magnetism, Radioactivity and Hélène Dufau's Transformism**

Amidst fiery debates in the Chamber of Deputies over the Separation of Church and State, French Fine Arts Director, Henry Marcel, commissioned Clémentine-Hélène Dufau and Ernest Laurent to paint four panels each for the Salles des Autorités at the New Sorbonne on art and science with no reference whatsoever to religion. Unlike Laurent's choice of Philosophy, Eloquence, History and the Poesie, Dufau chose to paint the new Republican religion of Science and more specifically, such Lamarckian disciplines as Geology and Zoology, as well as such Neo-Lamarckian ones as Radioactivity and Magnetism. While connoting interspecies relationships alongside hydrogeology, meteorology, volcanology and the environmental conditions conducive to universal attraction and spontaneous generation, in Dufau's panel coupling *Radioactivity and Magnetism* as a possible tribute to Marie and Pierre Curie, the male personification of Magnetism seems to be embraced by female Radioactivity engendering what Marie Curie called "radiation électromagnétique." Consistent with Lamarck's theory on the dynamics of fluids responsible for the transformation of living organisms, Dufau abandoned the defined contours and clear colour zones used for her posters and paintings of *Feminisme*, and regenerated bodies. Deploying a language of fluidity likened to that used in Albert Besnard's *l'Electricité* and his *La Vie renaissant de la mort*, critics singled out her vaporous atmospheres, prismatic light, refracted rays, "les forces radiantes de la nature" and "l'élément fluid" with forms appearing in a state of flux and metamorphoses just like Henri Bergson's "becoming". By focusing upon these panels at this polemical point in the Republican propagation of evolutionism, this paper will explore whether Dufau,

like Besnard, developed a Transformist aesthetic in order to convey the tenets of Transformism.

*Pascal Rousseau.*

### **Fluidity of Senses: Transformism and Synaesthesia in Felix Le Dantec's Biological Aesthetics**

French biologist and philosopher of science, Felix Le Dantec (1867-1917), was one of the most eminent and strategic personalities for the diffusion of neo-Transformism in the French Avant-Garde. Author of relevant articles and books on Darwinism, Lamarckism and Transformism, his theory of biology and embryology had an immediate impact on the discourses and experiments in the performative and visual arts at the « passage du siècle » (1890-1910). His theory spawned, in particular, the debate around the reform of sensibility of the modern Homo Novus in contact with the new technologies of communication. Drawing upon this material, this paper will re-explore the archeology of new media and audiovisual culture by focusing upon the influence of this neo-transformist philosophy upon the redefinition of perception in the modern age, specifically the "becoming" of a new synaesthetic sensibility mixing visual, auditive and olfactive sensations. It will closely examine Le Dantec's book, *Les Sciences de la Vie* (1912) where he developed a theory of a generalized electric translation between the senses that would favour the emergence of new cinematic and fluidic forms of abstract art.

Session 4B

### **Animal Blood in Art/ Zoo/ Literary History**

Chair: *Susan McHugh*

From the visceral lifeblood to the conceptual underpinnings of bloodstock, animal blood is a fluid that marks significant turning points in the history of representing animals. This panel investigates the representational significance of animal blood in three distinct arenas – painting, zoological display, and literature – in order to frame broader questions about human-animal relationships: How does the inclusion of animal blood (un)frame ideas about human identity in early modern European paintings of the hunt? How do nineteenth-century fantasies of primitivity inform twentieth-century practices of eradicating “domestic blood” from zoo animals like Przewalski's Horses? And how might the legacies of these representational histories of animal blood be seen as influencing a turn toward

more ambiguously bloody fictional depictions of indigenous hunting in the twenty-first century?

*Nigel Rothfels.*

**Bar Sinister**

This presentation will explore the roots and legacies of a decision in the 1950s by a German zoo director to euthanize some 10% of the world herd of Przewalski's Horses in order to eliminate alleged “domestic blood” persisting in the stock of the last survivors of what were seen as the ur-form of the contemporary horse. This apparently radical decision was reached in order to remove forever a sort of degenerate contagion lurking in the genetics of the captive Przewalski Horse population, a contagion evident in the phenotypic variability of the horses and traced to persistent rumors that the original horses brought to Europe at the end of the nineteenth century had interbred with domestic Mongolian horses. The decision, which has shocked many commentators, will be shown to be part of a long-term pattern -- evident even today -- of actively managing the genetics of these horses to conform to a nineteenth-century fantasy of primitivity.

*Amy Freund.*

**Blood and Paint: Hunting Art in Early Modern Europe**

Hunting, and its attendant bloodshed, was an important marker of social status and political power in early modern Europe, and European elites were enthusiastic consumers of visual representations of the hunt. The blood of animals, and its exposure to view in hunt-themed paintings, echoed commissioners' and viewers' preoccupations with their own blood right – their claims to natural superiority over non-nobles and to physical and political power. The painters employed by elite patrons to picture the hunt also seized on the depiction of blood as a means of claiming their own powers – to create life on canvas, and to dispose of it. Oil paint, itself a fluid, was confounded with blood in pictures that celebrated the skill of the artist as much as the violent agency of the hunter/viewer. This talk will consider the depiction of blood in early modern hunting art, focusing on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century works by Northern European artists, including Peter Paul Rubens, Frans Snyders, François Desportes, Jean-Baptiste Oudry, and Jean Siméon Chardin. Works like Oudry's 1742 Hare and Leg of Lamb, with its single drop of blood hanging from the hare's

nose and its willful contrasts – between the butchered and the whole body, the exsanguinated and the still bleeding, and livestock and game – challenged early modern viewers to consider animal life and death, and the circulation of the fluid that makes both life and painting possible. This paper will explore the implications of those challenges, both for early modern audiences and for the twenty-first-century viewer.

*Susan McHugh.*

### **Bloody Messes: Indigenous Hunting, Marine Mammals, and Contemporary Fiction**

Several contemporary novels, including Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale* (2009) and Robert Barclay's *Melal* (2002), feature scenes of indigenous hunting of marine mammals gone spectacularly wrong: people are killed, animal deaths are unnecessarily prolonged, and all inhabit polluted landscapes. While in isolation the killings are often seen as exposing the cruelty or unsustainability of hunting animals such as whales and dolphins, situating them in literary history suggests a more precise linkage of hunting with extinction and genocide stories at the turn of the twenty-first century. Whereas novels of the previous generation like Leslie Silko's *Ceremony* (1986) and Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* (1987) portrayed the native hunter as psychologically and culturally healed, respectively, by returning to a traditionally performed chase of or a modified traditional practice with animals, Hogan's and Barclay's hunters are set up to botch the ceremony, and the bloody mess that ensues exposes how the component that once marked the ideals of the hunt – namely, the ability for both hunter and hunted to escape any fixed script – goes missing, and in its stead emerges a cross-species politics of endangerment that concerns the limits of representing human-animal relations more generally and the importance of fiction to making them legible in particular.

Session 4C

### **Sick Interpretations: Paranoia in American Cold War Culture**

Chair: *Catherine Belling*

Whether applied to the persecutory delusions characteristic of some mental disabilities or to perceptions of political conspiracy, paranoia is at root a biomedically-inflected critique of someone's way of making sense of the world. Paranoia is, in other words, a pathological hermeneutic. To categorize another's

thoughts as “paranoid” is thus as much prescriptive as descriptive: it seeks to impose regularity on narrative and also to normalize practices of interpretation. As a term that shores up the borders between fact and fiction and brings issues of power and knowledge into view, paranoia offers an ideal lens with which to explore the biopolitics of interpretation. Speaker 1 begins the discussion by investigating one of the most famous subjects of paranoia and conspiracy theory—the Kennedy assassination—by looking at fictionality and diagnostics in Jed Mercurio’s 2009 novel *American Adulterer*, which focuses on Kennedy’s secretly diseased body as a master hermeneutic for his personal and political life. Using case studies of ultraconservative campaigns against psychiatry and fluoridation, Speaker 2 continues looking at the imbrication of medicine and politics by exploring how charges of paranoia were refuted by the American Far Right in the mid-1950s. Speaker 3 concludes by taking a close look at L. Ron Hubbard’s *Dianetics*, which serves as a cipher for American cold war culture and for the fluid boundaries between science and fiction.

*Catherine Belling.*

### **Paranoid Biofiction and the Containment of JFK’s Autoimmune Disease**

Jed Mercurio’s 2009 novel, *American Adulterer*, recounts the presidency of John F. Kennedy. What makes it a novel is not the usual elaboration of interpersonal events or construction of speculative mental interiority but the narration of biological events occurring in the President’s body. The novelist, a British physician, presents JFK’s sexual incontinence, then secret but now notorious, not as a question of character or morality, but as continuous with his other autoimmune pathologies: Addison’s disease, osteoporosis, migraine, prostatitis, steroid dependence. The novel is narrated in the form of a detached clinical account and Kennedy, called “the subject,” is at once the protagonist and proper subject of non-fiction biography, the objectified “research subject” of medical (and narrative) experimentation, and the object of a dynastic family plot to attain high office in spite of his infirmities. The medical case history is thereby inextricably imbricated with the public history of Cold War America. This paper considers the cultural implications of medicalizing the tension between conspiracy and contingency that frame the figure of Kennedy. Reading the novel alongside belated reports in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* on



the JFK autopsy (attending to adrenal glands as well as to ballistic trajectories) provides a biocultural account of the paranoia surrounding Kennedy's presidency, for which his assassination in Dallas was at once a perverse cure, a diagnostic crux, and the explosive point from which, we might say, his long-contained autoimmune disease was disseminated into the culture at large.

*Elizabeth Donaldson.*

### **Psy-Tech: The Paranoid Style of L. Ron Hubbard**

In 1950, L. Ron Hubbard published *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, beginning a crucial generic shift in his professional writing, from science fiction to self-help. Described by Morris Fishbein, the editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, as “the poor man’s psychoanalysis,” from its first iteration *Dianetics* had a complex, vexed relationship with psychiatry while also reflecting the cold war paranoia of its time. Hubbard claimed his science of the mind had the potential to save not only unhappy individuals, but the whole world: the atom bomb’s “hopeful nose [was] full-armed in ignorance” of the restorative technologies that *Dianetics* revealed. This paper begins with an examination of several key themes in *Dianetics*, such as the remarkable emphasis on prenatal experience and attempted abortions, the project of making the able more able, and Hubbard’s careful negotiation of the relationship between medical psychiatry and the methods he proposes. After *Dianetics* became a best-seller, Hubbard shifted genres again, from self-help to religion, and his thinking about psychiatry developed in response to a variety of factors, both personal and cultural. In this presentation, I argue that Hubbard’s changing response to the field of psychiatry is simultaneously a product of its time and the product of Hubbard’s unique mind: a cultural expression of science, fiction, and paranoia.

Session 4D

### **Fluidity and Computer Games: Bodies, Worlds, and Labor**

Chair: *Justin Schumaker*

This panel explores the potentially fluid nature of the computer games. As a medium, computer games provide spaces for players and machines to interact, which allows for seemingly disparate entities to collide. This panel will describe the various possible responses computer games have to intervening and overlapping forces. This interaction requires computer games to be responsive to intersecting agents, and at times, defensively rejecting certain invasions. This

panel envisions computer gameplay as fundamental in enabling the fluidity of the medium. Each presentation offers a different perspective on how computer games cultivate a sense of variability intrinsic to understanding the logic of interactive media. The presentations employ a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to think through the possible uncertainties of computer games. Players, physical bodies, virtual landscapes, and labor are some of the intervening forces we identify in computer games accounting for during play. The interactivity and flexibility of video games provide the medium's defining characteristics and give the medium its fluid nature.

*[Ian Jones.](#)*

### **Alpha waves: On the fluid geographies of Minecraft**

Over the past several years, the work of video game analysis has become increasingly temporally fraught. Enabled by the turn to online digital distribution (and accelerated by the recent emergence of distribution channels such as Steam Early Access), the rise of paid alphas and betas have increasingly drawn attention to the myriad of ways in which games are in time, as ongoing projects rather than as fixed texts. Whereas previously, genres such as the MMO had carved out a unique space in game studies in which version numbers, expansions, and changes in player behavior over time had to be methodologically accounted for, today even the relative stability of the single-player game has begun to dissolve, as a logic of fluid becoming overtakes staid notions of games as singular, fixed objects. This paper examines the ways in which this increasing temporal instability of games can lead to a corresponding instability in the spatial experience of games, turning to developments in the alpha, beta, and official release versions of the game Minecraft (Mojang, official release 2011) as a case study. As a game built around procedurally generated landscapes, updates over time to Minecraft's terrain generation algorithms have resulted in shifting geographies, the navigation of which has been upset by the occasional change in physics. To address such newly unmoored and de-centered game geographies, I argue, previous theories of video game space must be augmented with new vocabularies.

*[Peter McDonald.](#)*

### **Idle Hands and the Unconscious Playground**

Gestural interfaces have transformed gaming, mobile devices, and computer use, introducing what theorists such as Giorgio Agamben and Carrie Noland call a gestural regime. From a gaming perspective these new movements have been understood as enhancing immersion (Winnie Forster), as an expressive medium (Andreas Gregerson and Torben Grodal) and as communicative signifiers (Ian Bogost). These approaches tend to emphasize the contiguity with the human body's normal gestural practices, and thus miss what we might call a change in style and scale that turns the body towards the screen. The difference can be understood as a postural one that organizes the bodily space in which these gestures take place. This paper draws on theories of posture from dance scholars such as Susan Foster, Warren Lamb and Elizabeth Watson to begin characterizing this difference and the kind of social meanings that are attached to it. However posture also alters the meaning of the games themselves through the embodied experience of the player, and to get at this dimension I draw on an odd psychoanalytic theory of posture developed by the German Surrealist Hans Bellmer in his work with disfigured and re-constructed dolls. Bellmer argues that body schemas are re-organized by the tension of a posture, producing unconscious associations between some body parts and leaving others as empty terrain for unconscious phantasy. The theory seems particularly well suited for touch screen devices, opening up an analysis of the intense focus on finger movements and the sense of a forgotten body.

*Justin Schumaker.*

### **The Short and Dissatisfying Life of Diablo III's Auction House: Gamification, Labor, and Zombie Capitalism**

Gamification is often constructed and portrayed as a powerful marketing tool that borrows structures and tropes from board and video games. This paper explores how gamification returns to video games altering gameplay.

Gamification assumes a multitude of forms when in video games. They include overly present and obvious game structures, turning ergodic play into labor power, and constructing play as commodity trading. The struggle for and against gamification has no apparent end, but its return to video games alters the medium and reveals the fluid nature of computer gameplay. This paper explores the rhetoric of gamification in Diablo III's auction house. They become platforms reliant on gamification to obscure the labor created through play. For Diablo III, gamification operates as a tool perpetuating infinite play and driving players to

use the game's "real-money" auction house. This maneuver turns players into workers for the auction house. The gamification found in Diablo III transforms the form of capitalism found in video game culture. While it can be argued that these systems represent Marx's vampire, I see the gamification present in Diablo III engaged with the logic of zombie capitalism, which blindly spreads amongst players. When found in games, gamification appears as a mechanism to disguise labor as play and lure players into an epidemic of zombie capitalism. At its core, gamification uses the qualities of games to mask the mundane, but with its potential return to video games, gamification redefines players and play as symptoms of the zombie capitalism.

#### Session 4E

### **Book launch: three new books on speculative realism** (Roundtable)

Chair: *Steven Shaviro*

The philosophical movements that can be grouped under the aegis of "speculative realism" have had a significant impact in the last several years upon science studies, the humanities, and the arts. The three members of this panel have all published books in 2014 that offer, for the first time, an overview of speculative realism. Peter Gratton's *Speculative Realism: Problems and Prospects* introduces the contexts out of which speculative realism has emerged and provides an overview of the major contributors and latest developments. Tom Sparrow's *The End of Phenomenology* focuses on how speculative realism moves beyond phenomenology, and works to provide a philosophical method that disengages the human-centered approach to metaphysics in order to chronicle the complex realm of nonhuman reality. Steven Shaviro's *The Universe of Things* considers speculative realist trends in relation to the early-twentieth-century process-oriented thought of Alfred North Whitehead. This workshop will function as a joint book launch for these three volumes; the authors will present short summaries of their books, followed by commentaries by two respondents (Rebekah Sheldon and Scott Richmond). There is no more appropriate place for such an event than SLSA, where the issues raised by speculative realism have been central topics in recent years.

*Peter Gratton.*

### **Contribution**

*Scott Richmond.*

**Contribution**

*Steven Shaviro.*

**Contribution**

*Rebekah Sheldon.*

**Contribution**

*Tom Sparrow.*

**Contribution**

Session 4F

**Creative Writing Panel: Part 1**

Chair: *Karen Leona Anderson; Michael Filas*

This panel, one of two proposed for the conference, will feature fiction, nonfiction, and poetry written by SLSA members, some of which engages with the conference theme of fluidity.

*Laura Otis.*

**A Day in the Life of Traffic**

This SLSA presentation will consist of a reading from a novel-in-progress, *Clean*. The chapter to be read describes the sounds of traffic during a 24-hour period from the perspective of Ginny Boone, a maid at an inexpensive chain motel. Sexually and physically abused in her youth, Ginny avoids bonds with people but is fiercely protective of the rooms she cleans. When she discovers that her motel is being used as a way-station for human traffickers, she struggles to overcome her fear and repugnance toward people in order to save the young Asian women who are being exploited. *Clean* takes place by the side of Interstate 50, whose swish of traffic changes from moment to moment but never ceases. Ginny's motel lies amidst gas stations and fast food restaurants built to nourish travelers and their cars. Sensitive to sound, Ginny reflects on the daily cycles of traffic and the context they provide for a human life and the flow of time. Bio: Trained as a neuroscientist and literary scholar, Laura Otis studies the ways that literature and

science intersect. She compares scientific and literary representations of identity, memory, and communication and explores variations in individual thought styles. Otis received her BS in Biochemistry from Yale University in 1983, her MA in Neuroscience from the University of California at San Francisco in 1988, and her PhD in Comparative Literature from Cornell University in 1991. Since 2004 she has been a Professor of English at Emory University, where she teaches interdisciplinary courses on literature, medicine, neuroscience, and cognitive science. She has also been a frequent guest scholar at the Berlin Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. Otis is the author of *Organic Memory* (1994), *Membranes* (1999), *Networking* (2001), and *Müller's Lab* (2007) and the translator of neurobiologist Santiago Ramón y Cajal's *Vacation Stories* [...]

*Michael Filas.*

### **Biotene on the Soul**

"Biotene on the Soul" is a hybrid non-fiction prose-collage. Each collage is accompanied by an episode in a comic narrative about a tweener boy's treatment for xerostomia, or dry mouth, by his hack of a dentist father, as told by his devoted older sister. The collages are the non-fiction component and they include excerpts from James Brown songs, autobiographies, interviews, stage patter; Aristotle's "On the Soul"; medical journal articles; TV advertisements on YouTube; and other media concerning xerostomia, or dry mouth. Collage elements concern mouthwashes, artificial saliva, slow-dissolve muco-adhesive patches--treatments for xerostomia, or dry mouth, and what it means to have soul. One fun thread in the collage involves the history of electric shock to treat hypofunction in the salivary glands. By changing the genre from ironic tragedy ("The Lyrica Cantos") to romantic comedy in "Biotene on the Soul," I'm looking to make collage more accessible and emphasize surface pleasures, rhythms, and easy laughs. Bio: Michael Filas is a professor of English at Westfield State University in Massachusetts. "Biotene on the Soul" is part of "The Lyrica Cantos," which has excerpts recently published in *Eleven Eleven*, *Passages North*, *Specs*, and *Fiction International*. His essay, "My Dinner With Stelarc: A Review of Techno-Flesh Hybridity in Art," appeared in *The Information Society* last year.

*Karen Leona Anderson.*

### **Micrographia**

In these poems, which take fluidity between the vast and the tiny as a methodology, I explore the politics of the small and microscopic elements of the domestic sphere. An interest in the microbiome and a concurrent interest in shifts in scale—developed as I explore the trivial, quotidian nature of many of our domestic actions alongside a trend in contemporary poetry to small, minimal forms-- allows these poems to explore the vast “environments” located within small things, magnifying the small, overlooked, or tiny in poems themselves that formally reward minute attention. Bio: Karen Leona Anderson is the author of two collections of poetry, *Punish honey* (Carolina Wren) and *Receipt* (Milkweed Editions, forthcoming). Her poems have recently appeared in *New American Writing* and the *Best American Poetry 2012*. She received her MFA from the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop and her Ph.D. from Cornell University, with a dissertation about poetry and science. She is an associate professor of English at St. Mary's College of Maryland.

Session 4G

## **Medical Humanities**

*Kathleen Ong.*

### **Narrative Medicine in Full Sunlight**

Full name: Kathleen Ong XinWei Affiliation: Columbia University Narrative Medicine Masters Program Email address: kathleenongxinwei@gmail.com Snail mail address: Apt. 8D, 260 West 72nd Street, NYC, NY10023, USA. This paper takes as its cornerstone René Magritte’s intellectual reasons behind his fauve period, with particular emphasis on his manifesto “Surrealism in Full Sunlight”. While Magritte’s emphasis on the absurd logics operating in the unconscious was evident, he stressed—unlike the other Surrealists of his time—the difference between material life and the desperation to have it explained by symbols. I advance that this fluctuating tension between interpretation and material referent is analogous to the ethically complex dilemma faced in Narrative Medicine that displays both the practice’s weaknesses, as well as strengths. Paying close attention to the way Magritte’s oeuvre changed over time, I illustrate the shifting attributes that mark the practice of the developing field of Narrative Medicine; between its theoretical underpinnings and real-life application; between its defined function and palpable undertakings; as well as between its



facilitators and their use of narrative for self-curative purposes. I ultimately argue that this nebulous space between interpretation and material referent is, paradoxically, what makes the impact of Narrative Medicine both singular, as well as enduring.

*Jo Sullivan.*

### **Reading Gothic Medicine: Fluidity of Sexual, Scientific, and Generic Classifications in Nineteenth-Century Britain**

In 1867, Isaac Baker Brown was expelled from the Obstetrical Society of London for performing clitoridectomies as a cure for illnesses he believed to be caused by masturbation. The highly publicized debate surrounding his expulsion explored issues of the classification of sexual disorders, the use of surgery as treatment, and the appropriateness of male doctors performing invasive procedures on the genital organs of women without consent. Brown's illicit procedures highlighted the growing anxiety in nineteenth-century Britain surrounding issues of surgical, psychological, and patriarchal control over women's bodies and the liminal position of the surgeon's role in relationship to his female patient. In this paper, I will argue that Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Case of Lady Sannox" are not only impacted by this troubled medical history but exploit the unease felt by both the medical and lay communities in regards to experimental science and female sexuality through metaphoric depictions of clitoridectomies. The Gothic villains featured in these fictional texts thrive on scientific; their methodologies and procedures echo those of the discredited Isaac Baker Brown seen in his case histories, published medical texts, and reports of his disciplinary hearing. By reading the boundaries between these two distinct genres as fluid, I argue that the tropes inherent in Victorian Gothic fiction influence and enhance medical narratives while the medical discourse acts as a vehicle through which the Gothic can explore the nascent fears of both the medical and lay communities regarding sexuality, science, and professionalism.

*Ron Schleifer.*

**[Unnamed]**

Session 4H

**Imbibing**

*Andrew Pilsch.*

### **Coffee Futurism**

This paper addresses coffee makers as rhetorical emblems of fluid futurity. I analyze representations of coffee machines in science fiction, focusing on Spike Jonze's *\_Her\_* (2013) and William Gibson's *\_Count Zero\_* (1987). In *\_Her\_*, Jonze's minimal, unobtrusive future is captured in the proliferation of pour-over coffee makers throughout the film. These devices, ceramic and glass cones that hold a filter and some coffee grounds, purport to do a better job expressing the terroir of the coffee bean. The devices crystallize the film's craft-obsessed, minimal future aesthetic and connect, I argue, to nascent trends today (pour-over coffee was recently profiled in the *New York Times*). In Gibson's *Sprawl Trilogy*, his espresso machines—hulking, tarnished, and spewing steam—capture the faded-chrome futurism of the 1980s Cyberpunk movement, whose plots play out amidst the wreckage of 1960s Jet Age futurity. Similar to *\_Her\_*, Gibson also prefigures the rise of espresso-driven chain coffee in the 1990s, extrapolating from trends nascent in the Pacific Northwest at the time. Having argued that coffee makers are potent emblems of futurity in science fiction, I argue that the history of coffee making has always been a futurism: from imperfect steam pumps marring the possibility of espresso prior to the introduction of the Gaggia Classica in 1948 to innovations in filter technology throughout the 19th and 20th century, the perfect coffee always exists in the future, always resides into a cloud of steam and puddle of murky brown fluid.

*Daniel Millwee.*

### **Not Your Grandfather's Beer: The Fluid Notion of Desirability in Beer with the Advent of Refrigeration**

The craft beer industry is a relatively new, rapidly expanding market for Americans, with a variety of styles and subgenres to be found in breweries now being distributed across the nation. But in many ways, the territory being explored by modern craft brewers is a familiar one; the styles that brewers experiment with, or copy outright, are as old as the profession, and based on strong traditions that varied amazingly by region. These styles were common even in America before the Eighteenth Amendment came into effect in 1920. So what exactly happened in that period between the repeal of Prohibition in 1933

and the advent of the modern craft brewer? Why was the market at that time flooded with countless brands all marketing similar examples of the same bland, unassuming style? I argue, through use of primary sources like the transcript of the Second International Brewers' Congress of 1911, that proliferation of refrigeration and pasteurization at the turn of the twentieth century led to such a high emphasis among brewers on efficiency and consistency in their product, along with other new empirical studies at the cellular level, that brewers in America, once their powers were returned to them with the repeal of Prohibition, sought to maximize their profits and output at the expense of variety or tradition. The scientific discoveries and refinements made around the time of the temperance movement in America brought about sweeping changes, especially in the food and beer industries, but also were a strong part of America's cultural identity over the next fifty years, for better or for worse.

Session 4I

### **Waves of Sound: Theorizing Noise**

*Joe Carson.*

#### **“Fluidity of Structure: Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem* and the Phonograph Cylinder”**

The figure of the phonograph and the cylinder record, as an episteme, illuminates Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem* (1928) as a text mediating the borders and boundaries between the literary and early sound technology. Contextualized within the milieu of sound technology at the end of the 1920’s, we see McKay’s written form remains in flux, caught between the literary form of the novel and the cylindrical structure of sound production. In this sense, not only does the phonograph cylinder structure the various spaces within the text and shapes how the characters interact with these spaces, but more so, McKay’s novel challenges the boundaries between a strictly literary apparatus and the commercial production of sound. In creating a hybrid form, McKay’s novel enacts a subversive performance of the hegemonic Anglo-literary novel while creating a mimetic articulation of the liminality experienced by blacks within the early 20th century.

*Aaron Zwintscher.*

### **Fluid Noise: Towards an Insurgent Noise Politics**

Noise is often considered in static (pun intended) terms. Many interpretations of noise, especially those that consider noise in relation to music such as Attali, Kahn, and Hegarty often figure noise as a deterritorializing line of flight that is reterritorialized through systems like the culture industry. Noise, in this figuration, must continually be noisier-than-thou in order to maintain an avant-garde edge, in order to remain noise and not simply a new form of music or information. Taking instead a fluid reading of noise, a reading that figures noise as not only a line of flight but as several lines of flight, as instability and uncertainty that might be understood through fluid motion and fluid dynamics, noise can be seen in political terms as more than the bleeding edge of reaction to the status quo but as a collection of sites of dynamic resistance. Noise in all its readings has resisted a clear ontology or politics (much of this due to the undecidability of the term itself). While this has either been a point of contention between strands of theorization or a the shame of a theory that is ironically too noisy a fluid reading of noise would embrace this undecidability for its deterritorializing potential arguing for a politics that does not extend lines of flight to simply by noisy for the sake of noise (a problematic position) but would instead seek to use noise as an insurgent and mobile disruptive force against hegemonic forms.

Session 5 - Fri 10:45 am - 12:15 pm

Session 5A

### **Modern Arts, Science, and Occultism II: Organicism, Monism, and Neo-Lamarckism**

Chair: [serena keshavjee](#); [Fae Brauer](#)

The importance of alternative evolutionary theories to modern artists in Europe at the fin-de-siècle, particularly those deriving from Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and Ernst Haeckel, as much as those from Charles Darwin, cannot be over-estimated. The fluid lines and "informé" dominant in so much Modernist art, as well as philosophies of "becoming", can be related to the evolutionary concept of *Transformisme*. These relationships will be examined in a series of multi-disciplinary papers by scholars from the histories of art and science. [This session

is the second session in a three-panel stream, “Modern Arts, Science, and Occultism,” with the third panel being submitted by Linda Henderson.]

*Jessica Dandona.*

**The Serpentine in the Garden: Art Nouveau, Nature, and Excess in Fin-de-Siècle France.**

Nineteenth-century proponents of Art Nouveau celebrated the style’s flowing, undulating use of line as the expression of an organic connection to the natural world. Drawing on the theories of organicist solidarity and *Transformisme* popularized by scientists and politicians, artists such as Emile Gallé, René Binet, and Hector Guimard created sinuous, serpentine works that thematized the interconnectedness of all earthly organisms. Yet the critics of Art Nouveau’s “wavy line” often railed against the style’s perceived excesses, linking its curves to the idea of a teeming, seething world of feminized nature that escaped human control. This paper will examine the ways in which Art Nouveau’s rhythmic, twisting line was perceived as a threat to the positivist worldview of nineteenth-century France through an exploration of wave-forms in fin-de-siècle architecture, illustration, and design. By focusing upon contemporary criticism and caricatures related to these works, this paper will also consider the relationship between Art Nouveau’s organicism and its controversial status as a style associated with immoderate abundance, uncontrollable sensations, and uncontainable desires.

*Marsha Morton.*

**Monism Eroticized: Hermann Bahr, Wilhelm Bölsche, and Gustav Klimt**

In 1891 the Viennese writer Hermann Bahr defined literary modernism as an expression of evolutionary laws that revealed “being and becoming...in the infinite chain of being.” Seventeen years later he considered the paintings of Gustav Klimt to be a visualization of “our world-view...our monism” and was convinced that Klimt had become “Haeckel’s painter.” Bahr’s sensibility was shaped by an immersion in the writings of Ernst Haeckel and those of his friend Wilhelm Bölsche. Bahr and Bölsche had been members of the Berlin Friedrichshagener circle of poets whose journal, *Freie Bühne*, had published Haeckel’s essay “Die Weltanschauung der monistischen Wissenschaft” in 1892.

Bahr would subsequently become an editor of the Vienna Secession journal *Ver Sacrum*. Drawing upon these connections, this paper will explore Bahr's interpretation of Klimt as a painter who conveyed the Monist unity of man and nature and constructed art embodying Haeckel's aesthetics of natural beauty identified by Bölsche as an arabesque "rhythmic-ornamental principle" furthered by sexual selection. In Klimt's decorative patterns, inspired by infusorians, radiolarians, and cells, Bahr located morphological networks within nature, equivalencies of organic and inorganic form, and a spiritualized sensate matter. Klimt's nude figures and abstracted shapes suggestive of sperms and impregnated ovum represented, for Bahr, Haeckel's "sexual cell-love" and evidenced the same forces of attraction at work in gravity and chemical bonding. In conjunction with the aquatic environments, Klimt's paintings evoked Bölsche's descriptions of the ocean in *Love Life in Nature* (1898) as a primordial erogenous zone – "one vast chain of love" – alive with the amorous desire that fuels evolution.

*Robert Brain.*

### **Art and the Cult of Elementary Life: Bergson vs. Benda on Transformist Aesthetics**

Several scholars have compellingly demonstrated the large influence of Henri Bergson's philosophy on the arts and aesthetic thinking on the eve of the First World War. This paper will root the familiar Bergsonian linkage of Art and Life more deeply in the philosopher's profound engagement with turn-of-the-century biology, especially the varieties of Transformism (e.g. Neo-Lamarckian, Spencerian, and Haeckelian Monist), arguing that Bergson's philosophy extended the core logic of Transformism which held that consciousness might perceive and further the direction towards which evolution was working. I demonstrate this through Bergson's reinterpretation of Transformist accounts of elementary life—protoplasm—from organizational *prima material* to the figure of biological plasticity, mobility, sense experience, consciousness, and not least, aesthetic creation and reception. I shall also focus on the critical attacks on Bergsonism by Julian Benda, who derided the "contemporary cult of elementary, protoplasmic life", with its "desire that art shall be life itself, and not a picture which some intelligence paints of life." Benda systematically challenged each of the alleged Bergsonian virtues—fluidity, synesthesia, kinesthetic empathy, etc.— on aesthetic and political grounds, arguing that that in their renunciation of universalizing

reason the Bergsonian intellectuals might shoulder much of the blame for the European cultural and political crisis. Benda's critique provides a window onto the extent to which the anti-psychologism of interwar High Modernism centered on the rejection of the logic of Transformism, especially in its Bergsonian formulation

*Peter Mowris.*

### **Magic Bishops and Magic Mountains: Dada's Confrontation with Occultism and *Lebensreform***

Art historians have long connected occult or mystical impulses to the Dada performances of Hugo Ball. Yet despite the high volume of scholarship that has appeared on Dada, few scholars have offered an in-depth treatment of the broader historical context of performance during the time in which the movement flourished in Zurich. This paper will augment the extant knowledge of Ball's interest in occultism and its promises of evolving consciousness by considering his approach to ideas of other figures from the immediate historical context—namely, the modern dancer Rudolf Laban and philosopher Rudolf Steiner, both of whom were working in Switzerland during the time of Dada. A central tenet of this paper is that Dada can best be understood by considering it alongside evolutionary or Transformist approaches to culture that appear more immediately redemptive than the disruptive art practices of this notorious avant-garde movement. Crucially, these contrasting viewpoints on what constituted higher realms of occult knowledge addressed the concept of primitivism in a manner that reversed conventional evolutionary trajectories. Ball's treatment of these notions alongside the work of his colleagues challenged ideas that culture could be a redemptive rebirth of the higher realms of consciousness that radical thinkers located in primitive culture.

Session 5B

### **Gaming Capital**

Chair: *James Brown*

If both exchange and competition are contingent on difference--the cut that abstracts quantitative measure (ratio) from qualitative movement (kinesis)--then cutting characterizes both games and capital as fields in which differentiation propagates vectors of exchange. Capitalism cuts and money is one of the first digital games. Sociologist and game theorist Roger Caillois calls the cut of



competition agon, a behavior which characterizes both digital media in general and videogames in particular as they sample, score, sequence, and serialize analogue play into digital rules. “Gaming Capital” engages the play of the market and markets of play by analyzing games that simultaneously interrogate and participate in the logics of capital.

*James Brown.*

### **Obfuscated Mapping in Porpentine’s Ultra Business Tycoon III**

Ultra Business Tycoon III claims to be a port of “an old edutainment game from the 90’s.” Its designer, Porpentine, is known for her critiques of the game industry’s gender biases and profit motives, so few would actually buy this conceit. True to form, the game undercuts the empowerment that defines the “tycoon” genre. Rather than managing “from above” and learning the processes and procedures of corporate systems, the player of Porpentine’s game is caught in a messy world of sweating and bleeding bodies and, ultimately, of a framing narrative about domestic abuse. Reviews of the game are split between those who see it as a brilliant critique of the business simulation genre and others who leave the game frustrated. One review on the Interactive Fiction Database website is indicative of the latter: “I’m never sure if I’ve experienced the full game, if the author is trying to convey some message about frustration or death or something else profound, or if I’m just dumb and not finding the next thing to click on.” Many players expect to be able to control the game environment or to at least gain a clear sense of what is expected. Ultra Business Tycoon refuses to provide this kind of experience. Following Wendy Chun’s work in *Programmed Visions*, this paper argues that the game offers an example of “obfuscated mapping,” an approach to late capitalism that acknowledges the unknowability of systems (computational or otherwise) and attempts to engage that uncertainty on its own terms.

*Patrick LeMieux.*

### **This is not Super Mario Bros.: Super Mario Clouds and Coin Heaven**

As one of the most well known ROM hacks, Cory Archangel describes Super Mario Clouds (2003) as “an old Mario Brothers cartridge which I modified to erase everything but the clouds.” But, in the tradition of Magritte’s paintings and Warhol’s screenprints, that is not a pipe, that is not soup, and this is not Super

Mario Bros. Archangel's artwork does not contain any source code from the PRG ROM driving Nintendo's original game. Following Archangel's open source instructions and the ROM hacking community's documentation produces a different game altogether: *Coin Heaven* (2013). In *Coin Heaven* an invisible Mario walks on invisible ground, looping endlessly in a cloudscape where a cinematic sequence once took place between World 1-1 and World 1-2 of *Super Mario Bros.* Beyond the speed, and the pattern of the clouds, the colors, and greater degree of repetition, something is very different. A lone coin remains blinking in the menu. All that is solid does not melt into air this *Coin Heaven* resists a formal autonomy between games, art, and capital by first engaging the practical problems of hacking hardware then acknowledging the desire for a type of utopia in which these practices operate without material base. Through a discussion of *Super Mario Clouds* and *Coin Heaven*, this talk offers an example of how close reading becomes platform study and how the logic of the market infects its own critique.

*Stephanie Boluk.*

### **Welcome to Flatland: Valve's Productivity Wager**

"Welcome to Flatland." Valve's Corporation's Handbook for New Employees opens with an invitation to join a company without bosses, corporate ladders, or corner offices. Like Deleuze and Guattari's famous declaration, Valve has decided they are "tired of trees" and "stop[ped] believing in trees, roots, and . . . [a]ll of arborescent culture." Instead, Valve's "fearless adventure in knowing what to do when no one's there telling you what to do" operates rhizomatically, flattening office space, corporate hierarchy, and even players into single measure of value: productivity. In terms of a flat, physical space, the company's headquarters in Bellevue, Washington is famous for its open floor plan and reconfigurable desks on wheels. Their office symbolizes Valve's commitment to a horizontal corporate hierarchy in which there are no management, no titles, and no bosses. And this organizational structure applies as much to Valve's community of players as it does to their the employees. This talk will discuss how the precarious labor of modders, makers, spectators, and even standard players is not a form of currency for a company that actively engages in economic experiments, but an undercurrency driving a deluge of vectoralist management strategies. Since the late 90s, Valve's moneygames have harnessed vectors of information to financialize play. As play accretes within the company's digital

undertow, different forms of metagaming are abstracted, flattened, and made into productivity. There is no fun, there is no work: only productivity for player and laborer alike.

Session 5C

### **Fluidity of Fiction**

Chair: [Carol Colatrella](#)

[Carol Colatrella](#).

#### **Information and the Novel: Scientific and Technical Claims in Fiction**

In recent years the history of computer science has expanded to include the study of information. My paper "Information and the Novel" builds on the theories and histories of information science to consider the use of everyday information in fiction, particularly how it contributes to the building of a fictional world in a novel. Looking at the ways novels detail information connected with diverse systems of meaning, I analyze how fictional representations illustrate, interpret, and evaluate everyday information associated with science and technology. I focus on two British novels: *Offshore* (1979) by Penelope Fitzgerald and *The Radiant Way* (1987) by Margaret Drabble. Each novel represents family genealogies, scientific and technical material, historical events, and disciplinary expertise as interlocking networks of meaning that enable and constrain the outlooks and outcomes of characters and narrators and that influence readers. I am particularly interested in considering how each text acknowledges information as meaningful within certain contexts and not in others and in thinking about how readers' familiarity with information is related to privileging certain scientific and sociopolitical values. Both *Offshore* and *The Radiant Way* comment on women's abilities to manage technologies and technical information alongside with evaluating characters' commitments to feminist principles and practices.

[Rochelle Gold](#).

#### **Feminist Hypertext and Fluid Reading**

Critics and authors of hypertext like George Landow, Shelley Jackson, and Carolyn Guyer have argued that hypertext fiction is especially conducive to feminist storytelling because of its openness to a multiplicity of reading paths,

perspectives and narrative outcomes. On the other hand, Espen Aarseth has demonstrated that in spite of much utopian discourse to the contrary, hypertext is actually highly constrained. In this talk, I argue that Christine Love's interactive epistolary romance *Digital: A Love Story* (2010) helps to cast these debates in a new light by demonstrating how the very restrictiveness of hypertext can at the same time open up space for a fluid, feminist reading practice. *Digital*, which takes place in 1988, is narrated through a series of messages sent through bulletin board systems. In order for the narrative to progress, the reader must collect phone numbers for various bulletin boards, dial those numbers, read messages, and reply to messages; however, in spite of these opportunities for interaction, the narrative has a relatively fixed trajectory. In this way, even as the interactivity of the text is highly restricted, I draw from Eve Sedgwick's notion of "reparative reading" to argue that the fluid process of reading *Digital* allows for moments of surprise, resonance and intimacy. While contemporary scholarly discourse in the digital humanities and digital media studies tends to favor the active act of composing over the ostensibly passive act of reading, *Digital* prioritizes fluid reading as a model for how hypertext fiction might become feminist hypertext fiction.

*Marcel O'Gorman.*

### **What Is Digital Dementia?**

The myth of Theuth and Thamus from Plato's *Phaedrus* has become central in contemporary media theory, primarily as an argument for the destructive potential of mnemotechnics. Thamus's refusal of the gift of writing has buttressed the arguments of digital naysayers such as Bernard Stiegler, who view digital mnemotechnics as a recipe for "benumbing the soul." On the other hand, since writing has obviously not transformed humans into "empty vessels," digital de?vote?es view Plato's myth as a rationale for the unencumbered progress of mnemotechnology. What is at play in this discourse on memory is the ambivalent nature of mnemotechnology—as pharmakon, it can both heal and kill—and its inscrutable impact on what we consider to be the human soul (Plato), psyche (Freud), or spirit (Stiegler). Drawing on key concepts and recent research in cognitive science, as well as the philosophical work of Bernard Stiegler, Maryanne Wolfe, and Manfred Spitzer (author of *Digitale Demenz*), this presentation will take a rigorous look at the meme of digital dementia by comparing it to conventional dementias related to Alzheimer's Disease. I will suggest how new

media technologies might impact various types of memory – procedural, episodic, semantic, working, and cultural. Finally, I will briefly introduce recent projects from the Critical Media Lab, a selection of digital pharmaka that respond creatively to the supposed problem of digital dementia.

Session 5D

Session 5E

### **Creative Writing Panel: Part 2**

Chair: [\*Karen Leona Anderson\*](#); [\*Michael Filas\*](#)

This panel, one of two proposed for the conference, will feature fiction, nonfiction, and poetry written by SLSA members, some of which engages with the conference theme of fluidity.

[\*Holly Bittner\*](#).

#### **ENDOME**

*ENDOME* is a hybrid poetic memoir-documentary of one woman's experience living with endometriosis. Presenting both the literal and symbolic symptoms of this “woman’s disease,” this creative performance will infuse medical records and surgery reports with memories, songs, and dreams, disclosing boundaries and bonds between patient and physician, psyche and soma, and art and science. Endometriosis occurs when the lining of the womb becomes displaced and is found in other places in the woman’s body, causing her pain and excessive menstrual bleeding and sometimes rendering her infertile. Often this physical displacement is mirrored by the displacement of the suffering woman herself, initially manifesting as dismissal or misdiagnosis by both male and female “experts,” her complaints reduced to a hollow echo in the doctor's chamber. Beginning with a close inspection of the scars left by this disease in the body and mind of an individual woman, the poem also undresses the wounds suffered at a collective level by the systematic displacement of the feminine in Western culture and the barrenness that results. Bio: Holly Bittner, M.A., is Director of Writing and Assistant Professor of English and Creative Writing at Moore College of Art & Design in Philadelphia, where she founded The Writer’s Studio in 2011. Her poetry has been published in journals including *Chain*, *ixnay*, *PomPom*, and

the *American Poetry Review*,. *ENDOME* is her first full-length poetry manuscript, excerpts of which she has performed in Portland at the Maine Women Writers Collection of the University of New England in March 2012 and at the 20th Biennial Conference of the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research in New York in June 2013.

*Helena Feder.*

**Poems**

Helena Feder's lyrical and prose poems speak to strategies for knowledge, of ourselves and the world we inhabit. They record loss but cultivate a sense of wonder. The fluidity of time and space, "light" and "dark" matter, human feeling and human "technologies" lives alongside the hard facts of animal lives, ours and others, and our origin stories. Here, the diverse subjects of a dozen short poems, from nonhuman animal cooperatives to neutron detectors, show us, anew, what we already know. Poems she will read include "Striptease," "The Hard Facts of Life," "Confessional but Surreal," "Deceived by Form," "Krakatoa," "Making Pants," "Sarah and Siri," "Rotating the Compost," "Sawing in Half," "Tumescence," "You Like the Small Ones," and "Sleep and the Leaf People." Bio: Helena Feder is Associate Professor of Literature and Environment at East Carolina University. She has published articles on various subjects in *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, *Green Letters*, *Women's Studies*, and the *Journal of Ecocriticism*, and a book, titled *Ecocriticism and the Idea of Culture*, with Ashgate Press. She is just beginning to publish her creative work.

*Wayne Miller.*

**The Dung Ball Chronicle**

How much crap would you eat to get where you want to be? This two-book volume asks that question in various forms and for a number of characters: frustrated husband, father and low-level technocrat John Densch, who starts the ball rolling, so to speak, with his imaginary Bog Monster of Booker Creek; his wife Doreen, who wants so badly for John to move beyond the imaginary, but finds that everything comes at a price; Bollum, a voice in John's head that he had first heard many years before, who had told him tales of alien abduction and of a technological utopia for humanity, albeit one with an expiration date; and Derek, trapped on Bug World, at first just a character in those tales, but in time an

alternate existence for John. As John and his apparent alter egos careen from one crisis to another, we are confronted with big – and little – questions about meaning and existence, religion and self-reliance, on earth and in bug world. Sometimes, it seems, the answer may lie in what looks like a bowl of dung balls, and what waits after. Bio: Wayne Miller is the Assistant Dean for Academic Technologies at the Duke Law School, where he co-teaches a course on law practice technology. He has a PhD in German from UC Berkeley, and previously made use of that degree while working and teaching at UCLA. He is the Electronic Resources Coordinator for SLSA.

Session 5F

## **Animal Studies II: Concepts and Constructs**

[\*Stina Attebery.\*](#)

### **Losing Data Earth: Animal Cyborgs and Environmental Catastrophe in *The Lifecycle of Software Objects***

Ted Chiang's science fiction novella *The Lifecycle of Software Objects* situates artificial life forms alongside issues of animal endangerment and environmental catastrophe. His book follows two characters—an animal trainer turned computer programmer and a graphic artist, as they develop a new virtual species of pet called “digients.” As Chiang's story progresses, these human characters and their digient companions struggle to live in a world where the rapid technological obsolescence of the engine the digients run on begins to limit their ability to interact with the world and with each other. I want to approach *The Lifecycle of Software Objects* through an ongoing scholarly conversation within animal studies that suggests that virtual images of animals become more prevalent and more important as our connections to biological animal species are disappearing, either because the lives of the animals that make up our diet are rendered invisible to us or because species are now endangered or extinct. Chiang's novella is notable for emphasizing the endangeredness of both biological and virtual species. I find this take on animal-like AI important for this discussion because the parallels Chiang makes between digients and endangered animal species shows how virtual animals can draw our attention back to the problems facing biological animal populations, instead of merely serving as an affective distraction from these issues.



*Alba Tomasula y Garcia.*

### **Gorillas in the Mind: The Construction of a Great Ape**

Representations do cultural work on behalf of the societies that create them. The image of “the gorilla” is a powerful operator that has served a variety of interests, changing in the common imagination from ferocious beasts, as depicted in the popular 1933 film *King Kong*, to that of the gentle giants popularized in the 1970s by Dian Fossey. Yet this shift seems to have as much to do with what people want gorillas to signify as it does with how real gorillas behave. Indeed, in film, novels, and scientific studies, the narratives commonly woven around gorillas reveals how Western representations of colonized countries serve the political interests of their makers. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, these narratives were used as justifications for colonizing huge swaths of land and killing the humans and animals already living there. Today, in the 21st century, they often serve to promote and enforce particular forms of “conservation” over the interests of local people, and sometimes even over the interests and complex situations of gorillas themselves. This paper will examine the image of “the gorilla” as depicted in *King Kong*, both the popular and scientific accounts of Bushman the gorilla, who was used as a form of entertainment during the Great Depression, and the work of scientists and conservationists such as George Schaller in order to demonstrate how the idea of “the gorilla” continues to be a Rorschach test that says as much about the societies that produce the representations as about gorillas themselves.

*Bryan Alkemeyer.*

### **Shapes of Reason: The Fluid Human/Animal Boundary from Montaigne to Pope**

Many scholars have argued that the ape becomes the crucial figure in human/animal distinctions in the eighteenth century, long before Darwin’s *The Descent of Man* (1871). I seek to supplement this scholarship, and to complicate understandings of past attitudes toward animals, by analyzing representations of rational elephants in literature, natural history, and travel writing of Europe’s early modern period (1500-1800). While the ape is widely recognized as the animal that bears the closest physical resemblance to the human, many early modern writers—both before and after the eighteenth-century “discovery” of the anthropoid apes—argue that the elephant is the animal that most closely approaches human intelligence. Such beliefs about elephants challenge early

modern conceptions of the human by suggesting that the category of the rational animal must be expanded to include beings with a distinctly non-human shape. To support this thesis, I analyze accounts of elephant reason in works from Montaigne's *Apology for Raymond Sebond* (1580) to Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733), and I show how many early modern writers find it more difficult to make intellectual distinctions between humans and elephants than between humans and apes. A further implication of this argument is that scholars should continue to investigate beliefs about the intellectual proximity of humans and animals, in spite of recent suggestions that animal studies should prioritize similarities in human and animal embodiment.

Session 5G

### **Ambiguous Liminality**

*Timothy Miller.*

#### **The Solid Fluid, the Fluid Solid: Medieval Ice and the Fluidity of Figuration**

Ice famously lies at the foundation of Chaucer's dream poem *The House of Fame*. Inspired by posthumanist thought and the complex allegorical mechanisms of the poem itself, this paper raises a simple set of questions. What can medieval narratives that employ ice in the discourse of metaphor and/or allegory tell us about ice in its material ecologies? How do those ecologies differ from the world of metaphor that the substance so frequently inhabits and undergirds? Although fluid in more ways than one in its transformation from liquid into solid, ice also seems to signal the end of mutability in becoming a substance no longer fluid but fixed. Yet medieval authors who employ ice in metaphor rely on the substance's concealment within itself of the potential for reversal, for melting and reverting to fluid. In medieval narrative, ice so often appears to be a feature of the natural world taken as a given and a known, and then invoked as such to explore the complexities of human relations through reference to something believed simpler and more intelligible. But everywhere that we find ice, we should perhaps take this radical but necessary step to understanding a key ecology of the inhuman: imagining the human world as a metaphor for phase change, especially since the human body cannot itself ever endure such an experience. But in reversing the ways that ice has been used to

explain the human, perhaps we can use the human to travel beyond the human and approach ice itself.

*Ann Kibbie.*

### **Fluid Identity: Transfusion and Transgendered Selfhood in William Delisle Hay's**

In William Delisle Hay's sensational novel (1888), which has, until now, received no critical attention, an experimental blood transfusion effects a complicated gender transformation, as a male donor finds that his consciousness has been transferred, along with his blood, to the body of the female recipient. Hay's novel—part science fiction, part tale of terror, part detective story, and part satire—is not merely an exercise in sensation. It begins with a series of philosophical questions: “Who am I, or you? What am I, or you? . . . What is Personality, Individuality, Identity . . . and how is its existence begun, separated from other existences, and ended?” While Hay is a far cry from a systematic philosophical thinker, he uses the fiction of blood transfusion to present his readers with the kind of thought experiment that has animated discussions about personal identity since the appearance of John Locke's in 1690. But, by foregrounding gender and sexual identity in his tale of the fluid relocation of consciousness from one body to another, Hay's text entertains the problem of how sexual identity is or is not constitutive of personal identity. By imagining a man's involuntary inhabitation of a female body, Hay also provides a new twist on the familiar *femme fatale* of Victorian fiction.

*Alissa Walls.*

### **“Unauthorized Entry Prohibited” ...Floating Fast with Fred Tomaselli's Hummingbird**

The artist Fred Tomaselli has argued that, “We live in a mutating landscape of rapidly hybridizing bits—on the level of DNA and binary code, in the cross-pollination of global instant-access culture...Purity is a myth.” In Tomaselli's *Hummingbird* (2004) we find ourselves “floating fast” within a swirling pharmacopeia of pills, flowers, leaves, birds, body parts, and celestial geometries. Made by an artist from Los Angeles, living in Brooklyn, whose painting hangs in a private residence in England, *Hummingbird* speaks to portability, material fluidity if you will. Second, its discourse with historical natural history addresses exploration and exchange, and the mobility of human and non-human animals,

artifacts and specimens and ideas. Finally, I want here to specifically reconsider Tomaselli's hummingbird, in paint and in the world, as a migratory non-human animal, crossing borders that human animals often cannot. This fact has continued to strike me in rather powerful ways since a month-long experience on the borderlands—Arizona, New Mexico, Chihuahua and Sonora—in 2009. Standing in a National Wildlife Refuge, a vehicle boundary fence preventing my movements southward, I read a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sign that depicted a flying goose: “Unauthorized Entry Prohibited.” Yet as I stood there, watching clouds and shadows, without passports, passing freely back and forth over the fence I marveled at the ability of human and non-human animals to upset legislated political lines. This paper investigates Tomaselli's representation of “floating fast,” in which he simultaneously asserts the fixity of boundaries and the fluidity of movements.

Session 5H

### **Techniques of Enchantment: Magic in a Secular Age**

Chair: *Marie-Pier Boucher*

In the contemporary juncture where the sciences and arts are often secularized, what would an experience of magical enchantment do for us? Moving fluidly between historical and contemporary analysis of magic as cosmological practice, popular conjuring trick, religious power, and as an aesthetic force that figures a state of dynamic unity, this panel will explore the pragmatics of magic to rethink science's creativity and its enchanting effects. “Techniques of Enchantment: Magic in a Secular Age” will look to altered states generated by practices of levitation, three-dimensional medical imaging, outer space science and technology, optical illusions, hypnosis, subconscious and empirical perception, to explore the magical potential of the senses. That is, we ask does enchantment generate unprecedented forms of perception to give rise to new modes of knowledge? The aim of this panel will be to activate a creative and productive flow between heterogeneous fields of practices to enchant inquiry itself. We will envision the possibilities of charting multinodal structures of thought to produce new forms of communication between art, science, technology, religion, literature, and medicine.

*Nahum All.*

## **Reenchantment and Space Sciences**

This research and artistic project join together two areas: outer space activities and the concept of reenchantment. I will examine how the new discoveries in space sciences are providing us with a unique opportunity to feel, once again enchanted by the universe in a secular way. I will challenge what the German sociologist Max Weber noted in the early 20th century. He said, due to the secularization of the West that because of its science and industrial development, the world was facing disenchantment.[1] The latter involves losing the sense of awe and wonder experienced as science has been typically associated with coldness and extreme rationalism. It has also given society a certain sense of disconnection from the mysteries of the world. Following the Weberian line of thought, space sciences are the leading force in exploring and studying space yet somehow manage to achieve disenchantment in our relationship with it. Carl Sagan quotes the following on this concept: We have grown distant from the Cosmos. It has seemed remote and irrelevant to everyday concerns, but science has found not only that the universe has a reeling and ecstatic grandeur, not only that it is accessible to human understanding, but also that we are, in a very real and profound sense, a part of that Cosmos, born from it, our fate deeply connected with it. The most basic human events and the most trivial trace back to the universe and its origins.[Sagan, 1994] It is this connection I will present. I hope this research will bring a new understanding of the importance of space activities outside scientific circles. An understanding that is rooted in personal experience, that can generate a sense of awe, wonder and a profound connection with the cosmos.

*Marie-Pier Boucher.*

### **Suspend, Float, Fly**

At the contemporary juncture in which experimental architecture is turning to a variety of techniques associated with outer space science and technology, this paper explores the unprecedented forms of aesthetic experiences generated by life in weightlessness. Suspend, Float, Fly speculates on how the experience of weightlessness engages the mental-physical continuum in new aesthetic experiences that give rise to enchanting effects. Looking specifically at different technical lineages for achieving weightlessness: on the one hand, outer space exploration and its habitats, and on the other, techniques of suspension associated with experimental architecture, I will question how weightlessness

figures a state of magical dynamic unity that problematizes anew the relationship between mentality and physicality. By exploring how architectural and spatial techniques of suspension informed by life in weightlessness challenge spatial orientation, I will question the level of mental and physical energy necessary to trigger enchanting experiences. In brief, my aim will be to question how weightlessness and suspension enable mental and physical life to emerge as a new dynamic unity endowed with the magical power of enchantment.

*Cheryl Spinner.*

### **“Science (Photo) Fiction “**

This paper explores the conceptual fluidity of scientific visual technologies to excavate and re-configure a new history of science imaging that is rooted in fiction. I look to the nineteenth century, when scientific photography first emerges, to provide a lineage from which we might put pressure on the notion that scientific imaging is characteristically objective. Instead, I argue that 19th-century science is not only infused with fiction but even registers traces of the mystical in its aesthetics. “Science (Photo) Fiction” excavates the forgotten enchantments of science photography by arguing that 19th-century scientific images used the very same techniques employed in spirit photography and combination printing. Think of Marey’s use of “skeleton suits” to photograph human locomotion, Galton’s fictive racial types, and stereographs of the moon that created astronomical fictions. Camera trickery has been used in the service of science for quite some time then. If science produces fictions, I ask, why its fictive underpinnings are elided. By understanding that scientific imaging technologies blur the lines between fiction, art, and science, I argue that we might better train physicians and scientists to realize both the limitations and great potential of fictive reading practices.

Session 5I

### **Fluidity and Form: Cultural Molds and Political Modulations**

Chair: *Frida Beckman*

Contemporary global capitalism is typically characterized in terms of fluidity. When theorized in terms of power, Deleuze’s proposed development of Foucault’s disciplinary society builds on how molds, enclosures, and institutions have been increasingly succeeded by modulations, undulations, and free-floating control. As theorized in terms of critique, this fluidity has generated a crisis – as articulated

by for example Latour and Negri – a difficulty of finding a position from which critique is possible. Negri suggests that these developments have rendered cultural critique banal and superfluous. And indeed, if control society functions “like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point” as Deleuze suggests, how are we to understand the forms it nonetheless takes, if ever so temporarily? This panel is particularly interested in how cultural applications of form can be seen to relate and respond to the fluidity of control. Its different papers look specifically at the work form is set to do in different cultural modes of expression. What is the role of form in a culture characterized by fluidity? Does it, like Jameson suggests regarding allegory, function to create a reassuring sense of meaning in its midst? Can modulations of form be seen as a way of controlling the fluidity of power and, conversely, is it still possible to see a cultural resistance to form as a resistance to control in a contemporaneity in which fluidity has become the principle?

*Frida Beckman.*

### **J.G. Ballard and the Resistance to Form**

The literary work of J.G. Ballard offers a long time engagement with the politics of time and space reaching from the 1960s until the first decade of the 21st century. His novelistic production falls into a number of interrelated but thematically bound periods each of which carries its own implications in terms of political space as well as in terms of form. While his earlier novels resist interpretation both on the level of content and the level of form, his later work, the paper argues, shows an increasing level of allegorization. As such, his work enables us to discuss how the fluidity of contemporary power can be related to the politics of form.

*Gregg Lambert.*

### **Life, Dada, and Control**

In the conclusion of Foucault, Deleuze draws speculative conclusions concerning the potential regroupings of the forces of life and power in parallel with the earlier destination of language in modern literature to approach a limit through “a-grammaticalities that supersede the signifier.” In particular, for Deleuze, the forms of error that are expressed by molecular biology and third-generation



machines are defined in terms of modern literature and its tendency to “uncover a 'strange language within language' and tends towards an atypical form of expression that marks the end of language as such.” In other words, the forms of error employed by the forces of life and labor (i.e., power) bear more than a resemblance to the element of chance that is deployed by Dadaist practices, in which the “act” of error represents a creative leap in the name freedom from all determination. And yet, the first question is can we accept this parallelism at all? That is, can we accept this Dadaesque image of the powers of chance as the most singular creation of life itself, or is this what Foucault intended by referring to the singular manner that life has invented, in the form of man, to carry within itself the eventuality of error? The second question is in what way we can say that the new forms of chance and anomaly introduced by the forms of modern art have a relation to the manner in which chance and anomalies evolve in more complex living and informational systems.

*Gregory Flaxman.*

### **The Dividual Diagram**

The purpose of this talk will be to consider the transformation of both the subject and the image wrought by post-disciplinary societies. In particular, it will analyze how the introduction of new (i.e., post-cinematic) screens are consonant with a new regime of power-relations, at once oustripping the older sense of an individual and precipitating what Deleuze dubbed "the dividual."

*Cary Wolfe.*

### **Wallace Stevens and the Ecology of Weak Form**

Birds comprise arguably one of the most storied topoi in Anglo-American poetry—and particularly in the Romantic genealogy that runs from Keats’s nightingale, Shelley’s skylark, and Poe’s raven to the birds that appear centrally in Wallace Stevens’s “Sunday Morning” and “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.” In fact, two of Stevens’s most important birds appear in the poems that end his two major collections. Stevens is drawn to the bird topos for a number of reasons at different points in his career. Most of all, I think, Stevens is fascinated by birds because of their intensely inhuman embodiment of a subjectivity, a point of view, at once recognizable and yet utterly foreign—a strangeness for which even the term “animal” would seem a domestication. This paper will argue that the bird in Stevens is above all a figure for the complexities

that attend the problem of how “observation” produces the system/environment relationship (in systems theory parlance)—a problematic everywhere foregrounded in the familiar Romantic thematics of Imagination vs. Nature that Stevens quite conspicuously inherits. Drawing primarily on the work of Niklas Luhmann, I will attempt to elucidate how in the bird topos of Stevens, the lines of animal studies and posthumanism cross in a way that subordinates the problem of the animal other to the more radically inhuman or ahuman otherness of a machinic dynamics of paradoxical observation that is not limited to animal and human bodies, but in fact “traverses the life/death relation.”

**Lunch Break - Fri 12:15 pm - 2:00 pm**

Lunch Break

**Session 6 - Fri 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm**

Session 6A

**Modern Arts, Science, and Occultism III: Fluidic Vibrations in Occultism, Modern Art and Music**

Chair: [\*Linda Dalrymple Henderson\*](#)

Long excluded from formalist histories of modern art, occultism played a key role for many of the major figures of modernism in the early twentieth century. Without knowledge of the still-dominant ether physics of the period, scholars have not recognized the way in which concepts like the fluid, impalpable, vibrating ether of space operated across the realms of science and occultism—at the hands, for example, of physicist Sir Oliver Lodge or Theosophist C. W. Leadbeater. This was a period preoccupied with invisible waves and energies and a moment when the photographic plate, on the model of X-rays, was viewed as a *révélateur* of phenomena beyond the range of human perception. Musicians in this period, too, were interested in expanding perception beyond the range of familiar, harmonious vibrations to new dissonant tonalities and “noise” itself. Fluid vibrations—whether electromagnetic waves in the ether or new kinds of sound—offered the stimulating conception of a universe alive with previously

imperceptible phenomena that the sensitive occultist, artist, or musician might reveal. [This is the third session in a three-panel stream, “Modern Arts, Science, and Occultism,” with the first two panels submitted by Serena Keshavjee.] PLEASE SCHEDULE, IF POSSIBLE, IN AN ART STREAM WITH JAMES MCMANUS'S 3 FLUXUS PANELS (not in conflict with them!)

*Jeremy Stolow.*

### **Visualizing Xx Rays: On Photography, Psychic Research, and Occult Revelation**

From 1909 to 1911, the esteemed psychologist Julian Ochorowicz (1850-1917) conducted a series of photographic experiments based on his work with Stanislava Tomczyk, a medium whom Ochorowicz had “discovered” in Poland, and who had been brought to Paris for further study. The findings were published in a series of articles in the *Annales des sciences psychiques*, generating considerable discussion and debate among members of the French scientific establishment as well as readers and commentators in occult circles. At the heart of Ochorowicz’s research was a series of theoretical speculations concerning hitherto unknown invisible forces and luminescent energies at the disposal of the spirit medium: new powers that demanded the coining of a new vocabulary, including the terms “mediumnic lights” (*lumières médiumniques*) “rigid rays,” (*rayons rigides*) and “Xx-Rays” (*rayons Xx*). Their study, Ochorowicz was convinced, promised to help unlock some deep secrets of a radiant universe that had yet to be properly documented, let alone fully understood. This paper will examine Ochorowicz’s research on radiant energies and their luminescent effects, a crucial element of which, I shall argue, was his reliance upon the photographic apparatus as medium of esoteric revelation as well as a guarantor of objective, scientific truth.

*Luciano Chessa.*

### **“Music the Dead Can Hear:” Theosophical Presences in Luigi Russolo’s Art of Noises**

Recently, there has been a growing interest in the work of the Italian Futurist painter, composer, and builder of musical instruments, Luigi Russolo (1885-1947). As the author of the first systematic aesthetics of noise and the alleged creator of the first mechanical sound synthesizer (he first built it in 1913 and

called it *intonarumori*), Russolo is coming to be regarded as a crucial figure in the evolution of twentieth-century music. In the present paper I demonstrate that Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater's theory of "Thought Forms" was the foundation upon which Russolo erected his Art of Noises. I also show that both Russolo's noise aesthetics and its practical manifestation—the *intonarumori*—were for him and his Futurist associates elements of a multi-leveled experiment to reach higher states of spiritual consciousness. In this paper I carry this new critical reading further, by uncovering and systematically describing the occult plan of the Art of Noises. This view is supported by a variety of documents that have largely fallen under the radar of Futurism scholars. Chief among these is the coeval occult interpretation of the Art of Noises as presented by the Futurist writer Paolo Buzzi in a poem, in a wartime account and, rather disturbingly, in an obscure novel featuring none other than Luigi Russolo as the metempsychotic, biomechanical protagonist.

[Linda Dalrymple Henderson.](#)

### **Abstraction and the Ether: The Cases of Kandinsky, Mondrian, and Malevich**

Increasingly, it is becoming clear that one of the major stimuli for modernist innovation in the early twentieth century was the still-dominant paradigm of the ether of space filled with vibrating waves—what I have termed "vibratory modernism" (2002). From X-rays to the Hertzian waves of wireless telegraphy, scientific discoveries from the late 1880s through the early years of the century supported the idea of a "meta-reality" beyond the reach of human perception. On the model of radioactivity, matter was posited to be dematerializing into the vibrating ether at the same time it might be coalescing from it, creating a fluid model of continuity between matter and space (and, for occultists, matter and spirit). Indeed, occultists responded actively to this anti-materialist paradigm, and those artists inclined to Theosophy found information on these subjects in both the ubiquitous popular scientific writing of the period and Theosophical texts by figures such as C. W. Leadbeater and Rudolf Steiner. How can we possibly understand the development of abstract painting without knowledge of how artists such as Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, and Kazimir Malevich understood the terms "matter" and "space" in this period? Following an initial discussion of Wassily Kandinsky, this paper focuses on the critical role of the ether in the works of Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich.

[\*Lynn Boland\*](#).

### **A Culture of Dissonance: Wassily Kandinsky, Vibration, and the Development of Abstract Painting**

Wassily Kandinsky's interest in music as a source for abstraction in painting has often been noted in the scholarship on his art. However, no studies have sufficiently explained how the artist employed musical strategies. Although Kandinsky looked primarily to Arnold Schoenberg's exploration of the "emancipation of dissonance," his ideas developed within a much broader context of dissonance, a phenomenon grounded in vibrating waves of sound. By the late nineteenth century, extended passages of dissonance were common in musical compositions. At the same time, the concept of dissonance as a positive force was suggested in a wide range of late nineteenth-century literature, including the writings of Nietzsche, occult authors, popular texts on physics and experimental psychology, as well as within music and art theory. Close readings of Kandinsky's theoretical texts and selected works of art in this larger context provide crucial new insights into how he understood the concept of dissonance as well as that of vibration during the formation of his abstract style. Kandinsky's painting *Composition VII* of 1913 is the primary visual focus of this paper.

Session 6B

### **Code as Flow: Computer Code as Flows of Data**

Chair: [\*Wendy Chun\*](#)

When learning to develop an abstract understanding of computer software, programmers are taught to use flow charts. "Flow," in turns out, is a concept with a long and deep history in computer science, from Grace Hopper's language English-like FLOW-MATIC, the first commercially marketed computer language, to the esoteric, diagrammatic programming language Befunge, flow has proven a central metaphor. But flow is also a central concept in understanding how code is interconnected and processed. On this panel, using the methods of Critical Code Studies, three scholars will examine the notion of code in programming structures from the history of a specific language to more general structures and the design of a particular program. We will explore the way two radically disparate languages present computational flow to a programmer: FLOW-MATIC, with its syntax that resembles natural language, and the esoteric language Piet, which takes on the look of abstract painting. Then, we will

investigate and explore branching and conditional structures as a fundamental programming languages. Looking at the flow of a particular program, we will conclude with an examination of some code written by Friedrich Kittler, the theorist who famously wrote "There is No Software." This panel will explore fluidity in code and the trace the concept of flow as it courses through computer culture.

*[Ben Allen.](#)*

### **Divergent Flows: Programming in Piet and Grace Hopper's FLOW-MATIC**

In what ways are programming languages languages? As a way of exploring this question, I will examine two deliberately very different artifacts; a “hello world” program written in the esoteric programming language Piet, and snippets of early code for UNIVAC, written by Grace Hopper’s Automatic Programming Group at Remington Rand. Piet is a programming language written in carefully arranged blocks of color in a bitmap, rather than in words. The “hello world” piece I consider – primarily written to be seen, rather than compiled – serves as a useful tool for understanding how or whether there is necessarily a linguistic aspect to code. Whereas works in Piet, and other similar esoteric languages, work to complicate our sense of how language-like programming languages are, looking at code from the first generation of high-level languages can show the early roots of the association between natural languages and the notations used for programming computers. Advertising material related to FLOW-MATIC, the first commercially marketed programming language, consistently invite the reader to think of FLOW-MATIC as being simply English. More than this, internal-facing documents written by the programmers themselves frequently refer to programming “in English” – for reasons as much related to the organization of labor in Remington Rand as to the code itself. Drawing on recently published works from the history of computing and on the Frances E. Holberton papers at the Babbage Institute, I aim to trace out the (frequently historically contingent) origins of the association between language and programming.

*[Evan Buswell.](#)*

### **If: Close Reading the Conditional Branch Instruction**

Early attempts at computer languages are typified by their struggle to subsume human, mechanical, and electronic algorithms into a purely linguistic form. Conditional branch instructions all contain a tension that illustrates the nature of this struggle, and thereby the different ways in which code has become language. While a conditional branch represents a choice between two possibilities, it just as much represents a leap out of what is being represented to another place in the program. In this presentation I will close read several variations of the branch instruction, from its prehistory in Von Neumann's Draft Report to its stabilization during the design of the EDVAC, to its different forms in the early high-level languages FORTRAN and FLOW-MATIC, and finally to its modern representations in structured programming and the if statement. Each one of these points represents a different inflection of the linguistic nature of code, and a different suppression and incorporation of the nonlinguistic elements of an algorithm.

*Mark C. Marino.*

### **There is No Software Except Kittler's Software**

Friedrich Kittler refuted Lev Manovich's MIT Book series with his pronouncement that "There is No Software." In that essay, Kittler dismisses software, arguing that source code is merely an interface to the electronic components of the machine. However, Friedrich Kittler wrote software of his own, a ray tracer implemented in languages C and Assembly. A ray tracer is a drawing program used for creating images by replicating the path of light through the object. According to Paul Feigelfeld, a student of Kittler in who has archived the source code, the German media theorist used Assembly because it brought him closer to the machine. Using the methods of Critical Code Studies, I will explore what it means to be closer to the machine and trace the fingerprints of Kittler in the code, how Kittler encoded the flow of light into this drawing program, and the implications of that programming for his views on software.

Session 6C

### **Textu(r)al Folds and Fluids of Time and Space**

Chair: *Pierre Cassou-Noguès*

This panel seeks to investigate the ways in which fluids relate to space and time, i.e., the ways in which the experience of fluidity produces unusual structures of space and time. In his short essay « The Earth does not Move », Husserl links the



constitution of space and the position of objects that endure in time to the activity of walking on a fixed ground. When I get up and walk on the ground, I experience, according to Husserl, the firmness of the ground and the movement of my body; the earth indeed does not move, and can serve as a grid in order to constitute a homogeneous space in which objects have their particular position and endure in time. What happens, however, when there is no fixed ground, when the reader is confronted with a complex, foliated, almost baroque topology that challenges Euclidian geometry and in which points fail to map upon themselves? What structures of space and time would fluids give rise to? What kinds of time and space does fluidity as a feature of text in, or as, flux imply? Can texts only be deemed to be fluid when they have forsaken the stable medium of print? Does textual fluidity relate to environmental fluidity and bring about the same structures of space and time, or does text oppose an intrinsic resistance to the flow of time and the continuum of space, fostering the emergence of a paradoxical form of texture that remains to be defined?

*Pierre Cassou-Noguès.*

### **Space, Time and Objects by the Seaside**

I will start by discussing various descriptions, dating from the XVIIIth century, of the seaside in the “Landes,” in the southwestern part of France. I will concentrate particularly on some memoirs by Claude Masse, an engineer sent to the region to draw a map of the coast line. Masse emphasizes mostly on the “sterility” of the region, the “nudity” of the beaches and the “mobility” of the dunes: the landscape seems to be entirely fluid, the dunes look like waves, move like waves, only with a different rhythm. What will draw my interest is not exactly the alien character of these descriptions (in the summer we now flock by hundreds of thousands to the sea-side that Masse, as several of his contemporaries, found “hideous” and “terrifying”) but the metaphysics involved in these alien descriptions. Two problems in particular: 1. Just as in “The Earth, Does Not Move,” Husserl imagines a being born on a boat and wonders what kind of space and horizon this being could experience, we may wonder what kind of metaphysics a subject originating in Masse's fluid landscape would come up with. How much of our usual concepts of space, time and object are related to the firm ground beneath our feet? 2. These descriptions are different from the ones that we, and travelers a

century later, would give. To what extent, on what conditions, can we give them some reality?

*Gwen Le Cor.*

**Reading Textu(r)al Fluidity and Porosity: Stephanie Strickland’s slippingglimpse and Jonathan Safran Foer’s Tree of Codes.**

This paper aims at examining the flickerings of meaning in fluid and porous textual environments by focusing on two works whose hybrid textures prevents sense from ever solidifying. *slippingglimpse* is an electronic work in which sequences of words appear to be floating on videos of moving water—they are said to be “treading a wave.” The text thus loses its stability as it is “read” by the water. I am interested in the way this liquid text makes meaning quaver as its texture hesitates between the flow of water and the stability provided by the “coastal chreods” (a term used by the authors to refer to the videos and which comes from mathematics and René Thom’s catastrophe theory). Likewise, *Tree of Codes* is a paper sculpture which relinquishes the solidity of the page in favor of the instability introduced by the reading porosity calls for. The language of *Tree of Codes* originates both in the air and in the text, and hence combines the solidity of an imprint to the manifold possibilities that emanate from the “atmosphere.” My aim is to question liquidity and porosity as unbinding forces, which open up sense as they open up the textual space to fluidity or porosity.

*Stéphane Vanderhaeghe.*

**Notes on Virtual Fiction**

Taking my cue from diverse examples in contemporary American fiction, I would like to interrogate the concept of “textuality” and see the ways in which the rise of new media and of electronic literature may have redefined it—or at least changed the way the reader apprehends it. With the examples of such works as Mark Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* or Joe Ashby Porter’s *The Near Future*, Robert Coover’s *John’s Wife* or Michael Joyce’s *Disappearance*, I would like to analyse how text shifts about on the page through a series of unpredictable fluctuations, shaping unstable narrative worlds while deconstructing them in the same breath. What such novels exemplify may be the fluidity of narrative texture along with the malleability of textuality by foregrounding a poetics of the virtual that questions the reading experience and the temporality of text reception.

Arnaud Regnauld.

**Twirls, Whorls and Interstitial Environments in *afternoon, a story*, *Twelve Blue* and *Wasby* Michael Joyce, or the Truth of the Matter**

Michael Joyce defines the interstitial as “the place where the reader truly writes the text [...], as the ‘diffeomorphism [where] a point suddenly fails to map onto itself.’” I contend that those elusive and uncharted points foster resistance and add texture to an otherwise fluid textual environment as they ceaselessly remap the grid of the syntagmatic onto the complex topology of a foliated and mobile paradigm. Not fixed objects, but objectiles, these three texts are intrinsically unstable — even though somewhat more problematically so for *Was*, a novel in print as opposed to its electronic predecessors — capable of generating an infinite number of variations questioning the notions of truth and origin: “the text becomes a present tense palimpsest where what shines through are not past versions but potential alternate views » Joyce adds. In Deleuze’s words: “The new status of the object no longer refers its condition to a spatial mold - in other words to a relation of form-matter - but to a temporal modulation that implies as much the beginnings of a continuous variation of matter as a continuous development of form” (Fold, 37). How can we delineate the contours of a text and shape it into a meaningful form since they literally never took place, except as part of an uncharted occurrence failing to map itself upon itself: “It is not a variation of truth according to the subject but the condition in which the truth of a variation appears to the subject”(20)

Session 6D

**Biosphere Genealogy (ASLE Panel)**

Chair: Bruce Clarke; Derek Woods

Our panel addresses some genealogical threads rarely included in the contemporary scientific consensus on the Earth system: Vernadsky's idea of the noosphere and its later developments in semiotics; sociological organicism; and Bergson's influence on the biosphere concept. Through the politics of climate change and geoengineering, Earth system science promises to become a powerful technocratic discourse, playing a role analogous to that of cybernetics in the second half of the twentieth century. Biosphere Genealogy works through some rhetorical and conceptual underpinnings of what is variously called biogeochemistry, Gaia theory, and earth system science.

*Adam Webb-Orenstein.*

### **How Does the Biosphere Mean?**

What is the relationship between the emergence of life and the emergence of meaning? The notion that the social can be explained in organicist terms has a deep history, but its legitimacy and status are unclear, not least because, from Durkheim's society-as-superorganism to McLuhan's "extensions of man," it has been vulnerable to accusations of holism and of literalizing the metaphorical application of a properly biological concept. While more recent work in biosemiotics has explored the ways in which sign systems are integral not only to nonhuman socialities but, more fundamentally, to the basic processes of biological and ecological development, the question of where symbolic communication begins and ends remains a pressing one requiring a global perspective. My paper will explore this problem through the work of three Russian thinkers and their respective engagements with the concept of the biosphere. Alexander Bogdanov, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Yuri Lotman each theorized the organization of symbolic schemes within conceptual frameworks of complex, dynamic systems irreducible to the strict Marxist base/superstructure relationship. Indeed, as some scholars have noted, Bogdanov's proposed discipline of tektology anticipated the later contributions of cybernetics and systems theory, fields that are themselves closely linked with formulations of the biospheric model of planetary ecology. Parts of Bakhtin and Lotman's oeuvres likewise intersect with systems theoretical concerns, but whereas the latter arguably deproblematize semiosis by abstracting it into the register of information, these theorists interrogate how living relates to signifying and how culture relates to meaning.

*Derek Woods.*

### **Vernadsky, Bergson, and the Biosphere as Diegetic Space**

Bergson's influence on Vernadsky clarifies the emergence of the biosphere as a spatial concept, one that also requires a mutation in the history of diegetic space. This mutation affects literary setting, particularly in SF. The genealogy of the biosphere needs to include the many domes and mesocosms of SF fiction and film, up to and including the realized fantasy of Arizona's Biosphere 2. These other biospheres, Biosphere n+1, often appear as nested diegetic levels. What do

these formal characteristics of the biosphere mean for earth system science and geoengineering? How do biosphere and biosphere discourse change how texts produce meaning about the Earth?

*Cordelia Sand.*

### **What is Earth?**

Vladimir Vernadsky supplemented his systems-thinking of the Earth, organized according to the concepts of 'geosphere' and 'biosphere', with his additional notion of the 'noösphere', the sphere of the mind. While this was conceived by Vernadsky as the sphere of the human mind, at the start of the third millennium the concepts of 'human' and 'mind' have expanded, and are neither necessarily linked, nor exclusive of nonhuman life and matter. Microbiologist, naturalist, and evolutionist Lynn Margulis built on Vernadsky's systems-thinking of the Earth with her distinctive contributions to Gaia theory. Margulis' Gaia may be read together with this enlarged notion of the noösphere to ask the question: What is Earth in the twenty-first century as a scientific object of new and politicized knowledge practices.

Session 6E

### **Philosophy**

*Rodrigo Martini Paula.*

### **Alfred Jarry and 'pataphysics: Ebbs in the Flow of the History of Science.**

In the flow of the history of science, Alfred Jarry's 'pataphysics is certainly an ebb. When inventing the fiction of the "science of imaginary solutions," Jarry takes the clinamen — that for Lucretius atoms swerve from a straight line in their movement — and employs it in a theory of scientific chaos, with ripple effects even in the present. Similarly, Michel Serres's *Birth of Physics* (1977) uses the same Lucretius to speak of an alternative tradition in physics, one that would also change the flow of the history of science: it would embrace atomism, the clinamen, and would itself be a swerve from the fluidity of metaphysical and positivist science. Along with the developments in quantum physics, thermodynamics, and open systems, Serres's new tradition understands that the object of physics is "mass, fluids and heat" (5). However, Serres doesn't at any

moment account for ‘pataphysics. In this paper, I will read Jarry’s *Exploits and Opinions of Dr. Faustroll, Pataphysician* (1911) and use it to complicate Serres’s new history of science. This reading will show how an avant-garde science can disrupt a tradition of physics and run against the flow of history.

*Matthew Packer.*

### **Still Anxious About Influence? Social Contagion & Rene Girard’s Mimetic Theory**

Forty years after *The Anxiety of Influence*, the socially vexing sort of influence Harold Bloom saw as a primary generator in the history of poetry is now widely recognized as a contagiousness that extends to many different human behaviors and networks. Influence and ‘influentials’ today are everywhere—and importantly, seen to be everywhere. And yet the social aspects of mimesis, for which ‘influence’ has long been a euphemism, still scarcely seem understood, partly because we continue to think of imitation mainly in aesthetic terms. Issues surrounding copyright, cloning, plagiarism, coolhunting, and originality all involve mimesis somehow—but exactly how isn’t clear from theories of representational mimesis. Resurgent interest and research in the mimetic theory of René Girard (“the new Darwin of the human sciences”), however, are slowly shedding light on this large and fundamental human problem. Since even desire and conflict are mimetic—people want what they see others wanting and clash when their interests converge—Girard’s theory has implications for much of human culture. This presentation for SLSA offers a quick outline of Girard’s idea, as applied to a few contemporary challenges including the China-U.S. rivalry.

Session 6F

### **Pure-bloods and Fluid Bodies: The Traffic in Horses**

Chair: *Kari Weil*

Horses have been integral to the fabric and fantasies of the modern world not only because of their contributions to labor and transportation, but also as entertainment, objects of science, and objects, as well as subjects of affection. Horses were imported from “Eastern” worlds to strengthen or beautify local breeds. They were prized in shows and priced as meat. In either case, they were capital, rendered for various forms of consumption, both real and symbolic, much like Nicole Shukin describes in her recent *Animal Capital*. But increasing fluid boundaries between public and private space and between work and leisure,

contributed to possibilities for new affective relations and practices between humans and horses and new ways of representing those relations. This panel will address not only the status of the pure blood horse as liquid capital and prize possession but also changed understandings of just and unjust human-horse relations and practice from the 18th century to the present.

*Kari Weil.*

**Beating and Breeding in Eugene Sue's Godolphin Arabian.**

The “making” of the thoroughbred in the 18th century, newly accentuated the way that horses embody material and symbolic capital; their value determined by their labor power and/or by their beauty and obedience—that “nobility” that Buffon suggested could be transferred to humans in his designation of the horse as “the most noble conquest of man.” Eugene Sue’s short novel, *Godolphin Arabian* draws on 18th century tales about one of the founding sires of the thoroughbred race, and dramatizes the discovery of the value of “oriental” blood for improving British horse. More importantly, for my purposes, Sue’s novel it is a contradictory tale of the horse moving between zoe and bios, between identification with the (sometimes dangerous and sometimes abused) labor power of the working, and the power of blood and family name of the aristocracy, resulting in a traffic jam between discourses of class, of orientalism and of animal passions. In what follows I want to try to tease out the interrelations between blood and capital, but also examine the way that capital itself is alternately intertwined with and opposed to matters of affection or more specifically empathy—empathy for horses as modeled by but perhaps also in contest with empathy for other humans.

*Richard Nash.*

**Fluid: The Thoroughbred racehorse; of blood, and beyond**

A commonplace in praising the movement of the thoroughbred is to note his “fluid action.” A long-standing denomination of the breed is that of “blood-horse.” This presentation will deploy a range of material and figurative locutions of fluidity, both specific to blood and beyond that context, with a special reference to current, highly-charged debates about equine welfare and therapeutic medication and also to long-standing historical contexts that shape the contours of those debates. In the process, we will consider various fluids (blood, synovial



fluid, edema, etc.) as symptom, as figure, as consequence. And we will be led to consider how difficult it is to reconcile fluid bodies with strictly inflexible guidelines.

*Karen Raber.*

### **Fluidity: Aesthetics, Welfare, and Modern Sport Horses**

Since the classical era, dressage has celebrated harmony between horse and rider. Although initially conceived as a military skill, over time equitation became an elegant dance, with beauty as its ultimate standard. Its aesthetics necessarily required an ethical relationship between human and animal, which was achieved by careful training of both partners. Modern competitive dressage retains this commitment to harmony, which is now most often expressed by the term “fluidity.” Yet the production of a “fluid” set of movements often seems to invite the abusive application of crank nosebands, bits, and spurs, and to violate classical training principles. This paper will analyze the amorphously defined and applied dressage ideal of “fluidity” in video records of performances by top dressage riders and horses, and will interrogate the breeding practices and trafficking of horseflesh that transmit “fluid” performance capacity.

Session 6G

### **Cultural Flow**

*Angelika Potempa; Miriam T. Rodriguez.*

### **Of the border, on the border and terminally liminal: liminal persons in a border space.**

Geographic border areas are a particular form of liminality—fluid and transitional— where people and goods are constantly moving in and out. Moreover, these areas are either romanticized as a fascinating mix of two cultures or vilified as a place of drug wars and smuggling operations, as with the U.S. – Mexican border. Nevertheless, this is only part of the picture since the actuality of “place” in this region is only reflective of the bordering ones, and so is a neither/nor: a terminal flux of non-space in which the inhabitants have their own dynamics that are, paradoxically, static, and so a perpetual mimicking of a (non)space as place. Hence, as the proposed paper will argue, Turner and Getz’s notion of permanent liminality—a place out of place, a time out of time and, when

applied to the individual, alluding to one without individuality having a non-identical identity—is applicable. Thus, the outsider in a liminal space, so defined, would be the incorporation of the ultimate form of liminality, a person who is double-liminal: first, as one of the border and, second, as the marginalized odd one out within the liminal. This specific situatedness determines the double-liminal person's epistemological position. In order to critically examine the experience of permanent liminality, depictions of the U.S. – Mexican border in film and literature by those looking in from both outsides as well as by insiders will be utilized, for instance, Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, Domingo Martínez's *The Boy Kings of Texas*, and *The Border*.

*Michael Garcia.*

**“Fluid Identities: Cultural Mixing and Blended Metaphors for the Embodied Ethnic Self in Richard Rodriguez’s *Brown*”**

Richard Rodriguez's meditations on identity in *Brown: the Last Discovery of America* resonate with Gloria Anzaldúa's theorization of *mestizaje*, and trouble the waters of any monolithic notion of ethnic identity. Both texts theorize identity, and ethnic identity in particular, through a series of thematically-linked autobiographical essays. This paper explores Richard Rodriguez's use of the trope of “brown” as a celebration and conceptualization of cultural and racial miscegenation. Brown is, as Rodriguez describes it, the color you get when all the crayons melt together in the sun. Brown travels with but also moves beyond now-standard conceptualizations of identity such as “cosmopolitan” (which seems accessible only to those who can afford to travel), “frontier/border,” and “hybridity” by stressing the multipolarity and complex interaction of various ethnic and other cultures. In contrast, some notions of hybridity seem to assume that all hybrid identities are equally bilingual (and/or bicultural) or otherwise hybrid in the same ways—an authenticating gesture that as Debra Castillo and María Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba note in *Border Women* “runs the risk of excluding a large number of primary referents” (14). Whether resistant or revisionist in spirit, rereading Rodriguez acknowledges the irredeemable complexity of identity—intersubjective, contradiction-laden, and brown.

*Carla Dye.*

**The Liminality of *La Travesía*: How the Linguistic Innovation of Codeswitching Allows Flow Between and Around Cultures**

Codeswitching and the emergence of hybrid languages bridge the gap between past and present cultures, allowing us to reformulate the future while recognizing the past. It promotes a space for intimacy, builds a bridge to introduce cross-cultural traffic with alternative and alien viewpoints while creating a fluidity exploring multiple spaces of liminality, where social hierarchies dissolve and diverse threads of subjectivity thrive side by side. Through these varied threads, the heteroglossic voices (to use Mikhail Bakhtin's term) build a bridge between the languages by applying competing cultural codes, allowing for multiple interpretations. This paper takes Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism with its centrifugal and centripetal forces, and examines Ibis Gomez-Vega's novel, *Send My Roots Rain* advancing the theory that those intent on rebelling against stultifying monological stances appropriate language to reflect the fluidity of their vision. Her text illuminates the struggle of feminist voices against hegemonic forces, practices and structures, while her codeswitching allows her characters to exercise creative linguistic choices to overcome overweening masculine authority. Moving beyond patrilineal arguments of identity development, Gomez-Vega portrays a women-centered journey of self-discovery that both crosses and dissolves boundaries. Additionally, her characters re-formulate the political, private and public spaces of their reality. These aspects of personhood reflect and refract off one another, allowing for a rich, rippling text that explores life negotiating between cultures. By negotiating multiple languages, Gomez-Vega's characters negotiate multiple worlds allowing them to reside in a fluid state that smoothes "the new order of instability in the production of modern subjectivities."

Session 6H

### **Analyzed, Exposed, Tweaked: Body Galleries**

Chair: [Atia Sattar](#)

This panel will explore various cultural texts which reveal and challenge the presence of fixed, biological identities—in unborn bodies, virtual bodies, or disabled bodies. Online pregnancy test galleries, virtual human interviewers, and the prostheticized performances of Staff Benda Bilili all articulate and reshape our notions of the natural and the observable. Each of the papers will demonstrate the ways in which technology mediates the visibility of bodily knowledge and its normative contours. While the unexpected galleries of social media and global music beckon their spectators to engage in a more creative and

fluid imagining of the human body, the realm of virtual reality seeks to reify and hold stable biological indicators of health and wellness.

*Sara DiCaglio.*

### **Tweaking the Test: Fluidity, Diagnosis, and Online Pregnancy Test Galleries**

The earliest stage of pregnancy, or what is commonly called the two week wait, is a site in which the body's opaqueness seems to be at its most extreme. The rise of early home pregnancy tests further illustrate this opaqueness: because any line, no matter how faint, indicates that fertilization and implantation have taken place, the efforts of early pregnancy tests to make the body more visible often frustrate the user and end in ambiguous results. A combination of technological and community-based reading practices, often in the form of pregnancy test galleries, attempt to respond to this ambiguity, as users try to hack the test to more productively see the specific processes occurring within their bodies. The paper examines the use of these online pregnancy test galleries by users who upload and "tweak" images of pregnancy test results through the use of photo-editing software made available on the site. If a line is present, this tweaking may make it more visible to the naked eye; other users, who offer different levels of expertise as readers, may also vote on whether or not the test indicates pregnancy. The turn to communal reading and hacking of the test demonstrates the way in which technology mediates the visibility of this bodily knowledge. I argue that these galleries highlight the fluid nature of diagnosis, forcing us to consider the ability of diagnostics to make the body perform its contents, as well as the role of communities in responding to, influencing, and reflecting this fluidity.

*Atia Sattar.*

### **Virtual Therapy: Affect, Embodiment and Biomarkers in Mental Health Assessment**

This paper will examine SinSensei Kiosk, the virtual human interview framework designed to assess verbal and nonverbal distress indicators associated with depression and PTSD.

*Julie Nack Ngue.*

**“Put forward what is hidden”: Disability, Technology, and the Exhibition of the Prosthetic in Congolese Band Staff Benda Bilili**

“Discovered” in 2005 by two French filmmakers and music producers, Staff Benda Bilili from the Democratic Republic of Congo is a striking success story in the global music industry. Yet its success is presented less in terms of its musical artistry and significant place in transnational music than as a heart-warming story of triumph over adversity, in this case, disability, as most of the band’s members get around on improvised wheelchairs and the like. As disabled African musicians, their success is generally seen by the media as only possible through Western mediation. Indeed, their “foreign bodies” are rendered acceptable and desirable precisely by the prosthesis of Western intervention and its technologies. The prosthetic, that which substitutes or supplements a missing or defective body part, also means to allay the discomfort of the able-bodied onlooker in the presence of an other-bodied. To be sure, the Internet “gallery” of Benda Bilili seems to participate in what David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder term narrative prosthesis whereby disability is camouflaged, transforming it into an understandable, acceptable otherness. However, the band itself strays from such a clean, reassuring narrative. “Benda Bilili,” translated for Western audiences as “look beyond appearances,” is more literally “put forward what is hidden.” What this paper seeks to do, like the band’s name intended, is to expose rather than conceal the prosthetic relation by considering not only its mediated Internet presence but the group’s own technologized exhibition-performances of ambulation and expression, more specifically their ad hoc “wheelchairs” and musical instruments.

Session 6I

**Waterworlds: Ecocritical Considerations of Fluid**

*Laura Cassidy Rogers.*

**Experimental Media and the California Drought**

On January 17, Gov. Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency for California, thereby requesting federal help to respond to severe drought conditions in freshwater rivers and reservoirs. Ten days prior, Andy Griffin who runs Mariquita Farm on twenty-five acres in Watsonville and Hollister, California sent a reassuring email to his CSA members to explain that, while photographs of

cracked-dry reservoirs are circulating in the mass media as a statewide alarm, paradoxically Mariquita has plenty of water due to a granite formation that lies across the Pajaro River aquifer and dams up seasonal rain and snowmelt. Furthermore, Griffin explained that this granite formation protects Mariquita from saltwater intrusion, a lesser-known fluid phenomenon that occurs during drought years. When coastal aquifers run dry, the downward flow of underground freshwater to the ocean is reversed and saltwater pushes inland to the detriment of crops and drinking water. My presentation at the SLSA Fluid Conference will explore the California drought and its representation by journalists, politicians, scientists, artists, and citizens like Andy Griffin. My work combines the history of photography, cartography, science, and experimental media to think critically about the immersive and uncertain conditions of environmental change. I foreground posthuman works of art such as the work of Newton and Helen Mayer Harrison who are Professor Emeriti at UC Santa Cruz; for the Harrisons, the force of human history is diminutive to the Force Majeure and this insight leads to art and science adaptation experiments with both aesthetic and empirical dimensions.

*[Lisa Bloom](#)*.

### **Archives of Knowledge and Disappearances in the Anthropocene: From Polar Landscapes to Chernobyl in the Work of Amy Balkin and Lina Salander**

Environmental risk that represents environmental damage yet to come has been the hardest to represent and as such has been delegated to the realm of science fiction. I focus on how artists such as Amy Balkin have complicated in their work this notion of the future through rethinking the genre of the post-apocalyptic at a moment when dystopia is not simply a counter-current but rather a quite accurate forecast of things to come. Balkin's "A People's Archive of Sinking and Melting" (2012) is a growing collection of contributed items from places that may disappear due to the effects of climate change. Her archive is comprised of things that in her words "are intended to form a record of the future anterior, prefiguring forseen or predicted disappearance and related displacements, migrations, and relocation." Lina Salander's haunting film installation "Lenin's Lamp Glows in the Peasant's Hut" (2012) on Chernobyl uses montage to tell a complex story of remnants from an industrial dream that has gone terribly wrong. She takes the opposite approach to Balkin, to record the aftermath of the

Chernobyl disaster going backwards in time to understand how this among other events precipitated the fall of the already moribund Soviet Union. By re-editing sequences from Dziga Vertov's film celebrating the technologies of the future from the first decade of the Soviet state with contemporary footage of the abandoned city of Pripyat, Salander like Balkin turns the history of photography and cinema into an archive of knowledge and disappearances.

*John Johnston.*

### ***Watermind* and the Systems Ecology Perspective**

M. M. Buckner's *Watermind* is a techno-thriller about a liquid life form that emerges in a waste- and detritus-filled swamp in Louisiana. A complex emulsified "colloid," randomly composed of proplastid, algae cells, and "an alphabet soup of miniscule computer elements" --RFIDs, nanochips, and a microarray-- it somehow self-organizes into a sentient neural network. Discovered by an MIT dropout named "CJ" while cleaning up a hazardous chemical spill for a Baton Rouge corporation named Quimicron, a conflict develops between CJ's efforts to study it and Quimicron's efforts to isolate and destroy it. My paper will analyze the narrative's double perspective, as it follows the life form's growth, evolution and movement. As a corporate system based on a cost-benefit rationality, Quimicron mobilizes a network of paid resources in order to resolve and suppress "the problem," its scientists believing they can understand it through chemical analysis of its component parts. Meanwhile CJ tries to communicate with it by teaching it music. In this contrast the water in the swamps, the canals and the Mississippi River is not simply a liquid medium but an active and vital component in multiple ecologies. In contrast to Quimicron's controlling, hyper-rational corporate style, she observes and interacts, eventually thinking-with-water, as she moves between process and structure (in Gregory Bateson's sense). In short, CJ adopts a systems ecological perspective attentive to flows of matter and energy and the forms of interaction and boundaries that delimit them. Even with fellow humans she senses how the air is often charged with pheromones, testosterone, or adrenaline, and how "the liquid language stirred the hindbrains of everyone present." But while the human perspective remains uppermost, the narrative itself follows the directionality of flowing water --from Devil's Swamp to connecting creeks and canals to the Mississippi and then to the Gulf--as [...]



Session 7 - Fri 3:45 pm - 5:15 pm

Session 7A

### **Art as Open System since the 1960s**

Chair: [\*Johanna Gosse\*](#); [\*Christine Filippone\*](#)

Introduced into critical art discourse by Jack Burnham in 1968, systems theory was one of the most influential scientific theories for artists working in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Related to the fields of cybernetics, computer technology, automation and systems engineering, the concept of open systems served as a model for artists interested in making dynamic, fluid, and interactive art works. By definition, open systems, such as biological, ecological, or social systems, are characterized by a fluid exchange of matter, energy, and information. Open systems are associated with life, growth and change, qualities that took on special political and social resonance for artists seeking to resist the technocratic logic of Cold War America. This panel asks about the legacy of systems theory for art since the 1960s. How might we use the concept of “open systems” to understand art works that were not explicitly responding to systems theory? What kinds of problems does art-as-open-system pose to the art institution or market? Does it retain its subversive potential? How do contemporary critical paradigms such as “relational aesthetics” or affect theory reflect the inheritance of open systems? This session aims to examine the concept of open systems in relation to a wide range of art practices, including mail art, conceptual art, computer art, intermedia, performance art, expanded cinema, sculpture and installation, feminist art, art and technology, land art, new media, and exhibitions.

[\*Francis Halsall\*](#).

### **Art as Systems Irritants: Liam Gillick’s ‘Complete Bin Development’**

Gillick’s work might be variously described as: conceptual; post-conceptual; post-minimalist; discursive; relational. This, undoubtedly, reflects the interdisciplinary and collaborative nature of his practice, which spans a variety of disciplines and mediums including: architecture; design; writing; film; sculpture; education. I claim that “systems” and the systems-theoretical term “irritation” provide an effective way of discussing his work. In formal terms Gillick’s ‘Complete Bin Development’ is a sequence of abstract, brightly coloured boxes that are systemic in so far as any number of structures can be used as long as they

are separated by at least 1.50m. Hence the work is conceived of as a series of open frameworks allowing for multiple iterations according to different conditions of exhibition. Further, the work also refers specifically to standard systems of mechanical engineering (such as the Volvo, Kalmar plant in Sweden). My conclusion draws on the Niklas Luhmann's (d. 1998) conception of Social Systems and "irritation" defined through the vocabularies of social systems theory and second-order cybernetics. Gillick, I argue, works within social systems and provides strategies for revealing their conditions and operations. His objects, for example, circulate in economic and institutional systems whilst he has also engaged in design systems (collaborating with Pringle); educational systems (as a professor at Columbia/Bard); discursive systems (as a prolific writer) and even cinema (recently starring in *Exhibition*, (Joanna Hogg, 2014)). However, rather than being entirely complicit to them Gillick's practice both discursively engages and "irritates" such systems to political as well as aesthetic ends.

*Kenneth White.*

### **Cultural Engineer: Tom Sherman between Art and Administration**

My presentation explicates the complex and selective definitions of systems aesthetics and technical-libidinal operations in the work of Tom Sherman, an under-considered participant in North American media cultures of the 1970s and 1980s. I present a new view to how this central figure in Cold War-era media art negotiated an ambivalent position between "open system" aspirations of the anti-establishment avant-garde and "closed world" discourses of governmental institutions. Sherman's work of the era is widely acknowledged, but sustained analysis of his impact is non-existent. I argue that this may be due in part to his central role in the institutionalization of those discourses. As Founding Head of the Media Arts Section of the Canada Council, Sherman was pivotal to the administration of federal support for media arts in Canada during the 1980s, personally commanding a budget of 12 Million CAD. He was also an artist immersed in theories of cybernetics. I argue that Sherman's work presents an early, distinctive, struggle to manage information economies. This while Canada itself, as a nation, incorporated information processing technologies into its bureaucracy. In this environment, Sherman envisioned himself as a cybernetic "cultural engineer" (his term). I focus on Sherman's Hyperventilation performance (1970), his text "The Art-Style Computer Processing System" (1974), and his ganzfeld experiment (1975). My presentation is informed by research in

the artist's archives, unpublished materials, and extensive interviews with the artist and his associates.

*Kate Green.*

### **MoMA's Information: Experience as Protest in 1970**

This paper examines the participatory, politically engaged nature of MoMA's landmark 1970 exhibition of Conceptual Art, *Information*. The show featured over a hundred and fifty artworks made by more than one hundred artists from fifteen countries including Hans Haacke's *MoMA Poll*, Vito Acconci's *Service Area*, and Adrian Piper's *Context #7*. *Information* was a key moment in the steady march since 1970 away from equating art solely with the production of contemplative objects and toward embracing the notion that art can involve the creation of relations and open systems. In this sense, the exhibition rhymed with Jack Burnham's 1970 *Artforum* essay "Alice's Head: Reflections on Contemporary Art," which defines Conceptual Art as an expression of countercultural resistance to the hegemony of the object. Through exploring not only the show's artwork, but also its curatorial and intellectual frame, this paper provides an historical and political contextualization of *Information* and its rich legacy, especially the contemporary interest in "participation" and "open systems."

*Johanna Gosse.*

### **Transmission Received: Ray Johnson's Postal Network as Real-Time System**

This presentation examines the mail art practice of American artist Ray Johnson (1927-1995) through the lens of systems theory. Johnson's understanding of art-as-open-system began in the early 1950s with his "moticos," intricate, small-scale pasted-paper collages that featured names, puns, pictograms, and other obscure, Zen koan-like sayings. An anagram of "osmotic," the term "moticos" refers to the biological process of osmosis, and its more colloquial associations with fluidity and porosity—key properties of open systems. Johnson frequently distributed and exchanged his moticos with an expansive network of friends, celebrities, and art world figures, typically through personal and group mailings. As his postal network expanded, Johnson christened it the "New York Correspondance School" (NYCS), a wordplay combining the mail-order pedagogy of correspondence art schools with the kinetic interplay of "dance." By embedding the NYCS network

seamlessly, and quasi-parasitically, within the U.S. Postal Service's information exchange system, Johnson could broadcast encoded messages to a hand-selected community of artistic collaborators. Johnson used his postal network to sidestep the mainstream art market and its attending commodification, substituting the "white cube" with a gift-based economy based on mutual obligation and interactive exchange, or "correspon-dance," with a widening network of collaborators. This paper will consider Johnson's mail art network as an open aesthetic system, positioning it vis-à-vis other invocations of the "open systems" and "networks" in 1960s art and critical discourse, including Jack Burnham's influential elaboration of systems aesthetics in the late 1960s and Nam June Paik's interventions into another "networked" medium, television.

#### Session 7B

### **Mediating Climate Knowledge (ASLE Panel)**

Chair: *[Heather Houser](#)*

Increasingly, creative writers, filmmakers, and visual artists are addressing the pressing problems associated with global climate change. Their works encompass illustrations of traditional scientific data and narratives of the human and nonhuman lives affected by rapid changes currently underway in earth's geophysical systems. Crucially, they also offer alternative epistemological frameworks for understanding these transformations and are increasingly informing debates on our hydrocarbon past, present, and future. This panel examines what one participant calls the "aesthetic regimes" of climate change as they surface in varied media: data visualizations, documentaries, novels, visual art, material culture, and speculative nonfiction. Conceptual shifts subtend these regimes; thus we will address the increasingly popular idea of the Anthropocene as well as antecedent theories and narrative mediations of geologic transformation. These conceptual shifts make it clear that, as we seek to apprehend a world undergoing chemical and physical change, we develop new epistemologies and tools of knowing. This panel argues that these epistemologies and technologies are deeply aesthetic. Producers of climate culture are experimenting with forms that are hybrids of the imaginative and quantitative, technological and narrative, speculative and material. Climate culture raises these questions for this panel: How does climate art adapt strategies from the empirical, quantitative, and speculative sciences in order to convey knowledge? Conversely, how do scientific media borrow strategies from the narrative and

visual arts? What is the relationship between epistemology, sensation, and aesthetics? Do data-based media and art require different interpretational procedures than those cultural criticism has traditionally privileged?

*Heather Houser.*

### **"Climate Genres: Experiencing Data and Coming-of-Mind"**

Increasingly, art garners attention from research scientists, journalists, and environmental policy-makers confronting the limits of climate science's communication idioms: jargon-filled academic papers, lectures geared to specialists, data-dense graphs. Yet artists also take inspiration from these idioms and demonstrate a passion for information as an aesthetic resource. Rather than eschew data in favor of story, they manage climate information by aesthetic means. This paper addresses the question, What does climate change feel like as data, and not only as the lived phenomena to which data point, when it enters representational media? Analyzing climate model visualizations by national research labs and either Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior* (2012) or Charles Wohlforth's *The Whale and the Supercomputer* (2004), I detail two emergent strategies for aestheticizing information about climate change: making data experiential and the coming-of-mind plot. I contend that the forms climate culture takes make epistemological claims. Specifically, they correlate to particular epistemic virtues such as mastery, humility, intuition, and boundary shifting. Climate culture conceptualizes the procedures required for apprehending climate change and demonstrate that these procedures are as ethical and emotional as they are aesthetic. Knowing, representing, and feeling climate information are inextricable processes in information-rich climate art. Thus I provide an account not only of the data that climate culture delivers but also of the processes of knowing that data that these works elaborate and sets in motion.

*Janet Walker.*

### **"Documentary Film and Other Geolocative Media: The Case of Sea Level Rise"**

The documentary *Someplace with a Mountain* (Goodall, 2010) concerns the plight of residents of a small Pacific atoll facing global warming-induced sea level rise. In a pivotal scene, the islanders gather around a laptop to watch an

animated graphic depicting coastal inundation in the Shanghai region. They comprehend immediately—and trace with sweeping gestures—the broader implications of the sea change they themselves had already been experiencing in the immediate vicinity. The presence of this animation signals both the proliferation of scientific visualization technologies and their regular incorporation into documentary film. In this proposed paper, Walker will analyze several sea level rise documentaries in relation to cartographic modes including digital “interactive visioning” tools that have been developed to enable the user to toggle up sea heights to what they might be at some future date and view the results on maps of coastal areas. Drawing on concepts from human and critical GIS geography, Walker will make a case for comprehending the site-specific documentary as one among other “geolocative” media technologies that variously construct the spaces and places they may seem only to observe, document, model, or otherwise figure. The geographer Kathryn Yusoff writes that the catastrophe of climate change is upon us and that it is “earth writing writ large.” Taking cognizance of this perception, Walker’s talk will probe the meanings of sea level rise media for their comparative potential as forms of earth re-writing.

*Tobias Menely.*

### **"The Early Anthropocene: The Rise of Coal and the Narrativization of Geo-History"**

My talk will begin by considering the different origins proposed for the Anthropocene, including Ruddiman’s argument for the Neolithic Revolution, Crutzen’s argument (taken up by Chakrabarty and others) for the Industrial Revolution, and recent arguments for a “great acceleration” after World War Two. I’ll make a case for a seventeenth-century start of the Anthropocene, because of the way coal comes to be tied to domestic manufacturing in Britain, and so the surplus energy derived from fossil fuel comes into an amplifying feedback loop with surplus capital. This catalytic union effects a rift in the biospheric carbon cycle. In the second part of my talk I’ll discuss Thomas Burnet’s speculative cosmogony *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1681-90), widely acknowledged as a key text in the transition from scriptural to secular geology. In the third book of *Sacred Theory*, Burnet speculates about the material causes that will contribute to a conclusive conflagration, “when the Regions of the Air will be nothing but mingled Flame and Smoak, and the habitable Earth turn’d into a Sea of molten Fire.” The total combustion of the Earth requires some

specific “Fewel or Materials Nature hath fitted to kindle this Pile, and to continue it on Fire till it be consum’d.” There is such fuel: “Coal and other fossilles that are ardent.” “The Earth,” Burnet writes, “is already kindled, blow but the Coal, and propagate the Fire, and the Work will go on.” In fact, between 1700 and 1800, coal output in England rose from 2.7 to 15 million metric tons, igniting the Industrial Revolution. To conclude, I’ll reflect on the status of Burnet’s startlingly prescient prediction as a narrativitization of geological necessity and catastrophe.

#### Session 7C

### Posthuman Identities

*Mary Pollock.*

#### “David Brin’s Talking Dolphins: ‘What Counts as Human?’”

Haraway asked this question in 1992. Is it linguistic ability? Can only humans have “language”? Should humans impose our linguistic cultures on other species? Weil asserts that “animal studies. . . stretches to the limit questions of language, epistemology, and ethics” (2013). The topic of animals and language has been heavily theorized within the separate spheres of ethics, linguistics, and ethology. For Haraway, we are “awash in a sea of stories” that interrogate the fluid category of the “human.” In *Startide Rising* (1983), part of his “Uplift” space epic, and *Existence* (2012), an “Uplift” prequel, Brin considers the ethical questions within the context of environmental crisis and evolving information technologies. For dolphins, one of five “human species” having technological and linguistic sophistication (including “normals,” autistics, neo-Neanderthals, and ai’s), what Brin calls “uplift” is ethically necessary: dolphins cannot survive in their contaminated habitat without the agency conferred by linguistic and cybernetic modifications. In addition, interspecies communication becomes necessary as Earth is swept into interstellar military and viral linguistic conflicts. Talking dolphins are not inferior, unfairly tasked with somatically irrelevant labor, but equal. Through his systems approach, Brin (hypothetically) answers Haraway’s question and complicates those of Weil and others, suggesting that, for global survival, humans must become partners with other animals, applying information beyond and outside “normal” conceptual and perceptual competence. [Ref. Haraway, Brin, Noskey, Midgley, Pinker, Singer & Cavalieri, Savage Rumbaugh]



Kevin LaGrandeur.

### **Fluid Interspecies Relations: Androids, Animals, and Changing Notions of Personhood**

In TV and film, androids can be seen as symbols of our conflicting needs for companionship and for an “Other” against which to define ourselves. This presentation will focus on the former value of the android, and how it increasingly connects with the issue of “personhood” we grapple with when dealing with other intelligent species. Examples of such androids include those in movies such as *Bicentennial Man*, and even in television shows as old as *The Twilight Zone*. The androids featured in that show tend to evoke the theme of interspecies relationships. Two in particular are interesting: Alicia, a gynoid, in the episode “The Lonely” (1959), and Alan Talbot, a robot who falls in love with a human girl in the episode “In His Image” (1962), are about relationships between humans and androids, but these plots are really a marker for the issue of personhood—i.e., should androids who have sentience and feelings be seen as equivalent to humans, at least in terms of laws and customs. Ultimately, my thesis is that this fluidity in perception and definition of what counts as a “person” also parallels our increasingly common struggles with determining our evolving relationship with animals. Recent lawsuits by Stephen Wise and the Non-Human Rights Project regarding the “legal personhood” of captive apes and other animals, as well as our animals’ continued evolution from working servants to members of our families, and even the similar titles of recent books such as *Citizen Canine* and *Cyborg Citizen* (both about the increasing elision of our definition of personhood) display common themes of ambivalence toward our non-human companions—artificial and natural—in Western society.

Todd Woodlan.

### **Sanguine Attentions: Posthuman Construction of Self Through Blood Monitoring in Diabetics**

This paper looks at techniques of fluid management by type 1 diabetics to construct notions of subjectivity that extend posthumanism in important ways. Individuals with diabetes use technology to constantly observe the amount of glucose in their blood and organize their food intake, insulin levels, and exercise accordingly to avoid hypoglycemic attacks. Through these tactics, the diabetic subject is placed within a network of technology and self care that produces a de-

centered and self-managing subject still within the medical institutional gaze. This paper looks at how diabetics use these self-monitoring techniques to create a knowledge of the self that is physically based on fluids (blood, injectable insulin, etc.) and partially fluid in its emergence, opening up modes of resistance to the institutionalized medical gaze. Additionally, this paper will examine ways that those tactics can be used by “healthy” non-diabetic subjects to subvert medical normative structures of power.

Session 7D

### **Fluid?: Exploring denotative and disciplinary boundaries**

Chair: [\*Kari Nixon\*](#)

The panel explores fluidity of subjects and substances. Papers on this panel explore the term "fluid" both a noun and an adjective in analysis of categorical boundaries of substances, genres, literature, and disciplines to question the role of fluidity and the definitions of fluids from an array of vantage points. Paper topics explore generic blurring in fiction and burgeoning disciplinary fluidity in the humanities and sciences. Although approaching the question of fluidity from a variety of disciplines--digital media, computer technology, literary studies, and art history--each paper addresses epistemological moments when categorical boundaries are revealed as more fluid than they are usually conceived to be. As a whole, the analyses of these papers work towards exploring the importance of fluidity in an increasingly interdisciplinary academic world.

[\*Helen Gregory\*](#).

### **A Meeting of Nature and Culture: expanding definitions of natural history specimens through contemporary art practices**

Natural history specimens can be described as a meeting of nature and culture: nature mediated by the human hand. Yet, in an age when museums are storing and cataloguing genetic fragments meant to stand in for the whole specimen alongside collections of 19th century taxidermy, the definition of what constitutes a natural history specimen has become increasingly unstable. In this paper, I argue that the practices of bio-artists working with living organisms and artists working with preserved animal bodies have resulted in an increased mutability of what constitutes a natural history specimen. With the burgeoning interest in biological sciences in contemporary art, I argue that Star and Greisemer’s term

“boundary object” can be extended to the work of contemporary artists whose practices results in objects that inhabit and fluidly move between multiple social worlds, from the gallery to the museum to the lab. Consequently not only has the specimen come to occupy an ever more fluid social space, but it has also resulted in the disruption of established classificatory systems, both the taxonomic systems that situate specimens within an accepted natural order as well as on a broader cultural level. Furthermore, the natural history specimen has historically been a site of knowledge production, and in contemporary art practice it merges both the museological impulses of preservation and conservation with the scientific/laboratory-based impulses of experimentation and alteration.

*Rebecca Perry.*

### **Data Flowing from Dry Bones—A Dinosaur’s Long Digital Shadow**

A green line moves jerkily along a representation of the fossil form. The visualization has a lively, anxious energy--the scan line moves over the bumps and indents like a rubber band pressed against the contours of the bone--it seems to feel its way along, calculating points harvested from the object’s surfaces. The model taking shape will cast a long digital shadow on the museum’s organization and practices. A group at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History is transforming 16 wooden crates of dinosaur bones into a collection of digital 3D models--and eventually into a fully-articulated digital skeleton. In the process, the “laser cowboys” as one curator has called them, are disrupting traditional relationships among curators, their objects and the museum-going public, as well as igniting debates and power struggles among institutional departments and fundraising groups at the museum. Bringing 3D scanning technology into the museum redraws the expert/object link, creating a category of technicians able to perform museum objects, making them legible to audiences in new ways. The paper explores the seductive reality of 3D models and their ability to transform museum object categories, intersect groups within the organization, and redefine the practices of the archive. My approach builds on the insights on objects and their meanings by scholars such as Sherry Turkle, Peter Galison and Loraine Daston. To this conversation I contribute a view of digital models as meaningful objects, both tactile and evocative, through which conversations on authority, expertise, craft, nature and representation flow.

*Ghislain Thibault.*

## **Stream: Hydraulic Metaphors, Media Theory, and the Culture of Transmission**

In recent popular and technical discourses, data transmission through digital networks has been represented by a cluster of hydraulic metaphors. We stream radio, surf the web, download torrents, live-stream events and use stream-graphs to visualize the latest trends in Twitter. These discourses attempt to mark a rupture with previous transmission models (broadcasting) while boasting the new, open, and dynamic nature of digital networks. Media studies scholars, however, have warned that fluidity in fact remediate past politics of centralization, economical hegemony and forms of control (Parikka, 2004; Terranova 2004; Galloway; 2006). Building from their work, this paper seeks to challenge the boundary between analog and digital media by looking at the persistence, rather than the emergence, of a “hydraulic rhetoric” in the history of media theories. From the metaphor of ether (both a fluid and gas) describing radio in the 1920s to seminal studies of mass communication as flows (DeFleur; 1958; Raymond Williams, 1974) and the concept of “mainstream media” in the 1980s, images of fluidity have long shaped cultural representations of media systems. This paper offers a short genealogy of the models of transmission in media theory that borrowed from hydraulics before further examining the implications of the metaphor of “streaming”, in particular, as an ambiguous interface between theoretical models and technological systems. It argues that the hydraulic rhetoric of digital culture privileges the cultural functions of networks (constant connection and flows) over their material infrastructure (discontinuous transmission), as well as data transportation over meaning.

*Lorenzo Servitje.*

### **“The gas in those bubbles”: the Discursive Fluidity of Noxious Gas in Willkie Collin’s Armadale**

The very notion of poison is discursively fluid: a chemical can be toxic in some doses and medicinal in others. This fluidity was especially the case in the Victorian era. During this period, the term poison tended to refer to a granular or liquid concoction. However, Willkie Collin’s *Armadale* (1866) challenges the traditional states of poisonous compounds by illustrating how the very fluid nature of matter itself transmutes the traditional trope of liquid or granular poison into noxious gas, allowing for new mechanics of delivery. The most well-known scene in *Armadale* concerns the attempted poisoning of one of the

protagonists, during his stay in a sanatorium. The scene's setting in a medicalized, carceral space reimagines the gothic tropes of poisonings and madness by contextualizing them within the constructs of mid-Victorian medical discourse. I argue that Collin's use of gas articulates the dynamic medicalization of space through seemingly invisible assemblages. The notion that air itself can become adulterated draws on earlier notions of miasma. *Armadale* conflates the chemically toxic with the organically pathological in the "sanitary" medical space, in effect pathologizing certain medical treatments. Collins utilizes the genre of sensation fiction to provoke contemporaneous anxieties surrounding the progressively invisible mechanisms of medicalization in the Victorian era. To this effect, sensation fiction not only reflects Victorian medical discourse but actively shaped it through the malleability of adapting earlier literary forms.

Session 7E

## **The Fluid Body: Neuroplasticity and Cellular Osmosis**

*steven j. oscherwitz.*

### **Viscous Subjectivity**

I will present images contrasting the harmonious, cadenced fluid flows of my paintings, which mirror what I believe to be my own intuitional flows of thought, to those of the unharmonious, discordant, viscous flows of the cytoplasm in cancer cells. Utilizing Whitehead's process philosophy and some of its specific aspects of the temporal and aesthetic components of subjectivity and the latest research in Computational Fluid Mechanics—specifically, the dynamic, temporal complexity modeling of cytoplasmic flows—I will explore how these flows can be used to think about the temporal fluidity and viscosity of subjectivity. Also through Deleuze's concepts of the nomad, deterritorialization, and multiplicity, exemplified in the Rhizome, I will explore how "flows of intensity, their fluids, their fibers, their continuums, and conjunction of affects have replaced the world of the subject." In addition, I will draw on Levi Bryant's "onticology" and the concept of the rogue object in relation to cancer cells—objects that "pass in and out of assemblages, breaking with relations, as well as modifying relations in the assemblages into which they enter." I will also present histological studies contrasting and exploring the great difference between, on the one hand, the flowing, networked molecular pathways of protein matrices that compose a

normal human cell's cytoplasm's flows, and on the other, the discordant, accelerated, shearing, torque intensities found in the mutational and turbulent fluid flows of cancer cells. This juxtaposition, I will conclude, suggests a powerful hybrid networked complexity model that allows us to explore the temporal aspects of contemporary philosophies of subjectivity. And it's this exploration I will argue that can potentially lead to create novel and powerful laboratory designs in cancer research.

*Ksenia Fedorova.*

### **Plasticity and Feedback: Schemas of Indetermination in Cybernetic Diagrams and Contemporary Art**

Studies of plasticity are a growing trend not only in neuroscience, but also in the humanities and arts. The adaptive and relational nature of neuronal structures (e.g. Spike-Timing-Dependent Plasticity, or STDP) is instrumental in transformation of the conception of the self as a fixed entity towards understanding of it as fluid and plastic, with a potential for creativity and freedom (as acknowledged by Catherine Malabou). What exactly is (if at all) a "self", or "subject" of change in case of neuronal activity? How can plasticity be revealed and represented? How adequately can schemas explain temporal relations and predict behavior in "exceedingly complex" systems? What happens in between the discrete moments in which decisions are made? In this paper I explore the ways of describing the mechanisms of signal transference and feedback loops in human brain and artificial systems. The aspect of representation forms here a special tension with what Andrew Pickering (in reference to cybernetics) names performative epistemologies and ontology of unknowability. To illustrate these issues I would like to consider Warren McCulloch's diagrams of neural circuits, Gordon Pask's and Stafford Beer's experiment with chemical computers developing new senses (hearing and magnetic field sensing), and a work by a Russian art collective "Where the Dogs Run" (in which the activity of a live mouse in a labyrinth is complemented and eventually determined by the movements of its virtual doppelgangers).

*Pierre-Louis Patoine.*

### **Like a gull asleep on the sea : literary reading from plasticity to fluidity**

Much has been said in the last years about neural plasticity and literature. Notably, a study led by Gregory Berns (2013), investigating the impact of novel reading on connectivity in the brain, has become a widespread argument for the beneficial role of literature, which would produce more functional individuals by cultivating their brain's plasticity. But to what extent can plasticity enhance our understanding of literature? Neuroplasticity is a structural concept : it concerns the ever changing network of synaptic connections. The reader's fictional experience, however, is like a flowing river : only its bed and bank (the text) can be mapped structurally. I would like to argue that replacing plasticity with fluidity might allow us to go beyond an ecologically questionable view of literature as a set of productive, useful practices, a view linked with an ideology of growth and material progress. If plasticity has served to promote reading as a “neurological investment,” fluidity will lead us to study it as a practice of spending, as a fluid, immersive drift which occurs “whenever, by dint of seeming driven about by language's illusions, seductions, and intimidations, like a cork on the waves, I remain motionless” (Barthes 1975). In such a model, literature is not only a way of moving ahead, of running forward, it is also a technique of becoming that “patient pool or cataract of concepts which the author has constructed [...] The will at rest amid that moving like a gull asleep on the sea” (Gass 1970).

Session 7F

## **AC/DC: Electrical Currents**

*Jelena Dr. Martinovic.*

### **Electrical/Human Interactions: Experimental Groups in Art and Science (1960s-70s)**

In my paper I will present an experimental project conducted by the psychotherapist Edwin Hukill in 1973 in Palo Alto. Based on Wiener's “negative” and “positive” feedback, Hukill's experimental design intended to produce stable and crisis situations in a group of individuals treated for marital problems. Every member of the group interacted via specially programmed technological devices (hand-held micro switches for verbal voting, visual read-out on screens) and signals (amplifiers, repeated audio themes) while being recorded by a transducer on forearms. The group members were instructed to constantly modify and



reorient the content of the discussion. With this machine programming deeply rooted in cybernetics, Hukill hoped to achieve better goals in treatment of psychiatric and relational problems. Completing Hukill's case with examples of other practitioners (Gregory Bateson, Stafford Beer), I will open the discussion on works of video artists and collectives from the 60s and 70s (Juan Downey, Paul Ryan, Michael Shamberg, Rainedance Corporation) who referred to cybernetics and engaged through biofeedback and the portapak in an "electrical/human interaction" aiming to restore "ecological balance" (Juan Downey, *Radical Software* 1973). By presenting works of psychiatry, human engineering and video art from the 60s and 70s, the paper looks at how experimental designs crossing human psychology and technology served as a field of experimentation and political/artistic engagement. The concept of "fluid" is defined here as: spontaneous human actions circulating in continuous electrical/human feedback.

*Kristen Tapson.*

### **Poetic Pacemakers: Artificial Hearts Keep Time(s)**

In this paper, I begin by historicizing artificial heart technology and pacemaker development in the 1950s and 1960s—encompassing both the first implantable pacemaker design and the first artificial heart transplant—and differentiate the ways in which these technologies, as prototypes and implanted devices, rely on embedding one material in another. At the phenomenological level, these technologies stabilize the movement of blood by reinforcing a mechanistic concept of the heart as a pump, but at the material level, they open up questions regarding how the arrangement of inputs and outputs of different materials might generate new forms when we commit to what a mechanism does rather than how it works. In the early 1970s, two American avant-garde poets, Clark Coolidge and Bernadette Mayer, develop techniques for embedding both appropriated materials and temporal scales in their book-length poems *Quartz Hearts* and *Moving* respectively. By bringing the history of artificial heart technology into contact with experiments in poetic temporality, I suggest that we might characterize Coolidge and Mayer as engineers prototyping hearts for poetic measure as they dissolve the heart's literal circulating function and figurative feeling function into their poems and then rematerialize organs that keep time(s) by juxtaposing temporalities. In order to stabilize their measures, however, Coolidge and Mayer fluidize the writer-reader interface in the temporality of

composition, and the ways they negotiate that interface might be used to shift the terms of how we understand their relationships to the poetic schools with which they are often associated.

Session 7G

### **Animal Studies III: Traffic and Trade**

*Julie McCown.*

#### **Crocodylian Transmission: Correspondence Networks in William Bartram and Thomas De Quincey**

Crocodylians make notable appearances in two seemingly disparate texts from the Romantic period: William Bartram's 1791 *Travels* and Thomas De Quincey's 1849 "The English Mail-Coach." While scholars note the influence Bartram's *Travels* had on Romantic poets, namely Wordsworth and Coleridge, no one has extended Bartram's influence to De Quincey. Similarly, while some critics connect De Quincey's writing to natural history texts about Asia, Africa, and South America, no one has discussed De Quincey in terms of Bartram's North American writings. Correcting this oversight, I bring *Travels* and "The English Mail-Coach" into productive conversation with each other, focusing on crocodylians as a central point of connection. I argue that the presence of crocodylians in both texts coincides with an emphasis on how natural history correspondence networks are used to construct personal and national identity. Drawing from the theories of Akira Mizuta Lippit and Nicole Shukin, among others, I show how, in being transmitted through correspondence networks, the crocodylians shift from physical, material specimens to abstract, imaginary symbols. This initial shift can be seen in Bartram's *Travels* as his encounters with real crocodylians become invested with symbolic meaning. De Quincey's "The English Mail-Coach" reveals how crocodylians, once established as mediums of exchange in earlier transatlantic natural history correspondence networks, can be divorced completely from the physical animals or specimens and exist as abstract symbols haunted by their former embodiment. Thus, natural history's correspondence networks facilitate an abstraction and effacement of animals, removing the actual animal and leaving behind the horrid monster.

*Sharon Wilcox.*

### **Jaguars of Empire: Encounter and Representation in the New World**

The largest feline species in the western hemisphere, the jaguar (*Panthera onca*) has long evoked complex and often conflicting emotions of awe, reverence, anger and fear amongst human communities. While representations of jaguars are often closely linked to pre-Columbian civilizations, this paper is concerned with accounts of jaguars produced by European explorers, missionaries, and naturalists starting in the late 15th century. This paper engages with written and illustrated representations of jaguars produced in colonial reports and natural history guides, locating these cats within global circulations of knowledge, capital, and commodity. These sources demonstrate the dynamic and fluid ways in which Europeans imagined the jaguar's physical form, interpreted their actions, characterized their feline-ness, and ultimately, attempted to locate these cats within systems of natural order. Alongside this conceptual placing of animal bodies, these accounts frequently engaged with evaluations of the species' value, which were as fluid as the positions these cats occupied on physical and imaginary landscapes of the New World. Notions place and value of this species were not fixed, flowing through place and time within global systems of empire. Examining how the jaguar was encountered, identified, and subsequently represented within these sources reveals that this cat must be considered not only as a physical animal, but also as a symbol intricately connected to the evolving ways in which Europeans constructed and communicated about their place in nature and on the landscapes of the New World.

*Lucinda Cole.*

### **Elephants and Ivory**

Session 7H

### **"The Uncertainties of Film and Quasi-Liquids**

Chair: *Judith Roof*

Film hosts a layer of quasi-liquids suspended on its celluloid surface. Like phases of ice crystals in the interstices between ice and air, film is the relic of light frozen in fluid wavelengths to return as light, as waves read by the quasi-liquid membranes of ocular rods and cones. Particulate cells embraced by multitudes of membrane platforms, the eye's quasi-liquid membranes transduce the transductions of the cinematic apparatus. Rehearsed in film making and reception, the redundant physiology of the interstice returns wave as light, light

as wave, wave as particles, and film itself as the quasi-liquid jointure of all. This panel explores the waves cinema envisions its own fluid intersections: as chemistry, transducer, image, and self-reflection in works by such artists as Claude Cahun, Agnes Varda, and Margerite Duras.

*Judith Roof.*

**Film and Quasi-Liquids: The Uncertainties of Sand and Hiroshima**

Film always figures itself and in so doing replays a liquid architecture defined and sustained by the wave, defined and sustained by the particle. As recurrent temporality, film rewashes the same dynamic, but never rewashes the same way. Like the mirrors on Agnes Varda's *Les plages d'Agnes*, film is a temporality reflected askew, against, multiplying in one glance particulate times seen many at a time. Waves impelled wash over one another; waves of sound, light, waves of radioactivity. Particles gather, behave like waves. Waves interfere with waves just as temporalities interrupt, suspend, and layer over temporalities. The quasi-liquid architectures of the apparatus—its history, operations, projections, and our projections onto it—rehearse the paradoxical structures of the quasi-liquid and the particle/wave as those phenomena come upon themselves forward and back, both directions. Varda's opening captures all of this, modestly, seductively, romantically, clearly, as does Hiroshi Teshigahara's *Suna no onna* (*Woman in the Dunes*) from 1964. The radioactive resonances of Resnais/Duras' 1959 *Hiroshima Mon Amour* make cinema's particle/wave temporal architectures visible in another, more toxic manner, still embroiled with the seductions of quasi-liquid, particular, undulant memory.

*Alanna Beroiza; Kate Crawford.*

**Remaining Fluid**

Photographs are remainders of fluid—emerging from potential inscriptions produced by the photo-chemical reaction that occurs when a packet of light slips from a wave and radiates its energy onto silver grains in gelatin emulsions, which are then bathed in developing, stopping, and fixing liquids. They are also fluid remainders both insofar as they are material objects that deform over time, and insofar as what sustains the viewer's fascination in a photograph, what “holds the image together” as Jacques Lacan puts it, is a liminal, “evanescent,” object—which he refers to as the object-cause of desire, or object a. The Imaginary unity

of the image derives from this captivating and elusive visual detail that deflects the approach of the Real and its immanent threat to unveil the fundamental, alienating, split between any subject and its visual representation. Photographs are negotiations. They are fluid dynamics enacting a loop of desire for scopic sense from a terrain of light activated, and liquid fixed, opaque silver grains. A challenge to entrenched thinking around bodies, images, and signification, “Remaining Fluid” is a creative endeavor which takes seriously Roland Barthes’ claim that, “A photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see.” It explores and enacts the fluidity of the image through the body and the photograph, attempting to fashion a recursive loop between the “content” of each image and the “form” that it inhabits, ultimately demonstrating the image as a kind of Mobius strip functioning dynamically in the places where bodies and photographs are imagined to exist.

*Melissa Bailar.*

### **The Tides of Memory: Accretion and Erosion in Duras and Varda**

The cinematic and literary works of Agnès Varda and Marguerite Duras concretely depict variations on the movement of fluid—swirling, rippling, crashing, flowing, streaming, dripping, diffracting—and its physical force. In Varda’s films, the sea is a site of playful and benevolent creation: it appears to give birth to the protagonist of *Vagabond*, produces oysters for hungry scavengers in *The Gleaners and I*, and provides multiple layers of reflection in *The Beaches of Agnès*. In Duras’s work, water is rather a destructive element: its relentless tides plague the Indochinese in *The Sea Wall*, *The Lover*, and *Eden Cinema*, while its crashing echoes throughout the disintegration of relationships and sanity in *Blue Eyes Black Hair*, *Aurélia Steiner*, and *Vera Baxter*. Varda and Duras both turn seaward as they relentlessly rewrite, refilem, and reinterpret their own works across genres and over the expanse of decades. Their portrayals of the accretion and erosion of memory and the past enact their different ways of interpreting and representing fluid movements: Varda traces how images and ideas in her works have flowed through France and beyond as viewers add to them, while Duras notes what is lost or fragmented as time passes and she or others remember and reconfigure her works. In their oeuvres, memory, artistic production, and bodies of water wash over one another in spiraling eddies that return to someplace, something altered.

## **Fluid Objects, Solid Texts: Literature and Ethics in the Age of Hyperobjects**

Chair: *Matthew Dodson*

We live in a strange world, constantly encountering traces of fluid objects that exist on scales of size and temporality completely different from our own—global warming, genetic modification, nuclear radiation, and so on; things Timothy Morton calls “hyperobjects.” As Morton argues, “The more we know, the harder it is to make a one-sided decision about anything. As we enter the time of hyperobjects, Nature disappears and all the modern certainties that seemed to accompany it. What remains is a vastly more complex situation that is uncanny and intimate at the same time.” This panel follows up on Bruno Latour’s assertion that “the resource of fiction can bring... the solid objects of today into the fluid states where their connections with humans make sense,” and Jane Bennett’s claim that literary texts can help us to rethink our relationships with nonhuman things by allowing us to trace “the threads of connection binding our fate to theirs.” In particular, we take up a range of literary texts and posthumanist, vibrant materialist, and object-oriented theories in order to explore the ways they open up spaces for thinking (and rethinking) ethics in order to better adapt to the uncanny world we share with so many other nonhuman entities.

*Matthew Dodson.*

### **Coexistence Through Simulation: How Videogames Teach Us What it is Like to be Nonhuman**

Videogames have traditionally been disregarded by literary critics, but recently scholars have begun to take them up as objects of study; for example, Jim Andrews argues in “Videogames as Literary Devices” that games function on the same level as literature in that both entail “a process whereby events are generated by some mechanism and the events are interpreted [as] meaningful within the world of the piece of art.” In this paper, I build on Andrews’ assertion, arguing that videogames open up spaces in which the player can project her own subjectivity into the gameworld, allowing her to generate empathetic connections with characters and environments within the game. In particular, I explore the ways in which three games—Portal, Shelter, and Flower—teach the player to coexist through simulation. Emmanuel Levinas explains that when one

encounters an Other face to face, the Other reflects back the limits of one's own subjectivity, demanding ethical consideration. When videogames simulate human characters, this is precisely what happens. Yet this identification-through-simulation need not stop with humans; biologist Jacob von Uexküll extends subjectivity to nonhumans, insisting that animals also access the world as perceiving subjects, with each subject's perception forming an "umwelt" or environment which the subject perceives as objective reality. It follows that when videogames place players in encounters with nonhuman characters, the player's response is similarly empathetic. I argue that when games put us in the simulated shoes of the inherently-Other, they call us to ecological consciousness, challenge the limits of our subjectivity, and call us to rethink our relations, as humans, to the world we actually inhabit.

*Jonathan Josten.*

### **September 11, 2001: Assembling a Hyperobject**

Timothy Morton writes, "You could almost believe that the lost objects are right here—and they are right here, in the form of colors, sounds, words—one inside the other like Russian dolls..." (16). To be sure, whatever was lost on September 11, we (loosely defined) have struggled to reclaim it. The speculation and analysis of the event has always centered on the human interests. Despite the tragic loss of human life that day, and following, this paper is an investigation of the vibrant materiality or object oriented ontology of September 11. Further, the paper investigates September 11 as a hyperobject following the framework of viscosity, temporal undulation, nonlocality, phasing and interobjectivity. Further, I will use terminology from Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* to question the political ramifications of things. Object Oriented Ontology assists this question: "Since everyday, earthly experience routinely identifies some effects as coming from individual objects and some from larger systems...One would then understand "objects" to be those swirls of matter, energy, and incipience that hold themselves together long enough to vie with the strivings of other objects, including the indeterminate momentum of the throbbing whole" (227). To be sure, September 11 is an object. The context of which is fraught with overmining and undermining, of shifting foreground and background, of objects constantly interacting with each other. The throbbing whole interacted before, during and after September 11, and this paper posits the definition of hyperobject.



## First Plenary - Fri 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

First Plenary

*Robert Markley.*

### **Presentation**

## Gallery Walk - Fri 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Gallery Walk

## Session 8 - Sat 9:00 am - 10:30 am

Session 8A

### **The Aquatic Anthropocene 1: Flowtastrophes**

Chair: *Nicole Starosielski; Eva Hayward*

"The Aquatic Anthropocene" takes cultural processes and practices underwater, situating them both literally and conceptually amidst a flow of unruly actors. What is the difference that matters in subaquatic spaces? What kinds of attunement do forms of marine life activate? How does water work as medium and mediator? In what ways have crises, from the disintegration of coral reefs to the Deep Horizon oil spill, catalyzed new modes of fluid response? And how might we re-conceptualize borders, boundaries, and intra-actions given the materiality of the ocean? Do aquatic sites compel us to re-consider the formulation of the Anthropocene? These papers focus our attention on the cultural, historical, and material dynamics of submarine environments. The papers in the panel "Flowtastrophes" look at the ways that crises in oceanic spaces have produced new kinds of multi-directional diffusion Each of these papers documents swarms and schools of creative agents engaging in the production of aquatic representations. Jeanne Vaccaro's paper thinks together the ecocatastrophe of coral erosion, the patterns of danger for transgender life, and the artistic production of the hyperbolic crochet coral reef. Valerie Olson and

Eben Kirksey both focus in on the “flowtastrophe” of the Deep Water Horizon oil spill. Olson’s paper looks at how, as the spill was characterized as a catastrophe of flow, varied groups worked to mobilize representations to contain, redirect, and disperse it. Kirksey also theorizes such collective dynamics, looking more closely at the artistic production in the exhibition “Hope in Blasted Landscapes.”

*Jeanne Vaccaro.*

### **Feelings and Fractals: Woolly Ecologies of Transgender Matter**

“Feelings and Fractals: Woolly Ecologies of Transgender Matter,” examines how new forms of life, like identity, flourish as felt patterns and organizations of transgender matter by looking at the public artwork the hyperbolic crochet coral reef and connecting the ecocatastrophe of coral erosion and the geometric shapes of hyperbolic space to patterns of harm and danger for transgender life. The wooly reef and plastic kelp garden created by Los Angeles artist-mathematicians Margaret and Christine Wertheim was made to protest the bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef in Queensland, Australia. I animate performance and aesthetics as modes of survival and ways of negotiating environmental risk, slow death, and the distribution and economics of life for queer, transgender and racialized populations. Here I connect the handmade labor of making identity to markets of transnational capital and environmental crisis to conceptualize how diverse bodies of land, water, animals and flesh shape the administration of survival, distribution of life, political economy, and our biosocial landscape of sex and gender.

*Valerie Olson.*

### **Flowtastrophe**

A biochemist assessing the Deepwater Horizon well blowout in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 pointed out that this was not really a “spill:” it was the world’s first 3D crude oil disaster. In this industrial accident, oil flow from the mouth of a seafloor pipe rapidly transformed into a multi-directional diffusion throughout the enormous fluidic space of Gulf waters. Despite being something other than a neatly defined spill or flow, the accident became characterized in discourse and media as a catastrophe of flow: outflows, overflows, inflows, flow rates, flow preventers, flow charts, flow dispersants, fund streams, floods of anger, flows of tears. Using a variety of ethnographic data collected in Gulf settings, this

presentation examines how disparate and often competing social groups act to make claims and restore order by creating and controlling representations, calculations, and discourse about flows. In a sense, the DWH disaster “continues to flow” despite the importance of its more preponderant but less easily apprehensible fluidic processes like dispersion, absorption, emanation, and seepage. As a result, this case calls attention to shared contemporary stakes in the epistemological, ontological, and cosmological power of flow.

*Eben Kirksey.*

### **Hope: Moving Like Oil in Water**

With the flood of oil from BP’s Deepwater Horizon explosion uneasy alchemy transformed toxic fluid into a figure of hope. In a word, the oil spreading in the Gulf embodied the indeterminate nature of the pharmakon—the poison that doubles as a cure, a substance that presents opportunities alongside obstacles. The figurative power of this oil provided an opening for a multitude who desired to cure the ills of extractive capitalism. The seemingly unstoppable flood of petrochemicals became a call for a collective response. Signs of advancing disaster, depictions of animals in peril, spurred a swarm of creative agents into revolutionary action. Artists came together with anthropologists, biologists, and oceanographers at the Multispecies Salon, a 2010 exhibit that explored the theme of “Hope in Blasted Landscapes” in New Orleans. Against the backdrop of bleak disasters, people engaged in intimate acts of interspecies care—drawing creatures like pelicans, hermit crabs, and fish into shared bubble of hope. As collective outrage became focused on BP, as the will of millions bore down on this transnational company, concrete political possibilities emerged. Collective hopes moved like oil in water, coalescing around specific figures only to dance away – to alight on new events, objects, and lively agents.

Session 8B

## **19th/20th Century Literature**

*Anna Neill.*

### **Conversations with Animals**

Children’s literature is full of evolutionary nonsense. Humans turn into other animals, and other animals into humans. Inanimate objects take on personalities

with motives and tempers. Animals ventriloquize adult wisdom, but also, trickster-like, turn the adult world topsy-turvy. This paper will read Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* through archeologist Steven Mithen's *Prehistory of the Mind* and developmental psychologist Michael Tomasello's account of the role of "false stories" in child development. It will explore how children talk to animals, not because they cannot distinguish between human and non-human minds, but because they have begun to navigate the highly flexible, intersubjective, symbolic landscapes that are unique to our species. Child and adult reader alike can tolerate the way these stories assign intentions and mental states to improper objects. Such fantastic third party awareness enables powerful forms of cultural learning that includes the joint creation of a boundlessly malleable world. In contrast with the tools of didactic instruction or rote learning (both of which are buffooned in *Just So Stories*), these tales therefore highlight the role of shared fantasy in developing a rich, multi-perspectival cognitive landscape. Yet such interactive reading also modifies and manipulates that landscape even further, thereby creating still other and different occasions for intersubjective cultural learning and conceptual change. In this way, fantastic storytelling plays a role in the remarkable accumulation and configuration of symbolic information that has shaped human descent.

*Steve Nathaniel.*

### **Flirting with the War Machine: Technology and Scientific Abstraction in Blast**

For the pre-war and war-time issues of *Blast*, the Vorticists chose an analogy that stood between nature and machine. The Vortex was also formed at the confluence of past and future, Romanticism and Futurism. Proponents Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis claimed the swirling center of these forces and observed the illusion of stasis where the aesthetic and political currents were in fact strongest. I will argue that scientific analogies cleared the space between cultural poles but that in flirting with the war machine the Vorticists lost their balance. In Pound and Lewis the later proclivity for fascism is undeniable, but the tipping point is subtle. I will suggest that it began with the Vortex's precise center, a strange companion to Lewis's claim that "you must be a duet in everything." How could reciprocation be reconciled with rotation? In 1915 the omnipresent reciprocating engine translated energy in just such a way. However, the first issue of *Blast* had scorned the Futurists' fetishization of cars and aeroplanes, instead uplifting

technological abstraction. Only with the outbreak of WWI would the Vorticists compromise their commitment to abstraction. In their compromise, they failed to stand between; the illusion of stasis was broken, and the Vortex collapsed into turbulence.

*Suzanne Black.*

**“We were always adroiter/ with objects than lives”: Object-oriented ontology and Auden’s late poetry**

W. H. Auden’s late poetry has often puzzled or disappointed his critics, who tend to see it as a decline or falling-off from his writing of the 1930s and 1940s. Edward Mendelson suggests that part of the problem lies in Auden’s engagement with objects and animals: “He was withdrawing from his long conversation with the living; he was not yet ready to join the silence of the dead; and the only voices he heard would neither listen nor respond if he answered” (*Later Auden*, 492). For Mendelson, that is, Auden’s interest in mute things can best be explained psychologically, as a response to old age and alienation from an increasingly rebellious body. In this talk, however, I propose to challenge this interpretation of Auden’s late writing by re-reading philosophically poems like “Moon Landing” (1969), “The Aliens” (1969), and “Natural Linguistics” (1970), through the prism of object-oriented ontology. I will explore the extent to which Auden can be seen as a precursor of OOO, as well as consider his turn to things in light of his life-long commitment to scientific realism. I will also examine to what extent Auden’s late work balances celebration of natural and made objects with an increased environmental consciousness and skepticism about technology. Finally, I consider the usefulness of Auden’s late depictions of the biological body as object for others’ use, as expressed in a poem like “A New Year Greeting” (1969).

*Dalia Davoudi.*

**Dancing Minds, Dancing Matter: Oliver Wendell Holmes, Pragmatism, and the Aesthetics of Instability**

Dalia Davoudi Indiana University-Bloomington, Doctoral Candidate  
ddavoudi@indiana.edu Pragmatist philosopher William James writes that “We live, as it were, upon the front edge of an advancing wave-crest...Our experience...is of variations of rate and of direction, and lives in those transitions more than in the journey’s end (69). For Brian Massumi, this language, which pervades James’ work, suggests that “rather than arriving at end-objects, or

fulfilling objective ends, we are carried by wave-like tendencies, in a roll-over of experiences perpetually substituting one-another” (4). The epistemological and ethical imperative to see matter and meaning as fluid, non-linear, and ever-shifting is often the aspect of pragmatism most celebrated, and perceived as the most quintessentially American. In “Dancing Minds, Dancing Matter,” I argue the Pragmatist effort to see matter and meaning as constantly in a state of flux enables a kind of aestheticization of epistemological process and scientific method. With James, Charles Sanders Peirce, and fiction-writer/doctor Oliver Wendell Holmes, I follow the ways that Pragmatism’s core convictions in unstable truth and ever-moving objects/subjects shift together to constitute a material and metaphysical dance. Holmes’ *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny* (1861) documents the life of a mesmerizing snake-woman and the many doctors who observe her behavior—and both Elsie and her doctors are repeatedly presented as moving and dancing and shifting their gazes in what I call a “parallax method,” a mode of observation that relies on subject and object circling one-another rhythmically, so that knowledge-production and aesthetic pleasure are bound together. Ultimately, this paper meditates about the consequences of aestheticizing philosophical method in both disciplines of philosophy and literature.

#### Session 8C

### **Fluid Media: Anime/Comics/Science/Humanities**

Chair: [\*Pamela Gossin\*](#)

In this interdisciplinary panel, presenters from the humanities and sciences examine and explore the aesthetic, cultural and pedagogical fluidity of Japanese animation and comics. Two of the papers will feature team-presenters who will offer complementary professional and disciplinary perspectives on the medium of anime as literary text, artistic image and pop culture phenomenon in relation to cross-cultural audiences, interdisciplinary classroom dynamics, visual metaphor and scientific visualizations. The third paper will be presented by a philosopher of science who will draw upon science, politics, literature, and art to offer perspectives on the comic book superhero Wonder Woman as performed by William Moulton Marston, the creator of a lie detector test, who brought his study of the psychology of emotions, gender, and consciousness to his work and used mass media as a unique venue for his scientific research.

*Angela Drummond-Mathews; Debbie Scally.*

### **A Fluid Atmosphere: Wind and Water as Agents of Transformation in the Films of Hayao Miyazaki**

A tiny blue figure on a glider hangs suspended between an ocean of cloud and a mass of rolling hills, at the mercy of any random air current. A bright red aeroplane soars into a blinding, achingly blue sky, dancing with the breeze. Scores of waves with faces like fish undulate underneath dark, roiling thunderheads, a small girl skipping along their backs. A child sits, pensive, as a landscape of sea and sky speeds past her still form. Each of these separate images is taken from one of the films of renowned Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki. The images act as metaphors representing the fluid nature of both the elements and the subject. During the course of the narrative, each subject experiences a fundamental shift, some in perception, some in identity. These changes are reflected in or forecast by the fluidity of the environment. In this paper we will discuss how wind and water serve as agents of transformation in all of Hayao Miyazaki's work.

*Pamela Gossin; Marc Hairston.*

### **Fluid Dynamics: Anime as Agent of Change**

One of the key goals of modern education is to expose students to global perspectives and viewpoints. Prior to the mid-1990s most US children grew up being exposed (through television, movies, and books) to primarily domestic-made cultural products with a small slice of European cultural products on the side. Starting in the mid-1990s a wave of anime (Japanese animated films and television series) and manga (Japanese comic books) became increasingly popular in US youth culture. Since then they have grown to the point that they are now a significant (though still a minority) portion of the cultural mix that children in the US are exposed to and its popularity can frequently be traced to anime/manga's "foreignness" along with the novel viewpoints and stories they present to their audience. For 15 years, we have incorporated anime, manga, and Japanese novels into our team-taught courses, such as "Nature, Science and Medicine" and "Literature of Science Fiction and Fantasy" at the University of Texas at Dallas. In this talk we will discuss the often surprising results of these classroom experiments as our students taught us what they wanted to learn about



anime as art, literature, and culture and the insights it offered them in ecophilosophy, science and technology, psychology, gender, and non-western philosophies.

*Matthew J. Brown.*

### **Fluid Interactions between Science and Art: Wonder Woman as Marston's Psychological Technology**

In this paper, I explore the fluid movements between science, politics, literature, and art performed by William Moulton Marston. Most iconic among Marston's creations are the lie detector test and the comic book superhero Wonder Woman. Less well known, but crucial to understanding his other creations, are his psychological work in emotions, gender, and consciousness. In this paper, I will show how Marston used mass media as an unusual venue of the application of his scientific research, including popular psychology books, magazine articles, a novel, and his comic book character, Wonder Woman, and further, that his psychological theories were based on detailed understanding of the neurobiology of his time, but they are also imbricated with Marston's unorthodox feminist, gynocentric, sexually liberated values. Marston's experimental research and psychological theorizing resulted in a theory of psycho-emotional health that generated prescriptive conclusions for behavior, education, and policy, and he used these prescriptions to inform his literary and artistic productions. Wonder Woman is one of the most iconic characters of American superhero comics, one of a very small number of comics to be in continuous publication since the 1940s. Wonder Woman subverted both traditional female stereotypes and the violent hyper-masculinity of prior superheroes, used love as well as strength to conquer evil. Her creator, William Moulton Marston, was an experimental psychologist trained at Harvard, a major figure both within the discipline of psychology and in the public eye, though today he is barely remembered as a figure in the history of psychology.

Session 8D

### **Quarantine and Flow (Roundtable)**

Chair: *Megan Fernandes*

This roundtable panel would like to investigate the concept of “Quarantine” as a neoliberal form of regulation that enacts varied modes of containing flow and fluidity through segregation, classification, boundary control, and risk

assessment within our contemporary culture. Building upon biopolitical foundations around security (military, disease, economic, gendered bodies) we plan to explore how quarantine produces an immeasurable insecurity: radio waves constantly penetrating, radioactive waste leaking and lasting, and petrochemicals burning and spilling out of our control. These calamities at every scale serve as something to avoid, to seal off, and to contain; but they also serve as galvanizing political events, bringing communities together in defense of their own personal, collective, and environmental health. Is quarantine an impossibility in the 21st century? What can quarantine (and its failures) reveal to us about the interconnections of global industry and politics, national and ethnic identities, and luxury and waste? Do these connections only become visible when we attempt to sever ourselves from them? And if so, is there room for a reversal, a subversive fluidity? The six participants will each give 10 minute presentations with 30 minutes at the end for questions and discussion.

*Rahul Mukherjee.*

### **Battling Disruptions, Perceiving Contaminations**

I compare stories of contamination and immunization across contemporary environmental debates over disruptive technologies in India focusing on lived threat perceptions (ontological insecurities). The survivors of Bhopal gas disaster suffer unwanted intimacies with (chronic) toxins that enter their bodies and affect the bodies of their (born) children. Children suffering from congenital defects and genetic abnormalities are shown in the anti-nuclear documentaries such as *Buddha Weeps in Jadugoda* and *Radiation Stories: Manavalakurichi* which document lives of people residing close to mines of uranium and radioactive minerals. Urban lifestyle shows like *Living it Up* highlighted cases of people suffering from sleeplessness and cancer in Delhi and Mumbai who live in proximity of cell tower antennas. Contamination is either genetic or the contamination exists at places near the non-operating Union Carbide factory precincts, uranium mines, nuclear reactors and cell towers: contamination has spread in the soil and waters, and in the flora and fauna, but it is perceived to be still contained within a region. The immunitary apparatus was perceived to have completely failed in the case of the Bt brinjal (GM eggplant) debate. With experts and activists in the documentary *Poison on the Platter* suggesting that the toxic gene inserted in the brinjal seed can (potentially) climb its way up the food chain

through inter-species exchanges, the contagion seemed impossible to contain. Even for some of the elite liberals, who supported funding agricultural biotechnology and molecular biology, “neoliberalism” lacked an answer to the threat that life sciences posed through transgenic seed.

*Derek Woods.*

### **Earth Quarantine**

My presentation takes up the trope human as Earth parasite. “Earth Quarantine” names a containment fantasy directed at the influence of the “human species.” This organicist trope draws much from the racial ideology of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century social Darwinism and eugenics. As Laura Diehl and Mike Davis have shown, the trope that makes a racialized outsider a parasite in the body of the nation is widespread in U.S. and Canadian fiction—especially SF and fantasy—and in political non-fiction of the first half of the twentieth century. But the parasite trope seems to switch its reference, by the 1960s, from race to species. As second-wave environmentalism gains influence, so does the notion that humanity is a parasite or virus on the Earth. This trope is widely legible, from the poetry of Gary Snyder to the film *The Matrix*. My presentation asks just what this rhetorical and biopolitical shift from race to species means for ecopolitics—how the trope in question structures the fantasy space of the Earth system as a trophic diagram, with proper and improper relations of consumption, contagion, and decay. Roberto Esposito’s theory of immunitary politics assists my discussion of the trope human as Earth parasite.

*Lindsay Thomas.*

### **Media of Duration: Nuclear Waste Storage and the Containment of the Present**

How long can quarantines last? This presentation considers the temporality of quarantines by focusing on Michael Madsen’s documentary film *Into Eternity*, which explores the construction of Onkalo, a deep geological repository for nuclear waste in Finland. The film investigates the seemingly incompatible relationship between human timescales, including the timescales of our storage media, and the deep timescales of geology and radioactive waste. It posits two conflicting logics of human-centered time – one in which the far future can be managed through the indefinite containment of the present, and one in which the present, and the film, must leak into the undocumented past and be forgotten in

order for any future to exist at all – but ultimately sees both as problematic. Instead, the film emphasizes the nonhuman timescale of the impossible project it documents. By adopting the perspective of an unknown observer who discovers Onkalo far in the future, *Into Eternity* places pressure on the point at which human time becomes unhumanly long. In this way, the film speculates on the conditions of its own mediality, asking not only how long the present can endure into the future, but also how the media of film can capture duration, or the lasting of time, itself.?

*Steven Pokornowski.*

### **Nation, Race, and Quarantine**

Previously, I have examined the ways that the discourse of immunity as defense was deployed across disciplinary boundaries, entangling theories and discourses so variant as crowd theory, eugenics, biopolitics, and even nationalism – all of which took a defensive view against the threat of invasive germs (foreign bodies). Bringing my previously historical research forward to the contemporary, in this roundtable I would like to interrogate the ways that race, medicine, and nation are deployed in modern outbreak narratives. This paper will follow the work of such critics as Kirsten Ostherr, Priscilla Wald, Ed Cohen, Andrew Lakoff, and Mel Y. Chen, utilizing the tools and methods of cultural analysis and biopolitical theory to read medical, political, and journalistic documents in a new light. Due to time limits, I will limit myself to exploring two case studies: the racialization of Ebola in the 1990s and of SARS in 2002. I will examine how racial and national terms colored the discourse around both of these epidemics and social reactions to them. I will conclude by sketching out the impossibility of national, medical, and social quarantine in the contemporary age and advance a theory of relationality, inspired by rethinking Édouard Glissant’s “poetics of relation” in directly biopolitical terms. That is, I will argue that it is better to understand our imbrications and relations than to sever or seal them in response to a threat.

*Megan Fernandes.*

### **Ocean Quarantine**

In this presentation, I investigate the relationship between quarantine and kinship in the 2013 documentary about a New Bedford fishing boat, *Leviathan*, by exploring how it figures the “human” in relation to the ocean as opposed to the terrestrial, or even the extra-terrestrial (as has been the interest of scholars such

as Karen Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway* and Ian Bogust's *Alien Phenomenology*). The film, analyzed among other ecopolitical texts, highlights an uncertain intimacy in an aesthetic that segregates portraits of nonhuman matter from what traditionally has been reserved for human subjects. Through the imaginative use of hero cameras, *Leviathan* offers a model of kinship theorized as a threatening claustrophobia, a mode of what Stacy Alaimo has called "aesthetic estrangement" that challenges how we have previously imagined the habits of everyday quarantine and segregation when dealing with issues of cleanliness, food preparation, and fishing. Furthermore, in the age of global traumas around tsunamis and possibly submerged missing planes, the ocean has become one of the last spaces of uncertainty, thwarting methods of prediction and surveillance. What can these habits of oceanic "quarantine" (gridding the ocean for search and rescue missions, separating endangered species from consumable ones entwined in fishing nets, draining the blood of gutted fish back into the ocean) illuminate about our attempts to regulate and consume nonhuman bodies in the 21st century? How can we imagine intimacies that are not structured around traditional modes of kinship, but also ones that threaten and destabilize those relations?

*Mona Kasra.*

### **Politically Charged Images on Social Media & The Fluidity of Meaning**

In recent years, the pairing of digital image-making technologies and networked communication media has made it easier for citizens to utilize photographs as a conduit for political engagement and social activism. As autonomous, personalized visual actions, these digitally-networked images are continuously instigating controversial debates about critical sociopolitical issues and are increasingly cultivating mass social media movements around the world. However, while a photograph's meaning has historically been contingent on the intentions of the person who created it, and the context under which it was received, the meaning of the digitally-networked image is equally dependent on the fluidity of the multiple and immediate textual narratives and visual derivatives that social media dwellers disseminate in response to it. The online circulation of digitally-networked images in fact culminates a flow of ever-changing and overarching narratives, broadening the contextual scope around which images are traditionally viewed. By separating meaning away from what's inherent to the photograph's indexical nature and by making meaning more

dependent upon the discussions and stories around it, the duo of the medium of photography and the online social networks seems to have set forth a new system of meaning in photographs that operates not in isolation but by taking into account all the other mediated, citizen-produced byproducts surrounding the image. This presentation will hence examine the ways by which meaning is extracted from digitally-networked images, and will particularly emphasize on digitally-networked images that partake in political actions or express political dissent.

Session 8E

### **“FLUXUS/FLUID: Forming – Deforming – Reforming” – Panel number one**

Chair: [\*James W. McManus\*](#)

The word FLUID is defined, in part, as a substance with the potential for continuous states of forming, deforming, and reforming. This relationship of events aptly describes the viscoelastic art movement, Fluxus, from its inception in the late 1950s to today. The boundaryless space that is Fluxus encourages us to consider it as an agent for a new dynamic – one FLUID in nature. Manifesting itself (through social media, museum exhibitions and publications) as a global language – it defies boundaries (physical and conceptual) in numerous ways. We are proposing three panels, under the title “FLUXUS/FLUID: Forming – Deforming – Reforming” each with three speakers, that will investigate the FLUID nature of Fluxus over that past six decades.

[\*Hannah Higgins\*](#).

#### **Fluxus and the Fluid Timepiece**

“Fluxus and the Fluid Timepiece” will examine the various ways Fluxus artists have rendered time in objects, performance events and (especially) timepieces. These clocks describe time as indivisible, organic, ever evolving and existing within (not independent from) matter. Nye Ffarrabas’s Egg/Time Event,” (1966) consisted of an egg embedded in a plaster cube, where it would slowly dry out, petrify and be opened in a hundred years. Another example, Robert Watts’ Ten Hour Flux Clock (1969) replaced the twelve hour clock face with ten equidistant numerals, effectively dragging the habituating image of represented time by some seconds, then minutes, then hours, behind our lockstep habits. Robert Filliou and

George Brecht, by contrast, devised a pocket watch, *Eastern Daylight Fluxtime* (c. 1970) whose regulating mechanism had been exchanged for beads, stones, a crystal, a shell or two, a hatpin and a few buttons. It demonstrates that sequential time happens because two things can't be in the same physical space at once. Finally, Nye Ffarrabas's *Tempus Fluxit* (2013) consists of a clock in which the hands of the clock have been removed and put back behind the face, where the numbers have been replaced by the twelve-letter title of the work. The hands of the clock pass freely over the letter/numbers, disencumbered from their tether to a mechanism. These works have suggest strategies for resisting the speedup culture that occurs from ever smaller fractions of Newtonian time. To borrow from Henri Bergson, real transformation occurs because duration is unshrinkable. "Naught as matter," writes Bergson, "it [duration] creates itself as form. The sprouting and flowering of this form are stretched out on an unshrinkable duration, which is one with their essence." Henri Bergson, "Duration," in *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell, (Mineola, NY: Dover Press, 1998), 341.

*James Housefield.*

### **Participatory or Performative? Fluxus and the Design of Popular Science**

Fluxus creators embraced both performative and participatory approaches to making art. Occasionally, works of fluxus art or music were made by someone who performed the role of an "expert." In other cases, fluxus works could be made by an audience member transformed into a participant. With fluxus boxes, books, and event scores, the game of art could be performed alone, by expert or amateur, at any time or place. In these performative and participatory aspects, fluxus shares a common lineage with modern science. Like the scientist, the fluxus artist creates an experimental situation for potential replication. This paper considers the rise of popular science from the late nineteenth through the mid twentieth centuries, to analyze the emergence of immersive forms of popular science entertainment, and their impact on the fluxus movement. This is especially germane to the career of George Brecht, who trained and worked as a chemist before dedicating his life to fluxus. By analyzing the design of performative and participatory means to popularize science, this paper contributes to a growing body of inquiry into the relationships between fluxus and science.



*James W. McManus.*

**Fluxus : Viscoelastic – toggling between virtual and physical spaces**

This paper considers Fluxus' occupancy in today's boundaryless notional environment – a social space in which communication over computer networks occurs. From its inception Fluxus contributed importantly to the dismantling of relations between author and spectator, production and reception, use and intent. A logical extension of its own history - Fluxus' migration from physical space into cyberspace reaffirms it as a viscoelastic movement within a genre open to endless hybridizations. Geographical siting, along with the physical presence of authors and spectators, were necessary components informing Fluxus' efforts at establishing a global presence. With the advent of the internet the primacy of physical space has given way to the virtual – arriving at a new social language – affecting the intricacies of discourse between author and spectator, production and reception, use and intent. Today, Fluxus events encountered on venues such as YouTube, Facebook or Twitter confront us with a potentially confounding toggling between virtual and physical spaces to the degree that social experience flows readily between the two spaces. Pushing beyond established boundaries where art's production, function, and reception have been defined, Fluxus continues to explore counter-conventions, that extend to subject matter, making processes, easily move across venues and in and out of various genre.

Session 8F

**Audience Dynamics**

Chair: *Adair Rounthwaite*

This panel employs frameworks drawn from the computational and biological sciences to explore the behaviors of audiences of contemporary art, performance, and media. Recent scholarship in art history and media studies has emphasized the constitutive role of audiences in cultural production, particularly through the articulation of the concept of participation. However, the existing scholarship often underemphasizes the degree to which audiences are characterized by unpredictable dynamics which may confound or frustrate the roles assigned to them within a particular art project, media platform, or institutional address. These dynamics may in turn alter the flow of intention or design so that novel content originates from those audiences. Our papers expand the current debate by attending to the fluid dynamics of audiences, including: bodily and affective

interactions that cohere particular audiences, articulations of collectivities amongst individual participants, feedback loops between audiences and artists, and the networked circuits that distend audience interactions spatially and temporally. By examining the functions of audiences in generating and modifying cultural content by flocking, affective, or viral means, we propose strategies to better understand the ways audiences form material connections and produce intersubjective meanings.

*Jessica Santone.*

### **Contemporary Performance Transmissions: Between Audiences and Artists**

This paper examines the performativity of audiences of contemporary performance. As assemblies of engaged spectators (whether they are gathered physically or temporally), audiences collectively do their part to attend (to) the work, to sustain performers, to mediate the performance, and most importantly to circulate its effects. In an era of rapid uploading via social media, audiences coalesce around likeable images and videos quickly and temporarily, in the process making something out of what everyone else missed. Through their productive documentation of performance they constitute the unstable and unpredictable physical mediums of contemporary performance, a genre no longer understood solely through the immanence or labor of the body artist, if it ever was. Moreover, audiences work collaboratively, although sometimes in errant or insidious ways, to shape a work's meaning. While performance art has always been about the intersubjectivity of performer and spectators, the persistent documentary involvement of contemporary audiences makes evident the force of their witnessing as an illocutionary act. Looking briefly at several key examples, including La Ribot's "Laughing Hole" (2006), Marcel Sparmann's "Black Box" (2013), and Raqs Media Collective's "The Last International" (2013), I evaluate these artists' efforts to create experimental contexts in which to test or diagnose, respectively, fluid interactions between bodies, empathic situations, and the public as missing crowd. Finally, I compare these intentions with analysis of their audiences' efforts to intercede, to narrate, and to play, as visible in social media documentation.

*Adair Rounthwaite.*

### **Flock Together: Affect and Live Art's Audiences**

How does affect travel between members of an audience at a live art event? Recent literature on the audiences of performance and participatory art (e.g. Jackson 2011; Kester 2011; Rodenbeck 2011; Ward 2012; Widrich 2013) has yet to analyze the constitutive role of affect in audience experience and behavior. Clearly, audience members do not have identical experiences of a given event: an individual's experience can vary depending on factors ranging from past life experience, to momentary mood. Simultaneously, affect can travel fluidly across the bodies present, whether in the form of laughter rippling across a room, palpable collective discomfort, or all-too-obvious boredom. I mobilize the concept of the flock to theorize how affects are produced and transferred among audience members. A flock is a group of birds, whose collective movement is characterized by cohesion and alignment, but also by separation among individuals. Though any individual in a group can trigger flocking, it emerges out of a multiplicity of movements and social interactions that operate across the group as a whole. I propose that the live art audience is characterized by a flock-like bodily and sensory coordination. Individuals' movements and speech give rise to collective affects that impact multiple bodies present, though not in a transparent or uniform manner. Questions I consider include how to understand this affective cohesion in relation to the institutional and critical frameworks that assign meaning to audience participation within contemporary art history.

*[Sami Siegelbaum](#).*

### **From the Grand Publique to the Crowd: May '68 and Audience Participation**

My paper compares two street actions organized by artists in Paris in the late 1960s in order to assess the ways in which the events of May 1968 impacted attempts by artists to forge new audience-artwork relations. The first, carried out by the collective, Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV), was titled "A Day in the Street" and sought to interrupt the daily habits of Parisians by offering them a series of objects with which to interact throughout the course of the day on April 16, 1966. GRAV solicited responses from participants using questionnaires that mimicked marketing and political polls that had come into widespread use during the 1960s. The second action took place in October 1968 when artist Gérard Fromanger, along with several factory workers, installed a series of large plastic half-spherical sculptures at a busy intersection in a Parisian

neighborhood. Intended to offer viewers a psychedelic vision of themselves and the surrounding environment the objects were confiscated and destroyed by the police. Though both events encouraged audience engagement with new industrial materials in a manner that was thought to be more spontaneous, democratic, and undetermined, GRAV sought to establish feedback through data while Fromanger's sculptures activated new countercultural modes of perception. These distinctions, coupled with the different responses of spectators and authorities to the two events, indicate a shift in the possibilities for public engagement that turned on the events of May 1968, in which both Fromanger and members of GRAV were active participants.

*Kirsten Olds.*

### **Towards an Audience Vocabulary: General Idea's Re-Routing of the Audience Feedback Loop**

In three performances from the mid 1970s, the Canadian trio General Idea explores the concept of the audience as a feedback loop. These performances are dry-runs, or rehearsals for a long-awaited beauty pageant planned for 1984. Yet rather than the performers on stage, it is the audience who is being rehearsed. They are instructed to gasp, laugh, and perform other stock reactions on cue, developing an “audience vocabulary,” or a set of gestures they could use depending on the context. While the reactions are canned, in these performances the fluidity of subject positions is foregrounded—in one moment as viewers of a performance; in another, as directed actors in the production. In later works, this scripted feedback loop is complicated by another constituency: the “real” audience, watching both the stage performers and the audience-performers (the “extras”). What roles do the “real” audience members assume when their reactions have been prefigured by the other audience? The different audiences involved—the artists and stage performers, the audience extras, the footage of previous audience members screened during the performance, the live audience watching the event, and us, as later audiences—prompt a productive re-framing of the performer-audience relationship through the lens of general systems theory.

*Bortsova Kateryna.*

**FROM SYMBOL TO REALITY: PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF PICTURES ON THE SUBJECT OF ‘BATHING OF A HORSE’**

In this paper the author considers the tendency which appeared in fine arts on the border of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and consisted in interest to depicting a horse, namely, scenes of bathing of a horse. The author has analyzed main causes of origin of this phenomenon in visual art, its philosophical and aesthetical basis. Significant part of the paper is devoted to analysis of its philosophical and symbolic sense. The author also considered it as her debt to introduce into scientific use a number of other artists names and their less known works such as, for example: ‘Bathing of a horse’ by Valentin Serov, ‘Bathing of Horses’ by Arkady Plastov, ‘Kotovskiy men. Bathing of Horses’ by Anatoly Treskin, ‘Bathing of a Horse’ by Nikolai Samokish. In this paper symbolic implications of these works of art are considered. Their meaning is deciphered by means of disclosure of meaning of main symbols of colors, comparative analysis, psychoanalysis. The role of national aesthetics in the works of individual authors and its influence on formation of their world-view are shown. Territorially the investigation has to do with European art and Russian also. It was brought out that various political and cultural situations influenced interpretation of the plot with representation of bathing a horse. The author of the paper singles out as a separate genre the works devoted to horses exclusively, which led to formation of a new genre. The result is extension of term ‘hippology’.

*arkady plotnitsky.*

**Turbulences and Interferences: The Dynamics of Fluids in Art, Science, and Philosophy, from Leonardo da Vinci to Leonhard Euler to Digital Art**

In their *What is Philosophy?*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari define thought, the true thought, as a confrontation between the mind, indeed the brain, and chaos, a confrontation pursued especially by art, science, and philosophy—our primary means of thought. At the same time, Deleuze and Guattari see chaos as not only an enemy but also a friend of thought, even its greatest friend and best ally in a yet greater struggle that thought must wage, that against opinion, which merely protects us from chaos, rather than creatively interact with it. This

cooperative confrontation between thought and chaos takes a particular form in each domain: a creation of affects and planes of composition in art; a creation of functions or propositions and planes of reference in science (including mathematics); and a creation of concepts and planes of immanence in philosophy. The specificity of the workings of thought in each field makes them different from each other, and part of the book's project is to explore this specificity and this difference. And yet, the interrelationships among art, science, and philosophy, are ultimately equally significant for Deleuze and Guattari, which compels them to develop a more complex—heterogeneous, yet interactive—landscape of thought in relation to which each of these fields is positioned. The book's conclusion invokes “interferences” between the three fields or, to begin with, between the corresponding planes in the brain. The term “interference” should not be understood in the negative sense of inhibiting something, but instead in the sense it appears in wave phenomena, where interference at certain points amplifies and at others cancels out the force of the interacting wave fronts. Such interferences are as significant as the specific workings of thought even within each field. The proposed paper will argue that understanding of fluid flow, the dynamics of fluids, provides [...]

*Krystina Madej.*

### **Water Creates Space, Mood, and Story in Disney Animated Shorts and Features**

In Western culture four elements, earth, air, fire, and water were believed to be essential to life. All of these have been used to create environments and reflect ideology in animated films, but it is water that often takes on a special significance in developing the story, in building character, or in setting mood. In the early animated short “Alice's Day at Sea” Walt Disney uses a frame story to provide a reallife Alice an entryway into an animated black and white watery world. In the first twenty seconds of the underwater sequence, Disney brings a starkly represented tempest to theatregoers of 1924. Rolling waves, highlighted by jagged lightening, toss high a ship that soon succumbs to the power of the storm. Drawn in simple line drawings, more because of costs than art, the effects are never the less the most evocative of the power of water of all the scenes in the short. Disney's early interest in representing the nuances of the elements, in particular, the nature of water, is best represented in the experimental and award winning short “The Old Mill” in which water can be seen at its most gentle and

beautiful as well as at its most violent and awesome. This paper shows that in Disney films, including “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” and “Little Mermaid,” water, more than the other elements, is used to create environments for an audience that evoke a broad complexity of moods: gentleness and love, anxiety and danger, anger and malevolence.

Session 8H

**The History and Science of People and Rivers: A Discussion of Christopher Morris’s *The Big Muddy***

Morris’s book, *The Big Muddy: An Environmental History of the Mississippi and Its Peoples, from Hernando de Soto to Hurricane Katrina*, has been praised for being “deeply rooted in substantial interdisciplinary research.” Its use of traditional historical literary sources, such as letters, diaries, and memoirs, in combination with “the work of ecologists, geologists, hydrologists, geographers, and natural resource managers,” has drawn favorable attention from the *American Historical Review* and the *Journal of American History*, but also from *Nature*, and *American Scientist*. On the other hand, his use of a Freudian analogy to discuss “pathological landscapes” has proven controversial. A panel of two historians and a geographer will assess Morris’s achievement as an example of interdisciplinary research on the relationship between people and nonhuman nature.

[Kenna Archer.](#)

**Discussant.**

[Craig Colten.](#)

**Discussant.**

[Jack Davis.](#)

**Discussant.**

[Christopher Morris.](#)

**Discussant.**

Session 8I



## Fluidity in Early Modernism

*David Strong.*

### **Renaissance Poetry and Modern Neuroscience: An Empathetic Hermeneutic for “A Nocturnal Upon St. Lucy’s Day”**

In John Donne’s seventeenth-century poem, “A Nocturnal Upon St. Lucy’s Day,” the speaker strives to unite himself with his deceased beloved. Despite its physical impossibility, he generates a profound empathetic response that enables him to join her emotionally. The idea of empathy creating a fluid-like connection between two beings anticipates the twenty-first century advances in neuroscience. Via brain mapping, scientists have identified mirror neurons as those neurons that imitate the behavior of another, heralding it as one of the most exciting recent events. These neurons receive and decode the actions of others as well as facilitate communication with them to the extent that these actions indicate what one sees. These neural networks do not fire indiscriminately, but differentially depending upon the situation. The context in which these actions occur is vital in understanding what the observer deems valuable in the other person. In Donne’s poem, the speaker’s embodied simulation of death discloses an undying desire to maintain the immediacy of their relationship and his empathetic response creates a fluid union. It allows him to align himself steadfastly to his lover even upon her death. His heartfelt reaction prevents his complaint that he is “every dead thing” from slipping into melodrama or maudlin sentiment. It enables him to embrace a state that is isomorphic to another person’s affective state. Although her state diametrically opposes his own vivification, his sense of self mirrors the kind associated with death.

*Tita Chico.*

### **Gulliver’s Travels, Things, and Authoritarianism**

*Bethany Williamson.*

### **Margaret Cavendish and the Alchemy of the Arabian Sands**

## Session 9A

**The Aquatic Anthropocene 2: Wave Media**

Chair: *Nicole Starosielski*; *Eva Hayward*

"The Aquatic Anthropocene" takes cultural processes and practices underwater, situating them both literally and conceptually amidst a flow of unruly actors. What is the difference that matters in subaquatic spaces? What kinds of attunement do forms of marine life activate? How does water work as medium and mediator? In what ways have crises, from the disintegration of coral reefs to the Deep Horizon oil spill, catalyzed new modes of fluid response? And how might we re-conceptualize borders, boundaries, and intra-actions given the materiality of the ocean? Do aquatic sites compel us to re-consider the formulation of the Anthropocene? These papers focus our attention on the cultural, historical, and material dynamics of submarine environments. The papers in the panel "Wave Media" investigate the ways in which water sets the conditions of possibility for various subaquatic processes. What does it mean to work in, with, and without water? How can media studies grapple with aquatic environments? John Shiga, taking the sonic search for Malaysian Airlines Flight 370 as a case study, examines how water forms a substrate for media communication. Melody Jue's paper on Jacques Cousteau similarly pushes us to think about how oceanic sites offer ways to reconceptualize media theory. Nicole Starosielski's presentation demonstrates a digital media project, "Surfacing," that reveals how undersea cables form an infrastructure for media distribution. These papers seek not only to expand our understanding of underwater media but also, drawing inspiration from the subaquatic, re-orient media theory.

*John Shiga.*

**Chasing Pings: The Material Meanings of Ocean Sound in the Search for Malaysian Airlines Flight 370**

"Water," E.J. Christie writes, "is a substrate in which signs are necessarily momentary." Perhaps more than any other event in recent history, the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines Flight 370 on March 8, 2014 in the Indian Ocean provides a stark reminder of both the ephemerality of signs transmitted or recorded in water and the potency of what Christie calls "writing in water" as a symbol for unmediated communication. This paper explores this relationship

between the ephemerality of ocean sound and the desire for unmediated communication in the listening practices, technologies and discourses of search vessels as they tracked a series of underwater “pings” emitted by the plane’s black box recorder in April 2014. I suggest that the mood of crisis in official discourses about those “pings” articulates a broader set of institutional and cultural assumption and anxieties about water as a medium of communication. The paper begins by historicizing underwater “pings,” outlining the history of two techniques of underwater communication: passive (listen-only) sonar and active (“ping” and listen) sonar. I argue that mid-20th century debates among engineers and military officials about the reliability of underwater sound as a source of knowledge about the ocean echo in contemporary discourses about black box “pings.” The paper then draws from sound studies and, in particular, the work of Jonathan Sterne to explore the manner in which the fading, underwater pings of MH370’s black box became an unlikely occasion for the reassertion of sound’s long-standing associations with the living world, self-presence, and intersubjectivity.

*Melody Jue.*

### **Diving the Interface, or, Cousteau as Media Theorist**

Jacques Cousteau’s first person writings about diving ask us to rethink conceptions of the “interface” in media theory. As one of the fathers of the aqualung (or SCUBA), Cousteau personally tested the boundaries of deep diving. One physiological phenomena caused by breathing pressurized air (a mix of oxygen and nitrogen) at very low depths is nitrogen narcosis, or “rapture of the deep,” a feeling likened to being drunk underwater. Cousteau writes that he literally could not describe the feeling on the tablets he took with him. So long accustomed to tying the interface to screen culture, Cousteau’s narration of nitrogen narcosis suggests more of a durational, chemical, and non-visual interface between self and technology. Further, we could say that in diving, the interface is (1) amorphous and technically distributed between tank, regulator, lungs, and dissolved gasses in the bloodstream (2) non-visual, somatically felt in its effects (3) involving air as both medium and techne and (4) not about practices of reading and visual interpretation, which Alex Galloway and Joanna Drucker have focused on, but perhaps what Merleau Ponty has called the experience of “cohesion without concept.” Cousteau’s *The Silent World* and other science fictional imaginations of aquatic humans ask that we rethink the interface

as not simply a screen or boundary, but a primarily somatic experience that has temporal and physiological dimensions. This technique of displacing a concept like “interface” underwater aims to further elucidate the pervasive terrestrial biases of theory and philosophy through the aquatic counterexample.

*Nicole Starosielski.*

### **surfacing.in/...**

The representations of undersea cables – infrastructures that support almost all of our transoceanic Internet traffic – often position these technologies either as human interventions into a “natural” ocean or as vectors of connectivity that supersede the sea. Drawing upon new materialist research, the paper offers a counter-representation that points to other kinds of cultural and aesthetic relationships at play in cabled oceans. “Surfacing,” an interactive project designed by the author, depicts the undersea cables that carry today’s information exchanges as “media under water” – as technologies that take shape in and through its connections with the aquatic environment. The project reveals the oceanic and coastal processes that have long been constitutive of transoceanic movement. “Surfacing”’s navigational structure is oriented to dive down through different “surfaces” of cable-related information, each of which attempts to cultivate literacy about the materiality, historicity, and locality of transoceanic infrastructures. The project shifts focus away from transoceanic technologies as vectors toward the ways in which they enable and support a variety of modes inhabiting, mediating, and engaging the ocean itself.

Session 9B

### **Cybernetics and Psychedelics**

Chair: *Bruce Clarke*

The discourse of cybernetics in its present exfoliation provides this panel a conceptual framework adequate to the field reports of psychedelic science regarding the uncanny interconnectedness of materiality, life, consciousness, and communication. Reference to the multivalent work of neurophysiologist turned psychonaut John Lilly links the papers together.

*Bruce Clarke.*

## **Noise on Acid: The Human Biocomputer and the Biological Computer Laboratory**

In 1967 John Lilly produced two remarkable texts. One was *The Mind of the Dolphin: A Nonhuman Intelligence*. Here one difficulty of establishing controls on efforts to communicate with dolphins is theorized in terms of information theory's signal-noise ratio. When "listening to a very noisy acoustically presented process," Lilly wrote, the observer may begin to "make signals out of the noise' by introducing systematic changes into the noise." Attention to withdrawing involuntary projections of meaning returns in Lilly's second 1967 text, *Programming and Metaprogramming in the Human Biocomputer*, which details Lilly's parallel regimen of self-experimentation with LSD: "a reasonable hypothesis states that the effect of these substances on the human computer is to introduce white noise (in the sense of randomly varying energy containing no signals of itself) in specific systems in the computer." A lengthy reference to a paper by cyberneticist extraordinaire Heinz von Foerster immediately follows this passage. Von Foerster's Biological Computer Laboratory at the University of Illinois is a resonant backdrop to Lilly's cybernetic trope of the "human biocomputer." Moreover, their personal as well as conceptual connections suggest that Lilly's proactive treatment of LSD's "cognitive projections" upon the noise of the mind helped to set the stage for von Foerster's mature contribution to the discourse of systems theory, the epistemological constructivism of second-order cybernetics, for which "the environment as we perceive it is our invention."

[Richard Doyle](#).

## **Opening to the Inner: Consciousness, Openness, and the Materialist Hallucination**

Few ideas are more counterintuitive than the claim that consciousness, and not matter, is fundamental to the Cosmos. Matter *matters*, populating scholarly titles and reeking of relevance and actuality for a set of (inter)disciplines continually threatened by neoliberal demands for deliverables even while the global economy is transformed by that intangible, innovation. New Materialism, for example, asserts the "existence of a material world that is independent of our minds" (Delanda). Where and when does this distinction between the material world and "our minds" occur? An appearance that cannot be verified is usefully labeled "hallucination." First-person inspection of matter in search of such verification

always reveals not only a material world, but a beholding subject that must itself be investigated to warrant any such claim, raising a query in place of an assumption: Is subjectivity itself material? Both the feedback loop of consciousness onto itself explored by psychedelic science (Leary, Lilly) as well as *atma vicara* of the Sanskrit tradition suggest that while matter is transient, entropic, and fleeting, “consciousness-without-an-object-is” (Wolff). This talk will explore the parallel encounters with the primacy of consciousness as an immanent and fundamental attribute of Universe in the work of neuroscientist John Lilly and physicist Andre Linde. Lilly and Linde's findings will be contextualized by recent work on consciousness by Katherine MacLean suggesting that mystical experiences occasion an increased capacity for a psychological construct labeled “Openness”--perhaps including an Openness to the counterintuitive primacy of consciousness over matter.

#### Session 9C

### **Eating Others**

Chair: [\*Michael Lundblad\*](#)

Animal and animality studies have helped us to rethink nonhuman subjectivity, which can lead to new questions about who, rather than what, some people eat. We might be critical of carnophallogocentrism, in Derrida's terms, or factory farming, or, presumably, human cannibalism (to include a perhaps surprising example). But how do we resist these practices (or anxieties)? What are the cultural politics of various attempts to provide alternatives to eating others? This panel highlights new work in animal and animality studies in relation to a range of representations and practices of eating. All three presenters are currently involved with the development of an edited book collection, *Animalities: Literary and Cultural Studies Beyond the Human*, to be edited by Michael Lundblad. Sun-chieh Liang's paper, “Thou Shalt Not Eat: The Animal Extinction in the Ice Age Series,” explores how a resistance to carnophallogocentrism can end up masking the inevitable violence that is associated with any form of eating. Karen Victoria Lykke Syse's paper, “Looking the Beast in the Eye: Re-animation of Meat Eating in Food Prose,” considers the rhetoric and practice of slow and sustainable food movements in cookbooks and reality television series, as well as the cultural politics and privilege often constructed through these texts. Finally, Michael Lundblad explores the fear of being eaten by zombies—as a metaphor for terrorists denied subjectivity—in his paper, “Zombie Animality: What's Eating

Others in World War Z?” Ultimately, the panel encourages further thinking about how various people are defined by the others they choose to eat (or not).

*Sun-chieh Liang.*

### **Thou Shalt Not Eat: The Animal Extinction in the *Ice Age* Series**

The dietary habit of the animals in the animation *Ice Age* series precisely demonstrates the ambiguous structure of the western eating culture of what Jacques Derrida calls “carnophallogocentrism.” Eating is curiously presented as something evil, which jeopardizes the life of the eater. The *Ice Age* animals are all constrained by an oxymoronic unwritten law, which operates obviously against the animal instinct. If the animals want to live, they have to eat; and if they eat, they will probably die. In an ice age with all natural catastrophes imaginable, the food, the primary source to sustain basic survival, becomes horribly rare, but no matter how hard they try, the animals never get a chance to eat, as if eating itself is destined to destroy their life. As a result, the good guys, whether they are carnivores or not, do not eat anything at all, and the villains, whether they are herbivores or not, endeavor to hunt for food only to find themselves always in a futile quest. In order to shy away from the potential predatory violence embedded in carnophallogocentrism, *Ice Age* series ironically has to be carnophallogocentric enough to violently forbid all the living animals from eating anything at all. Those animals which do eat turn out to be animate machines in animal’s clothing. The world of *Ice Age* series is completely cleansed of violence at the expense of real animal lives.

*Karen Victoria Lykke Syse.*

### **Looking the Beast in the Eye: Re-animation of Meat Eating in Food Prose**

Slow Food, Cuisine de terroir, heritage breeds and a strong focus on organic meat—sourced, prepared and consumed within local communities and regions—are part of a movement which in addition to its environmental ideals also incorporates a new animal ethic. This presentation will explore how cook books – some of which are published in association with lifestyle TV-programs broadcasted over the last two decades - aim explicitly to reacquaint the meat eating consumer with the animal source. Various authors argue a need to reintroduce the meat animal into our cultural consciousness. Why have we – to



use John Berger's metaphor – started to look into the animal's eyes once again? And how is the so-called re-animation conveyed through cook books?

*Michael Lundblad.*

### **Zombie Animality: What's Eating Others in *World War Z*?**

In the panel's final paper, Michael Lundblad explores how animality intersects with recent representations of zombies, in which humans become potential food sources for undead others. What if the zombies can be linked with constructions of "mindless" enemies like "terrorists"? What are the biopolitical implications of these discourses, along with constructions of humans "reduced" to animal instincts in order to survive a zombie apocalypse? This paper explores these questions in texts such as the recent film adaptation of *World War Z*, the earlier novel upon which it is based, and other texts that illustrate the recent fascination with zombies. The idea of a zombie apocalypse can be seen as naturalizing both heteronormativity and survival-of-the-fittest violence, in which human survivors must rely upon their animal instincts in order to avoid being bitten, while states of exception are justified in response to threats of pandemic illness. Heroic epidemiologists, therefore, work side by side with the military to contain human populations and prevent the spread of viruses (often evoking the history of AIDS), linking the fight against contagion with extreme measures justified in response to terrorism. What's eating others in these texts is ultimately the construction of threats to "life as we know it," which becomes a key biopolitical site for policing and suppressing objections to state-sponsored violence.

Session 9D

### **Automatons and Automatism**

Chair: *Allison de Fren*

This panel investigates systems in which humans and nonhumans act on and influence one another, complicating and evolving notions of affective autonomy, agency, and alterity. The first paper explores the possibilities of such systems/networks for reframing conceptions of agency in relation to cinematic human automatism; the second examines the thematic tensions between awe and automatism inspired by affective programming; and the third considers the extent to which gendered technologies are marked by a radical alterity that constrains other possibilities for agency. Together, these papers explore both the aesthetic effects of automatism and the ways that technoscience shapes and

reshapes the conceptual boundaries between humans, nonhumans, and machines.

*Scott Selisker.*

### **Systems Ecology and Human Automatism in UPSTREAM COLOR**

This paper considers Shane Carruth's 2013 film UPSTREAM COLOR in the light of cinematic conventions of human automatism. Carruth's film is grounded in systems ecology and biology, as the film's action is framed around an organism whose life cycle makes use of a human host and human helpers. As such, the film suggests firm connections to contemporary conversations about the nonhuman and the anthropocene, as the film revises cinematic conventions of character and action around this nonhuman agent, a worm. This paper argues that UPSTREAM COLOR most importantly revises the cinematic use of the "human automaton," that is, the dramatization of uncertain agency in humorous (MODERN TIMES [1936], DR. STRANGELOVE [1959]) or uncanny (e.g., WHITE ZOMBIE [1932], THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE [1962]) scenes of programmed bodily movement. Scholars including Tom Gunning, Michael North, and Vivian Sobchack have attended recently to the phenomenological depth and political uses of cinematic automatism, though UPSTREAM COLOR moves beyond the illustrations of freedom and unfreedom that conventional human automata provide in film. With reference to work by Brian Massumi and Bruno Latour, this paper contends that UPSTREAM COLOR can help to describe a concept of agency that is based not in individuals, but in the flows between individuals; that is, a conception of agency rooted in networks and systems.

*Allison de Fren.*

### **Armonica/A.I.: Gendered Technologies of Affective Programming in E.T.A. Hoffmann's "Automata" and Spike Jonze's HER**

This paper explores the parallels between the female A.I. system in the 2013 film HER, with whom the central protagonist falls in love despite her lack of a body, and the female automaton singer in the 1814 story "Automata," who is invoked but only seen by a character who has fallen under the spell of her voice. Each romantic encounter produces thematic tensions between awe and automatism, raising questions about the vital and mechanical principles that enable machines to affect humans emotively and that make humans susceptible to their influence.

In Hoffmann’s story, these tensions are brought to the fore by the comparison of the singer’s voice to a glass harmonica, an instrument whose otherworldly tones had an unprecedented reputation for affecting listeners, in part due to its association with Anton Mesmer, who played it during his séances to facilitate the flows of magnetic fluid within his patients’ bodies. Invented by Benjamin Franklin in 1761, the armonica had a meteoric rise to fame, but fell out of favor not only as mesmerism faced increasing suspicion, but also as the discourse around music and nerves shifted from Cartesian hydraulic models of subtle fluid and Newtonian metaphors of nerves vibrating like musical strings to Galvanic models in which musical sensation were viewed as a form of electro-stimulus response. Hoffmann mines the ambivalence surrounding the armonica to probe the affinities between humans and machines and to raise questions about affective programming and agency that are still relevant today.

Session 9E

**“FLUXUS/FLUID: Forming – Deforming – Reforming” – Panel number two**

Chair: [\*James W. McManus\*](#)

The word FLUID is defined, in part, as a substance with the potential for continuous states of forming, deforming, and reforming. This relationship of events aptly describes the viscoelastic art movement, Fluxus, from its inception in the late 1950s to today. The boundaryless space that is Fluxus encourages us to consider it as an agent for a new dynamic – one FLUID in nature. Manifesting itself (through social media, museum exhibitions and publications) as a global language – it defies boundaries (physical and conceptual) in numerous ways. We are proposing three panels, under the title “FLUXUS/FLUID: Forming – Deforming – Reforming” each with three speakers, that will investigate the FLUID nature of Fluxus over that past six decades.

[\*Anne Collins Goodyear\*](#).

**The Drawing in Flux(us)**

Using as its point of departure George Maciunas’s 1963 Fluxus Manifesto, which it will treat as both a physical and a conceptual document, this paper will explore the impact of Fluxus on the “drawing.” In so doing, I will explore both the reconceptualization of drawing itself as a “non-precious” activity as well as the

role played by drawing in the ultimate collecting and “institutionalization” of Fluxus. With its embrace of the notion of “anti-art,” Fluxus activities and projects helped to stimulate and reorient the meaning of the preparatory “sketch” and the question of the role of such documents in the creative process. – Often understood as preparatory to some larger end, drawing, seen through, and as transformed by Fluxus sensibilities, comes to function both as testament to and record of creative exchange. Stimulating and documenting the “fluidity” of thought and of media themselves, Fluxus drawings simultaneously captured and recorded the artistic impulse. – In so doing, this heterogeneous category of work, ranging from collages to typewritten documents, to schematic renderings and handwritten instructions, itself became collectable, enabling historians both to observe and identify revealing idioms, such as the relationship between visual art and poetry, the interchange between artistic and technological conceits, and the interplay between visual art and the musical score. At the same time, the very act of preserving these drawings and the conceptual importance attached to them has arguably played a critical role in shaping the very notion of what it is possible to collect and comprehend as artistic practice, inevitably shaping the very narrative that has emerged around the movement itself.

*Nelson Smith.*

### **Categorical Ambiguity**

My presentation will explore the use of pragmatic organization and categorization by Fluxus artists, particularly Alison Knowles, to chart a liminal space between logic and poetry, and how this tendency has influenced my own diagrammatic paintings and drawings. Using a workshop Knowles presented in Detroit in 2004 as a model (titled “The Secrets of Ordinary Things”), I will compare her process of categorizing and labeling in her projects to my work creating original diagrams of landscapes and my cultural research of places. Like the Fluxus examples, my paintings and drawings – layered with imaginative diagrams and imagery – interpret landscapes, places, and cultures through research and lived experience. My most recent diagrammatic work is the result of residencies and travel in Ireland and Southeast Asia. This “categorical ambiguity” activates the fluid boundaries of logical structure, experiential and material knowledge, and poetic imagination.

*Roger Rothman.*

## **Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha: Fluxus and the Flow of Laughter**

The predominance of laughter is perhaps Fluxus's most distinguishing feature, the fusion of "Spike Jones, Vaudeville, gags, children's games and Duchamp," as George Maciunas famously put it. This paper will examine the role of humor in Fluxus by situating it in relation to the long history of philosophical, psychological, and sociological study of humor, from Plato and Aristotle's consideration of laughter as the expression of scorn, and thus evidence of low character, to Simon Critchley's recent claim that humor is "a form of liberation." Moreover, it's a form of liberation that is founded upon social bonds. Experiences of beauty and sublimity take place between the solitary subject and the object of its examination; but humor almost invariably takes place between individuals. The joker and her audience; the teaser and teased, the tickler and tickled. In addition, laughter is both contagious and irrepressible. It spreads from one person to the next like a virus, and—as we all recall from our childhood fits of "the giggles"—once its overtaken us, it resisted even the most aggressive efforts to contain it. More so than any other movement before or since, Fluxus recognized that art could be both a laughing matter and a laughing that mattered.

Session 9F

### **The Encounter After Identification**

Chair: *Scott Richmond; James Hodge*

What is the name for the person experiencing contemporary media? While we experience media variously as readers, players, spectators, or users, these terms characterize subjects according to generic behavioral norms that can obscure possibilities for theorizing the experience of contemporary media more generally. Without proposing another genre, this panel focuses on the term 'encounter' as a way to analyze the diverse forms of relation characterizing 21st century media. With the rise of atmospheric media and ubiquitous computing, we must develop a critical vocabulary to discover the senses in which the non-encounter matters just as much as the encounter itself. The term 'encounter' is, of course, not new. It appears with some frequency in contemporary queer and affect theory (Berlant, Edelman), and has a minor prominence in continental philosophy (Deleuze, Althusser). This panel brings these discourses into contact with studies of contemporary media in various networked, ludic, and temporal forms. Engaging different meanings of the term "encounter," we build upon psychoanalytical discussions of identification, which attend to the emergence of the subject in

concert with different modes of discourse (language, cinema). Our aim is to think identification in our contemporary moment, what might be called an era of the encounter, often conceived as “after the subject.” Rather than abandoning the subject, we show how the historical legibility of contemporary media depends precisely on a key insight from identification theory: the subject has never been fixed but is rather perpetually in flux, available to multiscalar attachments and labors of attunement.

*James Hodge.*

### **Encountering Digital Media**

This essay argues for the significance of Gilles Deleuze’s notion of the encounter for attending to the generalized address of digital media. Over and above specific behavioral designations for particular new media genres (readers of electronic literature, viewers of new media art, players of videogames), the term ‘encounter’ helps somewhat paradoxically to specify the aesthetics of digital media in terms of its status beyond any single platform as the massively general infrastructure of contemporary life. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze defines the encounter in direct opposition to recognition. The term thus offers a compelling starting point for considering new media not only as new but also as opaque. In a follow-up passage Deleuze speaks of the encounter as concerning “not a sensible being but the being of the sensible,” or the conditions of possibility for the sensible. While Deleuze is frequently cited by new media scholars, this dimension of his thought remains overlooked. This paper argues for its importance as a potent resource for theorizing the fundamental opacity governing the increasingly environmental and amodal “interface” between human experience and the inhuman operations of digital media. Unlike Whiteheadian philosophy or so-called “flat ontologies,” which have of late become so important for new media studies, Deleuze’s notion of the encounter pushes us to dwell precisely the human experiential opacity of digital media without leaving the human behind altogether.

*Patrick Lemieux.*

### **Networking the NES: The Nonhuman Play of Two *Brothers***

Without the player, there is still play. An electrical signal generated by the audio processing unit of a Nintendo Entertainment System flips a switch. Mario jumps over a pipe and into pit. As his 8-bit body leaves the screen, Koji Kondo’s

conciliatory “game over” music signals a second switch. Another Mario, running on another platform, jumps. In *Brothers* (2013), an electrical installation made with vintage videogame equipment, the feedback between two networked NESs reveals both the material constraints of Nintendo’s flagship platform and a form of nonhuman play with which we constantly collaborate. When one brother dies, the other one jumps. Asymmetry in the two systems--whether material, temporal, or structural--produces emergent patterns as each plumber leapfrogs over goombas and green pipes according to the thanatopic assistance of the other. The slowly oscillating death drive of two suicidal automata recast Conway’s *Game of Life* (1970) as a Game of Death. Without the player, there is still play and without life, there is still a game. Although *Super Mario Bros.* (1985) was engineered to showcase the affordances of the Nintendo Entertainment System, the widespread success of the game in the late 1980s naturalized the scaled and speed of Mario’s movement as a design idiom and software genre for a generation of players. Without the players, the rhythm, dynamics, and electrical impulses of the platform produce new kinds of networked games. This talk explores this encounter between two Nintendos and the uncanny, emergent effects of electrical platforms engaged in zero-player games.

*Kris Cohen.*

**Statement in the Form of a Question (Search Engines and Thomson & Craighead’s *Beacon*)**

Search engines make the encounter with an other (given as resource, fact, friend, community...) into an oblique encounter with the self. Identification becomes self-identification, although cryptically. This is true algorithmically, as many have argued, but the algorithmic fact grafts itself onto an encounter that feels driven by something deeply personal: curiosity, productivity, distraction, boredom. Search engines thus engage their users in a deeply asymmetrical form of relationality, a fact evident in British artists Thomson & Craighead’s web-based and installation work *Beacon* (2003-7). When self-knowledge is developed through a form (the search engine itself) that aggregates individual searches into populations, the data of which are then recompiled and delivered back to the individual in the form of “personalized results,” all of which come to stand in for and produce an encounter with the world, personhood itself becomes a population effect--a distillate of an immaterial and algorithmic massing that nevertheless is deeply and importantly personal. Through a close engagement



with search engine aesthetics, this paper describes the complex intersubjective imaginaries that form as a result of this encounter with a self that can never quite be one's own or simply another's.

*Scott Richmond.*

**Stupid: An essay on several wrongnesses in *Jackass*.**

MTV's TV and film franchise, *Jackass*, specializes in three distinct affects: the embarrassing mayhem of the prankster, the sympathetic pain of the fool, and the nausea and vomiting that may well be its own innovation. The latter two, especially, dramatize our irreparable and insuperable exposure to others, our mimetic resonance with an other. We experience sympathetic pain and nausea, registering in our own body the affects manifest in another. *Jackass* puts this other on a screen, transforming and intensifying our mimetic resonance by technical means. *Jackass* is promiscuous in the sorts of screens it deploys in its generation of its squeamish affects. It starts as a television show on MTV, becomes a film franchise (often with pranks and scenes directly lifted from the TV series), and then, in a stupid twist, shows up re-enacted by users on YouTube, occasionally sloughing off a viral prank (e.g. the "gallon challenge"). This migration across screens offers three different forms of technical mediation, offering three different configurations of mediated mimesis, and with them, corresponding forms of identification with others onscreen. In this paper, I scrutinize the prank, "Paper Cuts," in three forms: on MTV, on cinema screens, and re-enacted by users on YouTube. Drawing on phenomenological philosophy and "alternative" (post-Freudian and object relations) psychoanalytic theory, I ask how such technical elaboration of something as existentially fundamental as our exposure to others (as raw affect, as stabilizing identification) transforms that exposure in complex, unforeseen ways.

Session 9G

**Forming the Visual Imagination: Studies in Scale**

Chair: *Elizabeth Kessler*

In his introductory essay to *Structure in Art and Science*, Gyorgy Kepes claimed "the most powerful imaginative vision is structure-oriented." Kepes's historical moment – the 1960s – was repeatedly concerned with structures of scale. From new views of the cosmos and earth, to atomic and particle physics, the very large and very small drew attention to the scalar system of structures linking part to

the whole. The papers in this panel trace the life of scalar visualization technologies through different disciplines--slide rulers, telescopes, holograms and fractal mathematics. The papers specifically extend Kepes's attention to structure by considering how forms, structures, and models shape our visual imaginations. What are the implications for artistic and scientific representations when a particular form holds sway? What visual and phenomenological experiences are generated when we favor one form over another? Which ones are excluded? How might understandings of visual form shape notions of community, the cosmos, and our place within them?

*Hannah Higgins.*

**A Report from Zoomopolis: A Meditation on Social Life and the Scalar Dimension**

Our acculturated habits of thinking geometrically are ill suited to the new technologies of scaling. Carefully calibrated in grammar and high school curricula, Euclidean mathematics renders separate point, line, plane, cube and time as discrete one, two, three, four and higher level dimensions. In contrast, the scalar experience of dimensions, which I'm calling the "scalar dimension" here for shorthand, is fluid, made up of continuous experiences that link each dimension to the next. This fluid scale offers artists new visualization strategies with which to link individual experiences to social form. I included the root polis in the title of this talk because it references both a city (as in the original Greek), as well as participation in the social, political and military life of the city-state. By giving form to a fluid and relative relationship between part and whole, in other words, the scalar dimension has implications for emerging forms of utopian thought. By combining R. Buckminster Fuller's synergetic worldview with Benoit Mandelbrot's fractal mathematics, this talk proposes to describe a pattern of artists exploring the interstices between between one, two, three, four and more dimensions through synergetic forms and sensibilities. Using Damien Hirst's *Pharmacy* (1992-7), Gabriel Orozco's chessboards (1995 and 1997), Carsten Nicolai's *Grid Index* (2009), and Sarah Sze's *Portable Planetarium* (2011) as examples of fractals and synergetics in action, this talk proposes to map terrain in this emerging, paradigmatic space.

*Susan L. Jarosi.*

### **Interference Patterns: The Lost History of Holography**

From its introduction in the 1960s, holography's structural properties and metaphorical resonances presented compelling possibilities to researchers in fields as diverse as neuroscience, quantum physics, and experimental art. Specifically, they observed how holographic plates did not record mimetic images, like photographs, but rather indexed the more "complete" interference patterns of light waves – both their amplitude and frequency. These microscopic interference patterns represent vast amounts of visual information – whole visual fields – in a translated form. Just as important, the interference patterns of holograms are distributed uniformly such that their surfaces are identical at every point; any section of a hologram can reproduce the entire visual field. The very name hologram –(holos: without division; gramma: message) describes this property, known as redundancy, whereby every part contains the whole. These unique qualities – the recording of interference patterns and the redundancy of that recording – have enabled scientists and artists to model theories of memory, visual perception, and cosmology that are physically and aesthetically distinct from conventional understandings of reality. But despite this potential to open up new arenas, holograms have been constrained by their ability to generate three-dimensional images. In discourses on virtual images, holography is not formative, but repetitive: it simply extends the age-old thirst for illusionism and immersion. The lost history of holographic models in science and art dislodges arguments that position holography in service of a teleological quest for ever-more convincing, mimetically "real" environments, contravening current discourses on virtual reality and simulation, virtual windows and screens.

*Elizabeth Kessler.*

### **Jumps in Space: The Disappearing and Appearing Logarithmic Scale**

Charles and Ray Eames's short film *Powers of Ten* (1977) has profoundly influenced representations of the universe. The final film and a rough sketch from 1968 illustrate the logarithmic scale by fluidly zooming the viewer through space. In the years since, planetary shows, television programs, and popular films have made this cosmic trip a visual convention. But as *Powers of Ten* transformed one experience of the logarithmic scale into a visual trope, another representation of it was going underground: the slide rule. The period of the film's development corresponds to the replacement of this common manifestation of the logarithmic scale by calculators. What's lost in the move

from the transparency of the slide rule to the opacity of the calculator? What's gained? And what is the relationship between *Powers of Ten* and these technological shifts? As a means to examine these questions and further ask what happens when a visual form disappears and then reappears, this paper will consider the visualization of the logarithmic scale in *Powers of Ten* alongside a 2005 map of the observable universe published by astronomer J. Richard Gott and his colleagues. The map employs a logarithmic scale to compress the cosmos into a single image, and Gott cites *Powers of Ten* as an inspiration. The viewer's experience, however, is markedly different. The map substitutes the film's fluidity with a series of disjunctions that bring to the forefront the mathematics of scaling.

Session 9H

## Popular Fiction

*Sherryl Vint.*

### Corporate Contagion: SyFy's Helix

In "SF Capital," Mark Fisher critiques the conflation of narrative, advertising and commodity product in much science fiction, in which the power to imagine the future and inspire readers to invest in such visions is channeled into the purchase of products that simulate this future, taking the place of real social critique and political change. Such rhetoric mimics like the futurist discourse of TED talks, and the relationship between such visions of the future and corporate market-share is like the relationship between Star Wars as text and the sale of Hasbro action figures. These systems collide on the Helix website. The first page notes that Arctic Biosystems is a division of Ilaria Corporation, and one ancillary text is an advertisement for Ilaria Infinity lenses. The aesthetics of this poster conveys the promise of the future as entertaining design embodied by TED talks. Yet the larger type on this poster asks, "Do your contact lenses make you feel like you're dying?" – thus linking this ancillary text with the series' diegetic critique of corporate greed. At the same time, however, SyFy's website is supported by advertisements for Verizon's "Powerful Answers" campaign, whose rhetoric eerily echoes Ilaria's promise of a better future through patented technology. My paper will explore the tensions among series, ancillary texts, and corporate support for the SyFy channel, asking what happens as meaning flows across these boundaries

and considering whether sf still provides us with cognitive maps of the world otherwise.

*Connor Pitetti.*

### **Colson Whitehead's *Liquid City: Zone 1* and Apocalyptic Discourses of Urban Space**

In Biblical literature the sea represents the chaotic and incomplete, and the heavenly city represents solidity, completion, and stability. There is a movement across the narrative from fluid to solid – from the primordial deeps, to the Ark floating on the flood, to the imperfect Babylon sitting on many waters, to the New Jerusalem that banishes the sea. In Genesis the spirit of God moves over the face of the deep, but those waters disappear as the providential plan develops. As the happy end of Biblical history, apocalypse solidifies things: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” Contemporary postapocalyptic narratives, in contrast, keep things fluid. Representing the city itself as a liquid entity, postapocalyptic texts collapse the city/sea binary. Using Colson Whitehead's zombie novel *Zone 1* as an example, this talk explores the implications of this image of the liquid city. If the city and its people are understood as necessarily fluid rather than as being in need of solidification or stabilization, new models of human realization in history become necessary. This raises questions related to debates over sustainability and precarity as models for environmental thought. How do we go about the task of living well in a world in which solidity is an unattainable dream? If the flux of potential and risk cannot be resolved into the safe stability of the actual, what is our model for action and value?

*Melissa Littlefield.*

### **What Came First: the Scientific Criminal or the Criminal Scientist? Inventing Adversaries for Emergent Criminalists in *Amazing Detective Tales, 1930***

Much has been written about the rise of the Criminal Scientist, those real and fictional detectives that utilize scientific gadgets and techniques to uncover devious behaviors. But the criminal scientist, from Sherlock Holmes to Luther Trant to Craig Kennedy, also depends on the obvious and little discussed invention of the scientific criminal. Historians and literary scholars, including Ronald Thomas, Ian Burney, and Haia Shpayer-Makov have traced the rise of the

detective and forensic sciences; there has been no shortage of studies of criminology; and yet, the scientific criminal has yet to exert his telling influence on the history of criminalistics. In this paper, I explore the scientific criminals in a circumscribed set of texts from American Scientific Detective Fiction published in *Amazing Detective Tales* by Hugo Gernsback between June and October 1930. In addition to situating Gernsback's editorial mission within the concomitant rise of the Police Science, I argue that the rise of the criminal scientist depended, at least in part, on the creation of an appropriate foe—the scientific criminal.

Keywords: forensic science; American Scientific Detective Fiction; genre fiction; innovative technologies

Session 9I

### **Muddy Waters. Engineering the Amorphous**

Chair: *Dawid Kasprowicz*

In classical occidental ontology with its form-matter-dichotomy, the concept of the amorphous as the unshaped or not yet formed has a tenuous status. Looking at fluids or liquids this fact becomes more obvious insofar as they appear to resist the absorption through scientific axioms and classifications. On the other hand, the challenge to describe the fluid in its physical properties and to formulate ordering principles into scientific laws urges for an extension of technical instruments to measure, capture and calculate research 'objects' that constantly escape the process of identification. Referring to Gaston Bachelard's concept of "Phenomenotechnics", one could look here for the technological conditions of scientific perception. The panel aims to take these considerations one step further in asking how the amorphous is technologically recreated as an engineered system. Following Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, the ontological status of the object is not of interest for an engineer. However, through the technological productability of such systems (already before but explicitly with the advent of digital computers), the question of the ordering principles of the amorphous reemerges. While the latter are not graspable through causal-analytical approaches, the panel presents three modes of an engineered concept of the fluid-amorphous that also allude to a differential thinking. The modes will be the mathematical approximation for visualization (Niewerth), the stress ratio of blobs between fluid and solid bodies (Vehlken) as well as the aisthesis of the biomorph concerning bodies in space (Kasprowicz).

*Dennis Niewerth.*

### **Giving Shape to the Shapeless. On the Modelling of Fluid Mechanics in Science and Application**

Almost two centuries after the discovery of the Navier-Stokes-Equations in 1827, fluid mechanics still present physicists and engineers with numerous problems both theoretical and practical in nature. While rigid bodies exhibit only a limited repertoire of mechanical motion which exhausts itself in the movement types of *translation* and *rotation*, fluids are not constrained to a fixed shape and hence *deform* when physical force is applied to them - a phenomenon which is far more difficult to mathematically objectify. While solid mechanics concern themselves with bodies whose behavior can be explained in terms of *position*, moving fluids can only be grasped in terms of *velocity*. While we can reliably determine the position of any given point within a solid object while it is going through translational or rotational motions, the movement within a body of fluid can only be approximated as a field of vectors along which discrete parcels travel at varying speeds. In dealing with fluids, physics and engineering do not concern themselves with actual phenomena so much as they revolve around certain models which are inevitably reductionist. This fact becomes particularly pronounced in real-time fluid simulation, where the computational capacity of the available hardware imposes hard limitations on the complexity of the models which can be effectively visualized. The paper aims to explore these unavoidable 'blind spots' of simulatory approaches to fluids not as methodological deficiencies, but as highly functional strategies of engineering and visualizing shapelessness specifically by procedurally assigning shape to it - be it in theoretical physics, industrial design or even the aesthetics of video games.

*Dr. Sebastian Vehlken.*

### **All Surface. Blobs and the Liquefaction of Architecture**

In 2013, the deep-sea Blobfish *Psychrolutes marcidus* was elected the ugliest animal in the world, adding to an an-aesthetics of the amorphous which unambiguously refers back to the gelantine entities of the 1950s horror B-movie *The Blob*. But apart from such aesthetical entanglements, blobs have been intensely discussed as a novel concept in postmodern architecture throughout the last decade of the 20th century: Against the background of Deleuzian processural



philosophy, architects like Greg Lynn used novel digital design softwares to integrate environmental forces and fluid dynamics into the generation of architectural shapes. In order to achieve biomorphous blob-like forms, these softwares made use of NURBS (Non-uniform rational B-Splines) technologies which had not been applicable before the advent of advanced computing resources. Thereby, Lynn and others contested a traditional static and geometric understanding of architectural structures. They sought to computationally unfold more life-like and evolutionary developments of forms, adding a level of mathematical modeling to the an-aesthetical connotation of blobs: But also their *Binary Large Objects* (BLOBs) blurred the boundaries between notions of inside and outside, of surface and volume, of stasis and movement, and of bodies and parts. My presentation will engage with these seemingly paradoxical and counter-intuitive elements of liquefying approaches to the generation of architectural form.

*Dawid Kasprowicz.*

### **“Fluid Sacks” – or the Kinematic of Weightlessness and the Aisthesis of Bodies in Space**

The image of NASA-Astronaut Edward H. White floating in space with the earth behind him is one of the most popular in the world. But from a scientific point of view, the famous spacewalk is a problem with a long history challenging engineers and mathematicians. It's the question of how to formulate the kinematic of a biological body that does not constantly underlie the physical force of gravitation anymore. This problem leads the Air-Force Engineer Charles Whitsett Jr. in his report “Some Dynamical Responses to Weightless Man” (1963) to the phrase that the human body in space is comparable to a “*non-symmetrical, fluid-filled sack*”. The concept of fluid is in this case not only metaphorical but refers more to the basal problem of a locomotion that is not graspable by analytical mathematics and Newtonian mechanics. Instead, Whitsett and his colleagues have to create simulations of weightless environments like the underwater-training in spacesuits, called the “Neutral Buoyancy Simulation”. From this point, the mathematical approach has to be enriched with concepts like intuition, orientation or simply balance who deal more with the question of an *aisthesis of the body* in an alien environment. The talk wants to show how the concept of fluid becomes a synonym for the operationalization of amorphous, biological bodies at the edge of calculability and predictability of performance.

**Business Lunch - Sat 12:15 pm - 2:30 pm**

Business Lunch

**Session 10 - Sat 2:30pm - 4:00 pm**

Session 10A

### **The Aquatic Anthropocene 3: Dissolving Life and Water**

Chair: [\*Nicole Starosielski\*](#); [\*Eva Hayward\*](#)

"The Aquatic Anthropocene" takes cultural processes and practices underwater, situating them both literally and conceptually amidst a flow of unruly actors. What is the difference that matters in subaquatic spaces? What kinds of attunement do forms of marine life activate? How does water work as medium and mediator? In what ways have crises, from the disintegration of coral reefs to the Deep Horizon oil spill, catalyzed new modes of fluid response? And how might we re-conceptualize borders, boundaries, and intra-actions given the materiality of the ocean? Do aquatic sites compel us to re-consider the formulation of the Anthropocene? These papers focus our attention on the cultural, historical, and material dynamics of submarine environments. In this panel, four presentations draw from the materiality of the ocean to re-conceptualize boundaries, borders, and intra-actions. Stacy Alaimo suggests that psychedelic images of shell acidification invite us to contemplate the dissolution of individualist subjectivities. Eva Hayward asks us to think about how intra-actions are re-oriented in submarine environments, examining the diverging work of Rachel Carson and Charley Harper. Sophia Roosth looks at scientific speculations about biological phenomena in stone, dust, and rock to trace how life's milieu is being reoriented to dry, rather than wet. Finally, Jamie Skye Bianco will deliver a performance of the interfaces between human and nonhuman ecologies in two aquatic zones: Dead Horse Bay and the Salton Sea. These papers look at the constitutive logics of contact zones between wet and dry, human and nonhuman, art and science.

*Stacy Alaimo.*

**Your Shell on Acid: Precarious Marine Life in/as Anthropocene Seas**

The “anthropocene” enlists humans into one massive identity that has left an enduring mark on “the planet,” installing a human exceptionalism that erases other species. The term fuels modes of knowing and being incapable of responding to the cataclysmic complexities of the anthropocene itself, as the cartoonish chasm between man and rock and the immense block of geological time deny the unsettling ontologies and epistemologies of extreme fluidity—the sense of life, of species, of known and even unknown biotic communities liquefying more rapidly than science can capture. Rather than imagining the human as an abstract geological force I call for industrialized peoples to consider how ocean acidification dissolves the shells of sea creatures, and to contemplate our own “shells” on acid. To contemplate a liquid dissolution of the human form plunges us into anthropocene environs that can never be external or solid. It calls for a trans-corporeal conception of the anthropocene as a timespace of intra-active material agencies and provisional compositions. It requires scale shifting that is intrepidly--even psychadelicly--empathetic, rather than safely ensconced. Contemplating your shell on acid dissolves individualist, consumerist subjectivity in which the world consists of externalized, solid, entities-objects for human use. As filmic dissolves momentarily merge one scene with another, they figure multi-species intimacies within liquid worlds. Dwelling in the dissolve becomes a dangerous pleasure, a paradoxical “ecodelic” (Doyle) expansion and dissolution of the human, an aesthetic incitement to connect with precarious creaturely life and with the inhuman, unfathomable expanses of the seas.

*Eva Hayward.*

**Schooled by Mackerel: Multiplying Sea Life and Ecotonal Ethics**

*Sophia Roosth.*

**Latent Life: Seeking Vitality in Rock, Dust, and Powder**

How quickly must life proceed to count as life? What defines life when the animating processes that mark the living slow into imperceptibility, as life slackens from the temporalities of biological phenomena into epochs geological? As biologists have sought various answers to the question “what is life?,” they

often have looked to that which seemingly is not life, asking whether living things might arise from, live in, or be generated from dry substances: stone, dust, mud, rock, and powder. Since the mid-twentieth century, biologists have referred to an interrupted form of life displayed by tardigrades, rotifers, and seeds as “cryptobiosis.” Teeming in what is arguably the deepest crevasse of metaphysical divides, that which is situated between life and non-life, the paradoxical, chimeric forms of life I here track – frozen, dried, powdered, irradiated, and dormant for millennia – are self-referential material apparatuses manifesting theories of what life is, what it is not, and what lies in between. Perhaps, some mid-century biologists mused, cryptobiosis demonstrates that the origin of life need not be tethered to water – life may have spawned on dry land, not the ocean. Some theoretical biologists wondered whether on early Earth, isolated puddles of water occasionally dried up and then pooled again, creating conditions necessary for the development of all life on Earth. Central here is the reorientation of life’s proper milieu as dry, not wet. The definition of life is here decoupled from scientific and popular associations with water and even liquidity as its necessary condition.

*Jamie Skye Bianco.*

**#clusterMucks: an algoRhythmic nonhuman water weirding**

Act 1 : #bottlesNbones Don’t sit down. Walk this beach, cracking underfoot with nitrate-treated broken glass and horse bones, #bottlesNbones. Aptly named, Dead Horse Bay, the site of New York City’s horse rendering and bottling factories, was the waste disposal and recycling zone from the 1880s - 1930s. Decades later, the trash was “capped” underwater. The cap exploded, tidally throwing garbage onto the beach. The Bay sits across from The Rockaways, a fully inhabited barrier island catastrophically damaged by #superStorm Sandy and the final landing site for a 40-ton, endangered, and emaciated finback whale. Debris from Sandy landed on the beach of Dead Horse Bay, making it a contemporary and historical waste disposal site for 130 years. Act 2 : #saltNsea Have a seat. Fish, fowl, organic produce and an oasis of water in this beautiful Sonoran desert and once-mountain fed #saltNsea. Ignore weird watery smells caused by annual botchalism die-offs: endangered sea birds and tilapia stocked for a long-gone desert riviera. Postnatural composting. Other strange smells: salinity, ammonia and sulphides surfacing, pesticides, petrochemical food production and the exposed playa biomass. If the Colorado River fed the #saltNsea, farmers might

not siphon without filtration and sulfides wouldn't blow in Santa Ana winds across Los Angeles. Coda: #clusterMuck Not traveling to these paradisiacal #clusterMucks, where climate change, waste/recycling, agro-biz, lack-of-(clean)-water politics, necro-ecological management, and speculative failures muck and mire? Don't worry! I'll bring you media and thoughts (algoRhythms) and perform wonders of #trashNtoxicity water weirding.

Session 10B

## **Fluid Artist Methodologies**

*Victoria Szabo.*

### **Augmented Humanities Practice**

This paper explores the implications of location-based and marker-based augmented reality for digital humanities practice, focusing on augmented reality systems as a way to place historical and cultural annotations in dialog with real-world spaces on the one hand, and with historic and/or critical texts on the other. Working from case studies in art and cultural history in Venice, Italy and Durham, NC, the paper will draw upon the idea of the hypermedia archive as activated in the context of user experience of space, both physical and virtual, via technologies of location and viewing customized to the spatio-temporal moment of interaction. Reflecting upon notions of hypermedia access as imagined by Vannevar Bush, JCR Licklider, Ted Nelson, Douglas Englehardt, Bill Aitkenson and their successors, as well by digital archivists, multimodal art installations, psychogeographic practitioners, and alternate-reality gamers, this paper suggests that the annotation of physical and virtual space through augmented reality technologies offers a step forward toward the goal of reproducible, yet open-ended, trails of association, to be understood not only in terms of the text or image on the page or screen, but also the surface of the material world itself, and back again.

*M.E. Warlick.*

### **Alchemical Elixirs of Life**

The search for an Elixir of Life was an important goal in alchemical legends, developing alongside the better known metallic transformation of lead into gold. Laboratory preparations of plant and animal products created medicines that

helped to purge the human body of its impurities, mirroring the laboratory processes that turned base matter into the noble metals of silver and gold. This paper will survey the development of alchemical distillations and related imagery within manuscripts and early printed texts, particularly those texts with ties to medicine and pharmacy. The main focus within this evolution will be the contributions of women practitioners, beginning with the theories and vessels of the Hellenistic alchemist Maria the Prophet. The continuing role of women as distillers of medicinal remedies will be examined, continuing into the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. As alchemy was evolving into chemistry, botany, medicine and pharmacy, these fields became increasingly professionalized and the more exclusive realm of male scientists. Nevertheless, the role of women as distillers of medical products continued as a domestic activity, for which evidence can be found in handbooks for domestic remedies and culinary guides.

*Sidney Perkowitz.*

### **The Science and Art of Fluid Flow: Jackson Pollock and David Alfaro Siqueiros**

Science complements art in analyzing pigments to understand their properties and to validate or restore artworks. But colors on canvas are the dried residue of liquid paint. Further insight can come from analyzing how some artists directly use the dynamic fluid properties of paint, as Jackson Pollock did. So did another iconic artist, David Alfaro Siqueiros, who with Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco defined Mexican muralism in the 1920s to 1940s. Recent fluid mechanical analyses of paint falling under gravity in Pollock's "drip paintings" and Siqueiros' "Collective Suicide" [1, 2] illuminate each painter's artistic choices [3, 4].

Remarkably, there are also signs that early exposure to Siqueiros' methods affected Pollock's later work [5]. In this talk I link the science to images and film clips illustrating the two artist's methods and review their personal connection. 1. A. Herczynski et al., *Phys. Today* 64, 31 (2011). 2. R. Zenit and S. Zetina, <http://ow.ly/sGn6S>, Dec. 2012. 3. S. Perkowitz, ¿Cómo Ves?, Jan. 2014, 22 – 25. 4. S. Perkowitz, *Physics World*, April 2014, 52. <https://tinyurl.com/katzoaj>. 5. H. Harrison, *Jackson Pollock* (Phaidon, 2014). Sidney Perkowitz Emory Emeritus [physp@emory.edu](mailto:physp@emory.edu) 404 3741470 2549 Cosmos Dr. Atlanta, GA 30345

*Allison Myers.*

### **Collaboration as a Creative Methodology in the Work of Jean Dupuy**

From 1973 to 1979, French artist Jean Dupuy stood at a whirling center of the vibrant downtown New York art scene. During this period he organized some of the largest and most successful group performances – events that brought together musicians, dancers, performers, visual artists and other cultural practitioners from a diverse array of backgrounds. One of the most noteworthy was the 1974 event *Soup and Tart* at The Kitchen, where Dupuy and a team of artists cooked dinner for over 300 audience members. While the food was being prepared, thirty-five different artists, from Joan Jonas and Richard Serra to Philip Glass and Laurie Anderson, gave lively two-minute cabaret-style performances. Described as a “neighborhood circus,” its heterogeneity underscored the wide and fluid diversity of the New York artistic network in the seventies – a fact that is often suppressed in medium-focused art histories. Today Dupuy is best known for his 1968 work *Heart Beats Dust*, done in collaboration with engineers as part of the Experiments in Art and Technology program. Though his performance events and technological collaborations are usually understood as two distinct periods in his oeuvre, this paper argues that, taken together, both reveal Dupuy's underlying and driving interest in discipline meshing as a subversive means to disrupt the institutional control of artistic practice and expand the field of creative possibility. In this, Dupuy's unique collaborations offer a means to examine the multifaceted ways artists utilized living networks as creative methodologies throughout the seventies.

#### Session 10C

### **Fluid Time, Space, and Race in Video Games**

*Stuart Moulthrop.*

#### **Disturbance in the Flow: Time Travel as Method for Game Study**

This paper reads the meta-fictional computer game *Stanley Parable* (Galactic Café, 2012) against a similarly self-conscious digital text, John McDaid's “hypertext novel,” *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse* (Eastgate, 1992). Both works complicate the fluidic doctrine of immersion in ergodic systems – the game by means of an intrusive, hectoring narrator; the by canceling or extinguishing its narrative presence. Both contain (and perhaps gravitate toward) moments of systemic disclosure, involving awareness of the technical or genetic conditions of the art-object. However, the *Funhouse*, because of its unique



material circumstances – it is no longer accessible on modern platforms – offers a new way to understand the fragmentary superpositions of *Stanley*, through the myth of cosmic “divergences” resulting from time travel. This fictive frame of the *Funhouse* has become, in effect, its reality, since the text now belongs to a timeline (HyperCard on the pre-Intel Macintosh) that does not connect, technically speaking, with the present moment. On the basis of this observation, the paper proposes an approach to ergodic texts that redefines immersion not within the presence of an unbroken medium, but rather within a state of discontinuous flows – a difference that may have interesting consequences for the theory of games and other computational artforms.

*Josef Nguyen.*

### **Crafting Islands and Innovation in Survival-Sandbox Videogames**

By looking at survivalist video games, including *Minecraft*, *Don't Starve*, and *Rust*, I analyze digital remediation of manual and skilled craft as responses to cultural anxieties about post-apocalyptic futures. These games, I argue, attempt to domesticate the unknowns of post-apocalyptic imaginaries by rehearsing virtualized representations of manual skilled labor and craft of man-made infrastructures and technologies believed to be necessary for future survival. Drawing on the genre of shipwreck narratives, I show how the didacticism of cultural texts like *Robinson Crusoe*, which describe in excruciating detail how one might survive on a deserted island, are remediated in the formal qualities of video games like *Minecraft*, which provide simulations and tests for one to survive in similarly deserted environments. These craft-survival games allow players the fantasy of rendering in the present an imagined capacity to survive in a post-apocalyptic future, by rendering the unexplored world as standing reserve to provide raw materials to craft tools, weapons, and other gear for surviving against hostile weather conditions, starvation, and antagonistic agents—monsters, zombies, and wild animals. Through the discovery of a finite and predetermined set of crafting formulas and combinations, in a database of all things inventible, players participate in conservative reproduction of familiar and pre-known infrastructures as a fantasy of rebuilding the domestic of the pre-apocalyptic from the post-apocalyptic wreckage. My analysis examines how these fantasies negotiate between both the virtualization of skilled craft into combinatorics and the mastery of survival through repetition in these survivalist imaginaries.

[Xan Chacko.](#)

### **Garden of Defeating: Race in Plant Video Games**

While static representations of plants can show anatomy and genetic data, as a form suited to procedurality, video games have the potential to render experiential the processes of plants. In both casual and educational games, plants are not only at the centre, but the player must 'become' the plants in order to play. Inhabiting the plant avatar comes with racial coding, form, and function that are built into each plant. Plant identities are marked in ways that echo racial discourses of eugenic futures. In fact, the more successful games are ones in which the plant characters have virtually - as opposed to biologically - determined, racial identity markers. For instance, in the 2009 game *Plants vs. Zombies* there is a Karate simulating, *Brassica Rapa Chinensis* or Chinese Cabbage with the name 'Bonk-choy'. Thus, success in the game is based on tactical use of knowledge gleaned from the games' plant taxonomy: in some rounds a diversity of plants is useful and other times choosing just ones that have certain characteristics are all you need to win. In this paper, I study the racial markers that are co-opted into the virtual worlds of video games about plants by asking: What knowledge emerges from learning about plants by playing with them and as them? What values are in place that encourage and discourage specific procedural acts in games about plants? (i.e. score, wealth, safety...) What are the theories that govern taxonomies of plants in video games i.e., how are plants raced?

Session 10D

### **Trauma, Transcorporeality, and Acoustic Flow in Carruth's *Upstream Color*(2013)**

Chair: [Andrew Garcia](#)

Shane Carruth's 2013 film *Upstream Color* has received critical attention for its interwoven engagement with an ecology of experience bound up in notions of trauma, transcorporeality, and acoustics. The film depicts the strange life-cycle of an organic blue substance that flows in and through the assemblage of other lives (human, plant, animal) present in the film. At the heart of the film resides a set of key questions, which this panel will address: in what ways can human consciousness be situated in a fluid network of sensate experience based in acoustics? how do the flows of capital and the flows of material unite disparate

human and non-human bodies? and how do sensate experiences govern our encounters with and processing of trauma? The individual papers in this panel will inform a dialogue around these questions. In the end, what Carruth's film makes visible are the ways in which consciousness is shared across the actors, agents and reactants that populate the film's effluvial networks.

*Daniel Gilfillan.*

**Sound Samples/Sound Flows: An Acoustics of Consciousness in Carruth's *Upstream Color***

Carruth's 2013 film centers on the routines, life cycles, and feedback loops of a young woman, Kris, as her life becomes disrupted by a seemingly random pattern of events involving a mind-altering, blue substance and a set of human and other parasites seeking to either take advantage of or deepen her altered state of consciousness. This presentation explores the roles of ambient and functional sound within the film, seeking to understand the relationship they play in uncovering an interwoven noöspheric network of phenomenological experience. These ambient and functional sounds arise either as integral components of a conscious understanding of the world as a unified sensate experience, or as rationalized samples gathered and chosen, in this case, for a commodified experience of sonic fetishism. To understand sound as sample is to understand human experience of the world as both dissociation and dislocation; while to understand it as flow is to situate this experience as ethos, as a space of dwelling and interconnection. Ultimately Carruth's film functions as a type of imaginative intervention, providing acoustic points of access to an ethos-based realm of consciousness, where the human and non-human pawns involved in the initial disruptive plot are capable of establishing a rhizomatically co-produced form of agency.

*Dale Pattison.*

**Sensing Trauma: Anti-Narrative Processing in Carruth's *Upstream Color***

For the past several decades, trauma theorists have worked to establish the critical link between psychological trauma and narrative. Immediately following moments of crisis, individuals and communities engage in processes of narrative production that assemble and organize the traumatic event—which often cannot

be adequately represented in language—into manageable frames of reference. Narrative, and specifically testimony, helps survivors to cope with and understand that which, because it exists outside of language, cannot be spoken. *Upstream Color* (2013), Shane Carruth’s recent film about pigs, botany, and psychoactive larvae, provides fertile ground for examining the relationship between trauma and narrative. Through its emphasis on sound and vision as alternative modes of experiential processing, the film suggests that working through psychological trauma may be accomplished not by narrativizing the traumatic event, but rather by accessing sensory modes that move outside the confines of language and into the domain of fluidity and flow. The film’s chief characters, both of whom survive a transformative, psychically-traumatic experience, look not to verbal testimony as a means of reassembling their fractured selves, but rather to the visual and the aural, two modes that resist language and its attendant politics. Furthermore, the meaning that we, as viewers, produce throughout the film—guided often by visual and aural cues—mimics the work of the characters as they come to understand the psychological violence perpetrated on them. Examining *Upstream Color* through this lens suggests the possibility of confronting and processing trauma in ways that move outside of and beyond narrative.

*Jason Price.*

### **Transcorporeal Flow: The Posthuman Body in Carruth’s *Upstream Color***

*Upstream Color* portrays nonhuman material and forces that flow through the bodies of humans and nonhuman animals and plants. From the parasites that live in human and pig bodies early in the film to the blue substance which flows from the parasites in the piglets drowned in a stream into the flowers of a plant, the film traces these flows of material through bodies in a way that challenges the view of the body as an independent unit separate from the environment. In addition, the film also develops the theme of the aural, through amplified worm grunting for example, in its emphasis on sound and vibrations as other forces that move through and interfaces with bodies. This presentation will consider the film’s portrayal of “transcorporeality” which Stacy Alaimo defines as a notion of “the human as substantially and perpetually interconnected with the flows of substances and the agencies of environments.” While the film traces the loop in which the plants sold with the parasite pupae return to be sold once again in the

flows of material and capital, it also posits a need for ethical response for those whose bodies are similarly vulnerable because of their porousness and penetrability and their disposability to capitalist aims. Kris's discovery of the list of other victims of this parasite/drug-induced scheme involves her reaching out towards these humans but also to the nonhuman animals, the pigs, demonstrating a posthuman accountability organized by the flows which connect and bring bodies together into ethical relations.

Session 10E

**“FLUXUS/FLUID: Forming - Deforming - Reforming” – Panel number three**

Chair: [\*James W. McManus\*](#); [\*James W. McManus\*](#); [\*James W. McManus\*](#); [\*James W. McManus\*](#)

The word FLUID is defined, in part, as a substance with the potential for continuous states of forming, deforming, and reforming. This relationship of events aptly describes the viscoelastic art movement, Fluxus, from its inception in the late 1950s to today. The boundaryless space that is Fluxus encourages us to consider it as an agent for a new dynamic – one FLUID in nature. Manifesting itself (through social media, museum exhibitions and publications) as a global language – it defies boundaries (physical and conceptual) in numerous ways. We are proposing three panels, under the title “FLUXUS/FLUID: Forming – Deforming – Reforming” each with three speakers, that will investigate the FLUID nature of Fluxus over that past six decades.

[\*Jack Ox\*](#).

**FLUXUS/FLUID Coursing through an artist-scientist who came after:  
A Cognitive analysis of the work of Rich Gold**

The importance of artistic phenomena can be seen in manifestations of how the ideas emerge with later artists. Digested concepts are masticated into new forms with emerging outcomes. Born in 1950, Rich Gold came after, but his roots were in the avant garde of the 1960s, including John Cage, and Fluxus [1]. Ox will compare Gold's Plenitude to the Great Chain of Being, a taxonomy and metaphor system described by Lakoff and Turner in conceptual metaphor theory; this is followed by two of Gold's Goldographs (artworks in a pamphlet format that recall the Fluxus tradition of conceptual art in common materials). Goldograph NO1:

The Seasons is dedicated to the British mathematician John Conway and his Game of Life. Then, TEN OBJECTS UNDERGOING INTENSIVE RECOMBINATORY RESEARCH AT GOLDOGRAPHIC LABORATORIES ALL OVER THE WORLD, which is an exploration of conceptual blending. [1] M. La Palma, "Preface," *The Plenitude: Creativity, Innovation, and Making Stuff*, J. Maeda, ed., Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2007.

*Mike Maizels.*

### **The New Geography: Earth Music & Land Art in the Age of Big Data**

Within the larger rise of big data, the worlds of contemporary art and music are witnessing the emergence of a new kind of practice, one animated by evolving visualizations of seismic, atmospheric or tidal data. The projects are often fueled by a sense that the exponentially expanding ocean of data might be able to tell us something new about ourselves or our world, to yield truths that somehow transcend the limits of the human-scaled information gathering techniques that have heretofore been in common use by artists. Though much of this work is characterized by a digital clean-ness that would have been anathema to these earlier producers, I would argue one of the most significant predecessors of this search for a “new geography” can be found in the Fluxus ferment that began in the early the 1960s. While composers such as La Monte Young and Robert Watts sought to transform the processes of the earth into open-ended and largely un-authored pieces of music, other artists such as Nam June Paik envisioned the technological interconnection of the world as a means to bring about the dawning of a new global consciousness.

*Owen Smith.*

### **Dripping Dirty Water Music: fluidity and the aesthetics of Fluxus in performance, publications and beyond**

Throughout the history of modernism, there are a number of “alternative traditions” to the mainstream notions of Modernist practice. One of the most significant of these is that demarked by the trajectory from Dada through Fluxus. Their creative processes conjoined disparate elements from conventional meanings and actions in order to create new and unexpected possibilities. Fluxus attempted to establish multiple possibilities rather than to set new transcendent orders or associations and in this process fluidity became an important concept and water became a material of choice. In works such as George Brecht's Drip

Music, Mieko Shiomi's *Water Music* and Ben Vaulter's *Dirty Water* is utilized in a myriad of ways: as quotidian reference, as a performance prop, as a production material for multiples, and, something like Fluxus itself, something that can hold many forms and qualities. This paper will examine the role, place and function of water and related materials properties in the work of Fluxus artists as a means of elucidating the nature of Fluxus aesthetics and Fluxus praxis in the creation of an art of the everyday.

Session 10F

### **Fossils, Pigs, and Flies: Movement and Metamorphosis in Early Modernity**

Chair: *Lydia Barnett*

Fluidity played a central role in the philosophies, both popular and elite, of early modern Europe. Theories of hybridity, metamorphosis, progression and transgression were central to early modern habits of thought around the natural and the human worlds. From Renaissance Italy, to Enlightenment Britain, to the colonized islands of the Iberian Atlantic, we trace these theories of flow and change as they were deployed across science, literature, and travelogue. The fly became a literary figure of ambient social relations whose very mobility enabled it to connect and therefore transgress social classes. Fossils were such a potent symbol for metamorphosis in Nature that they gained a conceptual link to human hermaphroditism and transgressive sexuality. Pigs left stranded on Atlantic isles as a future source of food became a concrete way for colonists and travelers to imagine the power of foreign climates in shaping human and animal bodies over the course of generations. In each case, fluidity offered a way of thinking about the similarities between humans and animals and the malleability of both in the face of natural processes.

*Arielle Saiber.*

### **The Fluidity of Equivocation: L. B. Alberti's Paradoxical Encomium to the House Fly and Mathematics**

Circa 1441, the great, early modern, Italian polymath Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) wrote a brief encomium entitled *Musca*—an extended imitation of Lucian's *The Fly*. *Musca* was not, however, merely a spirited humanist exercise satirizing pompous epideictic rhetoric, but an indication of Alberti's complex relationship



to the humble and workaday, as well as to the bridges he was building between the sciences and the arts. To yank the heights of virtue and virtuosity back down to earth, and catapult a small, common creature up among the stars, Alberti employed a narrative strategy that expertly individuated the physical, intellectual, spiritual, moral, martial, and artistic excellence filling its subject's repertoire. With fine-tuned wit, Alberti included among the fly's panoply of gifts an extensive mastery of the sciences, especially that of the mathematical arts. Taking the paradoxical encomium *Musca* as a point of departure, this paper explores Alberti's praise-and-critique of mathematics throughout his works in order to bring into relief the central role that mathematics played in his vision of and for the human and natural worlds.

*Lydia Barnett.*

### **"Queer Fossils: 'Amphibious Sex' and Amphibious Rocks in Early Modern Europe"**

At the turn of the eighteenth century, fossils became objects of intense fascination across Europe. This class of oddly-shaped rocks upended ancient categorical distinctions between the biological and the mineral. Because of the way they queered the three kingdoms of Nature – animal, vegetable, and mineral – fossils took on an unexpected conceptual affinity with intersexuality. This paper examines several scientific and literary texts from turn-of-the-century Britain which gathered fossils and transgressive sexuality together under the rubric of the 'amphibious'. Although such comparisons were often made in jest, I argue that taking them seriously yields deep insight into the biological imagination of the early Enlightenment. The comparison to human hermaphrodites reveals one of the ways that fossils were understood in this moment: as plant-mineral or animal-mineral hybrids. Moreover, the comparison of hybrid fossils to 'hermaphroditic' humans (people possessing both male and female sex organs) betrays an understanding of intersexuality as yet another form of hybridity. This exploration of 'amphibious' naturalia illuminates the rich and complicated intersections of vitalist natural philosophy with theories of gender, reproduction, and sexuality in the early Enlightenment.

*Benjamin Breen.*

### **Pigs In Space: Early Modern Mariners and Island-Bound Animals**

Early modern physicians believed that travel into tropical zones physically transformed human and animal bodies, dulling senses, corrupting flesh, fermenting blood, and inducing madness. But some mariners also used the metamorphoses of the tropics to their advantage. Sixteenth and seventeenth-century ocean-going vessels often carried live animal cargo, and it was not uncommon for these non-human passengers to end up as castaways: deserted islands from Tahiti to Tristan da Cunha had, by the eighteenth century, become sites of “ungulate eruptions,” in which feral breeding populations of European domesticates like goats, cows and pigs multiplied rapidly in unfamiliar new ecosystems. This paper considers the phenomenon of early modern Iberian sailors “seeding” desert islands with herd animals from the perspective of both environmental change and cultural anxieties about bodily metamorphosis in the tropical belt. Drawing on colonial correspondence, travel accounts and early scientific reports from Portuguese Africa, Brazil and the West Indies, it argues that Europeans (and Africans) who carried animals on long voyages envisioned these oceanic passages and island as inducing physical transformations. Ultimately, these practices induced both widespread ecological changes (merely witness the profusion of “Pig Islands” and “Hog Islands” in formerly colonized territories) and also shaped theories of climate and inheritability in the Enlightenment and beyond.

Session 10G

## **Science Narratives**

*Raymond Malewitz.*

### **Tapered Ontologies and Posthuman Ethics in Primo Levi’s *The Periodic Table***

Tapered Ontologies and Posthuman Ethics in Primo Levi’s *The Periodic Table*  
 Raymond Malewitz Assistant Professor School of Writing, Literature, and Film  
 Oregon State University Critics of object-oriented ontologies maintain that these ‘flat’ philosophical systems cannot be used to evaluate ethical situations with the same sophistication as hierarchical, anthropocentric ontologies. The central assumption that governs these critiques is that humans’ special place within ethical discussions is predicated upon their unique ontological status as free, creative, active agents distinguishable from the constrained, passive status of

nonhumans. In this talk, I argue that Primo Levi complicates this assumption in his autobiographical story collection *The Periodic Table*, and, in the process, articulates a middle ground between humanist and object-oriented ontologies. Through analyses of two stories—“Uranium” and “Carbon”—I show how recalcitrant objects within both narratives place limits upon Levi’s characters’ desires to reshape the world to suit their individual desires. This stubborn recalcitrance of objects, in turn, forces Levi’s characters out of their solipsistic subjectivities and enables them to enter into ethical relationships with human and nonhuman others. I conclude that a tapering of hierarchical ontologies, far from abandoning ethics, is in fact a prerequisite for any sophisticated ethics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

*Tom Nurmi.*

### **Cinders: Derrida and the Literature of Mourning**

*Cinders are residues – of a combustible substance burnt of its volatile constituents – still capable of further combustion without flame; volcanic scoria (pyroclastic, extrusive igneous rocks); ashes of a dead body after cremation; whiskies taken in tea or soda water.* Both material and metaphor, cinders exist in the liminal space between states of force. Invested with figurative meanings rooted in the physical properties of fire, cinders have a long literary history associated with images of catastrophe, death, transformation, and mourning. “Sorrow,” cries Marcus in *Titus Andronicus* (1594), “doth burne the hart to cinders.” Derrida’s iterations of *Cinders* (1982, 1987, 1991) develop the rhetorical implications of the cinder as a model for language within Derrida’s own politics of mourning. “Our entire world is the cinder of innumerable living beings,” he writes; mourning is “the history of its refusal... The sentence adorned with all of its dead.” This essay responds to Derrida with a more material account of the cinder – as an object emergent from thermodynamic processes – to deepen the cinder’s vital but obscured relation to Western rituals of mourning, particularly through the act of writing. With specific attention to Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* (1930), the essay rereads the presence of cinders in the American literary tradition to uncover a literature of mourning: a fragile network of passages that simultaneously organize and dissolve the boundaries of American literary conventions. I take seriously Derrida’s question, “Who would dare run the risk of a poem of the cinder?” to elaborate a theory of the cinder in which materiality and meaning converge in the shadow of mourning and the afterlife of death.

Laura Jones.

**Story, Statistics, and Science: Leveraging Literature to Refute Proslavery Science**

The 1840 census results suggested that free Blacks were disproportionately prone to what was then labeled “idiocy and insanity.” These statistics, bolstered by new diagnoses such as drapetomania, (the pathological desire of a slave to be free) suggested that the increasingly popular field of psychology might be able to scientifically prove the argument that slavery was a “positive good” for the enslaved. This prompted some abolitionists to suggest that “the anti-slavery battle must be fought on the field of science” (D.A.W.). Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown have never been thought of as responding such a call in their literary works, but I will reconsider both of their narratives, along with Brown’s novel *Clotel*, as literary forays into contemporary scientific debates. Situated at the intersection of science studies, critical race theory, and rhetoric, this paper suggests that both authors approach a particularly fraught exigency in part by leveraging the generic constraints and opportunities of literary genres to navigate what amounted to a minefield of emerging scientific and statistical beliefs about psychology, race, and freedom.

Cybele Arnaud.

**Star power: Challenging superstition through astronomy and laughter in 18th century France**

I propose to study the interplay between scientific thought and theater through the analysis of the use of comets in plays from Fontenelle and Molière, as well as a number of lesser-known Vaudeville authors of the late 18th century. My research is set against the backdrop of two major transitions in French thought: the war the Enlightenment wages against superstition and the destruction of the last remnants of the cosmological theories inherited from the Ancient World. As Scientists, writers and intellectuals push back against rigid lines of thinking, against the fixed unmoving nature of the stars, comedic theater goes through its own transition. When a comet appears in the sky (Kirch's comet in 1680, or the great comets of 1771 and 1773), representations of the celestial bodies, of the astronomers who predict them, of the astrologers who interpret them, and of the people who fear them make their way on the French comic stage, challenging long-held beliefs and calling for a flexible mindset. As the eyes of all Frenchmen

turn towards the sky, the stage is set for an new exploration of the relationship between laughter and science. My paper will explore the following questions: How is the clash between scientific and public perspectives represented on the stage? How is laughter challenging the spectator's rigid beliefs? What is the greater purpose of including scientific knowledge in comedic theater?

Session 10H

## **Cash Flow: Commerce, Finance, Capitalism**

*Stephanie Peebles Tavera.*

### ***In Defense of the Compound: (Cy)Borg Capitalism in Dystopian Science Fiction***

In “Remarks on Utopia in an Age of Climate Change,” Kim Stanley Robinson argues that building ecotopia requires the “de-strand[ing]” of science and capitalism, not because science is inherently evil, but capitalism’s use of science results in environmental degradation. Elaine Smitha explains in *Screwing Mother Nature For Profit* that capitalism’s emphasis on the bottom line at the expense of other living things resulted from its legalized status as a living “person.” However, Robinson’s (and Smitha’s) critique relies on a constructivist theory of technology that grants humans primary agency over technology and its use in cultural construction. In contrast, Donna Haraway and Michael Hynes argue that the relationship between technology and the environment is reciprocal, not one-sided: “technology must be acknowledged as an influential agent for social change,” or a material body with agency. Further, as a living “person” and material body, capitalism must be seen as comprised of technology, not just wielding technology. In fact, Smitha compares corporations with Star Trek’s Borg, but rather than “assimilating,” corporations must recognize themselves as material bodies within the global ecology. In reading dystopian science fiction, including Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*, Bacigalupi’s *The Windup Girl*, and Robinson’s *The Gold Coast*, I suggest a reassessment of capitalism as a cybernetic organism including the human/animal hybrid, human/plant hybrid, and human/machine hybrid. In both the corporation’s and the consumer’s recognition of capitalism as a cyborg and material body, ecocritics are more equipped for developing an economic ethics for the Anthropocene.

*Christopher Walker.*

### **“Natural” Resources: Rubber's Fluid Aesthetic in the 20th Century Industrial Memoir**

The process of manufacturing rubber underwent several developments in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In its earliest iteration, colonialists forced indigenous peoples into near slave-labor to locate and tap rubber trees, often destroying the trees in the process, which led to further exploitation of people and the environment to find new trees. In the late 19th century, however, Sir Henry Nicholas Ridley developed methods to tap rubber trees without killing them, leading to a “sustainable” plantation model that increased the production of natural rubber. Furthermore, the extracted latex was then vulcanized, a process that creates cross-links between polymer chains, resulting in rubber tires that were more durable and flexible. The “industrial memoirs” (a neologism) of Henry Ridley and H. A. Wickham which describe the development of latex extraction methods and vulcanization of natural rubber, portray rubber as simultaneously fluid and solid, and as “natural” and “unnatural” resources. Relying upon Bruno Latour’s work, I argue that rubber’s hybridity deterritorializes nature and culture, and unseats both European and colonial spaces as the location of the “natural.”

*Jim Swan.*

### **Do We Know What Money Is? (hint: it’s not the same as currency)**

A troubling feature of how we speak and think about money is the naturalizing *fluid* metaphors we often use. The phrase “global capital flows” describes the movements of vast “pools” of money cruising the world in search of optimal investment returns. But capital flows don’t just “flow” into a nation’s economy—they *invade* it, buying up its debt securities and throwing it out of balance. Later, they will *evacuate* this economy to invade another offering better terms. The metaphor—*invasion/evacuation*—makes explicit the human agency involved and the economic damage frequently caused by capital “flows.” This paper argues that money is a form of *credit*, with all the political, social, legal and ethical issues arising with that concept and the institutional arrangements maintaining its creation and use. Money is created whenever a loan is made. The loan amount exists in two places at the same time, creating money by the double entry of one sum credited to two accounts—to the borrower who has the use of it

during the period of the loan, and to the bank which still owns it while receiving periodic repayments. This is not simply a two-handed game between private market agents, but a triangular relationship between lender, borrower and the money—or *credit*—guaranteed as “legal tender for all debts public and private” by the government that authorizes it as such. Yet, it is also the site of a seemingly unresolvable dispute unsettling today’s American political economy.

Session 10I

## **Water and Walls**

*Randy Fertel.*

### **Unmediated Experience as Will o’ the Wisp in Literature and Science**

Fluidity and flow are characteristic of “improvisations.” Defined first by their claim of spontaneity, improvisations present themselves as free-associative, untrammelled by the mediation of rationality, craft, or form. Modern science since its foundation has also longed for the unmediated experience of Nature. Bacon imagines Nature as the god Pan, whose spouse is Echo: “For that is in fact the true philosophy which echoes most faithfully the voice of the world itself, and is written as it were from the world’s own dictation; being indeed nothing else than the image and reflection of it, which it only repeats and echoes, but adds nothing of its own.” Bacon’s vision of the empirical scientist as nature’s unmediated echo, mirror, ventriloquist, or amanuensis faithfully recording nature’s speech anticipates an important strain in Romanticism: the quest for Ruskin’s “innocent eye” or Emerson’s “Transparent Eyeball.” The quest—in various degrees of extravagance—lies near improvisation’s heart. But to achieve this ventriloquism the experimental method relies first of all on hypotheses that inevitably shape Nature’s voice that we hear. We see light as a particle or a wave depending on the experiment we submit light to. Second, this immediacy was achieved paradoxically through the mediation of experimental tools like the microscope, telescope, and air-pump, whose aim was the “Inlargement of the dominion of the Senses.” (Robert Hooke, *Micrographia*, 1665) Science, like literature, thus held this contradiction in suspension, the longing for unmediated experience and the excitement about these new tools of mediation.

*Jody Griffith.*



**"The lock and key that kept him in, kept numbers of his troubles out":  
Obedience and freedom within *Little Dorrit's* walls**

In Dickens's *Little Dorrit*, architectural structures, and the social structures they represent, can be fragile, corrupt, and precariously propped up, but they can also be oppressive literal and figurative prison walls, deterministically affecting the people within them. Architecture is thus an important site through which the novel works through a central paradox: do solid walls and rigid social structures—the structures that channel the fluid circulation of people and ideas—provide coherent cultural systems, or do they repress individual expression and experience? Does the absence or failure of these structures offer freedom, or only anomie and incoherence? This paper uses Ruskin's architectural treatise *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* as a critical lens, especially the final chapter, "The Lamp of Obedience," which examines the paradoxical relationship between obedience and freedom. While the novel's walls may make communities legible, they can also be stultifying, without free circulation of air and light, or the free movement of inhabitants. Enclosure fails to ensure knowledge, as physical spaces and institutional structures often defer and obstruct, and present dangers, including the diffusion of authority, the contagion of false knowledge, and the potential for individual oppression by imposed definitions. *Little Dorrit's* architectural structures and cultural systems both reinforce and challenge Ruskin's assumptions about the necessity, plausibility, and desirability of obedience to coherent and bounded spaces. Unlike the constrained system that Ruskin advocates, *Little Dorrit* is fluid; ultimately, its walls cannot contain its various individual and intermental perspectives into a unified, knowable whole.

Session 11 - Sat 4:15 pm - 5:45 pm

Session 11A

**The Dig-Lit FLOW: Performances of Electronic Literature**

I would like to propose organizing an evening of performances of electronic literature for SLSA 2014. I hosted a similar event with Stuart Moulthrop at SLSA 2012 and at MLA 2014. As the Director of Communication for the Electronic Literature Organization, I have ready access to member lists and other publicity tools to gather artists for the performance. Also, many artists will already be attending. I am submitting my proposal to volunteer to organize and host a 90-

minute set of performances of innovative works of electronic literature, coordinating everything from the call to the selection of pieces and the orchestration of any technology involved in the presentations.

Session 11B

## Reel Fluid Film

*Shane Denson.*

### **Metabolic Media: On the Fluid Images and Ecologies of Post-Cinema**

In an age of computational image production and networked distribution channels, media “contents” and our “perspectives” on them are rendered ancillary to algorithmic functions and become enmeshed in an expanded, indiscriminately articulated plenum of images that exceed capture in the form of photographic or perceptual “objects.” That is, post-cinematic images are thoroughly *processual* or *fluid* in nature, from their digital inception and delivery to their real-time processing in computational playback apparatuses; furthermore, and more importantly, this basic processuality explodes the image’s ontological status as a discrete packaged unit, and it insinuates itself – as I will argue – into our own microtemporal processing of perceptual information, thereby unsettling the relative fixity of the perceiving human subject. Post-cinema’s cameras thus mediate a radically nonhuman ontology of the image, where these images’ disconnection from human perceptibility signals an expansion of the field of material affect: beyond the visual or even the perceptual, the images of post-cinematic media operate and impinge upon us at what might be called a “metabolic” level, modulating the flow of lived duration itself. Building upon Steven Shaviro’s theorization of “post-cinematic affect,” Maurizio Lazzarato’s Marxist-Bergsonian “video philosophy,” and Mark B. N. Hansen’s post-phenomenological analyses of “21st-century media,” this presentation focuses especially on the work of independent filmmaker Shane Carruth (*Primer*, 2004; *Upstream Color*, 2013) in an attempt to theorize the emerging interface forms through which contemporary moving-image media transductively generate experiences of a decidedly postnatural environment.

*Lisa Gotto.*

### **Beyond Fixed Frames: Fluidity, Spatiality and Digital 3D**

Fluid aesthetics have consistently been at the heart of the historical development of cinema. Since the late 18th century, many technological devices and artistic arrangements experimented with the intention to give spatial volume to projected pictures. However, our theoretical understanding of cinema often has underestimated the extent to which the cinematic experience aims to be borderless, transporting the audience in a fluid fashion. In the digital age, 3D cinema reclaims this cultural-historical terrain to expand it through its own specific potential. To explore this potential, I will recapitulate some of the manifold and continuous histories of spatial illusion in projected pictures. This will involve the discussion of aesthetic examples from the prehistory and the early history of cinema, followed by theoretical considerations of fluidity, spatiality and depth of field. Looking back at early endeavors to widen the perceptual field beyond the limits of the flat screen makes it possible to understand how digital 3D reflects and restructures the perceptual experience in present cinema and how it constitutes new forms of fluid aesthetics and spatial articulations.

*[Laura Lake Smith](#).*

#### **The Fluidity of Time in Christian Marclay's *The Clock***

*The Clock* is a provocative 24-hour cinematic video that is comprised of over 10,000 film clips. Most significantly, it is a novel artwork in that the video synchs the “reel” time of movie narratives with the “real” time of the spectator. This paper will examine the fluid conflation of chronometric time and cinematic time within the video, the spectatorial experience of this fluidity, and how *The Clock* ultimately elucidates something meaningful about our experience of time. Rather than encouraging the spectator to acknowledge the disparity between “reel” and “real” time, the video insists instead on their constant entanglement. In doing so, *The Clock* forces the spectator to exist in a perpetual “in-between-ness,” in-between different kinds of times. As I will argue, *The Clock* images a telling time of our lived experience.

Session 11C

#### **Collage: A Fluid Concept - Theory and Practice**

Chair: *[Dennis Summers](#)*

On this panel the three presenters will discuss collage both as theory and practice. Collage remains a fluidly defined word more than a century after its modern “invention.” Additionally, in spite of numerous claims in the past decade that collage is *the* most widely used creative strategy of our time, there is little coherent and comprehensive theory of collage. This panel will explore the range of collage possibilities in the work of several artists including two of the panelists. Artist Dennis Summers will look at formal issues raised with collage strategies seen in different media, including artist's books, cinema and digital media. He will discuss examples of artists' work including his own. Art Historian Barbara L. Miller will also look at formal issues as seen in the work of several visual artists and develop critical definitions which overlap and differ from that of Summers. Artist Don Pollack will look at landscape both cultural and physical to see what it has in common with collage approaches, and discuss the relationship between that and his own artwork.

*Dennis Summers.*

**Collage: A Fluid Definition as Seen in Artist's Books, Cinema and Digital Media**

At SLSA 2013 I discussed an approach toward creating a definition and taxonomy for “collage” - a creation strategy that has been surprisingly underdeveloped as a coherent philosophy. I also gave a brief overview of the history of collage as used by specific artists and art movements. For this presentation I intend on developing, in more detail, several forms that collage can take. One of the key differences between traditional visual arts, and cinema and literature, is that experiencing the former is an iterative process where the viewer is capable, more or less, of comprehending the image quite quickly and then can revisit it over and over again focusing on specific details at greater conceptual and visual resolution in order to increase their depth of understanding. Both cinema and literature are sequential experiences where understanding is gained by connecting concepts -in order and over time- and retrospectively recontextualizing formerly experienced concepts in light of those chronologically recently experienced. Collage is a formal approach that can be used in all these media and interesting distinctions can be developed between media. Furthermore, artist's books are particularly interesting as they can straddle both the iterative *and* sequential approaches to experiencing their content.

Barbara L. Miller.

### **Collage Strategies: the Cut, the Scar and the Hybrid**

“The word 'collage' is inadequate as a description because the concept should include damage, erase, destroy, deface and transform - all parts of a metaphor for the creative act itself.” Eduardo Paolozzi Regardless of media, paper, photography or physical objects, the artistic practice of collage turns upon fragmentation, defacement and destruction. It also entails incorporation, reconfiguration and transformation. As a result, collage provokes complex psychological, philosophical and aesthetical responses. Moreover, as British Pop artist Paolozzi states, its very practice resonates with artistic production itself. This presentation distills Paolozzi's comment and focuses on three collage strategies: the cut, the scar and the hybrid. While these strategies are evident in many artists' works, individual elements are drawn out to consider the implications of each activity: Picasso uses transformative "cuts," in his *papier collés*; Höch deploys generative "scars," in her photomontages; and Piccinini activates disturbing chimeras, in her trans-species sculptures, and Grünfeld presents troubling hybrids, in his taxidermied figures. Despite its lo-tech aspects, collage continues to be a productive endeavor - one that provocatively speaks to the fluidity of between physical (ecological and biological) boundaries. The cut, the scar and the hybrid were and continue to be transformative practices that turn upon questions of corporeal and spatial alterity.

Don Pollack.

### **Crossing the Great Divide, Trying to Understand the Collage of My Landscape.**

Our landscape is inhabited by the ghosts and mythologies that are layered over time, albeit metaphysically onto our psyche. Each culture brings its footprint and marks and collages on to the space. These representations could be compared to the collage strategy of a Fluxus Box, pointing to a referent with the result becoming some kind of abstraction with missing pieces and stories yet to be unpacked. In June 2015, I will begin my physical exploration of the contemporary American frontier following what amounts to be the almost mythical paths of Abraham Lincoln and Lewis and Clark. My mode of travel however will be by bicycle, so that I may slow down and look first hand and contrast what I see and

make sense of with the realities of a modern multicultural perspective. I will discuss my relationship between my project, the landscape, and slow travel.

#### Session 11D

### **Moving Pictures and Affective Stills**

Chair: *Patricia Olynyk; Ellen K. Levy*

Moving Pictures and Affective Stills Presenters: Ellen K. Levy. Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts Patricia Olynyk, Washington University in St. Louis This two-artist presentation and conversation examines fluidity as a concept and an organizing principle within a curated selection of digital, non-digital, static, time-based, and interactive works. Selected artworks for discussion include examples from the intersection of art + science by artists such as Steve Oscherwitz. Artists who emphasize movement in relation to stillness, such as Omer Fast, Janet Cardiff, Bill Viola, and to name a few will also be discussed. Additional selections will be made from a call for participation through various listserv's that include (but are not limited to) SLSA, Leonardo, and ISEA. Moving Pictures and Affective Stills will address the ephemeral nature and fluctuating state between and within static and moving images. The presentation and discussion will probe the limits of photography and video in particular, both as separate mediums and as those, which intersect with one another. Video works including holograms and Pepper's Ghosts that employ static camera angles reminiscent of photography, some of which have been algorithmically manipulated and incorporate a sense of time and movement are the focus of this talk. Interactive works that invite the viewer to examine the limits of perception, observe visual paradoxes, and/or witness the uncanny will be discussed and the cinematic qualities and unique and sometimes unexpected affects of staging will also be explored.

#### Session 11E

### **Object-Oriented Feminism Roundtable: The Fluid Future of OOF (Roundtable)**

Chair: *Katherine Behar*

This roundtable is convened to ask, what may become "the fluid future of OOF?" SLSA not only inspired the genesis of Object-Oriented Feminism, its communities have influenced OOF's trajectories thus far. Since 2010, SLSA has

hosted six panels on OOF. The “Ends of Life,” “Nonhuman,” and “Postnatural” conferences fostered a provocative platform and fruitful sounding board for delving into OOF’s main questions: Are object-oriented feminisms or object-oriented politics possible? What could emerge were object-oriented and speculative realist philosophical thought and object-oriented realist practices — such as art practices and feminist/queer political practices — to inform each other? OOF was intended as a provocation to search for resonances and address incompatibilities and omissions between object-oriented ontology and speculative realism and feminist/queer/postcolonial entanglements with objects in theory and practice including nonanthropocentric art practices, psychoanalytic critique, and critiques of objectification and marginalization. While the focus on objects remains key to OOF’s methodology, we now find ourselves looking toward a fluid future, absorbing sympathies with feminist new materialisms and more. This roundtable stages conversations with contributors to a forthcoming edited volume on OOF, and seeks input from the SLSA community to shape its future iterations.

*Irina Aristarkhova.*

**Contribution**

*Katherine Behar.*

**Contribution**

*Jamie Skye Bianco.*

**Contribution**

*Danielle M. Kasprzak.*

**Contribution**

*Frenchy Lunning.*

**Contribution**

*Anne Pollock.*

**Contribution**



[Amit Ray.](#)

### **Contribution**

[Adam Zaretsky.](#)

### **Contribution**

Session 11F

### **Posthumanism**

[Ashley Winstead.](#)

#### **“Oh honey...I know what you want’: Posthumanism and Illicit Desire in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*”**

The ontological boundary lines between the human and the posthuman are fluid and constantly in negotiation across theory and fiction. My paper reads Margaret Atwood’s speculative novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003) as an attempt to satirize the posthuman fantasy that technology’s intervention in the material body will be the locus for sweeping ideological and political change. *Oryx and Crake*’s Children of Crake are a new race genetically designed to be incapable of desire in order to be politically peaceful. The laughable powerlessness of the Children of Crake challenges posthumanist critics such as Donna Haraway and Katherine Hayles, whose writings suggest that human/technology couplings will produce more ideologically liberated beings. However, even as Atwood attempts to define the human as something more than embodiment, her depiction of the genetically-altered Children of Crake anchors selfhood firmly to embodiment. I argue that Atwood is interested locating the difference between humans and posthumans in the human capacity for illicit, taboo, and unrequited desires. If posthuman visions fantasize about the agency of materials in order to compensate for a perceived lack of human agency in late modernity, then what does it mean for Atwood to single out human desire as our defining characteristic, the locus of our agency? My interdisciplinary reading argues that even as Atwood resists the posthuman as a new model for political agency, her equation of human agency with the capacity to desire “inappropriately” has provocative implications for ethics and our perception of what it means to be human.

*Sean Farrell.*

### **Speculative Biotech and Posthuman Ethics in the Anthropocene**

Biotech art exposes the fluid boundary between aesthetic and scientific praxis, curating a troubling space in which distinctions between “nature” and “culture” are both collapsed and reified. In this way, bioart as a field proves an apt allegory for the relationship between posthuman theories and theories of the Anthropocene: the latter, a contemporary geochronological marker for the incredible impact that humans have had on the environment, runs in opposition to the former, which seeks to decenter the human in relation to other animals and the environment. While there is a long tradition of work in both fields - as exemplified by such theorists as Cary Wolfe, Stacy Alaimo, Claire Colebrook, and Donna Haraway - it is only in the last several years that they have been theorized together. I aim to add to this ongoing conversation by examining the ethics of engagement with biological materials for aesthetic and scientific ends in several forms of “speculative biotech.” This biotech art invites speculation upon the fluid boundaries between design, science, and nature, and includes the work of Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg, Patricia Piccinini, and Arakawa and Gins. Such projects point towards the ways in which ethics, as a biopolitical category of power, is necessarily compromised in the Anthropocene, and lead to questions about not only what responsibility toward the nonhuman Other exists at the point of contact between speculative fiction and synthetic biology, but also whether it is possible to develop an ethical framework for these encounters at all in our current era.

Session 11G

### **Constructing American Identity**

*Rachel Conrad.*

#### **Frightfully Fluid: Contagion, Quarantine, and American Identity in Henry James's "Daisy Miller" (1878, 1909)**

When Henry James's Daisy Miller transgresses the conventions of class and gender, the community of elite American expatriates in Rome deliberately cuts her from their social circle. While scholars have often interpreted Daisy's subsequent death from “Roman fever” in regard to her social indiscretions, the

frighteningly fluid ambiguities of her identity as an “American girl,” I situate her susceptibility to malaria within the broader context of James’s international theme, nineteenth-century models of contagion, the biopolitics of quarantine, and national identity. Through a comparison of the original and revised versions of the novella *Daisy Miller* (1878, 1909), I explore how Daisy’s death—the result of her ill-advised and un-chaperoned trip to the Roman Coliseum at dusk—operates as a figurative critique of the old-money expatriate American community’s fear of social fluidity. I interpret this critique, more overt and scathing in the 1909 edition of the novella, as the denunciation of quarantine as a model for American national identity and international relations more broadly. Drawing upon histories of contagion and quarantine, I contend that James’s revisions to the novella celebrate Daisy’s social fluidity as a model for American international relations and condemn the expatriate community’s attempts to re-inscribe American national identity according to rigid conventions of class and gender. Moreover, within the larger frame of public health and quarantine, my reading of James’s novella explores the interrelationship of contagion theory and biopolitics in the fluid realm of international relations.

*Katherine Rogers-Carpenter.*

### **Imagining a New Nation: Cholera and Citizenship in American Fiction**

This paper explores how cholera shapes national identity in three different works ranging from Catherine Read Williams’ autobiographical *Tales, National and Revolutionary* (1830-1835), to a children’s publication—*Lizzie Lovell, or What a Little Girl Can Do* (1858) to Julia Peterkin’s more recent short story, “Cholera” (1922). British fiction, especially during the Victorian period, links cholera to colonialism, class distinctions, and dissolute behavior. Stories like Charles Kingsley’s reformist novel *Two Years Ago* (1857) and Somerset Maugham’s *The Painted Veil* (1925) construct what medical historians call “hygienic citizenship” based on prejudices about non Europeans and the poor. Over time, such narratives reified the existing relationship between colonizers and colonized. Like the British works, American fiction tends to other those afflicted with cholera, but the texts discussed here reflect a different national agenda. Williams attempts to delineate a nascent national identity in her autobiographical work. In this story, cholera is an act of God which must be overcome. The religious advice/moral guidance tract *Lizzie Lovell* conflates cholera with morality and virtue. And finally, Julia Peterkin problematizes citizenship through her rich stories of

African Americans confronting cholera in the early twentieth century south. For Americans, then, cholera (like other epidemics) initially dramatizes nationalism and later, nativism.

*Jill Fennell.*

**Red-Blooded Americans Eat Red Meat: Conspicuous Carnivorism, Conservatism, and Immunitary Subjecthood**

Contemporary social politics on sacrifice, contemporary social biopolitics if you will, needs its own frame so that we might consider how the consumption of sacrifice is bound with the notion of “authenticity,” and is an immunitary reaction to modernity and the posthuman condition. This paper will explore the intersection of biopolitics and the immunitary to suggest that the posthuman lens might give us a way to embrace difference instead of investing in sociopolitical binaries. I argue that consuming sacrifice, specifically animal sacrifice, can signal a way of holding on to a pre-modern order. Furthermore, the contemporary impulse to negate vegetarianism and veganism, and flaunt, validate, and praise the consumption of meat (conspicuous carnivorism) reflects a performative impetus that seeks to situate itself as natural, authentic, and American in the politically conservative sense. Such an impetus also resists, the posthuman condition, the acceptance of difference, and the decentralization of the human. The biopolitical use of the immunological processes of affirmation and negation is a performative one bound up with sociopolitical codes. Whereas conservatism demands the subject conform himself to the false “authenticity” of a human performance, bending itself to be legitimized under the (actually) improper, technicity of non-human biopolitical structuring, posthuman systematization is a better option than biopolitical systematization because, in contrast with humanism, it is not bound with necessary affirmative performativity that needs a “natural” or an “authentic” outcome.

*Karalyn Kendall-Morwick.*

**“Meat for Natural Hunger”: Consuming Animals in Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself”**

This paper examines the paradoxical function of animals in the democratic poetics of Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself,” which posits animals as “meat for natural hunger” and vehicles for human transcendence even as it celebrates human animality, the fluidity of species boundaries, and the inherent value of

nonhuman animals. To account for this contradiction, I contextualize Whitman's representations of animals within 19th-century debates about vegetarianism. Whitman's seemingly inconsistent treatment of animality signals his resistance to a growing vegetarian movement whose tenets were at odds with a democratic poetics centered on the reinvigoration of American masculinity and, through it, democracy. In particular, Whitman would have rejected the views espoused by famed dietary reformer Sylvester Graham, whose "system of living" centered on a belief in the naturalness and healthfulness of a vegetable and raw-food diet and a daily regimen of bodily exercise and bathing. Graham lectured widely on the dangers of meat consumption and warned that animal flesh compromised young men's spiritual and moral natures by stimulating their base appetites. In contrast, Whitman embraces meat consumption as a celebration of human animality and male virility, troubling the human/animal binary at the heart of the humanist discourse of species while simultaneously capitalizing on the speciesist logic that underwrites the white male subject position. I argue that the antispeciesist potential of Whitman's poetics is thus short-circuited by Whitman's larger project of crafting a poetics of democracy. Ultimately, Whitman's extension of democratic subjectivity to all humans necessitates the discursive and literal sacrifice of nonhuman animals.

Session 11H

## **Fluid Movements: Dance and Space**

*Johanna Heil.*

### **Fluid Materiality: Moving / Moved Identities in Contemporary Dance**

Dance performatively visualizes the double aspect of the human body as (i) body, i.e., cultural abstraction and construction, and (ii) embodiment, i.e., material reality of the body gained through experience. Drawing on phenomenological and queer approaches to body/embodiment, this paper conceptualizes the dancing body as a discrete embodied agent, but also as a material entity that transgresses the boundaries of a solidly framed physical identity through (theatrical) performance. The performance piece *Eonnogata* (a creative collaboration of stage director Robert Lapage, choreographer Russell Maliphant, and dancer/choreographer Sylvie Guillem) stages this fluid transgression of solid physical identity on multiple levels. Telling the life of the Chevalier d'Eon, a

cross-dressing French diplomat and spy in England during the Seven-Years-War, *Eonnogata* combines the aesthetics of contemporary dance with the kabuki tradition to produce a fluid concept of (sexual) identity. As an embodied individual, a dancer performs and interacts with aesthetic and technical styles. On a larger scale, a dancer is part of a choreography, which prescribes the movement of a group of dancers in a specific setting. Even though dancers' embodied bodies may be conceptualized as agents, the individual dancer in the choreographical context becomes one among many actants in a fluid assemblage of moving bodies, light, costumes, music, props, etc. (cf. Jane Bennett's interpretation of a black-out in *Vibrant Matter*). Examining these aspects in *Eonnogata*, I seek to highlight that dance's exceptional ability to illustrate and perform the body's presence as a becoming may best be described as "fluid materiality."

[April Durham](#).

### **Fluid Subjectivity and Ethical Networks: Collaboration in Anna Halprin's Choreography and Online Social Networks**

At 93, choreographer Anna Halprin continues to design workshops and projects that foreground the unexpected possibilities in physical movement when connected to emotional and material, networked creativity. In the 1960s, she and architect Lawrence Halprin developed the RSVP cycles to describe collaborative creative processes without instrumentalizing them, making legible the movements of creative force through the bodies, minds, and capacities of any given group. Situated and contingent, RSVP scores map relational gestures that can develop into creative works, which are always contingent to the participants and situated in specific physical or institutional spaces. Halprin describes herself as a catalyst, like a chemical agent, in a group, shifting individual authorial responsibility to the network of creative actors. This shift allows for the emergence of complex, fluid, and temporary forms of "trans-subjectivity," distributed across bodies and identities as each individual acts in poetic relation to the others. While art historians like Claire Bishop and Grant Kessler debate problems of authorship and the opposition of process versus aesthetics in collaborative practice, Halprin's method speaks to specific techno-cultural issues of subjectivity arising in networked creative interaction, occurring in venues like Facebook and the online, user-generated news site Reddit. Rather than argue either for social processes or aesthetic value in collaborative works, this paper

considers how distributed aesthetics, in Halprin's work and in ongoing, situated, and chaotic online social networks, give rise to complex forms of subjectivity that, while fleeting, have significant bearing upon situated ethics and the transformation of commingled subjectivity.

*Robert Gero PhD.*

### **Infinity structures; Flows, aggregates and folds**

Infinity structures; Flows aggregates and folds panta rhei ("everything flows") Heraclitus of Ephesus ca. 530 B.C.E This presentation will explore the possibility of Infinity structures (IS) philosophically, mathematically and physically. My recent research as a philosopher and artist has led me to speculate on the existence of certain unique structures, IS, in which there is a stable exterior and an infinitely expanding interior. A seemingly impossible structure, whose internal dimensions exceed its external ones. These structures are quantitative additions in space at the same time their movement expresses qualitative change. They both conceptually and materially transform static space into dynamic space by weaving superfluity, the void and solid together in an intimate dance. My argument will include mathematical reinforcement by drawing on Georg Cantor's theory of transfinite numbers, the theorem that implies the existence of an "infinity of infinities." Philosophically I will support the thesis using Gottfried Leibniz whose monads are stable inside yet infinitely unfolding and expanding outsides – he calls them "insides without outsides," Henri Bergson's *durée* or duration to refer to the flow of the temporal, Alfred Whitehead's Process philosophy and Gilles Deleuze's de-regulated flows and folds. In addition I will present visuals, both immobile poses and video of these paradoxical structures.

Session 11I

### **Fluid Atmospheric (Roundtable)**

Chair: *Sha Xin Wei*

This panel explores the textures, temporalities and phenomenological qualities of fluid as they manifest themselves through mathematical equations, scientific models and artistic enactment. Drawing lessons from our consideration of the concepts of atmosphere and place, we attend to the manner in which fluid at once yields to careful scientific analysis and offers a fertile philosophical medium in which density, viscosity, diffusion, transition and migration flourish beyond their operational bounds. Bringing together an artist and mathematician, a



philosopher and a climate scientific, the panel tracks the tracks phase transitions between states of matter, concepts and affects, and seeks to articulate an aesthetics of atmosphere mediated by fluid dynamics.

## Second Plenary - Sat 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Second Plenary

*Karen Barad.*

### **Presentation.**

## Dance - Sat 9pm - Midnight

Dance

## Session 12 - Sun 9:00 am - 10:30 am

Session 12A

### **Borderlands and Leaky Borders**

*claudia pederson.*

#### **An Ecology of Empire, On Control and Hybridity**

In autonomist-inspired work, globalization is understood as an historical extension of empire, a universal (utopian) order without boundaries or limits. Unlike older forms of empire (based on the nation-state), globalization (the advent of transnational corporations and digital networks) thrives on fluidity. An alternative reading of empire in postcolonial theory relates fluidity to the concept of hybridity, and as a result, empire is seen as always a fragmentary process shaped through the absorption of foreign discourses on a local level. These notions are contextualized in relation to recent art practices emerging in various

locations in Latin America in tandem with the influx of ICTs in the region. The focus of this work is on processes and systems and key concerns are the production of research and the testing of practical solutions that modify the environment or contribute to the shaping of new imaginaries around ecology. Spanning art, technology, science, and the social spheres, these practices revive avant-garde art traditions; are largely funded by ICT corporations; and promote participation in social and political issues. Projects under this trend include the development of sustainable energy sources that can be integrated in buildings or used to power communication devices and robots designed to remediate degraded eco-systems. Developed from technological waste, access to shared pools of knowledge on the internet, local traditions, and a variety of public and corporate funds, these projects negate the notion of empire as diachronic narrative, all the while thriving on fluidity in absence of unifying and totalizing narratives.

*Shafik Amal.*

### **Fluid Identity : The Representations of the “Other” in Egyptian Cinema**

This paper examines Egyptian cinematic representations of the west as “the evil other”. Through the analysis of a selection of Egyptian films, this paper demonstrates some of the allegorical narratives that portray Egypt as the female nation being rescued by former president Gamel Abdel Nasser – an allegory that contradicts and coincides with Egypt as the strong male who has the power over the “blonde woman” (representing the west). After the 1952 revolution, Egyptian cinema was used as a political, promotional tool; the socialist government under President Abdel Nasser (1956 to 1970) wanted to reinforce a sense of nationalism. However, the effect of Egypt’s defeat in the 1967 Six Day War (between Arab countries and Israel) was catastrophic. Therefore, hostile representations of the colonizing westerners became a common theme in Egyptian cinema, and gender politics were in the heart of these representations. Gendered allegories in Egyptian movies reveal the gender inequality in Arab societies. In Egyptian contexts, the virgin-whore dichotomy is even more polarized. A woman not only signifies her family’s honor but also the national honor. On the other hand, the westerner blonde signifies the lack of honor. Popular media reinforces the idea of the sexual permissiveness of the westerner blonde – a phenomenon that is so

imbedded in the Egyptian culture to the point that is sometimes manifests itself in real life. This paper explores that intersection.

*Ozgun Eylul Iscen.*

### **Migratory Transcultural Affects: When a Cultural Inquiry Becomes Fluid**

This paper tackles the question of how we can do anthropology that acknowledges and expresses the complexity, relationality and continuity of becomings of individuals, materials and milieus, or life itself. In this regard, ethnography needs to and has a capacity to unfold and reflect on molar and molecular modes (in Deleuze and Guattari's terms) of transcultural becomings at the intersection of art, social sciences and philosophy. It presents a way of cultural inquiry aimed at exploring the potentials of ethnographic and experimental video-making as a process for evoking and transmitting transcultural affects. Drawing upon Spinoza's two-sided notion of affect, as affect and affection, enables incorporation of an ontological perspective into a cultural inquiry, which draws upon Simondon's processual and transindividual understanding of individual, Bergsonian transformative and interruptive memory, and Peircian embodied and relational semiotics. This brings alternative perspectives on body, subjectivity, time, memory, matter and image based on this relational, process-oriented and open ontology. The experiential impacts of transcultural experience and aesthetics can be framed as potential for composing newer blocs of fluid becomings and expressions. Deleuzian film theory guided the current work, especially through the operations of affection- and timeimage, which become fluid between body and thought, and molar and molecular modes of becoming. While this work brings the affect theory with what is called "anthropology of becoming" (Biehl & Locke, 2010), it becomes 'migratory' itself (in Mieke Bal's terms) due its fluidity across theory and practice, and fields of philosophy, art and anthropology.

Session 12B

### **Animals Studies III: Biology and Biopower**

*Catts Oron; Ionat Zurr; Bardini Thierry.*

### **Why does constructed life cannot hold from?**

Vladimir Mironov , one of the pioneers of organ printing, once compared tissue to fluids. The printed tissue droplets will fuse like drops of water forming a puddle. How a solid three dimensional organ could ever be formed by fluids? Organ printing is an alternative to the use degradable polymer scaffolds. One of the most famous attempts of tissue engineering is that of a human ear grown on a back of a mouse. The 1995 image that captured the public imaginary can actuality be seen as an icon of a transient fluid shape, as the form of the ear collapsed into a misshapen blob. Almost 20 years later one of the labs that was involved with the original ear-mouse experiment announced that they have moved a step closer to being able to grow a complete human ear . This feat was achieved by using a non-degradable Titanium scaffold that held the shape. This talk will conceptually question if life can ever be solid, and whether the rhetoric of constructed life is fundamentally flawed. We will argue that this rhetoric confuses two notions of form: the form/shape idea of a solid/liquid living being, where the living form understood as a patterned set of fluxes that connect a given entity to its living milieu.

*Hannah Biggs.*

### **Animalizing the Bio in Biopower: Veterinary Medicine and Foucauldian Paradigms of Biopower**

In 1972, James Herriot published his first novel of a soon to be five book series. The book was entitled All Creatures Great and Small, and it recounted the trials and tribulations of James Herriot and Siegfried Farnon and Tristan Farnon, veterinarians in rural Yorkshire, England in 1937-38. Herriot's novels recount a period in the history of veterinary medicine when change was fast approaching ways humans interacted with animals. No longer was veterinary medicine just an occupation of treating sick animals, but now, thanks to advancements in animal pharmacology, veterinarians were responsible for prescribing preventative treatments to preserve animal health as well. 1930's veterinary medicine was a period of farmers' increased insistence and reliance on veterinary medicine's ability to regulate the animal bodies both these farmers and the vets were charged with caring for. Throughout his writings, Michel Foucault discusses concepts of biopower, and although Foucault's definition of and understanding of biopower is limited to human populations, Foucault's writings on regulatory mechanisms of biopower still offer a theoretical framework to incorporate nonhuman animals' place in the biopolitical sphere. Many theorists have already

realized the missing animal in Foucault's works, but in incorporating the animal in a discussion on the biopolitical, we can gain a more articulate, in-depth understanding of mechanisms of biopower, especially within a veterinary medicine framework. By referencing *All Creatures Great and Small*, discussions on biopower and the biopolitical sphere can rearticulate the animal within Foucauldian discourse.

*Beatrice Marovich.*

### **"Connective Distinction: Animality & the Duplicity of Kinship"**

In spite of the troubled, and troubling, history of the term "kinship" thinkers in fields like anthropology, science studies, gender studies, and critical race studies have been retooling kinship theory. This queerer form of kinship has been making appearances in animal studies, as a way of acknowledging the fluidity of relational connections between humans and other animals. Donna Haraway, in numerous projects, evokes the power of interspecies connections under the sign of kinship. Deborah Bird Rose's *Wild Dog Dreaming: Love and Extinction* (2011) is an extended examination of fluid kinship bonds between human and non-human lives. But, as work from scholars such as Chris Peterson and Nicole Shukin has underscored, placing the connective relations between humans and other animals under the sign of kinship also reveals a deep duplicity. Kinship, as a form of connection, always carries with it a kind of troubling violence, or rupture. Taking the duplicity of kinship into account, this paper will be concerned to illuminate the ways in which kinship works both to illuminate affirmative and connective tissues of relation as well as rupturing disconnects. Ultimately, it will argue for the potential of the term "connective distinction" to describe the fluid but conflicted and ultimately indeterminate kinship relations between humans and other creatures.

Session 12C

### **Divine Hydromechanics: The Affects of Transcendent Narrative**

Chair: *Christine Skolnik*

The papers in this panel examine the affective power of narratives and stagings which attempt to use the language of physics, fluid mechanics, or thermodynamics to describe visions of transcendent entities. Each paper deals with an attempt to remix the physics of space/time in order to induce in consciousness a rethinking of the relationship between oneself and a larger

Whole--whether the cosmic All, the ecological Environment, or the gnostic "Creator God" who delivers social and political separation and atomization. Across a range of different mediums--speculative philosophy folded into science fiction, the graphic novel, and postdramatic theatre--these papers find that both the notion of fluids and fluid notions are at the core of attempts to push audiences and readers toward relation with these larger entities. Joshua DiCaglio focuses on Phillip K. Dick's paradoxical argument that wholeness underlies the fragmenting nature of his novels; Dick's engagement with the physics of Greek and Ionian philosophy invite us to understand the flows and reversals of his elaborate fictional and philosophical experience of disintegration. Christine Skolnik examines the use of water in two graphic narratives as a means of inducing ecological consciousness by making the future flow into the present. Finally, Guy Zimmerman folds Gnostic dualism into the So-Cal culture of Dick's suburban vision and Abdoh's *Urbs Roma*, examining the fluid dynamics between the upper and lower realms, often through the metallurgical flow of financially charged materials.

*Joshua DiCaglio.*

**Only the Everything Flows: the Paradox of Philip K. Dick's (de)Fragmentation**

Philip K. Dick's work seems an ideal illustration of the view of the world as a vast and fluid assemblage of multiplicities. However, on the other side of persistent fragmentation, PKD's crumbling universes reveal a startling wholeness. After his 1974 *VALIS* experience, PKD reinterpreted the decaying realities of his novels in relation to what he saw as a divine invasion of cosmic unity. Using PKD's analysis of Greek and Ionian philosophy—including unpublished material from his expansive *Exegesis*—this paper explores the paradoxical suggestion that "everything flows" only insofar as the Everything is that which flows. After reading the Oxford philosopher Edward Hussey, PKD argues that Democritus's atomism destroyed a view of reality as one vast, interconnected entity. PKD notes that, to avoid the paradoxes of Parmenides and Zeno, Democritus makes nothing into a thing. Unwittingly, PKD realizes, we have all come to believe nothing to be a thing and thereby divided the universe into parts. The result: wholeness must now break through our divisions. PKD calls this a "theophany"—Heraclitus's term for this "in-breaking of the divine." I argue that this flowing-into-Oneness inverts

our reading of the decay found in novels like *Ubik*: the post-*VALIS* PKD insists that these are descriptions of a de-fragmentation induced by a break-down of our normal divisive worldview. In addition, *VALIS* and “The Indefagitable Frog”, PKD’s short story on Zeno’s Paradox, indicate that only when the Everything flows into us can we see that this multiplicity may be a result our own fragmentation.

*Guy Zimmerman.*

### **Baroque Dynamism in the So-Cal Gnosticism of Abdoh and Dick**

In *Valis*, PKD brings Gnostic dualism into a suburbanized Southern Californian milieu at around the same time Reza Abdoh was exploring similar terrain in his stage productions. The transversal nature of this semi-urbanized milieu allows us to examine Dick's Gnosticism in Deleuzian terms as a “two-floored,” baroque assemblage in which the separation of the Creator God functions in an intensive embrace of an underlying immanent divinity in which time folds and re-folds back on itself. In the neoliberal era the semi-urban milieu of Southern California gave material and social expression to this thermodynamic and dissipative aspect of assemblages, the fluid dynamics of which are dramatized in Abdoh’s *The Hip-Hop Waltz of Eurydice*. The work of the anthropologist David Graeber and the Classicist Richard Seaford helps us track this dynamism all the way back from the financialization of postmodern Los Angeles to the birth of metal coinage in ancient Ionia, the materiality of coinage amplifying hypostasizing influence of the Creator God. This dualism was also already latent in metallurgy – in the contrast between the fixedness of ore on the one hand and the fluidity of molten metal on the other, with fire-techne acting as a kind of hinge between them. Together, these lines of inquiry buttress Isabelle Stengers and Philippe Pignarre’s call for a privileging of techne and “minor” science in response to the sorcery of speculative capitalism, and to the interlocking crises suburbanization has delivered in the age of the Anthropocene.

*Christine Skolnik.*

### **Drawing Water in A.D. and H<sub>2</sub>O**

*A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge* and *H<sub>2</sub>O*, Vol. 1 are graphic novels that dramatize a complex, relationship between water, consciousness, space, and time. While on the surface the novels seem conventional and even clichéd, their affective appeals reveal strong archetypal undercurrents. This interpretation is



inspired by Jeffrey Kripal's analysis of superhero comics in his *Mutants and Mystics*, Erick Davis's *TechGnosis*, and Phillip K. Dick's *Logos* mysticism. Both novels employ standard narrative and graphic generic conventions to create suspense and drama. However they also disrupt consciousness, as a generic convention, by folding space and time back onto themselves and into one another, in the mode of the sublime. *A.D.* dramatizes disintegration of consciousness within a diverse cast of characters as their familiar surroundings collapse around them, and gradual processes of reintegration after the deluge. *H2O* redraws ecological and political boundaries, in the usual manner of apocalyptic narratives, while revealing various levels of psycho-spiritual continuity. The novels also manipulate time in unexpected ways. *A.D.* recounts an historic event but also articulates a menacing present, as it evokes more recent hydro-climatic disasters, and foreshadows imminent crises—the predictable return of water, everywhere. *H2O* is set in the future but its drama resonates compellingly with current climate crises and resource grabs, gesturing to orthogonal time. Finally, the novels fold time into space by illustrating how spatial categories are a function of time, and revealing the physical non-separateness of past, present, and future climatic events.

#### Session 12D

### **Flui(d)igital Aesthetics**

Chair: [\*David Cecchetto\*](#)

This panel approaches creative practice as a fluid activity, entailing a form of thinking that adapts, moves in and takes shape in response to circumstance. Creative practice doesn't rest content on its own wonders; Instead, when it is seen as a lure for fluid propositions, what emerges is a form of inquiry—both practical and theoretical—that refuses a fixed delineation. In this, creative practice links itself not simply to a revision of logical thought but to a form of sustained imaginative encounter that is particularly important in a time when the deterministic vectors of ubiquitous technologies—the becoming-data in which we are continuously taken up—are increasingly forceful. Methodologically, each of the panelists in this session engages hyperstition—tightly and loosely—as a means of intervening in a system that suppresses contingency, even futurity. According to Nick Land, “hyperstitions by their very existence as ideas function causally to bring about their own reality...transmuting fictions into truths.” Such a formulation is exemplified by finance capitalism's investment in fictional

entities such as futures and derivatives to compose an abstract but no less real dimension of profit. However, if seen as a creative or aesthetic strategy, the manner in which the power of the virtual has been exploited by inhumanist capital to bring about the reality of a speculative profit—as in branding's sorcerous implantation of false memories and future desires, which rewire the very notion of lived experience—points to the promise of hyperstition as producing counterfactual lines of actualization that compel the world to unaffordable futures.

*Ted Hiebert.*

### **Muddy aesthetics and the pataphysics of digital culture**

Last night I dreamed my mouth was full of mud -- too fluid to spit out, too dense to swallow. All I could do was choke -- and it was enough to wake me up, with a panic series of involuntary coughs. It took a few minutes for the dream to subside, and even then the taste continued to linger -- a flavor designed by my mind but experienced physically by my body. In some small way, it was a moment of the imaginary made real. Despite the pervasiveness of digital codes and networked bodies, there is something about the vertigo of imaginary moments that continues to defy the logic of a code-based world—a form of immersion that digital culture understands but which stands beside its virtual counterpart as something a little bit simpler and a little bit different. For the romance of digital culture is that of a fluid networked environment governed by the algorithms of virtual possibility -- an environment that promises to deliver all the wonders of the imaginary in increasingly tangible ways. And yet the imaginary is not always or only the happy companion of creative classes and innovation forums. What the imaginary and the virtual share is that they sometimes make us choke, sometimes even on purpose. So, for an increasingly muddy context of the moment, a theory of muddy aesthetics that sets as its task a 'pataphysical exploration of the imagination and digital culture.

*Marc Couroux.*

### **Technomètic Navigation, Phonoegregoric Emanations**

Last night I dreamed that Artur Schopenhauer was extricating himself from a muddy sinkhole while prodded by Gilbert Simondon to relinquish information about his 49 stratagems (11 more than the Art of Being Right—a classic in mètic,

cunning intelligence which Plato would have undoubtedly suppressed) for channeling sonic rhetoric into a variety of expedient instrumentalizations, which the philosopher was eager to conjoin with his work on transindividuation via technical objects. The mud is both literal and figurative, a synecdoche for the dissimulative, becoming-opaque, bait-and-switching procedures of his phonometric tract. I woke up, remembering that I had been reading about a fateful meeting between French occultist Saint-Yves d'Alveydre—who extended the concept of synarchy to denote an egregoric group-mind secretly wielding executive powers—and phonograph inventor Thomas Alva Edison, anxiously expressing his fear of a dimly adumbrated phonic consortium gaining access to disembodied, objectified sound, ripe for circulatory contamination. I woke up again, wondering how a crafty leveraging of informatic substrates via hyperstition—the insinuation of synthetic constructs which become actualized within cybernetic feedback systems—might momentarily grant access to a digital, sonic virtual operating in the background, pervasively inflecting cognition and perception. It will be a question here of navigation, via scissiparity, sigiling and synchronicity; paradromic, algorithmical practices, parasitically hijacking temporal leakages induced by chronoportative modes typical of late capitalist phono-affective predation; an array of exploits conspiring to capture and arrest the fluxional phonoegregore in operation, the unfathomable overheard through prismatically pressured systemic cross-contamination.

*David Cecchetto.*

### **The sound of both ears oozing: Hyperstitional algorithms, capital, and sounding art**

One night I dreamed of mud, oozing from my ears. I sat at my computer reading as the thick, vaguely warm sludge slobbered down my arms. On screen, I read about the NSA spying scandal, through which we know that all online activities are subject to monitoring. The question of culpability is unaskable in this setting, in that no individual person (or entity) can be held responsible; an abdication that is a feature of any bureaucracy—which subsume by routing actions along circular, obscure, and repeating paths—but this case is different because the political scandal is overwritten by its technological conditions, namely the fact that spying is not the exception for networks but rather a precondition for network activity. That is, "our machines work by leaking" (Chun 2013). The question, then, is how to communicate ethically amidst this irrefragable leakage.

I can't hear a damn thing with my ears full of sludge, which helps me concentrate on the question of how sounding art might address this bind. It's possible that aurality-informed approaches to digital technologies can reveal perceptual biases underwriting these technologies, opening a ground for intervention. It's possible that sounding art might develop alternative sensitivities to algorithmically abstracted data, sensitivities that might reveal hyperstitious agential possibilities within contemporary capital. I just can't get it straight in my head, though, because the mud—the source of my deafness—amplifies the sounds of my listening; it's a kind of mucilage-based tinnitus. Leaky indeed.

Session 12E

### **On the Surface: Fluidity and Materiality in French Modernism**

Chair: [Melissa Warak](#)

In the late nineteenth century, American author Henry David Thoreau opined that “The fibers of all things have their tension and are strained like the strings of an instrument.” This panel considers the material properties of surface in the work of Claude Monet, Jean Dubuffet, and Alexander Calder, three modernists working in France at various points during the first three-quarters of the twentieth century. In investigating properties of reception, including phenomenological, indexical, and linguistic concerns, these papers seek to complicate scholarship on materiality in early twentieth century art in contrast to, for example, the “finish fetish” movement in Los Angeles in the 1960s. The inherent surface tension of these works, thus described in musical terms by Thoreau, plays out in both physical and theoretical ways. Although Monet, Dubuffet, and Calder had three very different aesthetic (or in the case of Dubuffet, anti-aesthetic) aims, they relied upon the immediacy of experience to bring meaning to their work. As a result, there is a fluidity of exchange between maker and viewer in their objects; this creates a constantly shifting relationship based upon material, experiential, and performative concerns.

[Jason Goldstein](#).

#### **Claude Monet's *Nymphéas* and the Art of Description**

A single principle has largely determined the way art historians have approached Claude Monet's water-lily paintings (*Nymphéas*) and his series in general: *The effects of the ensemble outweigh the experience of the individual paintings.*

Monet himself and the critics who wrote about his series contributed to the formation of a discourse privileging the ensemble. The tenacity of this guiding idea has resulted in a general neglect of the material specificity of the individual paintings. Reassembling the ensemble remains a virtually unattainable ideal. What is at stake when we take an alternative approach and at least temporarily focus on the experience of looking at individual paintings in the series?

The *Nymphéas* consist of three nameable elements: water, flora, and sky. A paradox ensues from the ostensible economy of Monet's motif: The further he pares down the identifiable components of his representational vocabulary, the more challenging it becomes to assign words that adequately describe his effects. In his *Nymphéas*, Monet exploits a productive tension between the fluidity of the phenomenological world and the resistant materials we have at our disposal to express our perpetually shifting experience of it. This paper will attempt to emulate Monet's pictorial methods by testing the limits of verbal description to account for abstracted painterly structures.

[\*Roja Najafi.\*](#)

### **Indeterminate Textures: Fluid Modes in Dubuffet's *Éléments Botaniques***

Some of Dubuffet's paintings resemble "abstract" art, while many others depict recognizable figures, especially human bodies, inanimate objects, animals, and landscapes. To classify Dubuffet's canvases according to the categories of abstraction and figuration is to overlook the way in which his art signifies directly through its use of material. In the late 1950s, Dubuffet tends to use more unconventional materials such as combinations of paint, sand, tar, found objects from nature like leaves, insects, butterfly wings, etc. The *Botanical Element* series is a good example of this practice in Dubuffet's oeuvre. The characteristics of Dubuffet's assemblages are closely attached to the material components of the works. On the one hand, sand, burlap, or dried leaves do not illusionistically represent other objects in the world, but rather signify themselves in their own material existence; they become self-referential or auto-referential. On the other hand, these material facts become part of the representational matrix of Dubuffet's pictures; they become pictorial signs. This paper examines the fluidity between abstraction (self-representational) and figuration (pictorial signs) through material substance in Dubuffet's *Botanical Element* series and aims to

find a more relevant way of understanding Dubuffet's primary mode of material signification.

*Melissa Warak.*

### **The Music of Alexander Calder**

Throughout his long career as a sculptor living both in the U.S. and in France, the American sculptor Alexander Calder (1898 - 1976) collaborated with composers on more than a few occasions. In addition to working with composers including John Cage, Pierre Henry, and Hans Richter on the many films about his mobile and stabile sculptures, Calder also collaborated more directly with composers, playwrights, musicians, poets, and dancers in creating set designs for no fewer than nineteen musical and theatrical productions for the stage. This paper aims to retrace Calder's interest in music and performance in arguing for the sonic materiality of his sculptures. In using wire and enameled surfaces, his mobile and stabile sculptures served as instruments in their own right, conducting vibrations along their metallic surfaces. Calder scholar Giovanni Carandente has asserted that the mobiles "do not move in any single way, but set up a series of 'passages' from one position to another, in a continuous, gentle, serpentine flux." In this way, this paper contends that Calder's sculptures rely on time, indeterminate action (to use a term of Cage's), and a fluidity of motion that is often at odds with the modern and non-matrixed or dissonant music, dance, or other performative actions presented on stage.

Session 12F

### **Spilling and Dumping: Toxic Waste**

*Lisa Diedrich.*

#### **"Drugs into Bodies" as clinical and political performative**

In this paper, I discuss what is usually taken as an image of political success: ACT-UP's phrase and campaign "Drugs into Bodies," a slogan and cause that transformed the experience and event of AIDS in very concrete, material ways. By exploring the phrase as a clinical and political performative, I aim to open up questions for the future that relate back to other possibilities that might yet emerge out of AIDS activism. My analysis of "Drugs into Bodies" as clinical and political performative seeks to undermine the seduction of scientific, political,

and conceptual reductionism, and the ongoing repercussions not only of treatment failures, but also of treatment successes. I take this phrase to express an ontology of the late capitalist present, a condensation of the complexities of the interaction of medicine, politics, and the multiple demands of different temporalities: the emergency time of immediate action and the tentative time of reaching for new forms and phrases to articulate what is and is not yet coming into being. Suggesting, among other things, the over-reliance on pharmaceuticals in modern, especially U.S., medicine, the enduring hope for sure-fire cures and quick fixes, and the pleasures and dangers of recreational drug use for various bio-social groupings, “Drugs into Bodies” is an almost magical phrase that encapsulates the messy experience and event of AIDS into the always already present tense of late capitalism.

*Pelin Kumbet.*

### **Toxic Bodies, Toxicity and Fluidity in *Animal’s People***

This paper delves into the fluidity of the toxic posthuman bodies in Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People* drawing on Stacy Alaimo’s *Bodily Natures*. *Animal’s People* is a fictionalized narrative relying on a real industrial catastrophe that took place in Bhopal, India in 1984, in which a corporeal factory leaked tons of toxic chemicals causing extreme abnormalities and impairments in the bodies of the characters. Resting on this grim reality, the novel is a poignant example in terms of the embodiment of fluid toxic bodies of people, who are wryly exposed to massive amount of life-threatening toxicity, in particular this character named Animal. As he has a twisted back, and becomes crippled he has to walk on his both hands and feet reminding the posture of an animal. Recognizing how bodies are interacting with the flow of chemicals and toxicants, this paper examines the penetration of environmental toxicity into the bodies of people, explores how fluid the bodies are—being in constant interaction and contaminated by the substances. These posthuman toxic bodies challenge the conception of pure body, and indicate how toxic becomes the part of a flesh. This novel, it will be concluded that by eroding the boundary between human and nonhuman, natural and unnatural body, provides a framework in understanding the fluidity of the human body which is “not isolated within a castle” but “enmeshed in a web of relationships” (Langston 147) with the environment.



## **Fluid Metaphysics**

Chair: [\*Michaela Giesenkirchen Sawyer\*](#)

This panel combines approaches from the philosophies of consciousness, science, and religion as it explores the idea of fluidity in three metaphysical contexts: The ontology of selfhood and thingness; the socio-theological implications of the history of a Mormon site of worship; and Gertrude Stein's radical empiricism.

[\*Wayne Hanewicz\*](#).

### **The Emptiness of Fluidity and Impermanence: Scales of Human Experience**

If Fluidity is consistent, then there is no moment in which any bounded “thing” exists, even for the slightest Planck period of time. Fluidity entails Impermanence. Impermanence entails “no-thingness” at any moment of space-time. Accordingly, the existence of any “thing” is “Empty” of Selfhood. Consequently, whatever “thingness” that human perceive is a function of our sensory apparatus. The world looks and feels that way it does because our senses work the way they do. Do we end with a Radical Solipsism, where even the Self that classical Solipsism entails is, itself, a projection of our sensory apparatus? I propose another way of understanding these entailments. As a whole, the nature of our existence and all that is contained within it consists of recursive patterns of perception that are internally holographic, which is to say that each bounded “thing” contains defining information of the whole. Moreover, each relatively distinct scale of perception contains defining and characteristic information about the other scales that it contains and in which itself is contained. My presentation will explore the implications of this framework. I will provide support for this view from both objective and subjective sources including Western and Eastern philosophy and psychology, as well as David Bohm’s work on “hidden variables” in the quantum mechanical framework.

[\*Kimberly Abunuwara\*](#).

### **The Provo Tabernacle and the Fluidity of Faith**

When fire destroyed the historic Provo tabernacle in 2010, the LDS Church announced it would rebuild the remaining shell as a temple. On the one hand, this architectural fluidity symbolizes the Mormon notion of the upward direction of our impermanence. Christianity interprets fire as sanctifier: “We are to ‘walk in

newness of life' (Romans 6:4), to become sanctified by yielding our hearts unto God (see Helaman 3:35), and to obtain "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16; Bednar). Such a doctrine is unafraid of destruction and embraces impermanence. On the other hand, the Church's efforts at preservation could be interpreted as an attempt to curb the very fluidity it is emphasizing. The tabernacle had become the home of an increasingly interfaith community, while the new temple will only admit Mormons. Mormonism, as Christian religions go, has an unusually healthy relationship with the fluidity of its doctrine. But is it equally open to socio-cultural fluidity? How can sanctification happen on a community level? How will an outward-reaching, proselytizing people remain faithful? How does impermanence affect faith? What does the Provo Tabernacle's reconstruction tell us about Mormonism's relationship with its distant ancestors and current neighbors?

*Michaela Giesenkirchen Sawyer.*

### **Does Fluidity Exist?: Gertrude Stein And the Stream of Consciousness**

Gertrude Stein has often been described as a stream-of-consciousness author. The label may seem appropriate, given that most of her work consists of meditative writing and the very term *stream of consciousness* originated with Stein's teacher William James, who is known to have had a tremendous influence on her philosophy. But Stein's works bear little resemblance to those that literary critics customarily group in the "stream-of-consciousness" category, such as, famously, James Joyce's *Ulysses*. While these tend to include interior monologues imitating the flow of associative thought, Stein's works tend to explore the synergetic, transpersonal potential of language to generate a simultaneous multiplicity of meanings through the transcendence of conventional usage. Fluidity was one of several conventional metaphors for movement and changeability that William James used to characterize the nature of consciousness as a process. This paper will investigate how closely Stein followed her teacher's endeavors in her writing when, first, she explored human personality as a substance in processual terms, and then, from there, developed a foundational ontology in which substances, and therefore states, such as fluidity, are treated as transitory conceptualizations. As if anticipating the discoveries of our contemporary science, Stein's grammatical experimentations lend themselves to being read as performative equalizations of matter and energy, or corpuscle

and wave. In a world composed entirely of events, the distinction between fluids and solids loses its ontological significance.

Session 12H

## **Flowing Code, Coding Flow: Creating Digital Worlds**

*Lindsey Joyce.*

### **Agency in Flow: Creating a Collaborative Criteria for Interactive Narrative Game Analysis**

The understanding of “flow” is a central component in the creation and study of digital games. Flow is achieved when a player becomes fully immersed and focused in the game; the player and the game become fluid and united. Designing games that allow for such flow is not easy, especially when the game incorporates a narrative. Though the intermingling of game and narrative in digital media may seem an easy match, the relationship between ludic play and narrative play is quite complicated, and thus balancing the two in such a way as to provide flow is even more complicated still. How can the player maintain a sense of agency in the narrative as well as in the state of play? Individual scholars and game developers have attempted to solve the issue of balanced ludic and narrative agency, but each experiment yields different criteria for analysis. As a result, little progress is made. By establishing and testing a collaborative criteria across present-day scholarship and game development, I intend to show that lucrative and progressive data emerge that will aid not only in the evaluation of current digital interactive narratives but in the productive of future ones as well.

*Michael Black.*

### **Taking The Shape of Its Container: Digital Materiality at Scale**

Over the past two decades, debate over the materiality of digital objects has drawn literary critics and theorists into the study of new media. While explorations of the fluidity of digital texts has served as an important coronership in new media studies, in practice much of this work has primarily served to extend existing practices in close reading and literary preservation. In short, while we now have a good understanding of how digital forms require us to adapt old methods to new texts, we have yet to engage the sociocultural implications of document encoding. In this presentation, I draw on my experience as a digital

humanist working in big data textmining to discuss how the material differences between plain text, mark-up languages like XML or TEI, and proprietary forms like the portable document format (PDF) are designed to instantiate specific relationships between readers and authors via interpretive software. Considering how these new formats extend or constrain hermeneutic practice remains important; however, I contend that the sociocultural implications of these technical details are largely invisible during close engagement because software often remediates pre-digital forms in the interest of usability. When working with texts at scale, however, remediation means little and it becomes impossible to ignore the concrete specifics of data encoding. Using examples from own work with corpora from the HathiTrust, Internet Archive, and PACER systems, I argue that "distant" reading paradoxically requires a very "close" attention to technical detail which in turn opens up those details to critical inquiry.

[\*David Familian\*](#).

### **Disrupting the Mirror: New Interfaces/Embodied Experiences**

Since the late 19th century art and science have been transformed by a shift in perception from space to space-time that ultimately creates a more *embodied* experiences. Henri Bergson noted this transformation as he described how we respond to the world as an ongoing stream of infinite durational multiplicities. Our minds become virtual repositories of these possible interactions with the present, a phenomenon interactive media art has only just begun to investigate. This paper will examine different modes of interactive art from the readymades of Marcel Duchamp to more contemporary computational-based practices. My specific goal is to analyze different typologies of interactivity that have progressed from simple one-to-one mirroring to more complex responses. One challenge of designing more responsive interfaces is that the viewer is "programmed" to believe we should have a direct and immediate effect on the work. When this does not happen, most users think the artwork must be broken. This is the problem with interfaces that are too simple and predictable. Composer George Lewis defined two kinds of interfaces--the "dog" interface, which does everything you want and the "cat" interface that does nothing you want. I will propose a third type, the "dolphin" interface--when teaching a dolphin a new trick, they will follow it for a while, then do their own version. Ultimately, I will show how new interfaces that "disrupt the mirror" with more

nuanced, complex viewer activation that elicits more embodied experiences for the participant.

*Jeff Pruchnic.*

### **Virtual Life and the End(s) of Evolution**

Two arguments are made in this talk, both of which are fairly straightforward but at the same time somewhat perverse insofar as they try to invert traditional approaches to the subjects under review. The first is that the creation and population of "virtual worlds" -- online communities that take place inside computer-based simulated environments -- is an example of one of three primary ways that the purposes that drive natural selection in biological evolution, as first conceptualized by Darwin, take place in contemporary times, a moment in which many evolutionary biologists have proposed that human biological evolution has ended, or at least no longer functions in the ways in which we have traditionally conceived of evolution. The second is that studying the ways that virtual worlds and the "virtual life" populating them have developed and been sustained online might also offer novel strategies for thinking through one of the more urgent concerns of contemporary biological life: environmental crises and the question of how to promote more sustainable lifestyles and uses of natural resources. In taking up these questions, this talk also discusses more generally attempts to link biological evolution and human ethics from the nineteenth century into the present.

Session 12I

### **Cognitive Alterity**

*suzanne lalonde.*

### **"Fluid Memories, Pseudo-dementia and Haruki Murakami's Fiction"**

Along with cancer and viral infections, the issue of memory loss is currently one of the most hard-to-solve medical conundrums. This article examines another type of memory loss, pseudo-dementia. If pseudo-dementia can be understood, especially from those who have recovered from the disease, then the condition of Alzheimer's and dementia might be better understood. Sufferers from pseudo-dementia could offer illumination on what it is like to have memories deleted. According to trauma theorist Henry Krystal, pseudo-dementia occurs when

individuals are so wounded that they constrict their cognitive functions and behave partly demented. Pertinent issues to be examined in the condition of pseudo-dementia are: How do brains function if deprived of emotions? What is it like to live according to the infantile roots of experience? And, how does it feel to live according to the irrational unconscious sources and forces, as opposed to rational and conscious processes? By studying the literature of Haruki Murakami, social and psychic sources of trauma that provoke cognitive constriction are analyzed. Murakami's short stories: "A Shinagawa Monkey" (2006), "Town of Cats" (2011) and "Samsa in Love" (2013) shed light on the psycho-philosophical dimension of memory loss. The critical suggestion made is that imaginative thinking—literature and dreams—and a keen awareness of the body help to restore memory after psychic suffering. It is concluded that when it comes to memory loss caused by psychological factors—as opposed to a lack of the right lipids or genes—literature provides an incubator of a holistic model of care.

*Masha Mimran.*

**From Emma B. to Anna O.: Day-dreaming Hysteria at the Salpêtrière**

With the end of the nineteenth-century medico-artistic project in France, the emerging diagnosis of psychological illness, hysteria in particular, travelled from fictional to medical depictions so that the scientific and the imaginary colluded in ways that often made the diagnosis necessarily cross-disciplinary. In the fields of psychiatry and psychology, the diagnostic fluidity between fiction and the sciences reinvented the notion of medical diagnosis from within the genre of narrative fiction, with the result that medical cases read much like fictional tales. As Mark Micale notes, "[...] Western psychiatry's subject of study, method of inquiry, and case-historical style became much more 'literary' and narrative." Case histories like Anna O. read like a short story and, indeed, under the pseudonym Anna O., Bertha Pappenheim has become the heroine of psychoanalysis. Yet, these emprints (and empreintes) are not mere artifacts that practitioners of medicine used to embellish the scientific treatises they produced or to appeal to a wider audience of readers. Rather they served to help translate and convey the language of pathology their patients express and move away from Charcot's neurological diagnosis. Looking in particular at Flaubert's Emma Bovary and the assimilation of her fictional character into Richet's medical piece "Les démoniaques d'aujourd'hui," this paper discusses the seminal role of the novelistic hysteric in the psychological diagnosis of hysteria that characterized

the medical discourses of the turn of the century and which preceded Freud's and Breuer's *Studies in Hysteria*.

*Julie Casper Roth.*

### **Bee Lines to Wander Lines: Autism's Story Lines**

Dismayed at the institutionalized lives of nonverbal autistic children and the traditional analytic frameworks through which they were understood, Fernand Deligny dedicated his life to children without language. Working in mid-20th century France, Deligny sought alternative routes to understanding and communicating with patients. He developed the concept of "wander lines" – the invisible routes that those with autism traversed over space and time. Deligny and colleagues mapped these wander lines over drawings representing the space that the children occupied. The fluidity of the lines represented freedom from the constraints of the observer and social determinism. As a video artist, I am interested in lives that exist on the periphery of the mainstream. Autism has been a primary focus of this work. Specifically, I'm interested in evolutionary implications of autism as they relate to communication and language. My current work is inspired by Deligny's "wander lines" and ponders their relationship to the wander lines of other animals and greater communication. My work mimics and updates the filmic work performed by Deligny and his colleagues while self-referencing the moving image, itself, as a form of nonverbal communication. [www.juliecasperroth.com](http://www.juliecasperroth.com)

Session 13 - Sun 10:45 am - 12:15 pm

Session 13A

### **Amorphous Topologies**

*Inge Hinterwaldner.*

### **Surfing the Waves. On the Role(s) of Tracer Materials in Turbulence Experiments**

Early definitions of 'turbulence' reveal the lack of verbal and visual concepts to grasp the chaotic processes observed in real-world experiments conducted by physicists. In order to gain initial insights they had to make visible the events



occurring in the moving air and water. They tested many lightweight markers: smoke, dye, club-moss spores, and wooden splints. In the sciences it is usually the case that visualization strives to show or enhance a natural process without distorting it, even "without physically interfering with the fluid flow" (Merzkirch 1974). Perhaps not surprisingly, a major discourse around hydro- and aerodynamics from around 1900 onwards is concerned with issues such as 'light' and 'contrast'. This shows that the introduced materials were selected according to their luminosity because they had to communicate with the cameras. As information carriers they might be seen as mediums and thus may lie beyond the requirements normally imposed on an object of study. But in addition to their suitability to make motions visible, there must be further aspects linked to them. For example, Hans Jenny tried out different substances in his cymatic inquiries and with these he sometimes even got inverse pictures. This suggests that the marker materials themselves should be seen as objects of study. How are they addressed and why? Are they being investigated with regard to their role as tracer materials or as embodiments of matter in movement? This contribution looks at the different roles in which fluid or granular materials were used in turbulence research.

*[peggy reynolds](#)*.

### **Topology of a Maelstrom**

In agreeing to participate in the new digital economy one accedes to total immersion in an addictive, frictionless fluidity. One's mundane activities seem to require little more effort than thought itself as online daemons fan out to pave one's way. Only retrospectively does it become apparent that with every online deposit, purchase, photo, conversation or search one leaves a trail of markers that can be exploited by malicious entities against whom one remains largely defenseless. Creatures in the wild, many similarly made vulnerable by the traces they leave, have developed strategies to counter the advantage this gives would-be predators. The water snake, for example, cuts through the center of the vortices its sinuous progress creates and thereby manages to leave neither wake nor eddies to drift downstream and announce its presence. Artist, trickster and aspiring mathematician Marcel Duchamp developed a similar technique for subverting the dynamic of the milieu in which he found himself, undermining the valorization of "retinal" art by creating self-reflexive vortices that furthered his preference for the purely conceptual. In comparing the survival strategies of these

two entities we find a number of topological moves that might be put to good use by those who would seek to survive and even thrive in the maelstrom that is the new digital economy.

Session 13B

## **Animal Studies IV: Animal Constructs**

*Alba Tomasula y Garcia.*

### **Between Possessions and Persons: The Humanization of Animals, the Mechanization of Beasts.**

Paradoxically, the more we think of animals in human terms, the more their lived experience resembles that of machines. Some of the same technologies that have granted animals a measure of their own inherent worth have simultaneously allowed for a language that gives us permission to use their bodies as we see fit. More than ever, scientific evidence suggests that animals have consciousness. Legal battles are even being waged to define apes as persons with some “human-like” rights. At the same time, though, animals are cast in the image of the machine even as machines are made more animal-like, further blurring the distinction: cows are employed as the organic parts in cybernetic milking systems; drones are made to look like hummingbirds; and “soft-bodied” robots are made to swim and maneuver like fish. As for animals themselves, pets, factory-farmed, and even “wild” beasts are subjected to such intense control that it is difficult to separate them from the artificial systems in which they are managed. This relationship is reflected in the language used to describe them: the animals made for meat are often referred to as “protein conversion units,” while some 90% of the animals bred for experimental purposes are not even legally defined as animals. Drawing on the work of early Cartesians, and more recent thinkers such as Donna Haraway, Cary Wolfe, and Timothy Pachirat, this paper will argue that animals are closer than ever to being the machines we’ve long believed, and perhaps have always wanted, them to be.

*Orkan Telhan.*

### **Fluid Narratives**

When most contemporary art, architecture, and design is shaped by what lies outside the living, it becomes a curious task to ask what aspects of culture today

are concerned with the fluidic space that lies within. As newly designed biologies—living, semi-living, and synthetic life—increasingly migrate from the imaginary to the everyday, it becomes even more important to think about their aesthetic, cultural, and political affordances as they began to circulate inside our bodies. In this paper, I present a series of artifacts—exotic medicines, designed plants, interior landscapes—and discuss what might be the culture of the fluidic in its multifaceted nature as narrative, material and form. I will articulate on a theory of the fluidic derived from Life Sciences and Synthetic Biology and compare it with the terminology of spheres, bubbles, and wombs that address the space of interiority through traditional manifestations of boundary, membrane, containment and confinement conditions rooted in theories of Sloterdijk and modern architecture. The paper will specifically focus on the agency of the fluidic drive, especially when there is a limited capacity to comprehend the conditions of the flow in visual terms—due scale, speed, or duration.

*Kathleen Duffy.*

### **The Science and Poetry behind the Fluid Motion of Starlings**

The murmuration or swarming behavior of birds, particularly of starlings, is one of the most beautiful of the many fluid motions that occur in nature. Frightened by the approach of the falcon, starlings defend themselves by swirling, pulsating, and soaring gracefully through the sky behaving at this moment like a single organism. Complexity scientists who study pattern formation in nature consider this type of group behavior an emergent property, a form of intelligence not present in the birds' ancestors. Poets have also been fascinated by the dynamic suppleness of the flock and have exploited its rich imagery. Recently, scientists have photographed swarming flocks of approximately 30,000 starlings. They have plotted the trajectories of the individual birds, correlated their motions, and have observed how the birds seem to follow a few simple “rules” that account for this coherent behavior. In this paper, I will present a brief overview of complexity theory, examine the fluid patterns of starlings through this lens, and explore the way poet from the Italian medieval Dante (*The Inferno*), through the British Romantic Samuel Taylor Coleridge (his notebooks), and to the contemporary naturalist Mary Oliver (“Starlings in Winter”) have employed the image of starling swarms. Finally, I consider how new scientific understanding of its dynamics provides even richer meaning to this fluid phenomenon.

## **Sensing Topologies : Embodied Process, Continuous Mutation, and the Figural in Contemporary Media, Dance, and Performance Art**

Chair: *Livia Monnet*

This panel examines an emerging topological ethico-aesthetic in the contemporary media arts, dance, and performance. Its contributions highlight the paradoxical forms and politics of topological media, or articulations of continuous matter « that allow us to relinquish a priori objects, subjects, egos, and yet constitute value and novelty » (Sha Xin Wei). Heather Warren-Crow's paper discusses artist Ian Cheng's installation *Metis Suns* (2014). The installation's CGI humanoids display an ever-changing behavior of infinite duration that challenges iconic visual illustrations of evolutionary development such as Rudolf Zallinger's « *March of Progress* » (1965). Stamatia Portanova suggests that diasporic multimedia choreographies such as Jobana Jeasingh's, as well as online reimaginings of popular music video dances such as the Gangnam style enact a fluid bodily time of continuous mutation that defies the standardized timing of capitalist production-consumption. Toni Pape argues that the recent photography and video works of artists Simon Menner, Liu Bolin and Lee Yong Baek imagine an aesthetic of stealth that subverts our culture's ubiquitous surveillance through fluid perception and through the subject's dissolving into the environment . Finally, Kiff Bamford proposes that Lyotard's notion of the figural allows us to envision the museum's recent attempts to capture the production of novelty in performance art (as seen in Stuart Brisley's eightieth birthday performance) as events that may render sensible the indeterminacy and productivity of desire. [...]

*Heather Warren-Crow.*

### **Extended Primitives: Ian Cheng's *Metis Suns* (2014)**

New York-based artist Ian Cheng's animations and accompanying texts explore movement and change across scale, bringing psychosocial dynamics to bear on ecological and cosmological imaginations (and vice versa). He recently turned away from computer animation as conventionally defined to produce computer simulations of potentially unlimited duration, usually exhibited as installations. The CGI objects and bodies that populate these simulations exhibit emergent behaviors and properties based on parameters established by the artist. Works

such as *Entropy Wrangler* (2013) and *Thousand Islands Thousand Laws* (2013) are “endless evolving live simulation[s]” that exist only in the present. My contribution to the panel will focus on *Metis Suns*, part of Cheng’s solo exhibition at the Triennale di Milano in March of 2014. The piece features crudely rendered CGI humanoids bumbling around in an aqueous primeval environment. They half stand up and then fall back into the steamy, shallow water; they aggregate and then disperse. One writhes face down; several are blown backwards by an unseen force. These uncoordinated activities suggest a failed—or rather, always failing—attempt to become bipedal. My presentation will discuss the unstable and ever-changing choreography of the piece as an engagement with narratives of evolutionary development crystallized in such visual texts as Rudolph Zallinger’s iconic scientific illustration “*March of Progress*” (1965) and Al Seckel and John Edwards’s *Darwin fish* (1983).

*Kiff Bamford.*

### **Freezing the Flow: Performance Art in the Museum**

In one of his last essays, and one of the few directly referring to film, Jean-François Lyotard adopts Deleuze’s discussion of ‘free indirect vision’, itself having flowed from Pasolini, to question the moment when the flow stops, is halted, confused and made to question those conventions of space-time which have allowed the body and its visual correlate, the eye, to function irrespective of that which ‘is immanent to visible reality’. The cessation is necessarily a temporary one, but is sufficient to indicate the persistent need for new films and new ideas: not the modish new demanded by consumer capitalism but the ungraspable desire which Lyotard has termed the figural. Now the museum wants to capture the new of performance art; is it simply to freeze its flow and seize the instant of its occurrence, or is it perhaps possible to maintain indeterminacy through the fluidity of the libidinal body, to open up the skin of the museum and let us in? This paper takes Lyotard’s fluid ideas to the eightieth birthday performance of Stuart Brisley and the currently homeless Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, searching for productive blockages.

*Stamatia Portanova.*

### **Mutations between stage and screen: aesthetic and cultural topologies of dance**

The idea of innovation as acceleration which characterises contemporary capitalism is tightly linked to a new aesthetic which dictates for art the same standardised timing as that followed by the algorithmic operations of the financial markets. This paper proposes a recuperation of bodily time as the time of an experiential singularity finding its own rhythm, an event which can be seen at work in different experiences of the dancing body. The recuperation will start by reflecting on the physical, geographic and cultural fluidity that characterises the multimedia works of Anglo-Indian choreographer Shobana Jeasingh, and by investigating how her performances enact a ‘topological,’ continuous bodily mutation in time and space, between traditional and contemporary forms, between Western and Eastern rhythms. The discussion will then open up the concept of rhythmic mutation to its wider social implications, wondering what happens when the rhythm of a dance spreads itself beyond the stage, as an infectious bacillus, or as the tendency to follow a pattern of imitable steps. The analysis will thus focus on the digitalization of some of the most popular dances produced by the contemporary music, film and entertainment industries (from M. Jackson's Moonwalk to the Gangnam Style), in order to reveal how the fluid diaspora of these digitally generated movements defies the capitalist repetition of timed activities of production and consumption, by inciting a nomadism of steps differently-timed across various bodies and cultures.

*Toni Pape.*

### **The Aesthetics of Stealth: Fluid Perception in the Times of ‘Liquid Surveillance’**

This paper proposes an analysis of stealth aesthetics in contemporary art. Foregrounding aesthetic concerns, I will engage with contemporary theories of ‘liquid surveillance’ to work towards a notion of fluid perception. Contemporary notions of surveillance insist on the continuous localization of individuals according to multiple, ever-changing social coordinates, leading to “the reduction of the body to data” (Lyon 2010: 325). It seems, however, that contemporary art thinks surveillance through the body and its different modes of appearance. Looking at photography and video art by Simon Menner, Liu Bolin, and Lee Yong Baek, I will show that constant surveillance leads to the body’s movement and perception in the mode of stealth. This attempt to remain imperceptible requires a perception that is fluid, i.e. able to move with the surroundings and dissolve into a perceptual ecology. Fluid perception is highly relational and modifiable; it

responds to surveillance through a relative desubjectivation of the individual into the environment. In the artworks by Menner, Bolin and Lee, this dynamic manifests itself in a play of in/visibilities, in a lingering at the threshold of the perceptible. Lyon, David. "Liquid Surveillance: The Contribution of Zygmunt Bauman to Surveillance Studies." *International Political Sociology* 4 (2010): 325–338.

Session 13D

### **Language: Charting Sex and Science**

*Patrick Keilty.*

#### **Desire by Design**

This essay considers how our embodied engagements with labyrinthine qualities of database design – including algorithms, data modeling, and visual displays – mediate pornographic images and structure sexual desire. Drawing on a range of databases of sexual representation (e.g. xtube, blog posts, pornotube), this essay examines how database design occasions embodied habits and mechanical rhythms when browsing pornography that pull viewers into a trancelike flow in which daily worries, social demands, and even bodily awareness fades away. The process of browsing pornography online exists under the aegis of getting what we want, but in excess of it. Floods of images and an enormous range of selection seem to promise satisfaction. To imagine the goal is to project into a moment of perfect satisfaction: obtaining the perfect image, one completely adequate to our desire. However, nothing can compare to an imagined perfect image. Desire's *raison d'être* is not to rationalize its goal, to find full satisfaction, but to reproduce itself as desire (Žižek 1997, p. 39). Thus, satisfaction is illusive. We continue to browse, forgoing the pleasures of the known for the pleasures of the unknown. We constantly shift to new images, creating a process of browsing in which pleasure derives from the habitual and repetitious delay and deferral of satisfaction, mediated by labyrinthine database design. Within this flow, viewers "lose" themselves in the process of browsing online, a form of unruly or excessive desire that blurs the line between human and machine, compulsion and control.

*John Stadler.*



### **Conceptual Writing: Deferral and Flux in Vito Acconci's Performance of Language**

Vito Acconci has typically been analyzed through the discourse of performance, but he additionally deserves attention for his extensive use of open systems of language as a means producing meaning. This paper examines the deferral and flux of language in two of Acconci's works, the first an encoded procedural poem and the second a risky rendezvous. In the case of the first, the context was literary, and in the latter, artistic, but as I hope to show, distinctions like these have more fluid boundaries than we might initially suspect. The poem gives a series of procedures for the reader to decode an advertisement with the aid of a 1966 edition of Webster's dictionary. It insists upon nontrivial effort, the navigation of embedded errors, ambivalences, and confusions. As such, it highlights Acconci's interrogation into the fixity of language by pointing to a system that itself was fraught with inconsistency and contingency. In turning to the art-context, a similar reliance on an open system of language can be seen at play in Acconci's "Untitled Project for Pier 17," which compelled gallery goers to attend a nightly performance where he promised to reveal secrets to anyone brave enough to trek to the derelict pier. The documents that conceptualized, provoked, and now record the project, however, also present counter-texts and contradictions that we must account for forty years later. In both of these projects, Acconci destabilizes and critiques the respective contexts, mediums, and semiotics at hand, honoring deferral and flux above fixity.

*Chris Goldsmith.*

### **Pornolexicography: Sex and Language in Johnson's *Dictionary* and Sade's *120 Days of Sodom***

Sex and language are fluid: given shape by the restrictions placed on them, but also eroding and overflowing their boundaries. They are intricately linked as sites of control and resistance. This paper argues that tracing the outlines of an Enlightenment pornolexicography will further nuance our understanding of the boundaries of acceptable linguistic and sexual practice in the 18th century. This paper therefore reads Sade's *120 Days* as a reference work and Johnson's *Dictionary* as erotica—that is, it reads each as the sort of text it declares itself not to be. In the Preface to his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Johnson writes that the lexicographer's task is cultivation: he 'toils' to "remove rubbish and clear obstructions," tending the language in order

to preserve and prolong its earlier state of undefiled perfection.

The *Dictionary* is, according to its compiler, an attempt to regulate and control an otherwise dangerously fecund and indiscriminate tongue. But in practice it is something else, containing as it does a number of “obsolete,” “low,” “vulgar,” and “cant” words; the lexicographer allows the language to remain defiled. Sade's *120 Days* is structured, like the *Dictionary*, as a list: 600 perverse sexual “passions” are equally distributed under four major headings. But its ‘preface’ describes proliferation instead of pruning: it is the minute differences between two sexual acts that contain “precisely that refinement ... which characterizes and distinguishes the kind of libertinage wherewith we are here involved.” The text works against its stated principle, however: with only 600 slots to fill, multiple variations on the same act are limited, and the ‘refinement’ necessary to pleasure is foreclosed. Indeed, where the lists are most in line with Sade’s theory of libertinage, they are the most monotonous.

*Olga Menagarishvili.*

### **Dictionaries of Science: An Attempt to Register the Fluidity of Scientific Language**

Language is fluid because the vocabulary is constantly changing influencing our decisions about which words to use as well as how and when to use them.

Dictionaries can be viewed as books that attempt to “freeze” that fluidity and provide a description of vocabulary at a certain point in time. In this sense, even though each separate dictionary edition stabilizes the vocabulary by presenting it as something fixed, a dictionary that has gone through several editions demonstrates the fluidity of language by providing new words or omitting them. Studying dictionaries of science from this perspective is necessary for the discussion of the fluidity of scientific language in particular. The purpose of this study will be to examine how the first dictionary of science that appeared in English (“Lexicon Technicum” by John Harris) and one of the most recent dictionaries of science published in English (“McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms”) register the fluidity of scientific language. An extended version of Latour’s model of knowledge accumulation in combination with lexicographic archeology will be used. The results will demonstrate how the fluidity of scientific language has been reflected in dictionaries of science.

References Harris, John. *Lexicon Technicum: or, an Universal English Dictionary of Arts and Sciences: Explaining Not Only the Terms of Art, but the Arts*

Themselves. London, 1704. McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms. 6th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 2003.

Session 13E

## **Boundary Overflow and Financial Rationality**

Chair: *Jennifer Gradecki*

The idea of fluidity is intrinsic to economies. This is observable in the language used when financial markets seek 'liquidity' or when 'frozen' markets precede a crash. A fluidity of ideas is also important to contemporary finance where ideas and assets from fields outside of finance are easily absorbed into the flow demanded by the intensely dynamic nature of global economics. Theories from sociology, mathematics, computer science, and statistical observations from climate science have all become intrinsic to the functioning of transnational banks. This panel will address the nuances and effects of fluidity in finance. Jennifer Gradecki will discuss the increasing fluidity of the boundaries between the markets of art and finance, and the resulting translation of financial practices into the art market, through a case study of art collector and hedge fund manager Steven A. Cohen. Derek Curry will examine how ideas about information freedom, appropriated from hacker culture, were used to create liquidity within the stock market in the case of an electronic exchange called Island. Tero Karppi's paper co-authored with Kate Crawford maps the intersection of algorithmic trading and social media through an analysis of an event where a tweet about a terrorist strike brought the S&P 500 index down causing a sudden financial flash crash. And Nicholas Knouf will critique the accelerationist program by focusing on the fluid activities of humans and machines in high frequency trading.

*Jennifer Gradecki.*

### **Insider Information in the Markets of Art and Finance: A Case Study of Steven Cohen**

The art market is changing, as the importance of financial markets, institutions and individuals involved in its functioning increase. The implications of this financialization have yet to be fully understood. By localizing an analysis of markets within the behaviors of, and narratives surrounding art collector and hedge fund manager Steven A. Cohen, this case study begins an examination of the ways in which the financial and art markets function and interrelate. An

analysis of Cohen's art trading reveals that it closely resembles that of his securities trading. He treats art as an asset class for investment: he uses aggressive trading tactics, hedges his bets by diversifying his portfolio, and increases the perceived value of his assets by placing them in legitimating institutions. Correspondingly, Cohen's collecting strategies tend to increase the price of artists. Central to how Cohen operates in both markets are expert networks, which trade in expertise and inside information, and allow collectors to buy access to the most sought after artworks. By translating financial practices into the art market, Cohen and other financiers are having the effect of increasing the financialization of the art market.

*Derek Curry.*

### **If-Then Statements in Financial Ideologies**

This paper will examine how values appropriated from hacker culture were used to create liquidity within the stock market in the case of an electronic exchange called Island. Unlike other electronic exchanges, a single person, Josh Levine, programmed Island. Levine's ideas for how markets should function were coded directly into the functioning of the exchange. Having no background in economics, Levine's ideas stemmed from hacker culture and the time he spent working for Datek Online, a company famous for exploiting the network structure of Nasdaq's automated system to trade profitably against market-makers, a tactic that came to be known as SOES banditry. However, when the platform Levine built was sold to Nasdaq, minor changes in the code resulted in dramatic changes in who is favored in market transactions. I will argue that if Island's code represents Levine's ideology, it is best described as an "if-then" control flow statement where a particular section of code is executed only if a statement evaluates to "true."

*Kate Crawford; Tero Karppi.*

### **Prediction as production: The @AP Twitter hack and the media ecology of financial algorithms**

A tweet "@AP: Breaking: Two Explosions in the White House and Barack Obama is injured" sent from a hacked Associated Press Twitter account caused a financial flash crash wiping out \$136.5bn of the S&P 500 index's value. In this paper co-authored by Tero Karppi and Kate Crawford, the above mentioned event will be used as an example to show how computational processes and interrelated

ultrafast systems operating beyond human response time are currently defining and determining the course of our culture. The paper maps theoretical outlines for an ecology of financial algorithms (Johnson et al 2013), which has a particular epistemology based on affective contagions (Sampson 2012) and speculative pragmatism (Massumi 2005) rather than ideas of truth, belief or meaning.

*Nicholas Knouf.*

### **Accelerationism and the Fluidity of Finance**

The concept of "accelerationism" has recently entered into critical thought as a rethinking of the development of capital. Accelerationism suggests that rather than trying to slow down or detourn capitalist processes, one should move to accelerate their development, thereby hastening the downfall of capitalism through the exploitation of capitalism's internal contradictions. While latent in the works of Marx and Engels, and supported by suggestive comments by Lyotard and Deleuze, theorists have now begun to think of accelerationism as a viable strategy. Much debate has explored exactly what an accelerationist program would look like, with some suggesting that certain forms of actually-existing capitalism, such as digital rights management and intellectual property regimes, ultimately arrest the forward motion of capitalism. While provocative, I will argue that accelerationism is fundamentally flawed due to the fluidity of capital, namely the fact that capital is always a socio-technical assemblage of humans and machines. As such, accelerationism will fail due to unpredictable events that occur in even the most carefully-designed system. Looking to the realm of finance, and especially the practices of high frequency trading, I will critique the teleological tendency that underlies accelerationist thought, showing instead that chaotic, fluid actions are at the heart of contemporary modes of technological development, and suggest instead that any accelerationist program needs to take into account these fluid activities of bodies and machines.

Session 13F

### **Fluid and Science in Literature Written in Spanish**

Chair: *Carlos Gámez*

The panel will address the following questions: Fluid and digital media in Spanish contemporary literature, environmentalism in Spanish literature, and sciences studies and its influence in literatura written in Spanish, Latin American or Peninsular, but contemporary.

*Maria O'Connell.*

### **Quantum Uncertainty and the Search for la Verdad Verdadera in Jorge Volpi's In Search of Klingsor**

Volpi's novel focuses on the problems surrounding the development of quantum physics, the physicists' roles in World War II, and the way that quantum physics' relationship with consciousness has affected the way reality works. Volpi never mentions religion as a motivating force, but the principles behind quantum physics and its enigmas are always present. The preface to the book sets up an unreliable narrator, Professor Gustav Links, who is writing, as we learn later, from a rest home where he is living his final days. He says that he wants to tell his story, or "My century. My version of how fate has ruled the world, and of how we men of science try in vain to domesticate its fury" (18). Volpi uses this unreliable narrator to consider a world that contains many different levels of possibilities and reality. His vision of reality is not informed by the ideas of classical physics but conceived in a world that functions according to quantum rules and so admits the reader to a very realistic world but which does not conform to simple laws of cause and effect. The quantum reality of Volpi depends on a point of view in which "the nature and properties of component parts can only be determined from their 'role'—the forming pattern of the inseparable web of relations—within the whole" (Karakostas 53). In such a world, outcomes can never be predicted and it is impossible to arrive at la verdad verdadera, the true truth.

*Carlos Gámez.*

### **Traces of Fluidity in Spanish "Mutantes": Agustín Fdez Mallo and Germán Sierra**

In the third novel in his Proyecto Nocilla trilogy, *Nocilla Lab* (2009), Agustín Fernández Mallo imagines a posthuman society where technological or manufactured elements completely invade the environment. In Germán Sierra's novel, *Efectos secundarios* (2000)—a thriller about the power of scientific corporations in contemporary societies—technology functions as a superstructure invading the human world. In Sierra's work, the city (something enormous, a conurbation) is metaphorically presented as a biological creature—a structure capable of invading human environments by force. In the first case, technology flows around the environment in a kind of superposition. In the second, the city

acquires a liquid nature in analogy with financial capital. These two samples of narratives, describing similar postindustrial societies, emerge from the same post-humanist and postmodern perspectives—perspectives that are very new in Spanish Peninsular literature. By analyzing these works from the framework of poststructuralism, environmentalism and ecological studies, I will demonstrate that both authors' narrative strategies and general poetics are influenced by the concept of fluidity.

Session 13G

### **Entropic Flows: Words, Bodies, and Landscapes in Poe, McCarthy, and Smithson**

Chair: *Matthew Taylor*

This panel examines how the concepts of chaos, entropy, and organization influenced three artists, whose works call attention to the primal forces that unceasingly shape human destinies. From the fiction of Edgar Allan Poe and Cormac McCarthy to the land art of Robert Smithson, these works foreground the ways in which physical encounters with waterfalls and floodplains, rivers and oceans, blood and pus advance deeply metaphysical narratives. Doubly generative and destructive, the works studied explore how life, death and art often interpenetrate, defying our desire for the predictable passing of time but also opening the possibility for new worlds of experience.

*Kelly Bezio.*

#### **Navigating Edgar Allan Poe's Entropic Corpus**

The (deliberately) mixed metaphor of this paper's title references fluids, flesh, and literary form in order to track Poe's own preoccupation with taking the measure of disorder. In bodies, across bodies of water, and through his own collected body of works, I argue, he traced the signs of uncertainty and turned their pursuit into a narrative flow recognizable as peculiarly Poe. Entropy in his oeuvre has attracted some scholarly attention, most notably in regards to "The Masque of the Red Death" (1842). This paper extends this work by suggesting that reading for fluid provides a better understanding of Poe's artistic endeavors in the 1840s--the very decade in which William Thomson was discovering the second law of thermodynamics. As an example of Poe's entropic aesthetic, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (1845) forms of the basis of my analysis. A



narrative tending toward liquidity, this story relates a mesmerist's suspension of a man--whose name translates to "valley of the sea"--in a hypnotic state at the moment of death. The cause of Valdemar's demise is none other than the "white death" or tuberculosis, a disease whose more dramatic symptoms include the expectoration of liquefied lung tissue. I will consider how the transition from solid to liquid is enacted symbolically, clinically, and literarily within the story. This maneuver allows Poe to contain, study, and resolve states of uncertainty, creating a perfect experiment in equilibrium repeated endlessly with each reader's engagement with the text.

*Sean McAlister.*

### **Apocalyptic Poe**

Edgar Allan Poe's writings abound in entropic images of the disintegration of identity, the diffusion of matter, and even the ultimate heat death of the universe. Significantly, however, these images of dissolution are inevitably offset by the possibility of narrating the catastrophe. In both "Mesmeric Revelation" (1844) and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (1845), for example, death is held in a state of suspension just long enough for its "facts" to emerge and be recorded. In "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion" (1839), the Earth's recent fiery apocalypse is coolly described by one human-cum-angel to another, as they float through the ether. I will nuance critical interpretations of Poe's impossible narrators by attending to the theory of authorship implicit in Poe's seemingly impossible first-hand accounts of the dissolution--and condensation--of matter. I argue that Poe constructs the author of genius as a figure of negative entropy, capable of combating dissolution of matter with a "praeternatural" insight into causality's complexities. In "The Power of Words" (1845), another pair of post-apocalyptic angel figures float above a new planet, formed as the accidental consequence of one angel's speech act performed centuries before. I read "The Power of Words" as Poe's parable for writing in mass culture, wherein the seemingly inevitable dissolution of ideas, identities, and bodies into an undifferentiated mass is resisted through rare negentropic acts of critical insight and authorial power that promise, in Norbert Wiener's words, "a temporary and local reversal of the normal direction of entropy."

*Oren Abeles.*

### **Cormac McCarthy's Negentropic Current: Water, Narrative, The Road and the Word**

This presentation gives a fluid, thermodynamic reading of McCarthy's most intimate and optimistic novel. Arguing that *The Road's* narrative current flows downstream--from Appalachian waterfalls, down to the Carolina floodplain and onto the coast--the paper also highlights the novel's counter-current of negative entropy, a dynamic of persistent life and design amidst an otherwise dark world verging on heat death. The story follows a nameless father and son traveling to the ocean with the false hope that there might remain a land apart from burned-out countryside. They find no such oasis, but their chaotic journey affords chance encounters with the small redoubts of life that remain, what the father calls "being lucky"-- improbable, random, swirling eddies of organization in an otherwise entropic landscape. The themes are not new for McCarthy, whose work often considers issues of ecological balance, wilderness and order, chaos, chance and complexity. Scholars have considered this before, both by studying his friendships with prominent physicists and systems theorists at the Santa Fe Institute, and by examining similar themes in earlier works like *Blood Meridian* and *No Country for Old Men*. This presentation builds upon that scholarship, finding McCarthy's previous novels developing themes that *The Road's* stark landscape brings into sharp relief. With particular attention to the symbolic and philosophical deployment of fluids and flows, the presentation makes the case that McCarthy's most mature work continues the bleak nihilism of his earlier narratives, but now juxtaposed with an even more vital belief in survival, luck and, ultimately, life.

*John Hatch.*

### **The Un-Damming of Time in the Entropic Landscapes of Robert Smithson**

The flow of time and nature's inevitable entropic progress fascinated landscape artist Robert Smithson who famously declared that Western civilization had lost its sense of death, that we falsely believed that the things we built could achieve our immortality. By 1966 the focus of Smithson's work was to reveal the entropic processes that surround us, highlighting the actions of time on the world and our constructed reality. Strangely enough, he illustrated this in processes requiring long time spans and with objects one would least expect the idea of fluidity to play a factor, but for Smithson, such geological scale "flows" were critical to

changing our awareness of time. His cascades of rock and dirt, mud slides, glue pourings, the shifting water and salination levels of “dead lakes”, or fluvial action on glass all served to disrupt temporal boundaries, to undermine the possibility of its containment. Arriving at this vision of change, Smithson drew upon a number of scientific sources, like P. W. Bridgman’s *The Nature of Thermodynamics*, which he wove together with artistic and philosophical works ranging from the writings of Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss to the work of such literary figures as Samuel Beckett, Edgar Allan Poe, Jorge Luis Borges, and Alain Robbe-Grillet, as well as natural history museums, science fiction, and 19th-century travelogues. All provided a vital impetus to bringing rethinking our traditional perception of temporal culture, allowing us to rejoin the flow of time toward its inevitable end.

Session 13H

### **Out of Our Minds: Telepathy and the Limits of Control in Late-19th/20th-Century Literature and Film**

Chair: *John Bruni*

When addressing the idea of telepathy, Freud famously commented: “I have no opinion on the matter and know nothing about it.” What is it about this idea that evoked—and continues to evoke—such a response? Our panel proposes that a crucial reason is the anxiety over the loss of control, the disruption of a guiding consciousness—where the psychic landscape becomes contested ground. From evolution to second-order systems theory, we chart how scientific thinking guides literary and cinematic images of telepathic communication and conflict. Patrick B. Sharp starts our inquiry by exploring how, following Darwin, women authors, in early-period pulp science fiction, depict the fear of an evolutionary schema of psychic development parasited by emergent technologies, such as radio and television. Next, Craig McConnell looks at Philip K. Dick’s amplifying concerns about psychic invasion (for instance, in *A Scanner Darkly*) to reexamine questions about agency and free will. Lastly, John Bruni traces how telepathic communication, in John Cassavetes’s film *Opening Night*, challenges the second-order systems concept of autonomous psychic and social systems. What we find particularly interesting is how telepathy in all these works serves as a bad conscience, if you will, to techno-scientific fantasies of liberation. We intend to further question such fantasies by foregrounding messy bodies, unrepressed

feelings, and the influence of “other” minds—where we have no recourse to a safe mental distance from the fray.

*Patrick B. Sharp.*

### **Evolutionary Monstrosities: Telepathy and Mind Control in Early Women’s SF**

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, science fiction authors wrestled with the implications of Charles Darwin’s work. Darwin emphasized the embodied evolution of the mind and its relationship to technology. In the early days of pulp SF, women authors engaged with this concept of the evolved brain and emphasized both the revolutionary possibilities and dangers of telepathy. An early example of this, Lilith Lorraine’s “The Brain of the Planet” (1929) depicts a professor who uses a telepathic transmitter to force a socialist revolution. While the resulting utopia is represented in earnest, Lorraine shows a common fear of how new technologies—such as radio and television—could be used to invade people’s homes and control their minds. Claire Winger Harris’s “The Evolutionary Monstrosity” expresses a much darker vision of mind control: a working-class scientist who discovers the secret of accelerated evolution turns himself into a pulsing brain capable of controlling people, and uses his power to force the woman he fancies into a relationship. While pulpy fun, the stories of these authors were but two of many written by women who engaged with these evolutionary narratives. Evolution posed many possibilities for “liberation” in such stories, but these women SF writers tended to be much more cautious than earlier feminist writers such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman. At the same time, they contributed to the genre’s investigation of embodied cognition, rejecting the patriarchal power inherent in the Cartesian dualism embraced by other SF writers.

*Craig McConnell.*

### **Mind Control and Minds out of Control in the Worlds of Philip K. Dick**

Over the course of his writing career, Philip K. Dick wrote a variety of short stories and novels that posed challenging questions about human and machine minds. In early works like “The Minority Report”, minds are explicitly controlled by government interests. Stories at the apex of his career such as “We Can Remember it for you Wholesale” and “Electric Ant” posit worlds where control of

the mind is at least partly in the hands of the mind itself. Longer works like *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *Scanner Darkly* are built on worlds where control is elusive. These stories have been variously read as parables about the slippery grasp we have on reality, as a reflection of Dick's own mental health, and as parables about the ethics of our interactions with other intellects. In this paper, I will explore their function as inquiries into the troublesome dynamics of agency and free will.

*John Bruni.*

### **The Next Voice You Hear: Telepathic Communication, Gender, and Performance in John Cassavetes's *Opening Night***

In the film *Opening Night* (1977), Myrtle Gordon, the star of a play about an aging woman, sees the apparition of a girl who was earlier killed in front of the theatre during rehearsal. This ghost-image crystallizes the conflict between different modes of performance—between Myrtle's fluid acting (that is open to new worlds of experience) and a more restrictive and controlled style insisted upon by the male director, female writer, and other actors. As Cassavetes remarked, the phantom signifies Myrtle's female identity; a male actor would “dream of a dead body or his own demise.” This paper focuses on how Myrtle's attempts to telepathically communicate with the girl (in two lengthy scenes) reflects on how her performance stages identity as a product of the contingent—and temporal—relations between psychic and social systems. In the film, (re-)thinking gender challenges the idea, developed by second-order systems theory, that psychic and social systems remain separate. At the same time, I suggest, the film engages with the paradoxical logic that governs the possibility for communication—that is, how the production of meaning is located both within and outside “self-closure”: Myrtle's psychic un-raveling on- and off-stage shapes the final scene (improvised in the play, but scripted in the film) that re-enters performance (as play) into the observation of performance (the edited film).

Session 13I

### **Across Fluid Borders of Health and Illness: Bringing Diaspora Studies to the Health Humanities**

Chair: *Rebecca Tsevat*

What can health humanities curricula and scholarship gain by including narratives written about and from the diaspora? In this panel, three graduates of

the Master's of Science in Narrative Medicine Program at Columbia University will discuss a collaborative paper that addresses points of convergence between experiences of illness and diasporic unsettlement in several literary texts. Rebecca Tsevat's section reflects how the readerly experience of diasporic literature parallels the disorienting and "unhomely" experience of illness. Kevin Gutierrez's section addresses how the hospital space figures as a temporally liminal space that resembles the kind of liminality characteristic of diasporic fictions. Anoushka Sinha's section discusses how cartography, as an organizing and reductionist enterprise, acts upon diasporic populations just as biomedicine organizes and reduces the physical body of the patient. Through this panel, we will demonstrate that the study of diasporic fictions can make patent the discomfiting sense of unsettlement that patients experience as they navigate the temporal dislocations within hospital spaces and the unfamiliar landscapes of their own bodies. We will also argue that narratives do not have to be stable, confined homes for those who either read or inhabit them, and therein provide a more porous, fluid, and inclusive model for narrative itself in the classroom and clinic.

*Rebecca Tsevat.*

### **Narrative Unhomeliness and Readerly Disorientation in Diasporic Fiction**

Sociologist Arthur Frank writes that "serious illness is a loss of the 'destination and map' that had previously guided the ill person's life." This paper will examine a few texts that feature characters whose illnesses or disabling conditions uproot them from their surroundings and set them adrift in time and space. These characters are not the only ones who are "unhomed," however; the authors construct their respective texts such that readers are impelled to meander through them as though they were labyrinths, rather than comfortable domestic spaces with clearly defined walls and boundaries. The fluidity of the narratives forces readers into a kind of diasporic, and often physically unsettling, state resembling but not identical to those they read about. This experience of "narrative unhomeliness" can help those who find themselves in unstable, uncomfortable places both within and outside the confines of their own bodies—if not completely grounding them, then at least providing some kind of orienting compass.

*Kevin Gutierrez.*

### **Heterochrony: Hospital Space as Borderland**

Street and Coleman frame the hospital space as a “heterotopia,” a term that Michel Foucault coined to identify spaces in which completely utopian or dystopian perceptions of society are simultaneously represented and destabilized, which revealed and articulated the inherent stratification and order that operate and conflict with one another within the hospital space. Although they successfully argue that the hospital space is a contested and permeable space to the rest of the space of society, they fail to address the temporal aspects of the hospital, an essential characteristic of the heterotopia that Foucault addresses in his fourth principle: “Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time – which is to say that they open what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies.” This section will address the heterochrony of the hospital and then compare it to the heterochrony that figures within several literary works. This will demonstrate that the hospital space is a fluid and temporally liminal space within which both the practitioner and the patient operate; therefore, the study of diasporic fictions offers a much-needed articulation of what it means to reside in such a temporal borderland.

*Anoushka Sinha.*

### **Cartographies of the Body**

Cartography is one means by which space is named and organized. Maps are useful tools for delineating place, yet they have the capacity to reduce the history of an area and its people to a single story. In the post-partition South Asia depicted in Manto’s “Toba Tek Singh,” the inmates of a mental asylum ask a startlingly sane question: “how was it possible that only a short while ago they had been in India when they had not moved from the asylum at all?” The inmates feel unhomed without even physically migrating due to their need to orient their identities to an unfamiliar, fluid map. Similarly, the experience of illness can be disorienting in part because one is forced to re-conceive one’s identity according to the lines imposed by healthcare and the cartographical divisions enacted on the body itself, all the while feeling tied to a memory replete with experiences and emotions that are nullified by the maps that often comprise the “single story” recorded by biomedicine.



**Wrap-up Session - Sun After Session 13**

Wrap-up Session