



‘POSTHUMAN(IST) ALTERITIES’

POSTHUMANISM RESEARCH NETWORK

TWO-DAY WORKSHOP

MARCH 30–31, 2019

SB107

**WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY
WATERLOO, ONTARIO, CANADA**

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE SUPPORT OF THE FOLLOWING FOR MAKING THE WORKSHOP POSSIBLE: SSHRC; THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM; WLU FACULTY OF ARTS; WLU OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES; WLU DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY; WLU DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND FILM STUDIES; WLU DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada 



SATURDAY, MARCH 30

9:30 – 11:00

**OPENING REMARKS – SB107 (THE SCHLEGEL BUILDING, WLU CAMPUS)
DR. RUSSELL KILBOURN (ENGLISH AND FILM STUDIES, WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY)**

THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE ARE ON THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES OF THE NEUTRAL, ANISHNABE, AND HAUDENOSAUNEE PEOPLES.

SESSION 1

- 1. ANNA MIRZAYAN (UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN): "THINGS SUCK EVERYWHERE: EXTRACTIVE CAPITALISM AND DE-POSTHUMANISM"**
- 2. CHRISTINE DAIGLE (BROCK UNIVERSITY): "JE EST UN AUTRE: COLLECTIVE MATERIAL AGENCY"**
- 3. SEAN BRAUNE (BROCK UNIVERSITY): "BEING ALWAYS ARRIVES AT ITS DESTINATION"**

11:00 – 11:15 COFFEE BREAK

11:15 – 12:45

SESSION 2

- 1. CARLY CIUFO (MCMASTER UNIVERSITY): "OF REMEMBRANCE AND (HUMAN) RIGHTS? MUSEOLOGICAL LEGACIES OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE IN LIVERPOOL"**
- 2. SASCHA PRIEWE (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO; ROM): "TOWARDS A POSTHUMANIST MUSEOLOGY"**
- 3. MITCH GOLDSMITH (BROCK UNIVERSITY): "QUEERING OUR RELATIONS WITH ANIMALS: AN EXPLORATION OF MULTISPECIES SEXUALITY BEYOND THE LABORATORY"**

**12:45 – 2:00 LUNCH BREAK
VERITAS CAFÉ (WLU CAMPUS)**

2:00 – 3:30

SESSION 3

- 1. MATTHEW PASCUCCI (ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY): "WE HAVE NEVER BEEN CAPITALIST"**
- 2. NANDITA BISWAS-MELLAMPY (WESTERN UNIVERSITY): "HUMANS 'OUT-OF-THE-LOOP': AI AND THE FUTURE OF GOVERNANCE"**
- 3. DAVID FANCY (BROCK UNIVERSITY): "VIBRATORY CAPITAL, OR: THE FUTURE IS ALREADY HERE"**

3:30 – 3:45 COFFEE BREAK

3:45 – 4:45

SESSION 4

- 1. DEBRA HARWOOD (BROCK UNIVERSITY) AND JAIME BARRATT (MA STUDENT, BROCK UNIVERSITY): “THE ORANGE GOPRO CAMERA & THE CHILDREN WHO WEAR THEM IN THE WOODS”**
- 2. HAYLEY MALOUIN (INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR): “LADIES, GENTLEMEN, AND THE REST OF US”: CIRCUS AMOK, REVOLUTIONARY SELFHOOD, AND GROTESQUE SINGULARITY”**

5:00 -

KEYNOTE: PROFESSOR PATRICIA MACCORMACK (ANGLIA-RUSKIN, UK)

TITLE: “WITHER IDENTITY?”

7:00-10:00

CELEBRATORY DINNER

PROOF RESTAURANT

DELTA HOTEL, 110 ERB ST. WEST, WATERLOO



SUNDAY, MARCH 31

9:00 – 10:30

SESSION 5 – SB107

1. PRISCILLA MCGREER (ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY): “BEING HUMAN IN A POSTHUMAN WORLD”
2. ZOË LAKS (UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA): “OBJECTS WITH MEMORIES: SENSING AND SCULPTING A LIVING WORLD THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA”
3. MICKEY VALLEE (ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY): “THE VIBRATIONAL ENERGY OF PERIPHERAL MEDIA”

10:30 – 10:45 COFFEE BREAK

10:45 – 12:15

SESSION 6 – SB107

1. TERRANCE McDONALD (BROCK UNIVERSITY): "MOVING IMAGES OF PAIN: NOTES TOWARDS READING FORMS"
2. CHELSEA BIRKS (UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA): “LOVING NATURE: EROS AND AGAPE IN *GRIZZLY MAN* AND *KONELĪNE: OUR LAND BEAUTIFUL*”
3. JULIA EMPEY (WLU ENGLISH AND FILM STUDIES): "NOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS": POSTHUMANISM AND LATE CAPITALISM IN *ALTERED CARBON*

12:15 – 1:30 LUNCH BREAK

1:30 – 3:00

SESSION 7 – SB107

4. TRACY McDONALD (McMASTER UNIVERSITY): “ANIMALS LOOK BACK: ARTISTIC REPRESENTATION AND A REAL EXISTING ANIMAL”
5. TIZIANA GALLO (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO): “LEAVE NO ROCK UNTURNED: A POSTHUMANIST GAZE ON STONE TOOLS”
6. CRAIG CIPOLLA (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, ASSOCIATE CURATOR, NORTH AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY, ROM): “POSTHUMAN ALTERITIES IN ARCHAEOLOGY”

3:00 – 3:15 COFFEE BREAK

3:15 – 4:15

SESSION 8 – SB107

4. LIAM WILBY (UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS): “IMAGINING A POSTCOLONIAL POSTHUMANISM IN THE WORK OF NALO HOPKINSON”

5. AMELIA DEFALCO (UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS): “DISPOSABLE CREATURES AND BODIES THAT MATTER IN THE AGE OF ROBOTICS AND BIOTECHNOLOGY”

4:15 –

CLOSING REMARKS



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE ORGANIZERS WOULD LIKE TO THANK:

**THE WLU FACULTY OF ARTS; THE ROBERT LANGEN ART GALLERY; THE WLU LIBRARY;
WLU OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES; WLU CONFERENCE SERVICES; VERITAS CAFÉ**

PRN Workshop 2019—List of Abstracts

Birks, Chelsea (University of British Columbia)

Chelsea Birks received her PhD from the University of Glasgow and currently teaches at the University of British Columbia. Her research focuses on film philosophy and conceptions of nature in contemporary global cinema. Her upcoming monograph, *Limit Cinema: Transgression and the Nonhuman in Contemporary Global Film*, will be published as part of Bloomsbury's "Thinking Cinema" series in early 2020. She won the 2017 SCMS Student Writing Award and has been published in *Cinema Journal*, *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, and *Journal of Gender Studies*.

"Loving Nature: Eros and Agape in *Grizzly Man* and *Konelīne: Our Land Beautiful*"

A number of recent films have framed the solution to our current ecological crisis in terms of love. *Bee Movie* (2007), *Avatar* (2009), and *The Mermaid* (2016), for example, suggest that ecological catastrophe can be averted through heterosexual romance between human and nonhuman characters. Is love a useful way of thinking about the relationship between humans and nature? How might love be useful for posthumanism? And is romantic love the only model for loving nature? This presentation will explore two ways that the idea of "loving nature" has been theorized, looking in particular at the debate between *eros* (preferential romantic love) and *agape* (divine love) as potential models for how humans should feel about the natural world. Rather than preferring one kind of love over the other, I will argue that love for nature is predicated on the indeterminacy between *eros* and *agape* – in other words, on uncertain distinctions between subjectivity and objectivity. Two films will help me explain what this indeterminacy looks like: Werner Herzog's *Grizzly Man* (2005) and Nettie Wild's *Konelīne: Our Land Beautiful* (2016). These films demonstrate that love for nature will always be imperfect, since it always involves subjective desire and projection. But if posthumanism is in part a recognition of the flaws and limitations of the human, then love might be a useful way of thinking through – or potentially beyond – our partial modes of access to objective reality. Further, *Grizzly Man* and *Konelīne* show that love can form the basis of a more ethical relationship with nature.

Braune, Sean (Brock University)

Sean Braune's first book of philosophy, *Language Parasites: Of Phorontology*, appeared in 2017 from Punctum Books. His theoretical work has been published in *Postmodern Culture*, *Journal of Modern Literature*, *Canadian Literature*, *symplokē*, and elsewhere. Between 2012-2014, he guest lectured on experimental writing and storytelling at Yale University. He is currently a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow at Brock University.

"Being always arrives at its destination"

In 1966, Jacques Lacan argued in *Écrits*: "c'est qu'une lettre arrive toujours à destination" (41), or "the letter always arrives at its destination." In this paper, I would like to propose, through a loss of the letter, "*lettre*" as "*l'Être*." The loss of this "T" would alter Lacan's maxim to read: "c'est que l'Être arrive toujours à destination," or *being always arrives at its destination*. However, the addition or loss of this letter links the concept of the "letter" (as some aspect of textuality) to being. This understanding of being is corporealized through language and its manifestations as the letter and as letters.

The *letter* of *l'Être* connects to the relationship between nominating (or naming) and the numinous. Building on the Latin saying *nomina sint numina* or the idea that names are numinous—a saying that situates a motivated theorization of the sign as the existence of an incarnational quality of language that corporealizes and embodies signs with things—links being and textuality. This link is predicated on an undecidable: namely, the undecidability of the openness or closure of a text and its correlations as a system amidst other systems (as networked subjects and objects). This argument requires an analysis of the ontological qualities of "openness" and "closure." In the context of poetics, Lyn Hejinian discusses "open" versus "closed" texts in "The Rejection of Closure" (1983). According to Hejinian, the "open text" foregrounds process—the involvement of a reader in the text's composition creates a continual flow of *hermeneusis* (or interpretation)—while the "closed text" permits only a singular interpretation.

My paper brings together two perspectives on openness and closure that have not been brought together before—those found in poetics and systems theory. I contrast Hejinian's poetics of openness or closure with the notion of

“open” or “closed” systems found in systems theory. Because the history of systems theory is very broad, I will emphasize the posthuman second-order systems theory of Niklas Luhmann. Luhmannian systems are paradoxically constituted by their “openness,” as Cary Wolfe writes, regarding Luhmann: “the very thing that separates us from the world *connects* us to the world” through a form of closure that “is generative of openness to the environment” (xxi). This idea of “closure” is different from Hejiniian’s idea of the “closed text” because, for Luhmann, the closed system is paradoxically an openness between system and environment. The system is, in *stricto sensu*, in-itself and separate from the environment in such a way that the environment is, according to systems theory, *created* by the system, but that closure is paradoxically open.

Cipolla, Craig N. (University of Toronto; ROM)

Craig N. Cipolla is Associate Curator of North American Archaeology at the Royal Ontario Museum and a member of the Anthropology Department at the University of Toronto. His research interests include archaeological theory, North American archaeology (specifically New England and the Great Lakes), settler colonialism, and collaborative Indigenous archaeology. His publications include *Becoming Brothertown* (University of Arizona Press), *Archaeological Theory in the New Millennium* (co-authored with O. Harris, Routledge), *Foreign Objects* (ed., University of Arizona Press), and *Rethinking Colonialism* (ed. with K. Hayes, University Press of Florida). He is currently co-authoring a book, tentatively titled *Archaeological Theory in Dialogue: Situating Relationality, Ontology, and Posthumanism* (with R. Crellin, O. Harris, S. Moore, and L. Montgomery, Routledge).

“Posthuman Alterities in Archaeology”

Currently on the rise in archaeology, posthuman theories promise new ways of engaging with alterity of various kinds—different people, different times, different forms, even different worlds. This work promises to aid in critical reflections on the arbitrary nature of the western gaze and to recognize and incorporate non-western knowledge in new manners. There are, however, several challenges to address. First, as noted by several leading thinkers in this area, the present range of posthuman approaches include contrasting theoretical underpinnings. Second, these approaches are rarely considered in relation to the practical challenges of specific archaeological cases, particularly contexts of settler colonialism in which practitioners are generally attuned to the potentially-colonial nature of their work. In this paper, I explore the range of posthuman archaeologies as they relate to my work in North American archaeology. In comparing various posthuman approaches, I outline their respective strengths, weaknesses, and points in need of further clarification. I conclude that posthumanism offers new and valuable angles of articulation with archaeological materials but that archaeologists must adopt them cautiously if they are to avoid repeating or continuing some of the darkest parts of our (colonial) disciplinary history.

Ciufo, Carly (McMaster University)

Having worked with various libraries, archives, and oral history collections across the country, Carly Ciufo returned to McMaster University in 2016 as an emerging museum professional pursuing her doctorate at the LR Wilson Institute for Canadian History. Continuing to interrogate public history methods in her academic work, her comparative dissertation about human rights museums seeks to determine if museum workers, broadly defined, actually do human rights work. Her case studies are the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg, Manitoba, the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, England, and the national Center of Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, Georgia. She is the elected graduate student representative on Council at the Canadian Historical Association.

"Of Remembrance and (Human) Rights? Museological Legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Liverpool"

In 2007, the bicentennial of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade was commemorated by a variety of cultural institutions across the United Kingdom. At its worst, it is mocked as a Wilberfarce or Wilberfest due to the disproportionate attention paid to white abolitionists like William Wilberforce. At its best, the honest conversations in newspapers, demonstrations, and museum exhibits about racism and reparations offered powerful challenges to how the transatlantic slave trade is remembered.

"The commemorative service at Westminster Abbey on 27 March 2007 is seen as a watershed. With Queen Elizabeth II and then-Prime Minister Tony Blair present alongside the invited descendants of slave traders and those who were enslaved, the clergy asked all in attendance to kneel. Intended as a request for absolution for each individual's part in the transatlantic slave trade, British Nigerian rights activist Toyin Agbetu refused to do so; why should a descendant of enslaved Africans ask for forgiveness in a system that violated their own humanity? With this, some of the more radical actions around the history and legacy of the transatlantic slave trade in the United Kingdom came to the forefront.

"By looking at the opening of the International Slavery Museum to the current effort to create 'In Their Name'-- Britain's first international memorial to the enslaved--I will discuss the human rights work done both inside and outside of museums in Liverpool since 2007. As many legacies of the transatlantic slave trade sustain dehumanized remembrances of Black slaves and their descendants into the present-day, who counts as a human being in the past affects who gets to be a legitimate rights holder into the future.

Daigle, Christine (Brock University)

Christine Daigle is Director of the Posthumanism Research Institute and Posthumanism Research Network, and Professor of Philosophy at Brock University. She has published extensively on Nietzsche, Sartre, and Beauvoir. Her most recent research is in posthumanism, material feminism, and environmental posthumanities, focusing on ontological vulnerability and collective agency.

"Je est un autre: Collective Material Agency"

Posthumanists, and specifically material feminists, have dismantled human exceptionalism by showing how we are material bundles permeated and interconnected with our habitats and other beings (e.g. Alaimo 2016, Barad 2007, Frost 2016). If we embrace a view of the human as radically material, permeable, and constituted by its habitat, one might ask whether "I" is not completely other, that is, whether we are ever ourselves, constituted as we are by a multitude of others. How does a posthuman "I" constitute itself in this swarm of material entanglements in which myriad others—human and nonhuman—exercise their agentic capacities? How must we reconceptualize the I and the other with and by whom it is always constituted—and which it always constitutes as well? The problem is pressing for material feminists who do not want to dismiss human agency altogether. How does one recuperate the "itness" of our bodies (Frost 2016) and thereby some, albeit minimal, locus of agency? Are there ways to conceive of agency as materially embedded, collective, and stable enough to effect change? The goal of this paper is to build upon the insights of posthumanist material feminism to put forward a notion of collective material agency, of the "I as other" which emerges from the entanglement of I with/as the other(s).

DeFalco, Amelia (University of Leeds)

Amelia DeFalco is University Academic Fellow in Medical Humanities in the School of English, University of Leeds and co-director of the Leeds Centre for Medical Humanities. She is author of *Uncanny Subjects: Aging in Contemporary Narrative* (Ohio State University Press 2010), *Imagining Care: Responsibility, Dependency, and Canadian Literature* (University of Toronto Press 2016), along with essays on contemporary cultural representations of ageing, disability, gender, care and the posthuman. Her current book project, "Curious Kin: Fictions of Posthuman Care," investigates representations of nonhuman care in literature, film, and television.

"Disposable Creatures and Bodies that Matter in the Age of Robotics and Biotechnology"

This paper is part of a larger project investigating the concept and representation of "posthuman care." As the phrase implies, this project explores relations of care between humans and nonhumans within posthumanist, new materialist frameworks that interrogate the structures buttressing anthropocentric, speciesist interpretations and evaluations of care. "Disposable Creatures" explores *the other side* of posthuman care, so to speak, that is, the *uncared for*, more than human matter, the affective things, machine animals and animal machines that are treated as unworthy of care, as disposable. I tease out this status of disposability in relation to cultural theories of originality and individuality.

In this paper, I explore the treatment and representation of “boundary objects” and “boundary creatures,” those liminal bodies that have been central to posthumanist critique since Haraway’s initial analysis of “odd boundary creatures.” In particular, I consider the disposability of companion boundary creatures, examining what happens to these creatures when their function expires or is exhausted, exploring how cultural narratives of disposability can contribute to posthumanist critiques of the cult of the individual human subject.

Julia Empey (WLU English and Film Studies)

Julia A. Empey completed her Hon. Bachelor of Arts in English and History with a Religious Studies minor and her Master of Arts in Cultural Studies and Critical Theory at McMaster University. Her doctoral research utilizes posthumanism along with radical and Marxist feminist theory to examine the social implications of sex robots. Her other interests include eco-criticism, cosmopolitan studies, and political theory.

"Nothing Is What It Seems": Posthumanism and late capitalism in *Altered Carbon*

This paper will explore how class politics are interpreted within *Altered Carbon*, the 2018 television series, which is based on the 2002 book of the same name by Richard K. Morgan. The series follows Takeshi Kovacs, a soldier turned rebel turned private detective, as he awakens after 250 years in stasis. Like all humans, Kovacs’ existence, or essence, has been compressed into a small disk known as a cortical stack. He has awakened into a world where although the technology has developed somewhat, the overall ethos remains the same. *Altered Carbon* does not present a liberated or democratic future, instead, it demarcates how our posthuman fantasies can mimic, or fully embody, the class politics we see today in our late capitalist society. *Altered Carbon* asks us to consider where the boundaries of the self and the body truly lie and how those boundaries, or lack thereof, are open for exploitation by those with financial means.

I will critique how posthumanism has, or has not, taken up class. I believe this issue is most salient when we consider how class mediates our past, present, and potential futures. I will take up the cortical stack itself in how it is a posthumanist interpretation of Cartesian dualism and how that mind and body divide is central to maintaining capitalism through the alienation of the worker. I contend that *Altered Carbon* asks us to consider what happens when one’s flesh and one’s identity in and of itself becomes transferable and never truly one’s own, and how that divide is essential to maintaining capitalism.

Fancy, David (Brock University)

Dr. David Fancy is Associate Professor in the Department of Dramatic Arts at Brock University. He is currently publishing on immanence and performance as well as immanence, electromagnetics, performance, and social control. His most recent volume is a collection of edited essays with McGill Queens UP entitled *Art as Revolt: Thinking Politics Through Immanent Aesthetics*.

“Vibratory Capital, or: The Future is Already Here”

This paper will engage both the need for and possible theoretical pathways that can be used to answer the following question: How can we extend currently influential notions of immaterial labour (Lazzarato) and affective capital (Marazzi) by developing the concept of *vibratory capital* to explore the ways in which electromagnetic fields are central to contemporary postfordist economic activity and related forms of subjectification and social control? This project builds with urgency on existing interdisciplinary writing drawing on philosophy and cultural critique that examines the rapid capitalization of advances in genetic engineering, tissue transplants, computer coding, algorithms, and other comparable areas. Quickly turned into products and services fueling economic growth—often primarily in the economic North—these scientific developments are investigated by authors such as Berry (2007), Finn (2017), Latour (2005), O’Gorman (2017), and Rose (2006) for their broader ethical, political, and cultural implications. Extensive primary scientific literature on the effects of electromagnetic fields on biological systems exists and research is ongoing. Research clusters such as the BioInitiative group (Carpenter and Sage 2014) reference over 22,000 studies. Preliminary examinations of psychosocial implications of cell phone and social media are also to be found in the literature (Maurya 2014). Contemporary cultural theory, political economy, and philosophy, however, have barely begun to engage in a broader inter- or transdisciplinary fashion with the *electromagnetic fields* that allow

the propagation of contemporary communications networks and devices. Similarly, literature around the posthuman engages extensively with many specific non-human components of human reality, including chemical, genetic, and affective aspects (Bennett 2010; Braidotti 2013; Wolfe 2009). The electromagnetic constitution of phenomena does not feature prominently, if at all, in this writing and speculation. Given the absolute ubiquity of EMFs—human-made/naturally occurring—and their significance to our bodies, economies, politics, and cultures, an inquiry on the subject is critically necessary and overdue.

Gallo, Tiziana (University of Toronto)

Tiziana Gallo is an archaeologist with a M.Sc. in Anthropology (Université de Montréal), and is currently a PhD candidate in Archaeology at the anthropology department of the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on the roles played by stone tools in the American Northeast, from 6000 BCE to the contact period, with an approach on different stone types and their relation to human practices. Her current doctoral project, a study of Iroquoian ground stone axes in the Lower Great Lakes, traces the connections between social, economic and political transformations, and changes occurring within the tools and the stones they are made of. Her methods include petrography, stone tool manufacture (*chaîne opératoire*), use-wear, and geographic information analyses (GIS). Her most recent publication, a book chapter in « *L'Archéologie au Québec: Six millénaires d'histoire amérindienne* », discusses the technological and potential cultural implications of distinct textures within similar, yet different stone types.

“Leave no rock unturned: A posthumanist gaze on stone tools”

The pre-contact archaeological record in the American northeast is predominantly composed of rocks that were transformed into tools by humans. Stone tools are commonly analysed and conceptualised as passive informants of human cultures. For example, the *chaîne opératoire* is a methodological approach that focuses on the “life histories” of tools, starting with their direct integration in human practices. The identification of rock types and proveniences, the documentation of traces of human intervention such as extraction, manufacture and use, are meant to highlight technological traditions and past networks. While recent calls in archaeology have urged us to shift our focus from people to things, archaeology remains a discipline of—but more importantly for—humans. Nevertheless, posthumanism can provide archaeologists with deeper and broader perspectives by allowing them to think of stone tools as more than representational vehicles of past cultures. By applying posthuman approaches, we can tune-in to stones’ million years old pre-human histories, as well as to their human related histories. Exploring the alterity of stones and stone tools can provide glimpses into the various ways they could have been relationally implicated with humans and acted with, upon or against them. Stone tools emerge from geological processes, from physical and cultural landscapes, from their interaction with both humans and non-humans, and from stone objects themselves. By sharing, withholding, or imposing their power onto humans and non-humans, and by flowing from one state to another, they are not mere instruments but can act on the world and on human practices. Examples of stone tools from various periods and areas of the American northeast are provided, demonstrating their transformative potentials.

Goldsmith, Mitch (Brock University)

Mitch Goldsmith is a PhD student and graduate member and research assistant with the Posthumanism Research Institute at Brock University. Prior to attending Brock, Mitch worked as a research associate in the laboratory investigations department at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals in Virginia and as an administrative assistant and volunteer animal caretaker at SASHA Farm Animal Sanctuary in Michigan.

“Queering our relations with animals: An exploration of multispecies sexuality beyond the laboratory”

Over the past several decades, scientists, primarily in the West, have been engaged in high-profile attempts to demonstrate a biological origin of homosexuality in both humans and nonhuman animals. This endeavor, to ostensibly naturalize homosexuality, involves painful and invasive experiments on animals, which frequently includes the injection of hormones and other compounds into the animals’ brains, and often ends in the animals’ death and dismemberment. In this paper, I provide a critical reading of these experiments including their undergirding assumptions about sexuality, nonhuman animals, and our obligations to them. Many experiments rely on the

“Phoenix model” of sexual differentiation and orientation, which posit a series of anachronistic dualisms reflecting prevailing, regressive normative understandings of gender and sexuality. Contra the “Phoenix model,” I propose an alternative understanding of queer sexuality inspired by the work of Malin Ah-King, Eva Hayward, and others, who understand sex and sexuality not as a series of static binaries but rather as a dynamic, ongoing process. Situated within a posthuman ecofeminist ethic of care and queer ecology framework, this understanding privileges a lively search for and expressions of pleasure, which, according to cognitive ethnologist Jonathan Balcombe, is shared by all sentient beings. Finding queer potentialities in embodied pleasure furthers Donna Haraway’s call for making thick kin relations and new modes of being-with multispecies others.

Harwood, Debra (Brock University) and Jaime Barratt (Brock University)

Debra Harwood is an associate professor at Brock University, Faculty of Education. She examines the intersection of curricula, pedagogy, and materials within multiple early learning contexts (outdoor, home, program, and communities). Debra has led several private and SSHRC funded projects with various community partners. Her research is published in various journals such as *Theory into Practice Journal*, or *Journal of Early Literacy*, and books such as *International research handbook on Childhood Nature: Assemblages of Childhood and Nature Research* or *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Out-of-School Learning*.

“The orange GoPro camera & the children who wear them in the Woods”

The orange GoPro camera bounds across the snowy field strapped to the chest of a four year old girl, ice pellets scrape across the lens. Heavy breathing and a quickened heartbeat can be heard in response to the resistance afforded by the knee high and in some places, waist deep snow. The snow covered lens is cleared by a swiping hand, the camera readjusted after tilting toward the ground from the force of the falling and rolling child. The steady red blinking of the GoPro (a signal to the children that the camera is operating properly) is once again visible and the field of snow offers itself up for endless possibilities. The snow, camera, and child are entangled within “thing–matter–energy–child assemblages” (Tesar & Arndt, 2016, p. 196). Quite vividly through the lens, nature appears as an agentic force for this small child who teeters, loses balance, and then crawls through the uneven terrain, carefully avoiding the tall thistles that appear before her. The field she crosses has offered an array of vibrant encounters throughout the different seasons, its intelligences often embraced by the eight children and their two educators of the nature school program participating in the ethnographic study. The orange GoPro camera, like the snowy field itself, is agentic and more than the passive backdrop to the children's stories (Änggård, 2015, 2016; Malone, 2015; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017). The snow, field, child, camera are inseparable, entangled in this ongoing process to navigate and experience the field. Perhaps, the GoPro helps to encourage this shift that Malone (2016) notes, when we move away from “child in nature” as the only agential body, we can focus on the materiality of children and non-humans as relational. In this session, we explore how posthumanism and new materialism (Barad, 2003, 2007; Bennett, 2010; Hultman & Lenz Taguchi) might offer additional lenses to examine the bodily, social, and affective intra-actions of nature/child/camera. Ultimately, helping us to think differently about the child’s relations with the world, ascribing to Barad’s (2003, 2007) notion of process, whereby “reality is composed not of things-in-themselves or things-behind-phenomena but things-in-phenomena” (Barad 2007, p. 140).

Laks, Zoë (University of British Columbia)

Zoë Anne Laks recently completed her master's degree in film studies at the University of British Columbia. In her thesis she explored audiovisual aesthetics of memory and nostalgia through films directed by Guy Maddin. She is currently researching representations of non-human memories in film and new media.

“Objects with Memories: Sensing and Sculpting a Living World through Digital Media”

What is a memory, and what can possess a memory? We all agree that a human being can remember, but what about a newborn child, a cat, tree, or stone? Objects in contemporary scholarly discourse are often discussed in terms of their “life histories” (especially in the case of the interdisciplinary “object interview”), but what does it mean to consider objects with memories?

By examining media texts that allow environmental objects to “speak” and “feel” past experiences, I argue that memory can function in a space between human and non-human, where we as media audiences listening to and “touching” media objects that “speak” their histories aloud, together mutually construct a memory of the past. In this way, memory need not serve simply indexical or social functions, as a record of the past or a connection between human beings across cultures or generations (as with popular anthropocentric theories of social memory). Instead, I conceive of memory as a multi- sensory and non-anthropocentric process, occurring through the imbrication and tactile contact between subject and object.

Taking examples from digital media (including films and video games), this project brings the field of memory studies into dialogue with posthumanist discourse. Using the Deleuzian-inspired work of Susan Naomi Nordstrom on entangled and enfolding objects simultaneously occupying past, present, and future, as well as the conceptual frameworks of Graham Harman’s object-oriented ontology and Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory, I demonstrate that these so-called “objects with memories” have the power to invoke larger non-anthropocentric networks. Together, these may sculpt a “living” (or “vibrant,” in Jane Bennett’s terms) world, where objects may present “felt” relations with other temporalities, objects, and human subjects.

Patricia MacCormack (Anglia-Ruskin)

Patricia MacCormack is Professor of Continental Philosophy at Anglia Ruskin University, UK. Dr. MacCormack has published in the areas of continental philosophy, sexuality and queer theory, feminism, ethics, post-human theory, animal studies and European horror film. She is author of *Cinesexuality* (2008) and *Posthuman Ethics* (2012) and *The Ahuman Manifesto* (2019), editor of *The Animal Catalyst* (2014) and co-editor of *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Cinema* (2008), *Deleuze and the Animal* (2017) and *Ecosophical Aesthetics* (2018)

“Wither Identity?”

This paper explores the usefulness and status of identity in an ahuman age. Beginning with gender, sexuality and race and the shift to queer, trans and the contentious contemporary transracial identity categories, the ahuman places radical identities as political alternatives to the no-longer-right alt-right and the no-longer-left neoliberal left. This paper goes on to explore the status of nation, borders and the potentials and risks of an absolute sacrifice of identity in a world where difference still leads to oppression, increasingly through signifiers disanchored from corporeal realities. This exploration extends to a discussion of the ethics of political identification and fighting for one’s own position. Against the self service of identity politics the ahuman engages abolitionist arguments to plead the case for fighting for identities which neither reflect nor benefit one’s self. Radical Ecosophy fights for the unknowable other, the nonhuman animal, the never-known human (women, people of colour), ultimately thinking beyond species toward life itself as valid for political address not for what it is but that it is.

Malouin, Hayley

Hayley Malouin is a lapsed graduate student, theatre critic, and independent scholar currently occupying Tkaronto in the traditional land of the Anishinaabe and Huron-Wendat Indigenous peoples. She studied theatre, comparative literatures and arts, and flirted around the edges of political science at Brock University, from which she holds an MA. As a scholar her research focuses on public performance, protest, and circus, with corresponding interest in the philosophies of Hardt and Negri, Deleuze and Guattari, Bakhtin, and Kristeva. She is the co-editor of *Performance Matters* Vol. 4.1-2, “Circus and Its Others,” and the web editor of *Alt.theatre Magazine*. Hayley is currently in the process of pursuing further graduate studies, because it’s too late to turn back now.

“Ladies, gentlemen, and the rest of us”: Circus Amok, Revolutionary Selfhood, and Grotesque Singularity”

Circus Amok—New York City’s free-to-the-public, outdoor circus troupe—has been entertaining and edifying audiences in the city’s public parks since 1989. As a politically engaged, self-described “queer celebratory spectacle,” their work finds affinity with Bakhtin’s (1965) notions of the grotesque and carnivalesque, most especially as a temporary “utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance.” Perhaps even more importantly, however, Circus Amok’s work engages with the revolutionary identity politics proposed by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2009) through highlighting and resisting an understanding of fixed identity-as-property; as such, their work is a

grotesque encounter with the “common,” an immanent project for a world that “we all share, a world that has no “outside.””

Using both Circus Amok and Hardt and Negri’s discourse on identity politics, singularity, and multiplicity as a springboard, this paper proposes an immanent re-reading of the grotesque and the carnivalesque, one which understands grotesque bodies as singularities—those intrinsically and extrinsically multiplicitous entities Hardt and Negri identify as “always engaged in the process of becoming different” and which possess the power to “liberate themselves.” Such a reading understands identity to be both “a weapon of the republic of property” through which hierarchy is maintained and itself a fixed property. In contrast, singularity is “a temporal multiplicity,” its relations with other singularities in the social multiplicity and its own internal composition of multiplicity “constantly in flux.” This paper thus offers up grotesque singularity as a vital aspect of the process from “revolt to revolutionary institution” Hardt and Negri call for, and proposes that Circus Amok is involved in a Bakhtinian process of “becoming, change, and renewal” through which grotesque singularity can be experienced and perceived.

McDonald, Terrance (Brock University)

Terrance H. McDonald is a postdoctoral fellow at the Posthumanism Research Network (Brock University). He is the editor of *Interconnections: Journal of Posthumanism / Interconnexions: revue de posthumanisme* and the secretary for the SCMS Film Philosophy SIG. His work has appeared in *Men and Masculinities*, *NORMA*, and *Symposium*, among other venues.

"Moving Images of Pain: Notes Towards Reading Forms"

This presentation aims to tease out the middle of an emerging project that posthumanizes pain through creative speculation sparked by the close reading of moving images and forms. Rather than assuming pain to be a human experience, I approach the affective force of pain as having the capacity to materialize as effects felt by bodies (human and nonhuman). However, my exploration also maps the generative forces of pain and the many forms (Brinkema 2014 and Levine 2015) that take shape through processes of pain. By engaging with work by Scarry (1985), Sontag (2003), and Vetlesen (2009) as well as posthumanist theorists (such as Braidotti 2013), I conceptualize the limits of knowing pain as intimately human and challenge the anthropocentric assumptions that underpin our understanding of pain. Then my presentation moves into readings of moving images where pain takes shape. Some potential cinema and media texts to be discussed include: *Hatfields & McCoys* (Reynolds 2012), *The 36th Chamber of Shaolin* (Liu 1978), *Happy Together* (Wong 1997), *Amores Perros* (Iñárritu 2000), and *If Beale Street Could Talk* (Jenkins 2018). My goal is not to trace or imagine what painful experiences are like for nonhumans nor is it to project anthropocentric knowledges onto the becomings of nonhumans. What is at stake in this paper is a posthuman conceptualization of pain that is not limited or restricted by the assumption that a human experience is the only image of pain.

McDonald, Tracy (McMaster University)

Tracy McDonald is an associate professor of Russian and Soviet history at McMaster University. She is the author of *Face to the Village: The Riazan Countryside Under Soviet Rule, 1921-1930* (Univeristy of Toronto Press, 2011) and co-editor with Daniel Vandersommers of *Zoo Studies: A New Humanities* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2019). She is currently working on a history of animal import-export and exhibition in the USSR and a biography of Dinah (1911-1915).

title: “Animals look back: Artistic representation and a real existing animal”

Can we “produce the concept of something we cannot imagine”? On 24 August 1914, a young gorilla arrived on the grounds of the New York Zoological Park. By best estimates, she was about three years of age. More than a month earlier, she began her journey from Gabon by English steamer on which she shared a cabin with Richard Garner. According to the director of the Park, Dinah arrived “a spoilt infant” because of the way Garner had raised her on Lake Ngovi and because he “pet her all the way from Africa to New York,” serving as her “cook and valet” on the trip. Once in New York, Dinah became a celebrity. She had several photo sessions, met Djuna Barnes, and was sculpted separately by Eugenie Shonnard and by Eli Harvey. These photographs and sculptures are permanent, but their

denotations and possibilities are constantly shifting. This paper examines these representations in which Dinah is often a cipher or a vessel into which the thoughts and minds of others, including mine, are placed. The paper then asks if these existing depictions of Dinah can serve as a way to establish an empathetic connection to and understanding of a mind and body that once existed in real time and space moving toward a call for a collective mindfulness between human and non-human animals. This attempt would bring together two often opposing ways of thinking about animals: those inspired by the parents of post-humanism and eco-feminism.

McGreer, Priscilla (Athabasca University)

Priscilla McGreer is a Literary and Cultural Studies student in the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) Program of Athabasca University. She is an Associate Editor for the MAIS' *Journal of Integrated Studies* and a writer and poet.

"Being Human in a Posthuman World"

The philosophy of humanism had the ontological assurance of a metanarrative that existed on a clear continuum with its predecessor, but with the postmodern end of the metanarrative key humanist categories, such as "human" itself, have become problematic. Posthumanist theorizing proffers multiple genealogies and futures for this category. Is the human the subject of history unconsciously creating a world defined by its existence—an anthropocene? Or perhaps it is an object, a body or embodiment, which the machinations of the world have morphed into a cyborg, creature or chtlulu?

In "Being Human in a Posthuman World," these possibilities, found in the works of Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles and Rosi Braidotti, will be examined in contrast to the work of Erin Manning who argues that there are always at least two bodies moving in a relationship that does not embody the world, but creates it. Manning's work on relational perception, which is ecologically-tuned and supersedes awareness of subjects and objects, will be explored as a means of understanding the posthuman conflicts of the human subject and (non or trans)human object, the collective and the individual, and history/movement and form.

Mellamphy, Nandita Biswas (Western University)

Dr. Nandita Biswas Mellamphy is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, affiliate member of the Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research, and core faculty in the Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism at Western University (Canada): she is also a research fellow of the Center for Transformative Media (Parson: New School/USA) and the Centre for War and Technology (Bath University/UK). Her research is situated at the intersections of Political Science, Continental Philosophy, Media/Information Studies, and Cultural Studies. She is author and editor of several works of interdisciplinary theory including *The Three Stigmata of Friedrich Nietzsche* (2011), *The Digital Dionysus: Nietzsche and the Networkcentric Condition* (2016), and the forthcoming book, *Larval War, Surveillance Capitalism, & Terror*.

"Humans 'Out-of-the-Loop': AI and the Future of Governance"

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming every sector of industry and research today, and has even become the primary conduit for a new arms race. The growing presence of AI is making the access and control of information a central object of governmental, financial, scientific, commercial, and public struggles for power. The seemingly limitless potential of (AI) lies in its ability to make perceptible that which is opaque, to bring to light data-rich fields of informational-stimuli that are normally inaccessible to human perception, and yet, AI is also being deployed in technologies that create conditions for total surveillance, social control and economic exploitation. Adoption of AI is escalating worldwide, as development of ever-faster and more-efficient unmanned weapons-systems driven by ever-more adaptive algorithms in combination with artificial-intelligence networks are quickly phasing out the need for human intervention in decision-making loops. Indeed, by 2030, many say that machine capabilities will have increased to the point that humans will have not only become the *weakest* component in a wide array of systems and processes, but they will fade out of the decision-making loop *entirely*.

I argue that this tripartite schema becomes useful in portraying the 3 main ‘circuits’ of power that are relevant to a critical and well-rounded discussion of the ethical use of AI: the politics of *Humans IN-the-Loop* (HIL): the model in which the human is in command of animals and machines through ‘free will’; the politics of *Humans ON-the-Loop* (HOL): the model in which humans share command and co-evolve with other animal and machine entities; and the politics of *Humans OUT-OF-the-Loop* (HOOL), which is where, I suggest, the notion of the post-human replaces human-based control and command (this is the realm of what I would like to call ‘post-human governance’). By *post-human*, I refer to the tendency occurring in military, scientific, economic, commercial, social and cultural sectors towards phasing-out the human in decision-making and replacing it with AI-driven command that requires no human intervention. Here, it is the computational power of artificial intelligences and post-human rationalities that have the power to replace humanism and reorder human activities. This submission aims to explore these three circuits of politics, and to speculate about influence of AI in future tendencies towards post-human governance, especially its role as a strategic driver of governmental, financial, scientific, commercial, and popular struggles for power, both currently and in the foreseeable future. What kind of politics can be mobilized in the context of a planetary future in which *humans are no longer in the loop*? How to *conceive* of a politics in which humans are no longer in the loop—can it be called a ‘politics’ at all? Or is it rather a something altogether ‘beyond’ politics? If politics is no longer the concept that provides the check and balance to human vicissitudes, then we must either think in terms of *post-human politics*, the politics of *humans out-of-the-loop*, or at least be able to conceive of politics as something that is not necessarily grounded in assumptions about humans being *in-the-loop*. My hunch is that what is needed is *not* simply a return to an old view of human politics, but a new vision of post-human politics: a politics in which humans can exploit their *out-of-the-loop*-ness in order to re-engineer struggles for power.

Mirzayan, Anna (University of Western)

Anna Mirzayan is a doctoral candidate in Theory and Criticism at Western University, where she focuses on philosophies of technology in aesthetics and war, and Marxist reimaginations of the posthuman.

"Things Suck Everywhere: Extractive Capitalism and De-Posthumanism"

According to Marx, the proletariat are those who “have no means of support other than selling their labour power.” Labour power, as distinct from merely labor or work itself, is the specific condition of labour under capitalism, whereby capital extracts value from labor. Accordingly to Marx, this class of people with nothing to sell but their own labor power will inevitably ignite a social revolution. The word “robot,” comes from the Czech and Russian word *robot* meaning “work” or “to work.” It is no coincidence that this archetypal posthuman figure is intimately linked to the concept of laboring for others. This paper looks at the concept of the proletariat in light of the growing reliance of capital on digitization, speculation and what Nick Srnicek has deemed “platform capitalism” in an effort to categorize the mode of value extraction characterized by vast networks that create platforms providing infrastructure for other businesses or users. This paper looks at the posthuman through two lenses. The first is as the forced posthumanisation of people that all must participate in (e.g. having to participate in social media and online consumerism in order to count or be valuable). This is digital proletarianization based on generating surplus value through the general intellect as the main mode of value extraction, with a nod to continuing my discussion from last year about the posthuman as a form of labor. Secondly, I attempt to articulate a posthumanization contra capital, in which work is disassociated from monetary value. I suggest that Marx’s idea of species-being, or labor as free association, should be considered its own form of posthumanism based on the currently inhuman possibility of work outside capitalism. Lastly, I look at aesthetic experimentation with the very digital platforms mentioned above as possible heralds of the proletariat revolution—that is, a posthuman revolution.

Pascucci, Matthew (Arizona State University)

Matthew Pascucci is a student in the English Literature PhD program at Arizona State University. He holds a Masters of Science degree in English education and has worked in education for ten years. His scholarly area of interest lies in the connections between poststructuralist theory and U.S. third world feminism. Additionally, he is interested in the use of creative forms as alternate methodologies for exploring theoretical concepts. Living for substantial periods of time in a wide variety of landscapes, from suburban New England to downtown Chicago to rural Oklahoma, informs his thinking on financial and metabolic economies and the power structures that promote or inhibit them.

“We Have Never Been Capitalist”

Much of the work done in posthumanist philosophy directly indicates or infers a system labeled in one way or other “capitalism.” I submit that we have never been capitalist, and I offer an alternate way of understanding and addressing the concerns of posthumanism and ecotheory. Turning from a focus on the environmental harms of a market driven by unchecked consumerism, I examine instead violence that functions contra-market forces to create a systemic transfer of wealth from communities of color to white communities. Using two examples, the documented history of the Greenwood District of North Tulsa and the Israeli occupation of Gaza in Palestine as told through the writings of Mahmoud Darwish, I offer the term de-development to describe the strategy for the transfer of wealth to white communities through the violent destruction of the accumulated wealth of communities of color. Further, I argue that the strategy of de-development both infers and creates a closed economic system in which wealth/privilege/blessedness is defined in part by a dialectical relationship to want/oppression/accursedness. Given a closed economic system, I turn my analysis to the global and ecological and suggest that climate change is a weaponization of Gaia at the hands of the imperialist white supremacist heteropatriarchy. Additionally, using Anuk Arudpragasam’s recent novel *The Story of a Brief Marriage* I demonstrate that from the negative side of the violence dialectic, waste may be a desirable part of a metabolic interaction with the environment. Rather than focusing on the problems of capitalism, consumption, and waste, I suggest a possible solution in a free market, closed economy, in a waste-ful metabolic relationship with the environment, and most crucially, in the cessation of imperialist white supremacist heteropatriarchal violence.

Priewe, Sascha (University of Toronto; ROM)

Priewe is the Royal Ontario Museum’s (ROM) Associate Vice President, Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships. In this role, he works on cross-departmental programs and projects that support the ROM’s strategic vision, and develops and manages new institutional partnerships with other cultural and academic institutions. Before joining the ROM, he was the Curator of Chinese and Korean collections at the British Museum and served as a diplomat in the German Foreign Office. He holds a PhD in archaeology from the University of Oxford. Sascha is cross-appointed as an Associate Professor in the Department of the History of Art at the University of Toronto, and is an Affiliated Associate Professor in Cultural Studies at Queen’s University. He is a Co-Founder of the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, a Senior Fellow of Massey College, and Associate Member of the Posthumanism Research Institute at Brock University.

“Towards a posthumanist museology”

Museums are creatures of their time, if understood as European creations, they fully embody European modernity. Almost since their inception they have been divided into either spaces that favour the natural world or those that highlight cultural productions. Disciplinary entrenchments and a particularly clear divide between nature and culture have become the modus operandi for museums, mirroring similar divisions at universities and in knowledge production. The nature-culture division is a particularly European understanding of the world and of the relationships between humans and non-humans. This ontology is not shared by most peoples across the globe, and yet it has been imposed and inflicted around the world through the project of colonialism and the imperialism of knowledge of which museums were a part. The foundation of European ontology has remained largely unchallenged in the museum world. Yet there is reason for hope as the post-colonial movement, calls for the inclusion of diverse and authentic voices and for changes in how museums wield authority are all challenging the ways museums have been operating. This paper offers a cautiously optimistic look at the ways in which museums may embrace posthumanist thinking and engage with and overcome their ontological foundations. But will museums be able to move humans off the pedestal or at least make ample room on that pedestal for those who should find space on it if museums were to embrace a posthumanist agenda?

Vallee, Mickey (Athabasca University)

Mickey Vallee is an associate professor in the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies at Athabasca University, where he also holds a Canada Research Chair (Tier 2) in Community, Identity and Digital Media. His research draws on developments in media theory to understand embodiment in the data turn. He has been published in such journals as *Theory, Culture & Society*, *Body & Society*, *parallax*, and *The Sociological Review*. His forthcoming monograph, *A Sounding of Worlds* (Palgrave Macmillan), uses sound and acoustics as prisms for thinking through the vibrations that bind biotic and abiotic bodies. He lives in Calgary.

“The Vibrational Energy of Peripheral Media”

In this presentation I respond to new and not-so-new directions in media theory concerned with peripheral mediation, including but not limited to elemental, atmospheric, and environmental alterities. I offer an open and nuanced theorization of peripheral mediation with the interpunct term: *general vibratology*. The presentation points to the continued importance of bringing peripheral mediation into media theory, as well as media theory into peripheral mediation, especially those mediations that expand our definition of life and community beyond the boundaries of human subjectivity and into new transdisciplinary theorizations of evolving techno-biological assemblages. The argument, that peripheral media actualize a vibrational becoming of voice/sound/sense, is grounded in contemporary scientific and cultural experiments that amplify new infrastructural embodiments, especially as they are manifest in the field of bioacoustics. I demonstrate how contemporary bioacoustics research opens onto, while it is opened by, important areas of inquiry ranging from shared ancestry to biodiversity preservation and bioethics, while producing new possibilities for imagining the concept of the body and embodiment as a tangle of vibrational energy. I argue that voicing/sounding/sensing stresses the importance of a *general vibration* that encodes human, animal, geological, and technological problematics. The study is energized by and hopes to energize scientific and arts-based methods in opening new ways of becoming-with the assemblages in which they are situated.

Wilby, Liam (University of Leeds)

Liam Wilby is a PhD student in English Literature at the University of Leeds. His project concerns the ways in which global science fiction narratives facilitate necessary discussions on the intersections between critical posthumanism and various indigenous epistemologies. His research contends that global science fiction figures situated frameworks for the posthuman in order to imagine anterior futures.

“Imagining a Postcolonial Posthumanism in the Work of Nalo Hopkinson”

This paper considers the work of science fiction writer Nalo Hopkinson and its production of a critical posthumanist framework for subjectivity through a hermeneutic approach to Caribbean epistemologies and spiritualism. It posits that global science fiction is a fertile ground for exploring situated theories of subjectivity in the context of what Rosi Braidotti has termed the posthuman convergence—that is, a time of post-anthropocentrism and post-humanism. In articulating her neo-Spinozist brand of critical posthumanism, Braidotti tells a history of European philosophy where political factors influenced which thinkers became prevalent. René Descartes was chosen over the heretical Baruch Spinoza. Martin Heidegger was recovered after World War II whilst Friedrich Nietzsche was blacklisted. Braidotti develops a neo-Spinozist, vital materialist approach to theorising an embodied and embedded posthuman subjectivity. In the context of Braidotti’s work, this paper asks what other histories of thought can be recovered in philosophical responses to the posthuman convergence? Through an engagement with Hopkinson’s novels, the paper explores the possibilities of and the extent to which indigenous epistemologies from across the Caribbean can be brought into dialogue with critical posthumanism. It is argued that Hopkinson’s novels figure a transformative ontological ethics as a political resistance to ongoing neocolonial practices. Also embedded in the paper is a discussion of contemporary debates concerning transhumanism against the context of the marginalisation of indigenous knowledges across the Caribbean. It is concluded that Hopkinson theorises Caribbean situated frameworks for non-anthropocentric subjectivity that are mobilised in the affirmative production of decolonised communities.