the nonhuman turn / May 3 - 5, 2012

with Jane Bennett, Ian Bogost, Wendy Chun, Mark Hansen, Erin Manning, Brain Massumi, Tim Morton, and Steven Shaviro

Organized by
Richard Grusin (Director, Center for 21st Century Studies)
Mary Mullen (Deputy Director, Center for 21st Century Studies)
John C. Blum (Associate Director, Center for 21st Century Studies)
Rebekah Sheldon (Provost Fellow, Center for 21st Century Studies)

Free & open to the public
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The Nonhuman Turn
A Center for 21st Century Studies Conference

This conference takes up the “nonhuman turn” that has been emerging in the arts, humanities, and social sciences over the past few decades. Intensifying in the 21st century, this nonhuman turn can be traced to a variety of different intellectual and theoretical developments from the last decades of the 20th century:

actor-network theory, particularly Bruno Latour’s career-long project to articulate technical mediation, nonhuman agency, and the politics of things;

affect theory, both in its philosophical and psychological manifestations and as it has been mobilized by queer theory;

animal studies, as developed in the work of Donna Haraway, projects for animal rights, and a more general critique of speciesism;

the assemblage theory of Gilles Deleuze, Manuel DeLanda, Latour, and others; new brain sciences like neuroscience, cognitive science, and artificial intelligence;

new media theory, especially as it has paid close attention to technical networks, material interfaces, and computational analysis;

the new materialism in feminism, philosophy, and Marxism; varieties of speculative realism like object-oriented philosophy, vitalism, and panpsychism; and systems theory in its social, technical, and ecological manifestations.

Such varied analytical and theoretical formations obviously diverge and disagree in many of their aims, objects, and methodologies. But they are all of a piece in taking up aspects of the nonhuman as critical to the future of 21st century studies in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The conference is meant to address the future of 21st century studies by exploring how the nonhuman turn might provide a way forward for the arts, humanities, and social sciences in light of the difficult challenges of the 21st century.
The Nonhuman Turn: Program

Thursday, May 3, 2012
Curtin Hall 175, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
3243 N Downer Ave

1:00–2:30 REGISTRATION
(Curtin 939)
Afterwards, and all through the conference, registration outside Curtin 175.

3:00–3:15 WELCOME: Richard Grusin (Director, Center for 21st Century Studies)

3:15–4:30 PLENARY: Brian Massumi, “Animality and Abstraction”
Introduced by Rebekah Sheldon, UW-Milwaukee, C21 Provost Fellow

4:30–4:45 BREAK

4:45–6:00 PLENARY: Erin Manning, “Another Regard”
Introduced by Nathaniel Stern, UW-Milwaukee, Art and Design

6:00–7:30 RECEPTION
Sala da Pranzo, 2613 E Hampshire St

Friday, May 4, 2012
Curtin Hall 175, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
3243 N Downer Ave

8:30–9:00 COFFEE


Introduced by Kennan Ferguson, UW-Milwaukee, Political Science

10:45–11:00 BREAK

11:00–12:15 BREAKOUT SESSION 1

Objects 1: Curtin Hall 175
Moderator: Jason Puskar, UW-Milwaukee, English

“Rhetorical Carpentry and Becoming Object” – James J. Brown, Jr., UW-Madison, English

“Thinking with Trees: Material-Imagination” – T. Hugh Crawford, Georgia Institute of Technology, Literature, Communication and Culture

“The Eco-Poetics of Hyper-Objects: Evelyn Reilly’s Styrofoam” – Lynn Keller, UW-Madison, English
Death: Curtin Hall 124
Moderator: Peter Paik, UW-Milwaukee, Comparative Literature

“Stretched Skulls: Anamorphic Games and the Memento Mortem Mortis” – Stephanie Boluk, Vassar College, Media Studies and Patrick LeMieux, Duke University, Department of Art, Art History, and Visual Studies

“The Corpse and Other (Post)Human (Non)Objects” – Sarah Juliet Lauro, UC-Davis, English

“The Ontology of a Visceral-Object: Notes on Commercial (or Cosmercial) Practices in the Meat Industry” – Emma Roe, University of Southampton, Geography and Environment

12:15–1:30 LUNCH

1:30–2:45 PLENARY: Steven Shaviro, “Consequences of Panpsychism”
Introduced by Elena Gorfinkel, UW-Milwaukee, Art History

2:45–3:00 BREAK

3:00–4:15 BREAKOUT SESSION 2

Ethics: Curtin Hall 175
Moderator: Stuart Moulthrop, UW-Milwaukee, English

“Tektology Transfer” – McKenzie Wark, The New School for Social Research, Culture and Media

“Companionable Objects, Companionable Conscience: Ethics and the Predicaments of Dwelling with Things” – Kenneth M. George, UW-Madison, Anthropology

“Ethology Becomes Ethics: Exploding Uexküll” – Arun Saldanha, University of Minnesota, Geography

Objects 2: Curtin Hall 119
Moderator: Sandra Braman, UW-Milwaukee, Communication

“Process-Relational Theory and the Eco-Ontological Turn: Clearing the Ground between Whitehead, Deleuze, and Harman” – Adrian Ivakhiv, University of Vermont, Environmental Studies

“New Media Ontology: Interacting with Object-Oriented Philosophy and Computational Objects” – Bruno Lessard, Ryerson University, New Media

“Against Deleuze’s Joy: Vitalism beyond Affectionate Immanence” – Ben Woodard, University of Western Ontario, Theory and Criticism

Animals: Curtin Hall 118
Moderator: Nigel Rothfels, UW-Milwaukee, Office of Undergraduate Research

“Talking with Animals” – Marilyn Cooper, Michigan Technological University, Humanities

“Compulsory Affectivity: Affect, Animality, and the Nonhuman Turn” – Donovan Schaefer, Syracuse University, Religion
“Animals, Assemblage, and Abstraction: Towards a Dark Ethics” – James K. Stanescu, Mercer University, Philosophy and Communication Studies

4:15–4:30 BREAK

4:30–5:45 PLENARY: Tim Morton, “They are Here”
Introduced by Peter Paik, UW-Milwaukee, Comparative Literature

Saturday, May 5, 2012
Curtin Hall 175, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
3243 N Downer Ave

8:30–9:00 COFFEE

9:00–10:15 PLENARY: Wendy Chun, “Imagined Networks”
Introduced by Anne Frances Wysocki, UW-Milwaukee, English

10:15–10:30 BREAK

10:30–11:45 BREAKOUT SESSION 3

Mediation 1: Curtin Hall 124
Moderator: Michael Newman, UW-Milwaukee, Journalism

“Mediation for Nonhuman Cognitions” – James J. Pulizzi, UCLA, English

“The Good Hyperlink” – Anne Helmond, University of Amsterdam, Media Studies

“Simple Solutions: Slashdot and the Articulation of Web Culture as Information System” – Michael Stevenson, University of Amsterdam, Media Studies

Human: Curtin Hall 119
Moderator: Annie McClanahan, UW-Milwaukee, English

“Digital Extinction” – Joshua Schuster, University of Western Ontario

“Towards a Supra-Human Metaphysics of Media” – Aaron Pedinotti, NYU, Media, Culture and Communication

“Posthuman: Next Steps” – Lucia Santella, São Paulo Catholic University, Technologies of Intelligence and Digital Design

Arts: Curtin Hall 118
Moderator: Ryan Holifield, UW-Milwaukee, Geography

“Immediation as Process and Practice of Digital Mattering” – Christoph Brunner, Zurich University for the Arts, Institute for Critical Theory
“Brimming with Vitality: Experiencing Colour Beyond Human Perception in Seurat’s La Grande Jatte” – Troy Rhoades, Concordia University, SenseLab

“In the Dome of the Parliament of Things: Media Art’s Engagement with Bruno Latour (with Peter Sloterdijk as Best Man)” – Marc Tuters, University of Amsterdam, Media Studies

12:00–1:00  LUNCH

1:00–2:15  PLENARY:  Mark Hansen, “Against Clairvoyance: The Future of 21st Century Media”
Introduced by Sandra Braman, UW-Milwaukee, Communication

2:15–2:30  BREAK

2:30–3:45  BREAKOUT SESSION 4

Performance: Curtin 124
Moderator: Heather Warren-Crow, UW-Milwaukee, Art and Design


“Call Me Ishmael’ and Other (New) Material Performa(c)tivities and Ontological Entanglements” – Lissa Holloway-Attaway, Blekinge Institute of Technology, English/Literature, Culture and Digital Media Programs

“DesignLab and Performative Scholarship: The Revelations of Dr. Kx4l3ndj3r” – Jon McKenzie, UW-Madison, DesignLab

Rhetoric: Curtin 119
Moderator: Rebekah Sheldon, UW-Milwaukee, C21 Provost Fellow

“From the Dustbin of History: Rhetoric and the Problem of Abundance” – Casey Boyle, University of Utah, English

“Tooling Affections from Allure: An Algorythmic #inhabitation of Foreclosed Remains” – Jamie “Skye” Bianco, University of Pittsburgh, English

“The Invention of the Impossible Object: Ethical Techne in Object-Oriented Media Studies” – Steve Holmes, Clemson University, Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design

Mediation 2: Curtin 118
Moderator: Charlotte Frost, UW-Milwaukee, C21 Provost Fellow

“iResearch: Using Smartphones To Do Materialist Media Theory” – Mark Cote, Victoria University, Media and Communication Studies

“The Materiality of Mobile Media: An Object-Oriented Approach to Mobile Networks” – Jason Farman, University of Maryland, American Studies and Digital Cultures and Creativity

“Happy Accidents—Facebook and the Autonomy of Affect” – Tero Karpri, University of Turku, Media Studies
Queer/Feminist/Gaga: Curtin 109
Moderator: Susan Bernstein, UW-Madison, English

“Object-Oriented Gaga: Theorizing the Nonhuman Mediation of Twenty-First Century Celebrity” – Shane Denson, Leibniz Universität Hannover, English

“Becoming Queer/Queer Becoming: Art, Affect, and the Dissolution of Being (Human)” – renée c. hoogland, Wayne State University, English

“Relationality and the Revitalization of Nature in Materialist Feminisms” – Janet Wirth-Cauchon, Drake University, Study of Culture and Society

3:45–4:00 BREAK

4:00–5:15 PLENARY: Ian Bogost, “The Aesthetics of Philosophical Carpentry”
Introduced by Stuart Moulthrop, UW-Milwaukee, English

5:15–5:30 CLOSING REMARKS: Richard Grusin
Plenary Speakers

Jane Bennett
Johns Hopkins University, Political Science

Title and Abstract
Systems and Things: A Materialist and an Object-Oriented Philosopher Walk into a Bar . . .

My goal is to explore the possibility of a notion of “sympathy” appropriate to a “new materialist” ontology. This would be a sympathy that applies not only to inter-human encounters but also to those everyday, intense flashes of connection between human and nonhuman bodies. How to characterize the ordinary event of bodies resonating with and being contagious to other bodies? Is it possible or desirable to conceive of a sympathy outside of a frame of anthropocentrism or divine design? To pursue this project, I draw upon Spinoza’s notion of affective bodies, Walt Whitman’s practice of listing (both as cataloguing and as leaning-toward), and some “new materialist” works of contemporary art.

Biography
Jane Bennett is Professor of Political Theory and Chair of the Department of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University. Her work combines an interest in continental philosophy with an interest in politics, ecology, and materialism. She is the author of *Vibrant Matter: The Political Ecology of Things* and *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*, and an editor of *The Politics of Moralizing* and *In the Nature of Things: Language, Politics, and the Environment*.

Recent Publications:
“A Vitalist Stop on the Way to a New Materialism,” in *New Materialisms*, eds. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, (Duke University Press, 2010).


Ian Bogost
Georgia Institute of Technology, School of Literature
Communication and Culture

Title and Abstract
The Aesthetics of Philosophical Carpentry

In my 2012 book *Alien Phenomenology*, I propose the name “carpentry” for the practice of philosophical craftwork, and I encourage philosophers to become engineers who make things (including, but not limited to texts). This proposal is a general one, and could be applied to any aspect of philosophy or the humanities, but in the context of speculative realism in general and object-oriented ontology in particular, the craft practice of philosophical carpentry requires just that: the development of a speculative craft practice. This talk covers my own thoughts on an aesthetics of carpentry, as well as some examples of my own work-in-progress in that vein.

Biography
Ian Bogost is a professor at Georgia Institute of Technology. His research focuses on videogames as cultural artifacts. He thinks about how to contextualize videogames, the rhetoric of videogames, and the relationship between computer hardware and expression. He also designs videogames, and the co-founder of a small publishing company. His most recent books are *How to do Things with Video Games*, *Alien Phenomenology, or What it’s like to be a Thing* and *Persuasive Games: the Expressive Power of Videogames*.

Recent Publications

*Alien Phenomenology, or What it’s like to be a Thing* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

Wendy Chun  
Brown University, Modern Culture and Media

Title and Abstract  
Imagined Networks

“Networks” has become a defining concept of our epoch. From high-speed financial networks that erode national sovereignty to networking sites like facebook.com that transform the meaning of the word “friend,” networks allegedly encapsulate the “new.” Much theoretical work in the humanities and social sciences has claimed that networks are the diagram for our current institutions: from Jean François Lyotard’s description of the postmodern self as a “nodal point” to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s examination of U.S. sovereignty as a form of “network power.” This paper asks: why? That is, rather than debating whether or not networks really are new and overpowering, it asks why have they become so privileged? What is explanatory power of networks? And why have they become the central theoretical tool for disciplines as diverse as systems biology and media theory?

Biography
Wendy Chun is Professor of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University. She has studied both Systems Design Engineering and English Literature, which she combines and mutates in her current work on digital media. She is author of Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics, Programmed Visions: Software and Memory, and co-editor (with Thomas Keenan) of New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader. She is currently working on a monograph entitled Imagined Networks.

Recent Publications:
“Crisis, Crisis, Crisis, or Sovereignty and Networks,” Theory, Culture & Society, 28 (2011): 91–112.


Mark Hansen
Duke University, Literature

Title and Abstract
Against Clairvoyance: The Future of 21st Century Media

21st century media designates media following its shift from a past-directed recording platform to a data-driven anticipation of the future. In my paper, I shall attempt to characterize the new form of governance rooted in contemporary ‘predictive analytics’ and the various systems, governmental but also commercial (e.g., Facebook, Google), that comprise nodes of its operation. I shall then explore the experiential challenges posed by this shift, and specifically by the capture of microtemporal sensibility by contemporary media industries. Finally, drawing principally on the work of Whitehead and Lazzarato, I shall sketch the rudiments of a post-phenomenological account of sensation that aims to restore unpredictability/creativity not against but on the basis of and within contemporary systems of predictive analytics.

Biography
Mark Hansen is Professor of Literature and Director of Undergraduate Studies, Literature in Duke University’s Art, Art History and Visual Studies Department. Over the past decade he has sought in his research, writing and teaching to theorize the role played by technology in human agency and social life. In work that ranges across a host of disciplines, including literary studies, film and media, philosophy (particularly phenomenology), science studies, and cognitive neuroscience, he has explored the meaning of the relentless technological exteriorization that characterizes the human as a form of life and has paid particular attention to the key role played by visual art and literature in brokering cultural adaptation to technology from the industrial revolution to the digital revolution. He is the author of Bodies in Code: Interfaces with New Media, New Philosophy for New Media, and Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing.

Recent Publications:


Bodies in Code: Interfaces with New Media (Routledge, 2006).
Erin Manning
Concordia University (Canada), Philosophy and Dance

Title and Abstract
Another Regard

In a recent piece entitled “The Silence Between,” Dawn Prince writes of an encounter with a Bonobo chimpanzee. Known for her earlier work on gorillas, especially Songs of a Gorilla Nation: My Journey Through Autism, Prince already felt a deep connection to gorillas, who, she writes, “regarded her.” In “The Silence Between,” Prince returns to this “regard,” recounting an experience of playing with the Bonobo Kanzi by running along the fence on all fours: “Naturally, I fell into the gorilla language I knew, a language of body, mind, and spirit. Kanzi and I played chase up and down the fence line, both of us on all fours, smiling in a sea of fun and deep breaths. Then something uncanny occurred: He stopped suddenly and grabbed his word board off the ground. He pointed to a symbol and then pointed to me and made a hand gesture with his eyebrows raised. It was clear that he was asking me a question. He repeated this series of words and movements over and over, until I said, out loud, ‘I’m sorry, I can’t understand, Kanzi. Let me get Sue and maybe she can help me.’ At first, she was at a loss. Then after asking him to point to the word again, she realized he was pointing to the word ‘gorilla’ on his board and making the American Sign Language sign for question after pointing to me. It was clear he was asking me if I was a gorilla.”

This paper takes this occasion as a starting point to rethink the question of “regard” in terms of Alfred North Whitehead’s notion of concern. Where regard often extrapolates the terms of the encounter from their eventness—setting the human/animal relation as primary to the event and creating expectations based on the presumed differences between their species—concern does not take the relation as pre-composed. As Whitehead writes: “The occasion as subject has a ‘concern’ for the object” (1976: 176). This concern “for the object” is not about the already formed but about the affective tonality, the edgings into experience of an occasion’s coming-into-itself. This concern for the event in its concrescence is a regard for what cannot pre-exist it: an affective tonality which will always be singularly tied to this or that occasion. “Concernedness is of the essence of perception” (Whitehead 1967: 180). Concern is never added on to a perception—it is the very how of perception: “It must be distinctly understood that no prehension even of bare sensa, can be divested of its affective tone, that is to say, of its character of a ‘concern’ “ (Whitehead 1967: 180).

This notion of concern has deep implications for the rethinking of a field of relations such as that generated in the example above. Rather than departing from a narrative of identity politics (which takes the “human” and the “animal” as given), I will explore how this singular example’s concern for the event in its eventness provokes a emergent fielding (a motif, as von Üexküll would call it) that creates an excess of species (what I call a speciation) that ties in with Whitehead’ work on nature.
Biography
Erin Manning holds a University Research Chair in the Faculty of Fine Arts at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. She is also the director of the Sense Lab (www.senselab.ca) a laboratory that explores the intersections between art practice and philosophy through the matrix of the sensing body in movement. In her art practice she works between painting, dance, fabric and sculpture (http://www.erinmovement.com). Her writing addresses the senses, philosophy and politics, articulating the relation between experience, thought and politics in a transdisciplinary framework moving between dance and new technology, the political and micropolitics of sensation, performance art, and the current convergence of cinema, animation and new media. Publications include *Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy, Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* and *Ephemeral Territories: Representing Nation, Home and Identity in Canada*.

Recent Publications:


Erin Manning’s websites: http://senselab.ca/
http://www.erinmovement.com/
Brian Massumi
University of Montréal, Communication Sciences

Title and Abstract
Animality and Abstraction

The aim of this talk is two-fold: to rethink the creative element in evolution as a positive mechanism governed by a radically different logic than that of adaptation. The analysis of creative evolution will begin from what might appear to be the least propitious starting point: instinct. Tinbergen’s discussion of “supernormal stimuli”—apparently maladaptive responses that follow a logic of intensity-seeking deformation generative of variation—will be used to extract instinct from the realm of stimulus-reflex response and resituate it in an aesthetic arena (Ruyer) alloyed with intuition (Bergson). This aesthetic element of animal life will be associated not with sexual selection (Elizabeth Grosz) but rather with play (Bateson). Bateson argues that play involves practices of lived abstraction that are an engine of evolutionary improvisation. The playful gesture brings the “supernormal” functioning of instinct into fuller and more abstract expression, preparing the way for language. The argument will remain in dialogue throughout its trajectory with Deleuze and Guattari’s theories of “creative involution.”

Biography
Brian Massumi a professor in the Department of Communication Sciences at the University of Montréal in Quebec, Canada. He is well known for his translations of several major texts in French post-structuralist theory, including Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus, Jean-François Lyotard’s The Postmodern Condition, and Jacques Attali’s Noise. Massumi’s work engages with questions surrounding the affect, the virtual, and perception. In his work, he intends to break the hold of signification to find the emergent states of intensity outside of the linear order of narrative continuity. Massumi has authored several books: Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts, Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation, and A User’s Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari.

Recent Publications:

“Perception Attack: Brief on War Time,” Theory & Event, 13, no. 3 (2010).

Brian Massumi’s Website: http://www.brianmassumi.com/
Title and Abstract
They Are Here

Even Pat Robertson and Richard Dawkins must use sun block to counteract the effects of global warming. Gigantic nonhuman beings—entities such as global warming and radiation and pollution—have dragged humans, kicking and screaming when they feel anything at all—mostly just blank with denial—into an Age of Asymmetry in which our cognitive powers become self-defeating. Knowledge is no longer able to achieve escape velocity from Earth, or more precisely, what Heidegger calls “earth,” the surging, “towering” reality of things. The dance-on-a-volcano idealism of Romantic philosophy and art has collapsed.

We are no longer poised on the edge of the abyss, contemplating its vastness while leaning on a walking stick, like the character in the Friedrich painting that exemplifies the transcendental turn and the managerial power of the bourgeoisie. Instead, like Wyle-E-Coyote in mid-air, we have discovered that we are already falling inside the abyss, which is not pure nothingness, but instead the fiery interior of a hyperobject. Or we discover that the space we inhabit is not open and neutral, but is in fact the interior of a gigantic iceberg whose transparency was simply a matter of our less than adequate eyes.

Flying through the Universe in the Space Shuttle of modernity, we find out that we were driving with the breaks on all the way, revving the engines while the fuselage lay rusting in a junkyard. We have woken up inside an object, like a movie about being buried alive. This is now the uncanny time of zombies after the end of the world, a time of hypocrisy, where every decision is “wrong.” Why? Because we are inside gigantic beings, like seven billion Jonahs inside four or five vast, intersecting whales.

Biography
Timothy Morton is a professor of English at University of California, Davis. His interests include ecology, philosophy, literature and the environment, ecotheory, biology, physical sciences, literary theory, food studies, sound and music, materialism, poetics, Romanticism, Buddhism, and the eighteenth century. He is the author of numerous books and articles, most recently, *The Ecological Thought* and *Ecology Without Nature.*
Recent Publications

*The Ecological Thought* (Harvard, 2010).


Timothy Morton’s blogs:  http://www.ecologywithoutnature.blogspot.com/  
http://arcade.stanford.edu/blogs/timothy-morton

Interview with Timothy Morton (2011):  http://figureground.ca/interviews/timothy-morton/
Steven Shaviro
Wayne State, English

Title and Abstract
Consequences of Panpsychism

Panpsychism, or panexperientialism, is the philosophical doctrine claiming that all things in the universe have some sort of at least incipient mental or experiential quality. The doctrine seems strange, but it has a long philosophical pedigree, and is defended today by a number of both analytic and continental philosophers. If we take the “inhuman turn” in contemporary thought seriously—in any of its forms, ranging from Latour’s claim for the importance of non-human actants, through Jane Bennett’s proposals for a “vital materiality,” and the various speculative realist critiques of correlationism, to the revival of interest (following Isabelle Stengers) in the non-anthropocentric thought of Alfred North Whitehead—then we need to consider at least the possibility that “things think,” and that thought cannot be confined solely to human beings and other animals with complex nervous systems. My talk is less an argument for panpsychism, than it is an attempt to consider what consequences might follow for the “inhuman turn,” were panpsychism accepted as true. In particular, I want to develop two points. First, against recent neo-vitalisms, I argue that “experientiality” is a more basic and more widespread category than “life” or “vitality.” And second, against cognitivism, I suggest that affect precedes and exceeds cognition, and that it is affectivity, rather than cognition or calculation, that lies at the base of mentality or experience.

Biography
Steven Shaviro is the DeRoy Professor of English at Wayne State University. His research interests include cultural theory, cultural studies, film and new media, postmodernism, and science fiction. He is the author of numerous books including *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics; Connected, or What it Means to Live in a Networked Society,* and *The Cinematic Body.*

Recent Publications:

Steven Shaviro’s website: http://www.shaviro.com/
Steven Shaviro’s blog: http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/
Breakout Sessions

OBJECTS 1

Rhetorical Carpentry and Becoming Object
James J. Brown, Jr.
University of Wisconsin-Madison
English

The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) protesters in Zuccotti Park were forced to craft an amplification system that they called “The Human Mic.” Protesters did not have the permit required to amplify sound with bullhorns or speakers, so they developed a workaround. A speaker would shout a sentence and then pause while the crowd repeated that sentence. In what sounded like a game of “telephone,” the protesters became the amplification system. In this system, the speaker has to wait for the amplification system between each phrase. This reminds us that any system of amplification is much more than a tool; it is a party to the conversation, helping to configure it.

But what if “The Human Mic” reveals something even more radical than this? What happens when we think of the protesters as becoming the amplification system? In Alien Phenomenology, Ian Bogost argues for a new kind of philosophical practice that he calls carpentry, the crafting of a machine “that tries to replicate the unit operation of another’s experience” (114). One example is his I am TIA, a computer program that simulates what it’s like to view the world as the graphics chip in the 1977 Atari Video Computer System. Given Bogost’s theory of carpentry, perhaps what we’re seeing at Occupy Wall Street is a kind of rhetorical carpentry—the crafting of an amplification system that seeks to capture the rhetorical life of objects. Rhetorical carpentry would not only simulate what it’s like to be an object but would also provide a simulation of the motives of that object.

“The Human Mic” means that protestors became the amplification system, and this has the potential to provide protesters with a different perspective on media, on environment, and on the objects that are part of the protest. Any amplification system (human or otherwise) is more than a mere channel through which information flows—it acts upon messages. One can say this as often as they like, but saying it is not the same as crafting a system that accounts for the motives of a bullhorn or microphone. Rhetoric has long been concerned with what motivates rhetorical agents, and this presentation extends recent work in speculative realism and rhetorical theory to consider what it might mean to account for the persuasive forces, drives, and motives of objects.
Thinking with Trees: Material-Imagination
T. Hugh Crawford
Georgia Institute of Technology
Literature, Communication and Culture

A terminology emerging in much of the New Materialist/Non-Human discourse is one of excess. Not an excessive vocabulary, but rather a notion that the non-human world always expresses more than our understanding provides. Graham Harman’s objects withdraw because there is always much more to them than our perceptions (hence his rejection of Husserlian phenomenology). Jane Bennett’s “vibrant matter” and Isabelle Stengers’s “wonder” are some of the more resonant versions of this attitude. However, we need to be cautious that such terms not become simply spectatorial. In the first chapter of her recent book, Bennett is arrested by seeing the various items caught in the storm sewer, and, though her work clearly avoids this trap, it is all too easy to experience this excess by rolling our heads like Gomer Pyle and exclaiming “shazam!” In this paper I want to think with trees, not through the quiet contemplation of forests primeval, but instead by immersion via head/hand/tool/wood—thinking materialized by and through carpentry. In Science and the Modern World, Alfred North Whitehead notes that “From the moment of birth we are immersed in action and can only fitfully guide it by taking thought.” I want to argue that “taking thought” can be a property of Whitehead’s active human, but it can also be used to describe the complete activity. By taking as example part of Ron Broglio’s performance piece “Santino’s Gift,” I will play out Stengers’s notion of wonder, linking it to the temporality of what she calls “idiocy.” Drawing also on Whitehead and Brian Massumi, I hope not to think about trees, but rather think with them.

The Eco-Poetics of Hyper-Objects: Evelyn Reilly’s Styrofoam
Lynn Keller
University of Wisconsin – Madison
English

Hyperobjects is the name Timothy Morton has given to long-lasting phenomena like radioactive pollution or materials like styrofoam that have been recently produced by humans, substances that are in some cases already being absorbed into our bodies and yet are “beyond the normal scope of our comprehension” (The Ecological Thought, 131). “Hyperobjects stretch our ideas of time and space, since they far outlast most human time scales, or they’re massively distributed in terrestrial space and so are unavailable to immediate experience” (Morton, “Hyperobjects”). Pointing out that “alongside global warming, ‘hyperobjects’ will be our lasting legacy,” Morton asserts that “the ecological thought must think the future of these objects,” a future that extends at least tens of thousands of years (Ecological Thought 130). Ten thousand years is an inconsequential length of time in a geological context, yet almost beyond imagining for the human being, whose life span is unlikely to exceed a century.

In contrast to conventional environmentally concerned poetry, which has tended to focus on human experiences of sublime or soothing nature, on human attachment to place, and, recently, on connecting the human to other animal species or biotic webs, Evelyn Reilly’s experimental volume from 2009, Styrofoam, takes on the immense challenge of trying to confront the reality and nonhuman scale of “styrofoam deathlessness.” In heavily collaged pages that juxtapose the periodic
table of thermoplastics with received notions of cornucopia, images of styrofoam art with photos of roadkill and internet data on environmental accidents, meditations on the creation of latex with consideration of the creation of epic poetry, Reilly works to develop an ecopoetics that can highlight interactions and relations among things and “usefully represent the unrepresentable.” She aims to produce work that is “dis-enchanted” in the sense of “being free from the mesmerizing spell of the transcendent” (Reilly, “Eco-Noise and the Flux of Lux”), yet her volume alludes frequently to several works in which enchantment and the transcendent loom large-- in particular, Melville’s chapter from Moby Dick on “The Whiteness of the Whale,” Coleridge’s “Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner,” and D. H. Lawrence’s “Ship of Death.” I will focus my analysis on Reilly’s construction, partly through these allusions to works in the Romantic and humanist tradition, of a kind of anti-sublime that decenters the human and ties the reader’s feet to the ground where s/he must stare directly at “MATERIAL CHANGE THE PILOT / UNCONTROLLED GROWTH THE SERIES” and think the future to which they point.

DEATH

Stretched Skulls: Anamorphic Games and the Memento Mortem Mortis
Stephanie Boluk
Vassar College
Media Studies

Patrick LeMieux
Duke University
Art, Art History, and Visual Studies

From Hans Holbein’s The Ambassadors to Robert Lazzarini’s skulls, anamorphic artworks explore the tension between mathematical models of vision and more fully embodied models of subjectivity. After reviewing the ways in which anamorphosis has been deployed as a philosophical tool for examining this relationship between technology and phenomenology, specifically via the criticism of Espen Aarseth and Mark Hansen, this paper analyzes how contemporary videogames like Sony’s Echochrome series, levelHead by Julian Oliver, and Mark ten Bosch’s forthcoming Miegakure technically, aesthetically, and conceptually explore anamorphic techniques. Historically, anamorphosis has been deployed as a memento mori, but we propose that games which frame anamorphosis as a metaphor for technology can be more accurately described as memento mortem mortis: reminders of a space beyond the death of death. Anamorphic games gesture towards fields of experience altogether indifferent to the human and foreground the radical alterity of computational logics to create allegories of the beyond. The result is that these are not so much speculative games, as they are games of speculation.
The Corpse and Other (Post)Human (Non)Objects
Sarah Juliet Lauro
UC-Davis
English

Some years ago, a colleague and myself presented a paper at the American Comparative Literature Association’s annual meeting; it was called “A Zombie Manifesto: The Non-Human Condition in the era of Advanced Capitalism.” (Our article was later published in boundary 2.) In the main, what we sought to do was to bring into parallax focus both posthumanist theory and anti-capitalist critique. The figure of the zombie served as a kind of prism through which we could first refract these discourses in order to ascertain where they were doing similar work, so that we might project what we hoped were useful intersections.

The paper I propose to deliver at your conference on the “Non-Human Turn in 21st Century Studies” might be thought of as a counterpart to the “Zombie Manifesto,” but here I will turn my attention from dead bodies in motion, to those at rest. Drawing on both Posthumanist theory and Object Oriented Ontology, I explore the manner in which the corpse constructively troubles certain currents in these philosophies, and, in another fashion, illuminates the dark regions in which they are fellow travelers. Can the corpse be properly thought of as an object? If so, what does the principle of “anthropo-centrism” look like when applied to this (literally) posthuman object?

Some corpses continue to “speak” after death-- think of the body of a political leader put on display, or the way that heads on pikes loudly proclaim defeat. Others are put to work-- anatomical models, for example, teach medical students, and organ donors supply replacement parts to the biological machines of the still-living. The afterlife of the corpse is dramatized in art, and my argument is grounded in a few concrete textual examples in which the corpse itself becomes witness, testimony, and finally, evidence of the transformation that awaits us all from human into object. This paper examines characterizations of the corpse as a nonhuman thing, an human object, and will investigate moments in literature, film, art, and culture where dead bodies perform functions, and thus, take on a kind of lifelikeness like that attributed to nonhuman objects in recent work by Graham Harman and others. What does it mean for nonhuman studies that this particular organic object (the human corpse) appears to have a kind of agency after death? Does considering the human corpse a nonhuman object reaffirm or undermine this field of inquiry?

Emma Roe
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Geography and Environment

For too long the material connections between meat in food of low nutritional value and that in premium quality meat-cuts have been overlooked. We have not found a way to think this connection, to name it either in the academic, public policy or domestic scenes, nor to identify the implications of these material connections for global food distribution patterns and nutrition. This failure can be attributed I argue to a failure to recognize the agency of nonhuman visceral matter in
the meat production industry and how it shapes commercial practices working to create food.

This paper is a close study of the animal body becoming a carcass of edible meat, consisting of what I call ‘visceral-objects’. Central to my argument is outlining the ontology of the ‘visceral-object’. I unpick what the ontology of the visceral-object is in commercial meat animal production, meat processing and retailing through studying different processes and practices of different animals (chicken and cow) becoming meat. This research is based on empirical material from interviews and ethnographic study of meat animal production systems, abattoirs, meat processing factories and food retailing in Europe.

The analysis draws upon the work of Mol (2002), Bryant (2011) and Bennett (2010) to consider the agencies and capacities of visceral-objects of different matter-kinds that make up edible bodies. Following the work of Mol (2002) ontology is understood as performed through practices; following the work of Bryant (2011) particular attention is paid to object-object relations which are particularly resonant for the visceral-object; and following Bennett (2010) in conclusion this paper outlines a ‘political ecology’ of visceral-matters. Through analysis of practices and processes in three transformative ‘life-phases’ of the ‘visceral-object’ as animal body-part, as carcass feature, and as meat-cut the paper continues conversations between feminist materialist literature on the body with object-orientated ontology literature in the context of a neoliberal food regime.

References

ETHICS

**Tektology Transfer**
McKenzie Wark
The New School for Social Research
Culture and Media

One of the less helpful legacies of Western Marxism has been to redact Marx’s advances towards a materialism that would exceed both philosophy and humanism back to certain canonic figures. Thus we have Kantian, Spinozist and Hegelian Marxes. Rarely is he understood in the context in which he saw himself: namely Epicurus, Lucretius, 18th century materialism and in particular the natural history of Darwin. Marx saw historical materialism as a subset of natural history.

A further error is to maintain that the main line of development of Marx’s though descends either through the Frankfurt school or the Althusserians. The former results in a retreat to the Kantian split between the realm of human freedom and natural necessity. The latter results in a purely epistemological relation to the natural sciences, and a theoretical anti-humanism which remains exactly that – theoretical.
Neither are satisfactory forms of knowledge for the era of climate change, and if one is to be a Marxist on the question of the politics of knowledge, then one’s relation to an inherited tradition has to be governed by just such an agenda. The Western Marxist construct has outlived its usefulness, and its highly selective version of the tradition, and its misreading of Marx’s own formation, have to be rejected.

Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that two figures marginalized by the Western Marxist construct were rare and early identifiers of the possibility of anthropogenic climate change: Alexander Bogdanov and Nikolai Bukharin. After framing the question of what is at stake at this critical juncture in the recasting of this critical tradition, this paper then turns to a brief presentation of just one piece of this excluded tradition: Bogdanov’s ‘tektology’.

Built on a study of the impact of modern physics on the metaphysics of the time, tektology, was an original contribution to a nonhuman concept of the practice of knowledge in dark times, which tracked homologies of form across different disciplines, with the aim of constructing a pedagogy of forms and their evolution that was discipline independent, and designed for the training of intellectuals for a period of difficult transition.

Given that we are in a period that calls for a transition to new post-carbon systems, the least we can do is try to learn from such examples and prepare the university for the production of the kinds of knowledge that will be needed in the imminent future.

Thus: while welcoming the turn away from hermeneutic practices of humanist knowledge, this paper is skeptical about the value of the positive contributions of some currents which allegedly make such a ‘turn.’ Instead, it advocates looking elsewhere for the theoretical and practical bases for a collaborative practices of knowledge that are attentive to critical agendas and open to the applied sciences and the constructivist practices of knowledge they require.

**Companionable Objects, Companionable Conscience: Ethics and the Predicaments of Dwelling with Things**

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Anthropology

My paper explores crafted things and the ethical and affective ties we form with them in our everyday lifeworlds and contemporary public spheres. A simple idea leads me write about “companionable objects” and “companionable conscience.” Things, too, are social beings—though not human beings—and as we dwell together with them we become vulnerable to them, and they to us. In that mutuality of influence between people and things there is both care and violence. An ethical realm stretches between us. And so I pose a question: Will we see ethics differently, will we see conscience in a new light, if we look to things as a fulcrum or as partners in ethical relationships? Using materials from ethnographic fieldwork and art historical research in South and Southeast Asia, I suggest that we will.
My “materialist” approach springs from the phenomenological and pragmatist perspectives that have led anthropologists such as Tim Ingold (2006), Michael Jackson (1998), Bruno Latour (1996, 2005), Yael Navarro-Yashin (2009), and Elizabeth Povinelli (1995) to insist on our need to recognize our intersubjective relations with material and natural things. A resurgent interest in the murky boundary between persons and things has come to preoccupy many of us in anthropology (e.g., Appadurai 1986; Gell 1998; George 1999; Keane 2003; Myers 2001; and Pels et al 2002). The “material turn” in anthropology fits congenially, meanwhile, with the rise of “thing theory” in literary and cultural studies (e.g., Ahmed 2006; Brown 2001, 2006; Felski 2007; Mondzain 2009; Plotz 2005; Schwenger 2006; Stern 2001), and in visual cultural studies, where W. J. T. Mitchell (2005) has asked, “What do pictures want?” The material turn, I argue, should shed light on the way our relationships with things also mark the public horizons and communal distribution of our ethicopolitical sensibilities. As Susan Gal (2002) and Jacques Rancière (2004) suggest, communal formations may rest on the distribution of such sensibilities.

Put another way, communities are what Miguel Tamen (2001) calls “friends of interpretable objects”—groups of people who have recognizable ways for dealing with things, and for identifying those things that will be recognized and made companionable and those that will be destroyed or expelled in iconoclastic purge.

Taking cue from these writers, and my decade of work with contemporary artists in Muslim Asia, I aim to understand how materiality plays a crucial role in constituting our conscience and ethical sensibilities.

**Ethology Becomes Ethics: Exploding Uexküll**

Arun Saldanha
University of Minnesota
Geography

Jakob von Uexküll’s concept of Umwelt has had a spectacular career, given that so few of his writings have been available, thanks to the uptake by Heidegger and other phenomenologists, then Deleuze & Guattari and most recently Agamben. This paper will argue that the concept has an intrinsically reactionary tendency and has to be exploded in favor of a critical return to the Darwinian understandings of life, environment, sensuality, and populations. Only by staying clear of the closet representationalism in Uexküll’s biosemiotics is it possible to deter the nationalist-vitalist readings his work led to in a cosmopolitan ethics of environmental concern.
OBJECTS 2

Process-Relational Theory and the Eco-Ontological Turn: Clearing the Ground between Whitehead, Deleuze, and Harman
Adrian Ivakhiv
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Environmental Studies

Calls for a nonhuman or posthuman “turn” can be taken as echoing a call for an “ecological turn” that environmental thinkers have made for decades. Precursors to an “ecological ontology” and/or an “ecological epistemology” can be found in the work of Bateson, Maturana and Varela, Gibson, Ingold, and others. More recently, philosophers influenced by Deleuze and Guattari (such as Stengers, Delanda, Protevi, and Berressem) have taken up these calls for an eco- or geo-philosophy.

This paper argues that in this task of developing an ecophilosophy, there is value in recognizing a “process-relational” tradition as running in parallel to substantialist, materialist, idealist, and dualist philosophies over the centuries. Such a tradition, while loosely construed and somewhat artificial, unites philosophers as disparate as Heraclitus, Chuang Tzu, and Nagarjuna with Peirce, Whitehead, Hartshorne, Simondon, Deleuze, and Stengers.

The bulk of the paper responds to Graham Harman’s recent critique of process-relational approaches. Harman argues that process-relational thinkers have already had their day and have failed to account for the stabilities and inner depths of objects that make up a (posthuman) world. Building on comparative and interpretive work by Rescher, Weber, Shaviro, Faber, Griffin, Kakol, and others, I briefly recapitulate the ontological distinctiveness of the process-relational tradition, and make the case that however widely notions of relational “interconnectedness” may have spread in our time, a clearly articulated process-relational philosophy has not been widely accepted in modern times (contrary to Harman’s suggestion otherwise). I proceed to argue that a process-relationalism grounded in the encounter between Whitehead, Peirce, and Deleuze can better account for the depths of Harman’s “objects” than Harman’s object-oriented metaphysics precisely because those depths point toward the processuality that constitutes the beating heart of all things.

Harman’s critique ignores the way in which Whitehead’s actual occasions constitute an ongoing infusion of creative novelty into the universe. The novelty comes neither from a pre-existing reserve of hidden qualities of objects (as in Harman’s object-oriented ontology) nor from some external realm of displaced “eternal objects” (as some interpretations of Whitehead suggest), but from each decisive act of prehension that constitutes every instance of actualization in the universe. The question of how this creativity is generated is arguably left somewhat mysterious; it is, for the most part, assumed to be there in the nature of things. Deleuze’s (and Delanda’s) gestures toward nonlinear dynamic systems topologies provide useful indications of how the virtual, when considered as equally real and dynamic as the actual, might account for the generation of this creativity. Peircian evolutionary semiotics (of firstness, secondness, and thirdness) provide a different means of approaching the same problem. Drawing on these and other resources in the process-relational tradition, I argue, presents a promising foundation for an ecological ontology that would recognize the creative capacity for novel interactions among human and nonhuman agents,
while also suggesting a basis for evaluating which kinds of interactions might attain greater intensities of beauty and satisfaction (in Whitehead’s terms) than others.

New Media Ontology: Interacting with Object-Oriented Philosophy and Computational Objects
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New Media

This paper is concerned with how the “nonhuman turn” could translate into a more insightful critical agenda for new media studies. I will argue that new media studies relies too much on a cultural-studies-driven paradigm centred on participatory culture and human interaction to the detriment of the actual computational objects themselves. Inspired by recent developments in object-oriented philosophy (OOP), this crucial reorientation will shed light on the ontological status of the “object” in object-oriented programming, the notion of “interaction” in physical computing (a.k.a object-oriented hardware), and, ultimately, what can be accomplished by interacting with OOP in the context of computational objects that have never been examined from a philosophically informed point of view before.

Far from being an instrumental appropriation of OOP, or a purely technical exploration of object-oriented programming and physical computing, the paper will make a plea for the development of a second phase in OOP in which objects would be further differentiated based on their singular ontological properties. In the case of computational objects, I will argue that such objects deserve special consideration because they have no precedent: they are the first programmable objects in history that can be made to simulate other objects. While OOP has put human beings and objects on the same footing, it has not gone far enough in singling out particular objects and their properties that differentiate them from other objects. The paper will argue for a differentiated philosophy of objects and posit that computational objects are a special case.

The last part of the paper being devoted to brief case studies, I will first turn to object-oriented programming and show how it features data and behaviours that are encapsulated in modalities of inheritance and composition (aggregation and association) that allow objects to interact with other objects. In the second case study, focusing on physical computing and object-oriented hardware, I will discuss Arduino (www.arduino.cc), which is an open-source hardware movement, and examine the three types of interfaces it features: the physical, software, and electrical interfaces. The Arduino case study will show how its software object interacts with physical and electrical objects such as microcontrollers and the Arduino boards and shields in the making of interactive things. These two case studies will thus set the stage for a refined version of OOP in terms of computational objects, programming, simulation, and interaction.

**Against Deleuze’s Joy: Vitalism beyond Affectionate Immanence**

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Theory and Criticism

Until recently vitalism has been either derided as an unscientific and anachronistic theory of life or as a philosophical concept determined primarily by the work of Bergson and Deleuze. This is further complicated by the fact that the latter in text (co-authored with Guattari) *What is Philosophy?*, identifies vitalism as being split between “an Idea that acts but is not and a force that is but does not act.” Through this split the opposition to which vitalism had traditionally belonged (that of vitalism versus mechanism) shifts to that of life as thinkable and life as unthinkable. This formulation of vitalism has been taken up recently (directly and indirectly) by thinkers such as Jane Bennett, Steven Shaviro, and Eugene Thacker.

For Bennett the issue becomes separating atavistic forms of vitalism from more critical forms (in Bergson and Dreisch) which allows for a vibrant or vital materialism which can allow for new approaches to politics. For Shaviro, speculative realism writ large introduces a choice between panpsychism and/or vitalism and eliminativism and/or emergence which rests in the need for a better understanding of sense and aesthetics. For Thacker, vitalism contains an enigmatic usage of life which itself upsets the correlational or co-imbricating categories of thinking and being leaving us in a state of thought-as-horror or perhaps in the cloud of a negative theological wager.

The critique I wish to pursue with these thinkers (but also against them) is that a tacit alliance with Deleuze is maintained by each, and that this is ultimately unhelpful in cleaving thinking from being vis a vis life. For Bennett, Shaviro, and Thacker I wish to question how Deleuze functions as the central philosopher of life and, subsequently, as the dominant way of philosophically thinking life which, despite a pronounced radicalism (which Manuel DeLanda has perhaps best espoused), anchors thought in a concept of life amiable to it. This problem, it can be wagered, also points to a deeper indecision in Deleuze between a philosophy of sense and a metaphysics more traditionally defined. By engaging these three thinkers through their Deleuzian alliances, I wish to outline a dark vitalism that opens the conditions of life without opening them strictly for thought.
ANIMALS

Talking with Animals
Marilyn Cooper
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Humanities

In most strands of the research that make up the nonhuman turn, animals (and things too, to some extent, though I won’t deal with them here) are addressed in terms of how much like humans they are: they think, they have emotions and language, they are moral. Not denying any of these claims, I instead wish to consider what animals have to teach humans, particularly with regard to communication. Drawing from scholars who theorize how we communicate with animals (Latour, Haraway, Despret), I argue for understanding communication as embodied behavior, as a form of “making with.”

Most scholars at this conference will agree that communication is not the transmission of information and probably agree too that it is not purely cognitive but also involves emotion. I argue that communicative behavior is grounded in bodies that interact, that (contra Luhmann) communication is not a system that can be separated from those who “talk” (in the broadest sense) with one another. The goal of communication is not to grasp the meanings of others but to respond to others, and responding is a fully embodied behavior, involving all the senses and the whole neural system: thinking, feeling, and acting. Thus, communication as “making with” brings forth in an ongoing way not only new meanings, but new things, new selves, new worlds, and new knowledge.

Making with is making through interaction, connection, and response, not through mastery. Despret explains how rats, in behaving as their experimenters expected them to, “authorized” the experimenters “to become competent” (120); Haraway describes her engagement with her dog Cayenne in agility competitions, furthering our understanding of how “dogs and people learn to pay attention to each other in a way that changes who and what they become together” (208); and Latour, following Whitehead, characterizes the way humans come together with nonhumans as propositions, risky attachments enabling humans (especially scientists) to become more or less trustworthy spokespersons for nonhumans: “we all work constantly to make things relevant to what we say about them. If we stop working, they no longer say anything; but when they do speak, it is indeed they that speak and not we ourselves” (85; and see Haraway 93). As these examples demonstrate, understanding communication as making with also illuminates how communication always entails an ethic of response, or responsibility.

Works Cited
Compulsory Affectivity: Affect, Animality, and the Nonhuman Turn
Donovan Schaefer
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Religion

This paper will argue for a new direction in contemporary affect theory: rather than viewing affects as passive, as a set of receptors stimulated as the body rubs up against the world, affects are active, living emotional realities that pull bodies behind them. Building on the work of Jane Bennett and Kathleen Stewart, this paper will argue that affects must be understood as having their own agency within bodies. This compulsory affectivity necessitates a shift in how we understand our own subjectivity, reframing bodies according to animality.

Emerging out of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s poststructuralist reading of Silvan Tomkins, affect theory orients the humanities to the priority of affect over perception, cognition, and language. Perception and epistemology, for Sedgwick, are epiphenomenal to a more fundamental bodily economy of affects. Echoing Darwin’s own interest in emotions from *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, affect theory proposes a more vigorous attention to the affective parameters of our embodied lives—a reorientation to the animality of perceptual experience. Sarah Ahmed has suggested that we perceive things in the world attached to “sticky” affects that condition how bodies and groups engage with them. Rather than fixing on concepts and language, affect theory orients us to the welter of emotions sticking to the world, driving thought and behavior within the body.

This paper will argue that this sticky affectivity is not just a set of passive registers embedded in bodies. Jane Bennett has suggested that matter has its own dimension of agency, its own “vibrancy.” Rather than focusing on subjectivity as the sine qua non of agency, Bennett indicates agency in other forms, the suite of micro-agencies penetrating bodies. Kathleen Stewart, for her part, has proposed the interrelated concepts of “ordinary affects” and “bloom spaces” to account for the emotional resonances between bodies and worlds. Taken together, these concepts provide a new way of thinking about affects as having their own agency, as driving bodies towards worlds.

By way of conclusion, this paper will turn to Teresa Brennan’s claim that the reorientation to affect overruns the classical western paradigm of autonomous, self-sovereign subjects. Compulsory affectivity *doubles* the force of this critique, not only undermining the rationality of the subject, but its autonomy. Compulsory affectivity compels us to return to Darwin and confront the radical animality of our bodies.
Animals, Assemblage, and Abstraction: Towards a Dark Ethics
James K. Stanescu
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Philosophy and Communication Studies

This paper takes up the notion of dark ecology from Tim Morton—an idea of enmeshed and embedded consciousness that refuses the division of Self and Nature—and extends this concept to the work of critical animal studies. It is has become common to critique certain advocates against animal exploitation of being concerned with purity over real change and facts. One need only look at criticisms from thinkers like Pollan, Kingsolver, and Kathy Rudy to realize how prevalent the idea that one have to be willing to kill and eat other animals in order to have taken seriously the concerns of the environment and animals. Otherwise, such critics contend, you are more concerned about the purity of your soul than you are concerned about the non-human. This idea of the purity of the soul should call to mind both Hegel’s notion of the beautiful soul, and Morton’s expansion of the idea of a beautiful soul syndrome. While I take seriously this criticism of the beautiful soul toward animal activists and academics, I propose there is a way of thinking of relation to other animals that take us out of such a syndrome, a way of thinking that refuses the division of Self and Nature, that refuses the division of Human and Animal.

Therefore, I propose that animal studies must take seriously assemblage theory, and come to grips with Jane Bennett’s proposal that we must engage in mutually enabling instrumentalizations. Such an idea causes us to move away from the individualism of an animal rights discourse, and instead forces us to confront the ethical reality of such instrumentalizations. In order to confront such a reality, I take up the idea of abstraction—as originally framed by Peirce, Whitehead, and Deleuze and Guattari and further elucidated by commentary of Massumi, Stengers, and Shaviro—as a key concept for a non-human ethics. While abstraction has commonly been treated as a concept for ontological thinking, I argue that abstraction is a necessary component for ethics, if we wish for ethics to escape the purely phenomenological that have dominated Continental conceptions of ethics. As we come to understand ourselves as enmeshed in ecologies and assemblages, the idea that ethics can be left to the immediacy of the face of the Other for whom we have an infinite responsibility seems more and more untenable. Against the phenomenological, we turn our attention to abstraction and an ethics that can take seriously ourselves as enmeshed and embedded.

MEDICATION 1

Mediation for Nonhuman Cognition
James J. Pulizzi
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English

Recent theorists and philosophers have turned their attention to the agency (e.g. Bruno Latour, and Bill Brown), intentionality (e.g. Graham Harman), and vitalism of nonhuman objects/things. I argue that we can understand this revived interest as a belated coming to terms with intelligent nonhuman cybernetic systems from the mid-twentieth century. The ability of those electro-mechanical systems...
to interact with their environment and modify their behavior finally made it possible to think of nonhuman things/objects as suffused with cognition and agency without necessarily invoking vitalism, animism, or panpsychism. N. Katherine Hayles, Donna Haraway, and Andy Clark have argued for the complex interrelation (via feedback loop or other self-reflective mechanism) of cognition, bodies, technologies, and media. But how is it possible to talk about nonhuman systems as cognitive agents without putting them in a feedback loop with humans, without Quentin Meillassoux’s correlationist circle consuming them?

The paper I propose for the “Nonhuman Turn in 21st Century Studies” conference will examine just that question. Nonhuman and human cognitive systems seem inextricably enmeshed because both are recursive. We know that the neural structures of human cognition involve multiple recursive loops thanks to scientific research ranging from Humberto Maturana’s and Francisco Varela’s *Autopoiesis and Cognition* (1980) to the Nobel laureate Gerald Edelman’s work on re-entry. Nonhuman cognition reects the recursive aspect of human cognition except that the recursion takes the form of loops among media technologies. Human cognition’s simulation in literary, visual, or digital form, however, also appears as such feedback loops, and so comes into contact with nonhuman cognition. While realism deals with human cognition’s mediation of reality, what I call fractal realism treats that mediation as the sphere in which human cognition, its simulation, and nonhuman cognition fold into one another. Like their mathematical cousins, fractal realist media systems teeter between order and chaos with every circuit through the many feedback and feed forward loops.

To understand how this process works, I begin by asking how media mediate, and how they can establish recursive loops. Gilbert Simondon’s theory of transduction gives an account of how media transmit information/structure from one to another, and in so doing, it shows how they may feed back into themselves thereby increasing their complexity. Transduction augments mediation in fractal realism.

**The Good Hyperlink**  
Anne Helmond  
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Media Studies

This study looks at the history of the hyperlink from a medium-specific perspective by analyzing the treatment of the hyperlink by software and devices over time. Hyperlinks may be seen as having different roles belonging to specific periods, including the role of the hyperlink as a unit of navigation, a relationship marker, a reputation indicator and a currency of the web. The question here is how different devices such as search engines and social media platforms have contributed to constitute these roles. By following how hyperlinks have been handled and in their turn have adapted to this treatment it will trace the emergence of new types of hyperlinks and linking practices. The hyperlink as a key natively digital object is considered to be the fabric of the web and in this role has the capacity to create relations, constitute networks and organize and rank content. Strands of hyperlink studies have been distinguished that deal with the hyperlink as objects that form networks, objects that signify a particular type of relationship and the use and usage of hyperlinks. What this study aims to contribute is to look into the technical (re)configuration of the hyperlink over time. It
will address how search engines and social media platforms handle the hyperlink and the particular ways in which they use it to organize and rank content and how it has adapted to these devices. By distinguishing between ‘traditional’ manually created hyperlinks and hyperlinks configured by software and platforms such as embed codes, widgets and social buttons this paper will focus on the increasing automatization of the creation of hyperlinks through software features. Special attention is paid to the impact of social media on the hyperlink. Social media platforms have introduced a number of alternative devices to organize relations between users, web objects and content through acts of sharing, liking, tweeting or digging. These devices shall be understood as pre-configured links, where the link has already been created by the platform and has been embedded in a widget or button. This automatization of the hyperlink has created new linking practices and new ways of organizing relations and content online. By providing a historical and medium-specific account of the hyperlink that foregrounds its socio-technical relationship with software devices, the paper will trace its changing role of organizing relations and content and its differentiation in the context of social media.

**Simple Solutions: Slashdot and the Articulation of Web Culture as Information System**

Michael Stevenson  
University of Amsterdam  
Media Studies

The most recognizable element of web culture today is its capacity to facilitate mass collaboration and amateur engagement in the production, distribution and consumption of media - the product of a broad shift that has been called the participatory paradigm or web 2.0. While attention is routinely given to their democratic potential (or to related critiques), novel cultural technologies from Wikipedia and blogging to Twitter and Facebook are rarely discussed in terms of software and interface design decisions, or the conceptual models, underlying assumptions and prior technical conditions that guide them. In this paper, I turn to the history of Slashdot, the tech news and discussion site that by 1999 had implemented many features now associated with social media and web 2.0 platforms, to demonstrate how an analysis focused on the architecture of such media challenges some basic assumptions in contemporary approaches to web culture. In particular, I make the case that Slashdot’s innovations represent a significant technological manifestation of a strand in cybercultural thought - one studied and critiqued by scholars such as N. Katherine Hayles and Fred Turner - in which media and culture are imagined as variable and quantifiable information flows. So rather than understanding Slashdot as the prototype for a new, open form of journalism or as an extension of fan culture practices, as has been argued elsewhere, I make the case that it should be seen as part of an ongoing expansion of information systems design to areas beyond the traditional concerns of information retrieval and computer science. Slashdot and its successors, in other words, belong to a lineage that includes Tim Berners-Lee’s semantic web and Facebook’s social graph, and have less to do with attempts to reform news and entertainment media than is commonly thought. This research seeks to contribute to an emerging body of work that focuses on what Sabine Niederer and Jose van Dijck call the “technicity” of web cultural production, specifically by exploring the historical conditions of the articulation of web culture as systemized information.
Digital Extinction
Joshua Schuster
University of Western Ontario

In an era of rapid biodiversity loss, we have given very little thought to the philosophical, psychological, and aesthetic implications of extinction. This essay draws from a larger project on the meaning of extinction in the context of new trends in animal studies by looking into the role new digital technologies play in documenting and possibly resurrecting animals from extinction. Mass animal extinction is converging with “digital Darwinism” (Richard Dawkin’s phrase), which presents both opportunities and multiple dangers for scientists as well as artists who wish to use technology to stem biodiversity crash. Artists and naturalist ecologists tend to use digital media technology to savor the feeling of last encounters, portraying the animals in melancholic tones. They represent vanishing animals in tropes of finitude that are invested in humanist models of mourning and humanitarian action, courting NGOs and fundraising entities that support wildlife preservation. Genetic scientists, on the other hand, see extinction as something that technology could render merely temporary. Indeed, rather than expect that human behaviour will change and thereby prevent extinction from spiralling, geneticists such as Craig Venter and Betsy Dresser seek to bypass human institutions, friend or foe to the animals, and amass a database of dying species and “frozen zoos” in order to resurrect them when the technology allows. But although extinction may be something one can engineer around (at least temporarily), we need to begin to consider the next effects of such science, including such issues as: the relation of capitalism to biodiversity, Jurassic Park fantasies, responsibility for digital life, preferential restocking of only favored species, the inevitable obsolescence of technology, and the possibility for digital data to be hoarded and hacked.

Digital technology is already playing a crucial role in documenting species loss, as Ursula Heise has argued, pointing to the importance of databases and the IUCN red list. My paper draws on this analysis to examine other aspects of digital technology, biotech, and new media, including narrative art works that imagine how research into artificial life would apply to species loss (Philip K. Dick’s Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep being a famous early example, Atwood’s Oryx and Crake a more recent take). With these technologies in mind, I also consider the philosophical implications of plasticity (Catherine Malabou) and artificial life theories of new media in their conceptualizations of the science and ethics of extinction. Biologically and philosophically, extinction is a rupture of being, a transition from being to nothingness. But digitally, extinction can be deferred and mediated, making possible the persistence of speciation by other means. What then is the ontology of extinction, now that we face the sixth mass extinction event but also witness the rise of digital Darwinism?
Towards a Supra-Human Metaphysics of Media
Aaron Pedinotti
NYU
Media, Culture and Communication

Several of the thinkers and schools of thought associated with the nonhuman turn have produced work in which media and processes of mediation are conceived as more-than-human phenomena. Actor Network Theory ascribes a causal role to mediators in the networks through which human and nonhuman forms of agency exert their mutually translational effects. The neo-Whiteheadian approaches of Stengers and Shaviro posit mediated processes ofprehension and objectification as key factors in the concrescence of all existing entities. Jussi Parikka has recently applied a Deleuzian approach to the study of distributed communication networks in arthropod insect communities. And in the object-oriented philosophy of Graham Harman, Ian Bogost, Tim Morton and others, mediums are characterized as the primary means by which things-in-general are able to encounter and affect each other. This characterization has entailed a retrospective look at the ways in which metaphysical theories of supra-human mediation have informed the history of philosophy through the ages, from the Aristotelian tradition to Islamic and French occasionalism, to the empiricist and rationalist thinkers of the seventeenth century, up to phenomenology and the McLuhan brothers.

In almost all of these cases, mediation is conceived as something that occurs in nonhuman domains, often informing the primordial mechanisms of worldly causation itself. This poses an interesting challenge to contemporary practitioners of nonhuman theory, particularly to those who have been influenced by the renaissance of metaphysical thinking in speculative realist circles. The challenge is to provide an explicit, metaphysical definition of media, informed by the rich assortment of contemporary and historical theorists who have commented on the subject, which can be applied to various types of nonhuman interaction.

This is the task that I pursue in my paper. I do so in three steps. First: I briefly survey the thinkers discussed above in terms of their takes on the topic of mediation. Second: using the concepts derived from this survey, I put forth a syncretic metaphysical definition of media, drawing particularly upon actor network, neo-Whiteheadian, and object-oriented approaches. Lastly, I apply this definition to the identification and analysis of mediated activity among animals, plants, and inanimate objects. My approach is therefore broadly metaphysical in terms of its overall reach, but specifically nonhuman in terms of its empirical application.
Posthuman: Next Steps
Lucia Santaella
São Paulo Catholic University
Technologies of Intelligence and Digital Design

As I have explained in several previous works, behind the diversity of interpretations, acceptances, and rejections of the notions of the posthuman there are different ways of understanding technology. According to Sloterdijk, the horror towards technology is inversely proportional to the attachment to old metaphysical truths. Having this in mind, we must testify that the increasing complexity of technological advances has brought human beings to an unprecedented condition under the name of posthuman or, more recently, nonhuman.

This paper aims to discuss the next steps and concerns of this new human condition, highlighting the transmutation of what we are used to call objects. In a very short time, microchips will become so plentiful that intelligent systems will spread to millions in every corner of our environment. Instead of becoming the voracious monsters portrayed in science fiction movies, computers will be so small that they will become ubiquitous and invisible, being everywhere and nowhere, so powerful that they will disappear from our view. These invisible devices will communicate with each other and automatically connect to a membrane composed of millions of computer networks in an intelligent planet.

All things that surround us, somehow, will turn into communicating beings. The information, which currently is still confined in databases, monitor screens, iphones, ipads, etc. will jump to the objects, architecture, clothes and bodies. A generation of intelligent technologies will anticipate and learn to act autonomously based on discernible patterns.

In this context one of the questions to be raised is: will the last ramparts of the old epistemological dichotomies between subject and object finally collapse? This work aims to discuss these dichotomies in the light of contemporary materialism, also known as speculative realism. As far as I can see, this new philosophical trend presents a potential to build bridges between oppositions that, until recently, philosophy would have considered insurmountable. Which answers can this new object-oriented philosophy bring to the reconfiguration of humans faced to their admixture with the new sentient beings that are emerging?

ARTS

Immediation as Process and Practice of Digital Mattering
Christoph Brunner
Zurich University for the Arts
Institute for Critical Theory

How is perception a constitutive force in interactive media environments and how does it effect its cultural and social conditions? What is the role of matter and materiality as co-constituting the fabric of perceptual events? These questions provide the ground for a conceptual and practical
development of the term *immediation*. Immediation describes the immediacy of particular aesthetic sensations and locates the event of imminated experience in the materiality of everyday life. It highlights the immediacy with which digital processes enhance or delimit perception and affect everyday life by directly shaping experience. This presentation investigates an immersive and interactive media environment called *Panoscope* - a 360° hemispheric projection space allowing for a fully immersive embodied experience – to parse out main aspects of immediation. Three lines of investigation will underscore immediation as tool for thinking and working with such media environments: 1) The creative role of perception as neither subjective nor objective but relational defines the crucial argument for immediation as embodied and located in everyday life. Perception is the very process through which a subject can temporarily conceive of itself in relation to an environment as apparently objectified and navigable. The *Panoscope* makes use of virtual reality technologies not to imagine new, unknown worlds, but to experiment with the point of perceptual emergence, where perception as relational process enables non-habitualized and distributed (ecological) experiences. 2) The shift away from virtual reality as imaginary space encompasses a reconsideration of the digital not as pure abstraction but a relational process as part of each perception. By developing a concept of *digital mattering* the co-emergence of material conditions and processes of thinking will be emphasized. The relationality of digital mattering becoming part of immediation can be also traced through a move away from signs as signifiers and towards signals as attractors for potential perception. 3) As a consequence the last line of investigation asks how processes of digital and signaletic mattering gain ethical and aesthetic relevance. Immediation as embodied and located in everyday life foregrounds the potential for perceptual change as an ecological practice—an ethico-aesthetic politics of perception.

**Brimming with Vitality: Experiencing Colour Beyond Human Perception in Seurat’s *La Grande Jatte***

Troy Rhoades  
Concordia University  
SenseLab

In this paper I will argue that there is an experience of seeing that is generated between George Seurat’s *Un Dimanche Après-midi à l’Île de la Grande Jatte* (1884–1886) and its viewers that exceeds human perception. Seurat, using his pointillist technique, composed the painting with thousands of nearly imperceptible tiny coloured dots. Although these dots are, for all intents and purposes, unable to be perceived, I will contend that viewers *experience* them through the vibrations generated by each dot’s colour. These colour vibrations produce a dynamism that viewers can feel pulsating throughout the entire painting, giving them a sense that the work is brimming with a vitality that surpasses perceptibility.

Henri Bergson explains that colour “amounts, in itself, to a series of extremely rapid vibrations.” Colours simply vibrate: that is what they do in and of themselves. Because colours always vibrate, I will contend that they have an elasticity that is not restricted to any particular threshold. This enables them to potentially affect all the other colours they encounter. The colour of a particular dot on Seurat’s canvas is not restricted to just that dot. Rather, as I will argue, the vibrations that this colour generates have the ability to affect how the colours of the neighbouring dots are experienced and vice versa. Drawing on the work of Alfred North Whitehead, I will contend that every dot in *La
Grande Jatte affectively feels the vibrations of colours from those dots immediately adjacent to it.

The limits of human perception prevent viewers from directly seeing the dots’ reciprocal colour vibrations. However, I will argue that these imperceptible actions are nonetheless felt in the seeing. The colour vibrations occurring in Seurat’s painting generate what Alfred North Whitehead calls contrast. Contrast is not simply the expression of difference or opposition between two juxtaposed entities. For Whitehead, contrast is much more productive, and is an activity of “conjoint unity” that enables two or more potential colours to affect each other. Contrast is what enables the colour vibrations to emerge into experience and generate the more-than-perceptible vitality viewers feel in the seeing.

In the Dome of the Parliament of Things: Media Art’s Engagement with Bruno Latour (with Peter Sloterdijk as best man)
Marc Tuters
University of Amsterdam
Media Studies

In a recent keynote address to the assembled “Design History Society” in Cornwall—home to “The Eden Project’s” spectacular geodesic domes—Bruno Latour (2008) discussed the connections between his project and that of Peter Sloterdijk, the German philosopher and rector of the ZKM (Centre For Media Art) in Karlsruhe. Sloterdijk considers politics as a matter of arranging and assembling artificial “spheres” of safety and immunity, leading him controversially to speak of “cultivating human beings”. In this address, Latour defended his colleague against an attack by public sphere theorist Jurgen Habermas, to whom Latour retorted: ‘when humanists accuse people of ‘treating humans like objects’, they are thoroughly unaware that they are treating objects unfairly.” For Latour, Sloterdijk’s Sphere Trilogy (the first volume of which has just been published in English) counters the claims of humanists and phenomenologists alike by revealing the “different envelopes into which humans are thrown”. For Latour, both Sloterdijk’s sphere’s and his own notion of actor-networks provide concepts that bridge the “great divide” between nature and human, subject and object, science and society, etc. To this end, both these thinkers look increasingly towards media art to bridge these divides by communicating science to the public. In this presentation, I thus look at how Latour’s thinking (and to a somewhat lesser extent that of Sloterdijk), have captured the imaginations of new media artists, in particular those engaged with issues of environmental sustainability (a key example being Natalie Jeremejenko’s Environmental Health Clinic). I also look at Latour’s own personal engagement with new media through his curation at the ZKM in Karlsruhe in 2005 (an exhibition in which I participated), in specific those works which he selected to illustrate his concept of “the parliament of things”. I argue that these ideas have contributed to the development of an emerging interpretive framework in which new media art and design practices see themselves (or at least can be seen) as giving voice to non-human agencies. I see this as an alternative to the more oppositional discourses typically associated with tactical media (more closely aligned with a Foucauldian ‘analytics of power’), a form of engagement which Latour refers to as “composition” rather than “critique”. This work is based on my PhD research under the supervision of Richard Rogers as part of the Digital Methods Initiative at the University of Amsterdam’s Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis.
**PERFORMANCE**

**Ecology without Nature, Theatre without Culture: Towards an Object-Oriented Ontology of Performance**

João Florêncio  
Goldsmiths, University of London  
Visual Cultures

In the last decade, developments in the Humanities have brought into question the central role attributed to the human in the play of reality and truth: from an increased interest in flat ontologies like the one encountered in Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network theory where the Nature-Culture divide collapses and agency becomes the property of hybrid networks made of flesh and steel and brand logos and...; from Quentin Meillassoux’s critique of the correlationism ingrained in all post-Kantian thought which, according to the author, has made contemporary philosophy unable to think the in-itself of beings due to its belief in the incapacity of thought for getting anywhere outside the for-us; from Latour and Meillassoux to Graham Harman’s Object-Oriented Ontology, a philosophical system that conceives the world as a play with no leading parts, a theatre made exclusively of extras and their stunt doubles, where sharks eat tuna like fire burns cotton or, I’d suggest, like you and I watch him/her perform in a gallery space or on stage in a nearby theatre.

Following such developments in Ontology, this paper will attempt to flatten and expand Performance Studies into the realm of the nonhuman and to think the usefulness such a notion of performance for thinking not only human actions on stage but the reality of all kinds of relations like rain falling on rusting iron, plastic bags floating in the wind, or neurons set on fire with the sight of a loved one. This way, I will propose an ontology of performance that sees performance as the mechanism through which all beings qua objects relate to each other regardless of any perceived differences in kind or the actual complexity of their structures. Not performance as immediate presence (Peggy Phelan) nor performance as mediated liveness (Philip Auslander); not even performance as the new cultural paradigm of the 21st century (Jon McKenzie). Rather, performance as the condition sine qua non of all forms of relationality and causation after the death of Nature and the extinction of Culture.

**“Call Me Ishmael” and Other (New) Material Performa(c)tivities and Ontological Entanglements**

Lissa Holloway-Attaway  
Bleinge Institute of Technology  
English/Literature, Culture and Digital Media Programs

To critically address the complex network of texts/bodies and other impossible dualisms supported by emergent digital/social media art-facts I propose that performativ methods of creative/critical practice offer generative models for exploring these new materialities. Such matter(s)—technical, organic, affective, sensory—operate outside traditional modes of representation and discourse and circulate within the ubiquitous mixed media realities of the contemporary digital media age. As media types and forms entangle within emerging media outlets, “lived” human experiences, and
other phenomena, understanding the ontological boundaries, aesthetics and expressive properties of these assemblages and formulations is critical.

In particular, identifying the site and role of affective organic being-ness in the midst of a (social) mediascape that seems overtly driven to erase it, offers interesting challenges to those exploring phenomenal material relations and agential functions. Furthermore, probing the new within new materialist theories and practices—as in the new media critical investigations of late 20th century and early 21st century culture stemming from the influence of Internet-based technologies—necessitates other performative models of engagement. New materialist theorists Karen Barad (in Meeting the Universe Halfway) and Vicki Kirby (in Quantum Anthropologies), for example, identify this model as a kind of thinking with phenomena, encouraging embodied critical models that avoid theorizing as a spectator sport intended to privilege exteriority from phenomena and assert human exceptionalism.

In an effort to create an active and applied performative method for engaging affective materiality, I am currently developing a collaborative research project that brings a classic literary text (Herman Melville’s 1851 Moby-Dick) in conversation with contemporary mixed reality media and social media technologies. Using the literary text as an inspirational base text, I am working with my colleagues to explore ways to re-map the novel onto physical sites and locations, including my current residence in a small town in southern Sweden, using digital media and performative new material disruptions. Re-mapping (figuratively and literally) the classic Romantic text in/as a collective contemporary digital (con)text, I argue, continues a tradition of embodied innovation initiated by Melville, but continued in the theoretical traditions of contemporary posthumanities studies.

In my proposed presentation, I will discuss the (new) material theoretical basis for my intervention as well as demonstrate elements of the project meant to stimulate and entangle phenomenal being-ness beyond representational models and to challenge the newness of such intra-actions. Bringing the 19th century whaling adventure into 21st century contexts offers navigational challenges to see (sea) the ontological phenomenal challenges looming on the horizon. Thar she blows…

**DesignLab and Smart Media: The Revelations of Dr. Kx4l3ndj3r**
Jon McKenzie
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Director, DesignLab

Social institutions globally are caught in a bind produced by the onto-historical folding of disciplinary humanism beneath an emerging performative posthumanism whose contours are traceable via certain material patterns (à la McLuhan) and propagated by experiments that mix gay science and sci-fi (à la Ronell). In this futural atmosphere, disciplinary debates over subjects, objects, and critical methods become largely irrelevant, as do the reading of conference papers. One pressing challenge: how to let the nonhuman lead, as it were? And how to do this far beyond the relatively small number of people now engaged with such issues?

DesignLab is a new media consultancy at UW-Madison whose mission is to democratize digitality, just as public education helped democratize literacy in the 19th century (for better and for worse). To this end, DesignLab seeks to democratize design beyond the professional designers of
commodities and to democratize post-ideational thought beyond experimental theorists such as Derrida and Deleuze. We serve students from potentially any discipline, and our means are smart media, emerging scholarly genres such as TED talks, podcasts, theory comix, and persuasive games, genres which supplement books, articles, and conference papers. Smart media remix concept and affect, eidos and imagos, logos and mythos: they target new venues and new audiences and point beyond the monomedial disciplinary expertise that still dominates humanist—and posthumanist—discourse and practice. One instantiation is “The Revelations of Dr. Kx4l3ndj3r,” a lecture performance whose disastronautic refrains slip past the all-too-human truth modes of correspondence and adequation (which inform debates over realism vs. constructivism) in order to explore recursion at a cosmographic scale.

**RHETORIC**

“From the Dustbin of History”: Rhetoric and the Problem of Abundance
Casey Boyle
University of Utah
English

The “nonhuman turn” in the humanities renders uncertain the boundaries, limits, and definitions on which humanities scholars have traditionally relied (Bryant 2011; Bennett 2007; Barad 2007; Latour 2006; Harman 2003). These new understandings compel us to re-learn how to be citizens, teachers, and students within expanded multiplicities. In the midst of these circumstances, Bruno Latour proposes we rescue “from the dustbins of history” modes of engaging our increasingly uncertain realities to “imagine a new eloquence” (Making Things Public 2005). Of course, Latour’s eloquence refers explicitly, if briefly, to rhetoric and its potential to orient our activities toward the non-human more productively. It is in direct response to Latour’s suggestion that my project proceeds.

This talk will extend Latour’s proposal and argue that a rhetorical orientation could offer immanent styles of engagement in addition to those critical activities of limiting and defining. Instead of strict critical orientations, a rhetorical orientation would focus on teaching and learning how to be “effective,” despite the absence or possibility of certain boundaries, limits, or definitions. Such effectiveness requires the development of capacities to affect and be affected within the various means available in any given situation, a goal not unlike even the most basic definitions of rhetoric.

Toward this end, my talk will offer three movements. First, I will propose that rhetoric’s long history can be understood as having been engaging the problem of abundance. This problem, not wholly dissimilar to those found in nonhuman and posthuman scholarship, occurs between *verba* and *res*, that is, between words and things. Second, classical rhetorical training offer sites that help habituate rhetors to the problems and possibilities abundance offers. Rhetoric’s numerous “dustbins” can provide practices for renewing eloquence; in particular, three of rhetoric’s traditional pedagogical practices—*dissoi logoi*, *topoi*, and *copia*—can be selectively renewed for engaging the vibrant, object-oriented, networks that compose us. For this section, I will focus on Erasmus’ 1512 rhetoric manual *De Copia: Verborum ac Rerum* as but one example where we might extract practices for a new eloquence.
Finally, I will conclude by connecting these rhetorical practices (copia in particular) back to Latour’s later call for “immanent modes of engagement” (“A Compositionist Manifesto” 2010). Ultimately, the presentation will explore how classical rhetorical training might offer practices to engage the emerging problems of our abundant world.

CANCELLED!

Metastabilizing Métis: Toward a Transductive Rhetoric of Influence Over Persuasion
Kevin Cassell
Michigan Technological University
Humanities

My presentation will respond to this question: how can the discipline of Rhetoric (and, relatedly, Composition)—so beholden to the linguistic turn of the mid-twentieth century—move beyond its traditional privileging of language and representation to prosper in an intellectual era brought on by the nonhuman turn? One suggestion I offer is to put rhetorical scholarship on ancient Greek conceptions of métis in conversation with Gilbert Simondon’s theory of transduction, a process that is not limited to human actors. Doing so creates conditions for the emergence of what I will call transductive rhetoric—activities of influence not confined to hylomorphic models of persuasion (“rhetor/audience”) that conceive of communication as the transmission of immaterial information between humans.

Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant describe métis as “a type of intelligence and of thought, a way of knowing” that for the pre-Socratic philosophers oscillated between the two opposite of poles of being and becoming. Although they claim that the suppression of métis by Western philosophical traditions stemmed in part from its blurred boundaries between human and animal intelligence, they themselves emphasize its human components by focusing on its instantiations in the gods Hephaestus, Athena, and Metis herself. Shannon Walters argues that recent revisions of métis by Janet Atwill, Michelle Balliff, Debra Hawhee, and Jay Dolmage likewise “have focused on métis as a human rhetoric, often privileging the human over the animal elements of métis.” While Walters does not fully liberate métis from these anthropocentric interpretations, her description of it as “movement, cooperation, and mediation among the diverse abilities of human, animal, and technical entities” lends itself to a conception of métis that I would like to advance: a phenomenologically embodied mode of influence that is transductive, exemplifying an ontogenetic process—what Simondon called “individuation,” or becoming—which resonates across material mediums and puts into operational solidarity (a type of communication I call influence) diverse sets of potentials. Out of the flux of potentialities (similar to what Simondon calls “preindividual fields”) in processes of becoming emerges a tenuous order, a metastability, that is agonistically in tension and hence productive of further transformations. I will suggest that métis can be conceived as a model for metastability and through its relationship to other rhetorical concepts (arête, phronesis, and kairos, but also Burkean cosubstantiality) affords us an opportunity to consider rhetoric in nonhuman terms—as the influence of diverse bodies across material spaces of becoming rather than simply the persuasion of human audiences by skilled rhetors.
Kevin Cassell’s talk is replaced by

**Tooling Affections from Allure: An Algorythmic #inhabitation of Foreclosed Remains**
Jamie “Skye” Bianco
University of Pittsburgh, English

**The Invention of the Impossible Object: Ethical *Techne* in Object-Oriented Media Studies**
Steve Holmes
Clemson University
Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design

Description and representation pose an obstacle for the object-oriented ontology branch of the “nonhuman turn.” In a refrain echoed by all involved with object-oriented thought, Graham Harman has argued that objects – human and nonhuman entities – possess a subterranean essence that never engages in direct relations with other objects. This formation begs the Lyotardian-esque question of ethics: How can we present the unpresentable object while maintaining its metaphysical Otherness? Other than Bruno Latour’s ethnographic description and Harman’s brief discussion of metaphor, Tim Morton is one of the few object-oriented scholars to study these aesthetics apart from philosophical discourse. Morton explores figures of the sublime that evoke the uncanny unknowability of objects; however, Morton fails to adequately explore the question of the ethics of representations of nonhumans. By ethics, this speaker means an understanding of how nonhumans exist for all types of entities without undue reduction to human ecologies of perception and use.

To provide a conceptual starting place for an object-oriented approach to aesthetics and ethics in media studies, this speaker describes a nonhuman theory and a *techne* of rhetorical (artistic) invention through a combination of Katherine Hayles’ “technotexts” and Matthew Fuller’s theory of media ecologies. Hayles traces how new media artists interested in the concrete properties of technologies that enable authorship foreground media artifacts’ materiality of production. Fuller explores artistic strategies by which invisible layers of technology can be revealed in ways that allow singular and affective material juxtapositions to emerge as topoi for invention. Yet, neither is interested in how media ecologies or technotexts might take on an ethical project of bearing witness to the nonhuman in the object-oriented sense. This speaker therefore explores the potential of technotexts to establish a differential index of materiality, algorithms, and other invisible components of media ecologies in the work of media artists who foreground the existence of nonhuman entities. This speaker differentiates examples of how a media artifact takes on its own materiality by removing the user’s ability to manipulate elements within a media system (e.g. Jodi’s *Ctrl-Space*) as opposed to artifacts that merely visually foregrounding an invisible material layer that the user never encounters (e.g. Ben Frye’s *Deconstructulator*). An object-oriented ethics lies in a combination of both approaches. Although such artifacts cannot represent the object’s otherness, they can provide an aesthetic intuition of the excessive remainder of nonhuman essence, while simultaneously testifying to the infinity of material fluxes that affect how humans dwell with nonhumans.
MEDIATION 2

iResearch: Using Smartphones To Do Materialist Media Theory
Mark Cote
Victoria University
Media and Communication Studies

Ubiquitous connectivity and the prominence of smart phones are recasting the parameters of the human in a media ecology which requires both new concepts and methodologies. My current research project examines the intimate constitution of the human and technology by utilizing smart phones to gather data on mobility, location and information. This collaborative process, undertaken with undergraduates in the socio-economically challenged Western suburbs of Melbourne, Australia, will deploy researcher-driven tools and apps for data collection from mobile communication and location awareness in everyday life. I wish to examine key theoretical paradigms and concepts underlying this new methodology.

My research engages the nonhuman by asserting that ubiquitous mobile connectivity is merely the latest manifestation of how we have never been human. This builds on work where I re-theorized the relationship between the human and technology, and, following a trajectory from Andre Leroi-Gourhan to Bernard Stiegler to Mark Hansen, rejects the well-established separation of the natural (phusis) and artificial (technē). Instead, our contemporary condition, like that of the earliest lithic industry, is one of mutual constitution with and exteriorization by technology. My project of ‘nonhuman data collection’ applies the emerging paradigm of new materialist media theory via two problematics. The first regards the networked and embodied materiality of information, a perspective initially developed by Hayles and Terranova which I propose can be extended via what Lev Manovich calls ‘big data society.’ Can the collection, analysis and visualisation of collectively produced quotidian data reframe debates under data exclusion instead of privacy, and toward critical data inclusion in a new information commons? The second is attention to the nonhuman technical network in which this pervasive data production transpires; specifically, the assemblage of distributed, situated and embodied technology wherein ‘machines talk to machines before they talk to humans’ as Jussi Parikka, following Guattari, aptly observed. Here I will apply an autonomist turn to the data collected by inverting Virno’s grammar of the multitude: can we parse a new syntax of flexibility in this mobile human-technological assemblage which, on the one hand, intensifies and extends the precarity of labour but on the other, engenders new politics as evinced in the Arab Spring, London Riots and the Occupy movement?

My hope is that this research will furnish data for a new approach to radical empiricism, explicating the syntax of our processual environment which is distributed, ubiquitous, mobile, localized, and informationally-augmented.
The Materiality of Mobile Media: An Object-Oriented Approach to Mobile Networks
Jason Farman
University of Maryland, College Park
American Studies and Digital Cultures and Creativity

In contrast to the study of human social networks and location-awareness through mobile devices, this paper seeks to trace the flows of mobile information through the vibrant materiality of their networked infrastructures. At the core of this inquiry is the question: who is the audience for mobile information? By approaching this question through the lens of performance studies, phenomenology, and object-oriented ontology, I wrest the terms “audience” and “user” away from a human-centered approach to argue that mobile networks address the various nodes within the network, one of which is human.

This paper draws from a primary example that, for me, became emblematic of the object-oriented approach to mobile networks. In October of 2011, I visited one of the major internet hubs on the East Coast: the Equinix internet peering center in Ashburn, Virginia. When I first arrived to the data center, I “checked-in” to the building using the locative social network, Foursquare, on my cellphone, which was connected to the internet over a 3G network. After I checked in, I was curious about the path that the cell signals took in order to locate me, access the data on the internet, and return that data to my phone. The pathways that this information flow took were quite fascinating: the 3G signal on my phone connected to the nearest cell tower. At this site, the signal ran down the antenna to connect with the fiber optic infrastructure of the internet, which then came racing straight back to my location at the internet data center. Here, in the building in which I was standing, the request prompted by my mobile device accessed Foursquare’s database housed in the Equinix facility. The signal was then sent back out to the towers and eventually back to my mobile phone. Within this circuitous path of information—which ultimately defines “mobility”—the “ephemeral” data of the mobile internet is seen as profoundly grounded on the material infrastructure of the network. Within the pathways of information in this network, I was only one node in the network. Here, the “audience” of the information cannot be restricted to human agents since many of the requests and exchanges happened at a level that did not directly address me in any way.

In this paper, the embodiment of information flows through these various audience members is studied through N. Katherine Hayles’ work on information materiality, Jane Bennett’s work on vibrant matter, and Ian Bogost’s work on object-oriented phenomenology. Ultimately, this paper argues for a practice of location-awareness that presents spatial objects and bodies as actors that produce space and are produced by that space.

Happy Accidents—Facebook and the Autonomy of Affect
Tero Karppi
University of Turku
Media Studies

September 22, 2011 Facebook introduced Timeline. Quite simply Timeline collects your Facebook and other online activities and shows them in your profile. Your friends will see what song you are
listening to, where you are and what you do if you allow the platform to track and share your activities. According to the Facebook blog, “Now, you and your friends will finally be able to tell all the different parts of your story – from the small things you do each day to your biggest moments.”

In fact, these changes do not intrinsically seem that new. Similar activities have been shared by Facebook users all along. However what is new is the way the sharing begins to happen. While social media has been seen as a dual platform for users actively sharing content and passively providing data for corporations (Dijck 2009) we are now moving towards a digital environment that reduces the user to a passive content/data provider. Users’ information is shared by the platform automatically and autonomously without their intentional involvement. Facebook calls this ‘serendipity’ and ‘frictionless sharing’.

As a consequence, my paper argues that the Timeline entails a new, affective, turn in Facebook’s history. This affective turn cannot be reduced to a mere visual renewal of the Facebook user interface. Quite on the contrary we are witnessing a comprehensive transformation in how social networks function as cultural and political media environments.

This transformation is discussed in the context of non-subjective autonomy of an affect proposed by Brian Massumi (2002). Affect is a non-conscious experience of intensity. It is not a feeling or sensation but an ability to affect and be affected; a body’s passage from one state to another. Affection on the other hand is “each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second affecting body” (Massumi 2004, xvii). Affects are located somewhere between passivity and activity, a resonance that cannot be directed entirely to a practical end. The key here is that Massumi’s interpretation of affects allows us to understand them from a non-subjective position. We do not need to reduce affects into subjective emotions; in fact we can understand affects without the subjective involvement as potentials transmitted between both human and non-human bodies (Bennett 2010, 61).

With improvements such as serendipity and frictionless sharing Facebook is moving from a mere quantification of data into building and controlling its affects. This new model of value production is the perspective from which my paper provides a case based study on Facebook’s Timeline focusing on the cultural and political theme of affects and affective networks.

Works Cited
QUEER/FEMINIST/GAGA

Object-Oriented Gaga: Theorizing the Nonhuman Mediation of Twenty-First Century Celebrity
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English

In this paper, I wish to explore (from a primarily media-theoretical perspective) how concepts of nonhuman agency and the distribution of human agency across networks of nonhuman objects contribute to, and help illuminate, an ongoing redefinition of celebrity personae in twenty-first century popular culture. As my central case study, I propose looking at Lady Gaga as a “serial figure”—as a persona that, not unlike figures such as Batman, Frankenstein, Dracula, or Tarzan, is serially instantiated across a variety of media, repeatedly restaged and remixed through an interplay of repetition and variation, thus embodying seriality as a plurimedial interface between trajectories of continuity and discontinuity. As with classic serial figures, whose liminal, double, or secret identities broker traffic between disparate—diegetic and extradiegetic, i.e. medial—times and spaces, so too does Lady Gaga articulate together various media (music, video, fashion, social media) and various sociocultural spheres, values, and identifications (mainstream, alternative, kitsch, pop/art, straight, queer). In this sense, Gaga may be seen to follow in the line of Elvis, David Bowie, and Madonna, among others. Setting these stars in relation to iconic fictional characters shaped by their many transitions between literature, film, radio, television, and digital media promises to shed light on the changing medial contours of contemporary popularity—especially when we consider the formal properties that enable serial figures’ longevity and flexibility: above all, their firm iconic grounding in networks of nonhuman objects (capes, masks, fangs, neckbolts, etc.) and their ontological vacillations between the human and the nonhuman (the animal, the technical, or the monstrous). Serial figures define a nexus of seriality and mediality, and by straddling the divide between medial “inside” and “outside” (e.g. between diegesis and framing medium, fiction and the “real world”), they are able to track media transformations over time and offer up images of the interconnected processes of medial and cultural change. This ability is grounded, then, in the inherent “queerness” of serial figures—the queer duplicity of their diegetic identities, of their extra- and intermedial proliferations, and of the networks of objects that define them. Lady Gaga transforms this queerness from a medial condition into an explicit ideology, one which sits uneasily between the mainstream and the exceptional, and she does so on the basis of network of queer nonhuman objects—disco sticks, disco gloves, iPod LCD glasses, etc.—that alternate between (anthropocentrically defined) functionality and a sheer ornamentality of the object, in the process destabilizing the agency of the individual star and dispersing it amongst a network of nonhuman agencies. As an object-oriented serial figure, I propose, Lady Gaga may be an image of our contemporary convergence culture itself.
Becoming Queer/Queer Becoming: Art, Affect, and the Dissolution of Being (Human)
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In one of her early essays on gender performativity, Judith Butler recalls saying to friends that she was going to Yale “to be a lesbian,” suggesting a non-foundational mode of sexual “being” that ultimately allows her to define both gendered and sexual identities as “ontological illusions” whose success depends on the reiteration of a certain stylization of the body; a Foucaultian definition that entails the possibility for undoing, for (playing at) being (anything at all) differently.1 Assuming a largely psychoanalytic perspective, Teresa de Lauretis has equally tried to explain the material, corporeal reconfiguration of straight(forward) human beings into the spectral ontology of “the lesbian” in terms of practice, primarily the practice of love, a process of bodily transfiguration she imagines as a series of “habit changes” (Bourdieu) obtaining on the level of the (Freudian) multi-componential instinct.2

Such early attempts on the part of lesbian theorists, despite their ambivalent investments in queer theory per se (reluctance and rejection respectively) might have opened the way for a radical, deterritorializing project of sexual, if not ontological dissolution. The rapid domestication of the term queer, now largely mainstreamed and employed, it seems, as a “funky” way to designate (male) homosexuality, and the sedimentation of its function as an adjective or noun, rather than a verb, may go some way to suggest why, in the eyes of many of its former practitioners, queer theory is “over.” Rather than resigning myself to this fact, and give up on queer altogether, however, I would argue that it is the affective turn, and, more specifically, the so-called new vitalism, that at once inscribes the centrality of queer theory in the emergence of the nonhuman turn generally, and that, more specifically, offers possibilities for pursuing a much more radical project of ontological dissolution than either a Foucaultian/Althusserian model of gender and sexual inscription (whether in terms of interpellation, disciplinary practices, and/or performativity) or a neo-Freudian/-Lacanian (intra-/inter-subjective) approach allows.

In my paper, I will focus on the active participation of nonhuman forces in the ongoing event of un/becoming queer, with particular focus on the operation of art, with its immediate affective power over and beyond its potential semiotic functions, as a privileged site, or forcefield, of non/human deterritorialization, or, indeed, of the dissolution of being (human) per se.

Relationality and the Revitalization of “Nature” In Materialist Feminisms
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One of the chief concerns of feminist materialisms that are part of the turn toward ontology is reconceptualizing matter as dynamic, animated, and in process (Haraway, 2008; Alaimo 2008, Bennett 2010). This revitalization or reanimation of nonhuman nature is said to make possible a reworking of the entrenched dualism of nature and culture, as vital materiality makes the “natural” more than passive resource for human appropriation or representation. In this paper I examine how this revitalization of nature and matter has figured in certain feminist work, and what its role is in feminist accounts of knowledge and of ontology. I examine how it has been addressed in relation to human/non-human encounters and relations, including questions of ethical response.

The questions of thinking the nonhuman, of accounts of a nonanthropocentric social-material world, and of ethical response are taken up in the new materialisms that are emerging in several fields. Drawing on selections from this work, including new readings of the process philosophy of Whitehead (Shaviro, 2009), and the work of those addressing the vitality of matter and objects (Bryant, Smieck, and Harman 2011, Morton, 2007), I argue for the importance of relationality in the feminist revitalization of nature and matter. If earlier material and ecological feminisms address the question of how nature has been historically constructed by human meaning systems, thus justifying its domination, a more recent question is one that asks how, in specific local encounters, human and nonhuman entities co-create one another. This shift marks a critical juncture in feminist engagements with materiality, in focusing on the co-constitution of entities, what Haraway has called companion species and more recently, sympoeisis (Haraway 2010).

I argue that the focus on relational, creative process is important to emphasize in feminist materialism, as a counter to a human-centered constructivism. It enables a consideration of the creation or becoming of the social-animal world that does not privilege human language or meanings as solely productive of what eventually comes to be. Nor does it privilege or prioritize matter or biology as constitutive or determinative of phenomena. A shift of emphasis to relationality and process seeks to avoid the separation of matter and meaning, enabling more dynamic accounts of event, instantiation or becoming, where various entities and agencies come together, and where materiality is bound up with --or more precisely, entangled with--language and meaning.
Extended Bibliography

The following lists books and articles for further reading on the topic of “the nonhuman.”


PDF: [http://danm.ucsc.edu/~dustin/library/deleuzeguattarirhizome.pdf](http://danm.ucsc.edu/~dustin/library/deleuzeguattarirhizome.pdf)


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