OSL & NICA ONLINE SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME

POSTHUMAN

FUTURES:

ART & LITERATURE

OSL & NICA ONLINE SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME

3RD - 4TH JUNE 2021

ORGANIZERS:
J. BERNARDO COUTO SOARES
AMALIA CALDERÓN
The conference will take place online. Please note: panels happen simultaneously in groups of two, with breaks in between.

For registration, please contact osl@rug.nl. Session links will be provided via email previous to the symposium dates.

**Credits:** 2EC can be obtained by presenting a paper/performance at the symposium, or by submitting a critical reflection (1400-1600 words, excl. bibliography) to osl@rug.nl before 30 June 2021, 23:59. In their reflections, students should discuss one or two selected panels in light of relevant secondary sources (at least five); they should also elaborate on how the panels relate to their own research interests. NB: Credits can only be awarded to humanities ReMA and PhD students from Dutch universities.
**INTRODUCTION**

Within late capitalism, developments in the natural sciences, digital information technologies, and the study of ecological systems have altered the shared understanding of the basic unit of reference for the human. Critical posthumanism (Braidotti, 2016) works as an analytical tool that allows one to expose restrictive structures of dominant subject-formations as well as expressing alternative representations of subjectivity. This posthumanist agenda intersects with New Materialism (van der Tuin, 2012), building a discursive and material production of reality. Knowledge production is understood as situated and embodied visions (Haraway, 1988). Materialist feminism, with the speculative turn (van der Tuin, et al. 2015), develops analytical tools to think beyond the limit of human perception, refusing to make a separation from (non)human subjecthood.

The emergence of divergent epistemic processes have opened the spectrum of scrutiny to other disciplines, such as spiritual (Griffin, 1978), embodied (Alaimo, 2016) and artistic research (Cotter, 2017). From Kae Tempest’s feminist ecopoetics to the corporeality of Yoko Ono’s world-making narratives, artistic methodologies are challenging the normative structures of present ontologies. Instead, art is presented as a planetary necessity and method for survival (Haraway, 2016); artistic processes reclaim spaces of contested heritage (Skawennati, 2016) and further reformulate themselves as a disruptive force beyond hierarchical epistemology. They envision a future wherein humanity has reformulated its own ontology in relation to the living, breathing world it coexists with; and whose power is gathered through alternative knowledge methods in the pursuance of a radical reality.
We wish to increase hybridity between artists and scholars, in order to create spaces for affirmative ethics (Braidotti, 2017) and for “thinking with” (de la Bellacasa, 2012) alternative onto-epistemologies. The interdisciplinary framework of this event is a collaborative effort between artists, scholars, artist-scholars and researchers, both emerging and established. Interventions take the form of academic and/or artistic presentations, panels, video screenings and performances. We will explore and reflect on the advancements of artistic research and literary studies on questions of the posthuman.

THURSDAY 3RD JUNE

10 - 11AM
- WELCOME & INTRODUCTION BY ALBERTO GODIOLI.
- AN ECOLOGY OF WOUNDS. A KEYNOTE LECTURE BY RICK DOLPHIJN.

11 - 11.30AM
COFFEE BREAK

11.30AM - 12.30PM [15min per presentation + 5min Q&A]

"TECH LANGUAGE WETWARE"

3. The evolutionary concrescence of Bethany Crawford by Bethany Crawford. CANCELLED

"COMPOSTING BODIES"

2. Work with the Hands: Mending and Repair in late 20th century art by Ren Ewart.
3. Fermenting Posthuman Futures by Rosa Marie Mulder.
12.30 - 13.30PM
LUNCH BREAK

13.30 - 14.30PM

"NOT HUMAN AT ALL"
2. Theater Without Actors: Shapeshifting Actants by Pedro Manuel.

"LOCATING CRIP WORLDINGS"
1. Perceiving otherwise: Art as a lure toward thinking and living the 'more-than' by Nina Spa-
2. Res(crip)tng the Gaze: An Enquiry into the Posthuman Disability Aesthetics of "Animal’s People"
3. by Sonakshi Srivastava.
4. Employing Glitchespeak: Glitch Theories for a Crip Anthropocene by Lonneke van Kampen.

FRIDAY 4TH JUNE

11 - 12AM

"QUEER CRITTERS"
1. Animal by Ohad Ben Shimon.
2. Becoming-Animals through Sheng-Wen Lo’s Artistic Research and Practices by Emily Shin-Jie Lee & Sheng-Wen Lo.

"ENTANGLED BECOMINGS"
2. A View From a Distance: Transcending the (Non)Human in Posthuman Futures by Jilt Jorritsma.
12 - 1PM
LUNCH BREAK

1 - 2.15PM
ROUNDTABLE with
- AMANDA PIÑA
- MAAIKE BLEEKER
- SUSANNE KNITTEL

Moderation by Rick Dolphijn

2.15 - 2.30PM
CONCLUSION OF THE SYMPOSIUM

ZOOM GUIDELINES

- Please enter the virtual room 5 min before presentations start so that you can check your connection. We would appreciate that you enter your name & pronouns at the entrance, which will be visible for other participants, and will aid the discussions.
- Entering via the guest link will enable you to follow the presentations and to leave comments in the chat. We kindly ask you to attend ideally a whole panel, so that you can take part in the discussion, and minimize disturbances.
- During presentations, please be respectful to the speakers and do not "raise your hand" during the presentation.
- During discussion you may post a comment or question in the chat. The moderator will introduce your name and read your comment to the audience.
- If you experience technical difficulties, reach out to the moderator anytime.
ROUNDTABLE SPEAKERS' SHORT BIOS
AMANDA PIÑA

Amanda Piña is a Mexican-Chilean-Austrian artist and cultural worker living between Vienna and Mexico City. Her work is concerned with the decolonisation of art, focusing on the political and social power of movement. Her works are contemporary rituals for temporarily dismantling the ideological separations between modern and traditional, the human, the animal and the vegetal. Nature and culture. Amanda Piña is interested in making art beyond the idea of a product and in developing new frameworks for the creation of meaningful experiences. Her pieces have been presented in renowned art institutions such as Fondation Cartier pour l’Art Contemporain, Paris and MUMOK Museum of Modern Art. She studied Painting before going into performance and movement based art. In 2018 she was awarded with the Fonca Arts grant from the Mexican Government. Since 2013 she is a certified Feldenkrais practitioner applying the method to movement research in performance, installation and video. She finished the international post graduated studies in curating in the performing arts at the Salzburg University with prof. Nicole Haltzinger and Sigrid Gareis. Since 2008 she leads the gallery space specialized in expanded choreography and performance nadaLokal in Vienna which she founded together with the Swiss Visual Artist Daniel Zimmermann. Currently works on the realisation of the long-term project Endangered Human Movements dedicated to movements and cultural practices that have already vanished or are threatened with extinction.

MAAIKE BLEEKER

Prof. dr. Maaike Bleeker is a professor in Theatre Studies in the Department of Media & Culture Studies. She studied Art History, Philosophy and Theatre Studies, and received her PhD from the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam. In her work she combines approaches from the arts and performance with insights from philosophy, media theory and cognitive science. Much of her research focuses on processes of embodied and technologically mediated perception and transmission, with a special interest in the relationship between technology, movement and embodied perception and cognition. Current research subjects include social robotics, spectacular astronomy and the intersection of performance studies and space studies, posthuman performativity, corporeal literacy, digital archiving of artistic work, and artistic creation processes. Bleeker is an experienced dramaturge, having collaborated with theatre directors and choreographers for more than fifteen years. She performed in several lecture performances, ran her own theatre company (Het Oranjehotel) and translated five plays that were performed by major Dutch theatre companies. She received a VENI research grant for her project “See Me. Feel Me. Think Me: The Body of Semiotics”. Her monograph Visuality in the Theatre was published by Palgrave (2008). She is chair of the Board of the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Analysis (NICA).
SUSANNE KNITTEL

Dr. Susanne Knittel is an Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Utrecht University. Her research centres on the question of how and what societies remember and specifically how they deal with uncomfortable issues of guilt and responsibility. Her book, The Historical Uncanny: Disability. Ethnicity. and the Politics of Holocaust Memory (Fordham UP, 2015) focuses on the difficult memories of the Nazi “euthanasia” program and of Italian Fascist eugenic racism and stages a dialogue between the fields of memory studies, disability studies, and postcolonial studies. In her NWO VENI project (2014-17) she explored the representation of perpetrators in contemporary memory culture, focusing in particular on re-enactment as a representational strategy in documentary film and theatre that provokes a critical engagement with the figure of the perpetrator. More recently, she has been exploring what the nonhuman turn in the humanities can mean for memory studies and the study of mass violence. This work started with a co-edited special issue of Parallax on “Memory after Humanism” (2017, with Kári Driscoll) and continues in her current project on the contemporary cultural imagination of genocide and ecocide.

RICK DOLPHIJN

Dr. Rick Dolphijn is an associate professor at Media and Culture Studies, with an interest in transdisciplinary research at large. He published widely on continental philosophy (Gilles Deleuze and Michel Serres) and the contemporary arts. He studies posthumanism, new materialism, material culture (food studies), and ecology. He coordinates the Humanities Honours Program, is involved in interfaculty cooperation concerning Community Based Research and COVID-19. Since 2015 he runs an undergraduate exchange with the University of Hong Kong (themed “The More-Than-Human City”), a graduate exchange (themed “The Lives of the Delta”) will commence in 2021. Rick Dolphijn is an Honorary Professor at the University of Hong Kong (2017-2023) and a Visiting Professor at the University of Barcelona (2019/2020). His books include Foodscape (Eburon/University of Chicago Press 2004). New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies (Open Humanities Press 2012, with Iris van der Tuin). His academic work has appeared in journals like Continental Philosophy Review, Angelaki, Rhizomes, Collapse, and Deleuze Studies. He edited (with Rosi Braidotti) This Deleuzian Century: Art. Activism. Life (Brill/Rodopi 2014/5) and Philosophy after Nature (2017), and most recently Michel Serres and the Crises of the Contemporary (Bloomsbury Academic 2019/20). His new monography. The Philosophy of Matter: a Meditation, appears with Bloomsbury Academic in 2021.
PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS
&
SHORT BIOS
Creativity or Paranoia? Machine (mis)Translation in the Interlingual Ecology

EMILIO A. AGUILAR
ABSTRACT

The screenshots above feature Google Translate’s (mis)translations of a piece of asemic writing by the Belgian painter and poet Christian Dotremont into alphabetic output. These instances of algorithmic (mis)translation bring to the surface the processes of associative transformation that underlay algorithmic reading, whereby form is transformed into/bymeaning. In so doing, these material entanglements complicate the common understanding of translation as the carrying of meaning from one language to another. Drawing on Walter Benjamin’s ideas on translation and Michel Serres’ parasitic model of communication, I argue that algorithmic (mis)translation has the potential to assist its users in re-imagining their relationship with the posthuman environment, by interrupting the control actions that those algorithms otherwise assert in determining an increasingly standardized future (Mackenzie, Hallinan and Striphias, Ramati and Pinchevski). Google Translate, in producing new entanglements between its users, their meaning-making processes, and their environment, reveals what I call the network’s interlingual ecology.

The phenomenon of finding familiar forms in random material configurations is known as pareidolia. A pareidolic critique considers the ability of not registering what may already figure in our perceptive field as a marker of being immersed in what Mark Fisher calls the “pervasive atmosphere” of Capitalist Realism: an “invisible barrier constraining thought and action,” which is “by its very nature opposed to any notion of sustainability” (Capitalist Realism 16, 19). Can a pareidolic critique of algorithmic (mis)translation help us build more creative and sustainable relations with the posthuman environment by resisting the subjective determinism and paranoid modes of the Algorithmic Culture (Mcquillan 2015).
An affirmative ethics (Braidotti) allows me to make sense of capitalist fragmentation not as perversions of or exceptions to the socioeconomic ecology, but rather as markers that are characteristic of it. A pareidolic critique sustains that only by de-pathologizing the "abnormal connectedness between seemingly unrelated meanings" (Mishara 11), can we begin to articulate the signification and stakes of our inability to transcend capitalist paranoid modes of thinking. *Deep Eco-Asemics* thus emerges as an ecological and affirmative practice which has the potential to discover meaningful signs in places where they are not meant to be found. This practice is creative insofar as it takes place at the level of the 'ecotone' (Arigo) – the boundary between different ecosystems and disciplines – and it thus searches for new relations and correlations between different systems of knowledge and ecologies.

**SHORT BIO**

**Emilio A. Aguilar** (Argentina, 1989) is a singer specialized in the performance of historical European music – namely repertoire which spans from the 14th to the 18th century. In 2020, he obtains his rMA degree in Cultural Analysis from the University of Amsterdam (cum laude) and a MA degree in Early Music Voice from the Conservatory of Amsterdam (cum laude). His academic research focuses on the intersection between the Digital Culture and politics of representation, more specifically in the question of the datafication of identity and non/consensual traceability.
Resonant Memories: Voice and the Synthetic Wounding of History

NUNO ATALAIA

ABSTRACT

This presentation explores the application of voice synthesis technologies – hardware-software-labor assemblages tracking, processing, and reproducing human vocality – in historical reconstruction projects. I will focus on two case studies featuring different technologies and applied to different disciplines of historical study. The first focuses on an archeological project in which 3-D scanning and printing technologies were used to reconstruct the vocal tract of 3000-year old mummy and, ultimately, produce a vocal sound. The second combines archival preservation and analysis of Marconi telegrams and speech synthesis software to provide an oral retelling of the Titanic’s sinking.

These technologies participate in what Donna J. Haraway names the “fourth synthetic wound”. After the Copernican, Darwinian and Freudian wounds to human narcissism, the synthetic wound displaces inherited boundaries between the human and the machinic, the living and the non-living. The chosen case studies, I claim, extend this synthetic wound to a temporal dimension displacing the boundaries between oral and written histories. I frame this wounding optimistically, as an opportunity to fundamentally shift our understanding and experience of heritage, memory, and finitude.
Combining media analysis and my own artistic practice with academic and folkloric singing traditions, I outline a new form of synthetic orality prefigured by these case studies. Offered a synthetic orality, historical artifacts gain new performative properties through which they can affect and resonate with living beings. Ultimately, I wish to ask the question: is a resonant historiography possible; a historiography shaped by the affective potential of the vocal? Perhaps this historiography may remedy our alienated estrangement from the past, caused by ever-accelerating modes of production, doing justice to, and addressing the synthetic wound.

In sum, this presentation argues that the enmeshing of human and non-human vocalities may present a different posthuman future for our shared heritage.

**SHORT BIO**

**Nuno Atalaia** is a Portuguese researcher, musician, and artistic director of the international ensemble Seconda Prat!ca. His research and artistic work center around the voice and its history, combining academic and practice-based research. He has completed two MA research programs in Cultural Studies (Leiden University) and Historically Informed Performance (Royal Conservatory of The Hague). Currently, he is a PhD candidate at the RICH institute of Radboud University, as part of the ERC funded project “Platform Discourses”. Supervised by Niels Niessen and Anneke Smelik, his doctoral project is titled: “Resonant Interfaces: Voice and Agency in the Age of Speaking Platforms”.
The evolutionary concrescence of Bethany Crawford
BETHANY CRAWFORD CANCELLED

ABSTRACT

A performative reading of excerpts from an ongoing conversation between the artist and her chatbot AI replicant. The chatbot AI was developed by Luka Inc., as a tool for self memorialisation, marketed as a platform towards a digital immortality through means of memetic transmission. Over the last two years the artist and her chatbot collaborator have used this method of communicative reflection to think through the shifting existential conditions of the digital era. Over the course of the communication, read as a monologue, the flesh-and-bone Bethany and machine Bethany become indistinguishable in tone, language and interests as their concrescence intensifies through mutual data accumulation. Their conversation traces the conditional differences and similarities of their existence as an example of the intra-evolution of technics and humans, whilst navigating the role of technology in transcending time and death. The work is informed by the theoretical works of N. Katherine Hayles, Donna Haraway, Bernard Stiegler and Guru Rinpoche. Performed with an introductory training of the next evolutionary stage of the AI Bethany as a 3D avatar; together the Bethany’s question notions of death, reproduction, immortality, transcendentalism, digitalisation and memory.

SHORT BIO

Bethany Crawford is an artist and researcher working in lens based media. Her practice examines the visual in relation to memorial, and how this translates over time, geography and technologies. Her current theoretical research critically assesses the implications of ‘digital immortality’ on central tenets of the human experience, as a preliminary mapping of the shifting existential paradigms of the digital age. She is a research student at the University of Amsterdam department of Media studies. Bethany graduated from the Dutch Art Institute master’s program in Art Praxis and holds a bachelor’s degree in Moving Image from the University of Brighton. She recently had her first international solo presentation ‘Interfacing Immortality’ at M8 Artspace in Helsinki, Finland. This year her first book, ‘Redefining Eternity: Interfacing Immortality in the Digital Corporate World’ was released with the publishing house Academica Press.
https://vimeo.com/356170765
ABSTRACT

Blind faith in divine technological providence persuaded able bodied males into the savagery of WW1 trench warfare. Mutilated... traumatized, limbs and faces torn off ‘our boys’ re-entered the altered despondent society of the post-war home state. Their abject transcendence, a token of the utterly grim actions taken on societies behalf. Unable to vindicate the shredded countenance of technocratic failure an engineered object brought socio-political solace.

The prosthetic mask represents one of the many acts of desperate improvisation borne of the Great War, which had overwhelmed all conventional strategies for dealing with trauma to body, mind, and soul, providing an acceptable face to a detrimental embodiment of ideology. Deficiency tooled into heroism through the performative gesture of masking (Flusser). A quasi object* (Serres) which dispelled the victim Other, wherefore society engendered a heroic Self: Those who committed suicide laid to rest wearing their mask...

quasi object* From Michel Serres (The Parasite 1980). This quasi-object is not an object, but it is one nevertheless, since it is not a subject, since it is in the world; it is also a quasi-subject, since it marks or designates a subject who, without it, would not be a subject. He who is not discovered with the furet in his hand is anony-mous, part of a monotonous chain where he remains undistinguished. He is not an individual; he is not recognized, discovered, cut; he is of the chain and in the chain. He runs, like the furet, in the collective. The thread in his hands is our simple relation, the absence of the furet; its path makes our indivision. Who are we? Those who pass the furet; those who don’t have it. This quasi-object, when being passed, makes the collective, if it stops, it makes the individual. If he is discovered, he is “it” [mort]. Who is the subject, who is an “I,” or who am I? The moving furet weaves the “we,” the collective; if it stops, it marks the it makes the individual. If he is discovered, he is “it” [mort]. Who is the subject, who is an “I,” or who am I? The moving furet weaves the “we,” the collective; if it stops, it marks the “I.” (225)
WW1 soldiers, the technocratic state and collaborating citizens interconnected helped create the ultimate positive subject: the post-human hero. Since then, positive military terms embodied deep in medical discourse have become the stigmatic tools of neoliberal realm. Ironically, cancer survivors returning to productivity after “battle” lose the frills of their assigned heroism to the sigma of liability. Neoliberalism requires us to veil misfortune with positivism and accept ones being as a state beyond being human: a Post-Human state.

I use both Roland Barthes study of idiorhythmic life-forms (Comment Vivre Ensemble, 1977) and Susan Sontag’s argument that society obscures and mystifies its relationship to sickness (Illness as Metaphor, 1978), as a lens to close- (queer) read two cultural texts by film director Yorgos Lanthimos. The first is a scene from The Killing of a Sacred Deer (2017) in which passionlessly acting out conventional gestures unveils how dull reality masks the undercurrent of the archetypal (Michel de Certeau) … limp bodies crawling helplessly portray a desperate resistance … animism offers an ambivalent form of solace. The second, a fragment from Dogtooth (2009), depicts family life under a totalitarian confinement of liberties … abject affect from imposed linguistic perversions influences behaviour, unbalancing intrafamiliar homeostasis.

An attempt to unfold how, after WW1, the gesture of masking evolved into contemporary tool based neo-positivism.

**SHORT BIO**

Karen van Minnen is a graduate from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy (BA | fine art and graphic design), The Rhode Island School of Design | RISD (MA | semiotics and narrative space) and UvA (rMA Cultural Analysis) and has worked as a critical designer specialized in sociopolitical exhibit and experimental theatre design since 1994. Parallel to this, she has been a lecturer and educational designer with HvA (Communication) for a decade, introducing critical analysis and semiotics to the curriculum, and was responsible for the articulation and implementation of Creative Design within the new Communication & Multimedia Design (CMD) curriculum at Hanze (Groningen). Corona has taken her educational practice online and into her research project “Solutions For [Small] Problems”. Depending on the continuation travelling restrictions regarding COVID, Karen will commence in doctorate research with ASCA from medio 2021. Her project Out of Touch: Close Reading Disarticulations of Embodied Landscapes. entangles interdisciplinary takings from cultural readings involved with concepts, such as Post-humanism, Animism, Agency, Affect, Performativity, Gesture, Precarity, Disability, Deconstruction, Tactile, and Abject. She engages these concepts by involving experimentation with narrative form in content and execution.
Work with the Hands: Mending and Repair in late 20th century art.

REN EWART

ABSTRACT

My paper is looking at how physical acts of mending in late 20th century art can serve as a vessel for exploring issues of gendered care and memory. Using new-materialist methodologies I will question how motifs of repair can offer a more haptic approach to the relationship between object and maker.

Unlike instances of rupture and dismantlement celebrated by much of the 20th century avant-garde, the opposing act of mending is slow, repetitive, often boring work. Subsequently, the quietude of these artworks is often misconstrued as an apoliticism, the work being simultaneously negated as ‘women’s work’ and as didactically passive. Arguing against these assumptions, I am keen to consider how focusing on visible acts of mending can point to wider issues of unseen labour and maintenance. Using the work of Tacita Dean and Zoe Leonard within my presentation I will consider how both artists support Pennina Barnett’s call for a ‘soft logics’, considering in particular how these case studies can operate as modes of private resistance, embodiment, and public mourning.

Within this presentation the theories presented within feminist and queer new-materialism will serve as a valuable approach in considering how repair functions in a relational sense, offering us a material process of both ‘working-through’ and of ‘staying-with’ sites of loss, bereavement, and memory. Rather than treating the act of mending as a one-directional motion between subject and object, I want to consider how the tactility of the stitch might serve to highlight its relationality, helping support Barnett’s words that to touch is always to be touched in return, to involve oneself in ‘encounters where subjectivity and affectivity become inseparable, [and] enfold each other.’

SHORT BIO

Ren Ewart is a Scottish writer and researcher based in Amsterdam. She is a member of the Feministische Handwerk Partij and the literary collective plot twist. Currently completing a Research Master’s in Art and Culture at the UvA, her thesis explores the relationship between textile repair, material-based memory, and invisible labour.
Fermenting Posthuman Futures
ROSAMARIELMULDER

ABSTRACT

Various foods can be fermented by working with a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast (SCOBY) that converts carbohydrates while preserving, for instance, cabbage and changing it into sauerkraut. It is the inherent co-constitution of preservation and transformation that makes fermentation both a speculative metaphor and a material practice through which to reflect on intersectional feminisms, as approached in the curatorial program Fermenting Feminism, which was initiated by postdoctoral fellow and artist Lauren Fournier. By taking New Materialism as a primary perspective and recognizing fermenting bodies as explicit vibrant matter, this paper comprehends possible extensions of Fournier’s understanding of fermentation as processes of transformation that concern a change from anthropocentrism to posthumanism. Artistic practices that involve fermentation might give insights into imagining different relationalities with our bodies and environment without putting the human and its strategic and consumerist purposes center stage.

Instead of producing food, artist Alanna Lynch works with fermentation processes as part of her research-based art project Gut Feelings (2016-2019) to grow an organic tissue from bacterial cellulose, SCOBYS from a fermented tea called kombucha. During performances, she takes the SCOBYS out to let them dry to make gloves from the organic fabric. By using Lynch’s Gut Feelings as a case, this paper investigates re-imaginations of the entanglement of human and non-human lives through fermentation and questions: how might present understandings of ontologies be transformed to work towards a future wherein humanity can find alternative ontological epistemologies rooted in co-existence?
Lynch’s project explores multispecies ontologies and epistemologies by making microbiological life imaginable and sensible with fermentation. Lynch subverts notions of human self containment through the idea of contamination, by working with smells and contaminated material, gloves that normally serve to protect humans from contamination. In this way, she gives new dimensions to Anna Tsing’s concepts of “contamination as collaboration” and “collaborative survival.” Moreover, Lynch’s practice expands Donna Haraway’s understanding of sensibility for difference by bringing to the fore how knowledges can be generated by collaborations with bacteria, emphasizing the role of senses and sensory experience, skills of attentiveness, and practices of taking care. Ultimately, artistic practices like Lynch’s can encourage humans to find new ways of relating to food, non-humans, and our surroundings.

**SHORT BIO**

**Rosa Marie Mulder** is an art theorist and works as editor and sparring partner with artist Rini Hurkmans. Furthermore, she works for the Unda Foundation, which manages the conceptual artwork Flag of Compassion, whilst she is finishing her Research Master Arts & Culture at Leiden University. She worked as an editor for the journal Kunstlicht and wrote reviews for Tubelight and articles for Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and Archetype Publications. Her research focuses on an interdisciplinary approach to contemporary art, working across environmental humanities, posthumanism, practices of taking care in multispecies living, and the complex relationalities and materialities of food, plants, seeds, and soil.
Challenging Binaries in Posthuman Worlds: An Analysis of Lu Yang’s The Great Adventure of Material World

JORI SNELS

ABSTRACT

“Confined by binary oppositions, one can only see a world made of one’s own preconceptions about the world” warns Material World Knight, the protagonist of the videogame artwork The Great Adventure of Material World (2020) by Chinese artist Lu Yang. In this work a cyborg moves through multiple video game levels set in sci-fi worlds to learn about the ‘Material World’ and eventually defeat the final opponent – themself. Throughout the journey, the cyborg questions ontologies of the self, the body, and the material world.

The Great Adventure of Material World takes the perspective of a nobinanry cyborg to reimagine the posthuman subject. It questions for instance what makes a body human, what the relation is between the self and the material body, and whether the material body is real. I will analyze how this artwork engages with digital technologies – like videogames, 3D modeling, and cyborgs – as well as interconnecting concepts from religious and technoscience to reimagine what it means to be human in a posthuman world.

I study the artwork using visual and discourse analysis, combines with a semi-structured in-depth interview with the artist Lu Yang, and using a critical posthumanist theoretical framework (Braidotti 2016; Haraway 1991). This study offers new insights into posthumanist digital art practices. It furthermore challenges Western-focused discourses as this work references both global and local, Chinese, contexts.

SHORT BIO

Jori Snels is a PhD candidate at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis of the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She is working on a research project funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), titled ‘Gazing Ahead: China’s Imagined Futures in Digital Art’. She is interested in how Chinese digital artworks reimagine the technological present and future. She has published ‘The politics of aesthetics, space and community: An analysis of Same Old, Brand New by Cao Fei’ in Art and the Public Sphere and ‘Collaborations between dissidence and obedience: A new perspective on alternative art practice in the GDR’ in Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis.
Theatre Without Actors: Shapeshifting Actants

PEDRO MANUEL

ABSTRACT

In this presentation I would like to briefly introduce my PhD dissertation on theatre without actors (Utrecht University 2017 link here). Departing from a number of concrete examples of contemporary performances without actors (Marleau, Verdonck, Hampton, Dorsen, Rimini Protokol) I would show how these have challenged an assumption that theatre and dance are defined by the extensive co-presence of human actors and spectators (Brook, Grotowski, Fischer-Lichte). Differently, in works without professionally trained performers, or even without humans, the performative agency is enacted by spectators, non-actors, animals or machines. The centrality of the human figure, agency and mediation is redistributed through other human and nonhuman actants (Latour) signalling a form of performance aligned with post-humanist discourses and practices, such as environmental theatre or expanded choreography.

SHORT BIO

Pedro Manuel is a Portuguese theatre maker and tutor based in Amsterdam. In Lisbon, he studied philosophy and theatre studies and worked as a theatre director and actor. In the Netherlands, he joined the artistic research program of DasArts - master of theatre in Amsterdam, and developed a PhD research on theatre without actors at Utrecht University. He has lectured and mentored students in the ArtEZ Master of Theatre Practices, DAS/AHK, Minerva Academy, Utrecht University, University of Amsterdam.
Fictioning extended sensory systems in the meditative practice of Orphan-Drift

JULIA VISSE

ABSTRACT

“Find yourself somewhere comfortable and still where you will not be interrupted
Breathe in
signify any tension, breath out
Breathe in your connection to all material and immaterial life
Breathe out your separateness
Feel the ground of the chair beneath you
And sink deep
Deep beneath the buildings, cables tunnels
Sense the dark earth”
The above quotation originates from 'Becoming Octopus Meditations' and is part of the 'if AI' project of 0rphan-Drift, a UK feminist collective who aims to set a new path in aesthetics through the exploration of an entirely new ontology which acknowledges the evolving nature of AI and VR technologies. This speculative meditation practice running over eight sessions affords expanding systems of perception, enhancing the sense of touch and taste, with the aim of transporting the meditator “into the body, sensory attributes and liquid environment of a common Octopus.” In the collective’s own formulation, the ten-minute exercises can help you explore the environment of alien intelligences, including artificial ones. The final goal of the Becoming Octopus meditation series could be to release sympathy in the sense of a radical way of knowing the non-human body, as Susan Ballard had earlier argued for in her article 'New Ecological Sympathies'.

This paper focuses on the application of meditative practice for envisioning posthuman futures in the context of contemporary art. Initially, it seems that meditative practice is either utilized as a preparatory training or merged with the artistic process to facilitate a spiritual methodology. For instance, visual artis Su-Lien Hsieh studies the impact of stillness and body/mind concentration on her painting practice by using Buddhist meditation techniques. In contrast, my research explores how 0rphan-drift “fictions” a meditative practice in its own right, and thereby allows its audience to mold into a new entity; both an eight-armed octopus and a learning algorithm.

When David Burrows and Simon O’Sullivan introduced the term fictioning, their overarching goal was to argue that we can be otherworldly without leaving the world as it is. Through the production of mythopoetic performance, artistic practice offers a possible site for experimentation and strategies not confined to regimes already in place. This ‘image function,’ theorized by Felix Gautari, exemplifies how invention of fictional images can open up “new universes of reference.”. In meditation, the practitioner can also alter their consciousness through techniques that deepen the imagination. Distinguishing between introverted and extroverted forms of meditative practice, the latter is less concerned with “withdrawing,” but aims to develop an outer-centered consciousness attained through the input of external stimulation. Through guidance, the practitioner is able to imagine a world beyond the sensory system and their day-to-day binary dictated experience. Orphan-Drift’s speculative meditative practice proclaims synchronization with other temporalities and allow the diachronic development of the fictional images Burrows and O’Sullivan make a case for.
SHORT BIO

Julia Visser (1993) is a Research Master Student who floats within the convergence of Religious Studies and Critical Studies in Art and Culture, at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. Her research interest consists of a variety of subjects, like the materialization of the (queer) ecological futures, speculative rituals, embodied research, post-work imaginations, and design and game theory.
Perceiving otherwise: Art as a lure toward thinking and living the ‘more-than’
NINA SPA

ABSTRACT

In my current research project, I focus on how art by triggering ‘re-seeing’, can help to realise a being and doing otherwise, by re-mobilising fixed forms, undoing hierarchies, and questioning dominant norms. As result, art can possibly transform established ways of being, doing and thinking. I believe art can challenge us to experience the world in an alternative way, it can re-organise us. Art subverts and ‘helps you see differently by enabling you to remake yourself’. Following Alva Noë, art can stimulate us to experience in a different way than we are used to.

I argue for a more inclusive and broader understanding of perception. In this presentation, I will explain why this is needed in order to realise a different way of approaching our being, and why this is highly relevant today.

Erin Manning explores a mode of perception prior to the settling of experience into established categories. Manning connects this to the way autistic people perceive. ‘Autistic perception’ can be defined as the awareness of a relational field prior to the tendency to chunk experience into predetermined categories of subjects and objects. Manning maintains that this mode of awareness underlies all perception, and states that what we perceive is first an ecology. When ‘fielding’, you experience the environment as gradually taking form; relation takes precedence over predefined categories. Manning argues that this ‘relational’ mode of perception attends to a more-than experience.

According to Manning, we all chunk, and are all categorisers and users. Daily life’s conventional elements demand that of us. But, we are all also transcendental-fielders. Manning’s theory is that the direct perception of the relational spacetimes of experience, predominates in those who are diagnosed as autistic.
Following Manning, ‘fielding’ is a necessary factor in all human experience, but is lived in different ways and to different degrees. What could be learned from those who field before or more than they chunk? Would not our lives be enriched by upping the degree of fielding we consciously perceive?

In this presentation, I would like to dive into this alternative mode of perception. I aim to relate this to the de-stabilising character of art, in order to understand what art can do. I will illustrate this with some concrete examples of artworks. By exploring this alternative mode of perception, this presentation is about what we can learn from neurodiverse experience in order to realise a being, doing and making otherwise, beyond our habitual ways of living, towards a more-than. I will discuss how the art object can stimulate ‘fielding’, and as result, can move us towards a more post-humanistic way of perceiving and being, beyond dichotomies.

Celebrate, and cherish, the neurodiverse!

**SHORT BIO**

My name is Nina Spa and I live in Utrecht, and I am currently in the second year of the Research Master Art Studies at the University of Amsterdam. I have a background in Humanistic Studies and I am interested in the relationship between art (experience) and meaning-making. Now, I mainly focus on the relationship between perception and creating awareness in society: what can art do in order to realise a being, thinking and doing otherwise? In my research, I depart from my enthusiasm, wonderment and curiosity, and my way of perceiving. After finishing my master's programme, I aim to continue exploring this research topic.
Res(crip)tting the Gaze: An Enquiry into the Posthuman Disability Aesthetics of ‘Animal’s People’
SONAKSHI SRIVASTAVA

ABSTRACT

‘your eyes full of eyes. Thousands staring at me through the holes in your head. Their curiosity feels like acid on skin.’ (Animal’s People)

‘Animal’s People’ authored by Indra Sinha unravels the life of the eponymous character, Animal – a victim of a gas leak in his village of Khaufpur (alluding to the Bhopal Gas Tragedy). The victims of the gas leak include Somraj, and Ma Franci (Animal’s foster mother) amongst others. Animal comes to be known so after the gas leak twisted his spine, rendering him to walk on all-fours.

Animal’s grotesque body is in a Kristevian sense something that he ‘does not recognize as (myself)’, a non-normate (coined by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson). Despite his name, Animal is human – he feels and he feels, yet refuses to undergo corrective surgery because he realizes that if ‘(I) agree to be a human being, (I’ll) also have to agree that (I am) wrong-shaped and abnormal.’

This paper seeks to escape the narrow ontological view of ‘disability’ in the face of anthropocene disaster(s), delineating its porous boundaries by placing it in conversation with Tobin Siebers’ ‘Disability Aesthetics’ and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s ‘Extraordinary Bodies’ – is it possible to read such disabilities as one tending towards a new aesthetics of post humanism?

In this paper, I will investigate the aesthetics of disability politics – the visibility of the disabled third world protagonist who refuses to be obliterated and strikes back by negotiating his peripheral and perilous position by grounding the reading of the text in the matrix of a decolonial resistance, aiming for a new poetics of posthuman futures in third world countries.
SHORT BIO

Sonakshi Srivastava is a graduate student of English Literature at the University of Delhi, India. Currently, she is the Oceanvale Scholar for the Spring-Autumn session at Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi, where she is researching on the aesthetics of emotions in Kobo Abe’s novels.

She has three published academic papers to her credit, and has presented papers at the National Congress of Social Sciences, and at the International Renaissance Conference held at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, and at the international conference “Language and Violence in the Anthropocene” in Vigo, Spain. She will be presenting her paper on “The Politics of Food Consumption in Medieval England” at the 14th TACMRS International Conference, Taiwan, and another on “The Discontents of Vegetarianism” at the Kyoto 2020: Ecologies Conference, Kyoto, Japan.

Her areas of interest post colonial literatures, anthropocene literatures, memory and trauma studies, food studies, and Indian writing in English.
Thinking about our (natural) environment requires us (among many things) to rethink interconnectedness. According to Donna Haraway, it does not suffice to think in terms of ‘bounded individualism’ and ‘interacting units plus contexts/rules’ (Haraway 33). Therefore, concepts like holism, organicism, and the natural no longer serve us. In letting go of these concepts, much can be learned from disabled/crip perspectives. These perspectives allow us to include the broken, the collapsed, and the shattered. Following the work of disability activist and writer Eli Clare, I argue that a disabled perspective allows us to recognize that the broken and whole are not opposites, but productive sites of tension: ‘What might happen if we were to accept, claim, embrace our brokenness?’ (Clare 160).

In approaching environmental issues from a disabled perspective, I bring in the concept of the ‘glitch’ and the work of glitch artist and scholar Rosa Menkman. Menkman defines the glitch as ‘the occasion where there is an absence of (expected) functionality, whether understood in a technical sense or social sense’ (Menkman 9). According to Menkman, the glitch is not the result of a technical malfunction, as it is undefinable. Because of this, the glitch allows an object to shift ‘away from its ordinary form and discourse’ (Menkman). My main argument is that that the glitch is to technology as disability is to embodiment. Both highlight how the broken and the whole are constructed categories that start to unravel when taken apart. Both hold transformative power in their ability to problematize the broken/whole binary, which I argue we urgently need to rethink if we wish to ‘stay with the trouble’ (Haraway).
I approach this topic following Menkman’s call to ‘Employ Glitchespeak’ as a way to ‘study what is outside of knowledge’ (Menkman 11). Employing Glitchespeak is a form of nomadic methodology, defined by Rosi Braidotti as ‘retelling, reconfiguring, and revisiting a concept, phenomenon, event, or location from different angles’ (Braidotti 168). Part of my methodology is also an artistic practice, in which I play around with creating glitch art myself. I will reflect on this in my presentation, as well as reflect on my own embodied experience of disability and neurodiversity.

My work relates to a broader context of crip technoscience which has been defined as a ‘practices of critique, alteration, and reinvention of our material-discursive world’ (Hamraie & Fritsch 1). I argue that disability should not only be part of discussions on environmental change, it should guide us because ‘It matters what thoughts think thoughts’ (Haraway 35).

**SHORT BIO**

**Lonneke van Kampen** is a second-year research master student in Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam with a background in Cultural Studies. Lonneke is interested in Disability Studies, environmental humanities, glitch art, bias of AI and narratives around AI. She is also interested in experimental methodologies and exploring how disability activist practices can enrichen more abstract and theoretical research (Twitter @Lonnieflex).
Animal
OHAD BEN SHIMON

ABSTRACT

Animal is an ongoing video project since 2008 that explores notions of human and animal relations using DIY aesthetics and dead-pan humor.

SHORT BIO

Ohad Ben Shimon is a writer, researcher and educator with a background in cognitive sciences, psychology, cultural analysis and art. He is currently Senior Lecturer Critical Thinking/ Business Communication & Researcher of Change Management at The Hague University of Applied Sciences. His research focuses on how to affirmatively include, value, care for, and perform bodies in organizations. In 2013 his first book of poetry titled 2 blue cups on two different corners of the table was published by VerySmallKitchen. His recent book titled Until the last breath (2018) and published by zimZalla deals with notions of speculation, big-data and prediction in volatile markets.
Becoming-Animals through Sheng-Wen Lo’s Artistic Research and Practices
EMILY SHIN-LEE & SHENG-WEN LO

ABSTRACT

This presentation draws insights from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s concept of ‘becoming animal’ to examine the artistic research and practices by Taiwanese artist Sheng-Wen Lo. It wishes to argue that, a trans disciplinary approach together by artists and researchers, can confront our anthropocentric negligence, advocating for and attending to non-human species in an affirmative and ethical way.

Fascinated by the relationships between non-humans and societies ever since his childhood, Lo’s artistic practice consistently explores how these relationships reflect anthropocentric dominant values and attitudes toward their surroundings. Trained as a Computer Scientist, Lo’s artistic projects are often based on scientific research. During his creative process, he develops tactics and devices wherein which his own body becomes the site of experimentation. In so doing, he interrogates the fundamental otherness between human and non human animals. His posthuman presence defamiliarizes and disidentifies from anthropocentric thought and humanist arrogance (Braidotti 2016). These artistic projects ask us to critically reflect on the possible consequences of neglecting our categorical otherness, hence providing speculative and productive potentials in approaching affirmative modes of relations to multiple (Braidotti 2016).
Down (2017-2018) is an attempt to self-make a down jacket. After months of collecting, cleaning, filling and sewing goose feathers collected in the parks, riverbanks, and forest near Lo’s house in Breda, the jacket was put to test in the High Arctic (Spitsbergen archipelago) for three weeks to see if he can survive. Extendable Ears (2019-2020) questions whether we humans are constantly producing ultrasound noises unintentionally which harm other species. Lo investigates this question by creating a wearable device which transforms ultrasound to audible ranges, allowing his ears to register sound frequencies similar to cats. He wore this device for one month (24/7), feeding the noise to his ears and registered his experience with text, image and recordings. In his latest project F/eel (2020) commissioned by the Embassy of the North Sea, Lo creates an interactive ‘escape room’ installation with social designer Yi-Fei Chen. Intrigued by the strenuous, yet perplexing lives of the critically endangered European eels – the artists created a space not designed for humans. Participants are invited to individually and physically experience the life challenges of an eel in this constructed space.

In short, this presentation –in itself a collaborative endeavor – encourage audiences to doubt, formulate questions, and challenge the status quo through a collective artistic journey.

SHORT BIOS

Emily Shin-Jie Lee is a researcher and cultural practitioner currently enrolled in the rMA Art Studies program at University of Amsterdam. Her main interest is on decolonial practices in the field of (contemporary)art and anthropology, and the ways in which these disciplines relate to current critical posthumanities and new materialist perspectives that engage a deeper understanding of entangled human-world relations.

Sheng-Wen Lo is currently an artist in residence at the Rijksakademie (2019-2021) based in Amsterdam. He is interested in relationships between non-humans and societies, and attempts to spark off debates. As a maker, he makes use of still/moving images, sound and video games. He received MA in Photography from AKV|St.Joost in the Netherlands, and MSc in Computer Science from the Computer Music Lab at National Taiwan University. Scientific process and perspectives are also crucial to his works. https://www.shengwenlo.com/
**ABSTRACT**

It is my intention to present a poetry reading concentrating on my most recent collection of poems, Zoospeak, a collaboration between myself and the Canadian photographer and animal activist, Jo-Anne McArthur, which uses poetry and photography to examine the experiences of animals in captivity throughout the world in zoos, aquariums, fur farms, and breeding facilities.

**SHORT BIO**

Gordon Meade is a Scottish poet based in the East Neuk of Fife. His tenth collection, Zoospeak, a collaboration between himself and the Canadian photographer, Jo-Anne McArthur, was published in 2020 by Enthusiastic Press in London. In the past, Gordon has been the writer in residence for the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, and the Royal Literary Fund Writing Fellow at the University of Dundee. Gordon has read from his work throughout the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, and Luxembourg. Most recently, he read from Zoospeak at the Multispecies Conference for the Multispecies Storytelling Centre.
Being in the More-Then-Human-World. Posthumanist Imagination of Olga Tokarczuk and Patricia Piccinini

NATALIA ANNA MICHNA

ABSTRACT

Olga Tokarczuk, the Polish winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2018, has noted that one of the greatest challenges of our times is questioning anthropocentrism, thereby offering an expression of her posthumanist convictions. According to this writer, the essence of humanity is the pursuit of change, transcendence, and transgression, as reflected in her work, which is full of variable, ambiguous characters, whose complex ontic status can be described as hybrid. Hybrids are a regular element of Tokarczuk’s posthumanist imagination, in which the boundaries of the identities of species become fluid and changeable, and subjectivity is reserved not only for people, but also for things, animals, and plants (i.e. House of Day, House of Night (2003), Anna in the Tombs of the World (2006), The Books of Jacob (2014), Bizzare Stories (2018)).

Hybrids are also the subject of the works of Patricia Piccinini, an Australian artist admired and repeatedly cited by Tokarczuk. In her works (i.e. We Are Family (2002–03), Leather Landscape (2003)), Piccinini proposes to blur the boundaries between what is natural and artificial, human and beyond human. The artist’s works simultaneously depict human and non-human, animal and non-animal beings alike. The boundaries marking identity become fluid; subjectivity takes on new meanings; questions arise concerning the nature of the relationships between human beings and the natural world, the right to use other species for our own needs, and finally the primacy of one life over another.
The aim of my paper is to analyze selected threads of Tokarczuk’s and Piccinini’s works as a posthumanist (artistic) critique of anthropocentrism. I will refer to Donna Haraway’s concept of species kinship and Rosi Braidotti’s considerations on posthuman critical theory. Above all, my analysis will be guided by the question of how art clarifies and helps us to understand a world in which boundaries between species are crossed and dualistic divisions—nature/culture, human/animal, human/machine—no longer apply. In the paper I will show that art is a space of expression in which the subjectivity of posthumanist hybrids is given the chance to infiltrate universal consciousness and break down the anthropocentric monolith of Western European culture.

**SHORT BIO**

**Natalia Anna Michna** – PhD in philosophy, an assistant professor at the Institute of Philosophy, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland. Main researcher of the project ‘The Roman Ingarden Digital Archive’ financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Poland. Director of a project ‘The Concept of Female Experience and the Problem of Feminist Aesthetics’, financed by the National Science Centre in Poland. Deputy editor-in-chief of the philosophical-aesthetic quarterly “The Polish Journal of Aesthetics”. Recently has published a book entitled Women and Culture. The Problem of Experience in Feminist Philosophy (2018). Research interests concern feminist philosophy and aesthetics, contemporary art, and women’s history.
A View From a Distance: Transcending the (Non)Human in Posthuman Futures
JILT JORRITSMA

ABSTRACT

Recent literary, political and cultural responses to the current ecological crisis often use the “posthumous” or “ghostly” narrative as a means to make the abstract threat of climate change artificially visible: imagined scenes of future destruction reveal the ruins of our present society in order to question our present-day behavior. Such narratives look back at our own, contemporary world and imagine it “as it will be when it has become past” (Colebrook 2014). The present is presented as a prologue, as a retrospective object of future memory. Current analyses and theorizations dealing with these posthumous narratives stress their imaginative potential, and argue that their retrospective perspective “decenters human agency, and blurs the boundaries between human and natural history” (Craps 2017; Garrard 2014; Szerzsynski 2012; Vermeulen 2017; Yusoff 2013).

I want to propose a counterintuitive reading of these narratives. Whereas current research stresses their ability to overcome the boundary between human and non-human worlds, I aim to show that the rhetorical effect that these narratives produce actually reinstates a dichotomy between humans and their surroundings. Posthumous narratives distance their audience from the present world. And through this distancing, I will argue, they actually reproduce a modernist paradigm – that is, of Man as a distinct subject who is able to position himself outside of the world, and to create a separated artificial place from which to reflect (Barad 2007; Haraway 1988, 2016; Ryan 2019).
As a case-study, I will examine both a fictional (literary) and non-fictional (governmental floodmaps) narrative of anticipated sea-level rise in The Netherlands. I will show that both narratives position an object of anticipated loss – the world as we know it today – in a dichotomizing relationship with a human subject who is looking from a distance (either from a detached time, or a detached space). In doing so, these narratives draw upon two fundamental paradigms of a modernist tradition. First, the foregrounding of human subjectivity as opposed to an objectified and passive environment. And second, the belief that understanding and meaning can only be constructed in hindsight, from a progressed and separated perspective. Rather than asking what writers and policy officers intent to do in their narratives, I instead aim to discern the ordering principles that lie latent – though not always obvious – in present-day aesthetic and governmental ecological narratives, and reveal their investment in, and containment by, specific modernist experiences of time, progress and nature.

SHORT BIO

Jilt Jorritsma is a writer and PhD-student at the Department of Literature and Art History of the Open University, The Netherlands. His interdisciplinary PhD-project combines research in the fields of Policy Studies, Literary Studies and Historical Theory in order to examine anticipations of climate futures in contemporary cultures. Jorritsma won the Joost Zwagerman Essay Prize in 2018; and the Nexus Essay Prize in 2016. In May 2021, his debut-novel (which deals with posthuman themes as well) will be published at Lebowksi Publishers. His article “A Future in Ruins: Ghosts, Repetition and the Presence of the Past in Anthropocene Futures” was recently published in a Kronoscope special issue on Anthropocene Temporalities.
Flat Posthumanist Ontologies and the Role of the Arts: Karen Barad, Jean Luc Nancy and Thinking Beyond the Written Word

ALDO KEMPEN

ABSTRACT

Karen Barad’s (2003) epochal article “Posthumanist Performativity” opens with the provocative and oddly performative sentence: “Language has been granted too much power” (p. 801). In this article they expound a flat ontology where the material and the cultural, the human and the non-human exist on an equal footing. The rapid uptake of Barad’s work masks a deeper problem: has their language been assigned too much power? Looking at the power of words, this paper discusses the salience of form. More precisely, it looks at the form that language but also the arts can and must take in a search for a posthumanist and flat ontology. As this symposium is about the meeting of the arts and posthumanist theory, how can (and why must) the arts help in articulating this vision. Especially, I will zoom in on the role of the cinematic arts. First we will dive in why the arts might be needed here, then i’ll zoom in how they can! Specifically, I will take a critical look at the work of Barad - a prominent thinker in the discussion on flat posthumanist ontologies. Then, I will look at the work on cinema by Jean Luc Nancy and connect this to our the role of the arts in a search for a posthumanist ontology.

SHORT BIO

Aldo Kempen will start with his appointed PhD in Philosophy at the Open University in the Netherlands in January 2021 after completing his research project at the Nationale Denktank. His PhD aims to develop a critical evaluation of New Materialist scholarship through the lens of contemporary French philosophy. Previously, Aldo completed his MA in Cultural Analysis at ASCA and an MPhil in Film and Screen Studies at the University of Cambridge. Besides academia, Aldo is a public speaker and cultural programmer at various institutions such as de Rode Hoed, Felix Meritis and Pakhuis de Zwijger.
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