Emergence of the Posthuman Subject

A two-day international conference hosted by the Department of English, University of Surrey

Programme. Speakers. Abstracts.

Over the past two decades theories and critical practices associated with posthumanism have become an increasingly significant presence in the Arts and Sciences. Inspired by the radical innovation that period has seen in information and communication technology, philosophers and writers have hailed what amounts to a break with the humanist tradition that has underpinned western civilisation for over five-hundred years.

This conference sets out to trace the Emergence of the Posthuman Subject, in fields as diverse as literature, psychology, philosophy, anthropology, film, palaeontology, zoology, theatre and physics.

The event takes place at the University of Surrey, the institution at the forefront of space exploration technology in the UK – situated in that territory west of London, criss-crossed by flight-paths and motorways, celebrated in key novels by JG Ballard.

Programme

Friday 2 July 2010	
9.00-9.30	Registration and Coffee
9.30-10.00	Welcome Address
9.45-10.45	**Keynote 1** Dr Andy Mousley, Senior Lecturer in English at the University of De Montfort, "Shape Without Form; Shade Without Colour"? - Literature's Mediation of the (Post) Human
10.45-12.15	**Panel 1 – Addressing** Patricia Silveirinha Castello Branco (Philosophy of Language Institute, Portugal) Ernst Junger and the Posthuman Subject: technology as an ally of Nature Jeremy Green (University of Colorado) Ben Marcus and the Ontology of Objects Stefan Herbrechter (Coventry University) Addressing the Post-Human **Panel 2 – Embodying** Salvador Olguin (New York University) Towards a Genealogy of the Posthuman Subject: traces of a prosthetic impulse in philosophical materialism during the Enlightenment and in Gnostic Theology William Merrin (Swansea University) FM-2030: the first transhuman Lucy Perry (Lancaster University) Medics, Mechanics and Techno-Priests: textualising old age in modern and contemporary prose
12-15-13.15	Lunch

Programme

Friday 2 July 2010	
13.15-14.45	**Panel 3 – Cloning** Adrienne Banner (San Francisco State University) Isaac Asimov's "Evidence" Josie Gill (University of Cambridge) Posthumanism and Race in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go Angus McBlane (Cardiff University) Evolution and Degeneration of the Inheritance of "Man" in the (Posthuman(s) of Michel Houllebecq's The Possibility of an Island **Panel 4 – Housing** Sudeep Dasgupta (University of Amsterdam) The Posthuman Object and Its Constructivist Futures in the Present: Urban Space, Artistic Contestation and the Staging of the Common Paul Jahshan (Notre Dame University, Lebanon) From Diomira to Urbicande: refexions on the posthuman cities of Italo Calvino and Francois Schuiten/ Benoit Papers David Ashford (University of Surrey) Gorillas in the House of Light: London Zoo and the Posthumanist Turn
14.45-16.15	**Panel 5 – Analysing** Tony Richards (University of Lincoln) Immediation Towards the Selfless Other? James Riley (University of Cambridge) J.G. Ballard and Sensory Deprivation Aylish Wood (University of Kent) Resolving the Posthuman **Panel 6 – Round Table: Performing** Seda Ilter (University of Sussex) Daniel Ploëger (University of Sussex)
16.15-16.45	Coffee Break
16.45-17.45	**Keynote 2** Prof. Steve Dixon (University of Brunel) Cybernetic Existentialism in Posthuman Performance Arts
17.45-18.45	Wine Reception
19.30	Dinner in Guildford

Programme

Saturday 3 July 2010	
9.30-9.45	Coffee
9.45-10.45	**Keynote 3** Prof. Robert Pepperell (Cardiff School of Art and Design) The Posthuman Condition: Progress and Challenges
10.45-12.15	**Panel 7 – Monstrous Arrivant** Nese Lisa Senol (University of Pennsylvania) Assembling an Army of Monsters: Re-reading Jacques Derrida with Marshall McLuhan Martin Watson (York and Ryerson Universities) Krzhizhanovsky's Time Machine Pamela Lock (University of Bristol) The Science-Fiction of Alfred Bester **Panel 8 - Culture** Thomas Festa (State University of New York) Posthuman Contingencies in Iain M. Banks's "Culture" Novels Vicki Tromanhauser (State University of New York) Virginia Woolf's Animals and the Humanist Laboratory Sakirko Elena (Moscow State University) Cellular Identities in V. Kishinet's "Nano Sapiens, or the Silence of the Skies" (2005) and D. Kehlmann's "Fame" (2009)
12-15-13.15	Lunch

Programme

Saturday 3 July 2010	
13.15-14.45	**Panel 9 - Re-Embodiments** Deborah Benita Shaw (University of East London) Posthuman Remains: Contemporary Biopolitics and the Consumption of "Undeath" Aline Ferreira (University of Aveiro) Posthuman (Re)Embodiments: Purloined Bodies in H.G. Wells's "The Story of the Late Mr. Elversham", Kureishi's The Body, and Coppola's Youth Without Youth Erica Moore (Cardiff University) Re-conceptualisations of the Human in the Fiction of J.G. Ballard **Panel 10 - Media** Melanie Chan (Leeds Metropolitan University) Representations of Posthuman Subjectivity in Contemporary Film and Television Barbara Salvadori (East Carolina University) The Dark Side of Posthumanism in Fahrenheit 451: technology, oppression and alienation
14.45-16.15	Coffee Break
16.45-17.45	**Plenary Speaker** Jason Lee (University of Derby) "When in Rome" – a performance of a recorded short story.

Steve Dixon
Cybernetic Existentialism in Posthuman Performance Arts

This multimedia paper, synchronised with performance video footage, focuses on cyborg and robot performance art and explores a number of conflicting and paradoxical themes that pervade posthuman performance, with reference to artists and groups including Stelarc, Louis-Philippe Demers, Marcel-li Anthunez Roca, Toni Dove, Amorphic Robot Works, and The Chameleons Group (directed by the author). Images and metaphors of 'machinized' humans evoke on the one hand representations of powerful and enhanced evolutionary beings, but on the other dehumanized beings at the mercy of technology. The paper considers how performing posthumanism becomes a potent expression of a 'cybernetic existentialism' where the natural, the spiritual, the political and the technological can both cogently cohere and spectacularly malfunction.

Steve Dixon is Professor of Performance and Pro-Vice-Chancellor at Brunel University. His creative practice-as-research includes international multimedia theatre tours, two award winning CD-ROMs, interactive Internet performances, and telematic arts events.

He is Associate Editor of The International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media, and has published extensively on subjects including performance studies, contemporary theory, and digital arts. His 800-page book, Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art and Installation (MIT Press, 2007) is the most comprehensive study to date of the field of technological performance and has won two international book awards.

Andy Mousley
'Shape without form, shade without colour'?:
Literature's Mediation of the (Post-) Human

There are different stories to tell about humanism and posthumanism. Despite the fact that humanism is currently being reinvented, differently, across a number of disciplines, and is arguably alive and well in certain domains of popular culture, one influential story which posthumanism tells about humanism is the story of its demise. If 'humanism' here means species narcissism, an inflated conception of human capacities, an overinvestment in rationality, a naïve belief in the idea of progress, and an equally naïve appeal to the autonomy and sovereignty of the individual, then it probably has been, and deserves to be, 'posted'. But this humanism does not account for the whole of the humanist tradition. It belongs, rather, to a 'top-down' account of humanism which literary texts, I will argue, have often called into question.

My paper will attend to the resources within the humanist tradition beyond those usually cited. It will not simply glorify these alternative resources, but show how they both question, and are questioned by, posthumanist tenets. Specifically, it will focus upon the particular nature of literature's mediation of the human and 'posthuman', and the challenge which this presents to a theoretical posthumanism whose literary canon has tended, with some notable exceptions, to begin and end with science fiction.

Dr Andy Mousley is Senior Lecturer at the Department of English and Creative Writing, De Montfort University, and editor of the Palgrave collection Literature, Humanism and Posthumanism.

Selected Publications: Recent and Forthcoming
- As invited respondent to articles published in the inaugural issue of a new (Palgrave) journal: 'Limits, Limitlessness and the Politics of the (Post)Human', postmedieval, 1:1 (2010, forthcoming).
- 'The New Literary Humanism: Towards a Critical Vocabulary', Textual Practice (2010, forthcoming).
- Editor, with introduction, of Literature, Humanism and Posthumanism (Palgrave, 2010, forthcoming).
- Guest editor, with introduction, of a special issue on 'Shakespeare and the Meaning of Life', Shakespeare, 5:2 (2009), 135-44.
- 'Early Modern Autobiography, History and Human Testimony', Textual Practice, 23:2 (2009), 267-87.
- Re-Humanising Shakespeare: Literary Humanism, Wisdom and Modernity (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).
- 'English after Anti-Humanism', in The Condition of the Subject, ed. Philip Martin (London: Palgrave, 2005).
- Critical Humanisms: Humanist and Anti-Humanist Debates, with Martin Halliwell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).

Robert Pepperell
The Posthuman Condition: Progress and Challenges

There have been enormous shifts in the intellectual landscape since the first edition of The Posthuman Condition was published in 1995. The view that the mind is entirely dependent on the brain has been widely and seriously challenged, with theories of enactive perception and extended cognition now gaining significant currency; mid-twentieth century models of artificial intelligence, with their dependence on top-down processing and symbolic logic, have been replaced with situated models of intelligence based on embodied interaction within the environment; and the notion of posthumanism itself — once a minor strand in science fiction literature — is now a major branch of cultural theory, which some have argued is succeeding postmodernism as the defining intellectual idiom of our age.

While all this is to be welcomed, I want to argue that the posthuman conception of reality continues to present us with profound challenges, the importance of which many contemporary theorists are yet to grasp. Take the startling implications of quantum theory, part of standard scientific knowledge for nearly a century now. Thought for a long time to be confined only to the smallest detectable scales, recent experiments have shown how quantum effects can influence events at the human scale of reality. Yet despite this, many thinkers continue to rely on ontological assumptions that were already out of date by the 1920s. Just as vital is the need to incorporate new knowledge arising from the quest to understand consciousness, which in the last 15 years has moved from the margins of psychology to the forefront of science and philosophy. Many recent discoveries in consciousness studies are deeply perplexing and counter-intuitive, and force us to rethink cherished beliefs about human nature.
I will survey these developments and point to where posthuman thinking might further guide us as we struggle to come to terms with developments in science and technology in the gathering posthuman age.

Robert Pepperell is a Professor of Fine Art at the Cardiff School of Art & Design. He is the author of The Posthuman Condition (1995 and 2003) and with Michael Punt, The Postdigital Membrane

Jason Lee
"When in Rome" – performance of a recorded short story

When stockbroker Rupert heads off for a weekend break to Rome with his wife Hermione, signs of a posthuman world are already surfacing. Despite his new son, the frantic numbers of the market have gnawed his soul, and the competition with mere mortals has left him ashamed of his mortality.

'When in Rome', a short story by Jason Lee, with music by Jason Lee, is a metaphysical morality tale, that encompasses the beauty of art and the body. One question remains, who is really in control?

Introduced by the author, with a Q+A to follow.

Panel 1 – Addressing
Patricia Silveirinha Castello Branco (Philosophy of Language Institute, Portugal)
Ernst Junger and the Posthuman Subject: technology as an ally of Nature

Ernst Jünger's aesthetic views of Modern Technology and of its impact on the Natural and Human world are one of the most accurate and original, yet forgotten, thoughts of the past century. Jünger's perspectives, mainly those found in this works: 'Die Totale Mobilmachung' (1930) and 'Der Arbeiter, Herrschaft und Gestalt' (1932) had a recognized influence on Heidegger's critic of modern technology, shared some views with pre-war Italian futurism (concerning the alliance between man and machine) and have inspired several later science fiction authors. In this paper, I will try and demonstrate that Jünger's views (both from the thirties and subsequent decades) offer an original and accurate perspective that can help us to reflect deeply on several Posthumanistic issues. In fact Jünger anticipated several Posthuman perspectives, mainly those concerning the blurring of distinctions between the human and the inhuman, the emergence of a new kind of "humanity" and a new understanding of the natural and animal world, as well as the need for a new relationship with technology.
Broadly speaking, Jünger inverted the Modern perspective that considers Technology to be an ally of the Humanistic project to rule over and master Nature. Jünger argues that, in the modern technological world, it is the very distinction between Human Culture and Nature that is being blurred. Strongly Influenced by Nietzsche, Jünger foresees a whole new world governed by new laws, and conceived of Modern Technology as the latest historical manifestation of the Nietzschian Eternal Will to Power. He considers Technology to be not a cultural artefact but a 'Titan', i.e., a natural force that is being brought to culture through human action. Jünger conceives of Technology as a 'Trojan horse' by which Nature, with its passionate energies of the Will to Power at work in all life, is invading Culture. Therefore, the instrumental and humanistic views of technology are totally wrong. This is a radical statement that will be scrutinized here. I will try and examine whether this view of Jünger is still a dualist perspective that conceives the Human world and the Animal and Natural world as appositive poles, or, on the contrary, it precludes something radical and new, perhaps a Posthumanism avant la lettre,

Jeremy Green (University of Colorado)
Ben Marcus and the Ontology of Objects

The concept of the posthuman has acquired a manifold significance in the decades since Foucault likened "man" to an image effaced by the waves. From Foucault to Fukuyama the posthuman future has been variously envisaged as the demise of the Cartesian subject, the end of metaphysics, the bankruptcy of humanism, and the rise of biotechnology. Like those terms with which the posthuman shares a family resemblance--postmodernism, postmetaphysical, and the like--the word bears a weight at once portentous and ambivalent, signaling the epochal rupture of the contemporary.

Recent developments in philosophy suggest that reports of the "death of man" have been greatly exaggerated. Speculative realism, a very recent current of thought that surpasses the familiar continental / analytical divide in philosophy, offers a way to rethink the relation of human to environment. Quentin Meillasoux argues that modern philosophy from Kant to the late twentieth-century has been caught up in "correlationism", the problematic in which all conceptions of the object are referred to the human, whether as phenomena, linguistic norms, or the present-to-hand. Correlationism forecloses the possibility of thinking the object, the non-human, without reference to the human vantage.

Is it possible to think the object as object? Certainly, philosophers such as Meillasoux, Graham Harman, Ray Brassier, and Iain Hamilton Grant have presented exhilarating and deeply strange vistas of thought in pursuit of the object, I leave it to philosophers to assess the cogency and significance of this project. My own interest lies in the status of the aesthetic within speculative realism, about which Harman and Brassier offer ambiguous but tantalizing hints. I propose to tease out these hints in an oblique way by looking at the experimental fiction of the American writer Ben Marcus, whose work vividly conjures up a world of violently colliding objects, among them human beings. In particular, Marcus disrupts notions of causality and agency by presenting humans as opaque, volatile, and disjunctive objects--truly a thought-experiment in the posthuman.

Stefan Herbrechter (Coventry University)
Addressing the Post-Human

Subjectivity is the central concept of poststructuralism. Poststructuralism's critique of the "liberal humanist subject" paves the way for posthumanist theorists like Haraway, Hayles, Graham, Braidotti or Wolfe, whose projects all involve the evaluation or construction of new subjectivities under new, "posthuman", conditions. In fact, whether one speaks of posthuman conditions (usually thought to be the result of "technoscientific" development), or whether one refers to posthumanising as a historical (and even anthropological) processes (for example in the form of a longterm trajectory of "becoming" or, indeed of "unbecoming" human), it will be inevitable to critically evaluate these through (emergent or existing) "posthuman" subjectivities. This means that the question of interpellation, ideology and address (Althusser) will remain extremely relevant in this process of submitting posthumanism and posthumanisation and their related representations of the posthuman to a substantial critique. Who and what is a posthuman subject? Who or what is a posthuman subject addressed by? What are the specific processes of interpellation that constitute a posthuman subject position. In turn, of course, to what extent does a critical posthumanism change Althusser's and poststructuralism's notion of the subject, of its positioning, of the process of interpellation and their understanding of ideology?

Panel 2 – Embodying
Salvador Olguin (New York University)
Towards a Genealogy of the Posthuman Subject: traces of a prosthetic impulse in philosophical materialism during the Enlightenment and in Gnostic Theology

Posthumanism emerges in a context characterized by the crisis of Modern thinking and the rejection of its intrinsic dualism, as well as by accelerating advances in biotechnology, cybernetics and artificial intelligence. But posthumanism's questioning of the boundaries between the human and the non-human –the animal, the machine– is not new to our culture, and can be traced back to some marginal discourses concerning the body. In this paper I intend to look for early questionings of the traditional boundaries of the human, particularly in Julien de La Mettrie's Man Machine, and in fragments from the writings of Basilides. While I'm not suggesting these early texts contain a posthuman view in embryonic form, I am interested in signaling possible paths for a genealogic approach to posthumanism. According to Katherine Hayles, posthuman thought conceives the body as the first prosthesis we all learn to manipulate; other prosthetic attachments or even full cyborgization are a mere continuation of a process we all start at birth. Such view of the body echoes some of La Mettrie's ideas. In spite of his appreciation for Descartes's philosophy and his extreme materialism, La Mettrie's rejection of Cartesian dualism, as well as the implications of his notion of the man-machine –which takes Descartes's mechanistic view to its last consequences– make an analysis of his work fruitful for a genealogical approach to the study of the intersections between the body and technology. On the other hand, Giorgio Agamben's way of interpreting the writings of Basilides in The Open. Man and Animal reveals how early Gnostic ideas regarding the end of times and the ultimate fate of the material world can be fruitfully connected to the preoccupations of our posthuman era; they can also, as I will show, be productively related to La Mettrie's ideas on death.

William Merrin (Swansea University)
FM-2030: the first transhuman

Who today remembers FM2030? It is ironic that a man who lived so much in the future should be so forgotten by it. Today even basic information about him is hard to come by. His books are out of print and few academics have even heard of his name. No mention is found of him in any of the critical literature in sociology, literature, philosophy, post-industrialism, the information society, cyberculture, digital media and media theory and the most distinguished names in these disciplines have shaken their head when I've mentioned his name. FM-2030, born Feridoun M. Esfandiary (1930-2000), was one of the earliest transhumanist philosophers, developing his ideas about the future of human society and the technological transformation of humanity itself across a series of books from 1970. In these texts he combined an interest in modern media communications technology and present and future scientific developments to promote an optimistic transhumanist philosophy. In his ideas and influence he was the progenitor of the entire modern transhumanist movement promoted by thinkers such as Hans Moravec and Ray Kurzweil. This paper will re-introduce FM2030 and his life and work, arguing that his significance lies in his role as a boundary-figure, not only between conventional media theory and transhumanist theory, but also between humanism and post-humanism: his almost humanistic politics jarring with and shining a critical light upon that very-different brand of high-tech, neo-Liberal, individualist libertarianism that would come to define the later movement.

Lucy Perry (Lancaster University)
Medics, Mechanics and Techno-Priests:
textualising old age in modern and contemporary prose

This paper explores the influences of changing medical and sociological/demographic treatments of senility have on 'postmodern', literary discourses of ageing. What contemporary literature is currently responding to is a medical history that has transformed senescence from part of the natural lifecourse, to the neurological research of Alzheimer which symbolically recast it as a curable pathology, to contemporary cosmetic/consumerist efforts toward an elliptical leapfrogging of the appearance of old age, and finally to this emerging speculative medical research which may be viewed, I argue, in terms of medical/fictional hybridity –an ideal with an eye to a future cure to ageing and with it the advocacy of an ageless transhuman utopia.

The progressive medical, cosmetic and consumerist drive to abolish the appearance and even physiology of ageing has challenged deterministic or fatalist narratives of old age and any conventional, or 'canonical', allusions to fixity and finitude. The dynamics of the mature identity are increasingly associated with liminality, hybridity, and fecundity as the boundaries between youth and senescence, fiction and medicine become metaphysically illusory. By extension, the lifecourse is symbolically becoming less linear and more recapitulative with an asymptotic relation to death –to the point where not only the task of 'tensing' the individual is increasingly compromised, but where the very notion of death becomes a paradox. As more contemporary novelists are responding to the ambivalence of the mature identity, it is evident that a new 'postmodern' discourse of ageing is emerging and requires definition within the literary canon, particularly with regards to stylistic, syntactic and narratological changes therein. It is the reality of ageing that challenges the language of fiction, and in a postmodern spin on Pound's dictum 'make it new', I will be arguing that old age requires a new vocabulary, and constitutes a site of continuing change and ambivalence, in contemporary literature.

Panel 3 – Cloning
Adrienne Banner (San Francisco State University)
Isaac Asimov's "Evidence"

In narratives that engage with the posthuman subject there are often foci on the notion of hybridization between the heretofore distinct ontological categories of human and non-human. An implicit understanding of duality is nearly always employed as the basis from which an interrogation of the relationship between the two categories can proceed. The identity-groups of "Human" and "Other" interact in novel ways to produce a coupling, interdependence, or supplementation that then calls into the question the sovereignty of the original definitions. By examining Isaac Asimov's prescient short story "Evidence" (1950) I explore a rhetorical strategy that challenges this dichotomy and shows it to be semantically meaningless in certain situations. Such a challenge does not so much call into question the boundary between human and machine but rather eliminates the validity of such a boundary altogether.

"Evidence" tells the story of the mayoral election of Stephen Byerley in the year 2032, and the scandal that erupts when a rival candidate starts the rumor that Byerley is not a human being but rather a robot. There are only two physical proofs that can be used to determine whether Byerley is a robot, and with several provocative lines of reasoning Asimov challenges the view that the politician's physicality holds many, if any, indications of the nature of his being. The only other ostensible method for ascertaining the "true" nature of Byerley's identity is psychological, and here again Asimov questions if there is any benefit in exploring this route if it is possible that a robot's brain/mind/psychology functions just the same as an "authentically" human brain. Far from problematizing the usual interplay between humans and machines, I argue that this text explores the intriguing possibility that the relationship between man and machine is no longer an interaction but rather a kinship that precludes the two categories altogether.

Josie Gill (University of Cambridge)
Posthumanism and Race in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go

Human cloning, although yet to become a reality, is often evoked in discussions of the posthuman subject, the clone acting as a symbol of the unsettling of traditional conceptions of human nature provoked by developments in biotechnology. The ambiguous nature of the clone has inspired writers wishing to explore the boundaries of the human. In Kazuo Ishiguro's novel Never Let Me Go, the figure of the clone acts as "something very simple –it sounds rather grand – but, a metaphor for the human condition".1 Whilst Ishiguro avoids ethical discussions about reproductive cloning in favour of the wider question of what it means to be human, cloning is more than simply an expedient metaphor for this question in the novel. I argue that Ishiguro's exploration of the posthuman subject is accompanied by a consideration of race, a parallel which draws on the genetically defined identities of both the clone and racial other. Through the evocation of the experiences of people marginalised because of their racial difference in the portrayal of the clones, the reader is forced not only to confront contemporary processes of exclusion and dehumanization, but to consider how the racially marginalised might act as prototypes for posthuman subjects. This paper will explore how emerging conceptions of the posthuman might be informed by genetic conceptions of race, and how Ishiguro's use of the clone to represent the posthuman impacts on his consideration of the human condition.

Angus McBlane (Cardiff University)
Evolution and Degeneration of the Inheritance of "Man" in the (Posthuman(s) of
Michel Houllebecq's The Possibility of an Island

Does the narrative of 'man' continue in the posthuman? Does the posthuman dictate a radical break from its antecedents? What are the possible futures of posthuman existence? This essay explores these questions in relation to Michel Houellebecq's novel The Possibility of an Island. Beginning by exploring the concept of the temporal posthuman (after human) of popular posthumanism in relation to technological progress via human enhancement and technological coupling, two distinct and interlocked conceptions of the posthuman arise: technological coupling and genetic engineering, or what Bruce Sterling imagines as the Mechanists and the Shapers. Houellebecq's novel takes the latter form of the posthuman to develop his concept of the neo-humans, recognizably posthuman beings who continue their existence via cloning technologies and sequestered living. However, these posthuman beings rely on the narrative of their antecedents in order to construct their lifeworld. Through the rigorous reading and commentary on the life of their primary ancestor they inherit a history of 'man'. In contrast, the 'human' groups which populate the neo-humans world have been cut off from this inheritance; they no longer have recognizably 'human' stories to tell each other. For the 'humans' the chain of transmission has been broken. I argue, primarily through the work of Jacques Derrida, that the neo-humans, who seem to be recognizably posthuman, are in fact not posthuman at all because they continue to engage, and in fact define their lifeworld according to a narrative of 'man' (a particular individual in each case which is broadened into a collective framework), while the 'humans', which the neo-humans have so much disdain for, are in fact the most posthuman of all the inhabitants of the world which Houellebecq constructs.

Panel 4 – Housing
Sudeep Dasgupta (University of Amsterdam)
The Posthuman Object and Its Constructivist Futures in the Present: Urban Space, Artistic Contestation and the Staging of the Common

The material dimensions of urban space interact with spatial practices of its wanted and undesirable inhabitants. The increasing gentrification of cityscapes produces an intersection between global financial capital, concrete (and glass) architectural structures and the material and imagined practices of humans. Concrete space presses on, enables and obstructs differentiated bodies parsed according to their perceived desirability. This contemporary de-humanization of the (post)human reverses the Russian Constructivist strategy of the 1920s in which spatial compression, graphic experimentation and the objectivization of the human body were the resources through which the revolutionary "man" was envisaged. By juxtaposing past avant-garde strategies of re-humanization to the contemporary free-market dehumanization of man, the lecture will argue for a re-orientation of the strategies of 1920s post-revolutionary Russian constructivism for the present. How can the de-humanization of the human as objectified congealed labour (Marx, Adorno) be contested by re-orienting past Constructivism (Rodchenko, Brik) for the present? Taking the concrete and imagined urban space of the massive South-Axis development project in Amsterdam (Zuid-As)1 as an example, the lecture will explore how the work of Danish artist Jakob Kolding contests this objectification of space and dehumanization of "the marginal" through artistic interventions (graphics, collage, posters, t-shirts). By framing Kolding's Stakes is High (2010)2 through Constructivist transformations of art into science and experimentation, the lecture argues that the very scientific rationality accused of perpetuating myth and capitalist reification of the human, can also be turned away (détournement and derive in Debord) toward contemporary contestations of human objectification. Rethinking Adorno and Debord's critiques in the context of contemporary "politics of aesthetics" (Rancière), the post-human subject as object emerges as the possibility for imagining futures in the contemporary embattled struggle over material and imagined space and practices.

Paul Jahshan, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of American Studies, Notre Dame University, Lebanon
From Diomira to Urbicande: Reflexions on the Posthuman Cities of Italo Calvino and François Schuiten/Benoît Peeters.

Italo Calvino's Invisible Cities and François Schuiten/Benoît Peeters' graphic novel series Cités Obscures offer, through the literary and artistic medium, prototypes of the post-urban era.

Their cities, invisible and obscure, are known to only a few initiates (as the authors of The Guide to the Cities point out, Novalis, Kafka, Benjamin, Calvino, Kadaré, Borges and others have done their best to hide their knowledge of such cities); they are never fully discovered but are always re-written, revealing themselves as constructs where memories and desires intersect, where bearings are repeatedly taken, not only by the travellers' gaze, but also by the citizens' practices of everyday life, where squares, buildings, bifurcations, passageways and alleys invite, in Benjaminesque fashion, the posthuman subject to not only participate in the writing of a forever-changing discourse, but also to discover itself as an emblem among the multitudinous emblems of the coming age.

Borgesian visions par excellence, beautiful, enticing, yet sprawling and monstrous like books of sand, these posthuman cities posit the existence of multiple worlds governed by arcane laws of access: upper- and lower-level cities, parallel cities, dystopian-utopian cities, "rurban" universes where post-urbanity meets the posthuman at the tantalizing edge between nature and the machine, between countryside and polis; if the passage from one to the other is permitted, the nature of the channels is difficult to identify, as each city has its own mapping representation, giving itself as the only capital of the empire. When the centre is always shifting, the art of cartography becomes an integral part of philosophy.

The city spaces imagined by Calvino and by Schuiten/Peeters are complementary representations of the postmodern paradoxical discourses that have accompanied the twentieth-century human as it is entering into a new age, that of the posthuman homo cyberneticus; their invisible and obscure cities can shed much-needed light onto the shifting maps of cybernauts, the new travellers in cyberspace, as they navigate their way through the challenges posed by the New Technologies.

David Ashford (University of Surrey)
Gorillas in the House of Light: London Zoo and the Posthumanist Turn

The Gorilla House at London Zoo was the first in a series of remarkable modernist zoo buildings created in England by the Russian architect Berthold Lubetkin in the 1930s. Produced at a time when many people were compelled to live in substandard victorian terraces, penguins, elephants, bears and gorillas at London, Dudley and Whipsnade Zoo could be seen in stylish ultra-modern villas, inspired by Le Corbusier, intended to provide a blueprint for the future redevelopment of the human metropolis. For most of the people who flocked to see the animals in their new homes this was their initial encounter with modernist architecture: - and Lubetkin's zoos are in fact a significant milestone for the movement, built at a time when the works of the modernist mainstream, centred in Paris, remained for the most part on the drawing board.

Lubetkin's zoo architecture is re-examined, in the new context provided by the pioneering theoretical work on the significance of the "Animal" initiated by Derrida and now central to the Post-Humanist Project.

His Gorilla House is seen to constitute an anthropocentric reinstation of the human order over the animal. Lubetkin's cartesian geometry embodies an enlightenment preoccupation with the free circulation of air and light, but seems a lyrical celebration of Human Reason rather than the straightforward, functional response to a specific problem that it purports to be. In later years Lubetkin's daughter was to accuse him of "irrational zeal for the rational". I hope to show that Lubetkin's Gorilla House is the product of a culture-wide anxiety, a psychopathology stemming from what Derrida called Humanity's second trauma, the threat to the tenets of Humanism posed by evolutionary theory, manifest in the distasteful representation of Anthropoid Apes, particularly Gorillas, that have been produced throughout our Modern Period, but particularly in the thirties, when such representations attained entirely new levels of ferocity and mass popular appeal. In short this paper establishes the exact nature of the menace that Lubetkin had himself placed in England's first "House of Light".

Panel 5 – Analysing
Tony Richards (University of Lincoln)
Immediation Towards the Selfless Other?

Ontical protheses are continually being invented with the innocent aim of mediation or communication. Communication posits a sending out of intentional content from one distant space to another, the aim or teleological horizon of which is to reduce the techne of communication itself toward a presumed extra-differential unity. This bears witness to a quite traditional notion of the transportation of a packet of res-cognitans (intention) through or along a res-extensa (equipment): analogous to the relations within the intentional body itself. The transportation of a content presupposes solidity and self-identity at some punctual point-of-origin (a division between the two spaces to be bridged presupposes a pre-prosthetic or pre-differential unity at the point or originary intentionality.

Within the last decade a professor of cybernetics at Reading University in the UK (Kevin Warwick) has invented a chip to be embedded within a host body that sends out a bio-status-message (over the expanse of the internet) to a receiver planted within another body that informs the receiving body of the sexual excitation status of this other (lover, wife, partner, attached, etc.) "Was it good for you?" would presumably be a speech-act no longer apt within this cocooned future absolute? Lingering within this long-time adolescent wet-dream of absolute synthesis comes the techno-teleological horizon or (eschatological, depending on one's perspective) of an invisible immediation, where deference, difference or difference would no longer (hold) court. As now, the sovereignty ensconced within the other's space, the one undecidable distance of the on-facing "face" (and the other Levinasian ontologico-ethical markings of autrui) would seem to be securely erased. Yet this would presuppose an existent intimacy secure already at source that woul d then be able to take within its intimate otherness that "disterance" of the other now vanquished.

This paper intends to develop some of the paradoxes of this doxa of intimacy (with one's prostheticised-other-lover), but also with an eye toward larger socio-politico-prosthetic issues of honing away uncertainty's (general economic) u-topo-graphy.

James Riley (University of Cambridge)
The Enormous Space: J.G. Ballard and Sensory Deprivation

In a number of short stories written across his career, J.G. Ballard makes use of imagery that evokes processes of sensory deprivation: the withdrawal of external sensory stimuli from the individual subject. These texts mirror works by the likes of Paddy Chayefsky (Altered States, 1978) and Colin Wilson (The Black Room, 1971) who take as their departure points information relating to a range of post-war experiments conducted by the US Air Force and private researchers into the physiological and psychological effects of extreme, prolonged isolation.

A well documented series of tests into this field conducted in 1954 suggested that the non-stimulated brain would essentially shift into a dormant state. In contrast, each of these writers present the experience as one which produces a hallucinatory intensity. In Ballard's 'The Gioconda of the Twilight Noon' (1964) the narrator's temporary blindness results in an extension of his remaining senses and the visionary resurgence of buried memories. Similarly, in 'The Enormous Space' (1989), a depressed suburbanite consigns himself to domestic exile at which point his house begins to take on the proportions of a cavernous cathedral.

However, where Ballard differs from comparable discussions of the theme is that he moves away from the humanist perspective they can be seen to advocate. His stories do not present an attempt to separate and valorise an essential human mind in the absence of the body as in Chayefsky's text, but narrate movements toward dissolution. In a departure also from narratives present elsewhere in his oeuvre that depict a merger with technology, these stories can be seen as posthuman, but in the sense that they are concerned with the depiction of an end point. They discuss the negation rather than the transcendence or reformation of the human identity.

Examining Ballard's representation of men in the process of dissapearing, this paper outlines the motif and considers its significance in relation to 'cyborgian' interpretations of his work.

Aylish Wood (University of Kent)
Resolving the Posthuman

The contradiction of the posthuman is between the automatism of technology and the greater autonomy of being human. Becoming posthuman might be understood as ways of resolving this contradiction. My paper starts from a deliberately simplified approach to the contradiction. It begins with the question: what happens during an interaction between a human and an automated process? Consider an animator using a software package that relies on algorithms to create moving images. To what do we attribute the outcome?

Intentionality, when used only to mean anticipating an outcome, is a conceptual device through which an individual might envisage a series of actions in order to achieve that outcome. With humans we can talk about plans, situated actions and the muddied emergence of agency. An animator may have a plan to move a line somewhere on a screen. The enactment of this plan involves the coming together of a series of selections: where to move the line, the kind of motion the animator imagines the line will have, in what ways will the package move the line? The outcome, the moving line, is the result of an interactive event: pressing the button.

The important stage in an interactive event is the moment when all possibilities leading to an outcome merge. When one of the elements is an automated process the intentionality of the human user merges with the algorithms underlying the process. But what does it mean to make this statement? In programming an algorithm is a finite sequence of instructions that solves a problem. It is clear that the sequence of instructions will always be executed in the same way. So what is human intention merging with?

Pressing the button creates a situation within which the possibilities of the technological interface begin to define what the human user can achieve. Since the technological interface has a programme, a set of algorithms through which it makes things happen, what is achieved is contingent on the programme. But this contingency goes further than simply allowing some options and not others. The logic of the algorithm becomes incorporated into the outcome of the interaction. The contradictory forces of human and machine are resolved in the interactive event. Broadening the scope of this paper I finally consider how this resolution attenuates or intensifies our affective encounters with the world around us.

Panel 6 – Round Table: Performing
Seda Ilter (University of Sussex)
Daniel Ploëger (University of Sussex)

Panel 7 – Monstrous Arrivant
Nese Lisa Senol (University of Pennsylvania)
Assembling an Army of Monsters:
Re-reading Jacques Derrida with Marshall McLuhan

Jacques Derrida has been subject to chronic misreading, at the hands of his most ardent admirers and critics alike. There is nothing innocent about these misinterpretations as regards either their cause or influence. James K. A. Smith recently devoted an entire book—Jacques Derrida: Live Theory—to debunking the "Derrida myth" that has run rampant in both academia and popular culture since the circulation of his first publications. It is noteworthy that the book's back cover describes it rather banally as "a new introduction to the work of this most influential of contemporary philosophers." The cover goes on to promise thorough breadth, an examination of key concepts, and an investigation of Derrida's influence on a wide range of disciplines. Nowhere does it mention that Smith's overriding intention, as explicitly stated in the introduction and sustained throughout the text, is to demonstrate how the pervasive saturation of discourse by the "Derrida-monster" is highly "symptomatic and indicative of broader sentiments" in Western culture (Smith 4). In this paper, I will examine the nature and genesis of the Derrida "myth," especially as it relates to a very different sort of myth—what Smith might christen the Marshall McLuhan-monster. I will argue, first of all, that the "myths" surrounding both figures are the products of identical cultural sentiments, and that each figure developed an uninformed impression of the other based entirely on these superficial cultural productions. Finally, I will argue that the actual writings of Derrida and McLuhan exhibit striking and consequential similarities, and that a space for dialogue must be opened between these and comparable figures in order to develop their most radical critiques of contemporary culture.

Martin Watson (York and Ryerson Universities)
Krzhizhanovsky's Time Machine

In his 1929 novella Memories of the Future Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky (1887-1950), a polish-born author of Russian fiction, tells the story of brilliant inventor Max Shterer and his 'timecutter', a fantastic device allowing him to travel back and forth through time. Funded by desperate individuals ready to forsake their possessions for a chance to escape the Bolshevik present, he completes his machine, travels forward to 1954 and eventually 'crashes' back into 1928. Krzhizhanovsky almost lived to see the future that Shterer glimpsed, but died far before the publication of this, or any of his other fictions. Most of his oeuvre was never even sent to a publisher, its content far too shocking and 'non-contemporary' for his Soviet present, and was instead shelved in the State Archives after his death, only to be discovered in the distant future of 1976 and finally published for the first time in 1989. Despite effectively time travelling past the sci-fi novelists (Ballard, Burroughs, Dick, Vonnegut etc.) that in an alternate timeline would have regarded him as a predecessor, Krzhizhanovsky's themes, particularly that of the construction of the subject dislocated in time, resonate with these authors as well as many of the contemporary thinkers of posthumanist subjecthood (especially Baudrillard, Deleuze, Harraway,). Through an exploration of the concept of the time travelling subject in Memories of the Future, including an examination of the theorists of time with whom Krzhizhanovsky explicitly engages (Einstein, Minkowski, Husserl, Bergson) considered in light of contemporary posthumanist philosophers, I propose to explore not only the content of Krzhizhanovsky time travel narrative, but the way in which the novella itself became dislocated in time, emerging in an era so unlike its origins, and how this and other chronological dislocations can speak to the construction of the (literal or figurative) time traveller, a uniquely posthumanist subject.

Pamela Lock (University of Bristol)
The Science-Fiction of Alfred Bester

In this paper I shall examine the idea of the emergence of the post human subject in Alfred Bester's work. I shall explore the idea of the human evolving into something post human, the motivation for that evolution (must it be the threat of death that forces us to change or to find the potential waiting within us), the way that machines are, and are not, used in his work and the importance of making his characters fit for survival in the 24th Century and beyond.

Alfred Bester cannot allow technology to develop faster than the men manufacturing it. In Bester's version of the future, man's evolution is as rapid and extreme as the technology he is developing around him. In Tiger! Tiger! human beings are developing the ability to teleport, known as jaunting in the book, while in The Demolished Man, telepathy has become so common that a Guild must be created to separate and control the new sub-set of humanity. In the 1950's Bester was writing against a tide of literature, which predicted the destruction of the human race by natural (The Kraken Awakes, The Day of the Triffids) or alien catastrophe (The War of the Worlds, The Midwich Cuckoo), through its technological advances (A Canticle for Liebowitz, The Chrysalids) or the triumph of the machine, particularly the robot (The Complete Robot). In the desperate and violent action of Bester's Science Fiction, we are presented with a difficult but potentially hopeful alternative future. But to what extent is his vision a positive one? The punishments of the societies he depicts revolve around the loss, the control or the rebuilding of the mind and the powerful controlling forces of corruption and greed he draws, reflect the society he saw around him and which we still see today.

Panel 8 - Culture
Thomas Festa (State University of New York)
Posthuman Contingencies in Iain M. Banks's "Culture" Novels

In Use of Weapons, which takes place in the liberal technological utopia known as 'the Culture', a robot tells the protagonist about a civilization into which he is to intervene on behalf of 'Special Circumstances', a branch of the Culture tasked with manipulating as yet unassimilated local populations through espionage, diplomacy, and, as in this case, violent means. Zakalwe, the operative, follows the directives of another human agent, but she, like all members of the pan-species collective, ultimately takes her cues from super-intelligent Minds, the sentient A.I. beings who oversee the Culture while embodied in gigantic spaceships. Like many of the protagonists of the Culture novels—whether human, alien, or machine—Zakalwe is enlisted to disrupt the political aspirations of an ethnocentric group who resist the enlightened universalism of the Culture. In this case, it is a gang of 'carbon fascists' who 'call themselves Humanists'—and 'refuse to acknowledge machine sentience fully; they exploit proto-sentient computers and claim only human subjective experience has any intrinsic value'. Zakalwe is an expert in the management of arms, but the humans who act as proxies for the Minds are the real weapons being used for ambiguously moral ends, and their memories as well as their actions form the decisive technology deployed by Special Circumstances. Instead of seeing technology as an extension of human will and desire, Banks ironically puts human beings in the position of serving as extensions of machine consciousness, such that humans, satiated in the hedonistic centre of a polity without ownership, illness, or laws restricting behaviour, can indulge their animalistic drives under the serene gaze of their machine protectors. This paper aims to explore the 'contingencies' of the Culture novels—both the provisional solutions that require human agency, and the contingency formed of disparate species bound together when forced by circumstance to intervene in what the Minds call an 'Outside Context Problem'.

Vicki Tromanhauser (State University of New York)
Virginia Woolf's Animals and the Humanist Laboratory

This paper examines the interpenetration of human and nonhuman worlds in Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway in the light of the emergent interdisciplinary field of critical animal studies. Woolf's sustained critique of the structures of hierarchy and dominance that underpin patriarchy, imperialism, and the class system extends to the distinction of species and thereby reveals an implicit posthumanist dimension to her politics. The figure of the animal surfaces in Mrs. Dalloway in a number of human guises, whether in the birds that chirp to the war veteran Septimus in Greek, the Skye terrier he sees metamorphose into a man, the hatred Clarissa experiences as a hoofed brute within her, or the resemblance of the German outcast Doris Kilman to a "prehistoric monster." Through these unreconstructed images of "man" as the animal of the polis, Woolf unearths the very fantasy by which humanity constructs its exalted status through the violent repression of the animal and animalistic. The psychiatrist's consulting room becomes the laboratory in which the idea of the human is mechanically and "scientifically" produced through the doctor's division of the populace into different zones of life whose breeding can be regulated and "unsocial impulses" contained. The animalizing discursive practices that surround eugenics, medicine, and evolutionary science converge in Clarissa's party for London's elite, which for all its transcendental exuberance is unable to prevent the intrusion of its unwelcome bestial other. By making us cognizant of those animalized beings that give contour to social life through their partial inclusion and subjugation, Woolf anticipates recent theorizations of the posthuman subject by Agamben, Derrida, Cary Wolfe, and others. Woolf's fiction thus lays bare the mechanisms of a social system predicated upon the sacrifice of homosexuals, women, and animals—lives denied the possibility of transcendence in humanism's metaphysical calculations.

Sakirko Elena (Moscow State University)
Cellular Identities in V. Kishinet's "Nano Sapiens, or the Silence of the Skies" (2005) and D. Kehlmann's "Fame" (2009)

Today communication has become humanities' core discipline. The development of new technologies has made information sharing incredibly intensive. Figuratively speaking, cellular phone has divided the world into cells where a man is moving from one cell to another being all the time celled in a communicational "cage". The paper introduces a new term - 'cellular identity'- which refers to the cell-phone communication motif on the one hand, and the identity of a posthuman character whose biologic nature has been transformed on the cellular level, on the other.

"Fame", a novel in nine episodes by Daniel Kehlmann, shows four different types of communication: interpersonal communication, intercultural communication, author/reader communication, author/character communication. A cell-phone motif goes through all nine episodes of the novel and works as a literary device that allows D. Kehlmann to show the role of a fantastic event that is not caused by any reason. The communication explosion eliminates boundaries between the fictional and the real worlds: a famous writer travels with his heroine, an incurably ill old woman asks the author to change the ending of her story. New technologies make human/characters' lives transparent and much more dependable upon each other: the reader's response influences the author, heroes make their own choices against the author's will, famous actors get various doubles that replace them in 'real life'.

A modern Russian philosopher and writer V. Kishinets thinks that Homo Sapiens does not correspond to the new technological conditions and it should be transformed into Nano Sapiens, a posthuman self-regulating being. The inevitable transition will take place when people understand the necessity to replace their living cells with the artificial micro devices. In a long run the intelligent life developing will transform Nano Sapiens into one immortal being - Mega Sapiens - which is more efficient than billions of individual species. The exponential growth of the communication will create one gigantic intelligence form. When all the civilizations disappear what will happen to all those identities that used to be part of a human being?

Panel 9
Re-Embodiments
Deborah Benita Shaw (University of East London)

Posthuman Remains: Contemporary Biopolitics and the Consumption of "Undeath"
As Zygmunt Bauman reminds us, our values are 'born of finitude' but contemporary techniques, like cryonic suspension and cloning are problematising notions of death and dying. At the same time, life support technologies are challenging legal definitions of death which differ from country to country and across the United States. Transhumanists claim that the consumption of life extension techniques is a human right and look forward to what Vernor Vinge has called 'the singularity'; the point at which the human fully evolves into the posthuman, confounding our ability to imagine ourselves in the future. This, they claim, is the point at which we will have cheated death.

Drawing on Michel Foucault's analysis of what he calls the 'technologies of the self' and Giorgio Agamben's concept of 'bare life', this paper will examine these claims in the context of contemporary biopolitics. I will argue that the desire to invest in 'undeath' is structured by the discourse of neoliberalism and that the concept of 'posthuman, in this context, refers to modernist notions of transcendence realised through science and technology. Against this 'transcendent paradigm', I will propose the 'intrinsic paradigm' which, as argued by theorists such as Donna Haraway and Bernard Stiegler, claims that we are always already posthuman and, further, that it is not a state to which we are aspiring but a necessary re-evaluation, in the face of technologies which threaten the boundaries of the 'human', of how the concept of humanity informs our politics.

Maria Aline Ferreira (University of Aveiro)
Posthuman (Re)Embodiments: Purloined Bodies in H.G. Wells's "The Story of the Late Mr. Elversham", Kureishi's The Body, and Coppola's Youth Without Youth

In this paper I wish to look at the longstanding fantasy of body swapping, or in more contemporary terms, acquiring a new, younger body to replace the older, sick one through medical technologies. I propose to look at H. G. Wells's "The Story of the Late Mr Elvesham" (1896), Hanif Kureishi's The Body (2002) and Francis Ford Coppola's Youth Without Youth (2007) as instances of this age-old aspiration.

The "uncanny" bodies in these tales raise fundamental questions about the deep-seated desire for physical youth and immortality, as well as the nature and potential for evolution of a stable concept of identity under radically changed circumstances. Kureishi's The Body specifically addresses a number of ways in which this fantasy might become fulfilled in the not so distant future with the implementation of such techniques as whole body or brain transplants, some of these already achieved in animals. Wells's tale can be seen as a precursor of the fantasies for radically extended youth and longer life spans which recent developments in the biosciences suggest might gradually become true. In Coppola's Youth Without Youth (2007), in turn, an ageing professor will revert to his youthful body after being hit by a thunderbolt on a stormy night. All three works, indeed, deal with elderly men who wish to recover their lost youth and vigour, a dream that might come to at least be partially concretized with recourse to emergent biotechnological advances.

Another crucial theme shared by these tales is the feeling of imprisonment in one's own body, the uncanny horror at being unable to abandon our physical envelope. The drive to leave the aging body behind, to search for a new one by all possible means, appears to be informed by what Emmanuel Levinas describes in On Escape (1935) as the need to break away from the human condition of being "riveted to the body". As Levinas ponders: "[Is] the need for escape not the exclusive matter of a finite being?…Would an infinite being have the need to take leave of itself?" (On Escape, 56). The fantasies of greater longevity, body swapping and even immortality are inescapably related to the question of death, finitude and whether death divests life of meaning, topics repeatedly addressed in these works.

I will examine these fantasies, which productively intersect with contemporary discourses of the posthuman body, mainly through the lens of Freudian and Levinassian theories pertaining to the body and the uncanny otherness of reembodiment, resulting in a personal feeling of unease and incongruity with respect to the perceived non-coincidence between mind and physical being. I will also draw on theoretical perspectives provided by Rosi Braidotti and N. Katherine Hayles's work on the future of the posthuman, prosthetic body.

Erica Moore (Cardiff University)
Re-conceptualisations of the Human in the Fiction of J.G. Ballard

The fiction of J.G. Ballard offers a means of exploring the question of what it means to be human. Texts like High-Rise (1975), Concrete Island (1974) and Crash (1973)—each considered part of Ballard's 'concrete and steel' phase—depict the human in terms of both the animal and the technical, exploring and challenging conceptions of 'the human' in the framework of Western capitalist cultures.

The texts I will discuss depict 'the human' as an entity influenced by both cultural institutions and biological history in terms of evolutionary theory, thus offering a merger of the two cultures debate outlined in C.P. Snow's seminal text,

The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution (1959). As the human is repeatedly portrayed as a cultural and biological 'animal', Ballard's texts also investigate the issue of the human-animal's interaction with its technological milieu. Within these narratives that examine an increasingly technological mastery of the 'natural' world via capitalist imperatives, a social commentary can be elicited, but one that is immanently entangled with questions of origin and evolution. In Ballard, such debates are frequently located within a depiction of an 'animal sexuality' that emerges as technological existence is forfeited or ultimately deemed inaccessible. Consideration of the human is thus also intimately bound up with representations of the body.

Through a consideration of critical texts such as Carey Wolfe's Animal Rites (2003), this paper will demonstrate how the fiction of Ballard can be used to examine shifting conceptions of the human, an issue that seems to increase in relevance as Western society moves towards a technological integration that supplants the use of technology with an integration of technology into the body. J.G. Ballard's texts offer a point of departure to engage with the pressing question of how these developments affect the human both in its present state and in its possible futures.

Panel 10 - Media
Melanie Chan (Leeds Metropolitan University)
Representations of Posthuman Subjectivity in Contemporary Film and Television

The term posthuman raises intriguing questions about what it means to be human and how this might alter in the light of technological, sociological and cultural changes in the early twenty-first century. One of the immediate questions raised by the term posthuman is does this refer to a temporal extension of the concept of the human, or to its demise? Human life can now be studied in relation to genetics, evolutionary processes and measurable aspects of brain activity such as neural firing. When taken to extremes scientific theories of human life do not appear to account for the subjective and qualitative aspects of human life. Indeed computer scientists Ray Kurzweil and Hans Moravec have argued that human beings will either become increasingly augmented by technology, or become obsolete as robots become increasingly intelligent. On the other hand, technologically deterministic scenarios are problematic because they overlook the historical, social and cultural context in which subjectivity is formed, shaped and negotiated. Drawing upon the work of Rosi Braidotti this paper will test out Rosi Braidotti's concept of a nomadic yet ethically accountable notion of subjectivity through the analysis of representations of posthuman identity in contemporary science fiction film and television.

Abstracts

Barbara Salvadori (East Carolina University)
The Dark Side of Posthumanism in Fahrenheit 451:
technology, oppression and alienation

Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 echoes with as much significance and timelessness as it did when it was first written, over 50 years ago.

In the midst of fast and relevant advances in technology we find ourselves busy texting, emailing, tweeting, surfing the net, watching our favorite - and more popular than ever - reality show in our 52 inch television sets…But do we interact? Could the same technology that can save lives drive us more and more distant from each other and from critical thinking? Are we that far from the unemotional future presented by Bradbury? How ironic is it that one of the new devices created by technology to replace books was named "kindle", word defined in the dictionary as "to set on fire"?

The purpose of this paper is to analyze Fahrenheit 451's posthumanist future and the use of technology both as censor, and as a way of alienating people from thought and emotion. I will use as theoretical background works from Jacques Derrida, N. Katherine Hayles, Neil Badmington, and other authors who have discussed Posthumanism.

Faculty of Human Sciences

Department of English

University of Surrey
Guildford, Surrey GU2 7XH UK

T: +44 (0)1483 300 800
F: +44 (0)1483 300 803

E: D.Ashford@surrey.ac.uk
www.ias.surrey.ac.uk/events.html