

# Life, in Theory

The 8th Meeting of the European Society for Literature, Science, and  
the Arts

June 3-6, 2014

Venues

Vercelli: Università del Piemonte Orientale, June 4

Torino: Università di Torino, June 5 and 6

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**Program Overview**

DAY	TITLE	VENUE	SPEAKER
<b>June 4</b>		<b>VERCELLI, EX OSPEDALETTO</b>	
10:00 - 10:30	OPENING ADDRESS	CRIPTA	
<b>10:45 - 13:00</b>	<b>OPENING LECTURE I OPENING LECTURE II</b>	CRIPTA	Vineis Testa
13:00 - 14:30	Lunch Break	CHIOSTRO	
14:30 -15:45	Parallel Sessions		
15:45 - 16:00	Coffee Break		
16:00 - 17: 15	Parallel Sessions		
<b>17:30 - 19:00</b>	<b>ROUNDTABLE I</b>	CRIPTA	Mori, Dianzani, Pirisi, D'Alfonso, Mattei
19:00	Cocktail-dinner	Salone Dugentesco	
20:30 - 21:00	<b>PERFORMANCE/LECTURE</b>	Salone Dugentesco	Lebech, Bencard, Fried- lun
<b>June 5</b>		<b>TORINO, CAMPUS EINAUDI</b>	
9:00 - 10:30	Parallel Sessions		
10:30 - 11:00	Coffee Break	CLE Einaudi	
<b>11:00 - 12:00</b>	<b>PLENARY I</b>	<b>Magna Einaudi</b>	<b>Esposito</b>
<b>12:00 - 13:00</b>	<b>PLENARY II</b>	<b>Magna Einaudi</b>	<b>Wolfe</b>
13:00 - 14:30	Lunch break	CLE Einaudi	
<b>14:30 - 16:00</b>	<b>ROUNDTABLE</b>	<b>Magna Einaudi</b>	<b>Esposito, Wolfe, Camp- bell, Lambert, Tarizzo</b>
16:00 - 16:30	Coffee Break	CLE Einaudi	
16:30 - 18:00	Parallel Sessions	CLE Einaudi	
19:00 - 20:00	Cocktail	CLE Einaudi	
<b>June 6</b>		<b>TORINO, CAMPUS EINAUDI</b>	
9:00 - 10:30	Parallel Sessions		
10:30 - 11:00	Coffee Break	CLE Einaudi	
<b>11:00 - 12:30</b>	<b>PLENARY III</b>	<b>Magna Einaudi</b>	<b>Colebrook</b>
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch break	CLE Einaudi	
14:00 - 15:30	Parallel Sessions	CLE Einaudi	
15:30 - 16:00	Coffee Break	CLE Einaudi	
<b>16:00 - 17:30</b>	<b>ROUND TABLE III</b>	<b>Magna Einaudi</b>	<b>Sagan, Bordese</b>
<b>17:30 -18:15</b>		<b>Magna Einaudi</b>	
	<b>Closing Remarks and Presentation of SLSA-EU Malta, 2015</b>		
18:15 - 19:30	Cocktail	CLE Einaudi	

Thanks to:



Università degli Studi del Piemonte Orientale  
**DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI UMANISTICI**  
LETTERE FILOSOFIA LINGUE *Vercelli*

**FONDAZIONE CRT**



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI  
DI TORINO



Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts



**Life, in Theory**

In the past forty years, research in genetics and genomics, the convergence of the latter with digital technology, and the intrusion of technology into all forms of life have called into question the idea that life is anything simple, natural or biological, and have made available knowledge and resources that may determine **mutations or new aggregations in the constitutive elements of life forms and living systems**, likely transforming the conditions of existence of life on the planet beyond reversibility.

Today, **biopower is a crucial node of social transformation**. It directly affects societies by interpreting and responding to their reproductive, medical, food-related needs, by redefining the notion of sustainability, by intercepting public and private funding, and by reorienting political aims and policies in ways that will heavily impact the **future life of individuals, communities, and ecosystems**.

The VIII European Meeting of the Society for the Study of Literature, Science, and the Arts aims to continue the **conversation between science and the humanities** on the implications for our projected futures of the manipulation, administration, and governance of life forms. The concept of life today no longer provides sufficient ontological ground to distinguish among different forms of life and to guide ethical, political, legal, or medical actions. Thus, **a discussion across disciplinary forms of knowledge and theories of life**, and the practices they authorize, is literally to confront issues of life and death.

**PLENARY SPEAKERS**

Prof. **CLAIRE COLEBROOK** – Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of English, Pennsylvania State University

Prof. **ROBERTO ESPOSITO** – Professor of Theoretical Philosophy, Vice Director, Istituto Italiano di Scienze Umane (SUM), Florence

Dott. **GIUSEPPE TESTA** – Head of Laboratory of Stem Cell Epigenetics/Head of the Unit on Science and Technology Studies, IEO, Milano

Prof. **PAOLO VINEIS** – Chair of Environmental Epidemiology, Imperial College, London

Prof. **CARY WOLFE** – Bruce and Elizabeth Dunlevie Professor of English; Founding Director of the 3CT: Center for Critical and Cultural Theory, Rice University

**DORION SAGAN** – Author of *Notes from the Holocene* and *Cosmic Apprentice*

**CLAUDIA BORDESE** – Science writer, author of *Wild Sex. When nature Loves* and *A Life at Others' Expense. Eulogy of Parasitism*

**ROUND TABLES SPEAKERS**

Prof. **TIMOTHY CAMPBELL** – Professor of Italian Studies, Chair of Romance Studies, Cornell University

Prof. **SANDRA D'ALFONSO** – Professors of Genetics and Genomics, Università del Piemonte Orientale

Prof. **UMBERTO DIANZANI** – Professor of Immunology, Università del Piemonte Orientale

Prof. **GREGG LAMBERT** – Founding Director Center for the Humanities, Syracuse University, and Director of the Central New York Humanities Corridor, a project of the Mellon Foundation with Cornell University and University of Rochester

Prof. **UGO MATTEI** – Professor of Private Law, Università di Torino

Prof. **MAURIZIO MORI** – Professor of Bioethics, Università di Torino

Prof. **MARIO PIRISI** – Professor of Translational Medicine, Università del Piemonte Orientale

Prof. **DAVIDE TARIZZO** – Assistant Professor, Moral Philosophy, Università di Salerno

**ARTISTS**

**SOPHIE LEBECH**, Artist, performer

**DAVID WAGNER**, Writer

**Program****REGISTRATION**June 3: Turin

16:30 Registration starts (Aula Magna Rettorato, Via Verdi, 8) [Registrations will continue through the conference]

17:30 – Welcome Salute to Delegates: SLSA-EU Chair

17:30 – 18.30 READING

David Wagner reads from his new novel [Leben \(Life\)](#)

Reception to follow

**DAY ONE**June 4: Vercelli

8:30 Bus Departure Points: Piazza Carlo Felice, Piazza Vittorio, Piazza Castello (Turin)

10:00 – 10:30 Opening Address (@Aula magna, Cripta S.Andrea)

Prof. Cesare Emanuel, Provost, Università del Piemonte Orientale (UPO); Prof.ssa Raffaella Tabacco, Chair, Department of Humanities (UPO)

Welcome: Prof. Yves Abrioux, President SLSAeu; Prof. Cristina Iuli, Vice President SLSAeu and Conference Organization Chair

10:45 – 13:00 Opening Lectures (@Aula magna, Cripta S.Andrea)

Chair: Prof. Umberto Dianzani, Immunology, UPO

Prof. Paolo Vineis, Chair, Environmental Epidemiology, Imperial College, London

["The New Challenges Posed by Epigenetics"](#)

Prof. Giuseppe Testa, Head, Laboratory of Stem Cell Epigenetics/Unit on Science and Technology Studies, IEO

["Life Scales: the Mutual Constitution of Living and Political Forms"](#)

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch break

14:30 – 15:45 Parallel sessions (@Ex-Ospedaletto)

15:45 – 16:00 Coffee break

16:00 – 17:15 Parallel sessions (@Ex-Ospedaletto)

17:30 – 19:00 ROUND TABLE I (@Aula magna, Cripta S.Andrea)

["Autoimmune diseases, biotechnology and the right to treatment"](#)

Moderates: Prof. Luca Savarino, UPO

Prof. Maurizio Mori, Bioethics, Torino: "Ethics and the Right to Treatment"

Prof. Umberto Dianzani, Immunology, UPO: "Immunity and Autoimmunity: when Defense Strikes the Organism"

Prof. Mario Pirisi, Translational Medicine, UPO: "The Cost Burden of Autoimmune Diseases"

Prof. Sandra D'Alfonso, Genetics and Genomics, UPO: "The Genetics of Autoimmune Diseases: Social

Implications"

Prof. Ugo Mattei, Private Law, Torino: "Healthcare as a Fundamental Right and a Common"

19:15 – 21:30 Extended Cocktail (@ Salone Dugentesco) and

Performance/Lecture

Sophie Lebech with Adam Bencard and Mats Friedlun

["The Biopolitics of Terrorism"](#)

21:45 Bus shuttle to Turin

**DAY TWO**June 5 – Turin

9.00 – 10:30 Parallel sessions (@Campus Luigi Einaudi, UNITO)

10:30 – 11:00: Coffee break

11:00 – 12:00 PLENARY LECTURE I (@Aula magna, Campus Luigi Einaudi, UNITO)

Chair: Prof. Aldo Fasolo, Emeritus, Accademia delle Scienze, Torino

Prof. Roberto Esposito, SUM

"Biological Life and Political Life"

12:00 – 13:00 PLENARY LECTURE II (@Aula magna, Campus Luigi Einaudi, UNITO)

Chair: Prof. Cristina Iuli, UPO

Prof. Cary Wolfe, Rice University

"(Auto)Immunity, Social Theory, and Control"

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch break

14:30 – 16:00 ROUND TABLE II (@Aula magna, Campus Luigi Einaudi, UNITO)

"Life beyond the Biopolitical Paradigm, a Roundtable with Roberto Esposito and Cary Wolfe"

Prof. Timothy Campbell, Cornell University: "Comedic Forms of Life: Impolitical Perspectives on the Biopolitical Paradigm"

Prof. Gregg Lambert, Syracuse University: "The Question of Life after 'the Regime of Truth'"

Prof. Davide Tarizzo, Università di Salerno: "From Abstract Life to Artificial Life"

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee break

16:30 – 18:00 Parallel sessions (@Campus Luigi Einaudi, UNITO)

18:00 – 19:30 Aperitivo (@Campus Luigi Einaudi, UNITO)

**DAY THREE**

June 6 – Turin

9:00 – 10:30 Parallel sessions (@Campus Luigi Einaudi, UNITO)

10:30 – 11:00 Coffee break

11:00 – 12:30 PLENARY LECTURE III (@Aula magna, Campus Luigi Einaudi, UNITO)

Chair: Prof. Marco Pustianaz, UPO

Prof. Claire Colebrook, Penn State University

"Exceptional Disaster"

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch break

13:00 – 14:00 SLSA-EU Board Meeting (Room F3 Einaudi)

14:00 – 15:30 Parallel sessions (@Campus Luigi Einaudi, UNITO)

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee break

16:00 – 17:30 A CONVERSATION ON SCIENCE, KNOWLEDGE, AND IMAGINATION

(@Aula magna, Campus Luigi Einaudi, UNITO)

"Life, Sex, and Death: Scales of Living and Evolutionary Regimes in a Biopolitical Perspective"

Moderates: Felice Cimatti, Università della Calabria

Dorion Sagan, author of Notes from the Holocene and Cosmic Apprentice

Claudia Bordese, science writer, author of Wild Sex. When nature Loves and A Life at Others' Expense. Eulogy of Parasitism

17:30 – 18:15 Closing remarks and Presentation of SLSAeu Malta 2015 (@Aula Magna, Campus Luigi Einaudi, UNITO)

18:15 – 19:30 Cocktail and Goodbye (@Campus Luigi Einaudi, UNITO)

**Parallel Sessions Schedule**

**STREAM 1**

**BEYOND BIOPOLITICS: PAPERS FROM THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDIES OF BIOPOLITICAL FUTURES**

**Conveners: Frida Beckman, Gregg Lambert, Cary Wolfe**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli  
14:30 – 15:45 (Cripta S. Andrea)**

**Panel: DISPOSABLE LIFE I**

**1. Control, Culture, Critique: What Happens Beyond Indignation?**

Frida Beckman (frida.beckman@liu.se)

**2. Biodigital Vision and the Control of Life**

Adam Nocek (anocek@uw.edu)

**16:00 – 17:15 (Cripta S. Andrea)**

**Panel: DISPOSABLE LIFE II**

**1. The “old boxes” of Posthumanism. On the Passivity of the Subject**

Anders Johansson (anders.johansson@litvet.umu.se)

**2. Radioactive Ghosts: Precarious Lives in Chernobyl’s Aftermath**

Gabriele Schwab (gmschwab@uci.edu)

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin  
09:00 – 10:30 (Room F2)**

**Panel: BIOPOLITICAL SUBJECTS I**

**1. Biópower: What an Apparatus Does (for Agamben)**

Antoine Traisnel (agt24@cornell.edu)

**2. Landscapes of Sovereignty**

Maria Whiteman (mwhitema@ualberta.ca)

**3. Biopolitics and Social Evolutionism in Asia**

Alex Taek-Gwang Lee (tglee@khu.ac.kr)

**14:00 – 15:30 (Room F2)**

**Panel: BIOPOLITICAL SUBJECTS II**

**1. Biopolitical Cosmopolitanism: The Right to Have Rights in Arendt and Agamben**

Miguel Vatter (m.vatter@unsw.edu.au)

**2. Biopolitical Equality?**

Dimitris Vardoulakis (d.vardoulakis@uws.edu.au)

**3. Towards an etho-rhetorical critique of “affirmative” biopolitics**

Stuart J. Murray (stuart.murray@carleton.ca)

**STREAM 2A**

**NARRATING LIFE: CONTAGION, IMMUNITY, AND MUTATION**

**Conveners: Yves Abrioux, Stefan Herbrechter, Cristina Iuli, Manuela Rossini**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli**

**14:30 – 15:45 (Room C1 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

**Panel: DEATH, AND LIFE**

**1. Infection, Immunity and Autoimmunity: Richard Powers' *Orfeo* in a biopolitical perspective.**

Cristina Iuli (cristina.iuli@lett.unipmn.it)

**2. Literature and destruction: William S. Burroughs' mutant life forms**

Pierre-Louis Patoine (pl\_patoine@yahoo.fr)

**3. Towards a Minor Sf: Literature, Science, and the Shock of the Biophysical**

Tom Idema (t.j.idema@uu.nl)

**16:00 – 17:15 (Room C1 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

**Panel: CONTAGION**

**1. Metamorphic Metaphors: Spreading Ideas across Space and Time**

Luis O. Arata (luis.arata@quinnipiac.edu)

**2. In Toxicating Language: *The Flame Alphabet* on the 'smallwork' of Biopolitical Life**

Laura Shackelford (lxsgla@rit.edu)

**3. Contagious alterity in literary representation**

Stefania Sini (stefania.sini@lett.unipmn.it)

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin**

**9:00 – 10:15 (Aula Magna)**

**Panel: LIFE, THAT IS TO SAY...**

**1. Life, That Is to Say...**

Stefan Herbrechter (aa7837@coventry.ac.uk), Coventry University

Manuela Rossini (rossini@iash.unibe.ch), IASH at Berne University

**2. Slime, junk and bacteria – new visions of messy and uncontrollable life**

Adam Bencard (adam@sund.ku.dk)

**3. A-Live: Biological and Artificial Theaters**

Yvan Tina (yvantina@gmail.com)

**FRIDAY, JUNE 6 – Turin**

**9:00 – 10:30 (Room F2)**

**Panel: LIFE, AFTER THEORY**

**1. Enacting Life on the Modernist Stage: Between Bios and Bare Life**

Hedwig Fraunhofer (hedwig.fraunhofer@gcsu.edu)

**2. Form-of-Life and Agamben's Messianic Poetics**

Chun-yen Chen (jochen@ntnu.edu.tw)

**3. Life beyond 'critique': Murakami after Latour**

Jeff Wallace (jwallace@cardiffmet.ac.uk)

**14:00 – 15.30 (Room F2)**

**Panel: POSTHUMAN BIOPOLITICS AND ETHICS**

**1. Posthuman Biopolitics: Moral Imperatives and Bioenhancement**

Maria Aline Ferreira (aline@ua.pt)

**2. On Responsibility and Response-ability in Contemporary Literature on Science**

Julia Boll (j.boll@uni-konstanz.de)

**STREAM 2 B**

**NARRATING LIFE: CONTAGION, IMMUNITY, AND MUTATION**

**Conveners: Yves Abrioux, Stefan Herbrechter, Cristina Iuli, Manuela Rossini**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli**

**14:30 – 15:45 (Room B2 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

**Panel: UNCOMMON AGENCIES**

**1. “Fictions of Agency”: Impersonality, Contingency, and Responsibility**

Viola Marchi (viola.marchi@ens.unibe.ch)

**2. Biopolitics Under the Skin: Relating Cancer Narratives – An Archive of the “Talking Dead”**

M.K. Bryson (mary.bryson@ubc.ca)

**3. The Metaphor of War against Cancer and its Anthropocentric Undertone**

Maria Temmes (temmes\_maria@ceu-budapest.edu)

**16:00 – 17:15 (Room B2 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

**Panel: TRANSGRESSING THE HUMAN/NON HUMAN DIVIDE**

**1. Life writing in a nonsubjective world? - Clarice Lispector's *Agua Viva* (The Stream of Life)**

Elisabeth Friis (elisabeth.friis@litt.lu.se)

**2. Making killable, making lovable – race, gender and species in literary humanimal transformations**

Ann-Sofie Lönngren (ann-sofie.lonngren@littvet.uu.se)

**3. *Primate times. The body-productivity-temporality complex in human-ape stories after Darwin***

Amelie Björck (amelie.bjorck@litt.lu.se)

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin**

**9:00 – 10:45 (Room F1)**

**Panel: CYBERNETIC EVENTFULNESS**

**1. Coming of Age Narratives and the Politics of Artificial Intelligence**

Craig McConnell (cmccConnell@exchange.fullerton.edu)

**2. Your Move: How Andrew Bujalski's *Computer Chess* Imagines a Biopolitical Future in the 1980s**

John Bruni (brunij@gvsu.edu)

**3. Distributed Natural Systems in *The Tempest* and the Mutability of Servitude**

Kevin LaGrandeur (klagrand@nyit.edu)

**14:00 – 15:30 (Room F1)**

**Panel: SYSTEMS OF KNOWLEDGE, STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE**

**1. How to Speak in the Language of Lamps: Walter Benjamin's Cybernetics**

Seth Morton (seth.a.morton@rice.edu)

**2. Subverting the dominance over life: Irony in Vilém Flusser's *Vampyrotheutis Infernalis***

Rodrigo Martini Paula (rodrigompaula@gmail.com)

**3. Racial Technics : John Henry, Ellen Craft, and the Racial Technics of Life-Writing**

Michael Litwack (michael\_litwack@brown.edu)

**FRIDAY, JUNE 6 – Turin**

**9:00 – 10:30 (Room F1)**

**Panel: POSTMODERNIST POSTHUMANISM**

**1. Postmodern points of view on technology: Posthumanism and Spanish Peninsular Literature**

Carlos Gámez (c.gomez1@umiami.edu)

**2. “Time with the Midas Touch”: J.G. Ballard and the Crystallization of Life**

Moritz Ingwersen (moritzingwersen@trentu.ca)

**3. Asimov's Insight into the Gaia Concept. From Reality to Fiction and Back Again**

Gheorghica Nela-Roxana (nela\_gheorghica@yahoo.com)

**STREAM 3**

**THE MATTER OF LIFE: ART AND DESIGN OF THE LIVING**

**Convener : Monika Bakke**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli  
14:30 – 15:45 (Room B1 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

- 1. A Life Liberated through Body Becoming Impersonal in Hijikata's Butoh**  
Stephen Shih-hung Chuang (baudelaire@gmail.com)
- 2. Imagination laboratory – narrating new life forms in contemporary bio-art**  
Tora Holmberg (tora.holmberg@ibf.uu.se)
- 3. Foregrounding Living Technology: Cognitive aspects of the conceptual integration of life and technology**  
Juani Guerra

**16:00 – 17:15 (Room B1 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

**Panel: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: RE-SHAPING LIFE IN MEDICAL SCIENCES?**

- 1. In Search for a viable model: when theory clashes with the body**  
Dolores Steinmann (dolores@mie.utoronto.ca)
- 2. Re-mapping life: affective cartographies and ecological re-presentations in medical visualization**  
Roberta Buiani (robb@yorku.ca)
- 3. The Potential Of Life: Objects, Strategies And Scenarios In Between Design And Neuroscience**  
Silvia Casini (silvia.casini@unive.it)

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin  
9:00 – 10:30 (Room F5)**

- 1. Methlabs, Alchemy and the Matter of Life**  
Jason Pine (jason.pine@purchase.edu)
- 2. Fringe interlocutors: Do it yourself biology, biohacking and biological art**  
Nora S. Vaage (nora.vaage@svt.uib.no)
- 3. The Intertwined Strands of Biology, Computer Science and Art**  
Georg Tremmel (tremmel@hgc.jp)
- 4. Life as we don't know it: biopower, tactical biopolitics and bio art in the age of post-natural biology**  
Maciej Ożóg (maciej\_ozog@uni.lodz.pl)

**14:00 – 15:30 (Room F5)**

- 1. Towards an Organology: the Vitality of Machines**  
Elizabeth Stephens (e.stephens@uq.edu.au)
- 2. Being Moved & Pushing Back: On Engineered Muscle Tissue in Movement**  
Ionat Zurr (ionat.zurr@uwa.edu.au) & Oron Catts
- 3. Lipid Membranes of the Past and Future**  
Juan Manuel Castro (castro@biodynamicgeometries.com)
- 4. Biomolecular Art and Architecture of Deep Time**  
Monika Bakke (bakkemonika@yahoo.com)

**FRIDAY, JUNE 6 – Turin  
9:00 – 10:30 (Room F5)**

- 1. Medieval Cyborgs: Exploring Biopolitics through Saints' Relics**  
Rachel S. Anderson (anderach@gvsu.edu)
- 2. Engineering life in Villiers' Tomorrow's Eve**  
Kieran Murphy (kieran.murphy@colorado.edu)
- 3. Unbecoming Human: Patricia Piccinini's Bioart**  
Kate Mondloch (mondloch@uoregon.edu)

**STREAM 4**

**LIFE, IN MEDIA: NEOCYBERNETICS, GENERAL ECOLOGIZATION AND THE RETHINKING OF ENVIRONMENTALITY**

**Conveners : Mark Hansen, Erich Hörl**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli**  
**14:30 – 15:45 (Room A1 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

**1. Out of Place Machines: the Anachronism of Machine Theories in Ecotechnological Life.**

Mark Martinez (mart1938@umn.edu)

**2. Life in Games. Evolution at Play**

Niklas Schrape (schrape@inkubator.leuphana.de)

**16:00 – 17:15 (Room A1 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

**Panel: NEW APPARATUS THEORY**

**1. What is Psychic Apparatus?**

Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan (bernard.geoghegan@hu-berlin.de)

**2. Mobile Media and the Paleolithic**

Grant Wythoff (gw2290@columbia.edu)

**3. Automatic Imaging: The Planchette as a Selbstschreiber**

Christian Kassung (CKassung@culture.hu-berlin.de)

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin**  
**9:00 – 10:30 (Room F4)**

**Panel: SYMBIOSIS (I)**

**1. Symbioses in Human-Computer Interaction – History of a Metaphor**

Timo Kaerlein (kaerlein@mail.uni-paderborn.de)

**2. Technosymbiosis in the First Machine Age**

Christoph Neubert (christoph.neubert@uni-paderborn.de)

**3. 'Ecotecture' – Reading Dietmar Dath and George Church on Symbiotic Politics and Synthetic Biology**

Martin Müller (maneo@gmx.net)

**14:00 – 15:30 (Room F4)**

**Panel: SYMBIOSIS (II)**

**1. Experimental Environments: John Scott Haldane and the Reciprocity of Organicism**

Florian Sprenger (florian.sprenger@leuphana.de)

**2. Parasitic Disturbances**

Serjoscha Wiemer (swiemer@campus.uni-paderborn.de)

**3. The Zombie as Metaphor for the Environmental Condition**

Christian Köhler (koehlerc@live.uni-paderborn.de)

**FRIDAY, JUNE 6 – Turin**  
**9:00 – 10:30 (Room F4)**

**1. Experimental Paleofuturism**

Aaron Jaffe (aaron.jaffe@louisville.edu)

**2. Cinema, Biopolitics, Biomediality**

Lorenzo Fabbri (lfabbri@umn.edu)

**STREAM 5**

**GAIAN ECOLOGIES: GRADIENTS AND BOUNDARIES**

**Conveners: Bruce Clarke, Dorion Sagan**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli  
14:30 – 15:45 (Room B6 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

**1. Iatrogenic illness: Medicine as an expression of life's ecology**

Michelle Jamieson (mmjamieson@gmail.com)

**2. The Multiverse, Posthumanism, and Dimensional Symbiosis**

Francesca Ferrando (francesca.ferrando@gmail.com)

**3. Scaling interrelations. On membranes, molecules and mind**

Maren Mayer-Schwieger (maren.schwieger@ruhr-uni-bochum.de)

**16:00 – 17:15 (Room B6 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

**1. William S. Burroughs, Gaia Theorist**

Derek Woods (derekjohnwoods@gmail.com)

**2. Charting Solar Systems, Exoplanets, and Earth 2.0**

Holly Henry (hhenry@csusb.ed)

**3. Viral Life and the Symbiotic Ecology**

Thierry Bardini (thierry.bardini@umontreal.ca)

**STREAM 6**

**LIFE AT RISK: ENVIRONMENTAL DEVASTATION, THE BIOPOLITICS OF CATASTROPHE, AND BIOTECHNOLOGICAL RISKS AND BENEFITS**

**Conveners: Ivan Callus, Najeeb Jan**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli  
14:30 – 15:45 (Room A2 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

**Panel: THE QUESTION OF LIFE & DEATH**

**1. Forms of Life in Agamben and Deleuze**

Kelly Kwar (kkwar@uni-koeln.de)

**2. Rewriting the Book of Life: Metaphor, Selection and Genetic Engineering**

Marija Grech (grechm1@cardiff.ac.uk)

**3. Life in Death: Narratives of decomposition in science and literature**

Ivan Callus (ivan.callus@um.edu.mt)

Sandro Lanfranco (sandro.lanfranco@um.edu.mt)

**16:00 – 17:15 (Room A2 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

**Panel: LIFE AND ITS FRGILITIES**

**1. Apocalyptic Risk: Life and the Walking Dead**

Jeanne Cortiel (jeanne.cortiel@uni-bayreuth.de)

**2. Life Curtailed: Infertility in Science Fiction**

Victor Grech (victor.e.grech@gov.mt)

**3. Mass natural disasters and the fragility of life**

Joseph Cacciottolo (joseph.cacciottolo@um.edu.mt)

Ivan Callus (ivan.callus@um.edu.mt)

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin  
9: 00 – 10:30 (Room F3)**

**Panel: INDISTINCTIONS: UNSETTLING LIFE/DEATH IN TECHNO-SCIENTIFIC PRACTICES**

**1: The after/life of meat: Exploring the trace of survival**

Nick Bingham (Nick.Bingham@open.ac.uk)

Stephanie Lavau (stephanie.lavau@plymouth.ac.uk)

**2. Intimacy and finitude: living with and as jellyfish**

Elizabeth R. Johnson (E.Johnson@exeter.ac.uk)

**3. Microbial suicide and the deconstruction of life/death from within biology**

Astrid Schrader (A.Schrader@exeter.ac.uk)

**14:00 – 16:00 (Room F3)**

**Panel: LIFE, RISK & THE POLITICAL**

**1. Rethinking Biopolitics: Political Ontology & Blasphemy**

Najeeb Jan (najeeb.jan@colorado.edu)

**2. Between power, biopolitics and exception: rethinking the ontological politics of Israel's occupation of the West Bank**

Mikko Joronen (mikko.joronen@utu.fi)

**3. Resource Wars: protest and propaganda in South African media and creative forms**

Mathilda Slabbert (mslabbert@sun.ac.za)

**FRIDAY, JUNE 6 – Turin  
9:00 – 10:30 (Room F3)**

**Panel: BIOPOLITICS, BIOTECHNOLOGY AND RISK**

**1. Contingency, Immunity and Risk: Modalities of the Biopolitical**

Ryan Kopaitich (ryan.kopaitich@ens.unibe.ch)

**2. Futures Past, Prolepsis, and the Banalization of Being “Genetically at Risk”**

Bill Leeming (bleeming@faculty.ocad.ca)

**3. Towards the Critique of Political Bioeconomy. Living Machines and Biotechnology**

Agnieszka Kowalczyk (agnikow@gmail.com)

**4. The Jab of Death: A Thanatopolitical Reading of The Swine Flu 'Pandemic'**

Carol-Ann Galego (cagalego@gmail.com)

**14:00 – 15:30 (Room F3)**

**Life at Risk: Plenary Discussion**

Chaired by Jan Najeeb and Ivan Callus, with the Stream Participants

**Abstracts****STREAM 1****BEYOND BIOPOLITICS: PAPERS FROM THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDIES OF BIOPOLITICAL FUTURES**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli**  
**14:30 – 15:45 (Cripta S. Andrea)**

**Panel: DISPOSABLE LIFE I****1. Control, Culture, Critique: What Happens Beyond Indignation?**

Frida Beckman (frida.beckman@liu.se)  
 Linköping University, Sweden

The possibility of performing some sort of cultural critique is, as many critics have noted, increasingly difficult in a society which is perfecting its control system so as to anticipate and even incorporate critical tendencies within its own system. This crisis, which has been identified from a number of different perspectives in the past decade, speaks to a general sense of subsumption and immersion of critique which, while having been analyzed throughout a post-Marxist tradition, has markedly intensified along with the intensification of biopolitics and control. The social and political development in the West over the past decades has enabled capitalism to systematically incorporate everything within itself and created a system that, as Baudrillard puts it “thrives by persecuting itself.” Old modes of critique are becoming redundant, as Negri has suggested, and information and affect are neutralized by the perfect circle of trash culture making indignation “no longer possible.” However, and “in these most depressing times,” as Latour puts it, our task must be not to give up but to retest the linkages between our equipment and the threats. This paper looks into this crisis in critique and retests some of the linkages in search for productive ways of responding to the present.

**2. Biodigital Vision and the Control of Life**

Adam Nocek (anocek@uw.edu)  
 University of Washington, Seattle, USA

This paper contends that Gilles Deleuze’s reflections on the “control society” are indispensable for understanding the political and economic seizure of “life” by current biological visualization practices. In particular, I explore how computer animation is one of the newest technologies for data visualization and mass communication in biology. I argue that its use is inextricably tied to global economies of entertainment and information exchange, which makes biological animation a crucial site for understanding control’s global reach over life and its image. In the end, I make the case not simply for the continued relevance of Deleuze’s insights about the “control society,” but also, and more specifically, for control’s extension into the technologies of vision and biological life that he intimated in various texts (e.g., *Cinema 2, Foucault*), but whose full development and conjunction in biological animation he could not have foreseen.

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli**  
**16:00 – 17:15 (Cripta S. Andrea)**

**Panel: DISPOSABLE LIFE II****1. The “old boxes” of Posthumanism. On the Passivity of the Subject**

Anders Johansson (anders.johansson@litvet.umu.se)  
 Umeå universitet, Sweden

In *How We Became Posthuman*, N Katherine Hayles argues that posthumanism may be understood as “the exhilarating prospect of getting out of some of the old boxes and opening up new ways of thinking about what being human means”. A problem with this prospect, I would argue, is that the “new ways” to such a high extent is dependent

on the old ones. One part of the problem is Hayles' implicit focus on agency, capability and action. Even though she contends that "subjectivity is emergent rather than given", and in that sense breaks with a supposedly natural humanism, she tends to stay within, and confirm the preponderance of, a liberal paradigm, centred around the agency and free choice of the individual subject.

In that perspective, Cary Wolfe's discussion of the desire among animal- and disability studies to be included in a liberal model of subjectivity is interesting. Wolfe argues that it would be more fruitful to try to establish an alternative model of subjectivity, one which, in its turn, would result in an ethics based not only on agency and capability, but also on vulnerability and passivity. In my paper I would like to reflect further on this alternative subjectivity. Would it be possible to formulate an aesthetics – or rather poetics – based on this kind of passive, vulnerable subject? My ambition is both to theorize Wolfe's idea further, and to give some literary examples of how this would appear.

## **2. Radioactive Ghosts: Precarious Lives in Chernobyl's Aftermath**

Gabriele Schwab (gmschwab@uci.edu)

University of California, Irvine, USA

In the fields there's wild grain, and in the forest there are mushrooms and berries. Freedom is here.

Monologue of a Chernobyl survivor

Ich habe eine neue Erfahrung mit einer bösen Art von Freiheit gemacht.

Christa Wolf, *Störfall*

After the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986, the town Pripyat in the reactor's vicinity was declared a contaminated "Zone of Exclusion" and evacuated. Secretly, however, many of its citizens returned and resettled there illegally, mainly because they found no viable alternatives for a sustainable life elsewhere. Many felt that they were treated as disposable humans. In the early 1990s, journalist Svetlana Alexievich gathered their oral histories. These reveal an astounding tension between narratives that depict an apocalyptic scenario of disposable people and lives and others that describe life in the Zone in terms of an idyllic space with flourishing gardens and abundant wildlife that offers an entirely new kind of freedom.

I propose to read these oral histories within a genealogy of a (surrealist) aesthetic of ruins and, more generally, a fascination with disappearing spaces or life forms that also pervades the popular media. This ambivalent fascination with an apocalyptic imaginary can be understood as a symptom of a hidden ecology of fear (Mike Davis) fueled by an epistemology of (self)deception. Verging on the uncanny, these phantasmatic apocalyptic idylls function as "concord fictions" (Frank Kermode) that compensate for the fact that both the reality and threats of nuclear contamination and catastrophe generate disposable lives in the present and a colonization of the future that will haunt generations to come. As the oral histories of survivors demonstrate, this haunting may manifest as a particular melancholia symptomatic of the inability to mourn disasters in the future, even if they are predictable. The largely invisible contamination of the land and its inhabitant species allows the phantasmatic idylls to persist against better knowledge. Within such an ecology of mind (Bateson), the contamination of nature thus finds its parallel in a psychic toxicity that is often translated into a splitting (Klein) between idyll and apocalypse in the cultural imaginary. I will ground this analysis in close readings of Alexievich's *Voices of Chernobyl* (oral histories), Martin Cruz Smith's *Wolves Eat Dogs*, and Christa Wolf's *Der Störfall*.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin  
9:00 – 10:30 (Room F2)**

### **Panel: BIOPOLITICAL SUBJECTS I**

#### **1. Biópower: What an Apparatus Does (for Agamben)**

Antoine Traisnel (agt24@cornell.edu)

Department of Comparative Literature, Cornell University, USA

My paper surveys contemporary debates in bio- and zoopolitics to suggest that bare life, conceived as life threatened by a noncriminal putting to death, is anything but a natural concept but must be understood as the result of procedures of capture. With "biópower," I wish to shift the emphasis from the partition between the lives that count and those that don't (bíos, as distinct from zoê) to the apparatus (biós) that facilitates and authorizes this partition.

In order to understand how apparatuses effectively shaped our modern notion of life, I argue that we need to make a detour through the perceptive worlds of animals and humans described at the beginning of the twentieth century by biosemiotician Jakob von Uexküll, whose concept of the Umwelt (the sensorial monad in which the animal is immersed) greatly influenced major philosophers of life (Heidegger, Canguilhem, Deleuze and Guattari, Agamben).

## **2. Landscapes of Sovereignty**

Maria Whiteman (mwhitema@ualberta.ca)

University of Alberta, Canada

This presentation discusses my recent series of photographs taken at two apparently very different sites: Versailles and the oil sands of Fort McMurray, Alberta. I will be exploring how the changing forms of sovereignty from monarchical rule based on law at Versailles to the even more pervasive and powerful yet decentralized form based on the energy industry and capital make themselves manifest in the landscape, prompting us to think about how their visual codes are both alike and different. What does the manifestation of power over land, nature, and landscape look like in these two instances, and what does the comparison tell us about our political past and our current geopolitical moment? I will link the images to another set of diptychs recently taken in Jasper National Park. These images are also placed in diptychs to conceptualize the tensions that exist in places like Alberta, created by its growing economy based on the oil and lumber industries. I will discuss the (dis)relationship between the visual logics produced by a political past that modeled itself on a period of classical antiquity by manicuring and developing technological resources such as “nature” and those at work in the “natural” areas near the Alberta oil sands (such as Jasper National Park) where an enormous range of wild/domestic animal life walk around freely in what is seen as a “sublime” landscape, yet in close proximity to managed infrastructures (crossing major highways, walking calmly through town and residential neighborhoods, and so on). The park is used for direct routes for large rigs that carry lumber and pickup trucks driven by young oil workers heading north to the tar sands. All of this is reflected in the economy and markets growing rapidly in Alberta and in the tensions between science, technology and nature that they generate. I will end by showing how the energy industry produces landscapes with a similar “classical reasoning” but by means of a much larger and more pervasive despotism of corporate power whose best visual image might be the oil sands of Alberta, where a once verdant and forested valley ends up looking like a desert in the Middle East.

## **3. Biopolitics and Social Evolutionism in Asia**

Alex Taek-Gwang Lee (tglee@khu.ac.kr)

Kyung Hee University, South Korea

Yan Fu, a Chinese translator of John Stuart Mill and Thomas Huxley, who firstly introduced social evolutionism into China, delivered a public lecture on politics on 13 October in 1905. What he emphasized for the course was that the politics is nothing less than the science of governmentality to produce better nation-state; he distinguished science from technology and firmly convinced that if understanding science properly Chinese could survive in the political crisis. His lecture was one of the most notable impacts on Asian intellectual scenes in general as well as Chinese ones, mostly regarding history as a progressive or evolutionary process through which each country should try to fit itself to the circumstance as much as natural animals do for evolution. Yan Fu's lecture was deeply saturated by social evolutionism interwoven with Darwinism. Since then, social evolutionism became to be centered in the making of the national identity incorporating with the idea of community, deeply rooted in the hierarchical culture based on the family-lines. Such transformation revolves around the application of selection theory to culture and society. The logical process is not simply applying the biological concepts of a general selection for super-biotic entities, but rather producing knowledge on the variation, selection and retention of autonomous cultural entities. As reconstructing the whole way of thinking, the concept of ‘nation’ was easily transformed into a category in which the identity of community, the logical ground for constituting ‘we,’ which excluded ‘non-we’ from the membership. In Asia, for this reason, there have been strong affinities between citizenship and nationalism, expelling the idea of people, those who have a right to insist their rights against the state, from the political scene, but rather the biopolitical meaning of population, which should be managed or controlled by the government. My presentation will focus on the way in which biopolitics has gone along with social evolutionism, better still, progressivism, in the Asian modernization, how such politics has imagined the ‘ideal community of citizens’ in a different way from what the Westerns presupposed, and then argue that the imagination stemming from Asian biopolitics is not common with the ‘citizens as the ideal people’.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin**  
**14:00 – 15:30 (Room F2)**

**Panel: BIOPOLITICAL SUBJECTS II**

**1. Biopolitical Cosmopolitanism: The Right to Have Rights in Arendt and Agamben**

Miguel Vatter (m.vatter@unsw.edu.au)  
 University of New South Wales, Australia

The concept introduced by Arendt under the name of the “right to have rights” has been the object of multiple and opposing interpretations in the recent debate on cosmopolitanism. The prevalent reading is the one offered by Benhabib and Habermas according to which this right should be interpreted as a “moral right” that each individual has, independent of her national or ethnic identity, to a set of civil and political rights. On this moral reading, it is a legal order (of a supra-national kind) that must secure and enact the reality of this moral right. An alternative reading is offered by Ingram and Parekh according to which the right to have rights is a right to “politics” (Balibar, Rancière), that is, a right to claim rights that one does not have and from outside of the constitutional confines of the state. But both of these interpretations share a “constructivist” understanding of the right to have rights, that is, they take seriously Arendt’s claim that equality between individuals is not given, but must be “made” by human beings, by constructing a public space of appearance.

In this paper I propose a different reading of Arendt’s right to have rights which takes it in an anti-constructivist sense, as a “natural” or, more exactly, a bio-political right. Although Arendt argues that politics is not natural and cannot be deduced from the “nature” of man or humanity, I show that the *right* to politics must be biopolitical, that is, it entails the existence of a form of community, a form of being-people, which is not the object of a legal or political construction and to which each individual belongs in virtue of their “nature” or “bare life.” I shall then compare this biopolitical reading of Arendt with Agamben’s biopolitical understanding of human rights and of peoples.

**2. Biopolitical Equality?**

Dimitris Vardoulakis (d.vardoulakis@uws.edu.au)  
 University of New South Wales, Australia

How can we think of equality from the perspective of biopower? I will pursue a twofold argument. First, I will argue that biopolitics is not separate from earlier forms of sovereign power, but rather one particular configuration of sovereignty, which is still supported by its earlier manifestations. Second, I will argue that equality can be understood from a biopolitical perspective when the physical body and the moral body are sharply separated. This move characterizes Kant, and his more recent followers like Rawls. In order to link the two parts of the argument, I will show how the separation of the physical and moral body in biopolitics arises out of a specific problem that the Aristotelian conception of geometric equality encounters. This is the problem of the measure of this equality – a problem which Aristotle himself identifies when he calls it in *Politics* V the principal cause of civil wars.

**3. Towards an etho-rhetorical critique of “affirmative” biopolitics**

Stuart J. Murray (stuart.murray@carleton.ca)  
 Carleton University, Canada

This paper stages an encounter between Heidegger and Foucault, offering an ontology of care as a critical response to recent scholars who propose an “affirmative” biopolitics (Campbell, Esposito, Hardt & Negri, Rose, Santner). Heidegger’s Being and Time characterizes human being as “distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it.” This self-reflexivity revolves around the ontological structure of care. In his late work, Foucault turns to the Hellenistic “care of the self” (epimeleia heautou) and argues that the self’s relation to itself represents an ethic of care. For both thinkers the tropological constitution of the human subject is paramount. My contention is that “affirmative” biopoliticians have not understood the rhetoricity of narrative and are caught within a utilitarian, neoliberal ethic. I offer a reading of the crucial midway point of Being and Time (§42), where Heidegger cites Hyginus’ first-century CE fable, “Care [Cura].” Significantly, this is the only moment in which his text deploys narrative, mythological or otherwise. I examine this radical shift in rhetorical registers and argue that the fable, which narrates the creation of the human, also functions performatively by prompting a meditation on language and death. Foucault’s “care of the self” is relevant here because the self-relation is rhetorical, based on the non-instrumental understanding of “use” (chresis). Care, then, is the “use” the self makes of itself, mediated through an aesthetics of existence—a rhetorical conception of life (bios), evidenced through Foucault’s final lectures on the fabled death of Socrates.

## STREAM 2 A

## NARRATING LIFE: CONTAGION, IMMUNITY, AND MUTATION

Conveners: Yves Abrioux, Stefan Herbrechter, Cristina Iuli, Manuela Rossini

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli  
14:30 – 15:45 (Room C1 @Ex Ospedaletto)

## Panel: DEATH, AND LIFE

**1. Infection, Immunity and Autoimmunity: Richard Powers' *Orfeo* in a biopolitical perspective.**

Cristina Iuli (cristina.iuli@lett.unipmn.it)  
Università del Piemonte Orientale, Italy

My paper discusses Richard Powers' recent novel, *Orfeo*, as a text that investigates the relation between knowledge, life and art from an explicitly biopolitical perspective. The novel attends to the paradoxes surfacing from the tension between a governmental apparatus of state security organized on the axis of autoimmunitary closure, and an open, undetermined approach to the aesthetic transformation of the living exemplified by musical composition. The novel exploits— in a truly Poweresque legacy since *The Goldbug Variations* -- the ambivalent notion of code as both a 'rule for transforming symbols into other symbols' and as 'sequence of executable instructions', and magnifies this ambivalence particularly as it applies to the splicing of musical sequences into the DNA of bacteria. In so doing, the novel addresses the philosophical and political possibilities, limits and consequences of manipulating living and non-living material through the editing of their systems specific codes (genetic, digital, musical, alphanumeric) on living and non living systems, on the human imagination and perceptual apparatus, and on the self-description of the human species. I will look at the series of parallel relations the novel establishes between viruses, viral codes and viral media, on the one hand, and biological, notational, and social systems on the other, in order to attend to the articulation of the political actualized by the operational logic of a biopolitical dispositif whose power is both epistemological and political, precisely as it manifests itself as a power that ceaselessly segments and reassembles life and its conceptual correlates in relation to its capacity of "giving death and letting live", both materially and metaphorically. Codes -- language, music, genetics and immunology -- affect/infect each other and recursively cross notions and kinds/forms of life and death, generating a narrative tension between intimations of autoimmunitarian death and mutation by infection. This tension spreads across biological and social life and human and non human entities, oblivious of human beings and of "the subject" of old Western philosophies, which it affects without ontologically or epistemologically privileging. After all, as the novel claims: "Life is nothing but mutual infection. And every infecting message changes the message it infects".

**2. Literature and destruction: William S. Burroughs' mutant life forms**

Pierre-Louis Patoine (pl\_patoine@yahoo.fr)  
Sorbonne-Nouvelle University, Paris, France

For American author William S. Burroughs (1914-1997), words are viral agents of social control. His famous "cut-up" guerrilla writing aims at undermining biopower exercised through language, and the constraints that semantic and syntactic conventions impose on (human) organisms and their modes of existence. By re-assembling institutionalized networks of meaning and established word associations into odd heterarchies, Burroughsian text generates mutant life forms. The reader inhabiting, through embodied interpretation, novels such as *Naked Lunch* (1959) and *The Wild Boys: A Book of the Dead* (1971) is caught in singular assemblages where the vegetal, the animal and the technological collide, where fluid genders abound, where media and pharmacology open up hybrid possibilities of living. These assemblages are born with the cutting of conventional linguistic and narrative links and chains. Destruction is thus at the core of Burroughs' literary work and I propose to investigate how biological, semiological and economical

forms of the negative become techniques of resistance against the society of control in *Naked Lunch* and *The Wild Boys*. More specifically, I will explore how developments in the theory of apoptosis (cell death; Ameisen 2003), our understanding of the biosemiotic role of absence and incompleteness (Deacon 2013) and Roland Barthes' vision of the writer as a producer of "nothingness" (1975) can help us to speculate on the entanglements of Burroughsian text with social forms of physiological life.

Ameisen, Jean-Claude. 2003. *La Sculpture du vivant. Le suicide cellulaire ou la mort créatrice*.

Barthes, Roland. 1973. *Le plaisir du texte*.

Deacon, Terrence W. 2013. *Incomplete Nature. How Mind Emerged from Matter*.

### 3. Towards a Minor Sf: Literature, Science, and the Shock of the Biophysical

Tom Idema (t.j.idema@uu.nl)

Department of Comparative Literature, Utrecht University, Netherlands

In this paper I want to demonstrate that Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "minor literature" offers a fresh starting point for analyzing those rarer sf writers who take up scientific ideas in order to grapple with the biophysical. Relocating Deleuze and Guattari's concept, I argue that "minor sf" moves beyond the patently human world (mental lives, social forms, urban landscapes, etc.), zooming in on the molecular as well as looking outwards to the macroworld of planetary and cosmic systems. Minor sf extracts from science ideas, desires, attitudes, and practices that co-construct a narrative in which science and humanity become embedded parts of environments open to change. I will illustrate this approach by analyzing Greg Bear's bio-sf novels *Blood Music* (1985) and *Darwin's Radio* (1999) in which humanity undergoes radical transmutations as a result of viral infections. These dramatic events, expressing a capricious, "inorganic" life, can be theorized as *topological* novums: emergent, interdisciplinary (involving genomics, nanotech, and other fields), and beyond human control. Novels like Bear's, then, are not only a social-political experiments: through scientific content they confront readers with the experiment that *is* (human) evolution. Sf works such as Bear's are vital for imagining the future of technoscience and humanity in an age of great biophysical and societal transitions, fueling strands of Science and Technology Studies, Critical Posthumanism, and Environmental Humanities devoted to thinking the webs of relations between humans and nonhumans.

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli**  
**16:00 – 17:15 (Room C1 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

#### Panel: CONTAGION

##### 1. Metamorphic Metaphors: Spreading Ideas across Space and Time

Luis O. Arata (luis.arata@quinnipiac.edu)

Quinnipiac University, Hamden, USA

This presentation reflects on how metaphors can spread ideas beyond their initial domain of application through metamorphoses, as a form of playful contagion. I propose that what enables such mobility is our sense of agency.

Derrida touched upon this process of spreading ideas bringing up the notions of play of signifiers and of dissemination. From a different perspective, Jorge Luis Borges suggested in "Pascal's Sphere" that universal history is perhaps the history of "the various intonations of a few metaphors." These reflections provide a sense of how ideas can spread through contagious transformations, from literature to science. Strict adherence to traditions, ideologies, doctrines, paradigms, and beliefs, along with outright censorship, are usual ways to try to safeguard from such contagions.

To explore what enables the potential mobility of ideas, I turn to neurobiologist Rodolfo Llinás. He observed in *I of the Vortex* that our nervous system models and remodels the environment to help us perform tasks. Llinás concluded that we are dreaming entities guided by the senses. In a cognitive sense, models are narrative metaphors that help steer our actions to perform desired tasks that arise out of our sense of agency. As ideas affect the making of guiding models, they get entangled with life. The rise and spread of ideas does not necessarily follow logical or evolutionary pathways that supersede desires. The pathways are surprisingly complex, uncertain, and imperfect, as long as human agency endures.

## 2. In Toxicating Language: *The Flame Alphabet* on the 'smallwork' of Biopolitical Life

Laura Shackelford (lxsgla@rit.edu)

Rochester Institute of Technology, USA

Reorienting the literary topos of language as a thanatological relation or vector of internalized death--a deadly literal ossification that transmits itself parasitically at the expense of human species-being--Ben Marcus' 2012 novel *The Flame Alphabet*, develops an acute poetic register of the altered operations of language as one material transmission (among many) now that "power is at work literally and figuratively everywhere, on the surface of 'life' itself" (J. Nealon) within distinctly non-representational, bioinformatic circulatory logics of neoliberal biopower. In the novel's near-future, childrens' speech has turned deadly, unbearably infiltrating the homelife of narrator Sam and his wife Claire and forcing them to flee their own daughter. As the linguistic allergen spreads beyond their Jewish community in upstate NY, surviving adults are quarantined in camps and a moratorium is placed on all communication until a counteragent can be identified.

Evidencing the contemporary novel's concern with "an elaborate circulatory system connecting bodies, goods, and information" (N. Fraser), *The Flame Alphabet* registers these circulatory regimes indirectly through their impact on the formerly 'interior' topographies of the human (domestic spaces, emotional life, religious practices, novelistic space and poetics). Redescribing such "techniques of self" (Foucault) as domestic 'smallwork' with full awareness of their fatal mainlining to 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century biopower, the novel poetically excavates these methods of reproducing the human and counters neoliberal biopower's proclivities for exchange, affective connectivity and widening "options of circulation" as an unmitigated source of "freedom" (T. Campbell).

## 3. Contagious alterity in literary representation

Stefania Sini (stefania.sini@lett.unipmn.it)

Università del Piemonte Orientale, Italy

My paper will focus on contagion as exemplary mode of social relations, biopsychic and biochemical, in which the power of the other on the self is suffered and / or acted. After reflecting on the various manifestations of contagion (verbal, psychological, emotional, bacterial, viral, radioactive ) in the light of some fundamental theories in its history, as Gustave Le Bon's *Psychologie des foules* (1895 ), Sigmund Freud's *Massenpsychologie und Ich -analyse* (1921), till the recent acquisitions of neuroscience and medical and nuclear sciences, we will see some examples of literary narrative in which contagion assumes essential importance as a vector of destiny and a crucial point of the plot. The role of the contagious word in the persuasion or ideological manipulation of crowds; gossip, rumor and slander amplified by the power of the media in the construction of identities and fictitious events; the collective imitation of aberrant behaviors; the spread of the disease with the consequent alteration of social dynamics: these and similar situations are staged in texts in which the contagion is often *myse en abyme* of itself (the contagion of the fear of contagion, the contagion of the fear of contagion of the fear of contagion ... ) . From Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) to Alessandro Manzoni's *Storia della colonna infame* (1840), from Albert Camus' *La peste* (1947) to José Saramago's *Ensaio sobre a cegueira* (1995), from Svetlana Aleksievic's *Chernobilskaia molitva* (2001) to Walter Siti's *Il contagio* (2008), we will try to trace a small, certainly incomplete, phenomenology of the contagion and of its diffusivity as existential and political figure, where Aristotle's "mimetic animal" comes to act in scenarios where the venerable philosophical categories which have portrayed him see their borders blurred and muddled.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin  
9:00- 10:15 (Aula Magna)**

**Panel: LIFE, THAT IS TO SAY...**

### 1. Life, That Is to Say...

Stefan Herbrechter (aa7837@coventry.ac.uk), Coventry University, UK

Manuela Rossini (rossini.privat@gmail.com), IAHS at Berne University, Switzerland

One of the most interesting, promising and often ignored starting points for the current discussion about our "posthuman future" is Lyotard's *The Inhuman*. In this collection of essays published in 1988 Lyotard speculates on a

double programme for what with hindsight could be called “critical posthumanism”: “what if human beings, in humanism’s sense, were in the process of, constrained into, becoming inhuman?” and “what if what is ‘proper’ to humankind were to be inhabited by the inhuman?” Lyotard’s notion of the “inhuman” in many ways is more critical and certainly less teleological than the figure of the posthuman, which nevertheless seems to have managed to capture people’s imagination. In “Can Thought Go On Without a Body”, the first short piece in *The Inhuman*, Lyotard stages a dialogue between a “he” and a “she” on the survival chances of the human and of thought after the “death of the sun”. While “he” prefigures the discussion about technological disembodiment, “she” insists on the future of sexual difference. In this sense Lyotard prefigures a faultline that runs through the entire field of posthuman or posthumanist investigation, and which concerns the question of “life”, “materiality” and “fiction”. In our talk we intend to continue Lyotard’s dialogue in this vein. More specifically, it will stage a discussion between a feminist materialist posthumanism and a deconstructive critical posthumanism.

## 2. Slime, junk and bacteria – new visions of messy and uncontrollable life

Adam Bencard (adam@sund.ku.dk)

Medical Museion / Novo Nordisk Center for Basic Metabolic Research, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

In ‘The Myth of Sisyphos and Other Essays’ Albert Camus offers a striking description of a fundamentally alien and inhuman world: “A step lower and strangeness creeps in: perceiving that the world is “dense,” sensing to what a degree a stone is foreign and irreducible to us, with what intensity nature or a landscape can negate us. At the heart of all beauty lies something inhuman...” This paper takes such a density its starting point by exploring three different invocations of life – in the form of slime, junk and bacteria – that each in their own way reflect upon the current cultural scientific moment as one in which the biological sciences have made massive strides in expanding our understanding of life, but in doing so have revealed a mess; a deep and disconcerting complexity. From post-genomic metabolic science to microbiome studies and beyond, life is turning out to be more uncontrollable, mutative and emergent than 20<sup>th</sup> century life science imagined. The paper will present a combined reading of Ben Woodard’s notion of the inherent sliminess of life and its “vital creep”, Thierry Bardini’s exploration of humans as composed of useless, but always potentially recyclable, junk, with contemporary science writing about the microbiota and the disturbing revelation that we are, on a cellular level, outnumbered 10 to 1 in ‘our’ own bodies. On the basis of this reading, I will argue that rather than inhabiting a ‘post-biologic’ condition, we are finding ourselves given over to mutating, contagious, self-replicating and dense biological systems, and that traditional visions of our mastery of nature must be tempered with the inherent uncontrollability of the processes of life.

## 3. A-Live: Biological and Artificial Theaters

Yvan Tina (yvantina@gmail.com), Aix-Marseille University / University of Texas at Dallas

Roger Malina, University of Texas at Dallas, USA

Yannick Butel, Aix-Marseille University, France

keywords : meta, theater, design, a-life, synthetic biology, living, skenabiotope, bioart

Christopher Langton, in the original workshops of what would lead to the constitution of Artificial Life as academic and artistic fields, issued the idea of exploring “life as it could be” (1). According to him, artificial systems which exhibit signs of life and life like behaviours are worthy of investigation in their own right because such systems can expand our understanding of life. Drawing on this, we introduce the notion of ‘Meta-Life’(2) which refers to a specific type of natural or artificial entities with behaviours characteristic of life -be they artificial, transgenic, synthetic, or inorganic- belonging to the Arts of A-Life and Biotechnologies as well as the fruits of evolution. As Maciej Ozog has shown in his article on the relationships between the arts and the sciences, these practices are somehow ‘meta-artistic’ for the reason that they generate meta-discourses’ (critical commentaries) on life, arts and sciences (3). Since theater, as a performing art, has something to do with the living and is meta-critical *per se*, we intend here to question the performative dimension of those practices/objects and to feed life sciences theories with few theatrical contributions. The notion of *theatricality*, which is for instance defined as a “density of signs and sensations” by Roland Barthes (4), or as a “medium” by Samuel Weber (5), could be applied to such kind of productions which affect the shaping of life itself and reveal theatricality potentials. Following Sally Jane Norman on her writings about the *skenabiotope* (6), we advance the idea that theater can also be seen as a suitable place for the modeling of life as art through the use of new media and technosciences. We would then be able to imagine an *artificial theater* involving both virtual scenes

and biotechnological artefacts, staging unpredictable stories with hybrid characters, playing on several levels of meaning through different mediums, and eventually allowing new ways to conceive a representation: body, space, time, and action.

(1) Christopher Langton, *Artificial Life, The Proceedings of an Interdisciplinary Workshop on the Synthesis and Simulation of Living Systems*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1988

(2) See Meta-Life. Biotechnologies, Synthetic Biology, A-Life and the Arts, a Leonardo eBook Series, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2014.

**FRIDAY, JUNE 6 – Turin  
9:00 – 10:30 (Room F2)**

**Panel: LIFE, AFTER THEORY**

**1. Enacting Life on the Modernist Stage: Between Bios and Bare Life**

Hedwig Fraunhofer (hedwig.fraunhofer@gcsu.edu)

Georgia College, USA

My work takes its inspiration from the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, and specifically the link he establishes between biopolitics and totalitarianism. Both Michel Foucault and Agamben agree that what is at stake in modern politics is life, and both see totalitarianism as a result of the modern politicization of life. The totalitarian leader claims the right of the sovereign not only to protect the life of the in-group, but also to declare a state of exception that reduces the life of certain (or all) parts of the population to bare life--or even to end life. This politicization of life and death affects the body—including sexuality--and it is in this sense among others that my work explores the almost obsessive discussion of sexuality in modern European (Scandinavian, French and German) drama. It is at the level of life--of the “bodily” health of the species or population--that issues of gender and sexuality intersect implicitly with similar discussions about racial health or “hygiene” at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

In European modernity, the experts that have intervened in the modern management of bodies have been not only medical, psychiatric or religious experts, but also aesthetic experts. As my work shows, modern theater participates in the naturalization or biologization of identity categories and contributes to establishing the border between insiders and outsiders that early twentieth century fascism would take to an extreme—the border between *bios politicon* and bare life.

**2. Form-of-Life and Agamben’s Messianic Poetics**

Chun-yen Chen (jochen@ntnu.edu.tw)

Department of English, National Taiwan Normal University

This paper proposes to examine the literary theory of one of the most prominent thinkers of life politics today, Giorgio Agamben, arguing that his writing on poetry not only helps elucidate many of his key political-philosophy concepts but also sheds light on the singularity of the literary in an age of media technology and bioscience. The paper will focus on a few things: (A) how Agamben’s interpretations of Dante on the one hand and of fetishism, melancholy and the emblem in modern poetry on the other hand render a posthumanism that attends to figures beyond the human and yet at the same time upholds an affirmative image of the human, and how his project thus departs from and calls into question antihumanistic propositions such as Derrida’s; (B) how Agamben’s reading of medieval Romance poetry, in particular its rhyming and rhythmic structure, forms a poetics of redemptive temporality that is grounded in a corporeal sense of language, and how this messianic view of poetry brings to light his notion of potentiality; and (C) how Agamben’s conception of gesture, wherein he puts forth a theorization of image that echoes and also revises that of Benjamin’s and Deleuze’s, can help us rethink the word-image relationship in an era where our affective and intellectual experiences are said to be dictated by visual and visualization technologies. To conclude, I will suggest that the concept of “form-of-life” that Agamben proposes in his political philosophy can serve as a literary thesis that posits *form* as the very stake in our attempts to translate or transcode life experience via the act of thinking.

### 3. Life beyond 'critique': Murakami after Latour

Jeff Wallace (jwallace@cardiffmet.ac.uk)

Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK

In his efforts towards a compositionist politics, Bruno Latour contests a conception of 'critique' whose origin he finds in Kant – that is, 'a wholesale acceptation [sic] of the divide between human and nonhuman' (2010). Beyond critique, which of course has 'run out of steam', and its associated hermeneutic of suspicion, Latour has begun to imagine a posthumanistic ecology, based on rigorous principles of assembly or re-assembly. While, for example, the interaction of human and nonhuman in Actor-Network-Theory displaces the abstraction of the 'social', 'Things' (as matters of concern rather than matters of fact) become 'societies.'

Literature seems to remain, for Latour, a privileged site for the configuring of this posthumanism – for example, in the rethinking of animism he finds in the fiction of Richard Powers. In this paper, however, I bring the recent fiction of Haruki Murakami into dialogue with Latour, in order to trace in Murakami's work an imagining of life beyond 'critique.' I suggest that the post-critical emerges in Murakami in two main, though interwoven, ways: in an ethics of selfhood and its relation to others and to the world of things, beyond the developmental and educational model of *bildung*; and in the challenge his work might pose to conceptions of literary and cultural value. In this way, I hope to show how Murakami's fiction addresses itself to the future of the literary 'under the current, generalised condition of mediality and biopolitics.'

**FRIDAY, JUNE 6 – Turin  
14:00 – 15.30 (Room F2)**

#### **Panel: POSTHUMAN BIOPOLITICS AND ETHICS**

##### **1. Posthuman Biopolitics: Moral Imperatives and Bioenhancement**

Maria Aline Ferreira (aline@ua.pt)

University of Aveiro, Portugal

My purpose in this paper is to consider a number of biotechnologies that purport to enhance human beings and will bring about a panoply of physical, biological changes that will radically transform the human landscape. I will consider proposals such as that by bioethicist Julian Savulescu who defends the ethical imperative for moral bioenhancement in order to prevent environmental and other catastrophes, such as violence and war, that would lead to suffering and the loss of life. *In vitro* "eugenics" is another potential area subject to an array of ethical questions with the prospect of being developed in the near future, as bioethicist Robert Sparrow observes, with recourse to the creation of embryos using eggs and sperm derived from stem cells, a technique that could lead to the selective breeding of individuals with particular genotypes. Yet another future technology is the development of artificial wombs, with bioethicist Anna Smadajor considering that there is nothing less than a "moral imperative" for ectogenesis.

These and other biotechnological advances will also be analysed through the lens of fiction, by looking mainly at how the putative implementation of these or similar techniques are dramatized in two novels, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Richard Powers's *Generosity: An Enhancement* (2009).

These biotechnologies envision new configurations of the human deeply embedded in posthuman scenarios that will drastically change the conception of personhood and embodiment, with biopower as an inescapable structure of dominance and agent of change, bringing science fiction close to science fact. I will draw mainly on the work of the bioethicists mentioned above, as well as recent work on biopolitics.

##### **2. On Responsibility and Response-ability in Contemporary Literature on Science**

Julia Boll (j.boll@uni-konstanz.de)

Zukunftskolleg, University of Konstanz, Germany

In the 2011 London production of Nick Dear's play *Frankenstein* the two actors playing the Creature and the allegedly mad scientist exchanged their roles every other night, thus emphasising how tightly bound the Creator is to his Creature, how close subject and object are and how inescapably dependent on each other they are regarding the affirmation of their respective subjectivities. When considering Victor Frankenstein to be mad, it is vital to remember that, with madness, we also associate a limited culpability, a limited responsibility, response-ability. By allowing

Frankenstein to step away into madness, we free him from an ethical responsibility for his actions, because we assume he is not capable of basing his decisions on ethical principles. The focus of this paper is the question of ethics in the context of responsibility and choice, the acknowledgement and denial of humanity, the recognition of the object of scientific inquiry, and how literature interrogates these matters. Drawing from texts such as Dear's play, Simon Mawer's novel *Mendel's Dwarf* (1997) and Emily Ballou's *Darwin Poems* (2009), as well as from Kelly Oliver's theory of an ethics based on witnessing, I will show how contemporary literature explores the possibility of giving voice to and hearing the object of scientific enquiry and how questions of ethical responsibility towards society and humanity are addressed.

## STREAM 2 B

## NARRATING LIFE: CONTAGION, IMMUNITY, AND MUTATION

Conveners: Yves Abrioux, Stefan Herbrechter, Cristina Iuli, Manuela Rossini

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli

14:30 – 15:45 (Room B2 @Ex Ospedaletto)

## Panel: UNCOMMON AGENCIES

## 1. “Fictions of Agency”: Impersonality, Contingency, and Responsibility

Viola Marchi (viola.marchi@ens.unibe.ch)

English Department, Center for Cultural Studies, University of Bern, Switzerland

Although approaching the question from different standpoints, both Giorgio Agamben and Roberto Esposito recognize the philosophical urgency to unwire the gates of personhood and define life in new terms. However, if Esposito’s concept of the impersonal paves the way for thinking of a new relationality beyond the confines of the human, it also seems to threaten the notion of agency, inalienable to both political and ethical theory and linked to the capacity for action and to responsibility for one’s deeds.

Recognizing the problems of simply discarding agency and responsibility, the aim of this paper is to investigate both concepts outside the domain of the personal and beyond the logic of agent and patient that, as I intend to show, might end up reproducing the same process of “exclusionary assimilation” that, according to Esposito, regulates the “dispositif of the person”.

A serious engagement with the impersonal and its ethico-political relevance thus calls for the configuration of new modes of agency and responsibility, outside the logic of persons and things, agents and patients. To do so, adopting Gilles Deleuze’s understanding of literature as a privileged point of access to the impersonal, I propose to look at the dramatization of instances of agency in a type of narratives - that I tentatively term “narratives of contingency” - where, instead of ordered patterns of events and progressive constructions of identities, what one can witness is a movement toward de-personalization, in a fictional world characterized by contingency and by the breakdown of cause-effect relationships.

## 2. Biopolitics Under the Skin: Relating Cancer Narratives -- An Archive of the “Talking Dead”

M.K. Bryson (mary.bryson@ubc.ca), Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice, University of British Columbia, Canada

Jackie Stacey, Center for Interdisciplinary Research in the Arts, Manchester University, UK

Chase Joynt, University of Chicago, USA

In this paper, we provide a genealogical-phenomenological schematization (GPS analysis; see Bryson & Stacey, 2012) of the pathographic narration of embodiment, cancer and alterity in three media artifacts (*dispositifs*) that constitute and choreograph I-witness accounts. In place of a phenomenological view of “experience as the origin of knowledge,” (Scott, 1991) our analysis uses GPS methods to analyze “survivor” discourses, in terms of fields of knowledge—systems of knowledge that are shaped and organized within specific mediatically organized generational and institutional frames of reference. We take up these autobiographical accounts as exemplary of the articulatory assemblage of cancer survivor discourse as a choreographic knowledge practice constitutive of a technological imaginary. Our analysis tracks the complex improvisatory affective labour of mobilizing attachments in the face of precarity vis-à-vis the intersectionally linked right to health, right to knowledge, right to memory and the right to be human.

Media *dispositifs* include: 1. **Tactic** (1959, American Cancer Society with Alfred Hitchcock) View Clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wnu9ibzx2Oc> 2. **The LuLu Sessions** (2011, Director Casper Wong) View Clip:

<http://lulusessionsfilm.com/trailer/> 3. **RESISTERECTOMY** (2012, Director Chase Joynt with Mary Bryson) View Clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPLdJm0TPA&feature=youtu.be>

To the degree that technologies of representation, text, photography and video can be rendered to make the ultimate implausibility of their efficacy explicit (as either engines of translation or of the reproduction of a Real), that degree of

modifiability can neither be predicted in advance nor can it be seamlessly harnessed (Barthes, 1977; Luciano, 2007). It is incoherent, and a good example of what Lauren Berlant (2006) has called “cruel optimism,” to take on some version of a modernist fantasy to manage what is ultimately unmanageable. As experimental engines for various autobiographical projects, however, these dermographic technologies offer us a hand in crafting recoded and radically denatured skins.

### **3. The Metaphor of War against Cancer and its Anthropocentric Undertone**

Maria Temmes (temmes\_maria@ceu-budapest.edu)

Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

In my presentation, I will examine how cancer, as an object of study, negotiates the boundary between scientific research and material ontology of individual body. As Michael Hendrickson points out “more and more, cancer is being thought of as a dysfunction of networks that includes, but is not limited to, genetic elements.” (Hendrickson 2011, 51) In other words, defining cancer as a definite material element has been challenged by contemporary research. As a result, individual based research is gaining ground in cancer research.

My aim is to question how contemporary systems biology approach to cancer research and its relation to material ontology resonates with the assemblage theory of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. I will argue that the vision of the body, which highlights its dynamicity, complexity and emergence, that contemporary cancer research maintains, is consistent with the assemblage approach. However, I argue that the metaphor of war against cancer, that is still prevalent when talking about cancer research, has a danger of reducing the complexity of this account. I argue that this militaristic metaphor is problematic because it supports an anthropocentric view of cancer and thus highlights epistemological challenges at the expense of ontological fluidity. Moreover, I argue that this metaphor does not give justice to the systems biology approach and contemporary cancer treatments. I will suggest, instead, that challenging this metaphor might open up new ways to envision the relation between scientific research and ontology more broadly.

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli**  
**16:00 – 17:15 (Room B2 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

#### **Panel: TRANSGRESSING THE HUMAN/NON HUMAN DIVIDE**

##### **1. Life writing in a nonsubjective world? - Clarice Lispector's *Agua Viva* (The Stream of Life)**

Elisabeth Friis (elisabeth.friis@litt.lu.se)

Lund University, Sweden

Clarice Lispector's short novel *Agua viva* (1973) can be considered a radical attempt to inscribe “the author” in the immediacy of the nonhuman world and thereby to overcome the bodily and linguistic limitations of the first person singular. “The author” engages with, follows and sometimes dissolves into other living “things” – first and foremost plants and non-human animals but also molecules and atoms. It's a dangerous and painful process but at the same time the text literally overflows with pure enjoyment. My paper will suggest that it is possible to describe the novel as life-writing even though it attempts to get rid of the subject: The novel is clearly a text about the author Clarice Lispector's experience of her own writing. But the text not only also asks if “the author” can write her life from a nonsubjective position. It also demonstrates how this becomes possible. This paper will discuss the function of the plant- and animal-invocations that stream through “the author”, and the possibility of and future perspectives for a life writing that goes beyond an anthropocentric subjectivity.

##### **2. Making killable, making lovable – race, gender and species in literary humanimal transformations**

Ann-Sofie Lönnngren (ann-sofie.lonnngren@littvet.uu.se)

Uppsala university, Sweden

In posthumanist theory it is often argued that the Enlightenment's notion of a unified, pre-given human subject was a condition for the rise of the totalitarian regimes during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the atrocities they carried out. As

Cary Wolfe (2003) and others have argued it is, however, impossible to understand this development without taking into account the anthropocentrism of the Western, modern discourse. This means that Man has the power to conceptualize *some* non-human animals as purely instrumental to mankind, while *others* become beloved family members. Since the intricate processes through which such categorizations happen are not just a matter of species, but rather carried out in intra-action between this category and others (such as race and gender) it might, however, have consequences for human- as well as non- human animals. Donna Haraway has called this process “making killable” (2008), while it also makes possible a “making loveable” (Lönngren, forthcoming).

In this paper I track these processes, making killable and making loveable, in two Swedish novels: August Strindberg *Tschandala* (1888) and Per Olov Enquist’s *Captain Nemo’s Library* (1991). These literary texts have in common that they both entail a humanimal transformation, and also that they both represent the ethnic group Romani as the Other within the Swedish national context. Through intra-actions between different race, gender and species these novels portray processes that lead to death as well as loving encounters.

### **3. Primate times. The body-productivity-temporality complex in human-ape stories after Darwin**

Amelie Björck (amelie.bjorck@litt.lu.se)

Ph.d and researcher in literature, Lund university, Sweden

A great deal of biopolitical work is devoted to keeping bodies in a productive state and ranging them into a chrononormative system for the benefit of societal control and economic progression. In my paper I explore how literary fiction after Darwin has employed the human-ape figuration – including co-existence, transformations, love between species etc – to work with this body-productivity-temporality complex. In quite a few primate novels a friction between two different formulas can be observed. On the one hand there is the traditional formula in which man has to free himself from the ape (the drives, the spell, the persistent animal), to be able to move forward and keep his humanity as well as the genre intact. On the other hand there is the disruptive formula of attraction/hybridity between ape and human, which for better or worse may put identities, progression and even the genre itself at stake. Through the prism of contemporary Swedish examples of primate literature my paper will consider the conditions for a potential literary counter speech in relation to the normative force of biopolitics.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin  
9:00- 10:45 (Room F1)**

#### **Panel: CYBERNETIC EVENTFULNESS**

##### **1. Coming of Age Narratives and the Politics of Artificial Intelligence**

Craig McConnell (cmcconnell@exchange.fullerton.edu)

Department of Liberal Studies, California State University, Fullerton, USA

In this paper, I will address the political and ethical dimensions of works of speculative fiction framed around the coming of age of an artificial intelligence. Robert Heinlein’s Mike (The Moon is a Harsh Mistress, 1966), Phillip K. Dick’s Rachael Rosen (Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, 1968), Isaac Asimov’s Andrew Martin (The Bicentennial Man, 1976), and Richard Powers’s Helen (Galatea 2.2, 1995) are characters that represent a literary thought experiment derived from Alan Turing’s 1950 conjecture that a machine that gives responses to questions indistinguishable from human responses would have to be understood to think. Criticism of these works of fiction follow closely the lines of the Strong AI debate, which considers the related issue of whether a machine intelligence could be conscious. Heinlein’s Mike and Powers’s Helen, unlike the cyborgs imagined by Dick and Asimov, are entirely mechanical, allowing ethical and political questions to be divorced not just from human qualities, but from privileging organic life over machine consciousness. Unlike earlier robot stories which are premised on human fear of nonhuman intelligence, these works raise questions about the ways in which the nonhuman is threatened by humanity. Though they clearly have their origins in Turing’s questions about the possibility of mechanical intelligence, their overlap with coming of age stories (particularly pivotal scenes in which individual mortality is considered) make these stories experiments in

political and civil discourse as well. Thus, they invite reflection on the consideration that humans owe to the nonhuman.

## **2. Your Move: How Andrew Bujalski's *Computer Chess* Imagines a Biopolitical Future in the 1980s**

John Bruni (brunij@gvsu.edu)

Liberal Studies Department, Grand Valley State University

Andrew Bujalski's *Computer Chess* (2013) envisions the merging of biopolitics and techno-futurism in the 1980s. This paper examines, in the film, how the development of artificial intelligence (AI) programs for playing chess rethinks the boundaries between life and what comes *after* life. As I suggest, the film takes a particularly provocative approach by situating the narrative during the Reagan era that marks the end of Cold War geo-politics. The questions thus raised by this approach: what new directions has corporate/military appropriation of AI taken? How are these new directions charted by biopolitical thinking in a current age of increasing post-national/ecological/economic crisis?

To respond to such questions engages us with a ghost world: the terrain charted by Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*. Derrida's sense of virtual being is translated, in *Computer Chess*, into phantoms of techno-consciousness that emerge in glitches, static, noise. These disruptions, which imply an emotional response to the uncertain, *posthuman* world of futurity manifested by AI, are enhanced by the use of outdated analog cameras to shoot the film, reminding us, as I point out, that the reality we perceive is always/already a matter of the biopolitical.

This reality of the biopolitical, as viewed through the film, indicates the increasing confusion between organic and technological images of development (for example, birth/creation) that pushes the biopolitical limits, including the notion of protection (immunity). This is a reminder that anxieties about a world beyond our control did not stop during the 1980s.

## **3. Distributed Natural Systems in *The Tempest* and the Mutability of Servitude**

Kevin LaGrandeur (klagrand@nyit.edu)

New York Institute of Technology, USA

When considered in terms of the broader notions of second and third order systems theory—especially in terms defined by Hutchins' notions of distributed systems—we have always been posthuman, as Katherine Hayles famously points out in *How We Became Posthuman*. Demonstrations of this can be seen in literature predating the age of cybernetics, and even of industry. Because Aristotle, in his *Politics*, likens servants to both organs in the master's body and to tools, and because his views on slaves were formative of Renaissance views, we can see, by extrapolation, a Renaissance precedent for thinking of *collections* of intelligent entities in either human or non-human form as a sort of servant-engine to humans. Aristotle's narrative on the form and function of servants was integral to Renaissance notions of servitude. Thus we have a precedent for discussing in Aristotelian terms the supra-mundane system of servants that Prospero creates in *The Tempest*. Aristotle's ideas of gaining advantage over nature by using slaves as instrumental, prosthetic enhancements of the body's powers is carried a step further: the natural forces on Prospero's isle are themselves incorporated into the master, in the symbolic form of spirits, as extensions of his body and will—forming a master-centered, supernatural system. This system is a supraorganism whose functions and intelligence is distributed, among Prospero, servant spirits like Ariel, mortals like Caliban, and even the very island itself. This presentation will discuss the implications of this, especially concerning the mutability of "servant" systems.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin**

**14:00- 15:30 (Room F1)**

### **Panel : SYSTEMS OF KNOWLEDGE, STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE**

#### **1. How to Speak in the Language of Lamps: Walter Benjamin's Cybernetics**

Seth Morton (seth.a.morton@rice.edu)

Rice University, USA

This paper argues that Walter Benjamin's interest in art, the literary, and the use and theory of criticism is develops a nascent version of what critics will later refer to as second order systems theory or cybernetics. My reading of

Benjamin as a historical stepping stone in the development of cybernetic thought is meant to redeem aspects of his aesthetics which are often relegated by critics as mere mysticism.

Critical concepts in Benjamin's work like limits of representation, the domain of communication and language, and the function of art as a dynamic and radically contingent signifier appear in essays like "On Language as Such and the Language of Man" (1916), "The Task of the Translator" (1923), and "The Storyteller" (1936) chart a development of thinking that primarily concerns the function of observation and the consequences of understanding the aesthetic as a meta-system within a larger, but equally dynamic, social system.

In Benjamin, there is a constant negotiation between a viral notion of language and art, that threatens to infect and mutate other systems, on the one hand, and an unintelligible zone of immunitary protection, which rather nihilistically gives up on the capacity for the anything to be understood by anything else, on the other hand. These competing notions outline a system of thinking that is obsessed with the threshold, the limit, or the divide between the system and environment. My paper hopes to elucidate the nature of this limit in Benjamin in order to provide a greater understanding of the use and historical development of cybernetic thinking within literary theory.

## **2. Subverting the dominance over life: Irony in Vilém Flusser's *Vampyrotheutis Infernalis***

Rodrigo Martini Paula (rodrigopaula@gmail.com)

Rice University, USA

With the emergence of the biopolitical logic of the "right to make live and let die" is the development of policies that produce state racism. As Foucault, Esposito, and Derrida point out, the immunitary logic steering the biopolitical state is always already auto-immunitary—what current biopolitical theorists as Cary Wolfe and Timothy Campbell suggest is *thanatopolitical*. This shift is accompanied by the development of scientific discourses that, in the name of enlightened research and progress, dominate, explore, and control the lives of human and nonhuman beings alike.

Czech-born Brazilian philosopher Vilém Flusser responds to this situation by writing fiction that parodies science and philosophy in order to subvert the metanarrative of species evolution. In one of his most intriguing works, *Vampyrotheutis infernalis* (1987), he writes a faux treatise on a vampire squid and compares it to humans. In that work, he uses what Linda Hutcheon (1989) defines as ironic parody and subverts how life and bodies are controlled and institutionalized through certain discourses of scientific determinism. This paper explores how parody and irony can imitate, mutate, and then replicate established biological discourses and expose them as anthropocentric. Flusser's work offers a displaced, posthumanist interpretation of the Vampyrotheutic world, where reason is not the main locus of knowledge nor the primary form of communication. In his use of irony, Flusser evades the double-bind of theorization on nonhuman life: that the only access to nonhuman forms is through a writing that is ultimately human.

## **3. Racial Technics : John Henry, Ellen Craft, and the Racial Technics of Life-Writing**

Michael Litwack (michael\_litwack@brown.edu)

Brown University, USA

This paper considers the fraught border between biography and biopolitics in relation to the theoretical and historical entanglement between technologies of race and technologies of writing. Recently, Didier Fassin has provocatively restated Agamben's well-known distinction between *zoe* and *bios* as a distinction between biology and biography, arguing that whereas "bare life" and its cognates speak a biological idiom that proffers "life" as simply that which can be put to death, the biographical augurs and preserves a form-of-life irreducible to, and in surplus of, any mere physicalist conceptions of "life itself." For Derrida, however, biography is always-already stalked by death, not as its opposite but as its necessary condition; this is what he calls thanatography and, elsewhere, thanatotechnics. Indeed, as early as *Of Grammatology*, Derrida would link the question of inscription and technics to the *figures* of the inert, the lifeless, the dead, and the deadly, even as technicity broaches and exceeds the metaphysical opposition between life and death. What is at stake in the *sous-rature* of the living—in the differing-deferral of *techne* as *bios*—is the constitutive contamination of life by its others or, more precisely, the *inscription of death in life* that makes life, like writing, fugitive and alluvial.

Beginning with an interrogation of the ways in which race and writing have been conjoined as figures of death and inhumanity in modernity, this paper argues that the proposition that "life must be defended!" has weirdly emerged as the rallying cry for many thinkers who work under the rubric of biopolitics, and that this transformation of Foucault's exclamatory stems from the under-interrogated transitivity between *anthropos* and *techne, bios* (life) and *graphie* (writing), issued by the sovereign traffic in racial Blackness that brokers this transaction. To do so, I draw on two texts that mark a de-formation of biography through a divestment from the tropological imperative

of prosopopoeia's dialogic address: the fugitive slave narrative of Ellen Craft (1860) that fixates on her writing supplements, and the biographical novel *John Henry Days* (2001), in which the death of the Reconstruction-era Black body at the hands of a steal-drill marks the birth of human life and national identity. Ultimately, I claim that both texts suggest the field of biopolitics raises questions not only about the government and management of life but also about inhumanity, mediation, instrumentality, and other ciphers of the dead that haunt and interrupt the metaphysical disavowal of technics. As a densely tangled methodology, a regime of representation, and a mode of government, biopolitics is underwritten by a biocentric metaphysics that demands a heightened critical attention to the cadaverous mediations of the thanatographical's rapport with biography.

**FRIDAY, JUNE 6 – Turin  
9:00 – 10:30 (Room F1)**

**Panel: POSTMODERNIST POSTHUMANISM**

**1. Postmodern points of view on technology: Posthumanism and Spanish Peninsular Literature**

Carlos Gámez (c.gamez1@miami.edu)

Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, University of Miami, USA

As Spanish critic and writer Vicente Luis Mora affirms in two of his essays (*La luz nueva* and *El lectoespectador*), the use of new technologies in Spanish contemporary narrative is changing the narrative of life itself, in contrast with past literary movements, when the influence of technology in Spanish Peninsular literature only appeared sporadically. In fact, today there exists an important group of authors who not only consider technology in their works of fiction, but who also use it in order to “compose” their pages (“pantpáginas” in Mora's words). Most of these writers think of technology from a posthumanist point of view, as defined by Katherine N. Hayles, for whom postindustrial society is marked by the coexistence of machines and artificial objects—a coexistence that implies the creation of not strictly human societies. I propose to analyze visions of posthumanism in our postindustrial society in two Spanish writers: Germán Sierra (*A Coruña*, 1960) and Agustín Fernández Mallo (*A Coruña*, 1967). I will demonstrate how their common point of view about posthumanism produces very different visions of the narrative of life in contemporary societies.

**2. “Time with the Midas Touch”: J.G. Ballard and the Crystallization of Life**

Moritz Ingwersen (moritzingwersen@trentu.ca)

Trent University, Canada

This year marks the centennial anniversary of Max von Laue's Nobel Prize for laying the foundations of the structural analysis of condensed (crystalline) matter, which is one of the reasons for the Unesco to proclaim 2014 *The International Year of Crystallography*. From Platonic solids to the quasi-crystalline structure of Penrose's tilings, the extraordinary symmetries in crystal geometry have persistently served as a source of inspiration for scientists and artists alike. At least since Watson and Crick's identification of the human DNA as crystalline molecule, thus confirming the ideas offered by Erwin Schrödinger 10 years earlier, the complexity of inorganic crystals and their self-propelled growth has, furthermore, become one of the central reference points for the description of life.

It is my aim to explore this association of crystals with negentropy and life in what is likely one of the most compelling negotiations of the crystal trope in 20<sup>th</sup> century literature – J.G. Ballard's *The Crystal World*. In this final part of a conceptual trilogy concerned with the apocalyptic ‘death by nature,’ Ballard imagines a world that for bizarre cosmological reasons suffers from the dissipation of time and the concurrent transmutation of all matter into crystals. In contrast to the scientific discourse of the time, Ballard's vision conceptualizes crystallization as a process not of increasing complexity analogous to the formation of life, but as an entropic chain reaction that ends in petrification and stasis. Likened to the structure of a virus, crystallized matter in the novel is “neither living nor dead.” My presentation will, thus, propose a reading of *The Crystal World* that positions it as a preeminent site for the contemporary discussion of tensions between the organic and the inorganic, the vitality of matter and the materiality of life.

### 3. Asimov's Insight into the Gaia Concept. From Reality to Fiction and Back Again

Gheorghica Nela-Roxana (nela\_gheorghica@yahoo.com)

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania

Born at the peak of the New Age, contemporary with revolutionary phenomena such as the first expeditions into the space and the flower-power movement, the Gaia concept may be the most innovative environmental theory of the last century. It was first developed in the 1960s by the British scientist James Lovelock, promoter of the holistic and green thinking, who claimed that Earth's Biosphere forms a self-regulating system functioning like a living organism and making the planet habitable – Gaia. His ideas, although partially accepted nowadays, were largely criticized by the scientific community; due to the geochemical balance, our planet did not need Gaia for self-regulation.

Nevertheless, the hypothesis also found many followers, and inspired Isaac Asimov to write two of his most important novels: the Hugo-award winning *Foundation's Edge* (1983) and the subsequent *Foundation and Earth* (1986). Here, Asimov takes Gaia a step further, endows it with awareness, and presents it as an ideal planet, an intelligent supraorganism whose members are tied together telepathically by a collective consciousness comprising both human and non-human life, where all components equally participate to the equilibrium of the biosystem.

Our present paper aims at discussing the influence Lovelock's works had upon Asimov, the spin the latter put on the theory as well as the ways it was absorbed by present mainstream literature and culture, including the debate created around Cameron's *Avatar* (2009). We will focus our discussion upon contemporary points of interest, such as: environment, individual vs greater good, individual vs group morality etc.

## STREAM 3

## THE MATTER OF LIFE: ART AND DESIGN OF THE LIVING

Convener : Monika Bakke

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli  
14:30 – 15:45 (Room B1 @Ex Ospedaletto)**1. A Life Liberated through Body Becoming Impersonal in Hijikata's Butoh**

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The present paper will employ Deleuze's body without organs and Jean-Luc Nancy's sense of the world to approach the Japanese "dark dance" performance of Tatsumi Hijikata's Butoh as a means of becoming impersonal and a means of returning back to Gaia (life in general). Hijikata is the founder of Butoh. A strategy used to efface the personality of each performer is to have their faces powdered with white makeup. The meaning of a face with white makeup is twofold: 1) the performers are becoming impersonal, and 2) they are restored back to the collectivity of capital Life.

Revolving around the thread of body, the Deleuzian body without organs helps explain Butoh as a performance: a cruel yet creative force that emerges from the body prior to any physical expression through matter and movement. Also, in the wake of Artaud, Hijikata invents a rather Japanese Zen concept of "hollow body" or a "body shop," from which body is no longer defined in terms of legs or arms, life or death. Hijikata's "hollow body" tries to redefine the sense of what a body is.

Aiming at redefining and opening the sense of body, Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of sense suggests that body serves as the spacing and sharing of sense or non-sense, extending the limit of body and opening the meaning (sens) of a body. By restoring to the primordial state of dark and chaos, the Butoh performance enables us to see how life, unleashed from the existing order of things, extends the sense of body through restoring and returning back to the collectivity of the world.

Keywords: Deleuze, Body, Body without Organs, Butoh, Hijikata, Jean-Luc Nancy, Sense

**2. Imagination laboratory – narrating new life forms in contemporary bio-art**

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"To be enchanted is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday" (Bennett, 2001 p 4).

Public engagement in biotechnology has declined as cloning, genetic engineering and regenerative medicine have become culturally normalized. Moreover, when debate occasionally emerges, scripts are strictly limited through established politico-moral discourses in which rationality and calculability of risks and benefits prevail. In order to vitalize debates on new technologies, we claim that there is a need for re-conceptualizations of biotechnological concerns and possibilities. In this paper we therefore turn to Jane Bennett's (2001) notion of enchantment and the importance of wonder and openness to the unusual, in order to problematize modernity's belief in rationality and calculations. Art can be viewed as an "imagination laboratory", through which un-framing and rupturing of contemporary rationalities are facilitated, and, in addition, enabling sense-making and offering fantastic connections otherwise not articulated.

Our aim is thus to explore representations of biotechnology and new life forms in contemporary arts in order to highlight alternative matters of concern than articulated through conventional politico-moral discourse. How are notions of post-human futures explored, questioned and (de)stabilized? Drawing on a cultural sociological analysis of Eduardo Kac's "Edunia", Lucy Glendinning's "Feather child", Patricia Piccinini's "We are family" and Heather Dewey-Hagborg's "Stranger visions", we expand on the metaphor of enchantment and discuss how the art works can be interpreted in terms of "magic", "wands" and "spells": 1) What kind of affects are mobilized through the magic of art (disgust, fear, wonder); 2) What kind of specific "wands" are used; (shock, warning, recognition) and 3) Which responses are fostered through cultural spells (protection, rejection, othering, inclusion)? The paper demonstrates that

while some modern boundaries and rationalities are highlighted and challenged through the “imagination laboratory” of the art process, others are left untouched.

### **3. Foregrounding Living Technology: Cognitive aspects of the conceptual integration of life and technology by a group of leading Physicists at FLinT Center for Fundamental Living Technology, DK**

Juani Guerra (juani.guerra@ulpgc.es), Research Group on Biopoetics, Cognitive Semiotics and Neuroaesthetics, University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain

Svend Østergaard, Center for Semiotics, Aarhus University, Denmark

Steen Rasmussen, FLinT Center, University of Southern Denmark

In this paper we present a case study of how cognitive operations like metaphor, metonymy, category extension and schematization/framing are working together in avant-garde scientific discourse (biophysics). The case in question concerns the highly interdisciplinary field recently lexicalized as *Living Technology* (Bedau et al. 2010).

The study follows the common assumption in contemporary cognitive theories of language that our verbalizations of the world encode abstract ‘image schemas’ or ‘cognitive schemas’ grounded in our early experiences of having a body and moving in space (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Langacker 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Langacker 2000; Talmy 2000; Fauconnier and Turner 2003). However, while the notion of ‘schema’ is most often thought of as static, internal structures unidirectionally mapped onto experience (for a related critique, see Thibault 2004; Visetti 2004), we will conceive of schematization as a dynamic and reciprocal process transcending the classical cognitivist boundaries between internal/external and individual/social (Clark 2006). The schematization process is thus rather conceived of as the result of experimentation and human interaction in a scientific community. We intend to illustrate this in a corpus of linguistic production gathered during 6 months at the FLinT Center (2012) and in the literature on Living Technology in view of how linguistic forms that encode standard image schemas are used.

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**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli  
16:00 – 17:15 (Room B1 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

#### **Panel: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: RE-SHAPING LIFE IN MEDICAL SCIENCES?**

##### **1. In Search for a viable model: when theory clashes with the body**

Dolores Steinmann (dolores@mie.utoronto.ca)

University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

Using Evelyn Fox Keller’s text [1] as a springboard, we engage in the debate on the contrast and similarities between our work and that of D’Arcy Thompson (a mathematician) and Jacques Loeb (a physician) attributed by Keller to their different backgrounds and subsequent bias in their modeling of living organisms. It is not unusual, in bio-medical

research, to apply the current cutting-edge metaphors in representing the functioning of the body and its unseen components [2, 3].

Current technology and its grip on society makes the binary code the way to disassemble the body. In the simulations generated in our laboratory mathematical models are virtual building blocks. Integrated into form and function of a blood vessel with support from the knowledge of physics and minute biological details, the body can be re-assembled and the blood flow can be simulated, mapped and examined.

Referring solely to mathematics and physics, and trying to simplify the form of an actual vessel may be useful to a certain degree, but it is detrimental when extrapolations to the living are too broad. By way of example, Poiseuille's law, governing fluid dynamics and presumed to correctly interpret the flow, unrealistically assumed vessels to be straight tubes. Our simulations revealed that slight natural wiggles of arteries can cause significant deviations from the predictions based in Poiseuille's law, and thus can clarify substantial errors in "physiological" measurements [4].

From mathematical models, with permanent reference to known physiological particulars, we attempt to create—out of non-living—a viable model of the living.

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## **2. Re-mapping life: affective cartographies and ecological re-presentations in medical visualization**

Roberta Buiani (robb@yorku.ca)

York University, Canada

A variety of methods of visualization and information mapping assist us in comprehending complex and large phenomena as well-defined and well-discernable items. While providing a rich source of knowledge and techniques, this variety can be read as the typical expression of the fragmented and hyper-specialized approach that characterizes today's technico-scientific research. Maps and visualizations capture and synthesize specific details that might otherwise lie undetected. However, while uncovering and zooming in to these new aspects, this bird's eye view obfuscates their contextual significance and their relation to other phenomena, promoting a detached outlook that extracts general trends out of specific events. This paradoxical situation becomes problematic when to be mapped and visualized is a medical condition, as its unique and affective aspects not only tend to dissipate but also often result in complicating the work of the clinician and the medical practitioner. In this paper I use the combined notion of biopolitics proposed by Foucault (2003) and Esposito (2008), and Guattari's understanding of the "three ecologies" (2000) to address this issue and to suggest possible solutions through the creation of affective cartographies and ecological re-presentation. In the first case, I offer Ron Wild and Joseph Geraci's *Oncomap* as an attempt to visualize the complexity of Cancer research, diagnosis and treatment in one single place in order to underline its complicated technical, scientific and emotional intricacy. In the second case, I propose Salvatore Iaconesi's *La Cura* as a re-appropriation and re-presentation (Mitchell 2010) of the complex ecology comprising cancer treatment and the institutionalized management of medical data (Iaconesi 2013).

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### 3. The Potential Of Life: Objects, Strategies And Scenarios In Between Design And Neuroscience

Silvia Casini (silvia.casini@unive.it)

Ca' Foscari University, Venezia, Italy

The molecularization of the body, prompted by research in biomedicine and genetics after the Second World War and enabled by the convergence of digital technologies with biology opened up a new era, the so-called "biopictorial turn" (Mitchell 2008). Images and bio-interfaces are perceived as living agents capable of intervening upon molecules, cells, genes and neurons. Furthermore, advances in molecular biology and increasingly specialized microscopy to see matter at nanoscale, have pushed the limits of what we humans can perceive through our sensorial apparatus, creating a new dimension but also a new aesthetics that Weibel describes as "molecular aesthetics" (Weibel and Fruk 2013).

One of the problems of neuroscientific and biomedical research is to lose touch with the object they investigate: many neuroscientific data resist depiction and, therefore, display too. Given the difficulty to make this research tangible, one of the most promising areas of collaborative projects between scientists and artists in this field entails design, and involves neurodevices and biointerfaces. As such devices operate directly on the brain, they might have different implications in terms of the possibilities that they open up for our bodies and brains than other means of enhancement. In particular, they ask us to constantly renegotiate the threshold between organism and machine, between the living and the non living. This threshold might be explored by recurring to Agamben's notion of potentiality (1999), a key concept that underpins his reflections on politics, ethics and aesthetics. Relying upon Aristotle's distinction between potentiality (dynamis) and actuality (energeia), Agamben explores the negative side of potentiality, the role played by the potential "to not be" which is fully preserved in actuality. For him to keep potentiality fully open means to live a life as humans. I shall explore some examples of collaborative projects between designers and scientists adopting the critical framework of Agamben's understanding of potentiality and argue that design creations (not only objects, but also scenarios or strategies) in neuroscience and biomedicine might prompt us to expand existing concept of the human being, to add a political dimension to Weibel's notion of molecular aesthetics.

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**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin**

**9:00 – 10:30 (Room F5)**

#### 1. Fringe interlocutors: Do it yourself biology, biohacking and biological art

Nora S. Vaage (nora.vaage@svt.uib.no)

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Actors from all sorts of backgrounds are currently engaging materially with biology. Among these actors are biohackers, DIYers and artists, who often inhabit the same spaces, use the same equipment, and adhere to the same laboratory protocols. So why do they tend to define themselves as different groups? Biohacking and DIY bio are sometimes used synonymously, and sometimes taken to describe different phenomena engaging non-academically with the emerging biotechnosciences. A range of different motivations and approaches can be found among the practitioners identifying themselves as either biohackers or DIYers, or both. In some cases, DIYers and/or biohackers also define themselves as artists or designers (or the other way around).

The proposed paper will discuss how the reasons and ideas artists have for engaging with biology differ from those of DIY biologists and biohackers (keeping in mind that there is a range of opinions within each group), as well as what they have in common. I argue that there are perceived differences in motivations, which can be traced back to the actors' different backgrounds, terminologies and audiences, and which shape their respective practices, although the borders between these approaches are not at all distinct.

## **2. The Intertwined Strands of Biology, Computer Science and Art**

Georg Tremmel (tremmel@hgc.jp)

Laboratory of DNA Information Analysis, University of Tokyo, Japan

In this paper we will present three parallel narratives: A, a brief introduction to recent advances in genome technologies, B, a short historical investigation of biology and computer science on the topic of simulated life, and C, our own art works involving living matter and biological processes. We will attempt to intertwine these three different strands and investigate and contextualize the points of contact between them.

The first strand will deal with recent advances in genome technologies, and although in recent year the ability to sequence ('read') genetic and epigenetic information has increased exponentially, the capabilities of writing genetic information and thus creating novel organisms are lacking far behind. We will take a close look behind this discrepancy, and also try to investigate the shared codes and meanings that bind Computer Science and Biology together. We are especially curious about the over-simplification of denoting living cells as computers - from the "instruction code" over "networks" to "input/output" behaviour. We will also look deeper at the cross-overs between Computer Science and Biology, as they are occurring in biological computation, computational biology, genetic algorithms, life simulations and bio-informatics. Although some of this comparisons can be attributed to the fact of simply re-appropriating already existing descriptions and vocabulary, the continued use in the case of Computer Science and Biology has led to expectations that living matters can and actually will behave like a computation device. I can be debated whether cells behave as computers or are actual computers. To further that debate, we will propose an art work, that we hope will create a direct connection between these two disciplines.

## **3. Life as we don't know it: biopower, tactical biopolitics and bio art in the age of post-natural biology**

Maciej Ożóg (maciej\_ozog@uni.lodz.pl)

Institute of Contemporary Culture, University of Lodz, Poland

The advances in biology and biotechnology have significantly changed the understanding of life itself and the practice of everyday life. However, while life sciences and biotechnology made it obvious that life is not a self-evident category and its definition needs constant scrutiny, the public debate on the role of science and biotechnology in society is often colonized and appropriated by the conservative rhetoric of so called universal human values. Therefore, public debate on cultural and social implication of developments in life sciences can be perceived as one of the main challenges of our times.

In my paper I will focus on cultural, political and economical context of biosciences. I will analyze specific forms of discourse that establish public comprehension and assessment of the progress in biological sciences and biotechnology as well as various application of the research in everyday life. Searching for critical attitude towards these issues I will refer to the praxis of bio art, which can be understood as a form of critical culture theory. Examining various examples of bio-art I will refer to Joanna Zylinska's concept of cultural contamination, which I combine with Rosi Braidotti's notion of critical art as tactical decontextualization and traumatic displacement. In this methodological framework I consider bio-art as a cultural resistance to neo-liberal biopolitics founded on the schematic and normative vision of life.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin  
14:00 – 15:30 (Room F5)**

## **1. Towards an Organology: the Vitality of Machines**

Elizabeth Stephens (e.stephens@uq.edu.au)

Deputy Director, ARC Senior Research Fellow, Centre for the History of European Discourses

University of Queensland, Australia

While the technologisation of the body has long been a subject of scholarly and popular interest, the reverse relationship—what Georges Canguilhem referred to as the "organologie" of the machine—remains critically under-examined.

Canguilhem argued that while philosophy has sought to understand the “liveness” of organisms using the conceptual framework of the machine, it has rarely sought to understand the functioning of machines through the conceptual framework of the organic.

This paper engages with Kember and Zylinska’s recent work on the vitality of new media, as well as related recent work on neo-vitalism (Fraser, Kember and Lury 2006; Bennet 2010), to elucidate Canguilhem’s rather elusive theory of an *organologie*, and to suggest how this can provide new lines of approach to the reconceptualization of “life” within increasingly technologised cultural contexts. The aim of the paper is to problematize the oppositional conceptualization of the mechanical and biological, in order to revitalize (in all senses) the relationship between them.

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Kember, Sarah and Joanna Zylinska. *Life After New Media*. Boston: MIT Press, 2012.

## **2. Being Moved & Pushing Back: On Engineered Muscle Tissue in Movement**

Ionat Zurr (ionat.zurr@uwa.edu.au) & Oron Catts

SymbioticA, School of Anatomy, Physiology and Human Biology, The University of Western Australia

While the questions of what life is, and when something becomes alive are open and arguably unanswerable, the question of when life is perceived to be is in the core of this exploration. In other words this is an investigation into the perception of vitality (and its gradients of agencies) as it expressed through movement. Movement is relative, ever changing and is affective as a signifier for the idea of “alive”. We would like to untangle the intricate conceptual, technical and biopolitical relations between movement and perceptions of “vitality”. The research is based on an Australian Research Council project exploring the use of skeletal muscle tissue which is grown, stimulated and activated in a techno-scientific surrogate “body”. This moving twitching (semi) living “machine” evokes, makes uneasy, and provoke, in sensorial and theoretical means issues of aliveness and agency. The project is concerned with onto-ethico-epistemological (Barad 2010) questions about life and the affect created through the phenomenon of movement.

We will be probing into the (sometimes) uneasy and undefined areas of shifting perceptions of life, heralded by developments in the life sciences and applied technologies, coupled with the introduction of engineering principles into life sciences. In the light of ‘new materialism’, ‘agential realism’ and ‘engineering efficiency’ of life as a raw material, we will examine the position and role of a humble artificially constructed, but living, muscle actuator in motion. The question of how to relate and care to a fragile semi-living and always in motion ecology may depend on the affect “things” have on our perceptions. In our experience with the close to futile and poetic attempt to actuate muscle cells; the tension between the bodies, machines, the living and non-living are correlating more to a random twitch of muscle tissue in a dish rather than the harmonious movement of a running cheetah or a well-oiled machine.

## **3. Lipid Membranes of the Past and Future**

Juan Manuel Castro (castro@biodynamicgeometries.com)

Laboratory for Molecular Cell Network and Biomedicine Art, Dept. Electrical Engineering & Bioscience, Waseda University, Japan

Carbon based-life, as we know it today, could not have developed without membranes. All living cells are universally enclosed by a selective permeable barrier: the plasma membrane. This liquid boundary is a necessary prerequisite for maintaining life’s integrity. Currently, as a novel techno-scientific artefact, the artificial membrane forces us not only to evaluate the consequences of protocell technology, but also to confront our views about life and its creation. For the past 40 years, linking the methods and techniques of the life and chemical sciences, teams of scientists have been constructing cell-sized systems using artificial vesicles. Just as genetic and tissue engineering have become major ethical issues, membrane-based biosystems are crucial to a philosophical discussion of biomaterial practices.

This paper presents an artistic and multidisciplinary perspective on the biological membrane and its potential as a media of expression. It is primarily focused on the description of a transdisciplinary project within the fields of biochemistry, molecular biology and art. The work, entitled *Fat between two worlds*, presents a collection of membrane boundaries formed in vitro with distinctive morphologies. Based on self-assembly processes and molecular interactions, this project explores the spontaneous transformation of fat into organic structures at the cellular level.

Phospholipids and cholesterol are grown in an aqueous medium to create unusual micro-sites with the potential to shelter materials and incite biochemical reactions. These organic structures, akin to living cells but with patterns beyond life forms, want to expose the intriguing vitality of fat and the plausible morphologies of future life.

#### **4. Biomolecular Art and Architecture of Deep Time**

Monika Bakke (bakkemonika@yahoo.com)  
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**FRIDAY, JUNE 6 – Turin**  
**9:00 – 10:30 (Room F5)**

##### **1. Medieval Cyborgs: Exploring Biopolitics through Saints' Relics**

Rachel S. Anderson (anderach@gvsu.edu)  
Grand Valley State University, USA

From the earliest centuries of the Christian church, the saint's relic formed a central focal point for the followers of this new religion. These once-living body parts, encased first in the tombs that became the earliest church altars, and later in elaborate reliquaries that, cyborg-like, replaced the absent flesh around the holy bones, were continual representations of the life-beyond-life beliefs of the medieval worldview. This paper will examine this central concept of life within current critical debates about biopower and sacrality, looking specifically at Derrida's formulation: "Life has absolute value only if it is worth more than life.... It is sacred, holy, infinitely respectable only in the name of what is worth more than it." This statement, which breaks down the binary of bare vs. political life (bios/zoe), is perfectly applicable to the medieval ideology of sanctity, for it is the sacrifice of the saint (his or her death) that creates the bodily relic which is alive because of the body's death, and whole because of its encased, fragmented state.

To illustrate that the medieval enactments of biopower were more complex than most contemporary theorists, like Gregorio Agamben, might account for, this paper will discuss a tenth-century glass bowl that might have served as a reliquary for an unusual relic: the pulsating lung of the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon king-saint, Edward the Martyr. This relic, in its fantastic dimensions, both exemplifies Derrida's life-beyond-life and serves as a way to chart the future of biopolitics through the past.

##### **2. Engineering life in Villiers' Tomorrow's Eve**

Kieran Murphy (kieran.murphy@colorado.edu)  
University of Colorado at Boulder, USA

In *Tomorrow's Eve* (1886), Villiers de l'Isle-Adam spends a great deal of the novel describing in minute detail how his fictional Edison builds an android capable of replacing a living human being. Although these descriptions do not attract much scholarly attention, I would argue that they are crucial to understanding Villiers' conception of the living and the machine on which hinges his critique of modern bourgeois society.

To render life, Villiers drew on the latest techno-scientific and psychological discoveries of his time. Building upon Georges Canguilhem's history of the automaton, I will investigate some of these discoveries and how they play out in the construction of the android. I am particularly interested in the way Villiers combines electromagnetism and the hypnotic therapy known as "animal magnetism" to supersede the mechanistic interpretation of the living.

##### **3. Unbecoming Human: Patricia Piccinini's Bioart**

Kate Mondloch (mondloch@uoregon.edu)  
Department of the History of Art + Architecture; Director, New Media + Culture Certificate, University of Oregon, USA

The Australian multimedia artist Patricia Piccinini creates imaginary hybrid lifeforms, working across various media to stage a variety of transspecies encounters. Perhaps not surprisingly, critical reception of her work has focused on the viewer's complex affective and emotional responses to these nonhuman creatures. Critics tend to theorize the artistic experience in generous, ostensibly progressive terms, discerning empathy, kinship, care, and parenting in the face of technoscience experiments gone awry. What are the critical stakes associated with these prevailing, positive

judgments? Through detailed analysis of the artist's "We Are Family" exhibition (Venice Biennale, 2003), I show how these dominant critical readings betray a symptomatic anthropocentrism, and may even be read as neoconservative. Simply put, the nonhuman is made familiar and "humanized" at every turn in the critical reception of the artist's work. Through reference to specific works of art, I will show how Piccinini's practice exceeds these well-intentioned yet reductive frameworks, and gestures toward a form of artistic experience more accurately described as a non-anthropomorphic posthumanism. I conclude that Piccinini's artistic practice, by inviting viewers to experience nonhuman others in a positive relation based on inexhaustible difference, offers a compelling model for ethical accountability in our 21st century technoculture.

#### **4. Methlabs, Alchemy and the Matter of Life**

Jason Pine (jason.pine@purchase.edu)

State University of New York, Purchase College, USA

Commonsense notions of "the economy" are, according to Bataille, restrictive utility-based conceptions of a broader dynamics he calls the "general economy," where glorious or catastrophic expenditure, the release of heterogeneous energy, ignites the radical undoing of the subject. This paper tracks ethnographically forms of vitality in the space between the living and nonliving in an everyday general economy that exceeds contemporary late capitalism.

Cottage industry meth cooks in many rural and suburban areas of the US tap the occulted potencies of ordinary mass consumer products—disposable AA batteries, instant cold packs, pseudoephedrine-based cold medicine, plastic Gatorade bottles—to trigger volatile chemical reactions that yield a crystalline substance with the bioeconomic power to enhance work, play and 'life itself.' Linking the tools and materials of the kitchen, bathroom and living room, meth cooks make their homes into secret alchemical alembics for chemical industrial, biochemical and psychopharmacological transmutation. Inside their houses and trailers—shrouded with aluminum foil or American flags for blinds and bordered by no trespassing signs and barking dogs—coffee grinders turn cold medicine into pink powder, muriatic acid burns through floorboards, lithium strips from batteries crackle like bacon in frying pans, and the incriminating refuse—fearfully hoarded—piles up over months of repeated cooking.

In the home methlab, the promiscuous mingling of work, play and lifework, and their everyday transduction with chemical industrial apparatuses, comes into relief. Home meth cooking is contemporary alchemy's alembic. It is what the general economy looks and feels like when it exceeds the restricted biocapital economy, the material de/composition of 'a life.'

## STREAM 4

### LIFE, IN MEDIA: NEOCYBERNETICS, GENERAL ECOLOGIZATION AND THE RETHINKING OF ENVIRONMENTALITY

**Conveners : Mark Hansen, Erich Hörl**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli**

**14:30 – 15:45 (Room A1 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

#### **1. Out of Place Machines: the Anachronism of Machine Theories in Ecotechnological Life.**

Mark Martinez (mart1938@umn.edu)  
University of Minnesota, USA

This paper suggests that to better understand the concept of “cybernetization” as a “general ecologization of thinking as such”—we must investigate particular moments of cybernetics throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as having short circuited our anthropocentric and individualistic assumptions about our relationship to our outside. Norbert Wiener’s claim that the “organism is the message” or British Cybernetician Grey Walter’s contention that the brain doesn’t think, but acts—these notions are not about how an organism is changed by technology, but rather how a technicity of thought can shift perception to what an organism has always been. The results of cyberneticization today are less about revolution as the spontaneous emergence of novel human-technological agencies—and more about how the intensity of technicity in our thought opens the possibility to understand the anachronism in our relations to our technological environment—the relics, survivors, the “out of place” organism/machine/system. This paper attempts to reconceive of Ecology based on the decontextualization of machines and technological systems from their imperative to be novel or state of the art. Despite neoliberal and militaristic technofetishist visions of a technological future, the cybernetic figure of the machine continues to short circuit identities of organism, system, and human. It also give us the tools to break away from eschatological thought that compels us to think that our moment is entirely new in this respect, as this is part of an anthropocentric historical frame of reference that also obfuscates our environment.

#### **2. Life in Games. Evolution at Play**

Niklas Schrape (schrape@inkubator.leuphana.de)

Lueneburg Centre for Digital Cultures & Centre for Advanced Studies in Media Culture of Computer Simulation, Leuphana University, Germany

Life and the processes of evolution have become objects of play – figuratively in the dry-labs of Bioinformatics and the Artificial Life programs of robotics and literary in popular computer games.

Will Wright’s “SimLife – The Genetic Playground” (1992) can be considered as on of the first Artificial Life laboratories for the masses. Inspired by Richard Dawkins “Biomorph” program, it allows the player to experiment with genes and heredity. Its B-movie-like cousin “Unnatural Selection” (1993) asks the player to breed battle-beast via mutation and selection—a concept took up in “Gene Wars” (1996) and “Impossible Creatures” (2003). Games like “SimEarth—The living planet” (1991), a direct adaptation of James Lovelock’s Gaia Hypothesis, and (to some degree) “Spore” (2008) go even further and model the interplay between an emerging biosphere and its co-evolving planetary environment.

These Games put the evolutionary processes of life itself at play. They model life-forms as contingent, bound to the play of a digitally encoded genetic recombination, while being objects for technoscientific manipulation by a god-like player. This is only possible because of a very specific epistemic situation, in which (1) life and its genetic building blocks have been modelled in the terms of cybernetics and information theory, and (2) an analogy between the formal processes in computer programs and life and evolutionary processes has been established via computer simulations like Conway’s “Game of Life”, Dawkin’s “Biomorph” program, and Lovelock’s “Daisyworld” model.

The talk will 1) explain how life and evolution are being modelled in games, 2) trace back the conditions for this, and 3) and discuss in what way the fact that life became the stuff of games can be understood as a symptom that indicates an

epistemic shift in the common sense of life in the age of cybernatization: as being contingent, computable, controllable—and therefore playable.

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli**  
**16:00 – 17:15 (Room A1 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

**Panel: NEW APPARATUS THEORY**

**1. What is Psychic Apparatur?**

Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan (bernard.geoghegan@hu-berlin.de)

Institute for Cultural History and Theory, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany

The concept of a psychic apparatus is as old as psychoanalysis itself. Already in the 1890s Freud accepted the psychische or seelische Apparat as a necessary conceptual site within the development of any rigorous science of mind. But in the years following 1945, this concept took on a new meaning as scientists including Gregory Bateson, Warren McCulloch, Claude Shannon, and Jacques Lacan embraced the experimental use of circuitry, switches, and cinema to instantiate the properties of the mind in hardware. Although the assumptions of these various scientists diverged on key points, they united around the conception of the mind as a kind of distributed, communicative ecology. In this talk I examine how the apparatuses employed by these scientists established common conceptions of mind across diverse regional and disciplinary sites. I argue that these scholars' conception of the mind as a kind of cybernetic-apparatus provides historiographic and epistemological clues for the origins and constraints of "old" and "new" apparatus theories alike.

**2. Mobile Media and the Paleolithic**

Grant Wythoff (gw2290@columbia.edu)

Society of Fellows in the Humanities, Columbia University, USA

In the mid-1950s, a collection of Neanderthal artifacts was unearthed in the southwest of France, kicking off one of the most famous debates over the study of cultural transmission through the archaeological record. At a time before the development of chronometric techniques like radiocarbon dating that would allow later archaeologists to definitively order these artifacts in time and space, the Mousterian debate centered on the question of how we can extrapolate history from the formal properties of a technical object. In this presentation, I attempt to put debates from the history of archaeology into conversation with an exciting new field in media studies known as "media archaeology." Media archaeology has thus far been informed by Michel Foucault's (largely metaphorical) use of the term archaeology to denote an inquiry into "the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events." But I will argue here that the traditional field of archaeology, its primary concern being the study of how objects mediate our relationship to the past, has much to offer a *media* archaeology. I focus on the two principal figures in the debate—the established French archaeologist and sometime science fiction novelist François Bordes and the upstart American Lewis Binford—in order to draw larger conclusions about how we both experience and interpret the artifacts around us.

**3. Automatic Imaging: The Planchette as a Selbstschreiber**

Christian Kassung (CKassung@culture.hu-berlin.de)

Institute for Cultural History and Theory, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany

The *selbstschreibende Apparat* was the exemplary device of the nineteenth-century. In fields such as physics and physiology, the powers of self-writing apparatuses (or self-recording instruments) promised an escape from human error and a release into the freedoms of scientific objectivity. Yet self-writing apparatuses also played a prominent role outside official sciences: In occult and spiritualist circles, self-writing boards such as the planchette and the ouija board promised instrumental verification of elusive, spiritual influences. This paper analyzes the structural, technical, and epistemic parallels of the self-writing scientific apparatuses used by spiritualists and scientists. Through a close examination of patent records it looks at the role techno-scientific instrumentation played in validating authentic knowledge and distinguishing productive and meaningful signs from mere "bosh." As such, the history of the self-writing apparatus also provides an object lesson in the cultural techniques [*Kulturtechniken*] of hegemonic knowledge.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin**  
**9:00- 10:30 (Room F4)**

**Panel: SYMBIOSIS (I)**

In a process of general ecologization (Hörl), the notion of symbiosis takes center stage. Following Margulis' biological account, symbiogenesis acts as the main mechanism of species evolution. But the semantics of the term are much wider. It is often called upon to describe ways of living with and inside technological assemblages like networks and interconnected digital devices. Symbiosis seems to lie at the heart of what Mark Hansen has called "our original environmental condition" as it refers to a radical relationality crossing ontological boundaries. When human technogenesis is interpreted as a nexus of symbiotic interrelationships, unlikely transversal links come into view.

Symbiosis generally calls forth associations of pre-established harmony and mutually beneficial strategies of co-evolution. But there are remarkable exceptions to this rule. The panel aims at an investigation of the historical and metaphorological (Blumenberg) shifts and adjustments of meaning of the term 'symbiosis'. If the general ecologization demands of us to "develop new [...] theoretical strategies for thinking our coming ecotechnological life" (CfP) and the concomitant transformations of meaning (cf. Hörl 2011) it is important to ask for the "absolute metaphors" (Blumenberg 1998) used in this endeavor. Insofar as metaphors "bring to light the metakinetics of the historical horizons of meaning" (Blumenberg 1998) they help us to understand how our thinking of the so far unthinkable is structured. To this purpose, various historical sites will be revisited with the goal of shedding some light on the genesis of the semantics commonly attached to the term 'symbiosis' today.

**1. Symbioses in Human-Computer Interaction – History of a Metaphor**

Timo Kaerlein (kaerlein@mail.uni-paderborn.de)

Research Training Group Automatism, University of Paderborn, Germany

The theory of technology offers fertile ground for biological metaphors. It is thus not surprising, that the notion of symbiosis has often been drawn upon to imagine (or advertise) radical shifts in human-technology relationships. Specifically, the HCI (*human-computer interaction*) community has extensively utilized the notion of symbiosis as a conceptual term, most prominently in Licklider's "man-computer symbiosis" (1960). Whereas such references mainly contribute to the field of human augmentation, other, equally cybernetically-oriented contributions situate symbiotic relationships at the core of techno-ecological environments. McLuhan (1964) states that „[m]an becomes, as it were, the sex organs of the machine world, as the bee of the plant world, enabling it to fecundate and to evolve ever new forms". Here, a systemic endosymbiotic relation replaces individual figurations of man and machine.

My talk traces the semantic adjustments that the term 'symbiosis' undergoes in its different uptakes during several post-cybernetic episodes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At its center will be a discussion of Pierre Bertaux' employment of the term in an academic debate about developmental trajectories of industrial society in 1963. Here, the participants (Arnold Gehlen among them) explicitly discuss the status of the term when applied to cybernetic technologies. Their different opinions on the level of literality of the symbiosis metaphor may contribute to similar debates occurring in the discourse on neocybernetics.

**2. Technosymbiosis in the First Machine Age**

Christoph Neubert (christoph.neubert@uni-paderborn.de)

Department of Media Studies, University of Paderborn, Germany

My talk aims at a historical perspective on the question of 'symbiosis' between humans and technology. The evolutionary shift from instrument to machine that becomes predominant in the industrial age inspires an early conceptual shift: Technology is no longer understood only as an extension of the human body and mind, but additionally as an environmental factor.

I will argue that the central notion which mediates between the social and the technological in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is the concept of work, taken in its dual meaning of physical work and human labor. Work represents a quantifiable category common to statistical mechanics, the emerging life sciences, and political economy, which leads to a new kind of epistemic transfer between discourses concerning the human body, the animal, and the machine. The commerce between mechanisms and organisms is now perceived on the systemic level of a common metabolism, comprising the

circulation of energy, matter, and information, as well as questions of reproduction. The particular ways in which humans and machines are assumed to 'live together' are described in the light of the theory of evolution, Darwinism, and early ecology, the options ranging from competition to co-evolution, from master-slave dialectics to parasitic relations.

In my talk, I will highlight some important traits of this discussion, drawing on texts from Helmholtz, Kapp, Marx and Samuel Butler. Against this background, I will ask whether the informational paradigm arising with 20<sup>th</sup> century cybernetics and today's electronic media introduces a qualitative change to the techno-ecology and posthuman scenarios that constitute the biopolitics of the first machine age.

### **3. 'Ecotecture' – Reading Dietmar Dath and George Church on Symbiotic Politics and Synthetic Biology**

Martin Müller (maneo@gmx.net)

Research Training Group Automatism, University of Paderborn, Germany

My talk focuses on the engineering paradigm within the current life sciences and on posthuman discourses of life and ecology. I will point out the irreconcilable differences between those biopolitical constellations: the differences between synthetic management and symbiotic becoming.

The talk starts with an introduction into the discourse of *synthetic biology*, which I will reconstruct from various articles and monographs by Craig Venter, George Church, Robert Carlson, Drew Andy, and others. The objects and concepts of this discourse can be summarized as the human-initiated *design and construction* of living entities and systems. Bioengineers claim to create completely new living organisms from scratch using genetically standardized parts and computer-based design: '*Living machines*' which do not exist in 'nature' are supposed to serve human purposes. The fastest growing field of research and the boldest claims can be found in the area of environmental applications.

With regard to George Church's *Regenesis* and Dietmar Dath's *The Abolition of Species* I will show the irreconcilable differences in this constellation between transhumanist biopolitics (human mastery over 'life' and total management of environment) and posthuman general ecology (envisioned by posthumanists, bioartists, do-it-yourself biologists, and so called biopunks): between anthropocentric control and the contingency of 'life' multiplied by biotechnology.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin  
14:00 – 15:30 (Room F4)**

#### **Panel: SYMBIOSIS (II)**

##### **1. Experimental Environments: John Scott Haldane and the Reciprocity of Organicism**

Florian Sprenger (florian.sprenger@leuphana.de)

Zentrum für Digitale Kulturen, Leuphana Universität Lüneburg, Germany

During the first quarter of the 20th century, the experiments and philosophical writings of British physiologist John Scott Haldane explore a transition that finally turns out to be of utmost importance for ecological thought: the change from adapting organisms to specific environments to modifying environments to suit specific organisms. Haldane begins his career with work on respiration, explores accidents in mines and sewages, then proceeds to investigate the consumption of oxygen in climbers and in divers and finally becomes a prominent figure in WW1 due to his research on gas attacks. He develops gas masks for soldiers at Ypern, diving helmets and finally a first space suit. All his experiments explore the thin line between organisms and environments, which is elaborated in his philosophical writings on organicism. They show how organisms react when they are transferred into a different environment or how environments can be artificially modified. Thus, he explores environments as both technical and epistemic objects. The paper will describe how these experiments lead to a new conception of the environment as something that can be modified, transformed and artificially created because it is symbiotically and reciprocally connected to the organism.

## 2. Parasitic Disturbances

Serjoscha Wiemer (swiemer@campus.uni-paderborn.de)  
Department of Media Studies, University of Paderborn, Germany

In my talk I want to address the question of 'otherness' in relation to the conception of ecological 'wholeness' or totality. If it is true that the concept of ecology has reached a peak of universality in current capitalist society, with applications from economics to software, from art to religion, from science and engineering to architecture and politics, then the question is, what is 'outside' of ecology? What are the limits of the ecological paradigm, what are its mechanisms of exclusion, what are its 'unquestionable' preassumptions?

In my talk I will develop these questions with regard to the theoretical figure of the 'parasite' as it was invented by Michel Serres (1980). Several key elements within current cultural conceptions of ecology must be understood as offsprings of cybernetics with regard to fundamental concepts such as regulation (feedback), equilibrium (homeostasis), system, communication (information). Serres' parasite, in contrast to this, is a figuration of noise, disturbance, instability and transformation. Following Serres' definition, the parasite always lives inside another system or organism, that is his 'environment'. One aspect that makes the parasite such an interesting concept with regard to the thinking of 'ecology' is his destructive and transformative power. It works against mutual exchange, it is a figure of destabilization, its effect is 'parastase', which is Serres' term for the opposite of 'homeostasis'. The parasite is a synonym for an asymmetrical relation. It is the appearance of the rat at the symposium. The parasite's outside is the inside of its host.

## 3. The Zombie as Metaphor for the Environmental Condition

Christian Köhler (koehlerc@live.uni-paderborn.de)  
Research Training Group Automatism, University of Paderborn, Germany

As this panel proposes 'symbiosis' as a key metaphor of neocybernetical and ecological discourses it addresses the notion of *life* shared by humans and (media-)technologies to mutual benefit. In my talk I'd like to contrast this with the discussion of a small – but growing – metaphorological strand which puts the figure of the Zombie in front and tries to think the ecological condition as shared *undead*.

Far from being blunt critics these thinkers argue that 'media' and 'life' have become "far-too-easy-labelings" (Deuze 2013). On the one hand, in an age in which networked technology is ubiquitous, people live their lives within media and behave as media as they become "relays for the information circulating in technological media" (QRT 2006). On the other hand "the technical recontextualization of biological components and processes" (Thacker 2004) also demands for a new ontology between the dichotomy of life and death which may be found in the "lifelike death of zombies" (Parikka 2010).

Furthermore the figure of the Zombie makes visible the epistemological aporia of a post-significative thinking of ecologies: How to adequately think and describe the existence of a being that knows no subject/object divide and – as a consequence – no rationality if all we have at hand are the tools and means of a theory of ecological conditions. "Therefore, when we truly become posthuman, we won't even know it" (Lauro/Embry 2008).

**FRIDAY, JUNE 6 – Turin**

**9:00 – 10:30 (Room F4)**

## 1. Experimental Paleofuturism

Aaron Jaffe (aaron.jaffe@louisville.edu)  
English Department, University of Louisville, USA

My paper will discuss the concepts of experiment, reflection and redundancy in the work of Siegfried Zielinski, the German media theorist. Much of Zielinski's experimental paleofuturist method is elaborated in writings such as *Deep Time of the Media: Towards an Archeology of Seeing and Hearing by Technical Means*. It also informs and is informed by his administration of the Vilém Flusser archive. The Flusser archive was entrusted to Zielinski following Flusser's death and it serves not only as a repository of Flusser's lifework - containing all his published and unpublished works - but also as a portable laboratory of cultural techniques. For Flusser, Zielinski writes, "technical media had been a pile, a

treasure of possibilities (or perhaps better: potentialities), which permanently had to be explored, every day and everyday new." My paper explores Zielinski's project to actualize the latent potentialities of dead media.

## **2. Cinema, Biopolitics, Biomediality**

Lorenzo Fabbri (lfabbri@umn.edu)

Department of French and Italian, Moving Image Studies Graduate Faculty, University of Minnesota, USA

Foucault tackled the history of power as a film: Gilles Deleuze arrives at this jarring conclusion in his homage to the departed friend. Deleuze explains that Foucault thought of governmental devices as audiovisual media that produce specific regimes of visibility and enunciability. These machines govern what can be seen and said on the basis of different political urgencies, and therefore they situate life in specific forms. Here, I take a closer look at Deleuze's Foucault, and ask: What does it mean to treat power as it were cinema? What does it mean to treat cinema as it were power? In this paper I try to answer these questions by working through Deleuze's emphasis on power apparatuses as biomedial devices.

The first move I perform is to highlight the limits of an approach to films in terms of ideology and state apparatuses. Specifically, I hold that the classic Althusserian framework cannot account for the fact that cinema has been deployed as a means of struggle in anti-governmental and anti-colonial battles. I argue that this fallacy is determined by an excessive focus on macro structures of power, a focus that misses how unstable power relations are on the micro-level. It is by going back to a micro-physics of power and life, I continue, that one can effectively investigate the relationship between cinema and biopolitics. In the last part of my paper I show how a molecular description of power, life, and cinema can benefit from the recent "neuro-turn" in the humanities and political science (Virno, Connolly, Thacker).

## STREAM 5

## GAIAN ECOLOGIES: GRADIENTS AND BOUNDARIES

Conveners: Bruce Clarke, Dorion Sagan

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli  
14:30 – 15:45 (Room B6 @Ex Ospedaletto)**1. Iatrogenic illness: Medicine as an expression of life's ecology**

Michelle Jamieson (mmjamieson@gmail.com)

School of Social Sciences, University of New South Wales, Australia

Iatrogenic illness refers to any condition, complication or side effect produced by the actions, manner or treatments of a doctor. Literally meaning 'physician-generated', iatrogenesis is used to describe any adverse or unintended effect to the patient that is caused by medical intervention itself (e.g. surgical mistakes, the effects of drug interaction, the placebo effect). Implicit in this definition is the idea that iatrogenic conditions are different in kind from the organic or true illnesses which motivate patients to seek medical attention in the first place. Commonly equated with the element of human error in medical practice, iatrogenic conditions are regarded as secondary, human-created, and therefore preventable illnesses distinct from their naturally occurring counterparts. Understood in these terms, iatrogenic illness is a side effect of medical practice.

This paper uses the example of iatrogenic illness to explore the assumption that medicine exists outside the domain of biology, nature or the body. Drawing on the work of Georges Canguilhem, it critically examines the idea that medical intervention occurs at a remove from life, and asks what it would mean ontologically to understand medicine as primary, rather than secondary, to biological life. Could we view medicine and biology as expressions of a single living system? How might discussions of iatrogenic illness and medical intervention be transformed if medicine and biology were understood as ecologically entangled?

**2. The Multiverse, Posthumanism, and Dimensional Symbiosis**

Francesca Ferrando (francesca.ferrando@gmail.com)

Università di Roma Tre, Italy

IRWGS, Columbia University, USA

The notion of the multiverse refers to the scientific investigations on matter from the micro to the macro level of materialization, which recently brought different fields (from Quantum Physics to Cosmology and Astrophysics), to the same hypothetical conclusion: this universe might be one of many. The hypothesis of the multiverse is inherently posthuman; it not only stretches any universe-centric perspective (problematizing the inclusive, but still centralized, notion of a universe), but it materializes the dissolution of strict binaries, dualistic modes and exclusivist approaches. And still, despite the undoubtedly non-human centric character of this notion, the hypothesis of the multiverse has been mostly developed in human-centric and solipsistic terms, both scientifically (Everett 1966), as well as philosophically (Lewis 1986). Instead, I will revisit such a notion through the rhizome (Deleuze / Guattari 1987), and develop it speculatively, not by counting on any essentialism, polarity or strict dualism, but by relying on a hybrid, mediated and process-ontological perspective. I will present such an interpretation of the multiverse both as a thought experiment, as well as a material hypothesis, which may conceal a possible physics outfit of the actual multiverse. Such a hypothesis, based on the deconstruction of the Self/Others paradigm, entails that matter, while constituting this universe, would also be actualizing an indefinite number of other universes, in a process of both relationality and autonomy. I will thus introduce the experimental term "dimensional symbiosis", stressing the relation among dimensions, and reflecting upon its impact in the ethics of everyday life.

**3. Scaling interrelations. On membranes, molecules and mind**

Maren Mayer-Schwieger (maren.schwieger@ruhr-uni-bochum.de)

Institut für Medienwissenschaft Evonik Doctoral Programme *Reconsidering Industry*, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany

The differentiation between system and environment or organism and milieu raises the issue of interrelations. But instead of just blackboxing them as, e.g. "structural couplings", or "nodes and networks", it's crucial to have a closer

look at mutual relations and interactions as one can claim in view of Haeckel's *Generelle Morphologie* (1866): In this text, where the term 'ecology' was coined, Haeckel's notion of adaptation and thus of "interrelations" between "the organism and its surrounding world" ("Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Organismus und umgebender Außenwelt") is the pivotal point, the swivel joint of two seemingly paradox strands: On the one hand Haeckel anticipates what can be called posthumanist concepts like autopoiesis, a processual understanding of form, or the undermining of dualisms such as inside–outside and living–non-living; on the other hand, he tells the neo-darwinist story of evolution as progress figuring "man" as crown of creation and nature red in tooth and claw, which has served as blueprint for racial ideologies.

With regard to these two intertwined strands in Haeckel, it's necessary to ask how to link (the thinking of) interrelations between organism and environment with interrelations on a larger scale, of course, without repeating the master narration of evolution as the progress of humankind. But this question of scaling, of the connection of the molecular or the local to the global, is also a question of the temporality of the concept of organism, as Claire Colebrook has underlined with her critical remarks on autopoiesis entitled "The Organism Has No Future" (2011). In my talk, I'd like to suggest two lines of thought, that might offer an alternative to neo-darwinist evolution as well as to futureless organisms. I'd like to link Uexküll's concept of "Gefüge", that he used along with his term "harmony" to describe the interconnectedness of the several "Umwelten" characterized by purposeful behaviour, with an actor, that allows to think the organism in a processual way: the membrane, which, following Lynn Margulis, not only relates inside and outside, but is a dynamic, fluid and interactive character of endosymbiogenesis.

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli**  
**16:00 – 17:15 (Room B6 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

### **1. William S. Burroughs, Gaia Theorist**

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"Margulis' Plots" is an extension to symbiogenesis of Gillian Beer's work in *Darwin's Plots*, where she examines the narrative and rhetorical patterns that Darwin's writing absorbed from Victorian culture. Beer shows the mixed resonance of the icon of the tree of life in Darwin's work, tracing both its biblical and genealogical meanings and how those meanings both inform and conflict with Darwin's rhetorical motives. In Margulis, there is no longer a tree the branches of which only bifurcate in one direction: symbiogenesis posits a labyrinth of anastomosis, like mycelial networks of fungi, as an alternate image of evolutionary history.

Margulis' Plots Part 1 presents an analysis of the narrative and rhetoric of symbiogenesis in the writing of William S. Burroughs. Though his work precedes that of Margulis and the present legitimation of symbiogenesis, Burroughs' *Nova Trilogy* exemplifies certain rhetorical structures that follow from symbiogenesis. In the model of *Darwin's Plots*, Burroughs tropes of parasitism, infection, and a cybernetic Earth would be an aspect of the cultural text of biology, but not of evolution. In the model of Margulis' Plots, the trilogy is squarely positioned in the cultural text of evolution. Further, the implicit mode of writing symbiogenesis in that text has implications for understanding Gaia Theory/Earth Systems Science. Particularly through this viral understanding of language and his implication of organisms, chemicals, and metals through synecdoche and metonymic displacement, *The Nova Trilogy* is an Earth system model (if, however, a cyber-gothic one by comparison to a Gaian text like James Cameron's *Avatar*). Margulis' Plots Part 1 contributes a revisionary reading of Burroughs that finds his work to be as much about ecology as control society.

### **2. Charting Solar Systems, Exoplanets, and Earth 2.0**

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NASA's Kepler mission has brilliantly demonstrated that our galaxy is teeming with extra-solar worlds. In late 2013, NASA reported that one in five sun-like stars are believed to host Earth-sized planets orbiting in the habitable zone. That suggests our galaxy alone hosts roughly 50 billion worlds potentially capable of harboring life. The proposed paper explores the implications of rapid developments in the search for habitable extra-solar worlds.

Astrobiologists are establishing new parameters for determining whether exoplanets many light-years from here have active carbon cycles. Even as James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis proposed that a viable biosphere would sustain volatile gases such as oxygen, ozone, and methane as a result of its biota, astronomers are developing the means for

characterizing the mass and radius of extra-solar worlds to better identify exoplanets capable of carbon cycling so crucial to terrestrial life.

Many factors determine a planet's habitability, including the type of star an exoplanet orbits. Most of the habitable real estate in our galaxy is associated with M dwarfs. With less than half the mass of our Sun, M dwarfs emit most of their light as infrared or heat. This is significant as much of life on Earth is keenly adapted to the light of our Sun.

Then too, stars produce the elements necessary for life as we know it. Forged in the cores of stars that exploded long before our Sun was born are the iron in our blood, the calcium in our teeth and bones, the carbon in food sources, and the oxygen and nitrogen we breathe. The implications of this are profound. As James Lovelock observed, geochemical processes in our universe produce the requisite conditions for life. Awash as it is in solar systems and exoplanets, the universe may be teeming with life. We do not know whether life thrives in Europa's icy ocean, near the briny geysers of Enceladus, or in alien seas of exoplanets many light-years away. What drives our exploration of those distant shores is that Earth offers proof of concept—even as we train our telescopes on Kepler 22-b and other tantalizing candidates for Earth 2.0.

### 3. Viral Life and the Symbiotic Ecology

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With the help of recent findings in virology, this paper focuses on viruses as crucial participants in both the blurry lower boundary of life, and its symbiotic ecologies. Once viewed as semi-living or even living-dead entities, molecules or organisms, or both, or neither (Lwolf 1957), viruses are now considered as “essential agents within the roots and stem of the tree of life”, and their “very genetic volatility... an essential *precondition* for life” (Villarreal and Witzany 2010: 706). Moreover, “the concomitant discoveries of increasingly host dependent parasitic cellular organisms with a less than minimal genome, and of increasingly complex giant viruses simply using the cytoplasm of their host as a rich medium, suggest that the historical abrupt frontier between the world of viruses and the one of cellular parasites or symbionts might have to give way to a continuous transition” (Claverie and Abergel 2012: 200). This continuous transition recasts significantly the *problématique* of the lower boundary of life and helps understanding how “the symbiotic role of viruses in host evolution” can indeed be “seen to be both major and universal” (Villarreal and Ryan 2011: 88). Finally, this paper will consider the role viruses could play in “the symbiotic view of life” (Gilbert, Sapp and Tauber 2012) not only as key actors in lateral genetic transfers (Bushman 2002), but also in ecological terms strictly speaking (e.g. “aggressive symbiosis”, Ryan 1998). Altogether, viruses can then be understood as the entity of choice to develop a new understanding of life, at a time when synthetic biology is getting ready to give it/them a bright (?) new future.

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## STREAM 6

**LIFE AT RISK: ENVIRONMENTAL DEVASTATION, THE BIOPOLITICS OF CATASTROPHE, AND BIOTECHNOLOGICAL RISKS AND BENEFITS**

Conveners: Ivan Callus, Najeeb Jan

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli  
14:30 – 15:45 (Room A2 @Ex Ospedaletto)****Panel: THE QUESTION OF LIFE & DEATH****1. Forms of Life in Agamben and Deleuze**

Kelly Kawar (kkawar@uni-koeln.de)

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University of Cologne, Germany

It is at the state of exception, the site of modern life's most precarious manifestation—where life is made 'bare'—that Giorgio Agamben works to think a way out of biopolitics with his notion of 'form-of- life,' "a life in which it is never possible to isolate something such as naked life," a form of life which exceeds or escapes the dictates of categorization—juridical, scientific, or otherwise, retaining a unity of being "always and above all power" (*Means Without End* 4). What is, perhaps, most at stake in the state of exception is the conceptual life of life itself, and releasing it from the regime of sovereign power is, for Agamben, the most important task of contemporary ethics. This is, indeed, a risky business, for while the threat of the exception is imminent, constitutive, as it is, of the laws and rights which seek to govern modern life, its 'bare' ontological terrain at the threshold of being both inside and outside of law provides the very sustenance for theory's own character and its capacity to think life. This paper will investigate the conflicted character of 'bare' forms of life in contemporary theory as, on the one hand, the extremely qualified form of life articulated by Agamben and, on the other hand, the radically free and vital form of life theorized by Gilles Deleuze. In juxtaposing Agamben's 'bare life' with Deleuze's 'a life,' the impersonal form of life which manifests most clearly in the diminished bodily form, I will reflect upon theory's own fetishization of the 'bare' and the vision of life 'itself' as an infinitely productive conceptual store.

**2. Rewriting the Book of Life: Metaphor, Selection and Genetic Engineering**

Marija Grech (grechm1@cardiff.ac.uk)

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Over the past few decades the human genome has been widely referred to and described as the Book of Life. This metaphor has been used in scientific discourse and the public arena to explain the workings of DNA and to exemplify how scientists attempt to 'read' and even 'rewrite' the genetic code. As years of critical theory and practice have shown us, the use of such metaphors is neither transparent nor innocuous; metaphors always come with excess baggage – extra meanings and connotations that although not overtly acknowledged exist nonetheless.

The metaphor of the Book of Life is no exception. In the Judeo-Christian tradition the Book of Life functions as a textual metaphor for salvation and damnation, as a metaphoric script that records the names of the righteous and erases the damned out of existence. Relating the use of this metaphor in contemporary scientific discourse to similar analogies used by Charles Darwin, this paper will explore how the notions of salvation and damnation directly influence our understanding of genetics and genomics, particularly of practices such as genetic engineering and genetic screening that seek to molecularly 'rewrite' the story of an individual or of a species as a whole.

Resurrected into a pseudoscientific promise of salvation, the metaphor of the Book of Life goes beyond mere analogy, directly influencing our understanding of genetics and biotechnology. This paper explores the risks associated with the use of such widespread scientific narratives in an age where man has the power to become his own maker.

### 3. Life in Death: Narratives of decomposition in science and literature

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Sandro Lanfranco (sandro.lanfranco@um.edu.mt), Department of Biology, University of Malta

Narratives of life, and of its cessation, are generally grounded in the notion of the individual as a 'physiological island', a self-contained entity that is identified with the 'organism'. Under this notion, death of the organism is constructed as an abrupt transition between one state and another. The identification of this transition is dependent on biological definitions of 'life' as a property of matter, but is also dependent on the definition of the boundaries of the organism. The organism, identified as the group of structures encoded by human DNA, is, in both cellular and genetic terms, a minority player in the human superorganism. Only 10% of the cells and less than 1% of the genes in the human superorganism belong to the organism, the other cells and genes being mostly bacterial. This human system is moreover a habitat for bacteria, fungi, and, depending on the circumstances, various invertebrate parasites.

Death of the organism and death of the superorganism are therefore not synonymous; the human biomass, no longer functioning as a coherent system, functions instead as an organic substrate sustaining a diverse heterotrophic food web. This food web, subject to the Laws of Thermodynamics as is any food web, is a medium through which matter is recycled and energy dissipates. The entropy of the organism-turned-substrate now increases and its energy content decreases, whilst the superorganism persists. The atoms which, for a brief time, were part of the organism disperse over the environs and into other organisms, whilst the other organismal components of the superorganism colonise fresh territories.

This paper examines the above in scientific accounts of decomposition, while drawing attention to the various obstacles – ethical, pragmatic and others – hindering the study of this theme, particularly where human life and death are concerned. It reserves significant space for consideration of Jim Crace's novel, *Being Dead* (1999), which is arguably one of the most powerful depictions in literature of decomposition and of the paradoxes of death-in-life, life-in-death. Its conclusions focus on interdisciplinary reflection on the manner in which decomposition is represented in literature, science and culture, and on the reactions which discussion of the theme occasions.

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4 – Vercelli**  
**16:00 – 17:15 (Room A2 @Ex Ospedaletto)**

#### Panel: LIFE AND ITS FRGILITIES

##### 1. Apocalyptic Risk: Life and the Walking Dead

Jeanne Cortiel (jeanne.cortiel@uni-bayreuth.de)

University of Bayreuth, Germany

This paper discusses the deployment of biotechnology as risk technology in contemporary Zombie film, which draws on the specific convergence of the apocalyptic tradition, survival horror and science fiction in post-millennium American cinema. This 21st-century genre hybrid explores the vulnerabilities of the gendered human body and celebrates its horrific disintegration at the historical moment when an enhanced, perfectly controlled posthuman future appears to be within the reach of science. The exploration of emergent pathogenic virulence as developed in risk theory (Jost van Loon) and Roberto Esposito's conceptualization of immunity provide a theoretical framework that enables a systematic analysis of the zombie figure beyond its rather evident function as manifestation of cultural anxieties around the boundaries between life and non-life. Although risk theory has largely concerned itself with risk communities, the theory of individual risk-taking, or edgework (Stephen Lyng, Jason Laurendeau) delineates how the individual body at risk is uniquely gendered precisely through its relationship to "manufactured uncertainty." From this perspective, the uncontrollable zombie horde emerges as close correlative to the lone superhero in these filmic end-of-civilization scenarios. Ultimately, the larger question addressed by this analysis is how fiction and speculation reflect upon (im)probability and the real in terms of life/living at risk.

The talk is part of a larger research project on what we call "risk fiction" that focuses on the aesthetic characteristics as well as the ethical and political implications of this emerging intermedial genre.

## **2. Life Curtailed: Infertility in Science Fiction**

Victor Grech (victor.e.grech@gov.mt)

HUMS, Humanities and Medical Science Programme, University of Malta

Fertility is vital to the continuation of the species and also weighs on one's personal sense of immortality. Infertility may therefore be a devastating condition. Science Fiction (SF) depicts infertility not only conventionally, but also in novel and sometimes fantastical ways that are unique to the genre. These range from widespread infertility that threatens a species' (including humanity's) extinction, to more prosaic forms of infertility incidentally affecting a single individual, human or otherwise. In between these two extremes, a veritable gamut of examples are contemplated, such as infertility as a consequence of warfare or by scientific misadventure or pollution, often with cautionary reflections on 'life at risk'.

Past atrocities that man has inflicted on humanity and life are also inscribed in this trope, including the infliction of infertility by the state or by humans on aliens or on humans or their creations. The inevitability of infertility in certain future occupations is also depicted, up to and including deliberate cyborg metamorphosis that sacrifices the organs of reproduction. The equally inevitable requirement of infertility of some kind or another is also presented when overpopulation becomes a political factor. Notably, gender roles are also explored in single-gendered worlds depicting infertility scenarios in SF, as is the infertility resulting from virtual sex or sex with manufactured biological or nonhuman.

As this paper will show, the commonest trope that emerges from these narratives is that of the cautionary tale, and of how the Frankensteinian desire to wrest nature's secrets and redesign life suggests that hubris must almost invariably meet tragedy. SF, however, tends to take the edge off extreme depictions of the risk to life through its predilection for happy, or at least positively resolved, endings. This paper considers all the above fully in order to come to some reflections on 'life at risk scenarios' as they emerge in the intersections between the science fiction imaginary and infertility (real or imagined).

## **3. Mass natural disasters and the fragility of life**

Joseph Cacciottolo (joseph.cacciottolo@um.edu.mt), Humanities, Medicine and Science Programme, University of Malta

Ivan Callus (ivan.callus@um.edu.mt), Department of English, University of Malta

Foreseeable progression of life, occasional rather than constant ill-health and slower ageing processes are taken for granted in an age of social security and preventive medicine. Mass natural disasters, however, undermine that confidence, bringing into sharp focus the fragility of life and its support structures. Personal tragedy, environmental devastation and social distortions inevitably follow, causing distress in regions and populations that are particularly vulnerable. Two deeply destructive climatic disasters serve as framework for discussing 'life at risk': Hurricane Katrina (United States, 2005) and Typhoon Haiyan (Philippines, 2013), which in various ways were strikingly similar yet tellingly different.

Both disasters were caused by spiralling tropical storms featuring high wind-speeds and heavy rainfall. Extreme flooding, immediate loss of life, large-scale material damage and disruption of systems marked both catastrophes. Moreover, both disasters led to significant political fall-out. Other contrasts relate to infrastructure, economic wellbeing, preparedness and response. The human cost in the aftermath of mass disasters remains unquantifiable, while the social and public health effects on communities can only be properly quantified well after the event. The long-term effects of Typhoon Haiyan, will to some extent be mirrored by the amply documented physical, emotional and political consequences of hurricane Katrina. Consequently, the paper assesses studies of the latter and their predictive value, from fiction to journalism to papers in medicine, all of which bring to the fore how 'the practice of everyday life' (de Certeau) becomes all too close to 'bare life' (Agamben) in such scenarios, leading to distinct forms of 'precarious mourning' (Butler).

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin**  
**9: 00 – 10:30 (Room F3)**

**Panel: INDISTINCTIONS: UNSETTLING LIFE/DEATH IN TECHNO-SCIENTIFIC PRACTICES**

Session Organizers: Astrid Schrader (a.schrader@exeter.ac.uk) and Elizabeth Johnson (e.johnson@exeter.ac.uk), University of Exeter, UK

If we are to take seriously the proposition that “life’s discontinuity [is] anything but theoretical” as the stream organizers of “life at risk” suggest, relationships between life and death in ‘practice’ may require closer inspection. Inspired by Jacques Derrida’s claim that “one must therefore inscribe death in the concept of life”, this panel enquires into the reconfigurations of life/death in techno-scientific practices. Throughout the history of philosophy, notions of finitude and mortality have been conceptualized in anthropocentric terms. Death is figured as an uncertain limit, threshold or telos of life, which, according to Heidegger, would be accessible only to humans “as such”. We are interested in how scientific practices complicate and reconfigure the “limit of life” and problematize “life’s very survival”. How might scientific research inspire new articulations of death, mortality, finitude and survival in less anthropocentric terms? How does the notion of survivability relate to the units of life under consideration, such as individual organism, communities, populations, or species? Is the end of life the only risk to life? This panel combines contributions that interrogate changing relationships between life and death, mortality and immortality, survival and extinction that take the role and modes of scientific knowledge production seriously. By looking beyond anthropocentric accounts of life to diverse accounts of death in nonhumans, the papers take us beyond biopolitical concerns and their attendant forms of calculability, which appear unable to escape the dichotomy of a ‘power of life’ vs. ‘the power over life’.

**1: The after/life of meat: Exploring the trace of survival**

Nick Bingham (Nick.Bingham@open.ac.uk), The Open University, UK  
 Stephanie Lavau (stephanie.lavau@plymouth.ac.uk), Plymouth University, UK

This paper reflects on a feature of current attempts to make meat safe by which we were repeatedly struck during our ethnographic exploration of the UK's food safety system. That feature is the emphasis placed within that system on matters of survival. Whether we consider (i) microbiological disease as the overriding matter of concern (and the interest in what persists after the life of the host animal has ended), (ii) the technologies of traceability (and the putting in place of a system capable of preserving the informational identity of the animal after its death), or (iii) the practices of inspection (where the need to be attuned to signs of the flourishing of life after death is key), a focus on what survives is central to managing the risky lives of meat. In seeking to do justice to this empirically-encountered role of survival whilst considering life in theory, we have found ourselves drawn to Derrida's work on the trace structure of 'living on' and that strand of biopolitical thought that seeks to move beyond zoe/bios towards a less anthropocentric politics of life. In both we find conceptual resources to help us insist on the importance of paying attention to the proliferation of life, not just the more and more life that studying pathogenic life draws attention to, but also the proliferation of ways of doing life and how they intersect, interact, and interfere. For it is here, we propose, that life in practice and life in theory meet.

**2. Intimacy and finitude: living with and as jellyfish**

Elizabeth R. Johnson (E.Johnson@exeter.ac.uk)  
 University of Exeter, UK

Nonhuman life forms have become increasingly integral to socio-technological apparatuses. The well-documented emergence of a bioeconomy, for example—including fields of biotech, pharmaceuticals, and biomimicry—suggests a growing intimacy between humans and nonhumans. This growing intimacy, however, paradoxically reinforces an anthropocentric narrative of social progress, particularly as the products of the bioeconomy are often developed as a means to forestall human death. This paper focuses on recent scientific research on the life cycles of jellyfish to further explore this paradox between the ever more complex enfoldings of biology and technoscience and the reification of human life as the sole agents of historical progress. Studies of the so-called ‘immortal’ jellyfish, *Turritopsis dohrnii*,

have provided some scientists with hope of eliminating the ultimate risk to human life: that of 'natural' death. While these scientific endeavours seek to place the life's ends at an ever greater distance, the increasing proximity between humans and jellyfish in the laboratory open up ways of thinking life beyond anthropocentric visions of progress. Drawing on the work of Frederic Neyrat, I ask how this research reinforces the anthropocentric logics that undergird biopolitics while simultaneously revealing a world in which life appears "without unity" (Neyrat 2007). How does reimagining life through jellyfish research reconfigure what we consider to be "common" in political thought? Might considering atypical life-cycles of nonhumans help us to rethink our own "struggles for survival" beyond desires for immortality and the biopolitical drive for power over life?

### **3. Microbial suicide and the deconstruction of life/death from within biology**

Astrid Schrader (A.Schrader@exeter.ac.uk)

University of Exeter, UK

Previously regarded as immortal unless eaten by predators, unicellular marine microbes (phytoplankton, the 'token of life' and productivity) are becoming mortal today. Marine biologists suggest that under specific environmental conditions entire population of phytoplankton actively kill themselves. Drawing on new empirical research into programmed cell death in marine microbes, this paper explores how an affirmation of the microbes' mortality and their active role in their own demise ('suicide') may reconstruct the relationship between life and death, biological individuality and assumptions about a natural teleology associated with the self-organization of life. The scientific findings not only contradict Martin Heidegger's assumption that no (merely living) organism produces for itself the capacity for dying, but also challenge a notion of death as a limit or telos of life, which in turn affects what it means to know 'death' or anything else. In other words, how these microbes are becoming mortal today is not just a question of knowledge about them, but also transforms the very meaning of knowledge itself. Reading the scientific research together with Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of Heidegger's fundamental distinction between human and nonhuman animals in relation to death, I ask how a less anthropocentric figuration of death (as internal to life) may open up a space for affectivity in scientific knowledge production.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 5 – Turin  
14:00 – 16:00 (Room F3)**

#### **Panel: LIFE, RISK & THE POLITICAL**

##### **1. Rethinking Biopolitics: Political Ontology & Blasphemy**

Najeeb Jan (najeeb.jan@colorado.edu)

Department of Geography, University of Colorado at Boulder, USA

This paper seeks to understand the virtually permanent state of exception in Pakistan in relation to the question of ontology – the emergency and abandonment of being. Pakistan is today a deeply troubling space, a nation perpetually caught up in tragic headlines: sectarian killings, suicide bombings, beheadings, drone strikes, endemic corruption. Central to Agamben's analysis of modern forms of biopolitical sovereignty is the well known conscription and capture of bare life by the state and the legal order. Charting the increasingly violent nature of what I call 'ulama governmentality, this paper suggests that the characteristic modality of the religious cleric in Pakistan today is disclosed in their deployment of blasphemy as a technology of sovereign power; in the production of the heretic as an essentially 'killable' human. While the blasphemy laws originally targeted Ahmadis, Christians and other minorities in Pakistan, today they are primarily deployed against Muslim citizens, as the recent assassination of the powerful Governor of Punjab by his own body guard testifies. After properly situating biopolitics within the horizon of political ontology, this paper seeks to recast the problem of blasphemy as a problem of the political rather than as the mere intrusion of antediluvian religious sensibilities into modern space. The politico-juridical apparatus of the 'ulama can then be seen as a paradigmatic variant of the government of life, which like the phenomenon of drones, is replete with its obsession for sovereignty and security.

## **2. Between power, biopolitics and exception: rethinking the ontological politics of Israel's occupation of the West Bank**

Mikko Joronen (mikko.joronen@utu.fi)

Centre of Excellence in Research on the Relational and Territorial Politics of Bordering, Identities and Transnationalization (RELATE), University of Tampere, Finland

In this presentation I focus on one of the central dimensions behind the normalization of Israel's occupation of contemporary Palestine: a dimension between forms of power and their ontological conditions. I will start by demonstrating, through the works of Foucault and Agamben, how the 'demonic', even contradictory, combinations of biopolitical, sovereign, and thanatopolitical modes of power operate in the contemporary West Bank. I will undergo certain exemplary events and spatial formations, which can further suggest how the normalization of the 'order of exception' is established in the West Bank. My intention, however, is not to conduct an explicit ontic-empirical examination of the prevailing forms, techniques, and practices of the occupation, but to lead the discussion towards the focal question concerning how to engage with ontology. I will do so, by critically examining the common and well-established narrative that considers the ontological reading of biopolitics, sovereignty and power as the uttermost weakness of Agamben's political ontology of the exception. I will enrich and clarify the potentials of Agamben's political ontology by leaning on Heidegger, especially on what he calls the calculative power of 'machination' (*Machenschaft*). I will tackle the following questions in particular: how, and in what extent, Agambenian political ontology of the exception can be seen as an ontological condition of possibility for the different forms of power present in topological figures of the occupation (such as camps, settlements, checkpoints and Separation wall), how these modes of power grow from the state of machination in Heideggerian sense, and further, how, in terms of theory, Heidegger's notion of 'machination' was able to take into account those questions that later came to be known under the vocabulary of 'biopolitics'. As a conclusion, I suggest a complementary reading, which does not engage with ontology by turning it into a quasi-transcendental ground suffering the constraints of ahistorical universalism, but which rather sees ontology as in itself a temporally finite event that reveals the ontic realities of the occupation.

## **3. Resource Wars: protest and propaganda in South African media and creative forms**

Mathilda Slabbert (mslabbert@sun.ac.za)

Department of English, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Due to global concerns about the looming energy crisis, South Africa, like many countries in African, has been targeted as a site for fossil fuel exploration. Renowned for its minerals and precious stones, the discovery of shale-gas and oil deposits inland and offshore, however, has stirred heated debates about the potential danger and economic consequences of resource extractions (e.g. hydraulic fracturing/hydrocarbon mining) in ecologically sensitive areas such as the arid Karoo landscape and bio-regions along the coastline. Environmental justice critics (e.g. Rob Nixon, Nnimmo Bassey) and other defence networks have argued insightfully about the immediate and lasting effects (local and global) of resource drilling/mining on all things animate and inanimate: e.g. climate change, water scarcity, increased poverty, the threat to marine biodiversity. On the other hand, government, NGOs, energy companies (e.g. Shell, ExxonMobil, BHP Billiton and Andarko), and other stakeholders emphasise financial gain and benefits to all. The power of decision, it seems, ultimately lies with those above and not the public or grassroots oppositionists. Or does it?

Climate justice advocate Patrick Bond notes that South Africa vaunts "amongst the world's highest rate of social protest per person" and although those above often "do not understand how to connect the dots between grievances, protest and solutions [...] the most valuable lessons [are learned] from below" (*Politics of Climate Justice* xx). I am interested in: why there is a dearth of creative imaginings with an activist ecological agenda in the country, what forms inspire "eco-political discourse and action" (Rust and Monani, *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*), and to what extent are existing expressions just "selfish green propagand[a...]" loaded with "emotive rhetoric" (Vegter, *Extreme Environment*)? This paper, therefore, examines a selection of protest texts that critique fossil fuel extraction to question the role of history, current power systems, and personal/public agendas on local cultural productions and forms. I will examine texts from various media forums (e.g. TKAG or "Treasure the Karoo Action Group" website), fiction (Etienne van Heerden's "Poison Karoo" and *For the Mercy of Water* by Karen Jayes), lyrics and performance art (e.g. Jitsvinger's "Fracking") and specific documentaries.

**FRIDAY, JUNE 6 – Turin**  
**9:00 – 10:30 (Room F3)**

**Panel: BIOPOLITICS, BIOTECHNOLOGY AND RISK**

**1. Contingency, Immunity and Risk: Modalities of the Biopolitical**

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English Department, SNF Sinergia project, “Theory and Practice of Authenticity in Global Cultural Production,”  
 University of Bern, Switzerland

My aim in this paper is to analyze risk as a negative modal construction, and in doing so, to reconceive of contingency as a way to think risk and its relationship to community. To do this, I will define risk in two ways, and will show that the interrelation between these two is revealing for thinking a contemporary, post-identitarian community. The first view defines risk as a partial and negative representation of contingency, in which the word’s connotation, as negative exposure, is a modal construct that circumscribes our thinking of the contemporary world (all this in relation to the ubiquitous sense of an “end times”). The second way I will look at risk is again as a generally negative construct, but this time relating to the immunitary paradigm as elaborated in the work of Roberto Esposito. In placing these two notions of risk alongside each other, I intend to show that in the prevailing immunitary tendency toward risk aversion, there is a fundamental asymmetry, and this binary can be fruitfully re-rendered in a broader paradigm of contingency. Because risk must, in the case of a modal logic, always be viewed in opposition to necessity, by reassessing the concept of risk in its broader form of contingency, I will show that the standard schema may be disrupted to interrogate the traditional view of risk as something for the individual or community to immunize against, and see it rather as the foundation of communal life.

**2. Futures Past, Prolepsis, and the Banalization of Being “Genetically at Risk”**

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One of the important contributions that Reinhart Koselleck’s *Begriffsgeschichte* has offered has been an analytical strategy to investigate the narration of events in history as a semantic struggle to ascribe meaning to central concepts which “reach into the future.” Included in this strategy is the proposition that semantics change at a slower pace than events of the present as they pass into the future while experiences and expectations expand for the individuals involved. In this paper, I provide an analysis of changes in semantics through which concepts about being “genetically at risk” have passed. By the end of the 20th century, the concept of “genetic risk” had a variety of different meanings within the transpersonal context of the family. I contrast the semantic frameworks of the 20th century with one that has emerged in the 21st century which focuses on genomics and quantifications of accumulations of “relative lifetime risk” in reference populations. The latter, I argue, tactically applies a prolepsis to foreclose future choice on expectations and anticipated benefits. This has the effect of, first, situating risk in relation to both developmental forces within individual lived experience *and* the objective correlate of symptomatic and asymptomatic populations. Second, and concurrently, what have been appositely identified by writers in the sciences and humanities as heterotopic sites in which dynamic and temporal practices of de-subjectification and subjectification take place now form the all too often unnoticed backdrop to more unobjectionable characteristics of (mundane) human life.

**3. Towards the Critique of Political Bioeconomy. Living Machines and Biotechnology**

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The emergence of novel biotechnologies and synthetic biology is increasingly blurring the distinction between our understanding of living and non-living matter. However theoretically tempting these kind of new materialist imaginaries can be – in practice they can easily be taken over by the logic of capital. At the stage when capital reaches limits of its geographical expansion it seeks new sites for expropriation at molecular level. The question is, where, in the continuum of living and non-living matter, we can position the effects of present biotechnological interventions as well as the future products of synthetic biology.

In my presentation I would like to focus on discourse of “living machines” (Deplazes & Huppenbauer, 2009; Fish, 2013) and its potential outcomes in regard to debate over the emergence of the concept of “biocapitalism” (Cooper, 2008; Helmreich, 2008; Rajan, 2006; Thacker, 2005; Waldby & Mitchell, 2006). The notion of “biocapitalism” can be misleading because it suggests some kind of quality change within capitalist mode of production in the context of biotechnological development (Helmreich, 2008). I would rather view it as a shift between formal and real subsumption of life under capital. Drawing from Marx’s insights in *Grundrisse* I would like to suggest preliminary conditions for undertaking the critique of political economy of biotechnology.

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#### **4. The Jab of Death: A Thanatopolitical Reading of The Swine Flu 'Pandemic'**

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In this paper I consider the 'tragic paradox' that Roberto Esposito identifies with the study of biopolitics, namely that the ability to regulate the vitality of the population has been historically linked to an increasingly sophisticated administration of death, in light of the 2009 H1N1 swine flu 'pandemic.' Following Michel Foucault, my use of the 'administration of death' refers not only to murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the act of exposing someone to death. My paper considers the widespread use of vaccinations in light of Foucault's anticipation that the excess of biopower appears when it becomes technologically and politically possible to not only manage life but to make it proliferate and build viruses that are universally destructive. I argue that when we suspend the question of efficacy and assume a more critical orientation to disciplines of medicine, vaccines provide a vivid portrayal of biopower in excess of sovereign restraint, the extreme point at which Foucault recognizes the capacity for biopower to turn in on itself destructively. I then detail the ways in which the mechanisms that Foucault associates with the historical integration of vaccinations into medical practice the notions of case, risk, and danger function at the level of the population to increase exposure to death. In short, my paper aims to substantiate contemporary theories of immunity and auto-immunity with a historico-political reading of the swine flu 'pandemic' and the widespread use of vaccinations.

**Plenary Speakers, Round Table Participants, Artists****Paolo Vineis**

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Professor Paolo Vineis is a leading researcher in the field of molecular epidemiology. His latest research activities mainly focus on examining biomarkers of disease risk, complex exposures and intermediate biomarkers from omic platforms (including metabolomics and epigenetics) in large epidemiological studies as well as studying the effect of climate change on non-communicable diseases. He has more than 600 publications (many as leading author) in prestigious journals such as Nature, Nature Genetics, Lancet, Lancet Oncology. He is a member of various international scientific and ethics committees and vice-chair of the Ethics Committee at the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC, WHO). He has been a member of the Scientific Council of IARC. His most recent publications include, *Lost in Translation. Scienza, Informazione, democrazia* (2011), *I due dogmi. Oggettività della scienza e integralismo etico* (2009) and, with Giulio Giorello, *Scienza, religione, modernità* (2014)

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Giuseppe Testa, Head of the Laboratory of Stem Cell Epigenetics and of the Unit on Science and Technology Studies, is currently carrying out a study on epigenetics of genome programming and reprogramming which focuses on the epigenetic mechanisms that enable lineage commitment and their aberrations in cancer. He has been awarded prestigious prizes, such as the Roche Prize for the most outstanding contribution to the Roche "Symposium for Leading Bioscientists of the Next Decade" (Basel, Switzerland, 2003), and the National prize "Luigi Casati" from the "Accademia dei Lincei" for the best graduation thesis in Medicine (1996). Furthermore, he has been a visiting fellow at the Berlin Institute of Advanced Studies (Berlin, Germany), and at the Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University. He is author, with Helga Nowotny, of *Geni a Nudo. Ripensare l'uomo nel XXI secolo* (2012)

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Professor Maurizio Mori is a member of the editorial Board of numerous scientific journals (Bioethics, Journal of Medicine and Philosophy; Journal of Medical Ethics; Medical Humanities). Apart from articles, he has published seven volumes concerning on Bioethics, Ethics and Rights. He is one of the founders of Consulta di Bioetica Onlus, of which he became president in 2006. In 2003 he founded the scientific journal Bioetica. Rivista interdisciplinare, of which he is the editor. He is author of *Manuale di bioetica. Verso una civiltà biomedica secolarizzata* (2012) and *Aborto e morale. Capire un nuovo diritto* (2008)

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Ugo Mattei holds a degree in law at the Università degli Studi di Torino, and a master at Berkeley. He is professor at Università degli Studi di Torino and an Alfred & Hanna Fromm Distinguished Professor of International and Comparative Law at University of California, Hastings College of Law.

He is member of Accademia Internazionale di Diritto Comparato, and Editor in Chief of Global Jurist online magazine; he is member of the Board of the American Journal of Comparative Law, and of the International Revue of Law and Economics, of the Rivista Critica del Diritto Privato. Ugo Mattei has also been Visiting Professor at Montpellier University, Berkeley, and Macau and Visiting Scholar at Yale University and at Cambridge. He is supervisor of the Ph D Programme "Dottorato di Ricerca in Diritto Civile ed Informatica nella società tecnologica Complessa" in Turin. His research has been focused on the question of the Commons. He is author of *Beni Comuni, Un manifesto* (2011), *The*

*European Codification Process: Cut and Paste*, Kluwer Law International, (2003), and, with Laura Nader, *Plunder: When the Rule of Law is Illegal* (2008).

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Chair in General Pathology, Professor Umberto Dianzani has been President of Interdisciplinary Research Center of Autoimmune Diseases (IRCAD) since 2002. He is the author of 143 articles published in prestigious international journals. His studies focus on the pathogenesis of autoimmune diseases, on the activation mechanisms of lymphocytes T, and on the immune response to tumor cells.

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Professor Mario Pirisi was Research Fellow of the Burnet Clinical Research Unit, Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in 1987-88. He is the author of more than 500 publications. His studies concern natural history of viral chronic hepatitis, prognostic factors of cirrhosis and of hepatocellular carcinoma, medical complications after liver transplantation, and immune response to neoplasia.

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Author of 85 papers on International indexed journals, 10 chapters in books and over 100 abstracts, mainly in the field of HLA immunogenetics and of the genetics of autoimmune and neurodegenerative diseases, Professor Sandra D'Alfonso is Member of the "European Federation for Immunogenetics" (EFI) and "Società Italiana Genetica Umana" (SIGU), and Member of the IMSGC (International Multiple Sclerosis Genetics Consortium) Strategy Group. Moreover, she is Member of the Editorial Board of "Genes and Immunity", and Reviewer for the European Journal of Human Genetics, European Journal of Neurology, Journal of Medical Genetics, Tissue Antigens, Journal of Neuroimmunology, Annals of Rheumatic Diseases, and Annals of Neurology.

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Cary Wolfe is Bruce and Elizabeth Dunlevie Professor of English at Rice University, where he is also founding director of the Center for Critical and Cultural Theory at Rice. Cary Wolfe's many books and edited collections include *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minnesota, 2010) *Animal Rites: American Culture, The Discourse of Species, Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago, 2003), and *Critical Environments: Postmodern Theory and the Pragmatics of the "Outside"* (1998), and the edited collection, *Zoontologies: the Question of the Animal*. Cary Wolfe is the editor of the series *Posthumanities* at the University of Minnesota Press. He continues to publish widely in areas such as animal studies and posthumanism, systems theory and pragmatism, biopolitics and biophilosophy, and American literature and culture, and he has written numerous pieces on art, music, architecture, and other kinds of non-literary culture. His forthcoming book is a study of Wallace Stevens's "bird" poems.

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Professor Roberto Esposito is Vice Director of the Istituto Italiano di Scienze Umane, and coordinator of the doctoral program in Philosophy. He was the only Italian member of the International Council of Scholars of the Collège International de Philosophie in Paris. Furthermore, he was one of the founders of the European Political Lexicon Research Centre and the International Centre for a European Legal and Political Lexicon. He is co-editor of *Filosofia Politica*, of *Per la Storia della Filosofia Politica* series, of *Storia e teoria politica* series, and of *Comunità e Libertà*. He is editor of the *Teoria e Oggetti* series and acts as a philosophy consultant. Among his many books translated into English, *Bios. Biopolitica e filosofia* (2004), *Immunitas. Protezione e negazione della vita* (2002); *Terza Persona: politica della vita e filosofia dell'impersonale* (2007) *Communitas. Origine e destino della comunità* (2003)

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Professor Gregg Lambert is Founding Director of The SU Humanities Center and Principal Investigator of the Central New York Humanities Corridor. Author of 12 books and critical editions, and well over 50 articles in journals and critical editions, Professor Lambert is internationally renowned for his scholarly writings on critical theory and film, the contemporary university, Baroque and Neo-Baroque cultural history, and especially for his work on the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida. He has lectured internationally and was recently invited as a Visiting Distinguished Professor at Utrecht University, the Netherlands, Ewha University, Seoul National University, and in 2010 was appointed as the BK21 Distinguished Visiting Scholar at Sungkyunkwan University, South Korea. Among his many publications, *In Search of a New Image of Thought: Gilles Deleuze and Philosophical Expressionism* (2011), *On the (New) Baroque*, vol. 12 in "Critical Studies in the Humanities" (2008), *Who's Afraid of Deleuze and Guattari?* (2006) *The Return of the Baroque in Modern Culture*, (2004) *The Non-Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze*, (2002), and *Report to The Academy (re: The New Conflict of Faculties)* (2001).

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Davide Tarizzo holds a PhD in Hermeneutics (University of Turin). From 1997 to 2007 he worked as a translator and editorial adviser for the Italian publisher Einaudi. From 2004 he is Substitute Professor of Political Philosophy at the University "L'Orientale" of Naples. From 2005 to 2010 he has been a scientific consultant for the PhD program in Philosophy at the Istituto Italiano di Scienze Umane of Naples. Since 2008 he is Lecturer of Moral Philosophy at the University of Salerno. His areas of studies are: the relation between philosophy and psychoanalysis, with particular emphasis on ethics and ontology; French theory; the "political" and its pathologies in modern times; the problem of contingency in modern and contemporary philosophy. His most recent publications is *La Vita, un'invenzione recente* (2012)

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Professor Claire Colebrook is the author of *New Literary Histories* (Manchester UP, 1997), *Ethics and Representation* (Edinburgh UP, 1999), *Deleuze: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Continuum 1997), *Gilles Deleuze* (Routledge 2002), *Understanding Deleuze* (Allen and Unwin 2002), *Irony in the Work of Philosophy* (Nebraska UP, 2002), *Gender* (Palgrave 2003), *Irony* (Routledge 2004), *Milton, Evil and Literary History* (Continuum 2008), *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life* (Continuum 2010), and *William Blake and Digital Aesthetics* (Continuum 2011). She has written articles on visual culture, poetry, literary theory, queer theory and contemporary culture.

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As a biologist, Claudia Bordese has written more than 70 scientific articles and several essays on science, some of which have earned her awards and honors. She is also the author of *Sesso selvaggio – quando ad amare è la natura* (Instar Libri, 2010), *Vivere a spese degli altri – Elogio del parassitismo* (Blu Edizioni, 2009), and *Innovare, crescere, competere – Le sfide del dottorato di ricerca* (Il Sole 24 Ore Pirola, 2008).

**Dorion Sagan**  
**American science writer, essayist, and theorist**

Dorion Sagan is an award-winning author and co-author of twenty-four books translated into eleven languages. His writings have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Skeptical Inquirer*, *Wired*, *Cabinet*, *Natural History*, *The Sciences*, and other magazines. His coauthored *What is Life?* (Main Selection, Global Business Network Book Club), was called “A masterpiece of science writing” in *Orion* magazine, and included on a list of “Mind-Altering Masterpieces” by *Utne Reader*.

His book *Into the Cool*, coauthored with ecologist Eric D. Schneider, was tagged “fascinating” by Nobel Prize winning chemist and poet Roald Hoffmann, and Melvin Konner, in *The New York Times* wrote about *Microcosmos: Four Billion Years of Microbial Evolution* that “this admiring reader of Lewis Thomas, Carl Sagan and Stephen Jay Gould has seldom, if ever, seen such a luminous prose style in a work of this kind.” His *Death and Sex*, a two-in-one hardcover written with Tyler Volk, won the 2010 New York Book Show in the competitive general trade nonfiction category.

#### **Artists:**

##### **David Wagner, writer**

German novelists. In 2000 his debut novel *Meine nachtblaue Hose* (‘My Midnight-Blue Trousers’) was published to great critical acclaim. He has been awarded a variety of prizes, including Walter Serner Prize and the Dedalus Prize for Contemporary Literature. His novel, *Leben*, was awarded the Leipziger Buchpreis in 2013. It has been translated in 7 languages (including Italian).

##### **Sophie Lebech, artist**

Sofie Lebech is a Danish director, performer and author of texts working solo and in collaborations. In 2006 she finished a MA in Comparative Literature and Modern Culture from The University of Copenhagen. Since 2003 she has made numerous research projects, cross medial performances, site specific interventions and installations. Some of the recurring themes in her work are the intersection between reality and fiction, autonomy, dreams of representation and the relationship between spectator and work.

Venues

**VERCELLI**

**1. Aula Magna – Cripta S.Andrea**

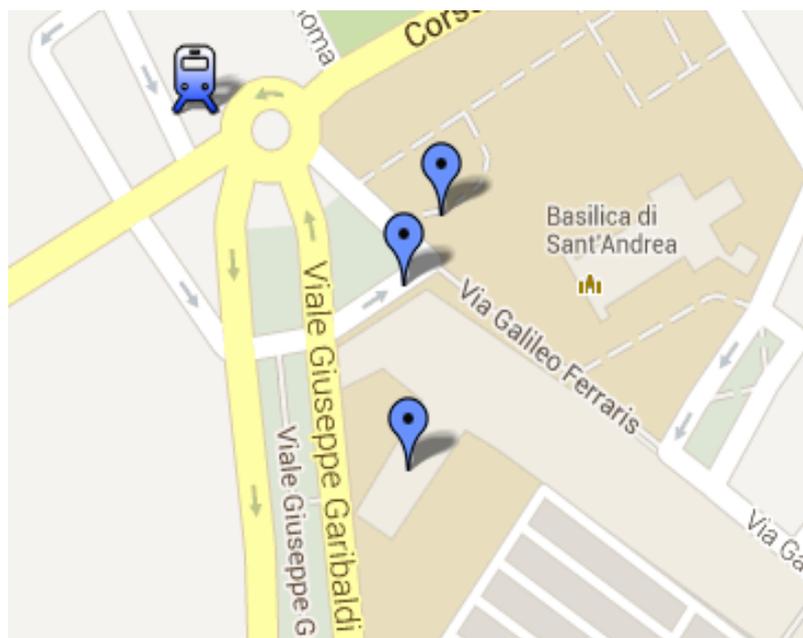
Via Galileo Ferraris 116



**2. Ex-Ospedaletto**

Viale G. Garibaldi 98

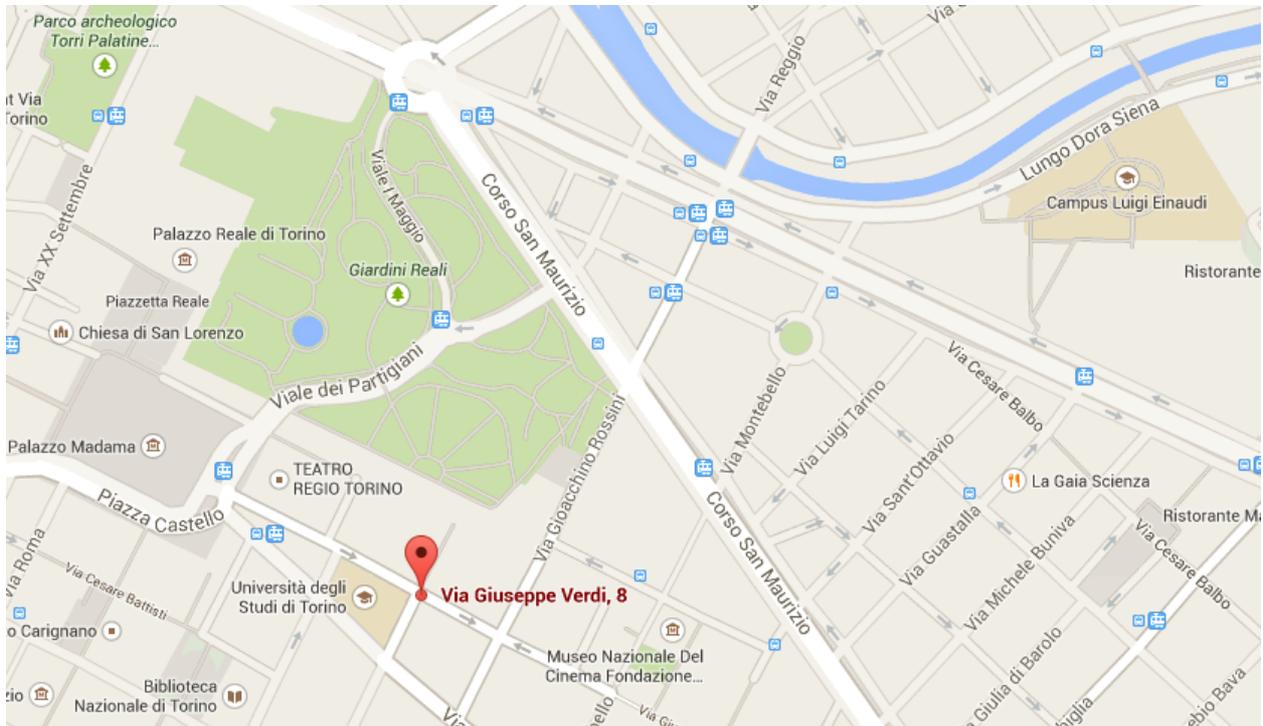
Entrance also from (3) via Galileo Ferraris 109 and (4) piazza Roma 36



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### 1. Rettorato

Via Giuseppe Verdi 8



### 2. Campus Luigi Einaudi

Lungo Dora Siena 100



**Organization**

**Conference Chair:** Cristina Iuli

**Local Scientific Committee:** Cristina Iuli, Margherita Benzi, Umberto Dianzani, Cesare Emanuel, Aldo Fasolo, Simona Forti, Maurizio Mori, Luca Savarino

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