

## ABSTRACTS

### Abstracts of Presenters and Artists

March 28th, Heaslip House 7th Floor, 297 Victoria Street, Ryerson University

**8:30 – 9:00**

Registration & Viewing of Installations (available for viewing all day)

### Modernity Exhibit: Installations in Photography and New Media Book Art

Curator: Cristina Naccarato

#### *The Persistence of Ephemeral Memory: Tech-Waste in Pastoral Spaces (Photography)*

Jeffrey Douglas, McMaster University

While traveling the back roads of rural Ontario, one might happen upon rusting, out-of-use technologies that have taken on new life as lawn ornaments. Jeffrey Douglas' photographs explore just such anomalous juxtapositions of aestheticized waste materials, ephemera, and obsolete technologies with rural settings. Drawing on theories of everyday life and trash aesthetics, his photography explores the compulsion to archive and poeticize a human-constructed object caught in the process of obsolescence and disposability, as well as that object's uncanny relationship to a natural environment. Many of the assemblages that he encounters tease out the idea that neo-pastoral space and our present conceptions of the picturesque must accommodate the disposability of consumer culture.

*Keywords:* consumer culture, everyday, neo-pastoral, photography, picturesque, rural, trash aesthetics

*Biography:* Douglas Jeffrey is a doctoral candidate in English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University. Apart from photography, he has an interest in animation, and has screened films in London, Hamilton, Toronto, as well as at *ShortsNonStop* in association with the Canadian Film Centre, and at the Ottawa International Animation Festival (2010).

#### *Documents For Artists: Reimagining Eugène Atget's Photographic Portraiture (Book Art and New Media)*

Reg Beatty, OCAD University

French photographer Eugène Atget (1857-1927) created city portraits that were suspended somewhere between the past and the present, between art and documentary. In a venture that he called *Documents Pour Artistes*, Atget used antiquated equipment to capture and catalogue the parts of Paris that were least changed by rapid modernization. Walter Benjamin saw the directness of Atget's photography as forensic and evidential, and he likened the viewing of his portraits to looking at a crime scene. At the same time, the surrealist force of Atget's image making was realized by using "the outmoded." Following Atget's approach and Benjamin's lead, Beatty's *Documents For Artists* relies on out-of-date technologies and a portrayal of the city of Toronto as fresh material for exploring the possibilities of "the outmoded." The project is conceived as two books: one printed for exhibition and one electronic for broadcasting.

*Keywords:* book art, Eugène Atget, modernization, outmoded technologies, Paris, photography, Toronto, Walter Benjamin

*Biography:* Reg Beatty is a bookbinder and book artist who has maintained a studio in Toronto since 1992, and whose work has been exhibited in Italy, France, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the US, and across Canada. He trained with Don Taylor and Betsy Eldridge in Toronto and Louise Genest in Montreal and has a Fine Arts degree from York University. He teaches book design at York University and book arts at OCAD and is working on an MA in Communication and Culture at Ryerson.

***Mitera (Photography)***

**Kimon Kaketsis, Ryerson University**

Kimon Kaketsis' project investigates the history of snapshot photography from the Kodak Brownie to the iPhone, illustrating that highly valued cultural objects, such as the photographic print and the "family album," have been replaced by hypermediated transactions of images stored online via social networking websites. Specifically, *Mitera* selects images of one woman across the span of her young life through facebook profile pictures and examines the story of her youth through photography. The nostalgic qualities associated with analogue snapshot photography – aged prints, exposure flaws, soft focus, and light leaks – are mimicked by contemporary digital images, creating the illusion of historical uniqueness. *Mitera* queries why western society enjoys looking back to its past and at the same time yearns for the future.

*Keywords:* analogue, digital photography, nostalgia, social networking

*Biography:* Kimon Kaketsis holds a BA of Fine Arts, with Honours, in Photography from Ryerson University. He is a Masters student in the Joint Communication and Culture Program at Ryerson. His photographs have been exhibited at the Ryerson Gallery, Maximum Exposure, and Namelings Gallery.

**9:15 - 10:15**

**SESSION 1: Self-Conceptions: Identity and Modernity**

**Chair: Nima Naghibi**

***Autobiography, Artists, Sincerity: Episodes of Modernity***

**Charles Reeve, OCAD University**

The chestnut that credits Renaissance artist Benvenuto Cellini with launching autobiography's modern form almost certainly overstates the case. He did, however, initiate a long line of artists-as-memoirists: from Cellini and his contemporary Giorgio Vasari, to William Hogarth in the eighteenth century (when autobiography as a genre truly takes off), to Tracey Emin and Art Spiegelman in our time. The result is a significant body of literature that links the artist's hand and head, thus promoting a holistic understanding of the artist's subject position and informing our grasp of visual art's shifting connections to conceptions of subjectivity under the sign of

modernity. In constructing a genealogy of the visions of wholeness and fragmentation that have circulated through artists' autobiographies from the Renaissance to the present, through the autobiographies of such artists as Cellini, Hogarth, Andy Warhol and Lucy Kimbell, this presentation assesses the patterns found in these autobiographies that indicate broader historical trends as well as continuities and shifts in conceptions of the artist's subjectivity. More generally, the exploration of autobiography's links to visual art will help inform our conception of the modern subject.

*Keywords:* autobiography, Benvenuto Cellini, modernity, sincerity, subjectivity, Warhol, visual art

*Biography:* Charles Reeve holds a PhD in Art History from Cornell University (2000). He is the curator at the OCAD University in Toronto, where he also is an Associate Professor in the faculties of Liberal Studies and Art. He has curated exhibits featuring such artists and designers as Rirkrit, Karim Rashid, Roger Ballen and Rosalind Nashashibi, and published widely on modern and contemporary art. In his theory and practice he sees art history as a broad and radical discipline.

***The Queering of Crisis: F. Scott Fitzgerald's Asubjective Modernism in This Side of Paradise*  
Dave Coodin, York University**

Written in 1920, F. Scott Fitzgerald's first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, presents a response to the cultural crisis of the First World War, involving its male protagonist Amory Blaine in two failed heterosexual relationships, one before and the other after he is shipped overseas and serves in the war. If above all else, heterosexual marriage constitutes an important plateau for bourgeois self-actualization, masculine homoerotics emerge in this novel as a major aporia into an alternative modernism constituted not by cultural and narrative fracture, but by impersonality and asubjective desire. What surfaces in this text is not homosexuality as a stable category of identity, but the queer sharing of excess pleasure, wasteful and indulgent, disrupting the linear development of character. By engaging and extending Cesare Casarino's *Modernity at Sea: Melville, Marx, Conrad in Crisis*, this presentation ultimately argues that *This Side of Paradise* queers the modernist coming-of-age narrative by offering a non-dialectical counterweight to the project of masculine identity formation.

*Keywords:* bildungsroman, erotics, F. Scott Fitzgerald, masculinity, Modernism, queer theory

*Biography:* Dave Coodin is a PhD student in English literature at York University in Toronto. His doctoral dissertation considers alternative forms of desire in the novels of Willa Cather, Nella Larsen, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Virginia Woolf.

***Modernity and the Flawed Body: Reading Chris Ware's Comics*  
Stephen Carlick, Ryerson University**

This presentation examines the graphic art of American cartoonist and comic book artist Chris Ware in his ongoing graphic series, "Building Stories." By featuring his female leg-amputee protagonist, Ware establishes the body as inherently fragmented. Ware's particular practice of

drawing characters that are more iconic than realistic allows his characters to serve as templates upon which readers can project themselves. In so doing, Ware creates a space in which individuals experiencing physical alienation from their body and society can see a reflection of their own fragmented bodies in the text, and accept it as “idiosyncratically different,” rather than “flawed” or imperfect.

*Keywords:* body fragmentation, comic art, graphic novel, modernity, subjectivity, Chris Ware, visuality

*Biography:* Stephen Carlick is a music critic as well as a Literatures of Modernity graduate student at Ryerson University. His research explores graphic narrative in the 21st century. Stephen is a contributor to *Exclaim! Magazine*, and will be an intern at *The Walrus Magazine* this summer.

**10:30 - 11:30**

**SESSION 2: THE CONDITIONS OF MODERNITY/READING MODERNITY**

**Chair: Jonathan Rollins**

***The Empty Modern: The Specter of Beckett in the World of Elizabeth Bowen***  
**Damian Tarnopolsky, University of Toronto**

In her novels *The House in Paris*, *The Heat of the Day*, and *The Death of the Heart*, written in the 1930s and 40s, British writer Elizabeth Bowen characterizes modernity as a “nothing” that demands new forms of description. Modernity, in these novels, is seen as a period after an old tradition has passed, but nothing new has arisen to take its place. Tarnopolsky proposes that Bowen, much like her contemporary, Samuel Beckett, tries to find a form in which to express the “nothingness” that is modern life, without misrepresenting it as something whole. He also argues that Bowen’s work is a response to the inheritance of Modernism as an aesthetic project that prioritizes literary style as a way of organizing a fragmentary world. However, unlike “high modernist” writers, Bowen avoids any suggestion that art can remake a broken whole or redeem a broken time. Instead, her effort is to find a way to write the empty modern without giving the impression that it is something full.

*Keywords:* Elizabeth Bowen, Modernism and modernity, nothingness, Samuel Beckett

*Biography:* Damian Tarnopolsky is a PhD student in the Department of English at the University of Toronto. His research, supported by a SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship, focuses on style and doubt in late modernist fiction. Damian has a chapter in press in a volume on Henry Green (to be published by Ashgate), and has also published an article in the scholarly journal, *Schuykill*. Moreover, Damian is an acclaimed fiction writer whose 2009 novel *Goya’s Dog* was nominated for the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize and the Amazon.ca First Novel Award.

***Modernity’s Dialectic: Charles Olson’s Objectivist Poetics***  
**John Wrighton, University of Brighton**

Drawing on Charles Olson's unpublished papers – the notes, extensive drafts, and revised manuscripts of *The Maximus Poems* as archived at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center (University of Connecticut) – this presentation discusses Olson's use of kinetics as enervating a radical experimentation in American literary history, and marking the birth of what might be called a late modernist poetics. It also examines how Olson's ethics of form advanced the early twentieth-century Objectivist poetics for the post-war period and influenced the development of a radical subjectivity in post-war American poetry. Ultimately, this presentation questions a periodized or teleological definition of modernity, introducing instead "modernity's dialectic" by way of a new reading of Olson's post-war American poems.

*Keywords:* Charles Olson, ethics, late modernist poetics, *The Maximus Poems*, post-World War II American poetry, radical subjectivity

*Biography:* Dr. John Wrighton is a lecturer in English literature at University of Brighton. He has published on both American poetry and ethical philosophy. He is the author of *Ethics and Politics in Modern American Poetry*, an acclaimed book published by Routledge in 2010. He is an International Research Fellow at the Modern Literature and Culture Research Centre, through 2011-13.

***Thomas Mann in the Arcades: Walter Benjamin's Dialectical Image of The Magic Mountain***  
**David Nutters, Temple University**

In a 1925 letter to Gerard Scholem, Walter Benjamin noted a shift in Thomas Mann's work, and pondered the "internal change [that] must have taken place in [Mann] as he was writing" *The Magic Mountain*. In this presentation, Nutters seeks to understand the "change" Benjamin locates in Mann as well as the larger "change" that both writers witness occurring in the modern era. As an avenue into the broader theme of modernity, this presentation considers Benjamin's notion of the dialectical image as he describes it in convolute N of *The Arcades Project*. By unpacking some of the theoretical dimensions of the dialectical image, Nutters shows its implications for theorizing both the conditions of modernity, and its consequences for critical reading practices; thus, turning to the linguistic dimensions of the dialectical image and Benjamin's description of allegory provides the framework for a comparative reading of Benjamin and Mann.

*Keywords:* comparison, Modernity, Walter Benjamin, dialectical image, Thomas Mann

*Biography:* Daniel Nutters is a PhD candidate in the English department at Temple University. He holds an MA in English from SUNY Buffalo and studies 19<sup>th</sup> century American literature with an emphasis on Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, and Henry James. His research interests consider how American literature anticipates the post-national, trans-national, and globalized trend in American studies.

**11:45 - 12:30**

**SESSION 3: FLIGHT OUT OF TIME: MODERNITY AND NOSTALGIA**

**Chair: Sarah Henstra**

***"Erroneous Representations": Nostalgia in Galician Modernist Literature***

## **Ihor Junyk, Trent University**

For much of the twentieth century, nostalgia was dismissed as a naïve longing for the “good old days.” Postmodern critics, however, have established nostalgia as a complicated affective, cognitive, and cultural state that deserves theorization. Taking a multicultural and comparative approach, this presentation is part of this ongoing effort to rethink nostalgia through an examination of modernist literature from Galicia (a region divided by Poland and Ukraine, in Central Europe). Though writing at the same time that the Futurists and the Cubists celebrated urbanization and technological advances, Joseph Roth (1894-1939) and Bruno Schultz (1892-1942) look back to a bygone era. Their work is neither celebration nor denigration of modernity; rather, it is a complex strategy for negotiating the traumas and disruptions of modernization and war, and their implications for conceptions of subjectivity, identity, and temporality. This research represents part of an attempt to bring “other modernisms,” ignored or dismissed in western scholarship, back into the centre of academic debate.

*Keywords:* alternative modernism, Galicia, nostalgia, postmodernism, Joseph Roth, Bruno Schultz

*Biography:* Ihor Junyk is an Associate Professor of Cultural Studies at Trent University. His work on modern literature and visual culture has appeared in publications such as *Comparative Literature*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Grey Room*, and *Early Popular Visual Culture*. His book manuscript “Foreign Modernism: Cosmopolitanism, Identity, and Style in Paris” is currently under review at University of Toronto Press.

## ***Politics of Loss and Remedy: Encounters with the Past in Orhan Pamuk’s Museums* Evren Ozselcuk, York University**

The work of Orhan Pamuk is defined by an engagement with the long-standing ‘crisis of identity’ in Turkey that stems largely from an ambivalent encounter with the western model of modernization. An important theme of his fiction is the tensions between remembering and forgetting the past. In both *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (2004) and *The Museum of Innocence* (2009), Pamuk articulates this crisis of identity and the melancholic attempts to attain the once-possessed, now lost object, whether it is a lost past, a lost home, or a lost identity. The two novels tell stories of fetishistic attachments to an idealized past. This presentation proposes a comparison of these two novels to articulate a distinction between two modes of collection: one that involves a contradictory process of simultaneously identifying with *and* othering the past, the other than entails an almost complete identification with the past, which dissolves the boundaries between past and present. In discussing these two modes of writing about the past, with the museum as a point of entry, this presentation deliberates on the alternative practices of remembrance indicated in these texts.

*Keywords:* collecting, melancholy, modernization, museums, nostalgia, Orhan Pamuk, Turkey

*Biography:* Evren Ozselcuk is a PhD candidate in the Joint Graduate Programme in Communication and Culture at York University, where she also obtained her MA. Her doctoral

dissertation examines discourses of identity constitution in contemporary Turkey in the critically-acclaimed novels and films of Pamuk, Akin and Ceylan.

***Modernity, the Avant-Garde, and the Myth of Futurism***  
**Geneviève Cloutier, Université du Québec à Montréal**

This presentation examines two movements, Dada Zurich, through Hugo Ball's "flight out of time," and Russian Futurism, through Velimir Khlebnikov's "worldbackwards." In so doing, it argues that "futurism," as an attitude towards history, is virtually foreign to the philosophical foundations of these movements, and that instead of the commonplaces usually associated with the historical avant-gardes (appetite for destruction, disregard for the past, glorification of the future), these concepts and the texts in which they appear convey a paradoxical will to go *against* the course of time. This approach reveals a surprising proximity between the conception of history held by some members of the avant-garde and the one that prevails in the post- or hyper-modern era—a conception that is fundamentally "presentist" in nature, characterized by anxiety toward the future and a will to safeguard that which is threatened by the passage of time. Ultimately, this presentation argues that a significant part of the historical avant-garde can be considered fundamentally anti-modernistic.

*Keywords:* anti-modern, avant-garde, Dada Zurich, futurism, nostalgia, Russian Futurism, Velimir Khlebnikov

*Biography:* Geneviève Cloutier is a Post-doctoral Scholar at the Figura Research Centre on Text and the Imaginary at the Université du Québec à Montréal, where she is working on the resurgences of the avant-garde in contemporary art and theory. She holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature (Université de Montréal) and Slavic Studies (Université Lyon 3). Her work has been published in Canadian and European journals, such as *Europe, Russian Literature, Toronto Slavic Quarterly* and *Canadian Slavonic Papers*.

**RESPONDENTS to morning panels & keynote: Stephen Voyce & Scott Dobbin**

**1:15-1:45**

**LUNCH TIME KEYNOTE**

**Chair: Alan Shepard**

***Modernity, Community and City Building***  
**Christopher Hume (*Toronto Star*)**

*Keywords:* architecture, city building, Toronto heritage,

*Biography:* Christopher Hume is the architecture critic and urban issues columnist of the *Toronto Star*.

**2:00 - 3:00**

**SESSION 4: SITES OF MODERNITY: ARCHITECTURE, SPACE, CITY**

**Chair: Sophie Thomas**

***In Whom I Sit Lonely: The Architectural Imagination in Allen Ginsberg's "Howl"***  
**Gregory M. Dandeleo, United States Air Force Academy**

Modernist architect Le Corbusier embraced the industrial over the organic, the new over the traditional and the functional over the aesthetic. As such, Modernism's popularity as the dominant style of post-World War II America reflects attitudes in the American psyche. As architects were focused more on designing buildings that made a philosophical point than on imagining structures that would please its users, the American government was more concerned with projecting its ideology than practicing it. Allen Ginsberg's use of architectural imagery in "Howl" represents the oppressive nature of the dominant culture and depends upon the very architecture of the period. Modernist architecture, defined by utility, rigid order and cold and inhospitable materials rejects divergence and dehumanizes the inhabitants of its buildings in a way that perfectly reflects Ginsberg's conflict with the society he inhabits.

*Keywords:* Allen Ginsberg, Le Corbusier, modernist architecture and utility

*Biography:* Gregory M. Dandeleo is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Fine Arts at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado. He has a paper in press with the journal *War Literature and the Arts*, and has been invited to present his scholarship at conferences in Colorado Springs, San Antonio, and Brooklyn.

***Modernity Questions Itself in Jean Cocteau's Ballet Les Mariés de La Tour Eiffel***  
**Cheryl Belkin Epstein, Canada's National Ballet School**

In 1921, Jean Cocteau wrote the libretto for the ballet *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*, which he set on the Eiffel Tower in 1900, eleven years after the tower was erected for the Paris Universal Exposition of 1889 as a symbol of the industrial strength of France. Although the ballet is a funny, madcap romp combining choreography, mime and the spoken word, this presentation argues that the intervals between the dates on which the tower was erected, the ballet set, and the libretto written, gave Cocteau the opportunity to comment on the transformations of the tower and other contemporary symbols of technological progress highlighted in the ballet. A careful analysis of the full spoken text of the ballet, published with Cocteau's plays, reveals a critique, not only of the bourgeoisie's fascination with technological progress, but also of the inherent dangers of that very progress. The ballet, then, can be understood as an absurd narrative of modernity questioning itself.

*Keywords:* ballet, dance, Eiffel Tower, Jean Cocteau, technological progress

*Biography:* Cheryl Belkin Epstein teaches ballet history in the Professional Program of Canada's National Ballet School. She holds a Masters degree in Dance from York University and has presented her research at conferences of the Society of Canadian Dance Studies, the Society of Dance History Scholars and the Modernist Studies Association.

***Modernity's Haunted House: Isabel Allende's The House of the Spirits***  
**Cory Teubner, Wichita State University**

In Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits* (1982), the multi-generational dramas of the del Valle and Trueba families embody a microcosm of negotiated systems of authority endemic in Chilean political history. Chiefly modern conceptions of space, time and history underpin evolving versions of reality specific to a series of ruling political consensuses. In Allende's figuration, these conceptions find expression in physical spaces, marginal zones off the radar of public power. This presentation explores the modernity-infused constitution of such spaces and the potentially subversive conceptions of space, time and history allowed to incubate inside. Further, it will trace the contours of the reconfigured cultural imagination that underpin the house's eventual fall as modern vectors of control unravel in the violent revolution – cultural and political – that unseated Chile's democratically elected president.

*Keywords:* Chile, Isabel Allende, modern conceptions of space and time, revolution

*Biography:* Cory Teubner is working on a MA degree in English literature at Wichita State University. After earning his BA in Philosophy from Kansas State University, he spent several years engaged in political activism and travel in South America. More recently, he spent three years teaching English in Beijing.

**3:15 - 4:15**

### **SESSION 5: MODERNITY, THE SECULAR AND THE SPIRITUAL**

**Chair: Randy Boyagoda**

***Literary History and Literary Heteronomy? Gil Anidjar's Postsecular Reading of Paul de Man***  
**Basit Kareem Iqbal, University of Toronto**

Paul de Man's 1970 essay "Literary History and Literary Modernity" famously observes that modernity "is one of the concepts by which the distinctive nature of literature can be revealed in all its intricacy" (161). Gil Anidjar draws on de Man's classic essay in his 2005 "Literary History and Hebrew Modernity," in which he notes that the problem outlined at the end of de Man's essay is a failure of a particular kind of historical thinking. Colin Jager notes that Anidjar's elaboration of de Man has immediate salience for contemporary debates over the possibilities and limits of secular criticism. Can Enlightenment critique ever purge itself finally of "its own heteronomous tendencies"? This presentation will consider the relationship of the critic to 'religion,' and will revisit de Man's call for a non-genetic notion of time, in suggesting that the literary historian will not be able to represent the divisions and tensions internal to literature until he altogether refuses the historical economy of inclusion/exclusion.

*Keywords:* enlightenment critique, heteronomy, religion, secularism, time

*Biography:* Basit Kareem Iqbal is an MA student in Religious Studies at the University of Toronto. His research interests include Islamic intellectual history, semiotics, and critical theory; his thesis is an analysis of Talal Asad's claim that Walter Benjamin's account of allegory can help us understand the relationship between politics and religion in a secular age.

***Old Religion, Modern Times: A. M. Klein's Modern-Day Psalms***

**Peter Aadoson, University of Ottawa**

A. M. Klein is generally regarded as one of Canada's foremost Modern poets, and also as one of the nation's foremost Jewish poets. As a minority writer, he demonstrates in his poetry a marked concern with identity, specifically with religious identity. In 1944 he published "The Psalter of Avram Haktani," a collection of modern-day psalms, as an attempt to continue the biblical traditions into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After its publication it was criticised for its blasphemous questioning of God, its impersonality, and its lack of formal connection to the ancient Psalms. Responding to this body of criticism, this presentation shows that Klein's "Psalter of Avram Haktani" is, in many ways, a successful continuation of the biblical tradition. Klein applies modern poetic techniques, modern politics, and a modern reality to an ancient tradition in order to create a modern work with biblical roots and so preserve a cultural identity.

*Keywords:* A.M. Klein, cultural identity, Jewish culture, modernity, psalms

*Biography:* Peter Aadoson is pursuing a Master's degree in English Literature at the University of Ottawa. He holds a BA with a double major in English and French from the University of Ottawa. His main area of focus is Canadian literature, particularly of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

***"A Universal Brotherhood": Modernity and The Canadian Theosophist***  
**Scott Duchesne, University of Guelph**

This presentation examines the work of the Theosophical Society in English Canada during the 1920s, focusing on representative work found in *The Canadian Theosophist*, the official publication of the Theosophical Society in Canada. The presentation argues that the various interpretations of the society's founder, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, published in *The Canadian Theosophist* inspired and in some cases defined the work of numerous leftists and modernists in English Canada; indeed, some of the most clearly articulated exegesis's of Blavatsky's work in *The Canadian Theosophist* during this period were written by these members. As a result, this Theosophy functioned, to some extent, as a spiritual bridge that unified these and many other movements – historically perceived as antithetical – into a "Universal Brotherhood" that worked to give rise to a paradigm shift in Canadian culture.

*Keywords:* Canadian Modernism, Canadian Theosophical Society, spirituality, universal brotherhood

*Biography:* Scott Duchesne teaches in the School of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph. His research explores the history of Theosophy in English Canada in its relationship to Modernism in Canadian culture.

**4:30 - 5:45**

**SESSION 6: MODERNITY AND TECHNOLOGY**

**Chair: Leila Meshgini**

***Vital Sounds: The Acoustics of Airplanes in High Modernism***

## **Robert Hemmings, Nipissing University, Muskoka Campus**

In the eleventh dictate of “The Manifesto of Futurism,” Filippo Marinetti sought to harmonize the song of Futurist poetics with the artful noise of modernity, including an “airplane whose propeller flaps at the wind like a flag and seems to applaud like a delirious crowd.” Published in 1909, two years before the first military flight, his invocation of the fervour of crowds and nationalism presciently anticipated the dawning role of the airplane in the militaries of European nations. Through its sound, the airplane announced its status as a technological object endowed with a kind of mechanistic vitalism. However, in wartime, the sound of airplanes became all too familiar. In this presentation, Hemmings examines key examples from modernist writers, including Marcel Proust and Virginia Woolf, in which the sounds of airplanes register their symbolic affiliation between vitalism and technology.

*Keywords:* airplanes, Filippo Marinetti, Futurism, Le Corbusier, Marcel Proust, technology, Virginia Woolf

*Biography:* Robert Hemmings is an Assistant Professor in Culture and the Arts and English Studies at Nipissing University’s Muskoka Campus. He is the author of *Modern Nostalgia: Siegfried Sassoon, Trauma and the Second World War*, a book published by Edinburgh Press in 2008. He is currently researching objects of mobility in modern British culture.

## **“Google-Thinking” and Pre-Compositional Space in Nico Muhly’s *Mothertongue* Patrick Nickleson, University of Toronto**

Composer Tristan Perich, along with a New York-based group of composers, has pioneered the concept of “art music” compositions that are breaking down barriers by working from pre-compositional conceptual spaces largely informed by popular music. This presentation investigates Nico Muhly’s 2008 musical album *Mothertongue*. Borrowing from Nicholas Carr’s concept of “Google Thinking,” this presentation discusses the influence of Internet-inspired multitasking on Nico Muhly’s compositional processes. Rather than dismissing these processes as negative or unfocused, as many composers of past generations may have called them, Nickleson examines Muhly’s album as heralding an oncoming revolution in compositional form, content, thought processes, and style.

*Keywords:* contemporary music composition, Nicholas Carr’s “Google Thinking,” internet, composer Nico Muhly

*Biography:* Patrick Nickleson is a Masters student in Musicology at the University of Toronto. He holds a BA from the University of Windsor and is the recipient of a SSHRC Joseph A. Bombardier award for a proposal on the use of the electric guitar in recent art music. His research interests include art-popular musical hybrids, music and the internet, and post-minimalist American composers.

## **Ancient Remnant Cultures Meet Video Art: Liselotte Wajstedt’s *Facing* and *A Sami in the City* Nathaniel Laywine, Toronto**

Maori filmmaker Barry Barclay has observed that Indigenous cultures exist as “ancient remnant cultures persisting within the modern nation state.” By exploring the work of video artist Liselotte Wajstedt, this presentation interrogates the nuanced layers of postmodern themes that can potentially exist within contemporary Indigenous artworks, such as: the performative vs. essential characteristics of one’s culture, the slippages of meaning in language and the role of signs and their interpretations in urban cityscapes. This presentation applies Wajstedt’s themes to the rapid extinction of Indigenous languages in the wake of a growing emphasis on the English language within digital culture. In particular, this presentation examines in what ways such languages can be promulgated through a re-contextualization of traditional, Indigenous oral story-telling traditions in both video and filmmaking practices and digital archiving.

*Biography:* Nathaniel Laywine holds a MA in Cinema Studies from the University of Toronto and a BA in Cultural Studies from Ryerson University. His research focuses on Indigenous-language film and video-making. He has worked for Toronto International Film Festival. He has also lived and worked in Paris, Berlin and Lima.

***Modernity Ruptured: Telepresence, Performance, and Phenomenology***  
**Karen Correia Da Silva, Ryerson University**

Within the hyper-mediated world of postmodernity, technology as a human activity has transcended the instrumentality of the body, moving into virtual space, while offering the possibilities of augmenting physical space. Interactive telepresence in art offers the possibility for an externalized, interactive presence to undermine the subject/object distinction between the body and its technologically mediated representations. As a vehement rejection of Jean Baudrillard’s claim that hyper-mediated presences, as simulacrum, are non-referential, and have no connection to the real beyond their systems of signification, this presentation interrogates the dispersal of phenomenological experience through the methodologies of telepresence, and the ways in which telematic performance art simultaneously undermines, complicates, and expands traditional understandings of the body/image, subject/object distinctions.

*Keywords:* body and embodiment, Jean Baudrillard, phenomenology, Postmodernism, telematic performance

*Biography:* Karen Correia Da Silva is the founder and editor-in-chief of the art collective and webzine Steel Bananas. She has published her work in magazines such as *The Toronto Quarterly* and *The Flying Walrus* and she is the coeditor of *GULCH: An Assemblage of Poetry and Prose* (Tightrope Books, 2009). Karen is a MA student in the Literatures of Modernity program at Ryerson, and a research assistant at the Modern Literature and Culture Research Centre.

**RESPONDENTS to afternoon panels: Karen Mulhallen & Deanna Janovski**

**6:00 – 7:00**

**ROUND TABLE: MODERNITY, COGNITION, TRAUMA**

**Moderators: Lara deBeyer & Samantha Magguilli**

This Round Table explores the interrelationship of modernity, cognition and trauma investigating the extent to which trauma and cognition are functions of the experience of modernity. Brief statements on interlinked topics by the six round table participants are followed by a discussion led by the two moderators who also provide synthesizing opening and concluding remarks. The audience is invited to pose questions that relate to all or individual participants.

***Resisting War with Words: Writing World War II* – SHEILA GIFFEN (McGill)** examines the language used in wartime fiction by women writers such as Virginia Woolf to explore how war affects the mind.

***Modernity, Cognitive Poetics, and Deictic Shift Theory* – MARIA KELLER (Waterloo)** scrutinizes the cognitive process whereby a reader's consciousness is molded by modernist poetry such as Mina Loy's.

***Modernity and Trauma Post 9/11* – MIMI CHOI (Ryerson)** discusses reception theory and the ways in which individuals traumatized by 9/11 inscribe their own experiences in essay form.

***Is Love Dead?: J.M. Coetzee's Diary of a Bad Year* – VALERIE UHER (Ryerson)** considers the ways that Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year* connects love, identity, and socio-economic subjectivities.

***Modernity, the Post-Holocaust Age and Writing for Young Adults* – AMANDA MERPAW (Ryerson)** considers Markus Zusak's 2006 Young Adult book *The Book Thief* and the way it communicates the Holocaust as a shared point of origin for culture.

***When Pathology Is the Norm: Christopher Nolan's Film Memento* – EMMA FEDDERSON (Ryerson)** argues that *Memento* is not primarily a representation of one individual's traumatic memory loss, but rather an exploration of subjectivity constitution in the modern world.

*Keywords:* 9/11, cognition, consciousness, Holocaust, identity, pathology, poetics, fiction, young adult fiction, war

**7:15 – 8:30**

**Reception with Hors d'oeuvres and Wine**

**Andrew O'Malley**, Director Literatures of Modernity Graduate Program, **Laura Gergley** (Organizer), **Closing Remarks**

This Symposium is hosted by the Literatures of Modernity Graduate Program and organized by the graduate students in *LM8912: Modernity as a Public Event* (Instructor: Dr. Irene Gammel).

The Literatures of Modernity Graduate Program was launched in 2008 in the Ryerson English Department to study the salient features of modernity including subjectivity, urbanization, migration, new technologies and war — pressing issues in today's world.

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