

ENTER THE FRAY:

Theory & Criticism in the Network-Centric World

A three-afternoon end-of-term conference for the UWO's POL9585/THC9609 and THC9612 graduate seminars, 'The Globalization of Terror' & 'Theatres of Operation', April '11, Open to the General Public.

POL 9585
The Globalization of Terror: Life as Insecurity
and
THC 9612
Theatres of Operation:
Conflagrations of Contemporary Theory & Criticism
present

Enter the Fray:

Theory & Criticism in the Network-Centric World.

Thursday April 7 SSC 9420 Deaf's Board Room	Friday April 8 SSC 9420 Deaf's Board Room	Saturday April 9 SSC 5220 Sociology Seminar Room
12:00 Welcome & Introduction	12:00 Panel Three: Biopolitical Asymmetry > Katie Osborne > Sarah Brumwell > Andrew Grant	12:30 Panel Six: Con-Textualization > Sarah Thorne > Malcolm McPherson
12:30 Panel One: Network-Centric Implosion > Hart Walker > Paul Hansen	1:30 Panel Four: Ethereality > Dock Currie > James Depew	1:30 Panel Seven: Subsumed Subjectivities > Yuri Forbes Petrovich > Noel Glover (Revolt/Teon) > Kristen Shaw
1:30 Panel Two: Terr(OR)ains of Operation > Joshua Smith > Dock Currie > Will Samson	3:00 Panel Five: Mysticism > Trevor Smith > Marc Mazur > Kevin Godbout	

A three-afternoon end-of-term Concluding Conference for the UWO's POL 9585 and THC 9612 graduate seminars. Open to the General Public in SSC 9420 and SSC 5520.

The Centre for the Study of Theory & Criticism at the University of Western Ontario.
All sessions will be held in the Social Science Centre (SSC) of the UWO, in London, SSC 9420 (days one and two), SSC 5220 (day three).

Thursday, April **Seven:**
SSC 9420

12:00 -- INTRODUCTION

Dan Mellamphy & Nandita Biswas Mellamphy.

12:30 -- NETWORK-CENTRIC IMPLOSION

(i) Hart Walker, '**Consuming Personhood: The Implosion of Identity in the Age of Technological Reproducibility**'.

In this paper I will adumbrate the foundation of a theory of personhood as it is constructed in contemporary consumer societies. Focusing on Walter Benjamin's essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility' coupled with Jean Baudrillard's Symbolic Exchange and Death, I will argue that "technological reproducibility" as these authors portray it marks the culmination of a historical moment in which the individual becomes fully "detached" from the world of signification that previously acted as the ground of her sense of personal identity. I further characterize this event as the "implosion" of identity, as the previous ground of personhood "collapses" into the individual and becomes both the site of its construction and of its disappearance.

(ii) Paul Hansen, '**Grave Thoughts: Reflections on War**'.

Warfare's methods have evolved ceaselessly from Hobbes' 17th-century thought-experiment on man's short, nasty and brutish life, to Bousquet's contemporary depiction of chaoplexity and the role of non-linear science in war. Hobbes argues from the perspective of *motivation*; Bousquet's thesis is decidedly *scientific* and *technological*. 19th-century militarist Carl von Clausewitz argues that politics is the foundation upon which wars are *launched, controlled* and *ended*. Those arguments are challenged by scholars who postulate that network-centric warfare diminishes the role of man as its controller. This paper posits that despite

technology's ubiquity, 'man' as 'political man' retains firm control of the policy and the plug. Thus Clausewitz's essential argument that war is a political act remains valid.

1:30 -- TERR(OR)AINS OF OPERATION

(i) Joshua Smith, '**Culture-centric Warfare: Weaponizing Anthropology in the Global War on Terror**'. This paper explores how anthropologists are used in the GWOT as experts on local cultures to assist as collaborators in counterinsurgency missions. This mercenary anthropology is at the epicenter of programs such as the Human Terrain System (HTS) and their counterinsurgency handbook FM 3-24. The bifurcated aims of mercenary anthropology correlate to two emergent needs in the era of Network Centric Warfare (NCW). One is the sustained perception of a 'humanistic' or 'civilizing' mission amidst the GWOT. The second is the need for (so-called) 'cultural experts' to sort out the friend-enemy distinction in a war where such boundaries are not discernible.

(ii) Dock Currie, '**Geomorphological Warfare: Altering the Landscape of Contemporary Combat**'. Whether in the construction of fortifications or the deforestation of Vietnam, the active and willful alteration of terrain to suit the purposes of making war is not a new phenomenon. And yet this militarized and militarizing re-articulation of landscapes has nevertheless not been articulated as such in either political or architectural terms. This work is therefore intended to draw-out and delimit the character of a warfare particular to the reconfiguration of 'terrain', as well as to look at the very presuppositions that such a notion of 'terrain' would imply. The ontological grounding of Gilbert Simondon will be taken up and read through political and architectural conceptions of warfare in the work of Carl von

Clausewitz, Carl Schmitt, Paul Virilio, Eyal Weizman, Manabrata Guha and Reza Negarestani in an attempt to isolate and identify this particular strain, type, or kind of warfare.

(iii) Will Samson, '**Petro-Jean-Paul-itics**'.

In Alberto Toscano's '*Petropolitics as Retro-politics: Oil and the Geopolitical Imagination*', he muses briefly on the notion that Jean-Paul Sartre was the "only philosopher of oil".

In my paper, I expect to show to what extent these musings hold on the basis of both Negarestani's notion of 'petropolitics' and Sartre's notion of 'scarcity' as an organizing philosophical principle in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* -- and how, given this, Sartre's notion of 'the practico-inert' explains how and why 'petropolitics' have heretofore been 'retropolitics'.

Friday, April **Eight**:
SSC **9420**

12:00 -- BIOPOLITICAL ASYMMETRY

(i) Katie Osborne, '**The Auto-immune Disease of the Body Politic: Bio-power & the Weaponization of Humanity**'. The concept of bio-power is at the centre of a relatively new discussion within the realm of political science and international relations. It has manifested with greater intensity in the modern debates on the transformation of war as it has emerged from previously defined spaces to become intertwined with civilian life. Using primarily the work of theorists Michel Foucault, Roberto Esposito and Albert Somit (among others), this essay will take an in-depth look at the concept of bio-power as it exists both as a biological concept (using research from the relatively recent studies of the relationship between biology and politics) and as the use of human life as a power commodity in the political sense, with a particular focus on the real world implications of this phenomena on the develo-

ping world. Finally, it will explore the implications that this has on the conceptualization of human life and subsequently, of its use in the shifting nature and weaponization of war in the 21st century.

(ii) Sarah Brumwell, '**Asymmetry, Violence and The (Bio)political Individual**'. The intertwined and yet incongruent interests of liberalism and the military-industrial complex have given rise to an asymmetric global order under the guise of a 'universal humanity'. By laying claim to this concept, neo-liberal hegemony has at once blurred the friend-enemy distinction and relegated dissimilar modernities to a subhuman status. Nevertheless, the pervasiveness of that hegemony prevents the possibility of a spatial exclusion, and so these 'enemies' disperse and camouflage themselves within an order that does not recognize them. The 'spacelessness' of the uni-polar order thus intensifies political antagonisms that it cannot avoid internalizing, and the terror generated by this ambiguity ultimately atomizes social life and makes it the primary focus of political and military interests. Drawing on the works of Walter Benjamin, Carl Schmitt, Michel Foucault and Louiza Odysseos, I will investigate the nature of violence within this chimerical network, specifically considering its relationships to security and the quotidian life of the individual.

(iii) Andrew Grant, '**The Discursive Colonization of Nomadism: War, Bio-politics and the Neoliberal State**'. A curious phenomenon struck the 20th and now the 21st centuries: on the one hand a series of wars in the name of humanity seem to deterritorialize modern States; on the other, a serious attempt to hold onto the territorial sovereignty of these same States. Paradoxically, these two seemingly contradictory movements are incorporated into a unified State logic which is characteristic

into a unified State logic which is characteristic of the dominant hegemonic discourse of the present: Neo-Liberalism. In order to attempt to disentangle and make sense of this bizarre state of affairs, I will turn to Agamben so as to examine the concept 'life' and its relation to the equally complex concept of 'law' in the Neo-Liberal State. In doing so, we will open upon a threshold region, a nomadic region, which belongs to neither concept, but cuts through both, deterritorializing each simultaneously, and forcing each to continually reorient their defensive positions.

1:30 -- ETHEREALITY

(i) Dock Currie, '**The Hauntological Voice: Repetition and the Sound of the Uncanny**'. In our contemporary tele-technological landscape the notion of the 'voice that returns' -- the technological repetition of the voice -- is more pertinent than ever. This paper will seek to address and explain how technologies of *reverb*, *echo* and *delay* complicate the already complicated relationships between 'body' and 'voice' as well as between 'language' and 'voice'. Taking up both Deleuze's conception of *repetition* and Derrida's notion of the *hauntological*, the representation of voice --this uncanny exposure to autonomous sound-- will be read through and located within *Krapp's Last Tape* by Samuel Beckett, *The Burrow* by Franz Kafka, and *The King's Speech* by Tom Hooper: a *stage-play*, a *short story* and a *major motion picture*.

(ii) James Depew, '**On Position: from Ether to Repulsive Field**'. This paper begins by noting the way in which the position of the Kantian subject leads to what has been called the aporia of inner sense, and points to its late resolution in Kant's ether proof. However, insofar as the ethereal individuality is presented as an ideal, it reproduces the aporia of posi-

tion at a cosmic level. Turning to Bataille, the paper inquires into how the problem of position might be considered in terms of real individuation across a pulsating repulsive field.

3:00 -- MYSTICISM

(i) Trevor Smith, 'Hegel's Trans(hu)mysticism'. Looking at the Hermetic and Gnostic influences on Hegel, and how they affected the development of his idea of the wise man with absolute knowledge, I link this Hermetic model to contemporary Trans-Humanism, arguing that Hegel can be viewed as a precursor and point-of-reference for the latter.

(ii) Marc Daniel Mazur, '**Rotten Earth: Existence, Ground, and the Subteranean**'. In Reza Negarestani's *Cyclonopedia*, the Earth takes on whole new dimensions. Not since Martin Heidegger has there been such a radical refiguration of the concept of Earth. The latter, in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, writes that "the world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through it." Earth and the World are in constant opposition and strife; they oppose and strive against each other, desiring to assert one against the other. Both, in their striving, raise each other into their essential natures. Negarestani introduces in *Cyclonopedia* the concept of the ()hole complex, upsetting and vitiating Heidegger's previous distinctions between earth and world. No longer is there merely a secluding and concealing earth, a solid surface providing a ground for world to posit itself. The earth is a porous, shifting and schismatic space, constantly undermined by vermicular undercurrents, concealed from the surface. Negarestani argues that the ()hole complex "unfolds holes as ambiguous entities... For a solid body, the vermiculation of holes undermines the coherency between the circumferential surfaces and its solidity" (*Cyclonopedia*

43). In this paper I will explore the significance of the ()hole complex in relation to Heidegger's and Schelling's notions of space and the opposition between ground and existence for the latter and ground and world for the former.

(iii) Kevin Godbout, '**Mysticisms of Reproducible Modernity: Constellations of Benjamin's Auratic Allegories in a Work of Art**'. In this paper, I aim to provide and contextualize an example of where technology and artistic theology are not the instruments of ideological battlegrounds, but rather represent the positive working of modernity's course towards spirituality. My example comes from a work entitled *Broken Saints: The Animated Comic Epic*, a work hitherto untheorized, but one that I consider a 'Spiritual Friend' to Walter Benjamin's writings. Via Benjamin, Bataille, Kristeva and furthermore Deleuze's writings, I hope to gesture toward of a theory of allegory and mysticism relevant to the march of the post-(unrealized)-millenarian 21st-century and its representation in the work of art.

Saturday, April **Nine**:
SSC 5220

[Please note the room-change for Saturday!]

12:30 -- CON-TEXTUALIZATION

(i) Sarah Thorne, [-]:
To Be Announced.

(ii) Malcolm McPherson, '**Dispatches and Discharges of Network-Centric Warfare: Weaponizing Bio-power in Criticism**'. Can current criticism of *NCW* be read as a *discursive performance* of *NCW*, and in what ways does *NCW*, already a slippery object of study, bleed into the very methods of criticism which attempt to understand, confront, and contain it? For whom? In order to further tease out the implications of 'writing war', this paper examines the reception of Michel Foucault within the work of Michael Dillon and Julian Reid as

a potential example of such textual-strategic responses to the 'violence' of Foucault with another, more decentered form of violence.

1:30 -- SUBSUMED SUBJECTIVITIES

(i) Yuri Forbes-Petrovich, '**Pre-Platonic Regression, or The Anti-Ethical Hermeneutics of the Technical Subject**'. In this paper, I will develop a schema for understanding the transition of *techne* from Michel Foucault to Bernard Stiegler through a chronological analysis of the origin of their notion of technicity (Greek mythology vs. post-Platonic philosophy). Of central concern will be the effect of Plato's *Republic* in transforming technicity from an ontological concern to an ethical one.

(ii) Noel Glover, '**Desire From the Outside: Subjectivity Beyond the Limits of the Self**'. Desire is centrifugal, fleeing the horizons of the Self in search of the abyss of Otherness. Morality is centripetal, incumbent upon the Self at the very moment when Desire is confronted by the Other. Becoming subject is an interiorization of exterior moral organizing entities that always already involves the primordial exteriorization of the desiring Self. Technicity initiates an exteriorization of the interiorized becoming-Self, displacing the subject as the center from which Desire spews forth and Morality seeps in. Today, the subject is capable of tele-sexuality and virtual-responsibility, of desiring from without. This presentation seeks to chronicle this dilation of subjectivity and question whether this change in Self is for better or worse.

(iii) Kristen Shaw, [-]:
To Be Announced.

A three-day conference in the wake of our CSTC class-trip to The New School in NYC for the 1st International Cyclonopedia Symposium (www.newschool.edu/parsons/events.aspx?id=61278).