

ABSTRACTS- LISTED BY PANEL- document updated March 14, 2009.

Panel A: Interventions into cityscapes

Chair: Janine Marchessault

Some wonder: Marketing nature and managing 'deviance' in Vancouver
Julia Aoki, Ryerson and York Universities

Elms, Wombs and Walmart in Truro, Nova Scotia
Stephanie Yorke, University of New Brunswick

Julia Aoki

University, Program, and Year: Ryerson and York University, Communication and Culture, MA II

Title: *Some wonder: Marketing nature and managing 'deviance' in Vancouver*

My paper uses Vancouver artist Mark Soo's 2006 gallery installation "is it any wonder (1600 Kelvin)" as an entrance to a critical examination of the dominant visual tropes of beauty and nature in a city affected by poverty, drug use, prostitution and unattended mental health issues. Soo's work juxtaposes a sunset image taken from Vancouver's wealthy West End and the monochromatic yellow lighting used in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) to discourage loitering and drug use.

The sunset image evokes visual cues of nature and health, which are everywhere in evidence in the West End, such as ocean, mountains, active residents on rollerblades and bicycles. However, drug use, poverty and prostitution in Vancouver's DTES fall outside the discursive norm set by visual tropes of natural beauty and active lifestyles. As a means to manage this crisis, the city employs tactics for controlling 'deviant' bodies, including, as referenced in Soo's installation, the use of monochromatic yellow lighting that prevents intravenous drug users from locating their veins. Through the analysis of Soo's work, I intend to extrapolate how the rational, discursive production of Vancouver as a destination-city includes the management of crises of 'deviance' through the surveillance and control of bodies.

Stephanie Yorke

University, Program, and Year: University of New Brunswick, MA II

Title: *Elms, Wombs and Walmart in Truro, Nova Scotia*

"I grew up in a town with pretty normal problems: the recession of the nineties combined with the Echo Boom to make a mess, or at least of our heads. But I think it was worse here than anywhere else. We've got the floods, for one thing, and the farmers all in the red. And every tree in town died. There's no shade now." (Anon.)

In the long poem "Reservoir," I explore the network of economic, social and environmental problems that have radically altered the demographics of Truro, Nova Scotia. The poem follows a young man, and the town of Truro, through the collapse of the railway, the invasion of big box stores and changing agricultural practice, along with the revolutions (or devolutions) in family life that have combined to create a place-not-to-live, a transient rather than rooted community.

My oral presentation will consist of portions of the poem, along with explanatory discussion of my academic/artistic research methods, which included archival research and interviewing.

Artistic Sample: from, "Reservoir" (the Truro long poem)

The elm trees, tall in their kingdom, died
before James was born, so the Lions Club
put in ash and maple saplings
along the Esplanade and Inglis Street –
cut circles through the elevated sidewalk
and installed demi-iron tree-guards,
to stop

i. dogs
from rubbing up and up
or getting tied to the little trunks
while their owners shop – it's not allowed.
It's not enforced, but frowned upon.
Frowns concede nothing to the small white
dogs of the frenzied old who consult
the Inglis Street jeweler, his roughed face
inset with the jeweler's loupe, busy periscope
sunk into a two-tone watch,
steeped, as it turns out, in battery leakage.

- No, I'll keep it. The strap's still good.

The small white dog has an axe to grind
against every pant leg; and then manic white teeth
in the rearview window, above a sticker with

- My Boss is a Jewish Carpenter

or

- Don't like my driving?

Call 1-800-FUCK OFF

to stop

ii) parallel misdemeanors,
greedy ends of mini-vans easing
over the curb, eyes all the while
on Margolians' Department Store, or Tim Hortons;
the "Indonesian" treatment in the "international"
gift shop window; the Ho Ho Wok Chinese.

to stop

iii) boys.

Today, at the school, they inoculated James

on a stackable plastic chair, turned backward;
his arm over the headrest like an open
car window, latex strip cordoning off
the touchdown area, when the nurse finally
introduced herself as Ms. Just Count to Three;
he didn't, and got his comeuppance
with her already reading the next surname.

- Zwanepol, please.

Afterward, they showed the class a Hepatitis C
slide, just so they'd know what they'd missed.
The nurse said they might feel sick.

James wishes he were sick, home, indulged, apart
from the rush for the school buses, sixth grade
flapping

jackets and backpacks

clump clump up the tall bus stairs,

and the dash for the parking lot, parents' cars
waiting to take their kids to matinees and
restaurants,

but James and his mother to the Friday rummage
sale

where long-breasted women rummage and shake
out sweaters, Archie comics, ice skates like softened
wine skins; the slippery church basement,
fold-out card tables; the sales lady in her change
apron,

heating for a double axel.

- Lookit James. Would you wear this?

Afterward, James and his mother drive down
Prince Street,

past the two remaining elms

with their brown medicine rings

like the foam belts toddlers wear swimming.

- How do those work?

- Just slow it down.

Between the belted elms and the old Normal
College

(recently converted to a YMCA)
the library is urban renewal pink
with a flat cement top, long tinted windows'
cool guy sunglasses, wheelchair ramp
laden with skateboarders, boards flying
through the air like tongues and sneakers loosed
teeth.

- What do you want for dinner?

He knows she means the grocery store.

Okay. French fries. Kilo frozen. Hogshead of
ketchup.

They park outside the Cash and Carry, and inside,
under the numbered isle lights

Isle 1 Candy and Confectionary

Isle 2 Crackers and Condiments

Everyone meets. Dilapidated teens, amnesia-
stricken

men, ill-advised mothers with miss-aligned hips.

The Family

stooping and sweating in zippered winter coats

Isle 3 Bread

checking the price on a tin of fruit cocktail,
army sized, five percent cherries guaranteed;
checking the shopping cart's trick wheels
and calling back wayward toddlers,
tightwad wives, overspendt husbands;
calling back soft outsourced grandparents,
on and on about their watch straps.

James' mother counts exact change, and pays
while he half-nelsons the frozen fries.

In the car, he pushes down all four locks [...]

Panel B: Urban In/Exclusions

Chair: Lewis Kaye

Luminato Festival: Toronto's response to the crisis of space and place

Michele Anderson, Ryerson and York Universities

Creativity in Crisis: Becoming Imperceptible Within the New-Normal Surveillance Apparatus

Matthew Tiessen, University of Alberta

Michele Anderson

University, Program, and Year: Ryerson and York University, Communication and Culture, MA I

Title: *Luminato Festival: Toronto's response to the crisis of space and place*

Drawing on research for the Toronto Culture Working Group based in York University's Centre for Canadian Studies, I hope to present a working paper that draws on David Harvey, Frederic Jameson and others for inspiration in the concept of the city as space and place of identity, citizenship, cultural expression and economic participation.

Luminato is part of Toronto's current cultural policy attempt at dealing with mounting tension between different groups who want access to the city and the city's cultural offerings: the elite crowd of the museum circuit and the disenfranchised poorer and middle-class locals.

Now more than ever, economic crisis looms largely over every decision made by both private citizens and public servants. Similar to how the Obama administration has decided to use media networks and community organization strategically to get record numbers of people involved in community activities in a way that feels personally empowering, festivals are Toronto's civic answer to the problems that divide the city's citizens.

I argue that in designing a festival that is accessible to all groups Toronto's culture plan includes Luminato's efforts to promote a sense of access to the city's wealth and resources in a more democratic way for lower and middle income citizens, while maintaining the sense of exclusive access that richer patrons have come to expect: from higher priced black-tie events and shows to catering to the 'masses' with free and accessible shows and events.

In doing this Luminato serves as a conduit for Toronto's various public and private interests, their sense of belonging to the city as space of public discourse and private pleasure, of ownership over the city as physical place, and their sense of pride in what it offers. The 'festival city' is, you could almost say, one big massive public relations plan in which Luminato fits very neatly.

Matthew Tiessen

University, Program, and Year: University of Alberta, PhD

Title: *Creativity in Crisis: Becoming Imperceptible Within the New-Normal Surveillance Apparatus*

The neoliberal “landscape of events” unfolding in urban centres globally presents the contemporary consumer-citizen with a post 9-11 paradox: Can prosperity and protection coexist? Can profit be generated while risks are prevented? Put differently, the consumer-citizen is compelled to reconcile two seemingly divergent – but wholly neoliberal – mandates: to innovate, be creative, and prosper and, at the same time, to exist anonymously and securely within the shadowy safety of the electronic and surveilled ether.

These apparently paradoxical imperatives represent what I would suggest is neoliberalism’s “new-normal” “security and prosperity” partnership, one that demands, at once, that knowledge-driven creative industriousness co-exist alongside and within an increasingly pervasive web of militarized surveillance systems, social sorting, and behaviour-predicting algorithms.

My paper maps the contours of this emergent terrain, first by considering the seductive narrative of the “creative economy,” whose most celebrated booster is best-selling author Richard Florida, and second by revealing how developing (domestic) security technologies, using adaptive algorithms and ever-growing archives of digital data, increasingly take aim at urban dwellers and city spaces in an attempt to reduce risks and predict problems.

I argue that this creeping network of surveillance technologies compels consumer-citizens, in a bid to assure their safety and “freedom,” to become, as Deleuze and Guattari once suggested in a different context, “imperceptible” or anonymous. That is, emergent systems of surveillance require that we become invisible in order to pass undetected across the networked security systems sweeping across the digitized landscape in search of statistical anomalies, abnormal behaviour, and threats to neoliberal security.

Panel C: Displaced boundaries and crisis of identities **Chair: Steven Bailey**

Dead Air: Communicative Action and the Suicide Bomber in Paradise Now
Kris Pikel, University of Manitoba

Untraumatizing the Past/Future: Architectures of Crisis in Synecdoche, New York and Blindness
May Chew, Ryerson and York Universities

“The Greatest Show on Earth”: Gender and Subjective Crises in The Biggest Modern Woman of the World and The Final Confession of Mabel Stark
Alison Toron, University of New Brunswick

What I See Three Times is True
Angela O’Hara, Ryerson and York Universities

Kris Piki

University, Program, and Year: University of Manitoba, English, MA II

Title: *Dead Air: Communicative Action and the Suicide Bomber in Paradise Now*

My paper examines the relationship between discourse and violence as it relates to the phenomenon of terrorism. It takes as its point of departure Jürgen Habermas's assertion that "The spiral of violence begins as a spiral of distorted communication that leads through the spiral of uncontrolled reciprocal mistrust, to the breakdown of communication. If violence thus begins with a distortion in communication, after it has erupted it is possible to know what has gone wrong and what needs to be repaired" (Borradori 35). I work to enlarge and clarify Habermas's thesis through a close reading of Hany Abu-Assad's film *Paradise Now* (2005) with the intention of showing the desperation that results from a breakdown of communicative avenues, especially as it manifests itself in a neo-colonial setting. It is my contention that the seemingly permanent conditions of poverty and political marginalization among Palestinians are conducive to feelings of impotence and frustration among neo-colonial subjects, which in turn fosters Frantz Fanon's claim that violence is the only viable option for change (*Wretched of the Earth* 84).

Works Cited

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Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

May Chew

University, Program, and Year: Ryerson and York University, Communication and Culture, MA II

Title: *Untraumatizing the Past/Future: Architectures of Crisis in Synecdoche, New York and Blindness*

Charlie Kaufman's *Synecdoche New York* (2008) and Fernando Meirelles's *Blindness* (2008) approach in two obviously divergent ways a kindred anxiety: the containment or "quarantining" of crisis through overzealous articulation. These films are structured around a productive trauma seeking to redress the failure of the body and the silencing of the narrative drive by the reconstructions of surrogate landscapes and sacrificial proxies. Through the designation of abject or quarantined space, these films elucidate how narrativizations of crisis attempt to untraumatize the past and future, leaving an anomalous and hermetic present for divergences to be played out and ultimately sublimated. This paper examines in particular the loci of crisis—Caden's theatrical warehouse (in *Synecdoche*) and the hospital for the blind (in *Blindness*)—to consider the rhetorical and architectural functions these structures serve in the rehearsal of trauma. Also explored are the ways in which noxious seepages continue to "contaminate" the hegemonic architectures of *Synecdoche, New York* through the assertion of deviating and irresolvable narratives.

Alison Toron**University, Program, and Year:** University of New Brunswick, English, PhD II**Title:** *"The Greatest Show on Earth": Gender and Subjective Crises in The Biggest Modern Woman of the World and The Final Confession of Mabel Stark*

Separated by nearly two decades, Susan Swan's *The Biggest Modern Woman of the World* (1983) and Robert Hough's *The Final Confession of Mabel Stark* (2001) are both fictionalized autobiographies that push the boundaries of truth and fiction, subjectivity and objectivity, gender, and genre to a point of crisis. The boundaries between self and other are shown to be permeable in both texts, and crucial to each text is a moment of crisis that eludes representation. These crises are represented as moments of silencing, a phenomenon that is ironically illustrated in *The Biggest Modern Woman* when the giantess Anna Swan literally loses her voice during her wedding to Martin Van Buren Bates, the Kentucky Giant. In *The Final Confession*, Mabel engages in physical self-harm that symbolically represents her lack of access to a language that could express her pain. In both cases, women are presented as being denied appropriate speech, but both Mabel and Anna challenge the phallogocentric order because as performers who depend on their unconventional skills and appearances for their livelihood, they embody a subjectivity that cannot easily be contained. Thus they manage symbolic crises by being both in control of and controlled by their own performances.

Angela O'Hara**University, Program, and Year:** Ryerson and York University, Communication and Culture, PhD II**Title:** *What I See Three Times is True*

What I See 3 Times is True is a video essay that follows the journey of 'Clara,' a Canadian ethnographer and filmmaker to the Palestinian Territories to research the phenomenon of *jinn* (genie) possession. Traveling to Jerusalem and the West Bank towns of Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Artas, a small village that is known for its connection to genies, her mission is to witness one 'true' case of *jinn* possession. However, the *jinn* elude her and everywhere she is confronted by the occupation: the separation wall, the ubiquitous building of settlements, and the fragmentation of people's land and lives. Clara quickly comes to realize how she herself is implicated in the situation and how her desire to *see* a genie symbolically mirrors the brutal reality of the occupation itself. Her final obstacle is to get through Erez checkpoint into Gaza to see her husband, Jihad, which has been all but sealed shut over the past three years. Half part documentary and half part fiction, *What I See 3 Times is True* is also a meditation on memory, reality and speculative nature of documentary itself and its historical connection to colonialism, and western discourses of objectivity, rationality, and visualism. Drawing images from archival footage, found footage, and home movies on the Internet, it follows the documentary image into cyberspace, a spectral terrain populated by free floating images where the *jinn* finally emerge to wreak havoc in the ambiguous space between truths.

Panel D: Bodily pleasures and anxieties
Chair: Bruce Elder

Rage, fear, and reason: A catastrophic reading of Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front
Michael Lockett, Queen's University

Undisciplined, Abject, and Undesired: American 'Obesity Prevention' PSAs and the Enactment of Fat/ness
Kristen A. Hardy, York University

Subversive Body and Its Pleasures
Tatiana Koroleva, Concordia University

Michael Lockett

University, Program, and Year: Queen's University, PhD I

Title: *Rage, fear, and reason: A catastrophic reading of Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front*

This paper uses Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* to illustrate a fusion of catastrophe theory with contemporary concepts of ecological aggression. Applying Zeeman and Saunders' (1978; 1980) mathematical explorations of catastrophe theory to Lorenz and Goldstein's (1966; 1994) considerations of behavioural ecology provides a unique lens for illuminating Remarque's portrayals of trench warfare and the fear spaces experienced by the novel's combatants. These portrayals are subsequently cast as synecdochical to the fear spaces of larger communities, namely a population mobilizing for war. In turn, these synecdochical relationships reveal the mechanics of subversive techniques used to manipulate an individual's aversion to violence and warfare.

Kristen A. Hardy

University, Program, and Year: York University, Social and Political Thought, PhD II

Title: *Undisciplined, Abject, and Undesired: American 'Obesity Prevention' PSAs and the Enactment of Fat/ness*

While public concern with body weight is not simply a recent phenomenon, the present decade has witnessed the rapid emergence of a set of discourses which frame fat/ness as a public health crisis or 'epidemic', particularly in the United States. These discourses involve the constitution of the putatively expanding American body as an object of anxiety, a target of surveillance, and a site of intervention. In 2004, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) produced a series of print, radio, and television 'public service announcements' as part of a self-described 'obesity prevention' campaign. In this paper, I bring methodological guidance from Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* together with broad theoretical directions culled from the work of Foucault, Butler, and Kristeva to consider how fat/ness is represented by the HHS campaign as an index of the undisciplined body-self, a space of abjection, and a basis for the exclusion of fat bodies as both desired objects and desiring subjects. Yet, given

the possibility of eliciting transgressive meanings from at least some of these representations, there also may exist scope for disruption of the 'prescribed' enactments and for new orientations toward fat/ness and fat bodies to emerge.

Tatiana Koroleva

University, Program, and Year: Concordia University, Interdisciplinary Studies in Society and Culture, PhD I

Title: *Subversive Body and Its Pleasures*

In contemporary culture power penetrates subjects' very bodies and modes of life. Democratic project developed as a project targeted at satisfaction of private needs of the individual in which his very life was put at the center of political intervention. As Michel Foucault describes it in *The History of Sexuality*: "For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics calls his existence as a living being into question." (1978) This merger of bare life of the individual with the structures of state control and intervention led to the formation of a docile body, an easily controllable body of civilized citizen formed to reproduce the ideals and patterns of dominant ideological discourses.

In my artistic work, video and performances, I investigate the possibilities of resistance to the dominant corporeal standard. Physical body which absorbed the very materiality of state intervention into biological domain exists in the state of continuous repression, but at the same time it accumulates the potential for the unlimited deconstruction of the established order. The very physicality of the body serves as a perfect background for the subversion of social expectations on corporeal practices. I understand self-adoration, fetishism, self-abuse and other forms of marginalized sensuality as ways to resist socially controlled discourses of pleasure. A game with strictly imposed rules, pleasure, is turned in my pieces into the form of corporeal creativity open to all variations and forms. In general my pieces are meant to reveal the possibility of alternative modes of physical and psychic being in contemporary culture resulted from the state of repression and discontent.

Sample: <http://www.youtube.com/user/TatianaKoroleva>

Panel E: Gender and Sexuality in Crisis

Chair: Dennis Denisoff

Diasporic Castration: Reading Lacan in Relation to M.G. Vassanji's No New Land
Taryn Beukema, McMaster University

Engaging with Mal(e)functions: Progress and Politics in Daphne Marlatt's Ana Historic
Carolyn Krahn, University of Victoria

a+b=c?: An Examination of Shirin Neshat's Adaptation of Shahrnush Parsipur's Women Without Men

Risa Shoup, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York

Taryn Beukema

University, Program, and Year: McMaster University, MA I

Title: *Diasporic Castration: Reading Lacan in Relation to M.G. Vassanji's No New Land*

M.G Vassanji's *No New Land* focuses on masculine experience within a diaspora, ultimately showing how the diasporic male subject is often unable to successfully negotiate the shift from his empowered position as male in his homeland to a new culture where his position as subaltern denies him that same status. This paper suggests that we can look at the homeland and the diasporic dispersal from the homeland as a symbolic castration – a critical disruption that silences and marginalizes the male diasporic subject, who necessarily goes through this process of castration in order to gain entry into the patriarchal governing structures of the host culture (in this case, Toronto). This paper reads the ways in which Vassanji's novel both echoes and resists the Lacanian theory of castration and entry into the Symbolic Order, schematizing the process of cross-cultural refraction between two (or more) symbolic orders. Moreover, I suggest a key departure from Lacan and Freud: because moving from culture to culture involves a renegotiation of entry into the symbolic order, people can go through this process several times in their lifetimes and thus the entry into the symbolic is not just entry into language, but entry into cultural agency, cultural legitimacy.

Carolyn Krahn

University, Program, and Year: University of Victoria, MA I

Title: *Engaging with Mal(e)functions: Progress and Politics in Daphne Marlatt's Ana Historic*

My proposed paper contends that interruption occurs at the point of manufacture of both resources and women. I qualify this statement through examining Daphne Marlatt's novel *Ana Historic* as an example where forest spaces and women submit to the prevailing patriarchal forces of resource manufacturing. Forests become the example of proper submission to this male industry whereas certain female protagonists in the text resist this submission, creating a fracture in male teleological development of resources. I demonstrate that the refusal to submit to male-driven centers of industry results in mal(e)functions. The plurality of this term allows for there to be multiple fractures in how these male-functioning centers are resisted, and allows for simultaneity of meaning in how it relates to economic as well as gender constructs. If one expands the mal(e)functions to the furthest extent, what results is the complete transformation from initial resource to finished product. In the case of *Ana Historic* trees become lumber, and women become mothers. I establish that the fracture at the point of product manufacture reveals the differing ways that mal(e)functions can be considered from economic and feminist perspectives, namely in how they intersect and challenge the male-dominated centers of industry and the nuclear family.

Risa Shoup

University, Program, and Year: Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, English, MA II

Title: *a+b=c?: An Examination of Shirin Neshat's Adaptation of Shahrnush Parsipur's Women Without Men*

Theories of adaptations often focus on distinguishing between adaptation and appropriation, a distinction based primarily on the clarity of the relationship between the new text and its source. Applying the post-colonial idea of the cultural hybrid to our definition of an adaptation allows us to view the adaptation itself as a kind of hybrid, clarifying its relationship to the source and helping us to understand the dynamic of agency between the source and the adaptation. My project uses these theoretical concepts as a lens to examine Shirin Neshat's adaptation of Shahrnush Parsipur's novel, *Women Without Men*, into film. The relationship between Neshat and Parsipur creates a disturbance of culture and media due both to questions of the integrity of a given genre when trying to tell a specific story and the relationship between location and identity as it pertains to Iranian artists, both living in America, but under vastly different circumstances. The concept of disturbance reverberates within the content of both women's works as they attempt to unveil a hidden female sexuality, a metaphor that takes on greater significance when considering what happens when texts are adapted into films.

Panel F: Crisis of the Environment
Chair: Brenda Longfellow

Chasing Arrows: Reproducing Hegemony Through Recycling Advertisements
Max Liboiron, New York University

The Climate Change Crisis and International (Mis)communication: Negotiating a Way Forward
Melissa Harris, University of Western Ontario

Re-mapping the river on film: Livelihoods and hydropower along the Salween
Vanessa Lamb, York University

Max Liboiron

University, Program, and Year: New York University, Media, Culture, and Communication, PhD II

Title: *Chasing Arrows: Reproducing Hegemony Through Recycling Advertisements*

People imagine that their recyclables are shipped to a recycling plant, melted down and poured into molds to create basically identical products. Recycling is understood to be good for the environment. Neither of these assumptions is strictly true; recycling can even contribute to pollution, toxins, and energy consumption during the process of material transformation. Championing recycling over other models of sustainability supports consumerism, waste production and non-sustainable industry practices.

Recycling campaigns interrupt, appropriate, and obfuscate alternative methods of waste management such as reduction, reuse, redesign, and the restructuring of industry. These campaigns, consciously or otherwise, reproduce the hegemony of high consumption by focusing on the individual consumer as the preferred unit for environmental change, by abstracting the industrial recycling process, and by

collapsing the distinction between solid waste management and other types of environmental activism. This paper is an effort to plant the seeds for a re-reading of these ads, and to provide information on which to base competing propagandas for critically responsible waste management.

Melissa Harris

University, Program, and Year: University of Western Ontario, Political Science, MA I

Title: *The Climate Change Crisis and International (Mis)communication: Negotiating a Way Forward*

In the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report (2007) it became clear that climate change poses a significant threat to the global population. With an overall increase in temperature and sea-level rise, scientists anticipate water and food scarcity, human health problems, political instability and many other negative impacts. Despite more than fifteen years of international climate change negotiation and dialogue, there continues to be a disconnect between the needs of developing countries and the interests of developed countries. This paper will examine climate change as a human security issue and will explore the implications of various national policy approaches presented during negotiations. The Fourth Assessment Report confirms that the most adverse effects of climate change will be in parts of developing countries where populations are most vulnerable and least able to adapt to change. In this truly global crisis, it is paramount that post-Kyoto negotiations facilitate communication between all countries to find a global solution.

Vanessa Lamb

University, Program, and Year: York University, Critical Human Geography, PhD I

Title: *Re-mapping the river on film: Livelihoods and hydropower along the Salween*

Working with conservation organizations in Southeast Asia over the past two years, I found that non-fiction film has been increasingly used for advocacy and awareness-building, especially in the context of the 'imminent threat' of hydropower and river resources development in the region. I propose to present an examination of three short films focusing on river resources produced by non-government organizations (NGOs)/activists in Thailand.

Film is examined here as a medium through which NGOs and activists stake claims, construct boundaries and re-map the river (and notions of conservation of). To contextualize the issue more broadly, it is my view that many actors – resident communities who rely on the river for livelihoods, fishermen, conservation workers, networks of activists – stake their claims and construct territories in relation to the river, rather than the national boundaries they cross, and use these constructions to assert power and resistance (against the state, for instance, and sometimes one another).

Some key themes in my analysis will include the urgency and crisis of human rights issues and resource rights (control/access over nature), role of local research, portrayal of the state(s) (e.g., Burma, China, Thailand), and the continued highlighting of what

constitutes legitimate resource use (the connection between resource use and resources rights). Other points of analysis include the issues of access and distribution, as these films are available in several local languages, where the majority of public information is not.

I believe that this work also necessitates a (short) self-reflexive section, since I have been contentiously involved in the production of a few of such films – from small work such as editing subtitles and narration, to the larger task of actually producing images and advising on film editing. The contention I reflect on is also connected to the crisis or extremely urgent nature of the work going into these films. These experiences brought to light the extent to which such films are ‘produced’ and produce boundaries in terms of race, gender, which also relate to conceptions of nature. At the same time, I also recognize their effectiveness and accessibility, their role in providing alternative media, as well as their strategic nature.

Panel G: Mediating Crisis

Chair: TBA

Renewing the Global Information Order: Assessing Channel NewsAsia as a Contra-Flow to Western News Domination

Shan Wu, Simon Fraser University

Freelance Writers and the Crisis of Media Labour

Nicole Cohen, Ryerson and York Universities

The Non-Profit Industrial Complex: A Key Concept for Social Justice Activism and Resistance

Candace Mooers, Ryerson and York Universities

Communicating Crisis: Participatory Reflections of Statelessness

Jacqueline Strecker, Ryerson and York Universities

Shan Wu

University, Program, and Year: Simon Fraser University, Communication, MA II

Title: *Renewing the Global Information Order: Assessing Channel NewsAsia as a Contra-Flow to Western News Domination*

This paper interrogates the notion of crisis and change in the area of global media flows, traditionally stemming from the West to the rest of the world. In particular, Western news organizations have been increasingly upstaged by satellite news services from the global South in the last decade. New players like Al-Jazeera in Qatar and Telesur in Venezuela have been touted to successfully threaten the monopoly in the broadcasting of international news long held by Western media organizations like CNN and BBC. The debate however, lies in whether this increased diversity in media flows does signal greater democracy in choice and expression. This paper takes a fresh look at this issue by examining

the contributions of the East Asian region to the emergence of such alternative flows. With the rise of powerhouses like China and India, East Asia as a geopolitical region in the global South has proven itself to be a significant force to be reckoned with internationally. Focus will be placed on examining a news station with one of the most extensive satellite footprints in the region, Channel NewsAsia, based in Singapore, and how it measures up against a working prototype of an effective media contra-flow. By analysing the political-economic factors that influence the organization within the Singapore media context, and preliminary data collected from a comparative content analysis of Channel NewsAsia, CNN and BBC, the author aims to discover if the station can challenge the existing order as a global media contra-flow capable of representing its region effectively to the rest of the world.

Nicole Cohen

University, Program, and Year: Ryerson and York University, Communication and Culture, PhD III

Title: *Freelance Writers and the Crisis of Media Labour*

The recent wave of strikes, protests, lockouts, and layoffs indicates that all is not well for media labour, a segment of the labour market often assumed to be inherently rewarding and glamorous, creative and autonomous. This crisis, however, is not new or short-term. Rather, the crisis of media labour should be understood in the broader context of capitalist media production, which is increasingly organized along neoliberal lines: flexible, lean production that demands more work from fewer workers; contract, temporary and part-time employment with little access to a union or other forms of protection on which workers have historically relied. This paper looks at a group of media workers – freelance writers – to provide insight into the current, albeit ongoing crisis of media labour. It examines the way freelance writers in Canada have been constituted (and indeed, constitute themselves) as ideal neoliberal workers and the ways these workers have responded to the crisis situation they face. By focusing on two approaches to freelance writer labour organizing, I argue that the model freelance writers ultimately adopt will have cultural and political implications for media production on a broader scale.

Candace Mooers

University, Program, and Year: Ryerson and York University, Communication and Culture, MA I

Title: *The Non-Profit Industrial Complex: A Key Concept for Social Justice Activism and Resistance*

In recent years, the non-profit industrial complex has provided a hostile environment for social justice movements, including community-based radio activism. Coined by scholars and activists in the 2006 publication [The Revolution Will Not Be Funded](#), the non-profit industrial complex became an important conceptual tool for critically analyzing the expanding sector of non-

governmental organizations and charitable foundations purporting to remedy social inequalities.

My paper interrogates the key concept of the “non-profit industrial complex,” considers its historical articulations, questions its relationship to the journalism-in-crisis alarm, unpacks its meaning, and finally, promotes its usefulness in the critical examination of social relations of power between non-profit organizations, foundations, state and capitalist interests, civil society, and social justice and media activists. Particularly, my essay focuses on the increasing importance of the social, political and economic implications of the non-profit industrial complex for community-based radio activists and practitioners striving to provide an accessible, participatory media for marginalized communities, music, voices and opinions.

Jacqueline Strecker

University, Program, and Year: Ryerson and York University, Communication and Culture, MA II

Title: *Communicating Crisis: Participatory Reflections of Statelessness*

Over the past fifty years the image of the heroic European political refugee has been reframed to depict nameless poverty-stricken refugees of the ‘developing world’. Despite this shift in visual strategy having ostensibly noble intentions of mobilizing public support; the voiceless refugee image has merely served to strip agency and expressive rights from the individual. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has reiterated these western ideological frames throughout their photographic depictions, resulting in the unwitting commodification of refugees in order to ensure funding from western donors. Ultimately through the provision of iconic refugee images, the UNHCR is able to lobby for western aid by presenting an easily digestible discourse congruent with western ideology.

This research challenges the commodification of refugees by presenting a comparative analysis between historical photographs chronicled by the covers of the UNHCR’s annual *Global Appeal* and images produced through a participatory communication case study conducted in the Kakuma Refugee Camp. Based on the seminal pedagogy espoused by Paulo Freire, this participatory study assisted refugees to use digital cameras to shift conventional illustrative discourse; identify and reject the ideological frameworks that have instituted the voiceless and commodified refugee by demonstrating their lived experiences and collective agency.

Panel H: Navigating Ruptures in Digital Environments

Chair: Barbara Crow

Going Viral: Contagion and Containment on the Internet

Jamie Rennie, University of Toronto – OISE

'Legitimate Peripheral Participation': Mitigating Digital Change in Traditional Animation Production

Tony Tarantini, York University

"Crisis" as Tool in the Digital Games Industry: Resistance or Command and Conquer?

Owen Livermore, University of Western Ontario

A Nation of Pirates: The Geopolitical Strategies of the Pirate Bay

Fenwick McKelvey, Ryerson and York Universities

Jamie Rennie

University, Program, and Year: University of Toronto – OISE, Sociology and Equity Studies in Education, PhD II

Title: *Going Viral: Contagion and Containment on the Internet*

As the global impact of Web 2.0 continues to grow and mutate, boundaries continue to disappear between the categories of consumer and producer, artist and audience, personal and public. Yesterday's media 'content' has become today's creative generator, as social networking sites and blogs encourage the individual web user to recycle culture through acts of creative construction.

In this paper, I will explore the discourse of 'viral' communication online, as I believe this metaphor has helped us to understand the communicative processes of Web 2.0 in complex and contradictory ways. The virus metaphor, once reserved for the software creations of hackers and pranksters, has grown to include a number of sophisticated marketing campaigns, file-sharing practices, and technological affordances. Malignant software must be re-imagined in light of this new definition, as the viral communicative mode necessarily uses the same conduits, tools, and even the same underlying ethos as the original 'virus'.

This essay will bring together case studies from both streams of the viral discourse, in order to critique the underlying metaphor of disease and growth; in order to contain or eradicate the virus, strict systems of linear control must be in place. The implications for true web neutrality are enormous. Do we let the virus run its course?

Tony Tarantini

University, Program, and Year: York University, Interdisciplinary Studies, MA I

Title: *'Legitimate Peripheral Participation': Mitigating Digital Change in Traditional Animation Production*

The period between 1994 and 2004 was a unique moment in time for the TV animation community. It was a time of transition, when the introduction of digital tools caused irreversible changes to long-established 2D animation production pipelines. These new digital pipelines altered the time-honored traditional roles of 'old timers' (senior artists) and 'new comers' (junior artists) and caused unparalleled revisions to the conventional 2D animation production models. This paper uses Lave and Wegner's concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' and Basil Bernstein's ideas on 'trainability' and 'recontextualization' to discuss the changes brought on by the introduction of digital

applications to a community of practice in flux. It focuses on the Toronto animation community as a microcosm of a global experience and uses Nelvana, one of Canada's most influential and successful animation production companies, as a case study. By means of an interpretive phenomenological approach it analyses and evaluates the crisis during this period of time and describes the animation artists journey from resenting change to directing change within their industry. The presentation will consist of both audio and video material delivered through a power point presentation.

Owen Livermore

University, Program, and Year: University of Western Ontario, Media Studies, PhD IV

Title: *"Crisis" as Tool in the Digital Games Industry: Resistance or Command and Conquer?*

The digital games industry, while currently touted as one of the most widespread and profitable forms of entertainment media, is at the same time inundated with different forms of crises. There is a purported crisis of creativity due to practices such as risk aversion with the deployment of recognized game genres and franchise-based production and marketing. A crisis of labour is cited by industry figures who identify a critical need for a more specialized (and larger) labour pool and by workers who shed light on the exclusionary, exploitative and precarious conditions of their work (Dyer-Witheford, and de Peuter 2006). Added to this is the looming global financial crisis which presents immediate and long-term challenges despite the recent rhetoric of a "recession-proof" quality of the digital games industry. While many of these contexts speak to the crucial role of crisis in capital as expounded in marxian critique, the ongoing struggles surrounding the digital games industry reveal diverse and often conflicting ways of utilizing crisis as a means of advancing various positions. An understanding of how the digital games industry can be transformed or subverted by crisis requires a comprehension of how the word "crisis" is deployed.

Fenwick McKelvey

University, Program, and Year: Ryerson and York University, Communication and Culture, PhD I

Title: *A Nation of Pirates: The Geopolitical Strategies of the Pirate Bay*

As proponents of online file-sharing, The Pirate Bay (TPB) cut through a sea of news headlines when they offered to buy the micro-nation of Sealand, a data center in international waters. News reports speculated that the Pirate Bay could use Sealand to create a nation of pirates, exempt from national copyright laws, because the group of pirates and hackers from Sweden offered to grant passports to all donors. Although an unsuccessful bid, the attempt to buy Sealand exemplifies the geopolitical strategies of the Pirate Bay.

The paper aims to study the articulation (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001) of the TPB as a political movement through a close reading of the group's politics and code. TPB not only advocates file sharing and the end of copyright, TPB runs a websites that facilitates file sharing and erodes copyright. The code and the politics are completely interwoven. The study will show how the strategic migration of TPB's computer servers has created a nomadic war machine: a fluid swarm of humans and machines (Deleuze & Guattari,

1987). The group uses network technologies and web platforms to tack between different national copyright jurisdictions to extend the life of their autonomous peer-to-peer file-sharing site.

To understand the political strategies of TPB, the paper argues that TPB and its websites are a case of strategic media, not merely tactical. The concept of strategic media adapts Laclau & Mouffe's strategic thought to compliment Garcia & Lovink's (1997) concept of tactical media. Strategic media is media central to the strategy of a political movement. Differentiating strategic media from tactical media addresses the agency, unpredictability, and, in this case, effectiveness of networked computers when allied with a political movement. The case provides an opportunity to make this distinction, while telling the compelling and important story of the Pirate Bay.

Panel I: Reading Temporal Ruptures

Chair: Murray Pomerance

Be Here in "Now-Time": Walter Benjamin's Ethical Critical Reformulation of History and Its Impact on the Moving-Image Archive as Seen in The Last Bolshevik
Papagena Robbins, Concordia University

Time's Arrow as Postmodern Apocalypse: Temporal Ruptures, Perpetual Crisis and the Capacity for Cultural Speculation
Laura Wiebe Taylor, McMaster University

Nostalgia for Crisis: Representing Revolution in North American Popular Culture
Emily Truman, Carleton University

Papagena Robbins

University, Program, and Year: Concordia University, Film and Moving Images Studies, PhD I

Title: *Be Here in Now-Time: Walter Benjamin, Crisis, and The Last Bolshevik*

Within the moment of crisis there exists a multiplicity of possibilities—a “time of truth,” as Walter Benjamin calls it in *The Arcades Project*. Benjamin’s “now-time,” this productive moment of possibility that the crisis exposes, characterizes his reformulation of the concept of history in such a way that historiography can be understood to be that action upon the past that brings to light a constellation of potentialities relevant to our own present in meaning and value. The critical ethical dimension of historiography that Benjamin stresses through his emphasis of “now-time” has interesting and potentially revitalizing consequences for documentary film practice, interpretation, and archiving. In my analysis of Chris Marker’s *The Last Bolshevik* (1993), I consider Marker’s use of the moving image archive in Benjaminian terms such that the ethical act of redemption of the historiographer, Marker, and the critical method of exposing points of rupture, moments of crisis which indicate alternative possibilities, may provide us with new tools for understanding the purpose and function of the moving image archive in the humanities.

Laura Wiebe Taylor

University, Program, and Year: McMaster University, English and Cultural Studies, PhD II

Title: *Time's Arrow as Postmodern Apocalypse: Temporal Ruptures, Perpetual Crisis and the Capacity for Cultural Speculation*

Martin Amis's 1991 novel *Time's Arrow* conveys through its narrative two major breaks: a split of consciousness that separates the narrator and protagonist who occupy the same body, and a split in chronology that confuses past and future, so that the narrator attempts to understand the protagonist's life in reverse. These schisms within the narrative parallel and invoke two major historical ruptures of the twentieth century: the Holocaust that happened, and the nuclear holocaust that looked likely to occur. Entwining disruptions of time and subjectivity with historical and narrative crises of trauma and guilt, *Time's Arrow* suggests that major cultural and personal crises can have immobilizing effects. In the novel, split consciousness and time reversal create the sense of perpetual postmodern apocalypse – with massive devastation looming both forward and behind. But a sense of cyclical crises and inevitable disaster, whether pertaining to violent conflict, climate chaos, or economic woes, has broader cultural relevance, impacting our collective commitment to change. This paper will discuss how Amis's novel conveys a sense of perpetual, debilitating crisis and will interrogate the implications of such imaginative work in terms of our Western cultural capacity for speculation and imagining a better future.

Emily Truman

University, Program, and Year: Carleton University, Communication, PhD III

Title: *Nostalgia for Crisis: Representing Revolution in North American Popular Culture*

Revolutionary artifacts proliferate across our pop culture landscape: clothing, collectibles, and media texts branded with revolutionary iconography are increasingly present. Despite the perception of revolutionary symbols as signs of crisis and potential danger, we circulate these artifacts employing nostalgia, an aesthetic mode idealizing the past. Nostalgia, which presents itself through visually identifiable styles and symbols indicative of another time and place, is the central aesthetic mode we use to talk about revolution in North American pop culture. This paper argues that while “revolutionary goods” which evoke a melancholic and sentimental response to the successes of past revolutions (such as the French Revolution, Feminist movement, or Civil Rights movement) appear to idealize the past, they are more accurately an engagement with our political future(s). As Pickering & Keightley recently argue, nostalgia should not be read as a literal desire to return to the past, but a metaphorical desire to use the past as a model for the future. The presence of a material culture of revolution is a sign of our desire to debate the political realities of modern liberal democracies. These consumer goods function as the subject(s) of a dialogue about the potential of “crisis” to produce positive social change.

Panel J: Theoretical articulations of culture in crisis

Chair: TBA

The 'Night of the World': A Psychoanalytic Critique of Economic Crisis, Labour Disruption and the Paradox of the Symbolic Order

Matthew Flisfeder, Ryerson and York Universities

Back to the Symbiotic Struggle! How to Save Cultural Studies with French Continental Philosophy

Andrew Iliadis, Ryerson and York University

Matthew Flisfeder

University, Program, and Year: Ryerson and York University, Communication and Culture, PhD ABD

Title: *The 'Night of the World': A Psychoanalytic Critique of Economic Crisis, Labour Disruption and the Paradox of the Symbolic Order*

In my paper I will examine the psychoanalytic notion of 'trauma' as it relates to the breakdown of the symbolic order, the function of which pertains to the ideological support of inter-subjective reality. With reference to two recent 'crises' of the symbolic order – one local (the so-called 'labour disruption' of CUPE 3903 at York University), the other global (the credit crisis in the market economy) – I will examine the perception of 'violence' that accrues in the reaction of individuals towards the collapse of ideological structures of knowledge, and the paradox of the public reaction and support for maintaining symbolic status quo. Why, I ask, in the face of recent evidence that demonstrates the flawed nature of the capitalist economy; as well as the unethical treatment of workers, the usurping of value from the labour of producers, the precarious nature of contemporary employment, in addition to various other forms of economic exploitation, etc... does the public still, largely, support the reign of contemporary power: the exploitation of labour, the renunciation of labour disruption, support for measures to 'mend' the flawed market economy, etc? My analysis draws upon Lacanian and Zizekian methods of psychoanalytic interpretation and critiques of ideology.

Andrew Iliadis

University, Program, and Year: Ryerson and York University, Communication and Culture, MA I

Title: *Back to the Symbiotic Struggle! How to Save Cultural Studies with French Continental Philosophy*

This paper attempts to address the problem of methodology in cultural inquiry by offering a rereading of traditional Marxist concepts of economy and exchange via the "post-class" reappraisal of Marx in the works of Georges Bataille and Gilles Deleuze. The argument will be made that both thinkers - particularly Bataille's work on expenditure and Deleuze's theory of the evental site - turn away from stratified Marxism and toward a post-human analysis of politico-cultural events, thus liberating cultural analysis from digressions on class and the immutable nature of capitalism while critiquing current trends in cultural studies. The second part of the paper formulates a new methodology for approaching the analysis of culture by briefly

applying the theories presented in the first part to certain “historical ruptures” in the evolution of telecommunication technologies, the inauguration of new forms of cultural studies product and the appearance of technology in facilitating the revolution of political ideologies. The thesis is that a cultural study should, following the expenditure of a material or symbolic surplus, investigate an evental site and posit an *agency of enunciation* that matches new symbolic or material subjectivities.