Panel A: Liminal Places in Bordering Spaces

Danielle Wiley, Carleton, Cultural Mediations
City Boundaries: Walking the Margins of Rome

The hybrid conditions that emerge at a city's boundaries can stimulate new urban forms, spaces and experiences. Over the past century, walking has been explored as a means to investigate and represent these boundary zones. This paper will discuss Stalker, a collective of architects, artists and activists based in Rome who propose the "transurbance" – a critical practice of walking – as a strategy for mapping the city's peripheries. The transurbance assumes a bodily engagement to be essential to encountering marginalized territories and their inhabitants.

Drawing from walks around Rome, Berlin, Sarajevo and Passaic, Stalker theorizes the contemporary city as an archipelago. In European cities that have expanded and contracted over long histories, a fringe of densely urbanized islands in a sea of semi-abandoned territories has been created. It is in these so-called "urban voids" of the archipelago city, rather than its historic centre, that first respond to change in the city's cultural, social and political conditions.

Key points in Stalker's work in the city's peripheries will be reviewed: the 1995 *Giro di Roma* (Walk about Rome); their theoretical engagement with precedents of critical walking including the Surrealist deambulation; and, finally, a 2007 walk along Rome's Tiber river. The walk along the Tiber revealed diverse and intensely contested boundary zones, containing paved pedestrian paths and impassable underbrush, formal agriculture and ad hoc fishermen, concealed shelters of illegal immigrants and established gypsy communities. The walk, in which the author participated, produced an atlas of the Tiber's riverbanks which, although embedded in the centre of Rome, belong to the city's margins.

Christopher Alderson, Carleton, Political Economy
A Prosperous Uncertainty: The Canada Border Service Agency, Risk Management, and the Not-So-New Political Imagination of Spatially-Bound Identity

The creation of the *Canada Border Services Agency* (CBSA) in 2003 marks an attempt to integrate all of Canada's various border-controlling agencies and acts under one enforcement organization; it's function is to provide "integrated border services that support national security and public safety priorities and facilitate the movement of persons and goods." In taking on this role, the agency presents two spatial configurations of Canada's interaction at the global scale. The first narrative is a vision of a globally integrated Canada with respect to economic and

market policy. This order corresponds to a Canada that depends on the proliferation of free trade agreements and fuller integration into the global economic sphere for its *prosperity*. The second narrative is the familiar configuration of spatially bound vulnerability and *uncertainty* in which the safe interior must be protected from the dangerous exterior. This paper is an attempt to unpack some of the significances associated with the stories told by the CBSA, the methods of risk management which are deployed to quell the concern raised by them, and the implication that these strategies have for repressing other narratives that could be told about the problematic nature of state sovereignty and the associated singular Canadian identity. I demonstrate that through the use of risk mitigation practices associated with a liberal governmentality, the CBSA not only attempts to mitigate the contradiction of a prosperous uncertainty but also secures what Rob Walker has identified as the conventional account of a centered and homogeneous political space. I argue here that the use of risk management strategies in Canada's bordering practices provides the illusion of an ontological security, offering up solutions to the contradictions that would otherwise threaten this notion of a homogeneous Canadian identity.

Panel B: Articulations of Theory

Fen McKelvey & Zach Devereaux, ComCult
Post-Marxist without a Pause: Getting Actor-Network Theory to Jive with Post-Marxism

In the spirit of moving between boundaries, we are trying to organize a meeting between some reluctant guests, namely we want to introduce Bruno Latour to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Why should we arrange such a ridiculous meeting? Laclau and Mouffe hold that *everything is discursive*: made of relations between elements sutured together. Their contingent theory of identity resembles Latour's notion of translated and linked elements within actor-networks. Seeing this congruence, we believe that all three authors hold a stake in articulation theory and we want to explore their respective strengths and weaknesses.

How does Latour's actor-network theory compliment Laclau and Mouffe's post-marxism? Post-marxism is often critiqued because of its supposed ignorance of materiality. Wark (2006) calls Laclau and Mouffe *disco marxists* because they mindlessly dance without hearing the all encompassing beat of the music in the room. But post-marxism does not need a hipster-sensibility in disco gold, rather the theory needs some additional language to bolster their musical sensibilities. Latour provides us with these terms in his work on the parliament of things. By granting speaking rights to both humans and non-humans, we can capture the agency of materialism without being stuck listening to K-Tel's greatest hits. Latour also stands to benefit by giving his parliament of things the radical democracy they clearly demand. Through a comparison of their respective efforts on articulation theory, we highlight how they can work together by translating

Latour's mediating actors within networks into Laclau and Mouffe's system of *nodal points* and *radical democracy*.

Kyle Asquith, UWO, Media Studies
Working on a Commercial Tidal Wave: Theorizing "Hypercommercialism" through the Analytic Category of Labour

The intellectual history of communication and media studies has generally given short shrift to examinations of labour. This paper applies recent efforts to rescue labour from the margins of the discipline to the phenomenon of "hypercommercialism," the processes by which advertising creeps into every nook and cranny of media space. I begin by defining hypercommercialism through a political economic framework. However, this approach can lead to a potential dead-end by theorizing corporate power as insurmountable. The alternative position, a celebration of audience agency, can be equally polarizing. Hence, I bring in literature on labour to move beyond these polar positions. The category of labour can account for the pervasiveness and potential contradictions of this "commercial tidal wave" (McChesney & Foster, 2003). By foregrounding labour in a mapping of the "paid" and "unpaid" immaterial workers constitutive of hypercommercialism, this discussion seeks to bridge gaps in the literature while simultaneously addressing the tensions of structure and agency. Understanding hypercommercialism through labour, accordingly, suggests a blurring of lines between workers typically associated with advertising and those associated with media content. Most significantly--and germane to the conference theme--through an understanding of immaterial labour, we can see that hypercommercialism not only obliterates the boundary between branding and content, it also obfuscates the roles of the "producers" and "consumers" of branding. In a hypercommercial mediascape, the labours of advertising are increasingly being downloaded to audiences. Although the so-called "creative class" is celebrated as *the* producers of advertising creative, this is not necessarily the case.

Panel C: Transgressing Normativity

Renee Erica McBeth, U of Vic, CSPT
Dynamic Bodies: Challenging the Biological-Cultural Dichotomy

The ongoing suspicion of feminists, among other critical theorists, surrounding (male-dominated) biological research is a necessary condition for developing political strategies that challenge existing social regulation of bodies. However, it is a mistake to foreclose questions of biology based on this uneasiness with the scientific field. It is important to consider how our biologies, biological becomings, and the ontology of the body reconcile with the particular kinds of social and cultural variation that are important to theoretical and political negotiation. For

example, if we aim to challenge current forms of biopower, we must have a comprehensive understanding of the conditions, limits and dynamics of the life (bios) that is subject to the domination and exploitation we seek to resist.
In my presentation, I will explore the boundary between the biological and the cultural. In particular, I will consider what goes on in the borderline between the social inscription of bodies and their production as cultural objects on one hand, and on the other, the dynamic biology of bodies, which is such that inscription is possible. I will challenge dichotomous understandings of biological and cultural concerns by exploring biological evolution as inextricably linked to and mutually constitutive of political, cultural and conceptual evolution.

Furthermore, I think it is possible to understand this border-space by examining the immersion of bodies in the movement of time, often linked to change or evolution. Taking up Elizabeth Grosz's exploration of notions of becoming, untimeliness and evolution *via* key texts from Fredrich Nietzsche and Charles Darwin, I will philosophically explore the interaction of culture and biology in and across the borders drawn on bodies, across academic disciplines, and around political struggles seeking to challenge social inscription on the body.

Tara Atluri, York, Sociology
Joke's on Who?: The Politics of Humour

I am interested in the relationship between joking, the comic, humour and identity. Specifically, I am interested in comic speech that plays with ideas of gender, sexuality and `race' and mocks dominant institutions and bodies. I want to ask what political possibilities, implications the joke, the comic, and/or humour might carry?

In order to explore these questions I will look at the work of queer Cree artist Kent Monkman and his alter ego "Miss Chief Eagle Testickle".

Drawing on post structuralist feminist, queer, psychoanalytic and post colonial theory I will discuss how humour functions in Monkman's work.

While humour has often been used historically to deride the figure of the Other, perhaps Monkman's satirical mockery of white colonial masculinity sheds light on how the comic might be good for more than just a laugh.

Marcos Moldes, ComCult
The Right to Bridal Registry: Reconsidering the Liminality of Same-Sex Marriage

On July 20th, 2005, the federal government of Canada passed Bill C-38, the Civil Marriage Act, which changed the legal definition of marriage to define marriage as the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of all others. The same-sex marriage advocacy organization Canadians for Equal Marriage (CEM) lauded the

change in legislation as a prominent move towards equality for same-sex individuals. The discourse that surrounded the gay-marriage debate leading up to and after July 20th framed marriage as the cornerstone of queer rights and equality; consequently it lacked any sort of critique about the broader social and political implications for queer identity and the queer rights movement. Conflating marriage with equality, CEM's discourse around gay marriage lacked any critique of how inclusion into state-legislated familial structures could affect broader discourses of queer identity. This discourse purports that the legal recognition of same sex unions is indicative of broader social equality, but is merely the assimilation of queer identity through state-mediated kinship structures?

This paper argues that including same-marriage into the federal legislation forces a discourse of conformity of dominant values onto queer relationships, values that privilege monogamy, heteronormative relations of power and a discourse of normalization. This limits the possibilities for creating alternative relationship structures and thus reinforces long-standing normative conceptions of kinship structures. Inclusion into marriage legislation creates a discourse of conformity through the endorsement and desire for the legitimization of queer relationships.

Panel D: Art and the Liminal

Laurence Robitaille, ComCult
The World Press Photo Exhibition: Global Public Sphere or Aesthetic Contemplation?

The World Press Photo Exhibition (WPPE) is an annual event displaying the winning photographs of an international photojournalism contest. It thus constitutes a broad panorama of the newsworthy activity of the year. Because the photographs offer condensed information that strikes the memory and has a great potential to mobilize, the WPPE is a witty wink to mass media, especially television, that flood the public with insignificant news images, leaving one untouched. However, gathering all those snapshots into an exhibition transforms their context and might also modify their meaning. The WPPE is thus a hybrid space where news and art cohabit, where entertainment meets information, and where a Western public observes a distant international scene.

Where does the WPPE position itself in the contemporary media system and a fading public sphere? Amid the commercial production of news, the WPPE may arouse a consciousness and indeed play an informative role; it may participate to an "alternative public sphere" outside the mainstream news networks. However, it may also tend to immobilize these issues into aesthetic visual artefacts that lose their critical potential when looked at as pieces of art. The proposed paper will assess this ambiguous and paradoxical quality of a space such as the WPPE in the light of the current diluting effect associated to mass media. Drawing on and expanding the work of Habermas, it will ask if the WPPE is contributing to the formation of a global public sphere.

Katherine McIntyre, Carleton, Art & Institutions
The Warbike Project and the Rise of Vernacular Creativity

Within a digital age, contemporary art serves as a forum to explore lived reality not just through representation but through art events that rely on participatory exchange. Aided by technology, previously inaccessible spaces and indefinable relationships now serve as raw material for contemporary artists working within the movement of relational aesthetics. This paper will explore how the participatory art experience of David McCallum's *Warbike* project (2005-2007), renders perceptual the invisible activity of networked culture.

The *Warbike* project illustrates how digital technology can be employed as tool for the examination of liminality, corporeal experience and social identity in contemporary art. The *Warbike* is an altered bicycle which features wireless detector equipment that amplifies the presence of wireless networks through musical sonification.

Central to this paper will be an examination of how the *Warbike* project aligns with the relational aesthetics movement. The consideration of relational aesthetics will be informed by a discussion of space, time and audience participation in art, three conditions which are elemental to the *Warbike* project. The theoretical exploration of relational aesthetics will be in dialogue with the work of Nicolas Bourriaud and Claire Bishop.

This paper will also consider how relational aesthetics has led to a rise in participation within vernacular creativity movements. Mediated by innovations in technology, individuals are increasing their participation in creative projects online. As an exemplar of the shifting definition of art within contemporary networked culture, the *Warbike* project will serve as a focal point for a close study of the links between technology, relational aesthetics, and art-making today.

Justina Spencer, McGill, Art History
"The Jaws of life": Damien Hirst and Inaccessible Excess

As a popular genre in the breadth of Damien Hirst's oeuvre, Hirst's vitrine works attempt to present a reality that is usually cast aside and denied, to artistically demonstrate the 'excluded'. This paper will look to one of these sculptures; *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1992), which played an integral role in the Sensation exhibition in 1997. As a deceased fourteen foot tiger shark suspended in steel-framed formaldehyde vitrine, *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* posits death as an excess marginalized by the promises of modern technology. Hirst's piece exposes the mythic belief that science and technology can contain and thwart the

inevitable as is evidenced by the disintegrating status of the shark's corpse. As will be shown, no matter how close technology can accommodate life-like entombment, death will always already reveal itself betwixt the boundaries of containment. Derrida's theories on the parergon will be exercised in order to illustrate how the frames of technology, lived experience and language at play in this piece speak to the parergonal nature of death, as something that brushes up against, rubs, places pressure on our lives on a frequent basis, but that which remains exclusively exterior to it. Though death is posited as an excess we cannot access, this piece illustrates the parergonal crevices that lie between the boundaries of lived experience and that which awaits us 'on the other side.'

Emily Pelstring, Concordia, Film
Morphing Bodies and Mechanical Eyes: A Reassessment of the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière

In the *Nouvelle Iconographie de la Salpêtrière* (Charcot 1881), one finds photographs documenting what Jean-Martin Charcot labeled "The Great Hysterical Attack." The photographs support an illustrated chart that organizes the typical attack into a progression of tableaus grouped into phases. Much like frames of a film strip, the photographs remove instants from time, leaving one to imagine what happens before and afterwards. In this series, movement exists only in the interstices between positions of rest—interstices which are missing, or left to the imagination.

These photographs highlight an instance in which the power of the gesture is deployed by doctors in the production of identities, and the power of machines in the production of these gestures. This essay aims first to explain how the body and its gestures might have been understood in the field of neuropsychiatry. It then takes a more in-depth look at the means by which imaging machines produce gestures, often beyond the control of human intervention. Awareness of the independent functions of imaging technologies will clarify the manners in which technologies of representation produce bodies and subjects. I postulate that the space for manipulation of images exists between levels of performance, recording, and perception, and that the techniques of manipulation rely on the gaps provided by the limitations of imaging technologies. The purpose of this essay is to examine the female patient's agency in medical contexts, with focus on the various locations where subjectivity is created, altered, or displaced during the production of images. This essay was produced in tandem with a body of video works that could serve as visual supplements in a presentation.

Panel E: On Liminal Placements

Alicia VanDeWeghe, ComCult
Tracey Emin's My Bed: The Shameful Bed as Affect

I am analyzing Tracey Emin's performance/installation/sculpture *My Bed* (1998) as a product of visual culture. In 1998, Emin installed her used, dirty bed in the

Tate Gallery. Though this bed is an assemblage, Emin did admit to spending several days in the bed after suffering a nervous breakdown. This bed was littered with Emin's personal possessions, such as bloody underwear, urine stained sheets, used condoms, dirty clothes, a half empty tube of KY jelly, empty bottles of alcohol, an overflowing cigarette tray and so on and so forth. Emin, like Duchamp, presented an everyday household artifact in a gallery as first class art. Like Duchamp's ready-mades this regular household object shocked the audience, but it is not because Emin displays an everyday household item in a gallery that shocks, after all, we all know what a used bed looks like, and Duchamp's ready-mades were already well established canons of post-modern art. It is the things that we are ashamed of, blood stained underwear, evidence of recent sexual encounters, and abjected bodily fluids that serve to shock the viewer as these items are exhibited in a public place.   My presentation addresses how Emin uses her own body to represent a gendered, *shamed* experience by exhibiting evidence of the abject body and questioning issues of privacy. I will be investigating how this art piece shatters patriarchal and bourgeois constructions of conformed standards of good and acceptable behavior by how she disregards what is viewed as acceptable to exhibit in public.

Susan Brandoli, UBC Okanagan, MFA
A necessary Violence: Deconstructing Ann Hamilton's Tropos

Installation art is not permanent; it is an act of art – an event that takes place over a certain amount of time and is conceived of only for a specific location. In an installation, of the event itself, one can say that it consists of a series of signs, endlessly shifting in relation to each other, to themselves and to the viewer.

Artist Ann Hamilton creates uncanny spaces that exist on the threshold of language. Through ritual and repetition, she places language under erasure, situating it forever on the border of understanding. These borders are eternally a doubling: a boundary where overlapping signs reflect both inside and outside, presence and absence. Her work focuses most notably on instances of repetition, what the artist sometimes calls "accretions of gesture" and from this we can discern ideas that constitute notions of presence and absence. This is an originary gesture. Each repetition is a presence in and of itself, yet never quite the same– a beginning and an ending, both the first and last time.

In *tropos*, we are confronted with principles of substitution, synecdoche, and fetishism throughout the work. In order to investigate these ideas within Hamilton's works, we can use as a starting point the strategies of deconstruction, drawn primarily from the writings of Derrida, Marx and Freud, to begin to unravel the many varied parts of the whole. Particular focus will be paid to the concept of Derrida's ideas of the *parergon* in art, touching briefly on issues of gender, colonialism, class, labour, commodity culture, alterity, the uncanny, language, and palimpsests. Derrida's demarcation of boundaries, his erasure of borders and limits are in full play here. The room containing the installation acts as a form of a subjectile, the material support on which a work of art is made. Wolfreys describes the subjectile as a becoming between. At once a support and a surface, the term marks and remarks a certain crossing and re-crossing of borders,

instituting the very borders it crosses, while having 'no consistency apart from that of the between'. Contradictions and ambiguity are hallmarks of Hamilton's works. Dualisms and binary oppositions abound: performer/audience, anonymity/personal, nature/culture, spiritual/agnostic, sanctuary/prison, inside/outside, absence/presence, fiction/fact, speech/language, and animal/human hybridity.

Jesse Ferguson, UNB, English
Violent Dis-Placements: Natural and Human Violence in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss

In *Post-Colonial Transformation,* Bill Ashcroft argues that "'place' is always more than mere location for the subject whose identity is in crisis" (158). This sense of "place-ness" is vulnerable, however, because it entails "dwell[ing] in a space beyond [mere] location, an imaginative space deeply imbued with the place-ness of [one's] own carefully nurtured sense of being" (158). Michel de Certeau goes further, claiming that "places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded." Indeed, he asserts, "haunted places are the only ones people can live in" (108). In a similar vein, in *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Yi-Fu Tuan notes that any place we inhabit "has temporal meaning at the level of day-to-day personal experience. . . . Familiarity is a characteristic of the past" (126-27). These and other theories of place stress the affective experience of a given location, those qualities that we project onto inanimate matter.

Place therefore differs from space: the unknown, the uncertain, and the threatening. Individuals and social groups convert space into place by living in it, by owning it and by learning about the things that have happened there. In Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), however, this transformation is shown to be reversible through violence. Just as nature undermines edifices, replacing humanity's constructions with indifferent fecundity, so too do Desai's characters use violence to undermine, though in order to degrade place to space and rebuild place according to a different agenda. My paper will address the boundary-breaking power of violence and its real world effects in this important new novel.

Panel F: Liminal Identities & Reflections

Dana Iliescu, ComCult
The New Romanian Cinematic: Context, Change, and Identity, in Cristi Puiu's The Death of Mr. Lazarescu (2005)

While cinema itself is a filter – of film-makers' intentions, of expectations from both film-makers and audience, or of technological means – I believe that today cinema in Romania stands as both filter and mirror, to gaze through but also to gaze back at oneself, clear and untainted by current nationalist objectives; only by the legacy – material, psychological, political – left by past ones.

By theoretically examining the representation of reality in current Romanian films, such as The Death of Mr. Lazarescu (Puiu, 2005), this paper investigates the recent emergence of Romanian cinema, and how its unprecedented realism in depicting personal stories aids in the negotiation and subsequent formation of new cultural identities in a freshly opened Eastern Europe, as well as within Romania's own fluctuating social, economic, and political context.

The Death of Mr. Lazarescu (Puiu, 2005) is a dark humor drama which portrays an older man's journey to the perpetually unhospitable emergency room, accompanied by a paramedic and her increased frustration with failing to obtain care. With a unique stylistic approach within the historical context of Romanian cinema, Puiu's is one of the first Romanian features to borrow heavily from the documentary style, but which continues to be a fiction film. While only loosely based on a real event, this film reinforces, perhaps even initiates, the most significant trend in recent Romanian cinema: a crude realism which has not been attempted during communism, nor immediately after its fall. As social and physical realities have changed since the transition to capitalism, this paper shall argue that despite – and perhaps because – of their (neo)-realism, recent Romanian films defy initial identification, yet reflect a covert nostalgia which in due course opens an increasingly necessary renegotiation of identity.

PhebeAnn Wolframe, McMaster, English / Cult Studies
A Complete Account is not Possible: Hybrid Identity, Narrative Failure And Self-Reflexivity in the Works of Jamaica Kincaid

In my paper, I will look at what Leigh Gilmore calls Jamaica Kincaid's "serial autobiography" (Gilmore 99). I will explore the way in which Kincaid continually seeks to recuperate and reconstitute her identity and her emergence as a self in her interconnected autobiographical writings. These will be, namely, A Small Place, in which Kincaid's narrator focuses on her relationship to Antigua; My Brother, in which Kincaid's narrator, now a privileged American, returns to Antigua; and Mr. Potter, in which Kincaid's narrator seeks to rediscover her family origins. I will discuss Kincaid's identity in these texts in terms of postcolonial notions of hybridity by reading this hybridity through Judith Butler's theory of narrative ethics, which Butler articulates in her book Giving an Account of Oneself.

I will argue that, in Kincaid's serial autobiography, her narrative "fails," as Butler puts it, because she is unable to account for all the elements which contributed to her coming-into-being as a self (Butler 42). Kincaid is both an Antiguan and a former British colonial subject living as an expatriate writer in America. She constructs her narratives through the voice of an autobiographical narrator character who repeatedly revisits her origins in an attempt to understand her own unstable sense of identity. Although Kincaid was born an Antiguan, and came into being as a self through Antiguan norms, she has also been, as Butler puts it,

"invariably transformed" through her relationship to American norms as well, and she cannot, as Butler argues, ever recuperate her original conditions of emergence as an Antiguan self (Butler 27). She cannot be just her American self, either, however, because she will also always be constituted by her original Antiguan conditions of emergence. I argue, however, that Kincaid demonstrates a certain self-reflexivity about her own narrative failure or inability to "give an account of herself" by creating a consciously self-created self, her narrator, who is able to capture the hybridity of her identity by undoing, remaking and filling-in-the-blanks of her own conditions of emergence as a self.

Allan McDougall, Waterloo, English
Post-Secret: The Intersections of Revelation and Healing in Online Communities

In November 2004, Frank Warren, a small-business owner and amateur artist, printed three thousand postcards inviting recipients to "anonymously contribute to a group art project." Warren handed them out at subway stations, left them in art galleries, and slipped them in between the pages of library books. His only requirement was that the contribution be a true secret that had not been shared with anyone; his three, simple recommendations were to be brief, legible, and creative. To date Warren's "PostSecret" project has received over 100,000 postcard confessions, spawned a touring art exhibit and four successful books, and postsecret.com has become one of the most popular blogs on the internet.

PostSecret has moved from art exhibit, to blog, to book series and simultaneously exists at the intersection of these three mediums. Similarly, the project exists at the intersection of authorship and anonymity because Frank Warren organizes and selects which anonymous postcards will be blogged or published. Recently, the most evocative postcards have been triggering exciting discussions within the PostSecret fan group on Facebook, a pervasive social networking website. Warren's Facebook fans, mostly young people, subsequently reveal their own secrets through lengthy reflectional discussion about the most striking postcard revelations. Their secrets intersect with those displayed by Warren. My paper will survey several of these compelling discussions and posit that the growing PostSecret Facebook community is a potential resource for the intersection of Humanities research in the area of online autobiography and the psychology of revelation.

Kiera Chion, ComCult
The Monglian Sour Cow Yoghurt Super Girl Contest: Desire, Femininity and Flexible Citizenship

In May 2005, Li Yuchun/Chris Lee, the winner of the annual Chinese singing competition, *The Mongolian Sour Cow Yoghurt Super Girl Contest*, became the catalyst for a national debate on issues ranging from democracy to standards of feminine beauty to the visibility of a queer national identity. This study explores

the ways in which Chinese youth have reppropriated the pop idol franchise in the form of the *Super Girl* contest and turned it into an exercise in fashioning for themselves an idiomatic production of culture that is also shaped by the larger flows of transnational economic and cultural registers of fashion, feminine identity, and citizenship. Using critical discourse analysis of news reports and surveys with the heads of local and diasporic fan clubs, I will investigate the culturally performative aspects of Yuchun's image by taking apart the particular socio-political-virtual space that she occupies as both a cultural metaphor and spectacle for a new notion of virtual citizenship and national identity. I argue that Yuchun's image is made possible by transnational processes of a "flexible cultural citizenship" that is leading to the creation of new Chinese subjectivities largely detached from physical space and working *against* the limits conferred by the nation state. I attempt to present the complexity of the particular symbolic space occupied by Yuchun and show how her image connects with the dislocated and globalizing forces of national and feminine identity by locating the role of Yuchun in the boundaries of the Chinese imaginary – an imaginary that is driven by new modes of consumption, desire, and fantasies of other locales.

Panel G: Of Death, Torture and the Control of Bodies

Anthony Seet, York, Social Anthro
The Politics of Death & Policies of Funeralization: The Funeral Parlour as a Place and Space of Liminality

To speak of that which is in-between and that which is in-betwixt, I began to explore the context of objects and space that surround me in the funerary world. As an Ontario Licensed Funeral Director, my paper will be informed by Kristin Norget's ethnographic research in Oaxaca, which revealed that "*death, which is sometimes the end of all things, was not an end but a change, a site of transformation, a moment when relationships among the living, and between the living and the dead, were reaffirmed*" (Norget 2006: 265-66). Likewise, the modern embalming process transforms a decomposing human body into a liminal object neither alive nor *perceptibly dead;* the embalmed body is then suspended in *time*, in order to allow the reaffirmation of kinship and of community. This paper is presents: (1) an exploration and negotiation through mortuary spaces, (2) the collision of the living world with the fluctuant nature of the domain of death, and (3) a consideration of the liminal quality of an embalmed human being. Finally, I will connect these points of post-mortem intersection, with a major theme of the Communication and Culture program (Politics and Policy) via associations between funerary laws in Ontario in conjunction with the politics of representing the contemporary world of the dead. Drawing upon resulting consequences and interpretation of law; through the enactment of a performance of death, I will illustrate the correlations between these interpretations of provincial funerary legislation and the lived experience of contemporary funeral practices.

Zachary Horn, McMaster, Sociology
Cemeteries and the Control of Bodies

There has been a change in the way that death is perceived in Canada, the United States, and much of Europe. Where once death was a public event, it is now private. In Europe, cemeteries were traditionally places of "asylum", key areas in the community, owned and controlled by churches, exempt from secular law (Aries, 1981: 63). In contemporary Canada, cemeteries are mostly administered by local municipalities.

The presentation will examine the change in cemetery administration, using the cemeteries in the city of Hamilton Ontario as a case study, and drawing on material taken from an inventory of Hamilton cemeteries. As institutions, cemeteries, reflect how people understand mortality, and more importantly represent a way of controlling corpses. The change in cemetery administration relates to the rise of statistical understanding of people, and to medicalization. Where once death was "an intensely personal experience", with the family being at the bedside at the moment of death, preparing the body, digging the grave, constructing the coffin, and creating a marker, by the end of the century, most of these rituals were handled by "professionals", such as undertaker and cemetery grounds crew. The analysis suggests that the laicisation of cemeteries is part of ongoing rationalizing trends in the larger society. This rationalization is linked to marginalization of the meaning of death as death itself moves from a religious understanding to the control of professionals in hospitals and funeral homes.

Ahmad Syed, Ottawa, Globalization
Discourse and the Performative "Space of Exception": The Prerequisites of Torture at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay

Using the pretext of an omnipresent terrorist threat, the War on Terror has facilitated the discursive construction of racialized spaces, dichotomizing the world into safe (white), "same," within national borders and the potentially dangerous (brown), "other," who exist in threatening proximity just outside the borders and beyond (Hannah 632). This dynamic is felt most acutely in regions of the world with large Muslim populations (Hannah 632). This dichotomy is reified, moreover, as "liberal-democratic" Western societies, with increasing conviction, abandon the belief in the Kantian ideal of a perpetual and sustainable peace in favour of a future rife with perpetual war (Reid 17). This amorphous War on Terror, because it is a war against an equally amorphous and exploitable concept (that is, terrorism), "has no definite spatial or temporal boundaries…a war to create and maintain social order can have no end" (Hardt and Negri, *Multitude,* 14). The implications of this are clear: war is becoming "the primary organizing principle of society" (Hardt and Negri, *Multitude,* 14). The result of this

modern rubric is that we are witness to a paradoxical situation where: "a less than human response in defence of the integrity of human life" (Reid ix). This paradox can be realized and perpetuated because the War on Terror has reinscribed imagined geographies such that, "the political and juridical folds between the national and the transnational" (Gregory 407). In order to understand how the (re)inscription of these imagined geographies function, the discursively created spaces of Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay vis-à-vis torture will be explored.

The prison facilities at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad are emblematic of how discursively disseminated tropes of barbarity and civility are combined with performative "spaces of exception," such that, torture and cruel and degrading treatment become ubiquitous and 'rationalizable.' With this proposed argument as a starting point, it is important also to set the parameters of this paper. This paper will not explore in detail the legal prohibition of torture in Domestic US and international law. Nor will it engage in a study of what constitute the 'acceptable' thresholds of interrogation. The starting premise of this paper is that torture and degrading treatment *have* occurred within the context of the War on Terror and there are exhaustive studies that document this (See, for example, Danner). This paper will instead focus on how the discursive project of Othering allows for the dehumanization of whole groups of people and how those forms of discourse function to create an environment where torture becomes acceptable and utilized. Furthermore, this paper will explore how the performative "space of exception," in tandem with this discourse, functions to construct a locus where egregious violations can occur.

Panel H: Affective Resistance, Silence & Nonsense

Nasrin Himada, Concordia, Film Studies
The Encounter of the Unthinkable: What is Affective Resistance in Cinema?

The encounter of the unthinkable provokes a politics of the in-between, a politics that moves beyond what is contained within the frame of the image and demands from the viewer an affective engagement with what is being seen. It is a politics that brings to the foreground the relation between what is being experientially felt by the viewer and what becomes thought. This is affective resistance. Drawing from Gilles Deleuze's concept of the *unthinkable* I ask can theories of cinema constitute a politics? I aim to create a connection between cinema, affect, and resistance. This relation, between affect and resistance will create, what I call, a new ethical encounter with the cinematic image. In this paper I do away with politics of representation in the context of national cinema, and focus on the ways in which an ethico-political engagement with the image leads to new thoughts on politics of identity, territory and resistance. I will be linking the concept of the unthinkable to the concept of affective resistance. I ask, what kind of political and

cinematic implications does this have on resistance and activism? I will explore examples of new cinematic practices that challenge cinema's own boundaries linked to perception and that provoke an affective political engagement. These new techniques that challenge visual modalities of perception, through how they deal with time, the frame, colour and speed, also challenge determinate political forces that bound identity and territory to national borders. They evoke a new-politics-to-come that is informed by affective resistance. Some of the film examples I will be looking at are: Julia Loktev's *Day Night Day Night* (2006), Elia Suleiman's *Divine Intervention* (2002) and Jean-Luc Godard's *Ice et ailleurs* (1977).

Joshua Schwebel, NSCAD, MFA
_____: Silence, The Affect-Phase, the Wait

An absence of speech could mean that there is nothing to say or that nothing *can* be said – silence is indistinguishably non-language and an allusion to the limits of language. "How can you establish what is not without criticizing what is? The undetermined cannot be established" (The Differend, 9). This paper will examine the potential of silence to depose the subject through Lyotard's concepts of the differend, the affect-phrase, the event and reality.

Silence is not a thing in itself, but many of the 'objects' on whose behalf we speak, some of whom have the capacity to express their pain own and fear, are determined or commanded to be silent. While the ambiguity of a particular silence makes each situation of silence somewhat familiar, the silence that I am concerned with is the silence that trembles behind the assertion 'there is'. In the moments when certainty is shifted, interrupted somehow, things become otherwise – words resound as meaningless sounds in our ears, as if heard for the first time. These strange slips of time allow us to ask ourselves, "is it happening?" and to let the measured ground of reality drift aside ever so slightly. "Silence as a phrase. The expectant wait of the *Is it happening?* as silence" (The Differend, 70). What I will be trying to achieve is an investigation of the relation between silence and language, between language and the subject. The breach given in silence may throw us temporarily outside of the use of language, to consider the world of the 'is' itself.

Cyril V. Reyes, York, Inter-Disc Studies
The Liberation from Meaning and the Value of Nonsense

Influenced by Battaile's notion of 'General Economy,' Steve McCaffery outlined a different way of writing poetry, one that abandons the traditional demand that poems must be meaningful. From Battaile's philosophy, McCaffery applied the concept of excess so as to embrace the delirious transgressions against traditional literary decorum. In essence, McCaffery provided a daring conceptual

framework which suggested that poems do not have to make any sense. His audacious abandonment of sense and meaning stemmed from his desire to make the destabilizing characteristic of poetry such as phonetics and textuality more salient. For McCaffery, the pleasures of poetry, which are primordially derived from the ruptures of the sounds and visible signs of the poetic text, have no necessary connection to the meaning of the text or signification itself.

I would like to extend and re-appropriate McCaffery's use of Battaile's philosophy beyond poetic and literary theory. I would like to exploit the notion of excess in normative communication. By exploring the excesses of normative discourse, the disruptive tendencies of human communication will be highlighted in such a way that others may recognize the accidental quality of the boundaries of communication. The boundaries of language will be exposed as having the same inherent instability as poetic discourse, for the textual and phonetic elements of normative communication have no necessary relation to meaning or signification either. Thus, the goal is to weaken the rigidity of communicative boundaries; perhaps, even suggest that nonsense may be a way of setting us free.

Panel I: Shifting Technological Landscapes

Nick Anderson, ComCult
Robotic Negotiations and the Liminal Politics of Technological Life

Rodney Brooks, a pioneering roboticist from MIT, testifies to his interests in exploring the "fuzzy" boundary between life and non-life, turning to evolutionary history and biological models in his quest to build artificial Creatures. To be sure, robotic engineering is nothing if not a daily negotiation of the liminal. Critical encounters with contemporary robotics bring us to a border-region of inquiry where the question concerning technology brushes up against the question of the animal and that of life itself. Within this region, which is ever expanding as we come more and more acutely to sense the liveliness of human artifacts and the degree to which the human is animated by its own socio-technical practices, the formulation of technology proposed by Bernard Stiegler as "life by means other than life" takes on resonances precipitating uncanny new entelechies. To respond seriously to the political lives of humans and nonhumans within the globalized techno-scientific culture of the twenty-first century, I propose an interface between two theoretical concepts pivotal to unpacking the stakes involved in negotiating the liminality of technological life. 1. *Biopower*, a term Michel Foucault coined to account for the political technologies that work upon and from within human biological living and reproduction. 2. *Dingpoitik*, Bruno Latour's German neologism expressing a political ecology of networked *things*, the various "quasi-objects" and matters-of-concern that assemble and reassemble to stabilize socio-technical collectives. In this paper, I shall sketch out a radicalized biopolitics stripped of its anthropocentrism in order to speculate

upon a future political living, of which current robotic development gives the first hazy glimpses.

Hicham Safieddine, York, Political Science
YouTube as the New Frontier of Narrative Production in the New Media

Conflict representation is at the centre of producing social and political memory and ultimately history. And new and particular forms of representation of particular conflicts over time can create, shape, and shift boundaries of knowledge. Understanding the relationship between a certain medium of representation that produces these histories and the narratives produced themselves is pivotal to evaluating new unconventional spaces, alternative modes of communication and their impact on human experience of conflict and history.

In this context, I ask the following question: Can we think of internet video sites where authority lies with the ordinary person as sites of narrative production, like a library archive? And how are visual forms of representation such as YouTube different from traditional textual forms, even in the internet space like blogs or Wikipedia? In this original study, I try to answer some of these questions by examining content, style and form of YouTube videos pertaining to conflict.
In particular, I examine 40 videos in relation to two dominant chapters of the Iraqi conflict and their corresponding dominant narratives: The Shock and Awe Campaign epitomized in the media representation of the Bombing of Baghdad, and the Battle of Fallujah, reified as a heroic assault on a den of terrorists by U.S. soldiers.

I try to construct the different narratives that emerge by watching these videos and discuss what it means to construct history within unconventional boundaries such as those of a video sharing site whose space is largely defined as one for entertainment.

Julia Bresee, Ottawa, Communications
Mapping the Cybergeography of the Canadian Political Blogosphere:Wherefore Art Thou Citizen Blogs?

The proposed presentation aims to expose original and creative renderings of the fluid borders and flows of one specific hyperlink network of the Canadian political blogosphere, namely an estimate of the "A-list" network (which represents the links between the blogs receiving the most links from the larger political blogosphere). Rendering maps of this specific network enables us to look at if and how borders fluctuate in this influential online space, to detect central and peripheral actors and, specifically, to highlight the position of citizen blogs (also called private blogs) within this geopolitical terrain that also includes media and politician blogs and websites.

Web crawler software and Hyperlink network analysis (HNA) were used to collect and to analyze six weekly renderings of an "A-list" of the Canadian political blogosphere following the Throne Speech in 2007. By analyzing these maps over a period of time, we can analyze the network's dynamics and visualize shifts between and beyond the center and margins. We can thus represent how links and flows of information are articulating and rearticulating this emerging public sphere and identify the position of citizen-bloggers within this critical cybergeography. This object of research allows us to look at the political blogosphere as an emerging site of discourse, conflict, resistance and marginality, to engage the notions of networks and flows, of social positions and hierarchies and of distributions of power as articulated within its shifting borders.