

Biopolitics, Biosociality and the Body
ESF/COST-Workshop St. Gallen, 30/31 August 2010

Abstracts

Petter Aaslestad, Universität Trondheim/NO

The Patient as Text. The Role of the Narrator in medical records

Abstract not available yet

Roland Borgards, German Language and Literature, Universität Würzburg/DE

**The Poetics and Politics of Animals. Animal Studies between Life Sciences
and Humanities**

Abstract:

I will give a proposal of a research projekt. Firstly, this project conducts basic research: Between the established research paradigms of Culturalism and Biologism, is there a third way? Is there a possibility of transcending the mutually exclusive approaches of the Humanities ("Everything is Culture!") and the Life Sciences ("Everything is Nature!")? In order to be able to discuss these questions effectively, the topic of "The Animal" is to co-ordinate the disciplines of Literary Studies, Philosophy, Art History and Film Studies, Biology, Zoology, Ethology, and the Legal Studies. Secondly the project also analyzes corpora of texts by relevant literary authors in a historical perspective: How could such a third way be implemented by the study of specific authors and their literary works? And what contribution could Literary Studies offer in the context of such a third way?

Heather Bradshaw, Centre for Ethics in Medicine, University of Bristol/UK

Human enhancement: is it "mere" science fiction?

Abstract not available yet

Ignaas Devisch, Health Sciences, University of Ghent/BE

You *have* to be yourself

Abstract

More than ever, it seems, we can decide upon our own 'bios', upon our life. Our whole way of living seems to have become an exponent of a personal lifestyle. Consequently, healthcare journals and ethical forums have been talking about lifestyle and the autonomy of the individual. These discussions deal with responsibility and with the amount of paternalism or control that should be allowed to intervene in an individual's choice for this lifestyle. Critics of paternalism talk about control and tyranny, while defenders point out the role of

public interest. Lifestyle is also at the centre of current discussions about how biotechnologies or drugs can help people adapt their rapidly changing lifestyles.

We do not want to discuss this once more, but rather analyze this evolution from another perspective. Using a method derived from the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault, the genealogical method, we want to sort out the correlation of the shift of the meaning of 'lifestyle', and its consequences for the way we talk about individual choices and responsibility for our life. The genealogical analysis of the shift of the meaning of lifestyle obtains to discuss the way in which the increasing autonomy to choose your own style, is not a simple evolution of decreasing heteronomy. On the contrary, in facing the imperative 'you have to be yourself', there is in fact an 'ought' at work which can be interpreted as a kind of biopolitics. At the very moment we think we are autonomous – 'my' body, 'my lifestyle' –, a stubborn heteronomy is at work. We will define this as oughtonomy.¹

Carina Groener, German Language and Literature, Konstanz / St. Gallen

Layered Text and Homosexuality: Sacher Masoch's Plato's Love

Abstract not available yet

Katrin Grueber, Institut Mensch, Ethik und Wissenschaft, Berlin/DE

The perfect body and the perspective of disability

Abstract not available yet

Nagihan Haliloğlu, University of Heidelberg/DE

The European Experience of Hijab

Abstract:

Different countries in Europe have different perceptions of or legal attitudes towards the hijab and as an identity category the hijabi serves as example that there can be no overarching 'European experience'. While the political status of the hijabi body may change from citizen to immigrant worker or student I want to look at how the European imagination, fuelled as it is by reports and representations in the media perceive and respond to the hijabi body which is declared by many European intellectuals and politicians as something alien to European culture. I will look at some political and intellectual discourses surrounding the hijab to see how the hijab itself is constructed as giving offence or as violating certain European codes of conduct. The supposed *unheimlich* quality of the hijab is contested by Christina von Braun who discusses the hi-

¹ Devisch, Ignaas. Oughtonomy in healthcare. A Deconstructive Reading of Kantian Autonomy. (JPMH, accepted at 210510)

jab, or female veiling in the Christian European culture and argues that, for Europeans, engaging with the hijab is a displaced way of engaging with their own Christian past. Investigating the hijabi predicament, in this paper I will look particularly at the French discussions about the hijab ban in schools, along with the murder of Marwa el Sherbini in Germany, cases that bring about the contentious issues of rights of citizens and immigrants in the 'ideal' European secular space.

Katve-Kaisa Kontturi, Art History, University of Tartu/FI

A New Materialist approach to the body

Abstract:

A body is never a definite entity, rather it is something that is always in process, becoming in multiple and changing relations between human and non-human bodies.

Bodies consist of other bodies; a body is always collective. Bodies can be virtually anything; in addition to human bodies, there are for example animal bodies, linguistic corpuses, social bodies. A work of art is a body too. A body is something that can be at once disciplined and described by discourses yet it has its own unruly flows that contest the 'grid' imposed on it. Following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the 'disciplined' body might be called a *molar* body; such as a female body that is defined in relation to a male body. However, there are always *molecular* flows that open the molar body into more complex relationships connecting it to various other bodies. Affects are crucial to the Deleuze-Guattarian understanding of a body; affects not as culturally fixed emotions but as body's capacities, as its affective 'input' and 'output', that is how a body affects and is affected. Hence bodies are about movement, though this movement is often imperceptible.

The *new materialist* take that I'm elaborating in my work aims at creating methodological and conceptual tools for encountering materiality of art in terms of process and (ex)change. This entails a focus on art processes rather than on completed objects. Besides the Deleuze-Guattarian understanding of a body (as stated above), a participatory approach involving fieldwork is central to my endeavour. Collaboration with contemporary artists has opened a possibility to engage with such questions as: How can materiality of art (and not only the artist) be a creative partaker in an art process? How is the artist's body involved in a painting process, and how does it collaborate with other bodies—both human and nonhuman? How can art be encountered as material motion that changes bodies?

All of these questions yield attention to the *singularity* of each 'body' of art, to its 'event value' as Brian Massumi puts it.

Kaisa Kurikka, University of Tartu/FI

The Author's Body

Abstract:

1) Understood in a broad sense 'body' refers to the immanent materiality of all things – not only to organic bodies since non-organic things have bodies as well. These different bodies enter into corporeal encounters, bodily vibrations (with different speeds and slownesses) as becomings on the plane of immanence. This understanding of 'a body' relates to Gilles Deleuze, to whom a body is "an intensive reality": a body is not defined only by its materiality or by its situatedness in a historical, social and political space (environment) but through its relations and connections and (re)actions to its milieu (internal and external) and other bodies. As starting-point the basic (Spinozan) question: What can a body do?

2) Special interest on "the author's body" – a methodological and conceptual attempt at defining 'the materiality of authorship' without either producing a mental portrait-photo of the author ('author-image') nor reducing the body of the author as the 'empirical flesh' of the writer (aka 'biografist or essentialist impulse'). The organic and material body of the author (as barthesian biogra-femes) and the body of writing are understood as folding into each other, entering a zone of intimacy in such a way that 'material bodily gestures' of the author can be seen in author-names, styles as rhythms and speeds etc.

3) The concept of the somagram (co-created with Jukka Sihvonen) as a tool for reading 'presentations of the body'. In fiction the soma (greek for 'body') must become a somagram, a drawn/written body. The operations of becoming-body in language can be reached by thinking echoes, reflections and 'ghostly embodiments' collected in the concept of the somagram.

Marina-Lucia Lienhard, University of Zürich/CH

Forms of Biosociality and Biological Citizenship Using the Example of Rest-less Legs Syndrome

Abstract:

Modifications in rationalities and technologies of government in the past century – notably the devolution of many responsibilities of the state to quasi-autonomous regulatory bodies, private corporations and professional groups – have also had their effect on modern biopolitics. The managing of human health is no longer solely the state's responsibility, but also that of, for example, bioethics commissions, biotechnology clinics and medical associations. These changes involve an increasing responsibility of individuals to be self dependent, to manage their own risks, to make their own choices and decisions. To quote Nicolas Rose, "patients are increasingly urged to become active and responsible consumers of medical services and products ranging from

pharmaceuticals to reproductive technologies and genetic tests". But how independent are patients in their choices? How much agency do they have, acting in a field of complex power relations? Using Nicolas Rose's concept of biological citizenship, I would like to take a closer look at the intertwining relationships between medical experts, scientists, the pharmaceutical industry and patient support groups in the case of Restless Legs Syndrome. By using the method of discursive analysis, I will examine the web forum of the Restless Legs Foundation as well as its official publications. By doing so, I hope to be able to shed a light on the question of patient autonomy in what Rose defines as "advanced liberal societies".

Robin Mackenzie, University of Kent/UK

Reading medical images to construct narratives of the transparent brain as valid or invalid in the neuroscience of autism, psychopathy, behavioral variant frontotemporal dementia, neurodegenerative conditions and atypical internal body maps

Abstract:

This paper seeks to demonstrate the relevance of LCS tools of textuality, rhetoricity, fictionality and historicity in elucidating the cultural underpinnings of medico-legal taxonomies in the neuroscience of brain imaging. Medico-legal taxonomies constitute somatechnologies, means by which biomedicalised bodies are produced. Images of the transparent brain obtained by neuroscientists increasingly inform assertions of the presence or lack of the neural mechanisms seen as necessary for moral responsibility or empathic social relations. Assertions of difference are used to shore up or to destabilise existing boundaries within medico-legal taxonomies, classification systems with profound implications for inclusion/exclusion, civic claims on healthcare, and biopolitics as envisaged by Foucault, Agamben and Esposito. For instance, medical and legal consequences attend those whose neural mechanisms appear to demonstrate the lack of a 'feeling brain', such as those diagnosed with autism spectrum, psychopathy and behavioral variant frontotemporal dementia. Those whose neural mechanisms reveal difference, as in those whose body maps do not match their apparent bodies, are read as abberant and as lacking in autonomy. Medico-legal taxonomies exert a rhetorical force where neural diversity is pathologised and brain images may not be acknowledged as historico-cultural artefacts but read as providing hard data or objective truth. I focus on autism and the neurodiversity movement as an example of possibilities for collaborative readings between stakeholders, eg LCS scholars, lawyers, health service personnel, neuroscientiists and various groups of those whose differences render them subject to specific biomedical controls.

Jacopo Martire, Law, King's College, London/UK

Putting the modern state in a biopolitical perspective: the changing contours of law in the genetic era

Abstract:

Genetics is seen as key to the building blocks of life. It introduces plasticity and malleability to life, fundamentally changing dynamics of power. These technologies include: cloning, genetic selection/therapy and breeding for military physical enhancement. Struggle over their use/ownership looms large in emerging tension over the balance of public and private power.

Modern genetics, by focusing on life itself, opens opportunities for power by reshaping sociality and influencing politics/regulation. Plasticity/control could problematically reduce man to her/his body and substitute biological machines for conscious political actors. My aim is to analyze the impact of genetics knowledge on world/body understandings, on personal/political choices and social institutions. My research questions how law is challenged and how democracy is influenced: How does control, by selecting and differentiating, undermine the mutual recognition our liberal society is based on? Its significance is to challenge public accountability/legitimacy of the modern state. It explores how genetic reduction may erode democratic equality between biologically-individuated "others".

The theoretical context is provided by Foucault and others who argue politics can be read historically as a function of biopower. While much contested, biopower implies analysis of socio-political uses of individuals' biological lives. Foucault points to rising *disciplinary power* alongside state sovereignty while modern law, democracy and rights arose during industrialization in the search for consensual productivity/work-discipline. More recently, Deleuze points to a transition to *control societies*. If the first focused on the body externally in terms of mechanical coordinated movements through space and classification (e.g., factory), the second focuses internally on the body's physical make-up and uses its individually-unique characteristics as a means of penetrative control (e.g., immigration retinal scans, criminal DNA databases).

Scholars have responded but efforts fall short. Rose sees genetics as new power over self and a path to self-fulfillment. Agamben warns that biopolitics can reduce humanity to "bare life". Hardt/Negri imagine biopolitics bringing a new world Empire. Each articulates a view of biologically-based power but grasp limitedly its institutional/political implications. My contribution will illuminate them by adapting biopolitical methodology to law, political practices and institutional infrastructure of democracy. My objectives are to: explore links between genetics and scientific knowledge; analyze impacts on power and law; and develop proposals for genetics policies.

Corinne Pernet, History, University of St. Gallen/CH

**Complications in Shaping Bodies: International Nutrition
Standards in the 20th Century**

Abstract not available yet

Anne-Marie Picard, Comparative Literature, American University of Paris/FR

The Illiterate Body : Psychopathology and literature.

Abstract not available yet

Judit Sándor, Human Rights and Biopolitics, Central European University Budapest/HU

Parens Patriae and the Politics of Birth in Hungary

Abstract:

Since the end of the first world war, Hungarian politics has always kept an eye on demography and population policy. At least on the rhetorical level, worries about the relative or absolute decrease of the Hungarian population have always played a crucial role in shaping not only child welfare policies but also some broader policy fields of reproduction, such as those related to abortion, assisted reproduction, or child bearing at home.

In general, one may see that any attempt, technological or ideological, that evoked the rhetoric of 'demography' (in its political meaning, any policy or technology to increase population) has been warmly received, and not only among right wing politicians. However, most policies have proven to be inefficient if the aim was the sheer increase of the number of childbirths: the harsh policies of penalizing abortion in the Rátkó era in the 1950s (after the name of the health minister), the measures in the 1970s against what was called 'abortion epidemics' or the current exhortation campaigns for increasing the population.

While utilitarian concerns for demographic enhancement has been manifested in several parts of the world in the past, in Hungary political rhetoric still bears the signs of an older (totalitarian) biopolitics. Still no or little analysis has been developed from the aspects of human rights, most specifically from that of women's rights. The failure to include these aspects in the policy analysis is striking as without this element in the policy, child and reproduction policy remain separated and as a consequence, women are targeted and even blamed for national demographic failures. This dual attitude explains while despite desperate efforts and pronatalist rhetoric most of these policies failed to achieve the desired goal to increase the Hungarian population.

Naomi Segal, Germanic and Romance Studies, University of London

Touching

Abstract not available yet

Marianne Sommer, History/Biology, University of Zürich/CH

History in the Gene? How Biohistories Are Implicated in Biopolitics and Biosocialities

In the aftermath of the Human Genome Diversity Project, genetic anthropology – or genetic history – has undertaken to reconstruct the history of human populations in different geographical regions as well as the migration history of humankind per se. Accordingly, the projects range from locally oriented university-based studies, to state-funded, international, and nonprofit organization-based global research. In such genetic studies, researchers mostly concentrate on groups that are thought to be genetically less mixed than highly industrialized, urban populations, due to cultural factors and/or geographical isolation.

Projects in genetic history are always already applied in the sense that they interfere with the identities and histories of human groups that especially in the case of indigenous peoples tend to be highly political. In addition, the DNA-technologies for genealogical reconstruction have been commercialized. On the basis of genetic markers, companies attribute the paying customer to a particular haplogroup, tribe, clan, primitive people, ethnicity, and/or geographic region. By means of customer databanks, company online-forums, websites, books, and films on genetic history, people who have taken such DNA-tests may become active participants in the shaping of virtureal socialities around genetically founded history and identity.

These recent developments raise important issues for a cultural literacy concerning the human body: What are the novel concatenations between research, media, markets, and 'publics'? What can we already say about the ways in which genetic history impacts diverse human groups and individual customers? How do biosocialities form around genetic histories and what might be their specificity? Which might be the shortcomings with regard to a cultural literacy concerning the DNA-technologies and their potentially disruptive effects?

Przemyslaw Urbanczyk, Archeology, Polish Academy of Sciences /PL

"Dead body as biological artifact"

Abstract not available yet

Uwe Wirth, Cultural Sciences, University of Giessen / DE

Between Hybrid and Graft

Abstract not available yet