



Posthuman Aesthetics, Aarhus University, presents:

Grand Narratives, Posthumanism, and Aesthetics

Conference, March 22-24, 2017, Aarhus, Denmark

The research project “Posthuman Aesthetics” invites proposals for its second conference: “Grand Narratives, Posthumanism, and Aesthetics”, March 22-24, 2017, at Aarhus University, Denmark.

Posthumanism sits uneasily with historicity. While transhumanist visions for an upgraded humanity fit almost too well with different sorts of teleological narratives – technological ones of accelerated progress, Darwinian ones of inevitable species transformation, socio-philosophical ones of needed human enhancement (from Nietzsche to totalitarianism) – critical posthumanism, on the other hand, questions historicity so thoroughly that it remains indeterminate whether we became posthuman yesterday or always were. Tellingly for this tension, the grandest thinkable of posthuman narratives, speculating what might happen to negentropic complexity after the sun in a far future has swallowed up the earth, was delivered by Jean-François Lyotard, the philosopher who otherwise became famous for killing off of the grand narratives. Moreover, when we do move into historiographies that more obviously expose larger time scales (such as Big History, Deep History and the theories of the Anthropocene), these historiographies tend to leave out a posthuman dimension.

In this conference we wish to confront head-on the hesitance toward large-scale posthumanist historiography, making an aesthetic point of view the catalyst for an invigorated exploration of possible posthuman grand narratives. In what ways may the interpretation of art and aesthetics be helped by large-scale narratives including and reflecting upon posthumanism? And how might artistic expositions of the posthuman facilitate new understandings of our position in or outside historical grand narratives? The conference thus invites contributions that address the ways in which grand narratives relate to the historiography of the posthuman. Although the conference has an aesthetic core, we invite contributions from other research fields such as the histories of science, technology and media, philosophy of science, biological sciences and Big History, extending the histories of aesthetic domains proper (art, literature, music, performance, aesthetic theory, etc.).

A non-exhaustive series of topics include

- The chronology of the posthuman condition (biocybernetic, Anthropocene, or universally 'human'?)
- Negentropic/entropic evolution and their treatment in art (cp. eg. Robert Smithson and the question of the inorganic)

- The relation in and outside art between cultural and natural histories; between grand and small narratives; and between evolutionism and anachronism, including the question of anachronism as a result of a new hyper-exchange of memes
- Emergence as a form of grand narrative
- The relation between art, literature and technology in exposing posthuman grand narratives
- A posthuman grand narrative as a philosophy of the human condition
- Anthropocene/Posthuman: compatible or competing grand narratives?
- Darwinist evolution as the 'good' grand narrative
- The status of the dualism perfection/imperfection in relation to posthuman enhancement

Keynote speakers

Claire Colebrook, Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of English, Pennsylvania State University

Claire Colebrook has written extensively on visual culture, philosophy, poetry, literary theory, and queer theory. Her numerous books include *Ethics and Representation* (Edinburgh UP, 1999), *Deleuze: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Continuum, 2006), *Milton, Evil and Literary History* (Continuum, 2008), *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life* (Continuum, 2010), and *William Blake and Digital Aesthetics* (Continuum, 2012). She has also written two books in the *Extinction*-series for Open Humanities Press: *Death of the PostHuman* (2015) and *Sex After Life* (2015), and has co-authored (with Jason Maxwell) *Agamben* (Polity, 2015) and (with Tom Cohen and J. Hillis Miller) *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols* (Open Humanities Press, 2016).

Website: <http://english.la.psu.edu/faculty-staff/cmc30>

N. Katherine Hayles, James B. Duke Professor and director of Graduate Studies in the Program in Literature, Duke University

N. Katherine Hayles is recognized worldwide for her many acclaimed contributions to the fields of critical theory, electronic literature and critical posthumanism. Her numerous books include *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis* (University of Chicago Press, 2012), *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (University of Chicago Press, 2005) and *How we Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (University of Chicago Press, 1999).

Website: <http://literature.duke.edu/people?Uil=n.hayles&subpage=profile>

Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, Professor of Philosophy and Bioethics, John Cabot University Rome

Stefan Lorenz Sorgner is director and co-founder of the Beyond Humanism Network, Fellow at the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies (IEET), and Research Fellow at the Ewha Institute for the Humanities at Ewha Woman's University in Seoul. He is the author of *Metaphysics without Truth: On the Importance of Consistency within Nietzsche's Philosophy* (University of Marquette Press, 2007). His edited and co-edited volumes include *From Humanism to Meta-, Post- and Transhumanism?* (Peter Lang, 2016), *Geschichte der Bioethik* (Mentis Verlag, 2011), *Human-Biotechnology as Social Challenge* (Ashgate, 2007) and *Eugenik and die Zukunft* (Alber Verlag, 2006).

Website: <http://www.sorgner.de/>

Information

Location: Aarhus University, Denmark (Venue TBA)

Dates and deadlines

Deadline for abstract submission: **1 November 2016**

Deadline for registration: **1 March 2017**

Submission of abstract

Please submit 400 word abstracts (incl. short bio) to: posthuman@cc.au.dk

Prices

Admission fee: 75€ (faculty), 30€ (PhD/Postdoc/independents)

The admission fee covers the entire conference, including a conference dinner and light refreshments during breaks.

Contact

Professor Jacob Wamberg kunjw@cc.au.dk

Postdoc Laura Søvsø Thomassen: laurathomasen@cc.au.dk

Please direct practical questions and other inquiries to conference assistant, Jakob Gaardbo Nielsen: jgn@cc.au.dk

Registration

Online registration platform will follow on our website

Website

See more about the Posthuman Aesthetics project, its research group, project outline and individual projects at <http://posthuman.au.dk/>