

London Conference in Critical Thought 2016

Birkbeck, University of London

24th & 25th June 2016

Call for Papers

The fifth annual London Conference in Critical Thought (LCCT), hosted by the Birkbeck Department of Law, will offer a space for an interdisciplinary exchange of ideas for scholars who work with critical traditions and concerns. It aims to provide opportunities for those who frequently find themselves at the margins of their department or discipline to engage with other scholars who share theoretical approaches and interests.

Central to the vision of the conference is an inter-institutional, non-hierarchical, and accessible event that makes a particular effort to embrace emergent thought and the participation of emerging academics, fostering new avenues for critically-oriented scholarship and collaboration.

The conference is divided into thematic streams, each coordinated by different researchers and with separate calls for papers, included in this document. We welcome paper proposals that respond to the particular streams below. In addition, papers may be proposed as part of a general stream, i.e. with no specific stream in mind. Spanning a range of broad themes, these streams provide the impetus for new points of dialogue.

- The Affective Life of Austerity, Precarity and Vulnerability
- Contagious Terms: Critical Inquiry into the Transmission and Effects of Language across Disciplines
- Data as Things: Dis/assembling the Stuff of Data and Data's Coming to Matter
- The Event
- Inside/Outside
- The Micro-Politics of Desire: Connecting Institutional Psychotherapy, Schizoanalysis, and Anti-Psychiatry
- Literature on the Littoral
- Objects of Memory and Rituals of Memorialisation as Fields of Struggle
- Passionate Work
- Publishing Critical Thought: Media, Infrastructure, Content.
- Reclaiming Subjectivity? subject(s) after the Death of the Subject
- Recuperation
- Satire: Power, Practice, Enculage
- Virtual Raciality

Please send paper/presentation proposals with the relevant stream indicated in the subject line to **paper-subs@londoncritical.org**. Submissions should be no more than 250 words and should be received by the **28th March 2016**.

Participation is free (though registration will be required).

Further details on the ethos and organisational structure of the LCCT can be found at **londoncritical.org**. Contact us at **inquiries@londoncritical.org**.

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The Affective Life of Austerity, Precarity and Vulnerability

Stream Organisers: Jacqui Gibbs, Billy Holzberg, Aura Lehtonen

What are the affective dynamics of current austerity politics in the UK and elsewhere? How do questions of vulnerability and precariousness figure within the current dismantling of the welfare state? And how do these processes work both as a nexus of neoliberal governmentality and as potential sites of resistance?

In the current theoretical and conceptual 'turn to affect', questions of emotions, sensation and feeling have become the focus of a wide range of social and cultural analyses. Therein, most scholars have theorized affect either as an energetic force that sensuously invests us in our ideological commitments (e.g. Berlant, 2009; Anderson, 2012; Ahmed, 2013), or as a pre-personal experience of intensity that continuously escapes all ideological inscriptions (e.g. Massumi, 2002; Sedgwick, 2003; Clough, 2009). Scholars like Berlant (2011), for instance, have shown how it is through affective attachments to the "good life" that the unravelling of the social fabric becomes legitimized. On the other hand, theorists like Sedgwick (2003) and Massumi (2002) have insisted that affect is the focal point from which new forms of practice and sociality will arise. Affect has, hence, been heralded both as the 'glue' that binds us to the status quo and as the 'fuel' that has the potential to bring about change and social transformation.

In this stream, we want to harness this 'double movement' of affect for a critical investigation of the politics of austerity and neoliberal forms of governmentality. In trying to understand the affective life of austerity, we propose that it is particularly the concepts of vulnerability and precarity that are central to such an understanding – both in their lived experience as well as their representation and mobilization in public discourse. Can the 'double movement' of affect allow us to think about how these concepts further, as well as contest, the erosion of the welfare state? How is vulnerability experienced in everyday life and what forms of subjugation and resistance might it give rise to? How are discourses of precarity mobilized and contested in media and policy debates? And how do these practices configure intersections of race, gender, ability, and sexuality?

In trying to understand these questions, we encourage submissions from a wide range of disciplinary fields, such as sociology, anthropology, gender and cultural studies, literary studies, as well as politics, economics and history. Moreover, although our own work mostly addresses these questions in the context of British politics, we are interested in approaching the topic from transnational and postcolonial perspectives, and encourage submissions that address these questions in different geopolitical contexts.

Contagious Terms: Critical Inquiry into the Transmission and Effects of Language across Disciplines

Stream Organisers: Sara Constantino, Emmett Zeifman

“He read in order to steal [...] He was the Library of Babel, but without concern for maintaining it, instead adding to it, making it overflow.”

Jean François Lyotard on the death of Gilles Deleuze. Lyotard, “Il était la bibliothèque de Babel,” *Libération*, November 7, 1995. (Translated by the authors.)

Occasionally, terms that may be precisely defined and prevalent in one discipline spread to others. This process can be likened to a virus or bacteria jumping to a new host species, which is not yet adapted to living with it. This jump produces a sudden infection, destabilization or mutation in the population of the new host – a productive, even necessary, moment of crossdisciplinary exchange that challenges prevailing assumptions or perspectives, and prompts the reconsideration of disciplinary boundaries and practices through the adoption of new references, vocabularies, technologies or methodologies. Looking at the historical formation and development of disciplines, we can identify numerous such jumps, some of which resulted in the wholesale transformation or invention of a discipline, and others that produced radical, though perhaps short-lived, alternatives to established ideas (themselves often continuing to influence work in other disciplines long after their efficacy has been diminished in their own, as in the cases of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud).

These crossdisciplinary jumps often occur at moments of crisis within a discipline or the broader cultural context, when received bodies of knowledge and practice can no longer be reconciled with new conditions or information. We might relate such moments of transformation to Thomas Kuhn’s theorization of paradigm shifts in the sciences. In Kuhn’s analysis, these shifts are carried out not by a process of linear accumulation of knowledge, but by individuals and groups who, in moments of disciplinary crisis, theorize radical alternatives to accepted beliefs that suddenly recontextualize entire bodies of knowledge. The term paradigm shift, coined by Kuhn, and applicable in his writing only to the epistemology of the hard sciences, can itself be understood as an example of this phenomenon, as it has found new valences in disciplines ranging from the social sciences to theology to technology, prompting reconsideration of the histories and practices of these fields.

Such transmission of a given term from one discipline to another requires the translation of the term into language specific to new host, entailing misreadings, appropriations and redefinitions. In some cases, the term in question may be rendered unrecognizable to the discipline in which it originated, which carries on unaware that the jump has been made. In other cases, an interdisciplinary conversation may begin, with the jump prompting feedback between disciplines. These jumps often bridge from the sciences to critical theory and the arts, suggesting, if not always realizing, the possibility of challenging what have become entrenched institutional and methodological divides. Today we might take as examples of this phenomenon the anthropocene (which has spread from geology), big data (from marketing and business consulting) and affect (from psychology), or, looking to the past half century, entropy (from physics), topology (from mathematics), networks and cybernetics (from computer science), ecology (from biology), structuralism (from linguistics), gestalt (from psychology) or deconstruction (from literary theory).

This is a call for critical analyses of the crossdisciplinary transmission of terms, addressing the function of such language in establishing new contexts or practices within and between disciplines. Papers might take as a starting point either a single term or multiple terms, tracing histories, genealogies or etymologies. They may consider how such terms spread through new contexts and find new meanings, as well as the politics of their use. What responsibilities to the original meanings or contexts of such terms come with appropriating and translating specialized language between disciplines? How should terms be defined when presented to new audiences, and how does the use of these terms construct new audiences within and across fields? Does the ambiguity, misreading and partial knowledge associated with these terms represent a productive force for the generation of new ideas and discourses, or a problematic disregard for established knowledge and meanings? This call for speculation on such language relates, ultimately, to a broad question confronting any who operate within the academy: How might established disciplinary boundaries be challenged, or, contrarily, be understood as necessary to the formation of critical thought?

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Data as Things: Dis/assembling the Stuff of Data and Data's Coming to Matter

Stream Organisers: Claudia Aradau, Rocco Bellanova, Gloria González Fuster

Data fascinate, anew, social sciences. Across disciplines, researchers, professional associations, and journals seem resolute in their quest to harvest and domesticate (big) data, as if they were a natural force finally available for (respectful) exploitation. If everything can be apprehended through data – if everything is data - the key problem becomes how to intervene theoretically and politically, more or less ethically and/of effectively, with the data deluge. Yet, the more the research excitement about data continues to grow, the more we seem to lose sight of how data are granted the power to count at all.

Before coming to matter as (big) data, data must be produced and recognised as such. If recently some critical researchers have engaged in exploring the epistemic implications of big data and data processing technologies, notably for the study of surveillance and security practices, these inquiries sometimes appear to be premised, paradoxically, on an acceptance of data as pre-existing tools in the making and ordering of societies. Likewise, discourses aiming to counter negative effects of current data practices seldom question data's (in)existence, as if data deserved to be protected rather than opened up, preserving their natural relations to reality rather than problematizing them.

These approaches to data, however, risk failing short in grasping the everyday implications of governing (through) data.

A more robust critique of contemporary forms of governmentality may only be set off by taking data apart: focusing on them as a continuous, and often contested, production. This goes beyond acknowledging their performativity in techniques of control and knowledge generation, so to understand their fabrication, their recalcitrance and their diverse contributions. From this perspective, data become a particularly interesting site to study both controversies and arrangements, in other words: to apprehend some of the most salient forms of contemporary politics.

Contributions to this stream will aim to problematize one step further the idea that everything is data. We invite participants to apprehend data as “an object of inquiry rather than subsumed to knowledge” (Aradau and Blanke 2015), and as a matter of concern rather than a matter of fact. In other words, we believe that we need to dare to think about data as ‘just another’ thing, in a double effort to problematize anew the protean role of data and to explore how new political spaces can be unblocked.

The Event

Stream Organisers: Ben Dalton, Jacob Bittner

The Event has emerged as a keyword in modern critical thought. Varying widely in its interdisciplinary figurations and applications, the Event always promises transformation. To think the Event is to question how it will arrive and manifest itself. Are we awaiting the Event, currently living it, or have we unwittingly lived past it? Will the event emerge as a single rupture, or will it unfold, slowly worming its way through textures of the everyday? Will the Event arise as an intelligible manifestation within pre-existing social structures such as technology, medicine, and law, or will it explode the fabric of the social altogether?

For the later Martin Heidegger, the *Ereignis* is that which cannot itself be reduced to an occurrence in the history of Being; rather, this event guides the 'destruction' of metaphysics itself and the thinking of the ontological difference between Being and beings. Michel Foucault addresses the Event not as a change within discourse, but as the interruption of discourse which produces both the limitations and possibilities of saying and doing within a society. But does the Event's foundational dislocation mark a sudden movement in our relation to reality, or an objective metamorphosis of reality itself? Slavoj Žižek, for example, debates whether to situate eventhood within epistemology or ontology. Meanwhile, Alain Badiou and Gilles Deleuze debate whether the Event relates to truth or sense. Derrida considers deconstruction itself to be an event. Other thinkers figure the Event as a matter of exposure. Claude Romano develops an 'evential hermeneutics' in which the Event opens up the horizon of meaning, and the human is defined as being constitutively open to events. Catherine Malabou explores her concept of plasticity through neuroscience, showing the brain's very materiality to be capable of its own deconstruction in its openness to the Event of cerebral trauma; the brain responds to the Event's alterity in its own dark and unforeseeable metamorphoses. Object-oriented ontologists such as Graham Harman and Timothy Morton see the event as an ecological concern, both thinking a universe devoid of the human. The OOOs with their post-correlational, disanthropic futures and Malabou with her evacuated post-traumatic subject both implicitly think the Event as an invitation to consider what comes after the subject.

In the aftermath of the Event, what fills the gap of what once was? How can we harness the explosive potential of the Event to question what it means to change? What current global phenomena might be leading us to the Event? What are the political, social, technological, sexual, ecological mutations that might have pushed us to its precipice? Does the Event occur as a snapping point in relation to a certain level of saturation, or is it something that rushes to fill a vacancy? This stream invites papers that address any of these (or other) questions related to the conceptualizations of the event, and/or the possible applications of the concept of the Event in any disciplinary field.

Inside/Outside

Stream Organiser: Andrea Vesentini

Inside and outside constitute a universal and inescapable dualism in our everyday experience of space. The split is also at the roots of our becoming human: we learn about their difference by being born, by leaving a safe inside for an unknown outside. The very definition of space seems to have its origin in this basic divide. Heidegger noted that space cannot be conceived at all unless it is first marked by a boundary separating it from the void. In order for any space to exist, one first needs to draw a line between what is inside and outside of it. Gaston Bachelard found in this dualism one of the foundations of his metaphysics of space, as well as a metaphor affecting our ways of articulating all concepts and systems of thoughts through spatial imagery. It surfaces in many other binary categories, such as interiority and exteriority, presence and absence, the self and the other.

However, inside/outside is not just one of the most powerful dichotomies dominating our empirical understanding of space; it also defines its politics. The split has returned in fields as different as philosophy, psychology, geography, cultural history, as well as architectural, textual, economic and political theory. Amongst other issues, it interrogates the artistic choice of what to include in a frame or text, the design of the built environment, the differences between private and public space, citizenship and foreignness, the nature of borders and walls, or the economic theories on externalities.

As any other binary opposition, the interaction between inside and outside is never premised on an equal relationship, but one whose analysis is bound to expose inherent imbalances and hierarchisations. This leads to a discourse on the politics of inclusion and exclusion, prompting one to ask whether spaces, as both metaphors and actual locations, are inevitably defined by the subjects and meanings that they shut out, rather than the ones they contain within themselves.

Submissions for this stream should focus on the inside/outside dualism in the design, representation and understanding of space from an interdisciplinary perspective. Space should be approached as a broad notion encompassing many aspects in the study of humanities and social sciences. Contributors would be encouraged to blur the boundaries and expose the complexities of this apparently clear-cut dichotomy and emphasise acts of conflict, subversion and resistance. The writings of Georg Simmel, Martin Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, Gaston Bachelard, Rudolf Arnheim, Yi-Fu Tuan, Richard Sennett and Peter Sloterdijk, amongst others, might provide a useful starting point for discussion.

Literature on the Littoral

Stream Organiser: Niranjana Ramesh

The space where the ocean meets land is a busy place. Trading ports are built. Cities develop around them, negotiating with fishing settlements. People set out or set foot, sometimes in search of overseas conquests, as romantic accounts of colonial seafarers or Indian Ocean histories suggest. At other times and places, they are reluctant but fervent voyagers, escaping conflict and battling borders. The water and land are also in constant activity – eroding, seeping, silting, inundating and salinizing – inspiring infrastructure like canals, harbours, flood barriers, desalination plants.

Hence the name ‘Littoral’ rather than just ‘Coast’ in the title. The space and activities encompassed in the littoral, including not just seashores but also estuaries, deltas or backwaters, comprise a ‘hybrid geography’ (Whatmore 2002) that this stream invites accounts of. We are interested in:

- landscape transformations at the littoral through socio-natural processes
- the ambiguity, marginality and fertility of the littoral in social, legal and administrative life
- fishing and other marine occupations that harness ocean-life for food and other commercial use - littoral urbanism and agriculture
- salt and other minerals that transgress between the water and the soil
- resource extraction at and facilitated by the littoral
- wetland ecosystems and their interactions with other human and non-human actors
- governance of the littoral through regulation, politics and commerce
- state-building, border-making, empire and colonisation through the littoral
- resistance and antagonistic politics at the littoral
- cosmopolitanism and cultures at the littoral
- technologies of production and reproduction at the littoral
- environmental politics and risk, in the face of climate change and its symptom of sea level rise

By calling for literature on the littoral, we aim to include ethnographic narratives, historic accounts, literary writing, theorisation of the geographical space and other forms of scholarly engagement with the littoral.

Through these accounts, we aim to discuss the question of nature and culture in academic vocabulary and conceptualisation. In a Latourian world of actors in dynamic interaction with and mutually constituting each other, what kind of knowledges about the littoral can we aim to produce? This is an exploratory stream and respondents are welcome to challenge the premise, some of the presumptions and possible omissions in the call, through their papers/presentations/abstracts.

Whatmore, S. (2002). *Hybrid geographies: Natures cultures spaces*. Sage.

The Micro-Politics of Desire: Connecting Institutional Psychotherapy, Schizoanalysis, and Anti-Psychiatry

Stream Organiser: Edward Thornton

This stream seeks to explore the potential of Institutional Psychotherapy, schizoanalysis and anti-psychiatry for a renewed, practical engagement with our contemporary psycho-political situation.

Psychoanalytic concepts are today integrated into the fabric of the social and political sciences. They range from mechanisms of social control, to theoretical lenses on colonization, to subaltern voices of protest. Many of our most commonplace economic theories use pseudo-Freudian concepts to imagine a marketplace of atomised egos, open to the systematic manipulation of affect by the advertising industry. National psyches are considered 'well developed' or 'regressive', and are even labelled 'neurotic', 'psychotic' or 'sadistic'. What is noticeable throughout, is the hierarchization of the political over the psychological: psychoanalysis, whether Freudian, Lacanian, or otherwise, is confined to the toolkit of political analysis.

There is, however, a counter-tradition that stands in opposition to this assimilation of psychoanalytic thinking into the social sciences in general and politics in particular. This counter-tradition is characterized by its distinctive psycho-political methodologies, which recognise the productive convergence of two sets of problems – the critical and the clinical – without subordinating the one to the other. Some of the most radical insubordination comes from those engaged in institutional therapy – Tosquelle, Fanon and Guattari – who refuse to collude in the all-too-eager bourgeoisification and colonisation of mental space by mainstream psychoanalysis. Other influential positions include that of R. D. Laing, who in his own engagement with the social-political refused to align his thought with the Left or with Marxist psychoanalysis. Equally rich approaches can be found in the work of the Marxist-Freudians in South American psychoanalysis who have pioneered new conceptions of group analysis with enduring contemporary relevance.

Felix Guattari's collaboration with Jean Oury at the clinic of La Borde, and his schizoanalytic work with Deleuze, both point to a practice in which the political nature of psychotherapeutic problems is tackled head-on. His work confronts both the macropolitical fascism of the state and the micropolitical danger of the fascist within each of us, within an integrated practice. Tosquelles' work at St Alban, and its influence on Franz Fanon, highlights another vector for the development of Institutional Psychotherapy. In Fanon, we find a radical healing and a therapeutic radicalism - in other words, the insistence on a rapprochement between revolution and healing and a simultaneous liberation of land and mind. Finally, the anti-psychiatry movements associated with figures such as Laing in the UK and Franco 'Bifo' Berardi in Italy, share a commitment to the development of a therapeutic practice that does not separate the subject from the social and political conditions of their genesis.

Contributors need not address the work of the authors listed above directly, but proposals should confront the problems that emerge at the convergence of psychotherapy and politics.

Possible topics:

- The closing-off of mental and/or physical spaces, the forces which enable this violent closure, and the possibilities for resistance within such spaces
- The globalization of Western categories of mental health and illness, and the possibility of thought outside these categories
- The production of subjectivity and group subjectivity
- The problematization of dominant subjectivities by queer theory and gender problematics
- Political ecology and its relations with other ecologies
- Non-patriarchal and non-heteronormative forms of institutional healing
- The analysis of desire

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Objects of Memory and Rituals of Memorialisation as Fields of Struggle

Stream Organisers: Federica Rossi, Kanika Sharma, Ozan Kamiloglu

This stream would like to question objects of memory - images, monuments, street names, archives, etc. - as fields of struggle between the Sovereign (Nation state, inter and multi national organisations and companies, local or global bourgeoisie, armed forces, etc.) and counter hegemonic movements and forces (peoples mobilisations, local uprisings, anti colonialist struggles, any form of armed organisation, occupations, class struggles, workers unions etc.). This involves studying the rituals of creation of objects of memory – processes of memorialisation – but also highlighting the difference between memory as a field of the past abstract and objects of memory that belong to present political. The stream is then looking for reflections not only on the process of memorialisation and its rituals, but also on spatio-temporal politics of objects of memory, the way they contribute to politicise the space, through the social and political meaning they carry.

A constitutive dimension of objects of memory is the (re)construction of time they allow or forbid. Objects of memory bend or disrupt the homogeneity of the arrow of time through overemphasising (or silencing) certain moments of history. Each new distribution of emotions, values and visibilities of historical events let the time reach the politics of today. On the other hand, the politics of today is always vulnerable to the counter distributions of the meaning among different historical events, to the existence of counter narratives and counter hegemonic struggles.

Objects of memory like flags, monuments, museums, but also official commemorations, objectify the consensus upon which the entire society is asked to agree. The different forms of imagined communities partly owe their legitimacy to these objects. Official memories of the past are imposed from up to down as the shared ones, they represent a tool in the hands of the political powers to affirm a dominant version of past events. However, interstitial memories, memories that want to be silenced by those very political strategies of memorialisation, the neglected memories of the subalterns or defeated struggles, can, under certain circumstances, re-surface and claim their share. What happens when objects countering official memory get accepted and embedded into the narrative of a given society? Can (anti)colonial histories and reconciliation processes be read as reinvestment of the Sovereign on the new objects of memory and rituals of memorialisation that try to achieve a new consensus? What are the conditions that allow a counter-memory to challenge the hegemonic memorial discourse?

Through the fields of history, sociology, culture studies, anthropology, law and visual studies – amongst others – we aim to analyse the ways in which objects of memory and other receptacles of memories become sites of power, dominance and counter hegemonic movements.

Themes to be explored include, but are not limited to:

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- Uprising in the squares, occupations in the estates
- Objects of colonialism and anti colonialist struggles, justice and reconciliation commission
- Flags of nations and images of martyrs
- Archiving the memory in the courts, and challenging the archives
- The rituals of commemorations and memory-making processes
- Contesting the names, monuments, urban aesthetics

Please send submissions to: paper-sub@londoncritical.org
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Passionate Work

Stream Organisers: Murray Robertson, Martin Young

This panel examines the relationship between two different modes of passion in regards to work. The first is passion in the sense of a general, abiding enthusiasm one may feel for an activity or employment. The second is passion as a specific, exceptional experience of emotional excess. In the professional sphere, discourses of passion are becoming increasingly strained. Passion in work is seen as both an affective obligation, with the demonisation of the unenthusiastic employee, and an unreasonable expectation, leading to efforts to disabuse workers (especially the young) of a naive sense of an entitlement to fulfilling or stimulating employment.

Acceptable public displays of emotion, both muted and forced, are constructed by processes of emotion commodification. Rarely does talk of passion emerge in public discourse outside the context of love of one's work. And yet as well as being expected to auto-induce (but not over-indulge) passions as part of their employment, workers in jobs with periods of high emotional intensity also face the labour of managing the passionate feelings which their work itself generates - a labour that is generally unacknowledged and largely unremunerated. Jobs which expose the worker to danger, physical exhaustion, responsibility for others' care and well-being, complex levels of performativity, or personal ethical compromise (to name only a few factors) produce excesses of emotion which the worker is required to manage, contain, and regulate.

Critical approaches both embrace and reject passion in work. Positively, the humanist Marxism of György Lukács and Erich Fromm equates unalienated labour in some sense with passion. Seeing labour as a fundamental human capacity for creativity, we are urged to grasp control over this joyous productive ability as a route to liberation. On a different positive tack, feminist care ethics articulated by those such as Eva Feder Kittay outline the interplay between passion and dependence that holistic notions of justice rely upon. Negatively, the mechanisms of emotional self-control have received increasing attention in academic writing on labour since Arlie Russell Hochschild's watershed *The Managed Heart*. This mirrors the clarion call of Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Silvia Federici, and other autonomist feminists to regard and reject gendered domestic labour revolving around care and passion. We welcome submissions on passion and labour working within and/or against these rich and intersecting critical traditions.

We believe the interplay between these two modes of passion – quotidian and acute – will provide grounds for developments of recurring theoretical debates surrounding affective labour. In the spirit of interdisciplinarity, we invite submissions dealing with issues arising in specific professional fields and especially welcome papers which are grounded in first hand observations of working life.

Papers might consider:

- The usefulness of passion as a category
- Temporalities of affective labour
- Responses to workplace harassment
- Physiologies of work and affect
- The gendered nature of workplace passion
- Repression and catharsis
- The strictures of professionalism and work-discipline
- Positive or ambivalent forms of passion, such as joy, celebration, relief, lust
- The ethics of losing control of passions
- Histories of labour and emotion

Please send submissions to: paper-subs@londoncritical.org
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Publishing Critical Thought: Media, Infrastructure, Content

Stream Organiser: Matt Mahon

This stream takes as its focus the relationship between critical thought and its conditions of production. How do the conditions under which critical work is produced affect the nature of critique itself? What forms of production of research (and what publishing methods) are recognised as critical, and under what conditions? How might the medium in which critique is produced itself be critiqued as form?

Three simultaneous gestures point towards a method for working through these questions. From within recent media theory (and more specifically software studies), the question of the role of the digital (or at least of the assumption of a divide between the digital and the analogue) can point towards an analysis of the role that the production of knowledge plays in creating and framing critical thought. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun's (2011) analysis of the role played by early computing in the rise of both practices of governmentality and its Foucauldian critique is key here. So are, among many others, Tiziana Terranova's work on information, Mackenzie Wark's call for analysis of the vectoral class, Nathan Jurgenson's rejection of digital dualism.

Equally, advances in critical work around publishing, and indeed critical methods of publishing, can lead to an interrogation of the framing of the critical and suggest possible alternatives – from the Elsevier boycott to the rise and fall of AAAARG.ORG, how does refusal to participate manifest? What about attempts to release work differently, for example the Hybrid Publishing Lab's glossary, or massively open journal projects like the Open Humanities Press and the Open Library for the Humanities? We might equally look to the custodians.online manifesto, or Ramus Svensson and Hanna Nilsson's call for a publishing model based on the blockchain.

Lastly, work around the infrastructure of the digital can be linked to these discussions (collection/curation projects like Stacktivism or the New Aesthetic, or Benjamin Bratton's work on the Cloud). We could think about the role of the library and its intensifying relationship to digital asset management. Consider the move towards iterative outputs of research (versioning and DOIs, and the growing importance of the simultaneous publishing of data with articles). What about the relationship between a book and its digital alternatives? What is the relationship between the stack, data and research outputs? What is the relationship between curation and critique? What constitutes a library or an archive under these conditions?

Who is included in the bright new future? What forms of critical work are privileged? In what respects are the novelties of new media captured by the neoliberal institutions to which we already belong? What might be the effect of a move away from the form of the journal article as the paradigmatic academic product? What is the status of authorship and authority without REFable outputs? Why has the term 'algorithm' become so ubiquitous?

This stream welcomes proposals that address these and related issues. Proposals to present or showcase critical alternatives to traditional publishing models are especially welcome.

Reclaiming subjectivity? subject(s) after the Death of the Subject

Stream Organiser: Sara Raimondi

Time and again, we have heard that the free willing human Subject taken as the cornerstone of modern society remains a myth confined to the past. In the 1970s, cultural theorists and literary critics announced the “death of the Subject”, referring to the impossibility, empirical and theoretical, to conceive of the subject as autonomous, unitary and self-determining being. Today, in areas as diverse as socio-political sciences and growing posthumanities, this claim is taken as irrefutable truth. As latest in a long genealogy, contemporary network- and system-theories across many disciplines are providing the new ontological and epistemological coordinates to articulate this statement, while the rediscovery of Spinozan vitalist ontology and ethics – often through the works of Deleuze and Guattari - is bringing its support from the ranks of philosophy. The capital-S Subject moulded after the modern and Cartesian legacy has fallen into disuse and suddenly projected back into “the world”. Yet, what we witness is not a collapse into nihilism or relativism, nor just mere attempts to get rid of subjectivity altogether. More and more “subjects” are emerging to populate the alleged void, offering new affirmative alternatives to fill the space once occupied by the normative requirements of modern subjectivity. From feminist and multicultural/post-colonial discourses to complexity and non-representational theories in social, technological and biological studies, new alternative modes of being are thought and imagined, capitalising precisely on the attributes of relationality, immanence and belonging seen as antithetical to modern understandings. After being decentred, the “subject” is put back at the centre again, this time heavily problematised in its alleged unitary, identitarian and universal nature. Conversely, attributes like situatedness, vulnerability, contingency and interconnectedness provides the new starting points for intellectual and practical enterprises trying to rethink subjectivity affirmatively.

In this multifarious and heated debate, a thorough engagement with the challenges posed by the question on subjectivity today appears as most relevant to critical thinking. If, echoing Žižek, the spectre of the Cartesian subject is haunting western academia, then, how can we engage the conceptual reverberations that follow the twilight of the subject? What is the destiny of this worn out notion? Jean-Luc Nancy stated once that “everything seems to point to the necessity not of a ‘return to the subject’, but of a move forward toward some one else in its place”. Thus, what are the available alternatives to our consideration? Who, if any, would endorse this task? Or perhaps, does the very question need to be transformed and is it out of place to ask? Ultimately, can we be critical of subjectivity today or are we still doing so from the same very vantage point that we try to describe?

The stream provides a forum for open-ended exploration to address this broad problematic. Possible contributions could consider the following questions, among others:

- How do recent discoveries in sciences of the mind and quantum physics rearticulate the idea of consciousness and what are the implications for thinking of society?
- What applications can theories of embodied, embedded and affective subjectivity find in ethical, political and social analysis?
- How does the twilight of the modern subject challenge the tenet of ‘individualism’ as grounding ontological and methodological principle?
- Is there place for a thoughtful and reflective subject behind action (particularly under recent developments in cognitive and neuroscience and complexity theory)?
- What challenge is cast upon classical political notions of freedom, liberty and rights, e.g. by theories of micro-political rights?
- What potentials can notions like Deleuze’s pre-personal singularities, individuation, haecceity, a life... open to theoretical speculation?
- How is this enterprise interwoven with the imagination of post-humanist futures?
- How does the liberation from the idea of the subject challenge the very notion of critique?

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Recuperation

Stream Organiser: Andrea Liu

Recuperation is an exorable feature of late capitalism, as modes of art and cultural expression that once were resistant, oppositional or antagonistic from the 1960's and 70's have been gradually absorbed by capitalism and its attendant apparatus, such that a certain generation has no idea what even constitutes "political dissent" because they have never seen examples of it. Land art which once rejected the commodification and circulation of discrete objects of the gallery system has now dissipated into high end "art tourism." Minimalism which was once a refutation and threat to the Western infatuation with pictorial representation has now been de-historicized and caricaturized into a banal design aesthetic. Site-specific installation which was once in opposition to the idealist space of sculpture and the logic of the monolithic monument was diluted into a benign marketing feature of the globalized art economy eager to manufacture consumable "difference" to break with the ever-encroaching homogenization of place. Institutional critique has been domesticated and instrumentalized by the institution to create the appearance of an innocuous self-reflexivity.

Recuperation has reverberations outside the realm of visual art as well, from the commodification of dissent (consumer as "rebel hero") and blatant Western commercialization of former Eastern Bloc "democratic" revolutions (i.e. Serbia's Otpor on MTV), to the recuperation of queer activism into queer consumerism ("pink money"). There is also the recuperation of a "postmodernism" of resistance, an oppositional epistemology that destabilized the grand narratives of Enlightenment into now a cynical a-historical "anything goes" postmodernism disemboweled of any element of critical resistance, complicit with neoliberal capitalism (as outlined by Frederic Jameson); as well as Boltanski & Chiapello's analysis of how the May 1968 Marcusean critique of the alienation of capitalist bureaucracy was simply recuperated into a more expansive, ingenious mode of capitalism—namely, post-Fordist networks of flexibility. In light of this, we must ask, "Is there no 'outside' position?" How can we theorize or historicize this phenomenon where the hollow shell of an oppositional form is preserved but it has been disemboweled of any actual oppositional content?

Other possible "recuperation" motifs might include, but are in no way limited to:

- Recuperation of digital technology, algorithms, big data or "smart technology" to capitalism or capitalist technocracy
- Recuperation of grassroots democracy vis-à-vis social media into now "cognitive capitalism"
- Recuperation of dissent by grassroots democracy into now dissent through consumerism
- Recuperation of Arab Spring democracy movements to authoritarianism
- Recuperation of feminism to a neoliberal agenda
- Recuperation of queer activism to queer consumerism (as evidenced by San Francisco activist group "Gay Shame" who, disgusted with the consumerism of Gay Pride weekend, forms a counter-demonstration during Gay Pride week-end called "Gay Shame") (<http://gayshamesf.org/>)
- Recuperation of posthumanism/reproductive futurism/cyborg theory to techno-scientific capitalism
- Recuperation of critical theory (Deleuze & Guattari's notion of "smooth and striated space") for militaristic purposes (http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/the_art_of_war/)

We seek to put together a cross-disciplinary "mini-think tank" from diverse fields (visual art, performance studies, cultural studies, critical theory, experimental geography, law, political science, linguistics, rhetoric, film, and others) with proposals related to "recuperation" of oppositional, antagonistic, resistant, or emancipatory forms of cultural production/art, activism or political movements. How does recuperation function? What is it that we seek to escape "recuperation" from (neoliberalism, militarism, consumerism, heteronormativity, Western hegemony, etc.)? Refutations, contradictions, or complications of the recuperation thesis are welcome also.

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Satire: Power, Practice, Enculage

Stream Organisers: Nina Lyon, Sarah Holman

In 1997, Chris Morris's television series *Brass Eye* broadcast an episode on drugs in which David Amess MP was, among other British public figures and celebrities, adequately convinced of the dangers of an imaginary drug called Cake to raise a question about its legislation in the Commons. In 2011, Charlie Brooker's drama *Black Mirror* told the story of a Prime Minister forced to have sex with a pig on live television.

In 2015, both these supposedly implausible premises played out in the IRL political arena, with David Amess tasked with chairing the Psychoactive Substances Bill Committee and details of David Cameron's youthful #piggate excesses emerging in a book by a former party donor. What was the causal relationship between satire and reality? Rather than reflecting and critiquing past events, could satire have a speculative, future-focused quality? And, in a sphere where highlighting the absurdity of individuals and their abilities appeared to have had no impact on political outcomes, does satire have any teeth?

Does satire offer a world upside down, a carnivalesque challenge to dominant discourse and systems of power? Or does it merely function as a sanctioned safety valve reinforcing the systems it purports to undermine? Or, as according to some critiques of the Charlie Hebdo events, could satire be co-opted as a tool to entrench the values of a dominant power? The *détournement* tactics of the Letterists and Situationists, in which political slogans or logos were altered to antagonistic effect, can be seen as a satirical act. Does *détournement* still work, or has a dominant culture of irony dismantled political parody? Has Žižek's irony become the default operational mode of ideology? Does the ironic distance of a knowing self-regard further blind us to dominant ideology's structuring power and, in fact, entrench its reproduction?

The relationship between satire and humour is rarely delineated. Can vernacular humour function in a satirical light? Is humour an internalised satirical form, a response to the inversion of normative structures of "common" sense?

This thread aims to interrogate these broader understandings of what satire is and where we find it. If Deleuze describes humour as a 'speculative univocity of Being and language', it seems possible that satire could be approached as a form of enculage. Nietzsche's aphoristic and self-contradictory style has a self-satirising quality, breaking ontological stability. Is satire or humour a metaphysical strategy? Would the Sokal hoax have been possible without a position of ontological certainty? Is it possible to build a discourse based on the perpetual undermining of discourse itself?

We would be keen to run a series of short performances and satirical papers relating to the academic conference's rich capacity for self-parody, either as its own session or at the end of each panel.

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Virtual Raciality / Race IRL: Critical Approaches to the Concept of Race in the Digital Age

Stream Organiser: Christine Goding

"2014 was the year everyone started talking about race." — Jenna Wortham, NYT

"The virtual structures behind racial formations don't look like formal logic (a/not-a); they continually differentiate as actual bodies interact and aggregate." — Arun Saldanha, *Psychedelic White*, 2007

From #blacklivesmatter to #alllivesmatter, Palestinian tweets of solidarity with Ferguson to the gamification of Western military aggression, or Michael Derrick Hudson and Rachel Dolezal's passing and their viral fallout, the digital scene is currently saturated with the topic of race. We are witnessing the unfolding of a conjuncture in which the digital and IRL ("in real life") forces of state power, international security, and personal belonging are set in an amplified tension, suggesting that the question of race has returned demanding renewed critical attention. Although the color line was to be the problem of the 20th century, race clearly remains in the 21st inflected by new contexts that traditional theories could not have anticipated. As the proliferation of the discourse and performance of race on the internet threatens to outpace our ability to conceptualize it, the question is, what kind of problem is it and how has it changed since the advent of the digital age? Inspired by Arun Saldanha's assertion that "what is needed is an affirmation of race's virtuality" (2009), this stream is interested in papers that attend to the relationship between race and the virtual. The stream investigates this relationship from both sides asking at once how race exists in digital space and attempting to account for those intensities, resonances and tensions which hover around our traditional understandings of race as a modern, IRL, phenomenon. Its motivating questions may include:

- How does the development of digital technology correlate to shifting ideas of race, racism, discrimination, identity, and representation?
- How do mass consumptive practices of digital information facilitate or interrupt the proliferation of colonial violence?
- What is the role of the body in the viral spread of race commentary and performance?
How are questions of intersectionality warped or clarified in the virtual world?
- What do affect theory, non-representational theory, or inquiries in new media have to offer our understanding of race and racism in the 21st century?

Additionally, papers may engage with (but are not limited to) the following topics:

Social Media And Digital Platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, Yik Yak, Grindr, Tinder, Reddit, 4chan, Youtube, Vine); Anonymity/Identity; Blackness, Whiteness, Latinidad, Indigeneity, Asianness, Arabness; Gender and Sexuality; Fandom; Microaggressions; Post-Racialism; #Activism; Hacktivism; Militarization; Neocolonialism; Neoliberalism; Anti-Colonial Solidarity; Occupation; Environmentalism and Questions of Land; The Undercommons; Digital Natives; Intersectionality; Cyborgs; Memes; Performance; Virality.