



Promises of Monsters  
University of Stavanger, Norway  
28-29th of April 2016

Abstracts

# Keynote speakers

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**Surekha Davies:**

**Monstrous geography, environmental history and the invention of race**

Writings from classical antiquity and biblical scripture informed European expectations about distant parts of the world. Among these expectations was the idea that human bodies, behaviors and temperaments were shaped by the local climate and environment. During the long sixteenth century, scholars, geographers and mapmakers investigated the relationship between information garnered from westward voyages across the Atlantic and pre-existing ideas about the inhabitants of the distant east and south. This talk reveals how Renaissance maps functioned as visualization tools that shaped European perceptions of the peoples of the Americas. By making the connections between geography, climate and human variety explicit and visual, maps made the classical concept of ‘monstrous peoples’ deformed by nature central to the fluid category of ‘human’. Ethnographic imagery on maps illuminates an important way in which Atlantic science was also the science of monsters. It also shows that there was an intellectual incentive to invent race long before there was a commercial one.

**Bio:**

Surekha Davies, Assistant Professor of European History at Western Connecticut State University. Her research interests and areas of publishing include cultural encounters, travel writing, the histories of knowledge and of science, geographical exploration, cartography, monstrous bodies and the history of mentalities c.1400-1800. Davies is the author of numerous articles and the forthcoming monograph *Renaissance Ethnography and the Invention of the Human: New Worlds, Maps and Monsters*. Her research interests include cultural encounters, travel writing, the histories of knowledge and science, geographical exploration, cartography, monstrous bodies and the history of mentalities.

**Tove Kjellmark:**

**Monsters in Art – panel discussion at Sølvberget Library and Culture House**

Artist **Tove Kjellmark** works with the boundaries between technology and biology, the known and the unknown, the monstrous and the human. Her work forms the basis for a debate about how the monster or the monstrous is represented in art and literature: what is at stake when the monster is made visible? What kinds of strategies do artists and writers have for showing the monster?

**Bio:**

Tove Kjellmark is an established artist based in Stockholm, Sweden. Her work investigates what she herself calls Another Nature: A nature that refuses to accept a difference between technological and natural forces, between human life and animal life, and between mechanics and organics. She explores artistic methods to trigger unsettling encounters between non-living artifacts and living agencies.

Kjellmark is the artist behind the installation that functions as the conference's artwork and logo. The image – which is from the installation 'Space of Abjection' – is from her exhibition Non-Humans Only.

**Margrit Shildrick:**

**Visual Rhetorics and the Seductions of the Monstrous: some precautionary observations**

What does it mean to look at the monstrous? For many people, monstrous embodiment in its many forms arouses discomfort that is more or less successfully managed through the medium of our differential senses. While the creation of an interval between self and other through sight and representation allows for a reassuring self-security, there is also the sense of a certain destabilising 'yuk' factor present. Yet, our persistent fascination with the monstrous speaks to a profound longing that may manifest not just in curiosity about the strange, but as a form of desire. In critical cultural studies, the complications of Freudian and Lacanian desire clearly provide a platform for understanding the seductiveness of the monstrous, but are now more often surpassed by the celebration of a reconfigured and wholly positive desire in its Deleuzian sense. At the same time our longing for the monstrous denotes a desire for the grasp of knowledge and for the domestication of anomaly. As such I want to expand on the familiar uneasiness that showing images of the monstrous potentially provokes, and its putative encouragement of an undoubted voyeurism, to engage instead both with a Derridean exhortation to preserve the strangeness, and with a reparative Deleuzian reading that offers reasons to be hopeful..

**Bio:**

Margrit Shildrick is Professor of Gender and Knowledge Production at Linköping University, and Visiting Professor of Critical Disability Studies at York University, Toronto. Publications include *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, (Bio)ethics and Postmodernism* (1997), *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (2002) and *Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Sexuality and Subjectivity* (2009), as well as several edited collections and numerous journal articles. Current research is on the interface of disability, prosthesis and embodiment and includes a major project in heart transplantation.

# Abstracts

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**Kimberlee Anne Bartle:**

**From Vague Regency Renegade to Ninja Warrior: Exaggerating Inherent Social and Gender Constraints in Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies***

Daniel Drezner posits that “zombies are unique in genre literature in emphasizing the breakdown of modern society in the wake of an external threat” (826), meaning that in light of a monstrous invasion, societal norms would fail to maintain their relevance. Apocalyptic, zombie warfare places emphasis on human survival, allowing an author a platform to critique traditional ideas in society in a more exaggerated and obvious way—which this paper will argue is exactly what Grahame-Smith does in his Regency monster mash-up.

By making much of the context surrounding Elizabeth's character more physical, Grahame-Smith is re-situating Austen's work in a way that makes issues of gender and social struggle more overt and relatable for a contemporary audience. While Austen's text confronts many internal and social issues that plagued women, most “modern readers can't quite grasp the horror those women felt for the earthier side of their natures, so including literal monsters in the text might be an effective way to communicate that terror across the time-gap” (Goodwin n.p.).

This paper will examine the ways in which Grahame-Smith exaggerates innately transgressive traits in Austen's protagonist by placing the story in an apocalyptic context. Specifically, by exploring aspects of physical mobility, “masculine” heroism, and the rejection of traditional aspects of femininity, manners, and dress in a world besieged by monsters, Grahame-Smith's zombie-slayer take on Elizabeth will be treated as a hyperbolic representation of the satire and social commentary inherent in Austen's original text, illuminating the absurdity of masculine domination and feminine repression in a way that modern readers can understand and better appreciate.

**Bio:**

Kimberlee Anne Bartle graduated summa cum laude from Western Oregon University in June 2014, completing a double major in English and the Humanities. A semester abroad in London inspired her to return to Europe, where she has since finished her Master's Degree in popular literature at Trinity College Dublin.

**Daisy Butcher:****Vampiric Portraits - The Uncanny Painting in *Dorian Gray*, *Interview with The Vampire* and *Carmilla***

Examining the Gothic trope of the portrait, I will apply Freudian theory of the Uncanny and Lacanian Mirror Stage to further analyse the effect of this prevalent motif. I will be looking at how the vampires in these texts are represented in painting versus the reality of their nature. By exploring closely how the self *becomes* the Other with the portraits serving as the Doppelganger. It proves interesting to observe how the monster perceives itself when reflected with its nature through human eyes. Confronted with evidence of their immortality and monstrosity the vampire/vampiric human, must acknowledge their transformation and also the revelation of their true monstrosity and often with fatal results for the painter. This is illuminated with Louis' disbelief in seeing a depiction of himself as innocent and even angelic and Dorian's confrontation with his demonic interior displayed to him. By lashing out and destroying the artist, this offers an interpretation of a desire to rebel against a creator/ fatalistic higher power that made them into monsters, thus lamenting their soulless states. The paintings therefore either represent an unwelcome reminder of a previous state of innocence now irretrievably lost, or the image of sin incarnate for Louis and Dorian respectively. Camilla's painting mirrors that of her infiltration of Laura's bedchamber both physically and symbolically in her erotic pursuits as the painting is placed inside, emphasising both that of Carmilla's constant gaze and her identity as Countess Karnstein. Bringing in psychoanalysis to break down the horror, I will offer interpretations where Louis and Dorian reject the image of themselves and see the painting as mocking them and how indeed these images can foreshadow the monster as in Carmilla, highlighting both their (im)morality and immortality and even being a catalyst to their very downfall.

**Biographical Note -**

I am currently developing a dissertation using the folkloric myth of the *vagina dentata* alongside that of the female vampire - the epitome of sex/death and a vagina with fangs. I have a passion for Gothic literature and have attended a range of conferences/ research seminars within the last two years including the British Library's Gothic study day where Fred Botting gave an engaging talk, and most recently Open Graves, Open Minds - Company of Wolves 2015 and What Lies Beneath at Manchester MMU.

**Jonathan L. Crane and Christine S. Davis:**

**Innocent Monsters: Battle of the Forces of Life and Death**

In this paper we explore the dialectical tensions between evil and innocence, as found in the parallel constructions of horror fiction and experiences among terminally ill children under the care of a pediatric palliative care hospital. In eerie correspondence, our experience as caretakers of dying, diseased, and hospital-bound children uncannily mirrors our centripetal fascination with the abject horror of the youngest monsters who “people” fantastic fictions. With a focus on the books and companion film versions of “Let the Right One in,” “The Other,” “The Babadook,” “The Sixth Sense,” “The Shining,” and “Carrie,” in tandem with long-term ethnographic observation conducted at a children’s ward for severely ill children, we consider the experience of children as singular conduits between life and death. We suggest that depictions of children as monstrous are incredibly terrifying because of the juxtaposition of terror with innocence and that this same dyad of maleficent terror and purity makes children heroic as they battle the forces of death. Dialectical envoys, monsters and angels, stricken children provide an especially powerful embodiment of the liminal divide that scores any and all interactions between the dead, undead and living. Attending to the voice of the young subaltern in both fictional and actual representations, we follow the path children scribe as they walk the line between virtuous incorruptibility and monstrous decay.

**Bios:**

Jonathan L. Crane is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at UNC-Charlotte. He has written widely on genre and horror films and is the author of *Terror and Everyday Life: Singular Moments in the History of the Horror Film* (Sage, 1994). He regularly teaches graduate and undergraduate classes on popular culture and film criticism.

Christine S. Davis, Ph.D. is Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at UNCCharlotte. She publishes regularly on topics such as children’s health, end-of-life communication, and narrative ethnography and autoethnography. She is currently writing a book on end-of-life communication.



**Roger Davis:**

**The Uncomfortable, Ugly Cannibal Plagiarism Monster**

This paper will map a rough literary history of monsters, cannibals, and plagiarists to frame a discussion around the problems and perceptions of plagiarism in higher education in relation to metaphors of cannibalism and monstrosity. Specifically, the narrow but persistent presence of the cannibal as monster in colonial and capitalist enterprises manifests itself because of larger anxieties about the purity of imperial subjectivity, the accumulation of cultural capital, and the broader project of liberal Enlightenment. The cheater, like the cannibal, is an ethical transgressor. That is, cannibalism is often not explicitly illegal or is often justifiable within a specific context. Similarly, plagiarism is rarely a criminal offense but more often a moral one. In academic terms, plagiarism is the representation of another's words or ideas as one's own; in colonial and metaphorical terms, cannibalism is the consuming of the Other in order to establish, to assert, or to justify the dominance of the colonial power. Both, essentially, are acts of taking the Other for different means or ends. In drawing together these two themes, this paper will argue that the history of cannibalism can reveal how the disciplinary techniques of contemporary educational approaches to plagiarism ensure a purity of student behaviour to learn, to consume, and to act in ways appropriate to the dominant models of educational practice. Put simply, the similarities in our conceptions about contemporary plagiarism and about historical cannibalism reveal monstrous traces on the underside of Enlightenment education as a system of indoctrination or domination.

**Biography:**

Roger Davis is a full-time faculty member of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Red Deer College, Canada. He is co-editor of *Hosting the Monster* and co-author of *Essay Writing for Canadian Students*.

**Megen de Bruin-Molé:**

**Broken Promises: Not-So-Monstrous Identity in Showtime's *Penny Dreadful***

Taking Showtime's television series *Penny Dreadful* (2014-present) as a case study, this paper explores the way monsters in allegedly subversive and progressive popular narratives often succumb to the influences of populist privilege. In contemporary culture there are many examples of frightening, subversive, and transgressive monsters, but what of those monsters we have already confronted? What happens to the monsters we no longer repress, and whose multiple meanings and categories of identification are not only accepted, but exploited? As Asa Simon Mittman asserts in his introduction to *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous* (2012), '[a]s we cannibalise the Others of others, as we tear them apart and stitch them back together, we continually redefine the parameters of the monstrous' (p. 7). Our mediascape is increasingly populated with monsters from other cultures, times, and parts of the world. In *Penny Dreadful* (and similar popular narratives), reimagined nineteenth-century monsters once again redefine the parameters of the monstrous, but they deliver less than they promise in the arena of identity politics. Showrunner John Logan has claimed that the show is an 'exciting way to play with the central duality of what it is to be man, what it is to be a monster, what it is to be woman'. For Logan, the experience of monstrosity is also strongly linked to his own experience as a gay man. This perspective on monstrosity shows strongly in the show, which takes many opportunities to comment on queer identity, visualise the queer experience, and valorise difference more generally. Ultimately, however, despite its noble goals, *Penny Dreadful* uses monstrosity (and fantastical monsters) in a way that constructs a false sense of diversity, disturbance, and change. In its attempts to represent 'everyone', it instead shuts out all but the privileged minority it represents on-screen.

**Biographical Note**

Megen de Bruin-Molé is a second-year PhD researcher with the school of English, Communication and Philosophy at Cardiff University. Her current research focuses on the ethics and aesthetics of mashup culture, using the theme of monsters and the monstrous to explore how and why the twenty-first century persistently appropriates nineteenth-century fictions and figures. Her other research interests include science fiction and fantastical literature, fan studies, age politics, and posthumanism. You can follow her (and her research) on her blog: [angelsandapes.com](http://angelsandapes.com)

**Nicky Falkof:**

**Christian nightmares: Satanism and gender violence in South Africa**

In October 2011, a young South African woman named Kirsty Theologo followed a group of her high school contemporaries to a hill outside the working class suburb of Linmeyer, Johannesburg. Later that night her friends doused her in petrol, set her on fire and left her to burn. Kirsty died of her injuries a few days later. This event was immediately explained as a 'Satanist murder', leading to media, judicial and religious interventions aimed at countering the apparent threat posed by monstrous Satanists to South African youth. This paper examines press material surrounding Kirsty's death and the subsequent arrests and trials of her killers. It argues that the pervasive and long-lasting moral panic around Satanism in South Africa served to obscure the gendered nature of this so-called satanic violence. My analysis reveals the act of collective disavowal by which Kirsty's death was categorised within a simplistic and Christianised framework of good versus evil. I argue that the elision of Kirsty's killers with an uncomplicated idea of monstrousness allowed media and public discourses to ignore the structural and historical nature of acts of extreme violence perpetrated by young South African men on the bodies of young South African women.

**Nicky Falkof** is a senior lecturer in Media Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. Her current research interests centre on moral panic, Satanism, race, gender and fear in South Africa.

**Desiree Förster:**

**The monster lies in between. On the motif of the precarious in artistic practices**

Scalability as basis for processes of perception and understanding is questioned again in a time when subjective environment can hardly be linked to planetary contiguities and the consequences of our actions, just as little as the increasing interconnectedness and intertwining of the human with the non-human other through technological extensions can be comprehended with the concept of the subject. In the artistic presentations of the becoming-precarious the technological constitution of our existence is being revealed, whose ontological constitution is to be re-determined in a fragile situation of planetary and global crises. This takes place through performative interactions and the disclosure of instability, where the interface functions as playground, as technology of turning visible and speakable what is identified as relevant and effective for the production or prevention of stability.

This paper investigates artistic strategies that make uncertainties and crises experienceable via the interface. That manifests often in monstrous ways –the monster as the motif to help dealing with the ungraspable becomes crucial again. Today it display and acts out human-machine-entanglements, microbiomic symbiosis, organisms between life and death. The interface in the artistic works to examine is more than just mediating, it's the scene of processes of de-/stabilization, navigating between possibility and refusal. Artists (like Pinar Yoldas<sup>1</sup>, Susanna Hertrich<sup>2</sup>) act against the background of present social, geological and global crises: Our established categories, the big truths and harmonizing narratives cannot encompass or give a sensation to the complexities of today's technological, social and planetary developments. With the loss of antagonist concepts such as nature, technology or animal, the positioning of the human subject is questioned again today. Artistic practices can acquire imagine monstrous entanglements and hence negotiate new subject constitutions and scopes for action.

<sup>1</sup><http://www.pinaryoldas.info/>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.susannahertrich.com/>

**Short Bio**

Desiree Foerster as a Berlin based curator and researcher collaborates within various disciplines such as (synthetic) biology, computer science, philosophy and humanities, and is interested in creating space for assemblies that cross assumed and naturalised relations. While organising workshops, talks and concerts, she is writing her Ph.D. at FU Berlin and works at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt Berlin as a program assistant. She gave presentations about her research on interspecies relationships and new artistic practices at conferences such as the Annual Meeting of the Social Studies of Science Copenhagen 2012 and Denver 2015,

gave workshops on Foucault's term "heteropia" at the Utopia School Copenhagen 2015 and is strongly engaged with the local artist and project space scene Berlin.

**Helle Grøndahl:**

**Becoming Monsters - The monstrous as subversive potential in queer-feminist artistic practices**

What is the subversive potential of the monstrous in queer-feminist artistic practices? How can queer-feminist artistic practices resist, subvert and challenge normativity by engaging with the monstrous? What kinds of strategies are being used to achieve this resistance? How does the deviant monstrous body present itself in these artworks? For a presentation at the Promises of Monsters conference I will look at some artists working within a queer-feminist frame and analyze how they engage with deviant and monstrous bodies in their artistic practices and look at what subversive potential these practices have. I will focus on the artworks *Intra Venus* by Hannah Wilke, *Omnipresence* by Orlan and the photographs of Del LaGrace Volcano. What these works have in common is a notion of the medicalized and/or pathologized body that borders on deviancy, abjection and monstrosity. Volcano works on the theme of intersex and transgenderism, Orlan's work show

the artist willfully altering her own body through plastic surgery and *Intra Venus* by Wilke show the artist suffering from lymphoma. I will compare the three artists and look at similarities and differences and show how they are all becoming monsters.

The presentation is a call to view monsters and the monstrous as a form of resistance to the hegemonic hierarchical knowledge of history and instead argue for a rhizomatic form of knowledge production that is more adaptable and useful in terms of resisting normalcy and embracing monstrosity. Art is resistance and it is time for us to enter the realm of the deviant and the monstrous. Seeing differently and becoming monsters.

**Biography:**

Helle Grøndahl is an artist, curator and academic. They have a Bachelor in Fine Arts from The Trondheim Academy of Fine Art, NTNU and are currently doing a Master's in Gender Studies at The Centre for Gender Research, University of Oslo. In their work Helle uses appropriations, copies and reproductions to reveal and deconstruct the ideas of gender, sex and sexuality. The subject of their master thesis is queer strategies of resistance in contemporary art.

**Jena Habegger-Conti:**

***Lady Gaga and the “Promises of Monsters”: Monstrosity in Visual Culture***

Sewn into a meat dress, dancing as a skeletal creature, moving robotically as a cyborg, American pop star Lady Gaga is known for her ability to shock. According to Caitlin Moran, she “wishes to disrupt, and disturb ... Her iconography is disconcerting, and disarranges what we are used to seeing” (2012: 260). But as “Mother Monster” to her fan base of “Little Monsters,” Lady Gaga is also known for her acceptance of difference, of otherness, planting herself firmly “on the sides of all the nerds, freaks, outcasts, intellectual pretenders, and lonely kids” (Moran 2012: 256). Gaga’s antics disarrange not just what we are used to seeing, but also what we are used to thinking, flipping the binaries of culture’s dominant readings of visual culture, so that her world of monsters does not depict a world of fear and entrapment, but rather encourages a world of free play and acceptance.

Jeffrey Cohen has argued that monsters “ask us to reevaluate our cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perception of difference, our tolerance towards its expression.’ (1996: 20) Within the framework of popular culture studies and feminist theory, this paper will explore imagery from the music videos “Paparazzi” and “Bad Romance” from Lady Gaga’s *The Fame Monster* album (2009) to raise questions regarding how monstrosity has been popularly defined, and to explore Lady Gaga’s attempt to disrupt the binary system enabling terms that permit othering. Lady Gaga’s frequent overturning of the traditional coding of the role of women in music videos for visual pleasure (Mulvey 1975) will also be discussed.

**Bio:**

Jena Habegger-Conti teaches American Literature, Visual Literacy and English Didactics at the University of Stavanger. She has recently published an article on teaching visual literacy in the ESL classroom and is currently researching the practice of reading difference through a study of autobiographical graphic narratives.

**Katharine Hawkins:**

***The Spectacular Monster: Making a glass of oneself.***

By nature, the monstrous is always spectacular in some way. A public, vulgar display of grotesquery that oscillates between scapegoat and martyr. More than a mere attention seeker, the Monster operates on multiple public levels: as portent, as mirror and as a spectacular and egalitarian space where oppositions meet and confront one another; creating new discourses and questioning the longevity of old ones. The term 'Monster' is derived from the Latin word meaning 'to warn' – and it is this oracular potential that makes the monster impossible to ignore: by embodying our worst fears and greatest suspicions, she shows us to ourselves.

My research concerns the monstrous feminine as a creature of spectacle: a constantly signifying and ever visible public performance that operates simultaneously as gleeful defiance of prudish patriarchal edicts, and an empathetic, abject saint. To examine the role and significance of the spectacular female monster within feminist discourse, I use the visceral and confronting work of American side-show performer Marry Bleeds as the embodiment of the shameless public grotesquery that constitutes the monstrous spectacle, with specific emphasis on the work of Julia Kristeva and Mary Russo. How does viewing this spectacularly distorted, bleeding, laughing, screaming avatar of the monstrous feminine remind us of the fragility of social boundaries, and what can she teach us about pleasure, pain, beauty and sympathy? How do displays of extreme bodily distortion and modification hint at the liminality of self and identity, and what can the sublime obscenity of the spectacular monster teach us about empathy?

The spectacular monster dislodges uncomfortable truths about ourselves; she peers back through the glass and asks if she reminds you of a part of yourself that you dislike.

**Keywords: Monster, monstrous feminine, grotesque, performance, body modification, bleeding, abjection, feminist, spectacle, desire, liminal, identity, embodiment.**

**Bio:**

Katharine Hawkins is a PhD candidate from Macquarie University, Sydney . Her study is interdisciplinary – being largely informed by Feminist and Queer studies as well as other intersectional aspects of social justice. Katharine's current research concerns the nature of the Female Monster, gendered 'Otherness' and subcultural identity.



**Christoph Hubatschke:**

**Can Zombies speak? Riots of the Living Dead**

“The only modern myth is the myth of zombies”

(Deleuze/Guattari – Anti-Oedipus)

“If you ever wanted to know what a real zombie outbreak would look like, you only had to tune into Sky News on Monday night.”, described a commentator of a popular online newspaper his impressions of the so called London riots of 2011. He continues his problematic analogy: “the eerie silence lifted by a roar as a hoard of feral youths poured in from a side road, leaving in their wake upturned cars and burning buildings”. This distasteful comparison of a political protest with a hoard of zombies must not come as a surprise. Politicians, as well as newspapers coined a lot of dishonourable names to delegitimize the protesters and portrayed them as mindless looters, like zombies, which are similarly described as brainless hoards only driven by a sole motivation. What both of these dehumanizing fictions of rioters and zombies have in common, is that they are told from a majoritarian perspective. But maybe it is neither the zombie nor the rioter, who cannot speak, but it is the majoritarian perspective which is unable to understand.

The figure of the zombie has a deeply racialized history, rooting in colonial narratives and it is by no means a coincidence that till today in works of zombie-fiction the majority of zombified bodies is still composed of ethical and economical oppressed minorities. So the zombie is most of the time a metaphor for the non-humans, the not-human-enough, the languished, the ones who are unable to organize themselves and speak for themselves, namely slaves, the uneducated, the subaltern, the “sans-part” (Rancière).

In my paper I want to propose a different reading of the figure of the zombie. Drawing on Deleuze’s anti-representative plea that we need to create “vacuoles of non-communication” I want to follow the roars and the stuttering of the “minor language” of the zombies. What could be the politics of a different approach to the figure of the zombie, an approach which neither categorizes zombies as different nor tries to speak for them? Can we read the zombie as an emancipatory figure, questioning dichotomies not only of life/death, but also of subject/object, individual/collective, gendered/genderless, human/non-human, and therefore also social-movement/riots?

**Bio:**

Christoph Hubatschke, *University of Vienna*, christoph.hubatschke@univie.ac.at

I graduated in philosophy and political science in Vienna. At the moment I’m working on my dissertation in Philosophy at the University of Vienna, financed by a DOC-fellowship by the Austrian Academy of Science.

The working title of my dissertation is *New figures of resistance. Social movements and new technology in the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari*. My research focuses on the work of Gilles Deleuze, philosophy of Technology, political theory, new materialism and social movements.

**Rolf Hughes:**

**1. *Thus strangely are our souls constructed\****

“Monsters cannot be announced. One cannot say: 'Here are our monsters,' without immediately turning the monsters into pets.” - Jacques Derrida

This contribution will explore how research may be transformed through paradigms of the *monster, magic, unknowing, and radical love*. The finite, linearly causal, object-centred reality described by Enlightenment practices is dissolving into a chimera, a forgotten fantasy. The monster trope allows us to reknit scientific and artistic conventions, to replay the tape of life and bring forth different stories than those spawned by the Enlightenment. Against coherence and causality, with their reassuring narratives of the bounded and the rational, “monster” (or hybrid) practices yoke together seemingly disparate components to destabilise norms and bring forth hitherto latent potentialities. Discourses of identity, gender, genre, disciplinarity, ontological categories spawned by narratives of evolution, science and progress, are threatened by *the being that does not conform* – the monster, that embodiment of a vibrant site of experimentation where certainties are torn apart and stitched together in new, provisional assemblages. One such site of experimentation is my current research with Rachel Armstrong, Professor of Experimental Architecture at Newcastle University, on experimental ecologies within the nascent *ecocene* whereby the nature of life itself is being choreographed into existence through rethinking interactions between bodies, spaces, soils and the many potential relations between them. The *Persephone Project* conceives its laboratory as an expanded living body in which a profusion of life and creativity thrive. Revisiting pre-modern forms of acquiring knowledge, unafraid of scrying, augury, magic and witchcraft, the project explores what a third millennial experimental research laboratory – wet, messy, and heaving – might involve.

\*(from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*)

**Bio:**

A prose poet and disciplinary nomad, Rolf Hughes has been actively promoting innovative forms of artistic and transdisciplinary research over the past twenty years. Hughes is Head of Research and Professor of Artistic Research at Stockholm University of the Arts (inaugurated 2014).

**Niclas Nørby Hundahl:**

**"Cruelty is a gift humanity has given itself." Hannibal Lecter's posthuman ethics**

Thomas Harris' novels about Hannibal Lecter (the first published in 1981), the respected psychiatrist and surgeon who was also a cannibal, provided us with a monster that was both sophisticated and brutal, admired by the oblivious public but feared by those who knew the truth. Lecter, however, always functioned 'outside' society, either from prison, hiding or exile. He would always already be Hannibal the Cannibal, a monster put where it could no longer harm us.

Bryan Fullers *Hannibal* (2013 -) recast the relationship between the monster and society, as his Lecter is celebrated by society: Hannibal the Cannibal, a know monster from the past, gets replaced by Hannibal the Connoisseur, a disguised monster in the present. As a public intellectual he enjoys almost immunity to accusations, as neither the public nor the elite seem to be able to accept, that for Hannibal a human isn't sacred, but meat.

In this contemporary version Lecter, I would argue, embraces posthumanism and formulates his own set of posthuman ethics. Posthuman because they expand the category of animal to include the *Homo sapiens*. In Lecter's world you can, paradoxically, only be human when you strip away most of what you would call *humanity*. Lecter considers human but a state of mind, something to transcend.

This paper seeks to investigate the ways in which Lecter's posthuman ethics function in the areas between critical race theory and posthumanism. Drawing on the works of Alexander G. Wheliye, Judith Butler, Rosi Bradotti and J. J. Halberstam, I will show how in the universe of *Hannibal*, human flesh can function both as dinner and building material; either to be enjoyed over expensive wine, or to help create a new from suitable for the posthuman.

**Bio:**

Niclas Nørby Hundahl

December 20 1990

Studying Modern Culture at the University of Copenhagen (MA). Is currently studying a semester at Goldsmiths University of London at the Center for Cultural Studies.

Have presented papers at the Nordic Summer University and is part of their Comparative Futurologies study circle.

**Allison Kavey:**

**Beneath the Skin: Frankenstein's Creature Uncovered**

Victor Frankenstein's creation has long stood at the forefront of the collection of modern monsters. Boris Karloff's bolt-necked visage has become an icon of the monstrous, embodying the radical disconnect of the human and the technological, the natural and the artificial. This paper contends, however, that Frankenstein's Creature is not modern at all, but instead a product of the medical and scientific cultures that preceded his creation. By placing the Creature into the context in which he was written, a world in which ancient thought co-existed with its rehabilitated (often poorly translated) and sometimes revised Renaissance versions and jostled along beside vernacular folk traditions about nature and the body and the nascent structures of "medicine" and "science." Textual references from the Bible, Agrippa von Nettesheim, and Paracelsus provide important clues to the construction of the monstrous and provide the opportunity to peel back the layers covering the Creature and lay bare the complicated intellectual skeleton beneath the skin. In doing so, the Creature permits us a better understanding of the universe of ideas that gave him birth and provides a starting point for reimagining what we mean by both "modern" and "monster."

**Allison Kavey** is an associate professor of History at CUNY John Jay College and CUNY Graduate Center. Her publications include *Books of Secrets: Natural Philosophy in England, 1550-1600* (University of Illinois Press, 2007), as co-editor: *Second Star to the Right: Peter Pan in the Cultural Imagination* (Rutgers, 2008), editor: *World Building and the Early Modern Imagination* (Palgrave, 2010), and co-editor: *Imagining Early Modern Histories* (Ashgate, 2016) and co-author with Lester D. Friedman, *Monstrous Progenies: The History of the Frankenstein Narratives* (Rutgers University Press, 2016).

**Jessica Baker Kee:**

**Black Masculinities and Postmodern Horror: Race, Gender, and Abjection**

This paper employs Kristeva's (1992) theories of affect and abjection to analyze two postmodern horror films (i.e., *Night of the Living Dead*, 1968, and *Candyman*, 1992). Although feminist film scholars (Clover, 1996; Creed, 1993; Halberstam, 1995) have remarked on the pervasive cultural fears of gendered and sexual difference addressed by Hollywood horror films, genre explorations of historical violence attributed to racial difference are relatively less common. These films are unusual within the genre both for employing Black male leads and for explicitly drawing on the imagery of anti-Black racial violence, including lynching, as their source of visual horror. Both films also offer more ambiguous imagery that troubles familiar racial/gender significations of bodies coded as Black and male in visual media.

This paper addresses these films in the context of the historical over-determination of Black masculinities in U.S. visual culture through critical textual analysis, and suggests alternate readings that complicate mediated racial tropes of Black male bodies as either abjected victims or hypersexualized 'monstrous' Others. With race long debunked as biological fact, how and why does 'race' linger as a signifier in visual culture? How do images of horror interrogate and destabilize racial and gender binaries that position Black male bodies as cultural border objects and predetermine their abjection? How do such abjected bodies resist this positioning and draw attention to affective and discursive gaps in racial signification itself? I explore major critical scholarship around each film and analyze visual and textual components of key scenes in order to address these questions and posit abjection as a complex representational space in visual culture, a space populated by overdetermined corpses no longer able to speak out against their multiple significations. In conclusion, I caution against inscribing abjected bodies with familiar racial and gendered signifiers and raise possibilities for abjection to exceed and disrupt the social and cultural exclusions that reinforce and sustain such significations.

**Author Biography**

Jessica Baker Kee is a Ph.D. candidate in Art Education at Penn State University. Her arts-based ethnographic research explores constructions of identity and trauma, examining the impacts of institutional education policy on students and teachers of color. Her research ultimately seeks new curricular models based on aesthetic and spiritual epistemologies of the African diaspora.

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**Ana Koncul:**

**Corps-à-corps: Cultural Constructions of Altered Embodiment**

Present research project intends to investigate constructions of differently able bodies within biomedical practices and culture. By focusing on differently able bodied fencers, the project intends to analyze links between the materiality of the body and ableist discursive practices. This project intends to challenge the techno-scientific reproduction of normative ableism and to study whether and how various structures may marginalize as well as how different practices (such as medicalization) may colonize bodies in question. Exploration of the meaning of the body will be conducted by looking into materiality and lived experience of differently able bodied fencers. This analysis will be enriched with an investigation into discursive practices as well as of powers that invest in or are transmitted by differently able bodies. Specific ways in which bodies orient towards, connect with, situate within or materialize social worlds will be another specific focus of the analysis. In search of different ways of relating, the project has a potential of complementing the existing body of work on differently able bodies as avoiding to be biased and not taking for granted and rejecting binarity between subaltern and the superior. Being a critique of normative bodily models, the research represents a call for creative models of embodiment.

**Biography:**

Ana Koncul is a research fellow at Department of Cultural Studies at Telemark University College. Her background is in semiotics and critical theory, and current research interests include medical humanities, cognitive semiotics, embodied cognition, queer studies and posthumanities.



**Agnieszka Kotwasińska:**

**Un/re/production of Old Age in *The Taking of Deborah Logan***

In contrast to popular possession horror movies, *The Taking of Deborah Logan* (2014) does not focus on an adolescent girl, but on an elderly woman suffering from a rapidly progressing Alzheimer's disease. The neurodegenerative disease is the most common cause for dementia in the elderly and is often cast as an emblematic disease of old age, as it exemplifies and amplifies symptoms associated with bodily and mental disintegration (e.g. short-term memory loss, difficulty with communication, disorientation, withdrawal from society, loss of bodily functions). Incidentally, these are also some of the symptoms that are often employed in the stories of demonic possession. In traditional possession narratives, however, it is the uncontrollable female sexuality that is cast as the actual source of threat and as such has to be subjugated (or destroyed) by male authority figures.

Firstly, I would like to take a look at what happens when it is the aging (and degenerating) female body that is presented as the source of horror, and the regenerative powers of prepubescent and adolescent girls' corporeality are replaced with the disorderly and unabashedly un(re)productive body of Deborah. Secondly, although the movie lends itself easily to a paranoid reading, through which it is possible to investigate late-capitalist anxieties surrounding the un(re)productive female body (i.e. one that can no longer work, bear children and consume), I would also like to read *The Taking of Deborah Logan* as a cultural text which, because of its complex fascination with old age, aging body and functional collapse, activates new ways of thinking about (slow) death, death-infecting-life and domestication of death.

**Biography**

I hold M.A.s in English Philology and American Cultural Studies from the University of Warsaw, Poland. I am finishing a doctoral dissertation concerning new familial configurations in recent horror fiction by American women writers. Apart from horror and Gothic studies, I am interested in canon formation and new materialist perspectives on embodiment and the posthuman.

**Erika Kvistad:**

***The monster in the classroom: on uncanny teaching***

Halfway through a class on horror writing, I said to the students, 'So for this part of class, I asked you to bring in something that you personally find uncanny. I'd like you to –' I turned halfway around on my way back to my desk, yelped and startled backwards; between one moment and the next one of the students had produced from somewhere and placed on their desk a perhaps three foot tall metal statue of what looked like a crane, with colossally elongated legs and neck and a sharp, curved beak. I said, 'Jesus Christ!' The students and I both burst into laughter.

In this paper, I talk about inviting uncanniness into the university classroom – or, more precisely, about becoming aware of the uncanniness already at work in the act of teaching. Freud places the uncanny with 'all that arouses dread and creeping horror', and accounts for the relative critical obscurity of the subject by saying that aesthetic treatises 'in general prefer to concern themselves...with feelings of a positive nature'. Here, though, I consider the ways in which the uncanny, welcomed into a normally formalized and hierarchical setting, produces delight. Drawing on our class texts (Freud's 'The Uncanny', L.M. Moberly's 'Inexplicable', and Nicholas Royle's 'Literature, teaching, psychoanalysis') and on the uncanny stories, experiences, and entities that joined us in class, I explore how the introduction of a monster can turn an ordinary classroom into something else: a space with room for interesting failures, surprises, reciprocity, and emotion.

**Erika Kvistad's** academic interests are sex and horror, sometimes at the same time. Her doctoral work was on sexual power dynamics in Charlotte Brontë's novels, and she is currently writing on consent in BDSM-themed erotic fiction. This spring she is teaching horror writing at the University of Oslo, where she is senior lecturer in English literature.

**Annegret Märten:**

**Unspeakable horrors: Elfriede Jelinek's speechless monsters in language philosophic perspective**

The idea of linguistic monstrosity adds to a theory of language that accounts for moments of speechlessness and representational voids. By examining mechanisms and examples of collapsing language this paper contributes to a teratology trying to make sense of society's transgressive phenomena. Austrian novelist and dramatist Elfriede Jelinek's ongoing project of deconstructing language unmasks those mechanisms of language which are bearers of ideology. Her opus magnum, *Die Kinder der Toten* (1995), with its mute zombies as main characters, is a prime example of how speechlessness and monstrosity forge a literary symbiosis in the context of processing the trauma of the Holocaust. The undead come back to life and they hold a bloody and abject orgy of destruction, forcefully rejecting the notion that the violence of the past is unspeakable. The author is not interested in the purely representational character of language, or in writing a new great narrative about Austria's historically entangled guilt. Instead, Jelinek turns towards an excess of transgressive language and violent imagery designed to break up the surface of a repression which has led to newly emerging right wing sentiments. Monsters are "never created ex nihilo, but through a process of fragmentation and recombination" (Cohen 1996) and a close reading of Jelinek's intertextually fragmented undead in the *Kinder der Toten* clarifies how issues of linguistic crisis relate to traumatic wounds (Kristeva 1982). Examining the linguistic condition of monstrous figurations adds a language philosophic dimension to the interdisciplinary theoretic understanding of the monstrous.

**Keywords:**

Language, Monsters, Unspeakable, Liminality, Speechlessness,

**Biog:**

Annegret Marten is a UK-based German researcher with a keen interest in performing arts and theatre criticism. Funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council's London Arts & Humanities Partnership Annegret is currently researching monsters and language as part of the Joint-PhD-Programme between King's College London and Humboldt University Berlin.

**Nicola Moffat:**

**The Monstrosity of Promises: Performativity and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein***

Lecturing in Harvard in the 1950s, linguist JL Austin first gave to the world what was to have a major theoretical legacy in the humanities – a conceptual monster, which he named the performative. Unaware that the term he christened would later mutate into various forms across the disciplines, Austin set out to develop a “doctrine” of conditions for the felicitous enactment of performative utterances, that is, utterances that perform an act in their very invocation. His first attempt was to distinguish between “illocutionary” utterances – utterances that perform the act, such as in “I promise” – and “perlocutionary” acts – acts that succeed the initial illocutionary utterance, such as the keeping of a promise – but, he found that the illocutionary invocation was no guarantee of a perlocutionary response. Thus, although I may felicitously perform the act of promising through my spoken invocation, this illocutionary act does not ensure that I will keep my promise.

This failure to ensure the awaited response for the initial act, the *différance* that separates the illocutionary utterance from the perlocutionary reply, is precisely what is embodied by the figure of the monster, a figure that is “unrepresentable except as representation” (Rebecca Schneider *The Explicit Body in Performance* 23). The Latin origins of “monster” only serve to ratify the existence of monsters as living signs, signs that promise an unknown future. This is precisely why we fear monsters, because this promise may instead turn out to be another performative act – a threat. Using a canonical monster text, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), this paper explores the fissure between the inaugural act and its result, between intention and outcome, probing the reasons why promises sometimes fail, highlighting the monstrosity always already present in invocations of the future, and, moreover, demonstrating the futility of making rules for monsters to abide by.

**Bio:**

Nicola Moffat is a part-time lecturer in Critical Theory with the School of English, University College Cork, Ireland. Her central areas of research include Feminist Theory, Monstrosity, and Contemporary Fiction. Nicola was awarded her PhD by the School of English, UCC in October 2015, and her varied publications include readings on Contemporary South African Literature, birth and motherhood, cartography, and performance.

**Daniel Otto Jack Petersen:**

***'Cowboys and Indians... and Cthulhu! Ecomonstrous Readings of the Fiction of Cormac McCarthy and R. A. Lafferty'.***

The paper proposes that monsters promise to re-enfold the human into ecology. It develops what I call an 'ecomonstrous' aesthetic of reading literature whereby landscape, fauna, flora, climate, and other elements of non-humanity are rendered through a self-conscious poetics of monsters and the monstrous. It is a dangerous and humbling reading in which Human Being may be mangled or even eaten alive by Being more generally, signalling the (sometimes gruesome) death of anthropocentric exceptionalism. Yet it also contains the potential for reconstituting the human as freshly enmeshed in the non-human. The ecomonstrous imagination navigates a frontier of uncanny yet communicative co-existence. The theory draws on the 'dark ecology' of Timothy Morton and the Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) Morton has mined in the metaphysics of Graham Harman and Bruno Latour. The ecomonstrous puts these ecocritics and philosophers into conversation with Monster Studies (e.g. the work of J.J. Cohen and Timothy Beal), yielding an affective encounter with the environment through literature that prizes monstrous modalities such as gigantism, liminality, hybridity, dislocation, and transgression. Furthermore, the paper performs its ecomonstrous reading in Southwestern regions of the USA (a geography that appears to be largely unexplored by an intentional combination of Monster Studies and Ecocriticism) through the eco-rich and grotesquely carnival fiction of Cormac McCarthy and R. A. Lafferty. Both ecology and ethnicity behave monstrously in their novels, especially when comparing Native American and European relations to land, evoking something closer to xenophilia than Lovecraftian loathing of the Other. These literary texts in turn challenge OOO and dark ecology, offering possible mutations through McCarthy's ecocentric moralism (contra critics who find his work primarily nihilistic) and what I call Lafferty's Weird Thomism, an object-opulent form of strange realism in its own right (thus heeding Andrew Cole's critique of OOO as neglectful of Medieval thought).

**Bio:**

Daniel Petersen is a PhD candidate in the School of Critical Studies, University of Glasgow. His areas of research include object-oriented ontology, ecocriticism, monsters, and American regionalism. He is married with five children. Originally from the Midwest of the USA, he has lived in the Midlands of Scotland since 2002.

**Marjut Puhakka:**

**Monstrous subjects**

BEWARE OF THE ZOMBIES! The rotten bodies have certainly risen from their graves (at least in popular culture). What is so interesting in brain graving living dead? In my doctors dissertation I study Richard Matheson's novel *I am Legend* (1954) which seems to be the source of the popular zombie apocalypse genre, and the three movie adaptations based on it: *The Last Man on Earth* (1964), *Omega man* (1971) and *I am Legend* (2007). I'm interested in the concept of subject on the other hand as an individual experience and on the other hand how society affects the subject. My theoretical back round comes from such scholars as Slavoj Žižek, Alain Badiou and Julia Kristeva.

A protagonist can be a monster in many ways; it might be a nice, misunderstood monster or a villain to hate. Why does a subject turn into monster? There are three kinds of monsters in *I am Legend*: dead who have risen from dead, ultraviolent infected people – and then there is Neville, the last man of earth, who fights the monstrosity in two different battle fields: the one outside his home and the one inside his head. Monster isn't always the obvious one; it might be something the subject carries with him, not wanting to recognize it.

In the *I am Legend* the message seems to be that "your one of us" (or no better). The monstrosity is measured by the morals of the monster, but not just by the actions but by the capability to do good or bad and the willingness to follow moral code. But whose laws define what is wrong or what is right? If there is only one man left, he doesn't need to answer to anybody, but still his choices seem to have an essential value maybe not to others but for himself. Maybe the Other we see is just a reflection of the monster inside, the qualities that is denied because of guilt.

**Bio:**

I am a PhD student at the University of Oulu, Finland. In my doctors dissertation I study Richard Matheson's novel *I am Legend* (1954) and the three movie adaptations based on it: *The Last Man on Earth* (1964), *Omega man* (1971) and *I am Legend* (2007). I major in literature and I specialize in horror genre.

**Marietta Radomska:**

**The Promises of Non/Living Monsters and Uncontainable Life**

How can non/living monsters contribute to our understanding of life? Can they offer us a new insight into the ontology of life? The non/living monsters, which I refer to in this paper, inhabit the space of bioart, that is, a current in contemporary art that involves the use of biological materials (living elements: cells, tissues, organisms), and scientific procedures, protocols, and tools. Bioartistic projects and objects (such as “Victimless Leather Jacket” by The Tissue Culture & Art Project) not only challenge the conventional ideas of embodiment and bodily boundaries, but also explore the boundaries between the living and non-living, organic and inorganic; the relation between the human and nonhuman; as well as various thresholds of the living. In this paper, I analyse selected bioartworks and argue that they expose life as *uncontainable*, that is, as a power of differentiation that traverses the divide between the living and non-living, organic and inorganic, human and nonhuman, and, ultimately, life and death. Thus, *uncontainable life* may be understood as processual and always already surpassing preconceived material and conceptual limits. It is marked by both the intertwinement of the living and non-living (which I refer to as *the non/living*) and the multiplicitous character of the human and the non-human. My hope is that such a revision of the ontology of life might allow for future conceptualisations of an ethics that avoids the anthropocentric logic dominant in the humanities and social sciences.

This research project is funded by the European Cooperation in Science and Technology through a travel grant.

**Bio:**

Marietta Radomska is a PhD candidate at Tema Genus, Linköping University, Sweden. She holds an MA in Philosophy and an RMA in Gender and Ethnicity Studies. Her research interests include feminist theory, Deleuze&Guattari studies, continental philosophy, and bioart. She published in *Artmix*, *Nowa Krytyka*, *Praktyka Teoretyczna*, *JCP*, and *Somatechnics*.

**Brita Strand Rangnes:**

**Complex Ghosts: The Haunting Pasts of Arild Rein's *St. Olav-komplekset***

This paper examines how the Norwegian author Arild Rein's 2014 novel *St. Olav-komplekset* (*The St. Olav Complex*) employs the ghost story to explore how the past catches up with the present on a number of levels: in the individual characters, in contemporary Western society, and in terms of the very city in which the novel is set. Rein's contemporary dystopia portrays the protagonist, Fritz Hellman, returning to his home city (Stavanger) after years of exile in Australia because of his father's death. The novel depicts a former prosperous city in decay and on the verge of collapse, and Hellman is confronted with characters from his past upon his return. This paper examines how the novel reveals monsters of the past, as it becomes obvious that its characters are dead. The paper argues that, in the tradition of Henry James' *Turn of the Screw*, this realization turns the novel into either a ghost story or a depiction of madness. Rein's ghosts, however, are also present in terms of the society to which Hellman returns, as its former wealth is constructed on the dead, fossilized remnants of former life forms (oil), and the paper analyses how its vanity and consumerism reflects the almost relic-like, yet profane, approach to the past reflected in the novel's title. The paper also examines how the death inherently incorporated into this society and its economy is mirrored in the depiction of the city of the oil capital of Stavanger as a ghost town: a town of ghosts, but also a ghost of a town. The paper also discusses how Rein, who has been one of Norway's major writers for years, in this novel also echoes his influential *Stavanger Trilogy* (1998-2004), conjuring up literary ghosts and forcing his readers to re-examine and reinterpret his earlier texts.

**Bio:**

Brita Strand Rangnes is Associate Professor of English at the Department of Cultural Studies and Languages at the University of Stavanger. She teaches English literature and Literacy Studies at BA and MA levels and her research interests include early modern drama and poetry, love in literature, vampire literature and the ghost story.



## **PANEL: Real Humans**

**Ingvil Hellstrand, Aino-Kaisa Koistinen and Sara Orning:**

In 2012, the Swedish sci-fi TV series *Äkta människor* (*Real Humans*) premiered on television. The series stages well-known concerns like the machine/human dichotomy and fears of being replaced by technology, as well as feeding into debates about immigration, human origin stories, ethics of care, gendered embodiment and sexual consent. What is at stake in the way *Real Humans* addresses these questions? What can we learn from it in terms of thinking about humanness, robotics, and monstrosity?

### **Bios:**

**Ingvil Hellstrand** is a lecturer and researcher at the Network for Gender Research at the University of Stavanger, Norway. Her research interests are science fiction, posthuman bodies, bioethics, biopolitics and feminist theory. Recent publications include articles in the journals *NORA – Nordic Journal for feminist and gender research* and *Feminist Theory*, and chapters in the edited volumes *Being Together: New cultural conditions for intimacy* and *Ill-disciplined Gender* (forthcoming).

**Aino-Kaisa Koistinen** is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her research interests include media culture and popular culture (especially television), science fiction, gender studies and feminist posthumanism. She defended her doctoral dissertation *The Human Question in Science Fiction Television: (Re)Imagining Humanity in Battlestar Galactica, Bionic Woman and V* at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, in 2015. She is a board member of *FINFAR – The Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research* and one of the editors-in-chief of *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*. She has been published, for example, in *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* and *Science Fiction Film and Television*.

**Sara Orning** is a Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Gender Research at the University of Oslo. She works on extraordinary bodies, monsters, humanimals and feminist theory, and has published and forthcoming articles in *Excursions: An Interdisciplinary Journal* and in the anthology *Animalities: Literary and Cultural Studies Beyond the Human* (Edinburgh University Press).

**Mexitli Nayeli López Ríos:**

**People as Places as Inner Prisms: Ghostly Imaginaries of Devastation in Videogames**

The paper I propose for Promises of Monsters addresses to scenarios of devastation. Such scenarios are mostly shown in narratives that involve post-apocalyptic worlds brought by pandemics that turn people into living dead or by world wars that not only leave the living traces of doom –monsters here, there and everywhere– but also produce desolation landscapes that threaten to contaminate survivors and assimilate them as part of them. Devastation scenarios in post-apocalyptic imaginaries, I argue, are not merely abandoned places, but the evocation of humankind as its own ghosts, the embodiment of interrogations such as its role in relation to Earth and its cohabitants and the impact of its own auto-destructive paths, a foundational absence that haunts humanity through the ravaged views of ‘what it used to be’. The promenade I propose for this conversation goes through the landscapes shown in videogames such as *The Last of Us*, *Metro Redux 2033*, and *Fallout 4*, which I find utterly illustrative as examples of the haunting relation between ghostly/monstrous spaces –and their monstrous inhabitants– and what is considered as human. Also, using these videogames as objects of study provides a valuable opportunity to explore narratives on the social haunting the individual, since these games are mainly played by only one player, often a simulated self, which seeks to appropriate the experience of these worlds of devastation. Furthermore, this solo game experience sets the self (player) to the other, the human versus the non human, a deceptive binary that serves the occasion to point directly to the self’s own tricky embodiment.

**Bio:**

MA at Studies of Mexican Literature, Universidad de Guadalajara, México. As part of my MA I spent an academic stay at Tema Genus, Linköping University, Sweden. BA in Hispanic Literature. Research interests: monster studies, disability studies, gender studies.

**Nikolai Rodrigues:**

**“Monstrous Alterity and the Abjection of Empathy in China Miéville’s *Perdido Street Station*”**

Monsters are a staple in genre fiction, often serving as allegorical representations of a particular culture’s fears of alterity, but distanced through the defamiliarizing function of the fantastic. Critical approaches to China Miéville’s novel *Perdido Street Station* tend to identify the category-defying slake-moths as monstrous antagonists, without commenting on their status as beings which, quite literally, emanate empathy. My paper addresses the issue of the slake-moths as both a physically and psychologically disruptive factor in a heterogeneous metropolis of sentient peoples, and how the slake-moths’ cognitive and linguistic differences act as signifiers of monstrosity in the novel, marking them as “Other” rather than as “people.” Specifically, in my project I will examine intersections between the monstrous, the human, and the animal, and how the process of the slake-moths’ metamorphosis from helpless grub to physiologically indefinable mind-eater is integral to their demonization in the novel. Furthermore I will examine how their physically transformative eruptions mirror their boundary-violating, disruptive effect on the urban ecology to which they are introduced. I argue that the act of their transformation signals a shift from innocuous animal to complex, cognitive monster, and that the act of being fed by – and feeding on – humans blurs the seemingly discrete lines between categories of human, animal, and monster. Moreover, the denunciation of the slake-moths as both socially- and psychologically-disruptive mind-eaters serves as a simultaneous abjection and rejection of the potential for cross-species empathy which the slake-moths, by their very occupation of the city, inevitably facilitate. In conclusion, this project, by closely examining the demonization of the slake moths in *Perdido Street Station*, sheds new light on the interplay between monstrous alterities and the politically- and socially-disruptive potential for cross-species empathy which they represent.

**Bio:**

Nikolai Rodrigues is a third-year doctoral candidate in the Department of English at Queen’s University. He is interested in intersections between monsters, race, violence, and empathy in fantasy, science fiction, and horror. His doctoral thesis focuses on the transgression of literal and metaphorical boundaries and borderlands in recent fantasy literature.

**Nora Simonhjell:**

**Monstrous fat in contemporary fiction popular culture**

TV-series like *The Biggest Loser* and *One year to change your life*, tends to portraits fat people almost like monsters. The stereotypical portrait is that the fat person has lost control over his/her life, they are sad and lacy, and the body has become a personal fleshy prison – and turned their life and bodily appearance into something monstrous. The fat monster must be defeated. Christ like trainers make the fatty undergo hard diets and heavy training. Only through expulsion can the person become human again. “The real person” is hidden inside or buried by the fat. The person imprisoned by the monster. Why is the stories of fat bodies told this way?

The academic interest in the cultural representation of fat is increasing. The cultural histories of fat, and representations of fat, and fat people are discussed by Sander L. Gilman in *Fat Boys. A Slim Book* (2004) and *Fat. A Cultural History of Obesity* (2008). Kathleen Le Bresscos *Revolting Bodies. The Struggle to Redefine Fat Identity* (2004), and *Bodies out of Bounds* (2001), contributes to a richer discussion of this topic. Is it possible to rethink and challenge the popular concept of fat?

Drawing upon monster and fat theory, I will discuss the representation of fat and fat bodies in weight loss series. I will also look at fat portraits in contemporary fiction and film. Both the film version (2008) of the Norwegian author Lars Rasmlié’s novel *Fatso* (2003) is striking examples.

**Katy Soar:**

**Excavating the Monstrous: Temporality and the archaeological horror**

In many works of gothic and horror fiction of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the monstrous is represented through the archaeological – from the mummy Queen Tera in Bram Stoker’s *The Jewel of the Seven Stars* to the ‘white people’ of Arthur Machen’s eponymous novel, the relationship between the archaeological and the monstrous is a common theme. This paper seeks to examine the relationship between archaeology and the spectral by positing the idea of temporal dissonance or anachronisms as a source of tension. Ghosts and the spectral represent, as Derrida put it, a collapse in the spatio-temporal order, signalling the collision of old and new; I argue that archaeology and the archaeological subject also acts in the same manner, by collapsing time in on itself and similarly creating ruptures in the linearity of time. This de-contextualisation of both artefact and monster creates an uneasy, eerie space, haunted by anachronistic spectres which belong out of time; it is within this space that both the archaeological and the monstrous gain their uneasy power.

This paper will examine the philosophy of archaeology and its role in 19<sup>th</sup> century fiction – through authors such as Stoker, Machen, M.R. James and Grant Allen – to argue for the effectiveness of monstrous antiquities. I suggest that the power of both to haunt and to terrify lies in their ability to disrupt the natural linear order of things.

***Dr. Katy Soar***

Katy Soar holds a PhD in Archaeology from the University of Nottingham, and is currently a visiting lecturer in Greek Archaeology at Royal Holloway. Her interests include the history of archaeology, archaeology and photography, and the role of archaeology in 19<sup>th</sup> century literature.

**Anna Rebecca Solevåg:**

**Judas the Monster: Deserved Disability and Haunting Death in Early Christian Rhetoric**

In a text from the second century (Papias' fragment, 4), Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus, is described with monstrous features. The description focuses on Judas enormous size, moves on to his swollen, blinded eyes, lingers on the unnatural size and condition of his genitals and describes in vivid terms the pus, worms and stench emanating from his body. The monster, *teras*, was an important cultural figure in Greek and Roman antiquity. This paper engages monster theory and disability history to explore the text's rhetorical construction of Judas' illness, suffering and death. Judas is described as exceedingly huge and bloated, and his bodily suffering is presented as a deserving punishment for his impiety. In the analysis of the rhetoric, I show how the description makes use of medical as well as monstrous categories in combination with the ancient pseudo-science of physiognomy. The swollen body of Judas is reminiscent of medical descriptions of dropsy, a condition that medical doctors connected with overindulgence in food and drink and thus revealed the person as lacking in self-control. The physiognomic tradition paid close attention to the eyes as "the mirror of the soul", and Judas' eyes, blinded by swelling, draws out the metaphorical level of seeing as understanding and philosophical insight. In the description of Judas' genitals and his death by worms, medical and monstrous categories seem to merge.

**Bio:**

Anna Rebecca Solevåg (PhD) is Associate Professor of New Testament Studies at VID Specialized University in Stavanger, Norway. Solevåg is the author of *Birthing Salvation. Gender and Class in Early Christian Childbearing Discourse* (Brill, 2013). She is currently working on a monograph about representations of disability in early Christian literature.

**Monica Tomás:**

**Hysterical Women, Wild Animals and Raving Lunatics: the Monster as the Materialization of the Unknowable Other**

In this paper I aim to make an original link between the discourses that structure female difference, animal difference, and the difference of the insane by documenting a major convergence point: the insistence that their bodies are inherently wild, the origin of their difference. I am interested in showing how the Western binary system of ordering the symbolic, along with the dependent notions of otherness, reason and language, constructs the categories of women, animals, and the mad. I intend to show how this construction shapes the bodies of its subjects in such a way that materializes alterity, hiding the traces of its action such that the created categories and the characteristics that define them appear to arise organically from the bodies it circumscribes. These unregulated, almost monstrous bodies inhabit a liminal space between the normative human subject and an ineffable, unknowable other-ness, serving both as categorical archetypes and a warning for those who might dare transgress. Drawing from visual art and literature, I will call upon the figure of the monster as an “embodiment” of the intersecting space between animality, female-ness and madness, and attempt to show that monstrosity is both the norm for women, animals, and the mad, and the result of them crossing a line. In this way, while appearing to embody the unknown, the impossible and the uncontrolled, monsters may in fact be guardians of the established symbolic order. However, monsters may simultaneously be our hope to escape from this order: in their mutations and border-crossings, they may draw a path to be followed.

**Bio:**

Mònica Tomàs White is a doctoral candidate at the University of Barcelona. She earned her BA in Comparative Literature and French from UC Berkeley, and her Master’s in Women’s, Gender, and Citizenship Studies from the University of Barcelona. Her research interests include animality, monstrosity, and mental illness.

**Félix Solano Vargas:**

**Mouthful of Honey: The Abject Sound of Sticky Brownness**

This paper examines genderqueer Filipina/Salvadorian artist Julie Tolentino's timedurational performance piece *Honey* (2010) that engages brown trans forms of communication and loss through technologies of sound, abjection, and monstrosity. In the piece, Tolentino's trans performance partner, Stosh "Pigpen" Fila emits a plasma of honey, excess, and abjection that travels down a gold cord and into Tolentino's open mouth while Tolentino records the drizzling with handheld tape recorders. Honey overflowing, throat and sound meet at the bottom. *Honey* transduces silence into sound, literally preserving sound as "sticky loss." This paper suggests that "sticky loss" reveals something about trans\* and mestiza/o subjectivities. Both, I argue, are shaped by kinds of fleshy losses and monstrous embodiments. For example, Tolentino plays trans\* Costa-Rican born Chavela Vargas' (b.1919, d.2012) ballad *Soledad* on loop in the background, making multiuse of the song by using Vargas' guttural utterance of the 'O' in *Soledad* as a spirit guide to open wide her own throat, superimposing silence, abjection, memory, and sexuality within the performance. Echoing a viscous sound that merges and abstracts the noise feedback from Tolentino's in/active recordings—the wet silk 'O' cave of Vargas' throat indexes the fleshy loss that I explore—a queer monstrous potentiality. In doing so, Tolentino's *Honey* calls forth Gloria Anzaldúa's "mestiza consciousness" in her recording of the sounds that are too sticky to be heard. As such, abject excess is monstrously rendered as loss—which suggests a grotesque enmeshing of sound, texture, desire, and embodiment. For both trans\* and mestiza/o subjectivities, excess is determined by loss, often a "fleshy loss" that embodies a cultural loss in which bodies are made monstrous as sticky records of incomplete processes.

**Biography**

Félix Solano Vargas is a PhD student in Gender and Women's studies at the University of Arizona. Vargas is a Chicano trans scholar. His work brings together performance studies, sound studies, trans studies, Chicana/o studies and theories of monstrosity.



**Todd Woodlan:**

**Far From the Maddening Horde - Zombies as Humanist, Rational Subjects**

In his work on the abnormal, Michel Foucault traced a link between the Western celebration of Reason as the defining characteristic of the “human” and medicine’s ability to provide justification for the inexplicable actions of the madman. By claiming that the madman was not really mad, but rather subject to a system of desires processes that originated in the mind and could be mapped out, psychiatry and other medicine discourse served to help create an “abnormal” mind. With the proper care, the abnormal mind could be re-inserted into normal society. The figure of the zombie in film and comics seems to fit this figure and perpetuate Foucault’s analysis of the humanist-affirming processes of medicine and science. Zombies are humans who have turned into monsters by losing their minds and their capability of rational thought. Only by finding a cure can the surviving humans save themselves and the rest of the world. It is the purpose of this presentation to prove the opposite.

This presentation will look primarily at *Marvel Zombies*, a recent comic by Marvel Comics where the zombies do not exist as the abnormal threat to humanism that must be dealt with and the surviving humans do not quite line up to the perfect humanist, rational subject. This presentation will examine the ways that *Marvel Zombies* actually depicts a world where rationality is the aggressor and a new type of subjectivity outside of medical discourse that does not base itself on rationality is championed. To accomplish this, the presentation will position zombies as the extreme products of a hyper-rational, liberal humanist, medical system: they retain their identity but are infected with a virus that causes them to be absolutely predictable in their actions, always driven by hunger for flesh (not the complex motivations usually found in the heroes). Medicine has little value here as zombification operates outside of known infectious processes and zombie biology is not subject to the same ailments as human biology. This paper will look at the repercussions of a world outside of medical discourse where subjectivity is not synonymous with rationality or motivation by desire. It will also trace the formation of different subjects in this world and the resulting ethical implications, both for ethics in general and for contemporary medicine and healthcare.

**Bio:**

Todd Woodlan is a PhD candidate in the Communication Department of the University of California, San Diego. He also has a Masters in Interdisciplinary Studies from NYU. His research focuses on philosophy of technology, love, health tracking technologies, ethics of technology, posthumanism, and phenomenology.

**Laura Winter:**

**Bloody Mary in the Mirror: A Comparative Examination of a Living Tradition**

“Bloody Mary in the Mirror” is an adolescent ritual activity that has been commonly reported for nearly half a century from most parts of North America. In this paper, I discuss supernatural play and the various functions of Bloody Mary as seen in and around St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada, over the past twenty-five years. While Bloody Mary has long been considered merely a game, it exists simultaneously as legend, ostension, folk drama, maturation ritual, a demonstration of social hierarchy within a folk group, as well as various types of play.

Bloody Mary is often associated with slumber parties, Ouija boards and Truth or Dare. However, these categorizations bring about questions that lead to other determinations in the folkloric spectrum. The specifics of where it is played, how it is played, who plays it and the variations in script and action open up many possibilities to consider. For many of my informants, it was a form of play-acting by young girls, who would summon some sort of “mirror witch,” while pretending not to be scared in front of each other. The anticipated spectral vision in the mirror is thought by some to be malevolent and capable of harming those involved physically, so Bloody Mary can certainly be considered a form of supernatural folklore. However, localization of the origins of Bloody Mary and an accompanying narrative of the belief amongst some of my informants puts Bloody Mary in the realm of legend and ostension. As such, I will touch on some localized legends that informants have incorporated into their Bloody Mary experiences, such as school hauntings and supposed (but unsubstantiated) murders and accidental deaths at local landmarks.

Examining narratives collected from three generations of informants in and around St. John’s, NL, has led me to conclude that Bloody Mary is still a living, dynamic tradition. Children still share it with their peers, changing certain aspects and adapting for their own locale, but what is at the fundamental core of Bloody Mary, the supernatural play and its subversive nature, continues to appeal to children.

**Bio:**

Laura Winter (B.A. (Memorial), B.Ed. (Acadia), M.A. (Memorial)), is a primary French Immersion teacher in the heart of downtown St. John’s, NL. She is also a part of the award-winning children’s band, The Swinging Belles. When not teaching children, collecting supernatural belief anecdotes from them or playing the banjo, she likes to tinker with small power tool and make copper art and jewelry.

**Mark Peter Wright:**

***"I" is another and another (looped)***

This paper is written through a practice-based research project titled *I, the Thing in the Margins*. Its context centers upon the historic self-silence of sound recordists within the histories and tropes of Nature and Wildlife documentary practice: be it for artistic or scientific purposes, recordist-authors are continually erased in the name of 'non-impact'.

How can this historical non-presence be critically re-imagined? What speculative identity might emerge if we were to bend the ear backwards, towards the hiss of self-silence? What would the consequences be in terms of power, agency and subjectivity within human and non-human, mediated encounters?

The paper responds to such questioning by presenting a chimeric medianature (Parikka, 2011): a becoming microphonic cyptoid character, part shadow, part absurd doppelgänger; a bipedal assemblage of another I. It is a haunting of the self, it is the self. It is the noise in the signal, a parasitic oscillation reanimated in brute anonymity. We can never be sure if it is dead or alive, sentient or not? Human? Animal? Technological?

Through this *thing* persona I will show how a legacy of self-erasure may be deemed both a promise and threat. I will examine the asymmetrical relations of power dormant within the process of human and non-human mediation, and propose that beyond 'capturing' the so-called signal (subject) there is a continual acquisition of other skins, formed out of the self and embroiled in a monstrous feedback loop of entanglement.

**Key words:** animal studies, eco criticism, costume, horror, monsters, sound, technology.

**Bio:**

Mark Peter Wright is an artist-researcher critically exploring the relationship between humans, animals, environments and their associated technologies of capture. He has exhibited and spoken at institutes including Harvard University, ICA, Museum of Contemporary Art Rome, New York Public Library, TATE and the University of Copenhagen.



I, the Thing in the Margins, 2015

<http://markpeterwright.net/i-the-thing-in-the-margins>

**Jani Ylönen:**

**Abstract for the Paper “Engineered for Monstrosity” in Promises of Monsters Conference**

While Emiko in Paolo Bacigalupi’s *The Windup Girl* (2009) and Carl Marsalis in Richard Morgan’s *Black Man* (2007) appear human by their physical appearance, they are classified as monsters in the worlds of their novels. As genetically engineered beings, who were made to service the humankind in various roles from soldiers to sex slaves, the reasons for this categorization are mostly hidden in their DNA. Nevertheless, they are used to define humanity in the future of these SF novels in similar fashion as was done with the monsters of history. Correspondingly, they also exhibit potential for examining the borders of human and non-human and, in addition, ethical questions specific to the contemporary society.

In my paper I will examine Carl and Emiko through the frameworks of monster theory and feminist posthumanism. Using the works of such scholars as Rosi Braidotti and Elaine L. Graham I will discuss how these characters are categorized as monsters and how is these definitions connected to the way the transgress different boundaries. I will, for example, analyze how their Otherness is constructed in connection to technology and gender. The focus will be on matters such as how their engineered backgrounds draw attention to reconfiguration of human and non-human, whether, for instance, animal or machine, that is currently occurring in the world around us and will no doubt accelerate in the future.

One of the central hypotheses is that Emiko and Carl represent a division between the values of essentialist humanism and the movement towards posthuman. They represent fears caused by technological advancement, but also the hopes for the disintegration of the traditional categories. Similarly, these posthuman monsters also discuss topical ethical questions with possible long term effects.

**Bio:**

Jani Ylönen is a postgraduate student at the University of Jyväskylä, who is currently in the early stages of a doctoral dissertation titled “To be human is to transcend rules” – Feminist Posthumanism in Contemporary Science Fiction. He has two Master’s Thesis, one in English Language and Culture and another in Literature.

**Susanne Ylönen:**

**Freakishly cute and audibly abject – monstrous cuteness**

Cuteness is a marker of childhood and children – or, of everything young and charming. It is almost a synonym for desirable childlikeness. But just as adorable childlikeness may turn into annoying childishness, cuteness may become misplaced or visually and audibly intrusive. Cute talk may, for example, sound false. And kitsch may turn grotesque. But what does this kind of highlighted, false or creepy cuteness show us? What does it demonstrate? The borders of art and non-art? The limits of genuine affection and glued-on child-friendliness? A turn from the natural to the unnatural?

This paper will discuss the border between the cute and the abjected. It takes as its departure point instances in which cuteness mingles with or passes into the territory of the grotesque and the disgusting. And it asks, what might be monstrous about cuteness itself. What kinds of limits may be discussed through the cute? How does cuteness become monstrous?

The examples, used here to illustrate the theoretical discussion, combine children's culture and adult practices focusing on childhood. From the art of Kim Simonsson to adults dressing up as teletubbies and the Japanese *gross-cute*, *kimo-kawaii*, the border-crossings here are mostly concerned with the dividing line between children and adults or adorable childhood and not-so-adorable adulthood. We have all heard children's songs that make us want to throw up. But how often do we consider the fact that these songs often originate in adult practices of cute talking or talking down at the child-other? And why would we then be offended, when this practice becomes too obvious?

**Bio:**

Susanne Ylönen is finishing her PhD research on the aesthetics of horror in picture books. Her research interests range from children and childhood to the philosophies of horror and she is absorbed in a project that seeks to map the ways in which aesthetic choices draw out both the borders of childhood and the limits of the desirable or the feared.

**Anna Young:**

**Bad Seeds: the psychopathic child as monster in fiction**

Why and how are monstrous children represented in fiction? What does the malevolent child represent? What, if anything, does he or she promise?

William March's *The Bad Seed* (1954) and Lionel Shriver's *We Need to talk About Kevin* (2003) both feature child protagonists who commit murder in cold blood. In *The Bad Seed*, Rhoda Penmark looks angelic, yet is willing to kill her classmate for a penmanship medal. In *We Need to talk About Kevin*, the eponymous protagonist not only carries out a high school massacre, but also kills his father and sister.

These novels lack the supernatural elements of many 'evil child' narratives, such as demonic possession, yet the child protagonists could certainly be described as 'monstrous', as they appear devoid of empathy and conscience. The horror these characters create stems from the incongruity between their status as children, a phase in life culturally linked to innocence, and their actions, which mark them as morally depraved. These characters come to represent a seemingly harmless, and therefore extremely dangerous, threat from within: within American society, within the nuclear family, and, in the context of pregnancy, from within the maternal body.

I will discuss how the narrative form constructs these child monsters, and how depictions of 'abnormal' children reveal and destabilize the norms of childhood. Furthermore, I will examine the way in which the maternal characters in these novels become monstrous by association.

My central thesis will be that both *The Bad Seed* and *We Need to Talk About Kevin* use the monstrous child to construct a critique of heteronormative family ideals and materialistic American culture. Thus these narratives offer not only a nightmarish worst-case scenario of parenthood, but also encourage us to reconsider how we think about childhood, parenting, and family.

**Short biography:** Anna Young is a Ph.D. fellow in literature and gender studies at the University of Oslo's Centre for Gender Research. Her dissertation deals with the themes of childhood, violence, and gender identity in a selection of British and American novels from the 1950s to the present day.

# Art and Performances

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**Tanja Jurković:**

## **The Monster in I: Living with OCD**

OCD, or an Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, is a mental disorder, or “an anxiety disorder in which people have unwanted and repeated thoughts, feelings, ideas, sensations (obsessions), or behaviours that make them feel driven to do something (compulsions).” An OCD person usually carries out those behaviours and compulsions, but this process only brings relief on a temporary level. Being an OCD person myself, I have come to realize that OCD as a mental disorder, where a chemical imbalance in one’s brain stops a person from performing some otherwise normal everyday actions, which in turn makes life a lot more complicated and harder than it usually is, becomes a vital part of one’s personality, trying to invade the mind by creating different types of thoughts that are usually on the border of the Real and the Unreal. It is a battle of keeping one’s own identity in the midst of a war with the monster itself, or the Other, the monstrous side of human nature that we all possess and fear. In recent years, OCD has entered the language and other spheres of life on a more trivial level, thus diminishing the reality of what OCD actually is, which in turn gives an overall impression of this mental disorder as not being serious enough to get treated properly, for example, or taken seriously in general, for that matter. With this photography project I would like to share my vision and experience of how it is to live with a mental disorder, in this case with OCD, comparing it to the monstrous side of human nature, the dark (id) entity that grows alongside our natural identity, and depending on a social and emotional context, it prevails and dominates the life of a person suffering from it, or it stays locked inside our minds, but never really disappears forever.

**Tanja Jurković:**



A great part of my work in photography realm, influenced by film and comic books, revolves around exploring different spheres of human nature and capturing moments and emotions that usually depict the issues relevant to our modern society that we need to speak about, in that way trying to raise awareness and pointing out the relevance of dealing with them in order to help others.

Website: <http://ayagravesphotography.weebly.com/>



**Tove Salmgren and Anna Efraimsson:**

## **Blobbing**

Blobbing is a performative and interactive proposal aiming at introducing a monster logic within and at the actual conference, a logic that adds the aspect of *how* “to conference”, a physical presence of monsters in parallel to all the speaking and analysing *about* monsters. Blobbing is infiltrating and playing, focusing on bodily and spatial reorganisation departing from and working through what is already present in terms of speakers, topics, architecture, context, the conference itself etc. We are interested in rethinking and destabilizing power structures in making playful and user friendly actions through The Blob.

Blobbing could be seen as a wash. The speakers and contributors of the conference are offered a “wash” / Blobbing of their presentations. Concretely we are proposing formats and instructions that could infiltrate or even possess the talk, the lecture, the after-talk etc ranging from very subtle to more imposing (Blobbing comes in three different sizes: small, medium and large).

Some concrete examples of the Blobbing instructions are:

- The Blobs says (instead of Simons says). The audience repeats what the speaker says.
- The Blob body fabric to cloth one or more speakers/listeners.
- Reorganisation of the furnitures and bodies in space.

Blobbing is entirely voluntarily. Even if no one would try Blobbing, it will still have a presence and an impact on the conference and create conversations and buzzes. Before the conference we propose to send an email offering our Blobbing service. There will also be a Blobbing information spot by the registration desk. In addition we offer a workshop where we speak and show The Blobbing methods.

In 2015 The Blob was mediated through Salmgren, Efraimsson and Miriam von Schantz (phd candidate in media and communication) when it/they choreographed the dinner at the International Deleuze Conference at Konstfack. <http://www.theblob.se/the-blob-conferencedinner/>

**Bios:**

## **The Blob**

is an elastic boneless alter ego/artist/ body curating, initiating and producing art and culture with a special interest in choreography. It creates forms and projects that stand alone or

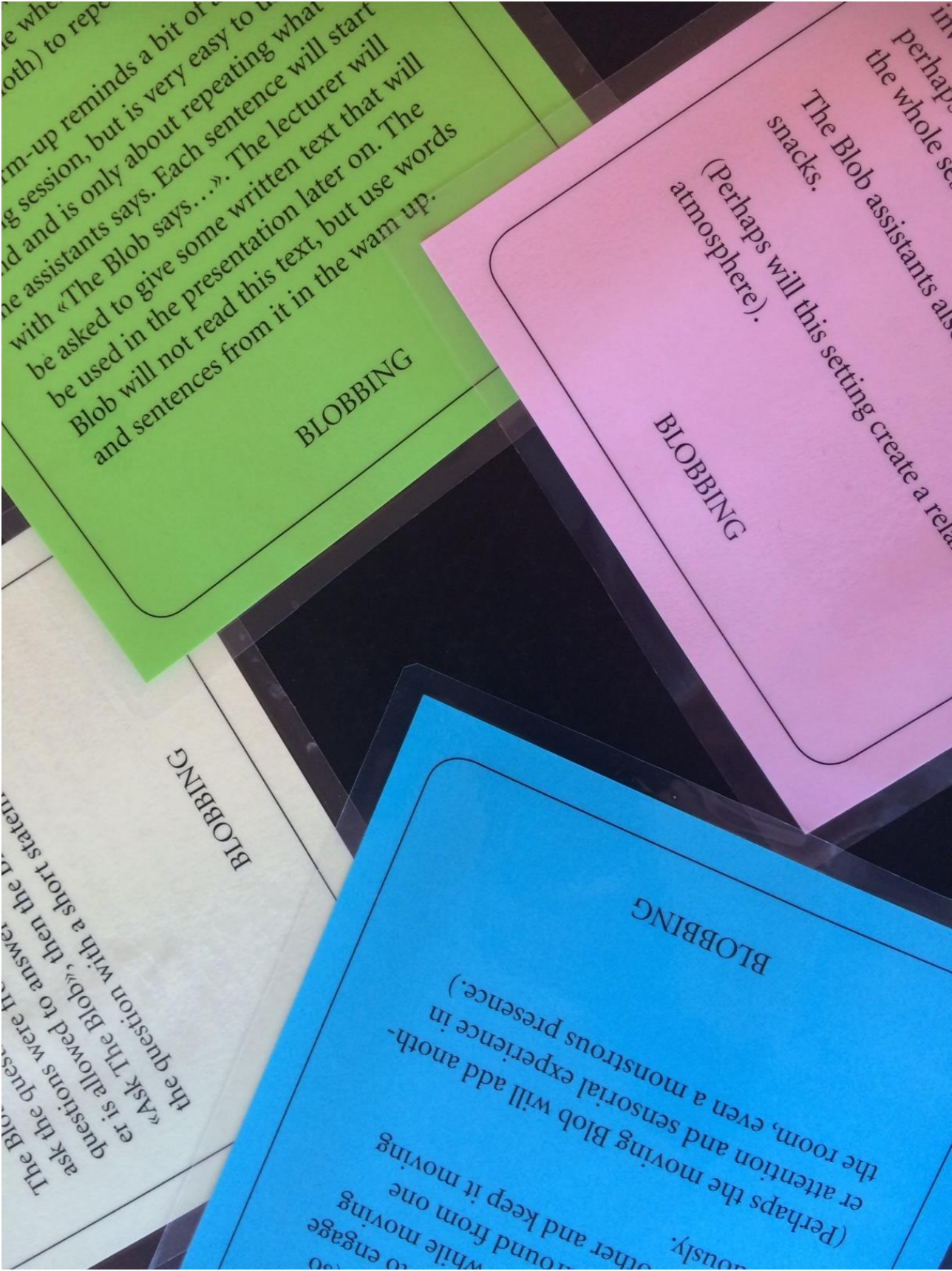
“blob on” to different structures through collaboration. It is inspired by the character Barbapapa and the 1950’s horror film The Blob.

**Anna Efraimsson**

works in performing arts as a curator, producer, lecturer, dramaturge and runs The Blob since 2014. She is a senior lecturer in choreography with a specialization in curatorial practices at DOCH School for Dance and Circus in Stockholm.

**Tove Salmgren**

works in the field of the performing arts as a dancer, choreographer and dramaturge. She is one of two artistic leaders of Köttinspektionen dans in Uppsala, Sweden, a venue for dance, theatre and visual art. Her artistic work often uses text and body, through performative experiments that deals with and challenges social hegemonic structures and practices.



**Nadine Zoghbi:**

**A monstrous sound story**

Monsters are fascinating, especially when one thinks about the duality aspect they bring: they are quiet, until they roar. They are old when they look young. They are dead when they crave life. They are organic, until we see their inner robot, and they are robots with human emotions. They are innocent children until their murderous demonic self is revealed, and they are horrifying yet so attractive. They are us, or at least from us.

If monsters are our culture's expression of its fears, then this story attempts to convey some of those fears: fear of the different, fear of the unknown, fear of the technological, fear of losing our innocence, fear of what awaits us after death and the legacy we leave.

Sound design: Nadine Zoghbi.

Additional recordings:

- Jewish Shofar: recorded by jpors.
- Melkite mass: recorded by jgntrs.
- Islamic prayer: recorded by xserra.

**Nadine Zoghbi:**

Sound designer, composer, and lecturer in sound and music design for the screen at the University of Stavanger, Norway. Her main area of interest is sound and psychoacoustics, how sound influences our perception of the world around us, how it can convey emotions, and the audiovisual contract between sound and picture on screen.