

MAIS Symposium – October 4, 2013

Research in the Interdisciplinary World

10:45am – 12 noon: Session Two
Frankenstein, Fingerprints and the Apocalypse

Abstracts

Mark A. McCutcheon

“The ‘mad scientist’ of media: McLuhan’s Frankensteinian discourse of technology in 1960s counter-culture and media”

This paper tracks counter-cultural and broadcast media receptions of Marshall McLuhan’s media theory in the 1960s, as part of a larger project which argues that McLuhan’s media theory and its diverse receptions, taken together, constitute a globalized discourse of technology as a Frankensteinian monstrosity. By a globalized discourse of technology I mean both the global distribution of a discourse that figures technology as a factitious monster run amok, and that establishes the global as the framing context for this figuration. Frankenstein has contributed powerfully to the modern meaning of technology, and Canadian adaptations of Frankenstein - anchored in McLuhan’s work as much as Mary Shelley’s - help us to understand the globalized transfer of this discourse.

This talk focuses not on McLuhan’s own work - which, as I have shown elsewhere, consistently represents technology as a Frankensteinian figure throughout his work. Rather, this talk looks at the global circulation of McLuhan’s discourse of technology in its receptions, relays, and reformulations by broadcast media, journalists, and popular writers, especially in the period of McLuhan’s greatest popularity - of “Macluhanisme” - the late 1960s. The popular and scholarly receptions of McLuhan in the period both amplify and counter each other, and converge with particular complexity and resonance in McLuhan’s popularity with a counter-culture that saw itself as a “global underground” (Rycroft). McLuhan’s popular receptions by journalists and the counter-culture in the 1960s helped to globally disseminate his Frankensteinian idea of technology, not only in their content but, fittingly, in their form as well. A counter-culture that saw itself as a “global underground” adapted McLuhan’s ideas for experimental scenes of social change (Gordon); however, these scenes furnished the journalistic establishment with sensational images of mediatized radicalism contributed to McLuhan’s caricature as a “mad scientist” of media.

Vina Tirven-Gadum

“Stylistic differences (or similarities) in the novels of the Russian born French author Andreï Makine /Gabriel Osmonde”

In my main area of research, I apply standard authorship attribution methods to evaluate the reliability of the concept that style is dictated by the subconscious and forms the “genetic” fingerprint of the writer’s work. I have shown, in previous studies, how the well-known Russian-born French writer, Romain Gary, used a different “linguistic fingerprint” when he wrote the novel *La Vie devant soi* under the pseudonym of Émile Ajar, for which he received a second “*Prix Goncourt*” (France’s highest literary award).

Using the same methodology, I am now conducting research on the novels of another Russo-French writer, Andreï Makine, who is also a recipient of the “*Prix Goncourt*”. Often compared to Stendhal, Tolstoy and Proust, Makine is tipped to be among the contenders for the next Nobel Prize in literature. Makine is the author of nineteen novels, four of which were published under the pseudonym of Gabriel Osmonde. My research seeks to establish whether he, too, used a different linguistic fingerprint when he assumed the pseudonym of Gabriel Osmonde.

James Gifford

“Elizabeth Smart and Canadian Apocalyptic Modernisms”

The paper will address the Left / Right binary in critical histories of the 30s and 40s (particularly the notion of Late Modernism in the New Modernist Studies and "Auden Generation" scholarship). At the same time, the talk will reconstruct an interpretive schema for the prose works of Canadian, British, and American anarchist writers of the period (Henry Miller, Lawrence Durrell, Alex Comfort, and Elizabeth Smart) with particular focus on Smart's relations with the New Apocalypse network.