“THE UNACCEPTABLE” CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE HANDBOOK

April 30 – May 1, 2011

Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies
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Becky Shepherd
Sarah Keith
Kathryn Millard
John Potts
Registration and venue information

Conference Venue
“The Unacceptable” Conference will be held in Building Y3A, Macquarie University, North Ryde.
Formerly occupied by AFTRS (the Australian Film, Television and Radio School), Macquarie University acquired the building several years ago, and it is now home to the Department of Media, Music, Communication, and Cultural Studies (MMCCS) within the Faculty of Arts.
Y3A is located at the western end of Macquarie University, on Epping Road. A map of Macquarie University is provided in this handbook, as well as transport options.
Sessions will be held in several locations around Y3A, as indicated on the schedule. Posters will indicate the locations within the building.

Registration
A registration desk will be located in the foyer of Y3A. Please visit the registration desk to collect your conference pack, name badge, and wireless internet guest account details.
Conference registration is administered by Conference Online. Secure online payment can be made via credit card, and you will be issued with an electronic receipt.
A link to the “The Unacceptable Conference” registration page can be found at:
http://unacceptableconference.wordpress.com/registration/
Please ensure that you have registered before attending the conference, as we are not easily able to accept cash payments. If necessary, we can provide access to a computer for registration, but registration in advance is highly recommended.
Registration for the conference get-together on Saturday April 30 is also administered via the Conference Online system. Please register for this event by 25 April so that numbers can be confirmed for catering purposes.

Conference Packs
You will receive a black Macquarie “Faculty of Arts” conference bag, containing the following:
• Conference program
• Conference handbook containing abstracts
• Pen and sticky notes
• Name badge
Please be sure to wear your name badge for access to sessions, meals, conference get-together, etc.

Refreshments and Meals
Morning tea, lunch, and afternoon tea are provided for all registrants. These will be served in the southern courtyard of Y3A, unless otherwise noted in the conference program. Other options follow.
Mezze Café (Monday–Friday, 9:00am–3:00pm) serves coffee, snacks, and lunches and is located on Level 1 of Y3A, overlooking Mars Creek.
Vending machines (24 hours, 7 days) are available near the café in the Y3A building, on Level 1.
Crunch Café (Mon–Fri, 7.30am–7.00pm: Sat–Sun, 7.30am–5.00pm) is located at the Macquarie University Sport & Aquatic Centre (W10A), a 4-minute walk from Y3A.

Marxine’s café (Mon–Thu, 7:30am–8:00pm: Fri, 7.30am–5.00pm: Sat, 8:00am–3:00pm) is located in the Campus Food Hub (C10A), a 5-minute walk from Y3A.

Woolworths supermarket is a 4-minute walk from Y3A, across Epping road.

Conference get-together (Saturday Evening)
The conference get-together is at the Ranch Hotel, on the corner of Herring and Epping Roads (a 10-minute walk from Y3A), in the Chats room, from 7:00–9:00pm, with food service starting at 7:00. Registering for this event is essential.

A map of North Ryde indicating the location of the Ranch Hotel follows.

Transport to and from Macquarie
A full transport guide to Macquarie University is available at:


Train: Macquarie University station is located on Herring Road, between the University and the Macquarie Centre. Regular train services operate on the Northern Line between Hornsby and the City via Macquarie Park. Transport time to Central Station is approximately 35 minutes. Services run approximately every 15 minutes in each direction. The last train to Central departs at 11:08pm, and the last train to Hornsby departs at 12.25am.

Visit http://www.cityrail.info/timetables/ for information on timetables and fares. Note that the Macquarie University train station is at the other (eastern) end of campus from Y3A, so allow a leisurely 12-minute walk.

Bus: Macquarie University is serviced by several bus lines, including Sydney Buses, Forest Coaches, and Hillsbus. The bus network is extensive and connects Macquarie University to many locations within Sydney. There are several bus stations around Macquarie University, including one adjacent to Y3A, but the main bus station is next to the Library (C3C), which is a 5-minute walk.

Visit http://www.mq.edu.au/transport/PDFs/map_mq_bus_network.pdf for complete information on bus services to Macquarie University.

Casual Parking is available in X4, X3, and W4 carparks, adjacent to Y3A. Parking tickets must be bought from a ticket machine and clearly displayed. Be aware that day-long parking can be expensive, so taking public transport is highly recommended.

Wireless Internet
To obtain a guest account for wireless internet access, please visit the conference registration desk in the foyer of Y3A.

ATM Locations
ATMs are located at Woolworths supermarket, across Epping Road from Y3A; in the Campus Food Hub in C10A; and below the Co-op Bookstore (C10A).
Smoking
Macquarie’s newly introduced smoking policy (effective 1 January 2011) bans smoking except in designated smoking areas. A designated smoking area is located at ground-level outside Y3A, next to the gazebo outside the café, overlooking Mars Creek.

In and around North Ryde
Macquarie Centre is the closest shopping centre, and is located across from the Macquarie University Train Station on the corner of Herring and Waterloo Road. It has many food and beverage outlets as well as general retail stores.

Epping is one train stop away from Macquarie University station and has many evening dining options around the train station, as well as hotels/pubs.

Eastwood is two train stops away from Macquarie University (transfer lines at Epping) and also has many evening dining options, particularly Japanese and Korean food.

Chatswood is three train stops away from Macquarie University, in the direction of Central, and likewise has many shopping and dining options.

City/Wynyard is eight train stops away from Macquarie University (around 30 minutes travel time).
Featured Speakers

Anna Broinowski
Director and writer Anna Broinowski is well-known for her 2007 documentary Forbidden Lie$, about the literary hoax surrounding the book Forbidden Love. The film explores the life and literary career of Norma Khouri, who found fame and fortune in 2003 with her infamous ‘true story’ Forbidden Love, which documented the shocking honour killing of a childhood friend in Jordan. Anna has also written and directed the critically acclaimed documentary Helen’s War, a portrait of her aunt, anti-nuclear campaigner Helen Caldicott. Forbidden Lie$ won Best Documentary in the Australian Film Critics Association awards for 2007, Best Documentary at the 2007 Rome Film Festival, Best Documentary and Best Editing in a Documentary at the 2007 Australian Film Institute Awards, a 2009 Walkley award for Television Current Affairs, Feature, Documentary or Special (more than 20 minutes), as well as the Golden Al Jazeera award for a long film at the 2008 Al Jazeera Documentary Festival. Anna is currently pursuing a PhD at Macquarie University within MMCCS, merging creative practice and critique, and Forbidden Lie$ was completed as part of her creative PhD.

Claire Colebrook
Claire Colebrook holds a first degree in philosophy from the University of Melbourne, a Bachelor of Letters from Australian National University and a doctorate from the University of Edinburgh. She was Professor of Modern Literary Theory at the University of Edinburgh from 2000-2008. She has published articles on contemporary European philosophy, feminist theory, literary theory, contemporary music, dance, visual culture and political theory. Her books include New Literary Histories (Manchester UP 1997), Ethics and Representation (Edinburgh UP 1999), Gilles Deleuze (Routledge 2002), Understanding Deleuze (Allen and Unwin 2003), Irony in the Work of Philosophy (Nebraska 2002), Irony: The New Critical Idiom (Routledge 2003), Gender (Palgrave 2004), Deleuze: A Guide for the Perplexed (Continuum 2006) and Milton, Evil and Literary History (Continuum 2008). She is currently completing two book-length studies, one on vitalism and another on William Blake and aesthetics.

Catharine Lumby
Professor Catharine Lumby is the Director of the Journalism and Media Research Centre at UNSW. She was the foundational Chair of the Media and Communications Department at the University of Sydney. She is the author and co-author of six books and one co-edited collection. Her recent work has been focused on young people and educational strategies that recognise and encourage their agency, with a focus on the role of digital, online and mobile media can play in education. She is the lead author of a book examining research into children’s use of media and the evidence of effects on learning, literacy and creativity titled Why TV Is Good For Kids: Raising 21st Century Children (2006).

Andrew Murphie
Andrew Murphie is the editor of the open access, online journal, the Fibreculture Journal (http://journal.fibreculture.org/). His own research: theories of the virtual, post-connectionist and poststructuralist models of mind; Guattari and Deleuze (and others – he’s not quite a card carrying ‘deleuzean’); art and interaction; electronic music (especially in Australia); critical approaches to performance systems and what he calls ‘auditland’; biophilosophy and biopolitics; innovation; education innovation; collaboration; contemporary publishing. Recent online publications include Differential Life, Perception and the Nervous Elements: Whitehead, Bergson and Virno on the Technics of Living’ in Culture Machine (2005) and ‘The Mutation of “Cognition” and the Fracturing of Modernity’ in Scan (2005) and ‘Clone Your Technics: Research creation, radical empiricism and the constraints of
models’ in *Inflexions* (2008). Forthcoming publications include ‘Deleuze, Guattari and Neuroscience’, ‘Performance as the Distribution of Life: from Aeschylus to Chekhov to VJing via Deleuze and Guattari’ and ‘Joyce Hinterding and David Haines: High Res Resonations with the Milky Way’.

**John Potts**

John Potts is Associate Professor in Media at Macquarie University, Sydney. He has published five books, including *A History of Charisma* (Palgrave Macmillan 2009, two translations: Korean and Chinese) and two edited collections – *After the Event: New Perspectives on Art History* (Manchester University Press 2010, co-edited with Charles Merewether) and *Technologies of Magic* (Power Publications 2006, co-edited with Edward Scheer). He has published many essays and articles on contemporary culture, digital technology, media history, art and cultural history. His writing has appeared in journals such as *Convergence, Meanjin* and *Senses of Cinema*, as well as in the Sydney Morning Herald. He is a founding editor of *Scan Online Journal of Media Arts Culture*. 
Abstracts

Nicole Anderson (Macquarie University)

The Unacceptability of ‘Bio-Art’: the Deconstruction and Politics of Art and Criticism

The term ‘bio-art’ serves to define an artistic practice that includes either biological materials, or techniques. This practice of bio-art is a fast growing field, and in November 2008 Gallery 400 at the University of Illinois, Chicago, hosted an exhibition entitled, ‘Biological Agents: artistic engagements in our growing bioculture’. Most compelling in this bio-art exhibition was the tension or aporia produced, on the one hand, by the aim of the exhibition, in particular the curators, to explore ‘human’ agency in this biotechnological ecological context, and on the other, the attempted artistic means by which to engage a public audience in their own agency. For instance, the three bio-artists all attempted to represent the inseparability of the traditional dichotomies between nature/culture, biological/technical, and human/animal, suggesting that humans are both biological agent and, at the same time, hosts in a closely linked biological system of causes and effects that have political and ethical consequences for the ways in which humans continue to live in the world. Specifically, the artists attempted this ‘inseparability’ by engaging a public audience in bodily (as well as mental and emotional) interactivity with the exhibits (through aural, tactile and visual means). This interactivity, then, attempted to enable a public audience to critically reflect on their links to, and their roles as, biological hosts and agents, in a biological/natural environment, thus challenging the dichotomy between nature and culture, as well as the normative perception that humans, and thus human subjectivity, stands outside of, or apart from, the biological system (nature).

However, to be able to engage an audience interactively, and thus have an audience ‘perform’, at least metaphorically, their links with an array of biological systems, paradoxically requires the audience to critically reflect, it requires a traditional form of criticism that produces a traditional form of agency, while simultaneously asking an audience to learn new ways of being an audience. And this is the tension, the aporia: to engage a public audience interactively the exhibition enables both a dismantling of preconceived notions of what it means to be human, but paradoxically at the same time, reproduces a humanist subjectivity and ‘agency’, by fostering criticism (objectivity, distance, disengaged mental reflection that requires analysis, evaluation and judgement), in order to potentially produce political awareness and action without allowing or simply bypassing the audience’s ability to simply aesthetise or fetishise biological-ecological concerns.

By way of a detailed exploration of the bio-art works in the exhibition this paper will employ Derrida’s notion of ‘autoimmunity’, a term he uses to invoke the condition where “a living being, in a quasi-suicidal fashion, ‘itself’ works to destroy its own protection, to immunise itself against its own immunity” (Derrida 2003: 94). In particular, Derrida’s notion of autoimmunity raises some questions about the relationship between ‘bio-art’ (and its political and philosophical themes and aims) and ‘criticism’ that this paper will address. Most importantly, how does criticism as a form of reason work against reason itself? Must criticism as that which produces a form of autonomy or agency, necessarily undermine its own aim in exhibiting political action and awareness about the biological-ecological crises that humans produce, reproduce and are produced by? In other words, is criticism simply an autoimmune response to ecological crisis? Is criticism as autoimmunity simply negative and suicidal? Or can it be a positive force as well, utilising the tensions or paradoxes produced by the interactions between art, philosophy and politics in order to understand action and change (for example, in the biotechnological ecological spheres) as that which does not simply reassert humanists notion of the subject (a notion that subjects act upon and thus outside of biological systems) and thus the dichotomies this in turn produces?
**Niko Antalffy (Macquarie University)**

**Polyamory and the Media**

Polyamory has become more acceptable in the last decade in both Australia, US and Europe: as a concept and a practice. Sometimes polyamory is called the ‘flavour of the month’ because of the high interest that the media is demonstrating in representing it. Yet there is a clear segmentation in representation: there are some progressive voices such as SBS and niche online magazines, yet the mainstream media continues to treat polyamory with a mixture of titillation and rejection. On the one hand polyamory presents sexy scenarios of infidelity for those already engaging in non-consensual non-monogamy (otherwise known as cheating) that brings the opportunity of voyeurism (even as this conflates cheating with polyamory), on the other hand the transgressive elements of the movement are still branded unacceptable, impossible, deeply problematic or against our true nature despite ground-breaking work such as Sex at Dawn and a growing social movement that is now a distinct, if small, subculture. In this paper I will draw attention to this double-sided development in the media and describe their strategies of making polyamory an unacceptable choice. I will also show how the international polyamory movement has been doing its best to celebrate its own vitality and tackle the media’s responses with tact, insight and by allying themselves with other subcultures who are at a later stage of acceptance.

**Santiago Ballina (Autonomous National University, Mexico)**

**The Sombrero Comes out of the Closet: Gay Marriage in Mexico and a Nation’s Struggle for Identity**

On December last year, in a swift move that caught by surprise both supporters and foes, the Local Assembly of Mexico City legalized gay marriage, becoming the first city in Latin America to allow civil weddings between same-sex partners. The Assembly went one step further, including adoption rights in the law that was finally approved.

In a country where the share of Catholic population is well above 80 percent, deeply bound by traditional values, the issue not surprisingly became the center of a heated debate. Interestingly enough, those who opposed the law—parents associations, the governing party and the President of the country himself, among others—abstained from framing the debate as a ‘denial of rights’ issue (by a twist of history, what has become unacceptable is to assert that a particular minority is not to be entitled to a certain right), but rather went at great lengths to conceal the moral source of their opposition in legalistic terms, insisting that this was to be treated as a ‘merely judicial’ issue.

This paper will address the controversy aroused by the approval of gay marriage in Mexico City, with a particular focus on the arguments put forward by its opponents, who either overtly or subtly portrayed this type of unions as a hazard to the social fabric of traditional Mexican society and values, and hence, as unacceptable.

The terms of the debate will seem germane to other modern Western societies where the issue has been raised. However, as this will paper will insist, the case of Mexico is unique insofar as it reflects the broader context of a nation struggling to reshape its own modern identity. Caught between a predominantly conservative and Catholic Latin America and a neighboring, flamboyant—and frequently intimidating—North America, fault lines are not infrequent among Mexican society. The debate about same-sex marriage is only but the latest expression of a national quest for identity.

**Dani Barley (University of Western Sydney)**

**Where Nana’s lessons meet cum shots: exploring non-traditional interpretations of traditionally female crafts.**

As if embargoed to do so, every few months another banal article appears in the media highlighting the “resurgence”, “renaissance” or “retro-appeal” of traditional (women’s) crafts -- knitting, crochet, sewing,
embroidery, and cross stitch. Most of the articles focus on the fact that these young people (mostly women) have fallen in love with an art form largely associated with the nursing home set and their spotlight remains almost entirely on reinforcing the themes and stereotypes surrounding such work.

While mainstream attention has sough to retain a conventional interpretation of the art forms, an Internet community has arisen that gives true life to term “subversive stitching”. Julie Jackson’s Subversive Cross Stitch, Jenny Hart’s Sublime Embroidery and the collectives behind the blogs Mr. X Stitch and Radical Cross Stitch all give a platform to those artists who aren’t interested in embroidering their beloved’s initials into a handkerchief as a sign of affection. Instead, they’ll stitch a lifelike representation of a cum shot from a ‘70s porno flick onto a throw cushion and give it to someone who will display it proudly. The result can be seen on pools of Flickr photo sharing website which have thousands of submissions and hundreds of members.

This paper is interested in both the motivation of some of these stitchers: why did they pick up a needle or a hook and why do they choose to subvert the norms of such a traditional art form? Further, I aim to visually examine some of the pieces through a feminist, post-modern and aesthetic lens to investigate exactly what is being communicated.

Scott Beattie and Susannah Bird (Victoria University)

Filth and the Unacceptable Spaces of Waste

"The law forbids both rich and poor from sleeping under bridges, begging for food and dumpster diving. But everyone loves to scavenge a hard rubbish bargain"

Disposal and reclamation of waste is a highly regulated activity and law places different value on cultural acceptable or unacceptable practices involving those who would disrupt the orderly disposal of rubbish. While dumpster diving remains a fringe, abjected practice, fossicking among the hard rubbish retains an authentic, carnivalesque aura, connected to middle class values of thrift and charity.

Both practices are governed by laws around the regulated flow of waste, public liability and ownership of consumable commodities. There is a complex intertwining of regulatory discourses around waste, recycling, rubbish and vagrancy that separates the new from the ‘dirty’. This paper uses critical legal geography to compare the regulatory spaces of the ‘hard rubbish collection’ and the ‘dumpster’ to compare the way in which different practices are defined as acceptable and unacceptable. Further we look at the class cultural meanings around dirt, waste, recycling and consumption to see how ‘street chic’ disrupts many of these distinctions.

Suzannah Biernoff (Birkbeck College, London)

BioShock’s medical imaginary

‘Art’ and ‘entertainment’ are concepts with an asymmetrical relationship to the unacceptable. Something that is acceptable as art may be regarded as dubious or unacceptable as entertainment. They are, on the other hand, thoroughly entangled, mutable and often contested terms: contemporary art has been promoted – and disparaged – as entertaining; computer games have been critically acclaimed as art. My case study is BioShock, a first-person shooter designed by Ken Levine and released in August 2007. It won the BAFTA for Best Game that year, amongst a constellation of other awards, and is the third highest rated Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 game to date. It is a game that in the words of one blogger, embraces ‘moral grey areas’. Some of these ‘grey areas’ are obvious: to kill, or not to kill? Others are less so: the score incorporates the ‘found’ sound of distressed breathing (found on an unnamed doctor’s website). Some of the artwork is based on medical case photographs from WWI of facially injured soldiers.

As historical artefacts, medical photographs can be both fascinating and troubling. Encountered outside a clinical context, they have the potential – as many artists have realised – to unsettle our ideas about what it is to be
human. This is precisely the function they serve in BioShock. I will focus on one photograph from the WWI medical case files held in the Gillies Archives in London, and consider its use (or misuse) as a source of inspiration for the game. Taking Susan Sontag’s question ‘what should we do with such images?’ as a point of departure, the case photograph will serve as a test case and interrogative tool. Rather than re-constructing its original social and medical contexts, I will consider the photograph’s 21st-century afterlives (in the game, on websites and discussion forums), and the ethical challenges BioShock presents.

Paulina Billett (University of Wollongong)

Dark social capital or just another way to cope?

Social capital is said to generate many benefits for young people. It is thought to help increases school retention rates, promote resilience, improve health, increase sense of identity, promote family understanding, lower levels of delinquency and increase a feeling of place within a community. However, some such as Xavier de Sousa Briggs (1997) have warned against an overly optimistic outlook of social and have suggested that social capital may in fact have a less desirable aspect a “dark” or “bad” side. Usually seen to emanate from a over emphasis of strong bonding and a lack of bridging networks, dark social capital among youth has blamed for gang membership, organized criminal activity and deviant subcultural behavior.

Consequently, the image of the anti social youth is constructed alongside the belief that problematic youths are social capital “deficient” with “bad” behaviour among young people seen as the result of too much bonding and not enough bridging in their networks.

However for most young people, bonding ties are an essential part of their identity forming and can be tied to their resilience, with youth of disadvantaged backgrounds often making use of their strong bonding ties to make their lives work.

This paper will look at how subcultural capital, rather than being acknowledge as a coping mechanism has come to be viewed as "dark" or "bad" and how pessimistic view has hindered the social capital of many young people and in particular those who are most disadvantaged. This paper will present evidence collected as part of the field work for the PhD thesis “Youth social capital; getting on and getting ahead in life” during 2008 and 2009.

Anna Broinowski (Macquarie University)

Filming the Con: The Making of Forbidden Lies

An examination of the ethical, cultural and artistic challenges involved in the making of FORBIDDEN LIE$, a dramatized documentary about Chicago con-artist turned hoax author, Norma Khouri.

When filmmaker Anna Broinowski set out to film Norma Khouri in 2005, she thought the author would prove that her discredited memoir, ‘Forbidden Love’, was based on the truth. Instead, Norma conned Anna too, sucking her into a deceptive parallel universe in which lies are truth, spin is justified, and ‘faction’ sells. But should we only judge Norma in the end, or are her publishers, the media, the law, Western and Jordanian politicians, and even the filmmaker herself equally complicit?

Dennis Bruining (Macquarie University)

The Accepted Unacceptable

In this paper, I offer a transsomatechnical approach to ‘The Unacceptable’ that is not so much interested in finding definitive answers with regard to (un)accepted cultural practices but rather tries to elucidate how “The Unacceptable” always already performs, creates, materializes, and most importantly, reiterates a categorical
either/or re-production of forms of bodily (un)accepted being. To ask – as the call for papers does – “what is unacceptable now”, and to understand the workings of a mechanism that deems certain practices and forms of being unacceptable, means to theorize the liminal space in-between the accepted and that what is unacceptable. That space, which could be called a ‘constitutive outside’ or a ‘leaky boundary’, renders all forms of being unstable because the accepted and unacceptable are mutually dependent on each other. Moreover, this space in-between is above all an object of policing which shows that this space is always in movement.

However, to focus on this space, and to focus by means of transsomatictechnics on the dual discursive nature of this space, means to look at how the accepted (as the reified reproduction of any particular contingent cultural convention) is in a precarious relation to itself so that it never really renders the unacceptable as The Unacceptable but rather as an accepted Unacceptable.

In this paper, I will specifically look at transgender. As a somatechnology, the identity category of transgender has been produced through various technologies that have consequently produced an unacceptable Other that must – in order for transgenders to occupy a viable subject position – be rejected. However, as I have argued above, the unacceptable is always already a part of the accepted. I would like to show, then, how an exploration of the term transsomatictechnics reveals the constructive nature of accepted transgender subjectivity as well as the inherently linked unacceptable consequences that the transition engenders.

Mio Bryce and Nicole Matthews (Macquarie University)

Visualising Unacceptable Lives: Discourses of Disability in "With the Light"

This paper offers an analysis of the significance of a sextet of manga novels by Keiko Tobe and an award television series based on them. The novels With the Light are an example of a type of manga that has received comparatively little commentary in the English speaking academic world. Manga which incorporate violence, explicit sexual acts, and representations of same-sex relationships and gender play – apparently “unacceptable” texts - have been of real interest to Anglophone academics and the wider public for some decades. With the Light, in contrast, is a Josei manga, addressing a largely adult female audience. It falls somewhere between a bildungsroman narrative (of the parenting experiences of the mother of an autistic little boy) and the popular but underdiscussed “how to” genre of manga. In some senses, then, in this instance, and perhaps more broadly, it is the workaday and prosaic rather than the unacceptable that has been neglected by academic scholarship.

In another sense, however, these texts address a theme which is often regarded ‘unacceptable’ therefore ‘invisible’ in Japan – that of disability. This paper will explore the discursive framing of “disability” in these novels and their spin off television series. In what ways do these texts challenge contemporary understandings of disability in Japan? Should we read these texts as activism – attempt to reimagine schooling in a more inclusive mode? And in what ways do these texts reiterate conventional ways of visualizing “disability”, in particular through the point of view adopted in illustrations and televsual visualization.

Brendan Burrows (University of Ottawa, Canada)

“Will There Be Windows on the U-Haul?” A Semiotic Analysis of Recent Depictions of Muhammad on South Park

The question of what is unacceptable to portray has always been a subject of taboo for satirists. Indeed, the modern day media induced ‘Islamophobia’ has set the agenda that anyone who opts to show the image of Muhammad is not only trespassing on sacred ground, but also on dangerous ground as well. The fact is depicting the Moslem prophet has resulted in the murder of a Danish cartoonist. As a result this has contributed to the notion that the prophet Muhammad or at least depictions of him is a significant catalyst for western self-censorship.
This paper looks at how the media sets the agenda for self-censorship in the west rather than strictly outlawing what is constructed as unacceptable. More importantly this paper aims to show how attempts at censorship by television networks can be ‘semiotically hijacked’ by a programs writers. The semiotic interpretation of a seemingly censored image can be triggered in a way to largely make attempts at self-censorship ineffective. By undertaking a thorough Peircean (Charles Sanders Peirce) Semiotic analysis of recent episodes of the television program South Park in which the network tried to censor the images, I will show how the creators of the show hijacked the attempts at censorship by Comedy Central (the network that aired it). This was accomplished through satirizing the very process of censorship itself. The semiotic subterfuge that occurred in the episode relied on a variety of indexical elements that triggered the viewer’s interpretive power into constructing the icon of Muhammad itself. Using this Semiotic analysis of the program, I will show how using self-referential satire, creators can make institutional attempts at censorship largely ineffective in the interpretive mind of the viewer.

Following the themes of the conference we can see how through this example what is outlawed becomes ultimately subject to the voyeur and the interpretive strategies he/she employs. The findings of this paper will show how attempts to render something forbidden largely takes the acquiescence of the people rather then just the censoring power of an institution.

Stephen Carthew (University of South Australia)

Accepting Unacceptable Cults: Cultural Innovation through New Religious Movements

My thesis, Approaching New Religious Movements (NRMs): The formative influences of the Universal Brotherhood Community (1971-1988), explores a marginal religious community. As a co-founder of this ‘New Age’ group I explore the social contributions it made. The lives of my one-time mentors, Fred and Mary Robinson, just had to be written. I am best placed to be their biographer. I wanted to interrogate stereotypical (mis)-representation of the Robinsons and the Community from the 1930s until 2009, when Compass made a retrospective documentary, ‘The Brotherhood’.

‘Prophet’ Fred; ‘Discerner’ Mary; and the ‘Preacher’ me (as Black, the last PhD researcher on the topic depicted us in 1984) are seen to inscribe their own histories onto the group. Media artefacts reveal how representations shift, to effect what Paul Ricoeur calls ‘emplotment’ (1984). Society ‘emplots’ narratives which ‘match the moment’, socially and culturally – and as society changes, so do the ‘telling’ of such stories. Religious movements are ‘part of’ the larger secular society, and yet the ‘cult’ stereotype is an ‘unacceptable’ ‘apart from’, distancing ‘emplotment’— one which arose after the notorious 1978 ‘Jonestown’ event, to push all understanding of NRMs into the same frame. Despite such depictions, I argue that many ‘New Age’ cultural innovations have become established mainstream practices and policies.

A purely pejorative take on such complex religious phenomena simply sends marginal group members of into persecution mode with detrimental effects. While resistance to zny curbing of religious freedom has long been a hallmark of liberalisation, the question of how to handle the negative experiences reported by ex-adherents does need to be addressed. A focus on ‘behaviour not beliefs’ (Xenophon, 2010) is needed. Since all religious institutions seem unreliable in self-monitoring, should a Religious Ombudsperson field complaints?

Claire Colebrook (Penn State, Pennsylvania)

Why Saying 'No' to Life is Plainly Unacceptable

In 2008 The Day the Earth Stood Still featured a dead-pan alien (played appropriately by Keanu Reeves) who informed humanity that its violence and destructive modes of consumption no longer entitled it to life on earth. The narrative of the film proved this judgment and diagnosis to be peremptory: Keanu is given the chance to see
the benevolent side of humanity through the eyes of a young boy, and the annihilation of the human species is delayed. A common motif in science fiction narratives of alien invasion, the judgment of humanity as life-denying and life-unworthy is neither refuted nor answered, but simply set aside as the plot hurries toward redemption. By contrast, only a few years later, in series three of True Blood, the villainous anti-hero Russell Eddington appears suddenly on live National News to tear out and chew the spine from the broadcasting newsreader. Eddington announces an end to vampire-human reconciliation - the seeming motif of True Blood's ongoing elegy to the desirability of human passion -- and declares that a vile, destructive, violent and planet-destroying humanity must give way to another more worthy species. How has the common figure of the self-evident value of human life as life itself given way to an increasing sense of species guilt and preliminary mourning? Why, just as humanity begins to have some sense of its end, are policies of survival, adaptation, mitigation and climate change, accompanied by a wide sense and figuration of the unacceptable nature of human life?

Peter Doyle (Macquarie University)

**Gazing upon the unacceptable: the (accidentally?) modernist poetics of the police record**

NSW Police photography, and particularly criminal portraits (‘mug shots’) of the 1920s and 30s paid little heed to then extant popular, pictorialist photographic aesthetics. But seen in retrospect, forensic photography of that time bears a surprising resemblance to the contemporaneous US and European art photography. Likewise profiles of criminals published in the NSW Police Gazette and its supplements are written in a pointedly unemotional style, which corresponds the anti-sentimental literary style of Ernest Hemingway, or the “seen-it-all” knowingness of Dashiell Hammett’s ‘Continental Op’ stories or even Isaac Babel’s Odessa gangster stories. But perhaps the most distinctively modernist impulse is evidenced in the way the photos and records together assume urban identity to be fluid and performative, rather than fixed and inborn, a notion at that time directly contrary to the essentialist orthodoxy of ‘criminal types’. This paper will explore certain of these rhymes and paradoxes, speculating on the extent to which they are accidental or motivated.

Charlotte Farrell (University of New South Wales)

**Transgression in the Arts: Barrie Kosky’s The Lost Echo**

“Art is profoundly rebellious. Bad artists speak of rebelling; real artists actually rebel.” (Grotowski 1989, 31)

Often referred to as the ‘enfant terrible’ of Australian theatre, auteur director Barrie Kosky’s oeuvre consists of classic tragedies and operas used as generic formats; the boundaries of which he transgresses using violent theatricality. He has been based in Europe since 2001 where he has had a prolific and profitable career. He returned to Australia in 2006 to stage his Sydney Theatre Company production of The Lost Echo, which consisted of stories from Ovid’s Metamorphoses and an adaptation of Euripides Bacchae performed in two acts and four parts, running for eight hours. This performance is prime example of his theatrical violence.

This paper will explore how Kosky stretched the skin of the STC in this epic production using an excessive and violent eroticism, themes of which are generally deemed unacceptable when looking at the contained conservatism of the theatre company’s programming. His meddling with gendered bodies queered the STC ‘overcoding machine’, burlesquing stable subject positions to open up a space to rethink subjectivity through active, processual individuation (Erin Manning 2009).

In experiencing The Lost Echo I felt emergence, emergency, a cathartic transformation. In emergency we become aware of the structure to which we cling to remain organised falling away from our flesh, dissolving subjectivity and objectivity, becoming a Body without Organs (BwO) (Artaud 1947, Deleuze and Guattari 1987). With a particular examination of the first half of the production – where spurting, leaking, naked, screaming, bleeding,
cross-dressed bodies scattered the stage – I argue that Kosky’s production created “a topological hyperspace of transformation” (Brian Massumi 2002, 184) where BwO were produced. I’m interested in how these topologies affect my body to become.

Kyriaki Frantzi (Macquarie University)

The Greek rembetiko song: deviation, norm and the creative process

Greek Rembetiko song is a paradigm of an unacceptable tradition that dominated Greek musical culture for a century. An underground genre that emerged in the refuge slams of the degraded suburbs of Athens and Piraeus in the 20s inspired experimentation to ‘marry’ popular music with high quality poetry in the 60s, became extremely popular after the fall of the dictatorship, and, embedded in diverse forms such as rock and alternative music and opera, continues to inspire Greek musicians up to these days. In the meantime, it was intensely questioned by both the outlaw left and mainstream upper class culture, which later on embraced it, either in its original raw form, or in acceptable adaptations, as an authentic expression of Greek tradition.

History reveals that apart from modernistic contexts and an increasing tolerance of deviance in Greek society during the last decades, two prolific Greek artists served as catalysts in this continuing impact. Drawing on these parameters, the paper investigates the assumption that in any given situation not valuing radiant against shadow elements and vice versa is extremely important for the creative process. Another question investigated is how qualities such as openness and tolerance can be exerted without compromising core values or robbing situations from their intensity and essence.

Vanessa Fredericks (Macquarie University)

Forgiveness and the Unacceptable: The Katyn Massacre and the Politics of Apology

During the Second World War, approximately 22,000 Polish prisoners of war were shot and buried in mass graves throughout Russia. The prisoners were made up mostly of army officers and generals, but also of civilians. They were executed by the Soviet secret police, the NKVD, under Stalin’s orders in 1940. In 1943, German soldiers discovered the first of the mass graves in the Katyn Forest. It is because the grave at Katyn was the first to be discovered that the massacres are now collectively referred to as the Katyn massacre. The German government announced the discovery of the graves to the world and accused the Soviets of mass murder. The Soviet government denied responsibility for the massacre and retaliated by accusing the Germans of committing the crime. Successive Soviet governments continued to deny responsibility for the Katyn massacre until Mikhail Gorbachev’s admittance of Soviet guilt in 1990. It was only then that the whereabouts of the other mass graves was disclosed. To this day, no one has been prosecuted for the crime or its cover up, there has been no attempt to compensate the victim’s families, and there has been no official political apology.

The horrific events of World War II have made possible the widely understood concept of what constitutes a ‘crime against humanity’. Philosophers Vladimir Jankélévitch and Hannah Arendt, writing specifically on the Holocaust, have both argued that the crimes committed by the Germans in the Shoah are unacceptable and therefore unforgivable. Jacques Derrida on the other hand, proposes that forgiveness is an aporia that forgives the unforgivable. He argues that if forgiveness only forgave the forgivable, then the very idea of forgiveness would cease to exist. The Katyn massacre and the cover-up that followed can be defined as unforgivable crimes. But in instances of mass murder or crimes against humanity, who does the forgiving, and what or whom does one forgive? How does a nation go about forgiving the unforgivable and what are the consequences? For Poland, the issue of forgiveness after Katyn and World War II has rarely been thought outside the constraints of Polish Christianity. This paper will consider the possibilities for political forgiveness and reconciliation in Poland in light of Derrida’s claims.
Joel Gilberthorpe (Macquarie University)

**The Unacceptable as Reader/Translator**

As a society, Western Culture has developed canons around specific texts and works that are seen as containing a certain cultural value or relevance. These canonised texts remain in a cultural sphere that place institutions in positions of power over how the texts should be translated, read and received. The churches control over religious works and iconography, the governments control over ideas and versions of history, and the academic institutions control over ideas of aesthetics and literariness in works by artists such as Picasso and Joyce, all force the readers into preconceived notions of the text that limit the ways that it can be understood and interpreted. Underlying these institutions is the notion of acceptable versions of the text, of translations or editions as faithful to the original author’s designs; the invisible translator.

Is it possible in today’s society to keep this notion of the invisible translator? Can we envisage an editor/translator devoid of their own voice and perspective? How can we have an objective view of history, an acceptable version of the Bible? Is Tchaikovsky’s version of Shakespeare through music more acceptable than Dot Mobile’s version through SMS slang?

Looking at theorists such as Foucault, Derrida and Venuti, my paper will address ideas of how the acceptable is governed by institutions and aesthetic notions and ideals, before reflecting on the affect this has on the ways texts are viewed and conceived.

Liz Giuffre (Macquarie University)

**Is 21st century Music television unacceptable? Or, how do we understand contemporary products that cross some but not all, previous industrial boundaries?**

Some would have us believe music television is dying, either because broadcast television is in danger, or because industrialized music, as it has relied on mass dissemination like broadcasting, is dying. However, in Australia in particular, this is not the case. Unlike the US and Europe, we still rely on broadcasting primarily, and while this will hopefully change in coming decades (the development of a national broadband network will ensure that Australian audiences are able to access, and regularly consume, more material online more often), as it stands for the majority of Australians broadcasting remains an important point of access. As well, music remains a popular form of content for broadcasting, one that provides reliable commercial fodder and a popular artistic form able to service a range of demographics and reflect a wide range of Australian experiences.

This paper explores a particular type of crossover, that is, products that cross between two distinct members of the creative or cultural industries, but are not necessarily part of the all-encompassing wave of ‘convergence’. This is a study of the specific context for the creation of cross industry products, of music television which can be claimed equally by popular music and the television industry, using recent Australian case studies to demonstrate.

Chris Haywood (Newcastle University, UK)

**‘Schooling Scandals!’: Exploring the Necessity of Cultural Disgust**

This paper explores cultural representations of the unacceptable that circulate through media reports of schooling and sexuality. Researchers have argued that media reports on sexuality and schooling are primarily concerned with the control and regulation of sexuality divisions. This paper seeks to build upon this work by suggesting that such media reports are intricately connected to the fragmentation of a cultural imaginary that is constituted by idealised teacher / pupil and adult / child boundaries. It is argued that the fracturing of these boundaries creates an intensified anxiety that recalibrates uncertainty with an exaggerated abnormality and perfected normality.
However, media scandals do not simply threaten the imaginary and reinforce the acceptable, they also create a cultural disgust that is abhorrent, unacceptable, exciting and necessary. To explore this further, the paper draws upon UK news reporting of school sex scandals from the last 25 years and focuses on representations of sexually ‘voracious teachers’, ‘precocious pupils’ and ‘predatory paedophiles’. The analysis of these representations helps us to understand how the shock and horror of media accounts is not simply about the closure or the repression of the unacceptable, but rather the mobilization of abject and subjunctive sexual subjectivities. The paper concludes by suggesting that representations of sexual unacceptability in schools impel and contribute to narratives of future social and economic prosperity.

Diane Hughes (Macquarie University)

**A tweak too far: fine-tuning the out-of-tune?**

Following the opening episode of the 2010 series of The X Factor in the UK, viewers vented through social networks that the use of Auto-Tune had impacted so much on contestants’ vocal sound that it had undermined the effectiveness and legitimacy of the show. So vehement was viewer outrage that, five days after airing, Simon Cowell (Executive Producer and Judge) was reported as saying that he too was “very angry” about the way in which Auto-Tune had been used deeming it to be “totally wrong” (The Sun, 26/08/2010). Traditionally, pitch awareness and replication has been fundamental to the artistry of singing. As artistic expression and perception are ostensibly at the core of The X Factor, the application of Auto-Tune can certainly be challenged and the use of such technology in this context raises issues in relation to artistic and production integrity, perfectionism and control. So when, if ever, is the application of Auto-Tune on the singing voice acceptable? Through an analysis of artist, producer, viewer and pedagogical perspectives, this paper examines the contexts in which Auto-Tune may be currently applied to the singing voice and discusses the implications from its use. Is it time, as one blogger (jesseinpain, 2011) suggests, for an “anti-autotune real music real voices revolution”?

1 (http://www.youtube.com/all_comments?v=RFVqnFBD7XU)

Rebecca Jennings (Macquarie University)

**Constructing the lesbian as ‘unacceptable’ in mid-twentieth-century Australia**

This paper will explore cultural constructions of lesbianism as unacceptable in mid-twentieth-century Australia. Drawing on oral history interviews, together with a range of medical, legal and literary sources, I will consider the ways in which the social and moral unacceptability of female homosexuality was communicated to Australian society in this period. In particular, analysing individual women’s experiences, I will explore the processes by which social disapproval of lesbianism was expressed despite, and by means of, a taboo on discussion of homosexuality. How did the silence surrounding female homosexuality, in particular, operate to convey its unacceptability to women experiencing same-sex desire? How did the communication of social disapproval surrounding related sexual transgressions such as extra-marital pregnancy and male homosexual activity help to shape women’s understanding of the unacceptability of female same-sex desire? This paper will consider the processes by which women developed an appreciation of lesbianism as immoral, legally proscribed and reprehensible, despite a complete absence of discourse on the subject, and the models of sexual identity constructed by individual women in this cultural context.
Elaine Kelly (University of Technology)

**Framing the border/framing the unacceptable: The Queensland floods, climate refugees and hospitality**

Judith Butler’s *Frames of War* (published in 2010) makes repeated references to the role of the media in the reiteration of specific “frames”. Butler’s analysis gives us the tools to go beyond critique that recognises the media as complicit in reproducing unequal relations of power between different groups in society, and toward an understanding of its role in constituting particular “ontologies of the subject” (2010, p.3).

This paper will look at the role of the Australian media in enabling or disabling an understanding of sociality and vulnerability during the recent Queensland floods. At the same time that the media and local Queenslanders were identifying as ‘refugees’, asylum seekers detained in Australian camps sent donations and offered to assist in the disaster zone; both acts of generosity were considered by the Australian government.

In this short paper, there will be a focus on the ways in which discourses of hospitality and associated themes of homelessness/displacement, movement and belonging were narrated. I will then open up discussion in relation to the application of various frames and the constitution of differential precariousness in the context of global climate change. By doing so, I hope to engage with the conference theme, the unacceptable, with reference to frames of welcome or unwelcome, by exposing the unstable and shifting boundaries of hospitality in the context of climate change.

This paper responds to the conference theme by addressing the question: “How does what is deemed unacceptable reflect the racial [...] fault-lines of a society?”

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Stephen Kerry (Independent Scholar)

**Intersex and the case of Caster Semenya: the unacceptable women’s body**

In 2009 South African athlete Caster Semenya was subjected to international media scrutiny. The most prominent questions were: Is she really a man? Is she a hermaphrodite? The discursive framework in which Semenya was imbedded centred on unfair advantage whereby her body’s musculature, gonads and hormones were considered unacceptable. Invariably the media ignored several key issues: firstly, woman with androgen insensitivity syndrome (AIS) respond differently to testosterone compared to other women and men; secondly, ‘sex testing’ in the international sporting arena had been stopped over a decade ago; and finally, Semenya is not the first intersex woman in the international sport culture to attract media attention. This paper analyses how the media represents the intersex woman’s body. By throwing up questions of authenticity the media delineates gender from the self and reinforces the normative notion that a muscular body is not only unfeminine but cannot belong to a woman.

This paper will argue that this framework mirrors the medicalisation of intersex; that is, intersex bodies are unacceptable bodies. The medical profession is concerned that intersex bodies will not meet certain social criteria. For example, the phallus is determined unacceptable if it large enough for ‘lockerroom peeing contests’ or adult heterosexual penetration subsequently it is then removed or reduced and the child is raised girls/women. But it also comes down to surgical procedures, as one often quoted physician has said: “it is easier to make a hole than a pole”. The fact that 90% of normalising surgeries result in girls/women means this is a feminist issue, thus by applying Butlerian theories of being a “woman” and Foucauldian biopolitics it is argued that, despite international sport community’s changes to ‘sex test’ policies, the dominant narrative within news media continue to consider certain women athlete’s bodies unacceptable.
Jo Latham (Monash University)

**Becoming...Man? Ftm Materiality, Feminist Theory**

The erasure of ftm [female to male trans+] bodies, especially in feminist theorising of materiality, exposes the ways in which ftms and lives continue to be deemed 'unacceptable.'

When feminist theorists have corresponded with trans discourse they have overwhelmingly displayed a preoccupation with transwomen as the primary or only concern of feminist theorising. The writing off of ftms and the preoccupation with mfs reveals a failure to engage with feminist investments in a stable 'sex/gender system.' That ftms seek to alter their female forms in ways directly implicated in embodied sexual difference is not intrinsically incompatible with feminist embodiment, though it has certainly been understood in this way.

Ftm resists categorisation as an 'identity,' presenting the possibility of a 'becoming-man.' In its relation to 'the standard,' majoritarian 'man,' ftm compels a rethinking of male embodiment as biologically determined and man as a 'sate of being.' Ftms' knowledge of gender privileges and oppressions are unique. Working out [feminist] ways of becoming-[a]man whilst rejecting misogyny are desperately imperative to gender theorising and feminist movement.

There are important strategic issues to consider here in relation to mobilising political interests. Feminist movement and politics affect 'male' and 'female' (assigned at birth), trans and nontrans people differently and solidarity is best achieved through understanding 'the deep diversity of agents' (Heyes, 2003: 1117); seeking out points of commonality and recognising that commonality is always partial (Kobayashi, 1994: 76).

Thinking-ftm provides a place through which and from which to embark on such a project. Considering ftm as an ontology which shines a critical light on subjectivity as constantly in flux, rather than a stable identity, propels a rethinking of the radical politics of subjectivity and of the future.

Celeste Lawson (Central Queensland University)

**Police culture: changing the unacceptable**

When Sir Robert Peel proclaimed in 1829 that the police are the public and the public are the police he could not have foreseen that his ideals would promote the evolution of modern police services all around the world. Although the ideal of policing “with” the community was the intent, the dramatic development of technology in the 20th century resulted in a policing “of” the community. The police organisation became separate from the community it was trying to police. From this separation evolved a police culture that strongly held to beliefs about the role of police. Police culture promoted arrest and prosecution as the dominant role of police; and training and recruitment of officers was conducted by those police who reinforced those beliefs. This police culture promoted a stereotype of what it was to be a “policeman”. The result was a police “force” which bore little resemblance to the ideal so carefully articulated by Robert Peel.

The Queensland Police Service is one of many police services who experienced such a culture. Eventually confronted with a Commission of Inquiry in 1989, the Queensland Police Service had its sordid culture exposed to a community who had lost faith in the ability of the police to undertake its role. The police (and its culture) had become “unacceptable”.

This paper considers the nature of police culture in Queensland 20 years after this Inquiry. Foocussing on “community policing” within the Queensland Police Service, this paper considers the effects of a reactive driven culture in a proactive policing model. Using policy analysis and interviews with police officers, the paper presents evidence to suggest a paradigm shift has taken place in Queensland, that although “typical” police culture still exists, it exists in a growing harmony with non-reactive police sections.
Marianna Leishman (Zahra Stardust) (University of Sydney)

**Behind the Red Curtain: Branding Sexuality, Codifying Desire**

This presentation is based on 30 interviews with artists working in the adult industry in a range of disciplines, including pole dancing, burlesque, striptease and sex work. It focuses on what kinds of bodies are permitted access to the mainstream erotic stage (in terms of class, ethnicity, sexuality, body shape, gender, iconography, desire), and the ways in which those bodies are excluded (through audience remarks, peer policing, management recruiting, marketing strategy). Although the presentation takes a sex-positive approach that sees wonderful possibilities for subversion and resistance on the erotic stage, it explores how performer's experiences of autonomy and rebellion can be curbed by a narrow range of available or 'intelligible' erotic languages which determine what is 'desireable' or 'unacceptable'.

The presentation shares individual experiences and local examples of rules, regulations and expectations that continue to govern female sexual display onstage, regarding the type of costuming, uniform, make-up, skin colour, hair colour, fingernails, tattoos, body shape and dance style, and the ramifications for what kinds of bodies are desires are allowed to be represented and imagined. It explores the acceptability and mainstreaming of classic burlesque (with it's focus on class and taste) compared with it's origins playing with notions of the taboo, grotesque and inappropriate. Such examples are used to show how the rhetoric of class is used to make arbitrary and harmful distinctions between what is acceptable (for example, between burlesque and striptease, striptease and sex work, R rated and X rated shows, open leg or closed leg work, pasties or bare nipples).

David Lenton (University of Western Sydney)

**Hard Bodies and Limp Dicks: Transgressing Artistic Boundaries?**

“We men can get so funny about our cocks. The language we use to describe them and their various uses is often out of all proportion to the relatively small and rather delicate flesh perched precariously between our legs...If they were half as interesting and impressive as certain people would have us believe, surely we’d have created our own equivalent to the Wonderbra by now.”


“I love to experiment with the sculptural form of both the male and the female,” says the artist. “But there is one more picture I want to capture for my book – the erect penis. I want to shoot it as a sculpture in and of itself. Is that the final taboo?”


While the nude female body is often unproblematically positioned as a worthy object of the gaze in both artistic and popular cultures, the same cannot be said of the male body; particularly when the specific object on display is the penis, whether it be flaccid or erect. Often regarded as the point upon which distinctions between art and pornography can be argued, the penis simultaneously stands as an icon of manhood and a reviled object of cultural disdain and sexual perversion. At the same time, the artistically acceptable nude male body is often presented in terms of a phallic ideal – hard, controlled, impenetrable and ready for action – and has become, in many ways, a proxy for the very bodily organ which many artists dare not name, let alone depict.

Using the interview data and photographs published in Blue magazine, this paper will question the reasons why the turgidity of a man’s muscles is considered to cross the line from artistic to pornographic when and where that muscle is otherwise known as the penis.
Elliott Logan (University of Queensland)

How Everyday Performance Defines and Denies the Unacceptable in Breaking Bad

A hybrid of the family melodrama and gangster tragedy, the television series *Breaking Bad* (AMC 208-) modulates dramatic interest between moments of crisis, choice, and action that are extreme, ultimate, and irrevocable—concerning matters of life and death—and those that are moderate, everyday, and relatively inconsequential—concerning matters of domestic community. Although its extreme scenarios emphasise their concern with what is unacceptable in society, *Breaking Bad*’s moments of more everyday crisis and choice demand at least equal dramatic interest, intensities of engagement, and seriousness of consideration. My paper will examine this dissonance between the subject matter of such moments of quotidian drama and the engagement and response they demand, exploring how everyday crises and choice in *Breaking Bad* are articulated as important to fundamental matters of social acceptability.

My paper will focus on one such scene in the series’ second season. I will argue that in this scene the relatively trivial surface matter of a father unacceptably supplying his son with alcohol serves to dramatise the fundamental conflict between personal characteristics that serve individual satisfaction and success, and those that serve the interests of society or community. In other words, this scene dramatises the question: what type of individual, or what characteristics of an individual, are acceptable or unacceptable in modern society, particularly American society? Inviting dramatic interest through the absence of acceptable performance, this scene draws attention to the role everyday performances play in shaping and reinforcing these aspects of character that define the limits of acceptability and unacceptability, while also inviting us to consider what of the individual is lost or smothered by acceptable performances in the interest of the social.

Attending to such moments of drama, both *Breaking Bad* and this paper explore how boundaries of individual acceptability shape the social, and the capacity of melodrama to bring these everyday matters into extraordinary relief.

Calum Logan (University of Melbourne)

Unacceptable Bodies: body modification and the acceptable social sphere

It could be argued that the idea of the unacceptable has become an organising concept of our times. Wars are fought to remove unacceptable regimes, camps established to intern unacceptable immigrants, campaigns mounted and policies enacted to combat unacceptable practices. The rising acceptability of body modification, surgical and other, seems to indicate that not only others but indeed our own bodies are increasingly unacceptable. Focusing specifically on the body this paper questions the incongruence of approaches to “other” body modification practices, specifically campaigns against Female Genital Mutilation, in the context of the apparent rising unacceptable of the modern Northern body which evident in increasing resort to surgical procedures that modify sexualized body sites.

Given the context of modern Northern embrace of a suite of surgical and non-surgical body modification practices it seems the outrage which FGM generates in the Northern psyche, rather than simply representing a sophisticated concern for the welfare of the Southern feminine other, may be attributed to an objectifying postcolonial gaze that is uncomfortable with the other’s body and views Southern cultural values and practices as inferior, aberrant, and unacceptable. This situation seems to evoke comparison with historical precedents in campaigns against foot binding, suttee, and other unacceptable “native” practices despite accepted metropolitan practices that objectified, controlled, and harmed women. These similarities raise difficult questions about how best to confront practices which appear harmful or abusive, as well as the realities of living with the other as considered in Susan Moller Okin’s Is multiculturalism bad for women?
Examining these competing unacceptabilities draws attention to the contested nature of the role of acceptable unacceptable binaries in facilitating social life, frequently reaching far beyond the realm imagined in northern philosophy to constitute the “public sphere” stretching instead both inwards into the most intimate sites of the self as well as outward across the globe.

Catharine Lumby (University of New South Wales)

Representing Children: The Politics of the Visual

Over the past decade, images of children have become the site of increasing public concern, debate and regulation. From fears that children are being sexualised in advertising to the public outcry about Bill Henson’s photographs of naked young people, we are living in a time of heightened anxiety about how children are represented and who has the right to represent them. In this paper, I will explore the extent to which discourses of protection mask discourses of control and what the consequences are for our understanding of children and young people’s social and political rights. In unpacking this question I will examine recent research into children’s use of emerging online, social and mobile media technologies.

Alexandre Marchant (ENS de Cachan, France)

The drug cultures in France and the Netherlands (1960s-1980s): banning or regulating the “unacceptable”

At the turning point of the 1960s-70s, Western societies were confronted with a sudden upsurge of drug consumption within the youth (cannabis, heroin, LSD, or disused legal medicines). Drug scenes, with first cultural happenings (beatnik, provos in Amsterdam, “underground” in Paris) then young junkies shooting themselves in the streets, appeared in every Western cities. In reaction, drug abuse was termed an “epidemic” by the media, designated a “social plague” by politicians, and conceptualized by intellectuals as a threat to civilization. The new drug subcultures were indeed structured around three components: psychedelic movement with the use of hallucinogens for enhancing and exploring the mind, orientalism with the hippie runaways on the roads to Kathmandu and the research of mysticism through drugs, later a new urban subculture making wandering and drug taking a lifestyle. They were therefore a true negation of what had become the modern Western world.

Based on French and Dutch public archives, through a historian reasoning, the paper aims to question the cultural logics which make a practice and a subculture unacceptable. Public discourses, through a real media frenzy, have shared a lot of negative stereotypes demeaning and denigrating drug addiction as a disease. In France, in an atmosphere of moral panic, public authorities have set up in 1970 a prohibitionist logic, because drug abuse was considered as a violation of body integrity, a subversive threat in the frame of the larger ongoing societal dispute about lifestyles and values in the 1960s, and later a sign of criminality in the denunciation, for certain observers, of the deep-rooted social decadency in the 1970-80s. On the contrary, Dutch authorities, more receptive to counter-cultural claims and young protestations, have established a model of toleration of soft drugs and harm reduction policies in 1976, but finally through a model of “repressive tolerance” (Herbert Marcuse), accepting certain deviant behaviors for a better control. That means that, beyond apparent and formal differences, the comparison highlights a common opposition of Christian and conformist societies to drug underworlds which were denying, by their simple existence, the traditional symbolic order.
Eduardo Mayoral

Extended Biotechnological Bodies

Life manipulation techniques explored in synthetic biology, genetics or regenerative medicine, are radically redefining the notion of the body in evolutionary terms. That is still considered unacceptable by a significant amount of our society.

Bio-techniques break traditional reproduction boundaries between different species. Genes are transferred from one species to another to reconfigure living bodies, their features and behavior. That is the case of Alba, a transgenic rabbit genetically engineered by Eduardo Kac. Its DNA was hybridized with GFP (Green Fluorescent Protein) extracted from a bioluminescent jellyfish. The resulting bunny-jellyfish hybrid stands as a novel body-creature that glows in the dark.

Biotechnology makes possible the hybridization of living and non-living systems blurring the limits between natural and artificial bodies. Cyborgs, understood as living systems with artificial parts embedded, are no longer science fiction but a reality. Cyborgization modifies the body for restorative or enhancing purposes. An example of both is Mathew Nagle, a handicapped ex-football player with an artificial device connected to his brain that enables him to drive a mouse pointer along a computer screen.

Other ways of exploring the notion of the body through biotechnology have to do with disembodied semi-living entities able to perform certain functions outside the body that once hosted them. In that sense, Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr printed living mammal cells to conform the Victimless Leather Jacket.

These manipulations require a posthumanistic approach (Huxley, Kurzmeil, Fukuyoma, Haraway, Moravec) and the use of crossbreed evolutionary strategies that redefine human and non-human agency (Latour, Sloterdijk, Descola, Foucault). There is the need to set up an extended framework where features from plants, animals, machines and humans, are hybridized to achieve higher forms of intelligence (Serres). That implies an ecological reconfiguration of life fabric and the modification of bodies that may still be unaccepted but it is happening.

Janet Merewether (Macquarie University)

Feckless girls, fertile spinsters and their b*stards: The autobiographical representation of maternal embodiment and solo motherhood by choice in the documentary Maverick Mother.

This paper examines the subject of the solo mother by choice, through the analysis of media representations of acceptable and unacceptable mothers, normative and non-normative family structures, and film censorship laws and definitions of “good taste” which frequently limit the cinematic representation of maternal embodiment and experience.

The autobiographical documentary Maverick Mother (Merewether 2007) charts the filmmaker’s unpredictable and at times reckless journey from unpartnered thirty eight year old woman, to fertile spinster, to solo mother of a son. Concurrently, the documentary analyses the contemporary role of the father through interviews with my aging and dying conservative father. The documentary reflects on discriminatory illegitimacy laws which stigmatised the so-called “b*stard” child as filius nullius (son of nobody), denying ex-nuptial children inheritance rights until property and wills acts were amended the mid-1970s.

Maverick Mother challenges conservative social definitions of the unwed mother as a fallen woman, a social deviant and polluting influence on the institution of marriage. The childless professional woman in her late thirties, previously labeled by John Howard as “socially infertile”, responds to her ticking biological clock by considering her options: bisexual “known” donors, anonymous sperm donors or a one-night stand. The filmmaker as spinster,
defying her image as a pitiable, sexless, workaholic, barren or ‘dry’ Miss Hathaway character, now exercises agency over her fertility, choosing to “bypass the man and go straight for the sperm.”

Through the employment of frequently ironic, hybrid postmodern quotation and performance integrated with subjective, intimate video diary footage, the pregnant film author defies “feminine” stereotypes by controlling the conditions of her pregnancy, birth and cinematic representation. Feminist avant-garde and documentary directors have frequently used their embodied experience as a basis for creative expression. Juhasz observes that “these are documents of a politicised (usually autobiographical) self-expression: a woman performing and archiving her defiance against the rules of sex and gender.”

*Maverick Mother* incorporates non-naturalistic tableaux vivants in which the filmmaker performs the roles of acceptable “good” (Virgin Mary) and unacceptable “bad” (White Trash) mothers. Creed suggests in *The Monstrous Feminine* that “the prototype of all definitions of the monstrous is the female reproductive body.” *Maverick Mother* engages with the abject borderlines of maternal experience: blood, excrement, vomit and milk represent a breach of public and private boundaries. Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* describes this simultaneous fascination and terror, where “defilement is the translinguistic spoor of the most archaic boundaries of the self’s clean and proper body.”

This paper will reflect on a range of cinematic representations of the unwed mother and non-normative family, including *Know Thy Child*, *The Brood Ladybird*, *Ladybird* and *All About My Mother*. Autobiographical films such as *Maverick Mother* and writers including Greer, in her critique of the tabloid vilification of single mothers, challenge media stereotypes of “feckless girls and their bastards” and “welfare cheats.” Unlike the 1970s, contemporary working mothers are rarely demonised as “against nature,” or irresponsible parents raising future drug addicts or “latch-key” kids. The solo parent household, rather than being defined as a hotbed of social pathologies, is now represented as a legitimate alternative to the traditional nuclear family. Birrell notes that “The consequence is that these [unpartnered] women are playing an important role in raising the next generation of Australians.” Is the fertile spinster, the solo mother by choice, now emerging from scorn and vilification into the realm of the socially “acceptable”?

http://www.maverickmother.net

**Jane Mills (Charles Sturt University)**

*‘The Only Good Indigene...’ Genre, intertextuality and miscegenation anxiety in Jedda and The Searchers*

*Jedda* (Charles Chauvel. Australia. 1955) has most frequently been analysed in terms of melodrama. A comparison with Ford’s maverick Western, *The Searchers* (USA, 1956), however, provides significant parallels which illuminate a notion of nationality defined in terms of white supremacy and indigenous subalternity, and place it within a subgenre of the western.

This paper explores the representation of the Australian Aborigine in *Jedda* primarily in the context of the Native American sub-genre of the Hollywood Western, and also other specifically Australian literary texts, in which issues of blood kinship, mixed race, adoption and indigenous land rights are articulated or repressed.

The historical context for this analysis of expressed and repressed miscegenation anxiety in the two films is the decade in which integration and assimilation debates in the USA were fanned by the overturning of the ‘separate but equal’ laws (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 1954), and in which racial policies in Australia justifying the enforced separation of mixed race children from their Aboriginal parents and communities were beginning to be questioned but which culminated in the federal government’s support for assimilation at the 1961 Conference of Native Welfare Ministers.
Tony Mitchell (University of Technology)

**Unacceptable Censorship: The Bill Henson Case Revisited**

The impounding of some of Bill Henson’s photographs from the Roslyn Oxley9 gallery and elsewhere by the New South Wales police in 2008, and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s description of them as ‘revolting’ raises serious issues about artistic freedom in Australia. This paper revisits a seminar given at UTS at the time of the Henson case and offers an appreciation of aesthetic and cultural aspects of his work from the perspective of a cultural studies lecturer who has taught Henson to first year students. It draws comparisons between his work and the Italian renaissance artist Caravaggio, who was also noted for portraying the naked bodies of children and adolescents in his work (some of which hangs in churches around Italy), and was accused of paedophilia in his search for child subjects. I argue for the importance of defending Henson’s photographs from insinuations that they constitute ‘pornography’, but do not necessarily extend my argument to the work of other Australian visual artists, at least on aesthetic grounds. The subjection of Henson and his work to police brutality and public censure and the subsequent introduction of Australia Council protocols for artists dealing with children are unacceptable measures which have precedents in Australia stretching back to the banning of literary works in the 1950s, and to the banning, un-banning and re-banning of Pier Paolo Pasolini’s 1975 film *Salò* more recently. Some, but not necessarily all art works which deal with potentially disturbing, confronting and ‘unacceptable’ subjects have a right to be seen and heard.

Eshan Milani (Macquarie University)

**Internet News and Volatile Boundaries of Unacceptability: Questioning 'Unacceptability' in the Dissemination and Presentation of News**

Convergence and divergence of technologies in the 20th century were considered as primary factors to make fundamental changes in not only what we communicate but also they expanded the areas of acceptable discourses in public domain. Presentation of different discourses in the media has always been subject to approval of media professionals and media technologies. Whether a discourse could be presented according to values of any given public sphere was a matter that often was critically analysed by gatekeepers and media professionals. On the other hand the projection of discourses were also dependent on available technologies. Whether man’s first steps on the moon could be delivered live to audiences in the world had to do with satellite technologies of the time. If there was no available channel to secure uplink and downlink then the historical moment was completely faded out from public eyes.

With Internet and growth of new information and communication technologies it became very difficult to define what is acceptable or unacceptable. Popularity and growth of participatory platforms for online content made it extremely difficult to divide and make a distinction between unacceptability and acceptability. If governments owned media technologies and they could regulate media content on the basis of access, it has become extremely difficult today for governments and civil societies to monitor production and consumption of mediated messages. People in different sectors can unite for a cause without seeking acceptability or unacceptability of discourses according to government’s policies and guidelines. Demonstrations against the rigged election in Iran after 2008 presidential election are an example of this practice. In this context as acceptability and unacceptability are essentially based on values and norms of societies I am arguing that with free and equal global access to the internet, unacceptability as a form that was used by governments and media owners to regulate public content, is losing its contextual meaning that was based on recipient’s social and geographical location. Although government’s investment in Internet filtering might be a temporary solution to distinguish discourses from each other, advocates of civil society promote the idea that unacceptability, like many other structural concepts of 20th century has reached to an end.
Andrew Murphie (University of New South Wales)

On Not Performing: Difference in Retreat

It is now unacceptable not to perform. We have to be active, positive, getting things done. Our own life must become exemplary in this respect, often in carefully aligned and measured alignment with the exemplary conduct of others. I will suggest that whatever is privately believed, researched or taught, within such performance systems we are in retreat from difference. Or, within each of us there is a struggle. This is between the inevitability of what Deleuze called different/ciation and the now almost just as inevitable, indeed insistent if always already failed, attempt to corral this into performativity. As a way of understanding these tensions I propose a variation of enclosure, a “third enclosure”. The “third enclosure” is an enclosure, an often proprietary system of never-quite-recognition, of free social exchange, free work, play and the open production of subjectivity that these involve. In response, I argue first for “ghosted publics” and “unacknowledged collectives”, that refuse systemic recognition and alignments. Second, I argue that the time-action relation, within the context of ongoing collective individuation, is crucial in these contexts. Somewhat ironically we can turn to Benjamin Bloom in this respect (Bloom was the founder of the notion of a taxonomy of objectives within education). Finally, I argue for a commitment to a “differential life”. This is life which brings together concepts of different/ciation with pragmatic techniques of living. Differential life accepts a problematic of difference which has constellations of singularities but not singular targets. In this life it is important to explore—even and especially within the counter-performance of multiplicity—non-performance, stillness, slowness, non-action.

Samantha Murray (Macquarie University)

Not Just ‘Fat’ to ‘Thin’: ‘(e)Strange(d)’ Embodiment after Weight Loss Surgery

We are reminded daily that we are in the midst of an alleged ‘obesity epidemic’ – an epidemic that is not marked by contagion, and yet the fear of ‘infection’ has unsettled us within and beyond the walls of the clinic. The moral panic over the apparent threat that the alleged Western ‘obesity epidemic’ represents is framed by medical discourse as endangering the ‘health’ of populations, while at a more fundamental level, it would seem there is also an acute cultural anxiety about the ways in which the ‘fat’ body disrupts our normative ideals about bodily aesthetics and gender. Given this, it could be argued that the medicalised discourse of ‘health’ is an effective and authoritative ‘disguise’ for generalised social anxieties over excessive bodies and non-normative modes of (gendered) embodiment.

In response to the increasing medico-moral panic that has framed obesity over the last decade, numbers of obese patients agreeing to undergo weight loss (bariatric) surgeries has risen sharply. In Australia, the most popular of these procedures has been the implantation of adjustable laparoscopic gastric bands. Restricting one’s food (and therefore, caloric) intake, the gastric band offers the dual promise of ‘health’ and normative appearance by enabling a transition from a ‘wrong’ body to a ‘right’ one.

Unsurprisingly, the promise of radical weight loss promised by gastric band placement is often represented in and through the ubiquitous ‘before’ and ‘after’ images of patients whose transformation is reduced to two snapshots: the pathological fat body replaced by a more normatively slender one. This example of the way these surgeries are marketed represent surgical weight loss as a joyous but appealing simple teleology, where the lived experience of being-in-the-world as multiple, contingent and ambiguous is effaced. In other words, the complexities, tensions, difficulties and often unpleasant daily negotiations involved in living post-surgically with a gastric band in situ remain obscured, simplified or invisibilised. In this paper, I aim to problematise the allegedly simple bodily transition offered by gastric banding via a critical reflection on my own lived experience of this procedure. I will explore the ways in which one’s lived embodiment is both en-abled and dis-abled in and through weight loss surgery, how it is made ‘strange’.
Peter O’Hare (University of Abertay, Dundee)

**Radio Unfriendly: unacceptable sounds and corporate hounds**

This paper explores the recording philosophy of Steve Albini, focusing on his recording of Nirvana’s *In Utero* album. Albini’s unique contribution to the discourse surrounding record production centers on his rejection of the producer’s and objection to the role itself. Albini’s recording philosophy and ethical stance is highlighted within an examination of his role during the recording of Nirvana’s *In Utero* album. This will cover the context in which Nirvana employed Albini, as a means of recovering the Lo-Fi sound of their First album *Bleach* and as a rejection of the Hi-Fi production values of their commercially successful *Nevermind* album.

In order to investigate the conflict surrounding the *In Utero* recordings it has been necessary to devise an approach titled Sonicology. This will be used to explain sonic elements of the recording process, from the commodification of *Nevermind* to the raw recording of *In Utero* and its subsequent radio friendly remix. As it was the actual sound and not the musical or lyrical content that was at the centre of this debate, a traditional musicological or textual analysis would be insufficient at uncovering the sonic nuances central to this investigation.

Amy Plumb (Macquarie University)

**Censorship via Localisation in Anime Intended for Distribution for Western Audiences**

In *anime* (Japanese animation), there is a notion that anything remotely sexual or violent should be effaced, due to the misconception that television prompts adolescents into re-enacting scenes from programs through suggestion. *Anime* is censored for child consumption in English-speaking countries, through localisation – the process of adapting products for a specific market – and is unavoidable for commercial releases of this media. Parents are drowning in the fallacy that sexual content, no matter how minimal or non-sexualised, will corrupt youths and cause them to perform sexual acts, or turn them into deviants. Homosexuality is erased, perpetuating the idea of same-sex relationships as debase and wrong. Many scenes including violence, blood or weapons is removed or digitally altered, for fear of children reproducing acts of violence, or that this imagery will permanently affect healthy, well-adjusted human development. This is not only erroneous, but unfounded. Censorship has damaging aspects, as well as promoting flawed assumptions about adolescent interaction with issues of sex, sexuality and violence. The idea that these notions are unacceptable for a young audience is a driving factor in the destruction of the original Japanese medium. The companies, who want to appease parents and broadcasting officials, and the parents themselves, do not put into consideration the affect these edits have on the overall works, or how they will be received. They ignore the fact that they are limiting the childhood experience and are potentially producing ignorant adults. My proposed paper will examine localisation and its effects on the original *anime*. The focus will be on the censorship of sexuality and violence in American distributions, and how fan culture has responded to localisation. Also, addressing why these aspects are seen as ‘unacceptable,’ the differences reflected between American and Japanese society, and whether censorship is the correct option.

John Potts (Macquarie University)

**The Monstrous-Familial: Representations of the Unacceptable Family**

This chapter takes a historical perspective on the changing structure and status of the family, culminating with the normative status attributed to the nuclear family in Western societies since the mid-twentieth century. The chapter focuses on representations in film and TV of the nuclear family’s other, which has often been depicted as monstrous – that is, both repulsive and fascinating. Variations of this monstrosity include the extended family, portrayed as constricting and violent (*The Godfather*), the polygamous family, patriarchal and illegal (*Big Love*) and the rural/cannibalistic family depicted in numerous horror films since the 1970s. Each of these family types is
represented as unacceptable, to varying degrees, yet each generates a strong fascination for audiences. This chapter considers why depictions of alternatives to the conventional nuclear family have exerted such appeal.

Holly Randell-Moon (Macquarie University)

**Secular Discomforts: Religion and Cultural Studies**

In the last decade, religious issues have emerged as intense sites of conflict in media and political discourse in western liberal democratic countries. With its focus on issues of representation, power and discourse, cultural studies is well placed to engage with religion’s influence on media, political and cultural communication. However, religion’s influence on everyday life has largely escaped the disciplinary attention of cultural studies. Why is religion unacceptable to cultural studies theoretical and disciplinary paradigms? In this paper, we seek to explore the theoretical and methodological assumptions of cultural studies and how these work to exclude religion from consideration. We argue that a series of secular discomforts make explorations of religion and secularism uncomfortable, undesirable, unorthodox and perhaps unacceptable in cultural studies. The first of these discomforts is the secular epistemological orientation of academic critique and by extension cultural studies. Secondly, there are specific cultural, political and corporeal economies that condition intellectual engagements with the secular and religious in certain ways. The paper concludes by asking what might it mean to be ‘relaxed and comfortable’ in relation to the religious? What do representations of religion communicate about living religion, living secularism and doing cultural studies? How can cultural studies begin to ‘accept’ religion?

John Scannell (Macquarie University)

**“When the Smoke Clears”: Smoking and Social Policy**

Drawing as it does on the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, a well known victim of smoking, this paper could never try to defend the practice, but instead, uses the recent trend of enforced smoking bans in public spaces to ruminate upon the “encounter” that ensues. As such, this paper seeks to dissect the point of intervention between smoker and assailant, a complex assemblage of multiple worlds thrown together by chance, and necessarily guaranteed by law. As ongoing smoking bans impel further collisions between habit and policing, such unmitigated encounters have driven the more indignant of the nicotine-addicted to widely reported incidents of “smoke rage”-related physical violence. Yet the biggest victim of all in this power struggle over public space, is community itself, with law enforcement taking precedence over camaraderie, and where the punitive work of an increasingly litigious society is freely undertaken by private volunteers. With the growth of open air smoking bans, and a commensurate growth in individual policing that necessarily ensues, this paper argues that the detrimental social side effects of such overzealous prohibition has reached its limit of its effectiveness to the community at large.

Anette Schumacher (University of Luxembourg)

**How can you say I am a fulltime working Mom and I feel happy about it?**

In 2005 a new concept of institutional childcare called “Maison Relais pour Enfants” (MRE) was established in Luxembourg. That can be considered as a flexible answer to an increasingly complex society. The MRE aims to facilitate the conciliation of work and private life, especially for parents with children aged between 3 and 48 months. This study accompanies the establishment of MRE for members of the University of Luxembourg and the neighborhood around the MRE. As a first step, we interviewed 45 persons (parents, staff and politicians) driven by the need to understand their expectations of the varied functions of the new MRE. The special situation in Luxembourg, a small European Country with a highly developed economy, a trilingual education system and one of the ten highest net migration rates in the world, results in many different social environments.
First results indicate that there are different ideas about the role of the MRE for giving satisfaction to the children and their parents. Results also show that mothers and fathers handle their Work-Life-Balance depending on their cultural background; parents often feel “guilty” and they are confronted with a whole range of conflicting thoughts and ideologies of their social environments and related party.

Catherine Simpson, Donna Houston and Kate Wright (Macquarie University)

**Panel Discussion: Unacceptable Animals & Environments? An Ecological Humanities Approach**

How acceptable is it to eat kangaroo meat, to keep a pet cat that kills native birds, or bludgeon cane toads to death?

Donna Houston

*Unacceptable Preservation? Wilderness and Wasteland*

Looming ecological crisis has hastened awareness of our dependence on an unstable environment and climate. This panel on ‘unacceptable animals and environments’ seeks to perform the inter-connected "tasks of (re)situating humans in ecological terms and non-humans in ethical terms" (Plumwood, p. 8-9). It attempts to highlight how, as Val Plumwood does in her landmark *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* "anthropocentric perspectives and culture … make us insensitive to our ecological place in the world" (p.10).

What happens when endangered species inhabit toxic landfill? In the twenty-first century, the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable environments has become blurred. In our first paper in this panel, titled ‘Unacceptable Preservation?’, Donna Houston considers the connection between wilderness and wasteland in the American West and the political ecology of animal agency, loss and resilience.

Kate Wright

*“A whole continent of rabbits”: the unacceptable wild in rural Australia*

Taking a postcolonial approach, our second paper explores the question of animal acceptability in rural Australia. Highly moralised eco-nationalist politics often determine the ambiguous categories of the native and the invasive, the pet and the pest. Adopting Deborah Bird Rose’s (2004) conception of the “wild” as country that has lost the connections that sustain life, Kate Wright reconsiders settler Australian’s position in country as introduced pest, and in a time of environmental upheaval, humanity as a feral species that is out of control.

Catherine Simpson

*Queensland road warriors or, what the cane toad can teach us*

Drawing threads together from the first two papers, the final paper considers the condemned cane toad in the context of habitat loss and non-native animal agency in Australia. Once synonymous with Queensland, the introduced ‘bufo marinus’ is now colonising the NT, and northern WA and NSW. Taking inspiration from Mark Lewis’s classic natural history films, (Cane Toads: An Unnatural History (1989) & Cane Toads: The Invasion (2010)) this paper uses Glenn Albrecht’s notion of ‘solastalgia’ to reflect upon the ecological destruction this species has wrought. The cane toad has become Australia’s frankenstein whose presence produces ambivalent responses, but also signals an emerging ecological unconscious.

Robert Sinnerbrink (Macquarie University)

**La nouvelle violence: Traumatic Critique in 'New French Extremity' Cinema**

James Quandt coined the phrase ‘new French extremity’ to describe an emerging wave of explicit sex and extreme violence in French cinema during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Commencing with Gaspar Noé’s visually brilliant and brutal first feature, *I Stand Alone* [Seul contre tous] (1998), and Catherine Breillat’s transgressive explorations
of feminine sexuality in *Romance* (1999), this intriguing wave spans various genres including psychological horror, realist drama, and the rape revenge story. Included under this rubric are films such as Virginie Despentes and Coralie Trihn Thi’s *Baise Moi* (2000), Claire Denis’ *Trouble Every Day* (2001), Patrice Chereau’s *Intimacy* (2001), Marina de Van’s *In My Skin* (2002), Noe’s *Irreversible* (2002), and Breillat’s *Anatomy of Hell* (2004). Marked either by extreme violence or graphic sexuality, indeed often by both, these films were accompanied by predictable moral outrage, media controversy, even public bans (*Romance* and *Baise Moi*, for example, were both banned briefly in Australia). Far from gratuitous—or indeed ‘unacceptable’—attempts to shock complacent arthouse audiences, such films, I wish to suggest, deploy explicit sex and violence in order to stage a subterranean form of *traumatic critique*. Despite their surface shock effects, their aesthetic of extremity conceals a deeper critical-political significance, which finds cinematic expression in traumatic and transgressive ways. I consider some examples of this kind of traumatic critique in the films of Gaspar Noe and Catherine Breillat, offering some reflections on the ethics and aesthetics of their provocative, yet perversely pleasurable, cinematic interventions.


**Cristine Siokou (La Trobe University)**

**“The Drugs have gone to Shit!”: Changes in Party Drug Use in the Melbourne Rave/Dance Party Scene (1996-2006)**

This paper examines how a group of long-term rave/dance party attendees in Melbourne view the changes party drug use, by comparing party drug use in the mid-1990s, with party drug use during in 2006-2007. This comparison is achieved by exploring eight interconnected themes:

1. The extent of party drug use.
2. The way party drug purchases are managed.
3. The variety of party drugs available.
4. Drug quality.
5. Party drug prices.
6. The branding of ecstasy.
7. Concurrent use of alcohol and party drugs.
8. Drug-related demeanour and conduct.

I suggest that these trends contributed to the creation of several new drug-related risks for many ‘old skool ravers’, even though for most of them their drug taking decreased significantly between the mid-1990s and 2006-07. I then consider the two main changes in policing practices: the introduction of sniffer dogs and the ‘drug bus’.

**Penny Spirou (Macquarie University)**

**I’m Still Here: Joaquin Phoenix and the hoax**

As well as directing music videos and producing television programmes Joaquin Phoenix started acting in the early 1980s and became an established Hollywood actor in the late 1990s. Phoenix is known for such films as *Gladiator* (2000), *Ladder 49* (2004), *We Own the Night* (2007) and *Reservation Road* (2007). During his career he has been nominated for Academy Awards, BAFTA Awards and received a Golden Globe for his portrayal of Johnny Cash in *Walk the Line* (2005).

On 11 February, 2009 in an interview on the *Late Show with David Letterman*, Phoenix announced that he would be retiring from acting to pursue his ambition of becoming a hip hop musician. Appearing to promote his new film,
Two Lovers (2009), Phoenix appeared with a grown beard, dark sunglasses and unkempt hair. Throughout the interview Phoenix consistently answered Letterman’s questions with short replies, leaving Letterman to conclude the interview by saying “Joaquin, I’m sorry you couldn’t be here tonight”.

One year later, ‘documentary’ feature film, I’m Still Here was cinematically released; chronicling the life of Phoenix that followed his public announcement on Letterman. A week into its release in the US, director Casey Affleck confessed in The New York Times that the film was in fact a mockumentary; that Phoenix had been putting on an act for the last year, fabricating the idea that he was pursuing a career in music and further stating that he would return to acting.

This paper surveys the media representations and audience responses to Phoenix’s shift in identity during the twelve month period; discussing the idea of imposture, even though Affleck admits that idea of a ‘hoax’ never entered his mind. This case is framed by the scholarly study of stars and celebrity; discussing the alternating views that faking a new (completely contrasting) identity is unacceptable. Largely, this paper argues that the series of events created by Phoenix and Affleck provide a commentary on the contemporary notion of Hollywood stardom.

Naomi Stekelenburg (University of Sunshine Coast)

Disgust, Morality and Transgressive Fiction

Transgressive fiction is a genre that is thought to explicitly flaunt its capacity to challenge societal conceptualisations of acceptability. It does this through the representation of behaviour, thought and interaction existing at the boundaries of human experience. Works by transgressive authors such as the Marquis de Sade, Georges Bataille and contemporary authors such as Charlotte Roche frequently represent the “unacceptable” via the overt portrayal of the products of the body, bodily states (such as filth and death) and ways of bodily functioning that place it under threat of contamination. In this sense, they create an aesthetic of disgust that has, to some extent, prevented their participation in mainstream literary society. This paper will draw on an understanding of the emotion of disgust from an evolutionary psychology perspective that will ultimately suggest that works by the authors mentioned present a quite conventional view of human nature; that the portrayal of corporeality is, paradoxically, a distraction from and a conduit for their contribution to the conversation regarding morality. It is suggested by evolutionary scholars that disgust originated as a response to protect humans from pathogens and disease and from this particularly corporeal and material focus, it was co-opted into the more abstract purpose of protecting the “soul” from moral contamination (Rozin, Haidt and McCauley, 1999). Reading transgressive fiction in the light of this nexus provides insights into how authors manipulate the connection between corporeal aspects of disgust and the associations they have with notions of moral purity and cleanliness in order to evoke a commentary on sexual and moral “acceptability”.

Nikki Sullivan (Macquarie University)

Unacceptable Flesh, or the Phenomenology of ‘Wrongness’

Over the past decade there has been increasing medical and academic interest in what some now refer to as Body Integrity Identity Disorder (BIID), a condition most often associated with individuals who experience a particular body part or function as somehow superfluous, or, more particularly, ‘wrong’. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the vast majority of research on the heterogeneous phenomenological experiences constituted in and through this psychiatric nomenclature as a (singular) ‘disorder’ is concerned with aetiology, diagnostic classifications, and treatment protocols, rather than with critically interrogating the lived experience of wrongness described by those who desire amputation, to be deaf, blind, paraplegic, and so on, and/or asking what the relationship between these particular desires andmorphologies, and those associated with more mainstream forms of body modification, might be.
As the diagnostic nomenclature suggests, this ‘disorder’ is conceived in terms of a lack of integrity, with those who see the problem as psychiatric arguing that it resides in the subject’s (pathological) sense of self, and those who understand it as neurological claiming that a lack of integrity physically exits in the (dysfunctional or malfunctioning) brain. What is surprising to me as a cultural theorist, is the almost universal assumption in the existing literature that what is being referred to as BIID is a diagnosable illness that resides in the psyche or the body of the afflicted individual, and that can be at best cured, and at worst treated by various medical interventions. The task of medicine, on this model, is to ‘order’ the individual thus afflicted by changing either his or her body or his or her mind. Whilst debates over which should be changed and how are ongoing, there is little work that challenges the fundamental premise that underlies such debates, and that individualizes the ‘problem’ of ‘non-normative’ desires and/or corporealities. In other words, what is missing from current debates is any serious consideration of what it might mean “to strive to create and transform the lived meanings of [the] materialities” (Salamon, 2004:12) currently constituted as ‘identity disorders’, that is, as abnormal, abject(ed). This paper will draw on Merleau-Ponty’s account of the phenomenology of perception in order to redress that lack, to (re)think the lived experience(s) of ‘wrongness’, and to critically interrogate the notion of (bodily) integrity as a natural, normal state.

Mark Sutton (University of Sydney)

“You Know They Refused Jesus Too”: Bob Dylan’s Unforgivable Conversion

It is well known that Bob Dylan has had an uncommonly mercurial career, and for many Dylan fans, it is this constant changing that has allowed him to remain a relevant and powerful artist for nearly fifty years. Once controversial career moves, such as renouncing his protest mantle in ‘My Back Pages,’ going “electric,” or going “country,” are now celebrated as invaluable, significant periods in his history. However, for many Dylan fans and critics, his conversion to evangelical Christianity (and his musical conversion to gospel/Christian rock) is a career move that remains unacceptable. It was a change that caused many long-term Dylan fans to tune out, some never to return, and even today, to old and new Dylan fans alike, the Christian albums (Slow Train Coming, Saved and half of Shot of Love) are largely seen as a kind of stumbling block, a bizarre and unfortunate episode in a long and distinguished career. Many major works of Dylan scholarship choose to either gloss over or ignore this period completely. This paper will revisit this often derided time in Dylan’s career and give renewed consideration and appraisal to the Christian albums, as well as examining why, for many otherwise stalwart followers of Bob Dylan’s erratic and eccentric career, Christianity is unacceptable.

Alison Taylor (University Of Queensland)

“Newborn Porn!”: Content, Context and the Limits of Representation in A Serbian Film (2010)

This paper examines the relationship between disturbing content and its context in A Serbian Film. Srđan Spasojević’s controversial debut follows Miloš, an ex-porn star turned family man lured out of retirement to perform in high end art porn; a film with a ‘serious script’ which the producers know, but the actor does not. The mysterious project is the lucrative brainchild of an eccentric director who caters to specific client desires. Undertaking this too good to be true offer, Miloš finds himself caught up in a world of rape, murder, pedophilia, necrophilia and incest. Pushing the boundaries of representation, the film’s most notorious moment depicts a woman giving birth to an infant who is immediately raped; spurring a subgenre the director proudly dubs “newborn porn!”

Whilst the film’s subject matter is undeniably confronting, it will be argued that its context within the torture porn film provides generic mediation which diffuses its impact and our involvement. This paper considers the framing of
the infant rape scene, shot with a handheld camera mimicking an amateur aesthetic found in mondo films, and its placement within the greater ‘gorno’ framework.

C. Kay Weaver (University of Waikato, NZ)

**Monstrous activism: A study in the public unacceptability of the use of the naked female body as site for challenging the ethics of science**

In the beginning of the first decade of the new millennium, New Zealand was in the grip of a national debate concerning the opportunities and threats posed to it by the science of biotechnology. The Labour Government of the time positioned participation in the development of the science as vital to the nation’s ability to evolve as a knowledge based economy. Contesting this position, environmental activists asserted that biotechnology, and specifically genetically engineered crops and foods, represented a fundamental threat to New Zealand’s “clean green” image and the health of its people. One activist group, Mothers Against Genetic Engineering (MaDGE) was especially successful in getting its anti-GE message into the public domain, using as it did deliberately controversial imagery of female chimeras, cyborgs and nakedness, as well as street demonstrations and a consumer boycott campaign. Yet for many “mainstream” New Zealander’s, this campaign used imagery and tactics which they considered unacceptable and, consequently, alienating in terms of its profanity. And while MaDGE’s aim was precisely to challenge public perceptions of what is ethically acceptable in the corporeal, it was the activists themselves who became the subject of condemnation and censorship because of how they represented women’s bodies. This paper explores public responses to the MaDGE activist campaign through the examination of news reporting on the group and their activities, and through focus group discussions with New Zealanders from different age, gender, ethic and occupational population segments. The paper brings corporeal feminist theories and the concepts of inter- and trans-corporeality to bear on the examination of these public responses, the limits of acceptability, and challenges to the ethics of science.

Anna Westbrook (University of New South Wales)

**Fuck (Me) Fem(me)inisms: Positive Difference & Politicised Pleasure in Slit magazine**

How have representations of sexuality and sexual difference been authored by lesbian/queer/trans-identified subjects in the textual production of Slit magazine (2002-present)? I will specifically focus on depictions that may be read as ‘Femme’ embodiments, framed in reference to issues of visibility and intelligibility, and which untie Femme desire from heteronormative moorings. Slit, (a Sydney-based, internationally distributed magazine), is a “dyke sex culture politics porn” publication produced by “smutty dirty grrls who like to talk about sex, read about it, see it, feel it, pretend it, dream it…”[1]  

Femme identities have had a history of contention for some feminist theorists, however I will contend that Femme and feminism can (and does) have a mutually strengthening, inextricable relationship. Queer theory in its discursive efforts to de-naturalize the sex/gender relationship, I will argue, can risk dissociation from the materiality of the body and a ‘flattening out’ of sexual difference. Tendencies towards queer utopianism neglect the inscriptions of asymmetrical power relations and continued imbalances in social/sexual spaces, particularly the dominance of the exteriorised or ‘phallicised’ queer visual erotic vocabulary. Recent moves (within the GLBTQI community) to celebrate and positively reframe androgyny, female and trans masculinities, and ‘Butch’ identities – although necessary and valuable – have recast the tensions of Femme identities and recharged issues of ‘passing’ and (in)visibility.

‘Fuck (Me) Fem(me)inisms’ asks how difference, a position occupied by Femmes as ‘doubly Othered’, can be divested from its negative connotations and reconfigured positively. To me, the condition that may facilitate the
thinkability of positive difference must be pleasure. Positive difference must start from a place of pleasurable embodiment. This paper will look at the radical political potentialities in Slit’s representations of defiant queer Femme sexuality.


Daniel Wilson (University of Leeds)

**Bound[aries]: An Investigation of Sadomasochistic Imagery in Merzbow’s Music For Bondage Performance**

This paper aims to address the perceived relationship between noise music and sadomasochistic imagery, specifically through Merzbow’s album *Music For Bondage Performance* (1991). The album must first be contextualized through a discussion of the history of Japanese Bondage and its contextualization in contemporary Japanese obscenity laws. The laws draw upon issues of taboo and the procreative image, as well as issues of the real: [when looking at Japanese obscenity laws] we come to realize that the prohibition against the depiction of pubic hair and genitalia has, to a large extent, allowed many of the graphic images and subject matter commonly found in Japanese manga and erotic films to exist.

These issues present a more complex reading of transgression when contextualized with a Western interpretation and response to these images; a response that is largely derisory. These issues can be expanded to include other imagery commonly found in Japanese society including many different types of manga or comic book art.

In terms of the album’s sonic material, I propose an alternative reading of noise as a concept. Whilst many may assume that the two aspects of this album (the images and the sound) are placed together because of noise music’s position on the edge of acceptable music—a sonic transgression—I wish to argue that this is, in fact, not the case. The paper will address issues of how noise is constructed on a wider level through the discussion, and eventual deconstruction of the idea that noise is an objective fact. When noise in constructed in this way, it allows for a reading of transgression—in terms of Bataille and Foucault—to take on a new meaning; one that is far broader than first assumed. Is noise transgressive, or is it, in fact, transgression that is noisy?

Timothy R Wilson (University of North Texas)

**Censorship in Performance in America**

Although Freedom of Speech is a basic tenet of American foundation and philosophy, contemporary artists in performance, theatre, film and television are consistently faced with issues of censorship. Government grant agencies [local, state, national] may refuse funding based on “the decency clause.” Concerns that an artist’s individual expression may violate “common standards of decency,” a vague and openly prejudicial concept, may and does prevent full enjoyment of Freedom of Speech - not only for the artist, but for the potential audience.

The intent of this proposal is to present and discuss the disparity and lack of clarity in what appear to be a rather arbitrary and inconsistent approach to allowing performance to be seen as an honest expression of the individual artist.

One contemporary example will include the case of the "NEA 4," four individual artists who took their cases of implied censorship by a government agency to the United States Supreme Court, as well as a mention of the historical hysteria on the part of the US Government to censor and blacklist individual performers and performances.

In exploring the American Film Rating System, one experiences a secretive organization which appears much more concerned with sexuality, nudity and language rather than the effect of violence. This sense of arbitrarily assuming what may/may not offend the American viewer becomes even more difficult to understand in Television. The
practice of concealing body parts [Butt Cracks and Breasts] with black bars or fuzzy ovals confounds the contemporary audience and distracts from the artistic intent. In further "protection" of our sensibilities, television censors will simply "bleep out" what is considered an expletive in contemporary language. [No Fucks, No Shits.] The language is a vital part of the contemporary writer’s intent, but various networks will choose to edit someone else’s work. However, it appears to be acceptable for the American viewer to experience violence and brutality.

This presentation is not intended to provide answers, but simply to stir up conversation.

**Can Yalcinkaya (Macquarie University)**

**“Drawing the City’s Arsehole”: Unacceptable Turkish Comics 1996-2006**

Up until the 1970s Turkey had a long history of publishing humorous political comics/cartoon magazines. Subversive and grotesque realist humour has deep popular roots in Turkish folk culture; however, this tradition did not translate well into humour magazines in the first fifty years of modern Turkey. This preference was certainly influenced by the official discourses of the Republic’s founding fathers, whose agenda of modernization included pedagogical tendencies and a sense of propriety.

It was not until the mid 1990s that cartoon magazines began to produce content that would not find place in any other form of media in Turkey. Magazines like *Leman* and its sister publication *L-Manyak* gradually increased the level of sexuality, obscenity, and scatological images and language to the point of being deliberately ugly, disturbing and unacceptable. Despite the criticisms that they are degenerate and apolitical publications, these magazines stated they were naturally on the same side as Turkey’s social misfits, such as junkies, street children, and transsexual and transvestite individuals, becoming the only media channel to represent these groups on empathetic terms. Two magazines, *L-Manyak* and its successor *Lombak* can be considered as the publications in which this tendency reached its peak. The editor of both publications, Bahadir Baruter, described their publishing policy as “drawing the city’s arsehole”. “Arsehole”, in this instance, both signifies the representation of the city’s [Istanbul] peripheries and the grotesque nature of the humour in these magazines.

This paper provides a general introduction to the comics of *L-Manyak* and *Lombak*. It argues that these magazines produced carnivalesque humour in the Bakhtinian sense. Finally, it claims that they had a political stance which aimed to subvert dominant ideology’s sense of social decency, regardless of the fact that they were uninterested in the country’s political agendas.

**Holly Zwalf (University of New South Wales)**

**Can Mummy be as hot as Daddy?**

When a woman becomes a mother, she is expected to suspend her sexuality, and surrender her body wholly to the purpose of mothering. While it is obvious that women who are mothers are, or can still chose to be, sexually active, what is not (openly) discussed is whether a mother is able to independently own her sexuality, to actively desire, and to seek a selfish pleasure from her maternal functions. Rarely are mothers deemed “good mothers” when they are recognized as powerful or sexual beings; if a mother is strong, she is seen as overbearing, if she is sexually assertive, she is deemed irresponsible or inappropriate.

This paper looks at the sexual, childless maternal body, focusing in particular on queer, women and trans, Mummy play, within BDSM relationships. Even in queer kink culture, where social norms and restrictions are often challenged, and where traditional gender roles are constantly subverted, I suggest there are echoes of the wider social issue of the sexual maternal body being rejected as unacceptable. In the queer women and trans kink scene, there are a plethora of leather Daddies and their admirers. Yet I argue it is less popular and less common to hear of a leather Mummy, or to hear people speaking adoringly of her. Is this a reflection of butch/femme dynamics, or something more? Through my research into perceptions of Mummies within the community, by monitoring online
chat rooms, conducting internet interviews, and through the discussion and debate which takes place on my blog, mintgreenmommies, I discuss whether the queer kink community’s attitudes towards Mummy play emphasise a perversion or a perpetuation of the gendered notion of the maternal body and its limitations.