VIRTUAL
HISTORIES

02.18.11

THE ZOOPRAXISCOPE   35   A COUPLE WALTZING

GRADUATE HUMANITIES FORUM

—11TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE—

virtuality / 2010_2011

VIRTUAL HISTORIES

11th Annual Graduate Humanities Forum Conference

Friday, February 18, 2011

University of Pennsylvania
Nevil Classroom • Penn Museum

GRADUATE HUMANITIES FORUM

A program of the Penn Humanities Forum, the Graduate Humanities Forum (GHF) was established in the year 2000 as an interdisciplinary research forum for Penn doctoral students in the humanities and allied disciplines. Penn Ph.D. students have the opportunity to participate in the GHF through the Andrew W. Mellon Graduate Fellowship program of the Penn Humanities Forum (PHF). Ten $1000 fellowships are offered each year for graduate and professional students in all humanities-related disciplines who are interested in exploring the trends and challenges of interdisciplinary research related to PHF's annual theme. In addition to their regular research seminar, GHF fellows each year organize an international graduate conference on the Forum's theme.

2010–2011 Andrew W. Mellon Graduate Fellows in the Humanities, Penn Humanities Forum

Asma Al-Naser, Comparative Literature
David Alff, English
Julia Bloch, English
Scott Enderle, English
Ellery Foutch, Art History
Joseph Lavery, Comparative Literature

Deirdre Loughridge, Music
Phillip J. Maciak, English
Melanie Micir, English
Christen Mucher, English
Emily Zazulia, Music

WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the Graduate Humanities Forum, I am delighted to welcome you to our eleventh annual conference, "Virtual Histories."

The Graduate Humanities Forum brings together graduate students from across Penn, fostering discussion and collaboration among the humanities disciplines. In biweekly meetings, our fellows present works in progress that address the 2010-2011 Penn Humanities Forum theme, "Virtuality," from a broad range of methodological and theoretical approaches. As we planned this conference, we felt compelled to test the boundaries of the virtual, seeking points of continuity and rupture between past, present, and future virtualities, and considering those moments when the virtual becomes linked to the material, the tangible, the corporeal, or the actual. Out of our discussions emerged four panels, "Medium and Contact," "Interjections," "Sonic Transubstantiation," and "Seeing Virtually," each of which presents its own limit case for virtuality.

"Virtual Histories" was brought to fruition through the hard work and dedication of many. I would like to thank the Graduate Humanities Forum fellows and Warren Breckman, our Faculty Advisor and mentor, for their thoughtful contributions to the shaping of this conference. Many thanks also to Sara Varney and Jennifer Conway of the Penn Humanities Forum, and to Jim English, the Forum's director. This event could not have taken place without their tireless support. Finally, I would also like to thank our keynote speaker Lisa Nakamura.

Thank you for joining us!

Scott Enderle
Graduate Research Assistant
Penn Humanities Forum

PROGRAM

9:00-9:20 | Coffee and Remarks

9:20-10:50 | Session I: Medium and Contact
Moderator: Joseph Lavery, Comparative Literature, University of Pennsylvania

Jesse Hoffman, English, Rutgers University
　　Virtual Photohistory: Tennyson's *In Memoriam*

Chris Morales, Cultural Studies, Universiteit van Amsterdam
　　No One Ever Really Dies on Facebook: Mourning Practices and the
　　Metaphysics of the Virtual

Marla Pagan-Mattos, Comparative Literature, University of Pennsylvania
　　From Virtuous to Virtual: Poetic Access to Saintly Praesentia in the
　　Cantigas de Santa Maria of Alfonso X

11:00-12:30 | Session II: Interjections
Moderator: David Alff, English, University of Pennsylvania

Peter Sachs Collopy, History and Sociology of Science, University of Pennsylvania
　　Virtual Revolutions

Jeehey Kim, Art History, City University of New York, Graduate Center
　　Commemorating the Dead in Virtual Space

Sara Beth Levavy, Art History, Stanford University
　　Projected Reality: The Interwar Newsreel and the Cinematic Vernacular

12:30-1:30 | Lunch

1:30-3:00 | Session III: Sonic Transubstantiation
Moderator: Emily Zazulia, Music, University of Pennsylvania

Brooke McCorkle, Music, University of Pennsylvania
　　Chopin's Virtual Voice

Daniel Morse, English, Temple University
　　Your Friend the Phonograph: Advertising the Virtual Voice in Early Film

Patrick Wood Uribe, Music, Princeton University
　　Written Music Examples in the Nineteenth Century: Imagined Sound
　　and Virtual Performance

3:15-4:45 | Session IV: Seeing Virtually
Moderator: Christen Mucher, English, University of Pennsylvania

Lauren Klein, English, City University of New York, Graduate Center
　　Virtual Research, Actual Lives: Text Mining Slavery's Digital Archive

Ella Mershon, English, University of California, Berkeley
　　Treating Objects Like Women: The Bodies of Humean Sympathy

Jason Zuzga, English, University of Pennsylvania
　　The Virtual Life of "The Inner Life of a Cell"

5:00-6:30 | Keynote Address (Rainey Auditorium, Penn Museum)
Lisa Nakamura, Griefing Culture and Incivility on the Internet

6:30 | Dinner

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Lisa Nakamura
Director of Asian American Studies, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Griefing Culture and Incivility on the Internet
"Griefing" or online harassment has been around as long as the Internet itself. Trolls, flamers, and other cyber-irritants have become ubiquitous, operating as veritable online subcultures. Lisa Nakamura, a leading voice in Asian American studies, considers attitudes toward race expressed in these new, virtual subcultures—particularly the troubling rise of what she calls enlightened racism.

Lisa Nakamura is the author or coeditor of four books, including *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007) and *Race After the Internet* (with Peter Chow-White, Routledge, forthcoming 2011). She is currently working on a new monograph tentatively entitled *Workers Without Bodies: Towards a Theory of Race and Digital Labor in Virtual Worlds*. In addition to directing the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Nakamura is Professor in the Institute of Communication Research and Media Studies Program, and Professor of Asian American Studies, where she teaches courses on Asian Americans and media, as well as introductory and advanced courses on new media criticism, history, and theory.

ABSTRACTS

Peter Sachs Collopy, History and Sociology of Science, University of Pennsylvania
Virtual Revolutions

The idea that the violence of political revolutions can be replaced by new communications technologies has been a recurring one in recent history. In the years around 1970, American activists captivated by the new technology of portable video envisioned a "media revolution" which would use videocassettes, cable television, and even satellites to change the political order without a shot being fired. "If one had access to the technology," wrote one, "he had as strong a voice in shaping the destiny of the world as the politicians and generals." Many saw video as an inherently democratic technology that would distribute this power to be heard more equitably. The movement reached its clearest expression in the 1971 book Guerrilla Television, which argued that society was structured by its media, with politics following as mere superstructure, and thus that any form of activism not focused on media was futile.

More recently, we have heard of Twitter Revolutions in Iran and Moldova and seen the U.S. Department of State mobilize a similar rhetoric of democratic technology. Drawing on my own research on technological utopianism and video in the years around 1970, and on the critical scholarship of David Golumbia and Evgeny Morozov on the idea that the internet will foster global democratization, I plan to explore some commonalities between these discourses and analyze the ways in which they borrow from more militant revolutionary movements.

Jesse Hoffman, English, Rutgers University
Virtual Photohistory: Tennyson's *In Memoriam*

This paper presents a virtual, spirit photograph of Arthur Hallam recently discovered in the archive that evidences the relationship between Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and photography. The spirit image and the story behind its creation relate to broader questions about the Victorian period's seminal elegy. No literary historian has related this elegy to photography, yet the period of Tennyson's mourning coincides with the emergence of Victorian photography that gives a new, visual form to elegy. My paper argues that Tennyson's desire to touch Arthur Hallam uses photographic theory's emphasis on indexicality and polarity to reach him.

The elegy is not analogically photographic; instead, *In Memoriam* develops techniques for visualizing and touching Hallam that have the same operations as photography. The poem's recurrent polarities generate figures of light like the flash to come into contact with Hallam, which indicate Tennyson's photographic desire. However, just as Tennyson considers photography for his purpose, he must also dispense with the medium. The reasons for this are counterintuitive: the photograph's explicit absence from *In Memoriam* is a measure of the elegy's relationship with photography. This absence paradoxically suggests the medium's presence within the poem; the very same desire for proximity to Hallam's form necessitates the photograph's exclusion. Tennyson cannot reconcile the absence of

Hallam that the photograph's indexicality would make visible, although Tennyson still uses indexical forms to reach Hallam. Victorian photography and poetic elegy share a nascent, interconstitutive relationship in *In Memoriam* that is put in service of a desire to be near the lost subject. Finally, this desire is realized in the spectral photograph of Arthur Hallam that emerges from a haunted archive found in early Modernism.

Jeehey Kim, Art History, City University of New York, Graduate Center
Commemorating the Dead in Virtual Space

This paper explores virtual space for commemoration in Korea. Roh Moo-hyun and Kim Dae-jung, former presidents of South Korea, passed away in 2009, one of whom by suicide. Numerous mourning stations were built all around South Korea, even in Korean embassies in foreign countries. People tried to commemorate the former presidents, stopping by mourning stations to bow and burn incense in front of funerary photo-portrait of the president. However, the government did not allow citizens to establish a mourning station in Seoul Plaza, which is at the center of the capital city of South Korea, lest it lead to demonstration against the government. It appeared that Korean people have more freedom in virtual space. Numerous expressions of condolence were spread out through personal blogs and major portal web sites, uploading the presidents' speech and photographs. Meanwhile, an internet game was created to judge the late president Roh in one of the major UCC (user creative contents) websites in Japan.

This paper examines the way funerary photo-portraiture is transformed into web-based memorial services for the dead in Korea, and the way the use of portrait photography in virtual space complicates the notion of death and memory, as well as the hegemonic structures that usually accompany memorial services for public figures.

Lauren Klein, English, City University of New York, Graduate Center
Virtual Research, Actual Lives: Text Mining Slavery's Digital Archive

The Jefferson Digital Archive, hosted by the University of Virginia Electronic Text Center, contains nearly 2000 letters written to or from Thomas Jefferson, an annotated bibliography of scholarship about the President, a virtual tour of the UVA campus he helped to create, and more. By most measures, the Jefferson Digital Archive appears to encompass the full range of his life and work. But much like his own written records, the Jefferson archive merely hints at the presence of his many slaves. Take, for example, James Hemings, Sally Hemings' older brother, whom Jefferson took to France and had trained as chef de cuisine at his Parisian residence. A search on "James Hemings" in the Jefferson archive yields no results. By examining other records in the archive, however, we can infer this: James Hemings loved hummingbirds; he spoke fluent French; he declined to work as head chef in Jefferson's White House; he committed suicide in 1801.

With the example of these traces of the life (and death) of James Hemings, I will propose a new method for archival research in the digital age. This method applies

the traditional techniques of close reading to the technical structure of the archive, its metadata, and its visual frame, in addition to its contents. By showing how a technical reading of the archive can help to reanimate an actual life, I will demonstrate why such techniques should be required of twenty-first-century humanities scholars. Only by incorporating these techniques into our research practices can we move towards a form of scholarship that illuminates the forces of the present at the same time that it recovers shadows from the past.

Sara Beth Levavy, Art History, Stanford University
Projected Reality: The Interwar Newsreel and the Cinematic Vernacular

Appearing for the first time on American screens in 1911, the newsreel was an inherently hybrid film, drawing influence from newspapers, still photography, and radio, in addition to practices already in place in the production of motion pictures. Given the wide parameters and broad influences with which these films were produced, newsreels reflected life (or something like it) back at the viewing audience. In the interwar newsreel, audiences were able to see themselves (or a version of themselves) on the screen: it was the cinema of everyday life, contemporary experience writ large and small at the same time.

The typical newsreel is a compilation film that functions through a unique form of montage; its eight- to ten-minute running time brings together as many stories to audiences twice weekly. What unites the stories in a given reel is their collective effort at a visual description of time—they are a performance of everyday life re-presented in the cinema for visual consumption. At once fragmented and unified, the interwar newsreel performs a particular style of historical and documentary narration, wherein the viewer is given a series of stories that together comprise a so-called unclosed narrative: they are a recapitulation of recent history, the ending of which continues to unfold.

I will argue that the newsreel's performance of reality (literal and figural) becomes an alternate means through which to reconstruct—to manufacture—the contemporary as the explicitly crafted past, a virtual historical narrative that is simultaneously also a running representation of the present.

Brooke McCorkle, Music, University of Pennsylvania
Chopin's Virtual Voice

Contemporary accounts of Chopin's playing often revert to fantastic metaphors. Robert Schumann described the performing Chopin as a "clairvoyant, lost in his dreams..." Charles Hallé wrote his parents: "During Chopin's playing I could think of nothing but elves and fairy dances...There is nothing to remind one that it is a human being who produces this music." Regarding these "supernatural tropes," Kallberg suggests they "enabled the subject of sex to figure into the understanding of Chopin." Kasunic, however, believes an analysis of Chopin's material world helps us comprehend this otherworldly imagery. I propose another way of understanding these fantastic metaphors. In addition to drawing on fantastic terminology, contemporary listeners often compared Chopin's pianistic style to a singing voice.

Kallberg, Kasunic, and Rosen have all explored vocal qualities in Chopin's piano works. His nocturnes in particular, with their origins as drawing room songs, display an instrumental voice distinctive to Chopin. A voice emitted from a non-human mechanism, carries with it an uncanny effect. This untexted, mechanical voice invited Chopin's listeners to compare his performances to the supernatural. Furthermore, many of Chopin's listeners didn't just hear the instrumental voice; often times, they perceived the voice as imparting something directed at them personally and because of this, experienced "emotional overture" in Chopin's creations. In this paper, I consider the allusion to voice in Chopin's music for violoncello, one of the few instruments he composed for aside from the piano, contending that in Chopin's music, the cello conveys an extra-musical association with the singing voice.

Ella Mershon, English, University of California, Berkeley
Treating Objects Like Women: The Bodies of Humean Sympathy

In Hume's epistemology, sympathy has the capacity to reverse the flow of impressions into ideas, effectively transposing the grammar of self and other through the communication and transfusion of emotion. Where feelings are mobile and subjectivities are porous, Hume's sympathy envisions a society of feeling selves, quiveringly attuned to their social world. Peopled with receptive bodies, Hume's sympathy seems to offer us a model for "real" intersubjective experience. However, in the strangely de-ontologized world of Humean skepticism, selves and others, subjects and objects flicker in and out of existence. I am curious to what extent Humean sympathy can be said to prefigure a model of intersubjective exchange that is only virtually intersubjective. How might we understand Humean sympathy as an interactive software that tends to make all emotional interactions look strangely virtual?

In turning from Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* to Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey,* I will move from the Humean sympathetic inversion of self and other to the interchange of subjects and objects, attempting to test the categorical assumptions undergirding Hume's sympathy against an economy of erotic exchanges. By bringing Humean sympathy to bear on eighteenth century sentimental discourse, I intend to frame a debate about the technologies of social and sexual interactions in terms of the sociability of virtual worlds and the bodies that constitute those worlds. Are emotional exchanges only ever imagined? And if so, what are the ramifications of trying to translate sympathy from a philosophical system to an embodied practice? Hence, this paper aims to answer a few basic questions about the sociability of Humean sympathy and to probe the curious way bodies appear and disappear within an economy of social exchange.

Chris Morales, Cultural Studies, Universiteit van Amsterdam
No One Ever Really Dies on Facebook: Mourning Practices and the Metaphysics of the Virtual

Heidegger's later work warns of the trappings of the modern technological understanding of being, which reveals the world nihilistically as a standing reserve

to be ordered by humanity, and which increasingly confounds humanity's ability to understand being differently. He suggests we can only be freed of this technological understanding by understanding it as such, and engaging with the world and other people through practices that gather a local community, holding open a world and recalling the Gods in everyday life. In *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor claims certain secular practices have come to do the gathering and worlding work of more explicitly religious practices found in previous Western epochs. In this talk, I will explore the phenomenology of virtual mourning practices and the emerging role of social networking sites as mediators of relationships with the dead in order to see how such virtual practices can function as worlding focal practices. Websites such as Facebook and Myspace have undercut traditional religious and cultural technologies by providing simple public rituals for addressing the dead. This research approaches the topic of "Virtual Histories" on two levels: the virtual life history of the deceased, and the metaphysical history of the West and what virtual mourning practices reveal about current understandings of being. We will see how life stories are virtually emplotted and archived, keeping the deceased readily available for ongoing intersubjective engagements and incorporations into the lives of the living, pointing the way towards a post technological understanding of being revealed on the basis of the virtual.

Marla Pagan-Mattos, Comparative Literature, University of Pennsylvania
From Virtuous to Virtual: Poetic Access to Saintly Praesentia in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria of Alfonso X*

Recently, *Time* magazine published an article on the use of digital candles in different churches in Spain that allow "the faithful to remotely light a virtual candle to a favorite saint through the website MiVela.com (MyCandle)." The website includes icons, official prayers, and brief sketches of the vitae of the saints. Undoubtedly, this is a contemporary upgrading of the forms of devotion of the cult of the saints, as it preserves many of the features already present in the Middle Ages: the reading of a vita, admiration of an icon, and a prayer. In this contemporary version the only feature missing is the corporeal proximity to the icon or the relic, this proximity being replaced by the "virtual" space, the digitization of images and offerings. However, medieval devotees of the saints did not always find icons and relics available to the touch, many times having to endeavor in pilgrimages to reach the sources of the praesentia of the saints. Oftentimes the written vitae were all that was left to derive a sense of the presence of the saints. In this paper I approach the function of the written word as allowing the virtual presence of Mary in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria of Alfonso X*. This text presents an interactive quality in its relation to the believer as St. Mary, as dream image, or an invisible intercessor, moves across dimensions answering her believers' requests. These movements contrast to the depiction of the corporeality of the text, Mary's presence rendered as unstable, un-chartable, yet secured as long as her name becomes repeated through the material text as interface.

Daniel Ryan Morse, English, Temple University
Your Friend the Phonograph: Advertising the Virtual Voice in Early Film

Advertising films from the silent era are often thought to be formally retrograde, resisting the shift in fiction films from an earlier cinema of attractions to a later one of narrative integration. Two Edison films advertising the phonograph, *The Stenographer's Friend* (1910) and *The Voice of the Violin* (1915), however, usefully complicate this narrative in that both feature melodramatic plots that are then interrupted by moments characteristic of the attractions model of cinema—close-ups of the machines, their operators, and even the Edison factory complex. Far from disrupting the message of the films, though, these remnants of the cinema of attractions belie and attempt to address the anxieties surrounding the introduction of mechanically reproduced sound, namely that these machines would replace stenographers and musicians (which was, tellingly, how Edison first marketed the phonograph). In a scene paradigmatic of the attempt to anthropomorphize devices of mechanical sound reproduction in the earlier film, a stenographer pets her phonograph as if it were a well-behaved animal companion. After recovering a lost brother with the help of a phonograph, a family (and by extension the audience) is treated in the later film to a sweeping panorama of Edison's laboratories, characteristic of industrial-process films. In both cases, the dialectic between competing models of cinema in these films not only complicates the history of early non-fiction film, but also—and more importantly—reveals attempts to navigate and neutralize the threats of a new virtual world of disembodied voices.

Patrick Wood Uribe, Music, Princeton University
Written Music Examples in the Nineteenth Century: Imagined Sound and Virtual Performance

Music examples, silent invocations of sound, present us with a range of virtualities. At one extreme, models merely await physical implementation in sound, while at the other, whole scores are represented by a pair of lines, sketches jog the reader's memory of a work, and graphs lay bare what the analyst believes to have uncovered. Drawing on treatises and music criticism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, my paper focuses on perhaps the most telling change in the function of music examples: the move from explanatory theoretical models akin to diagrams toward quotations from existing works that amount to fragmentary virtual performances that interrupt the writer's text.

My paper proposes that these unsounding quotations of sound not only enact changes in the virtual mimicry of the real, but also testify to a whole set of changing relationships: of works to performances (both real and imagined), of music to the other arts, and of readers and listeners to music itself. When placed in a wider context these changes demonstrate the dramatic transformation of music in early Romantic aesthetics from craft to art, from decorative arabesque to the most quintessentially Romantic form of expression. The presence of a mere four notes from Beethoven opens a new perspective on the social and aesthetic status of music in the nineteenth century.

Jason Zuzga, English, University of Pennsylvania
The Virtual Life of "The Inner Life of a Cell"

My presentation will be on the creation of the eight-minute digital animation "The Inner Life of a Cell," a collaborative project created by biology educators Dr. Alain Viel and Dr. Robert Lue at Harvard and the animation studio XVIVO. My focus in the presentation will be on the negotiations during the collaboration and production between fact and compelling aesthetics, as the cell becomes, in the words of one of the creators, a "thriving metropolis," the scale of the cell enlarged to allow for room for the virtual camera to zoom, pan, and follow the dramatic activities of the cell's busy organelles. As well, I will briefly review the reception by the public of the animation, including its broadcast on ABC news and its mis-use by creationist organizations as proof of the sublime nature of God's microscopic artistry, proof of His tiny hands. None of the activities in the animation would be visible to a human eye, even with the aid of a microscope; the activity is "imagined" in order to allow it to be understood better by an untrained viewer, degrees of compelling drama and music are amplified to pull the viewer into the experience. The creators of the animation depend, however, on the orchestral soundtrack and bold colors being subtracted by the viewer's intellect to proceed to the "actual" realm of invisible density and complexity of cellular activity.

PENN HUMANITIES FORUM

Established in 1999, the Penn Humanities Forum is charged with taking a fresh look at ideas that touch on the human experience. The Forum's goal is to introduce humanistic perspectives to the sciences, professions, and public, and to bring ideas, long confined to the ivory tower, into popular discourse. Addressing a different topic each year, the Forum offers an integrated program of research, teaching, and outreach, which invites students, scholars, the cultural community, and the general public to discover common ground. For 2010–11, the topic has been Virtuality, its trends and rich history of thought concerning alternate worlds, simulated realities, and the "as-if" of the imagination.

For more information on events and fellowship opportunities:
www.phf.upenn.edu

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Warren Breckman, Faculty Advisor, Graduate Humanities Forum; Associate Professor of History

Jennifer Conway, Associate Director

James English, Director; Professor of English

Heather Sharkey, Faculty Advisor, Undergraduate Humanities Forum; Associate Professor, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

Sara Varney, Administrative Coordinator