

Command and Control: The Quantified Self and Biomedical Posthumanism



Stefan Danter, University of Mannheim

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Transcriptions Center (South Hall 2509)

Advances in computer sciences and technology that have jumpstarted the rise of smart devices and their inclusion into an ever increasing number of everyday contexts are starting to change the way human subjects see and think about themselves. In his talk, Stefan Danter will look at the way contemporary technology has cemented the hegemony of the numerical, and how the concept of the “Quantified Self” could be used to not only optimize, but also control individuals. What exactly does it mean if knowledge is increasingly understood as synonymous with quantification and ever increasing data sets? And what implications does this “quantification culture” have for contemporary concepts of subjectivity, especially when considering scenarios in which participation in said culture is no longer voluntary? It is within this context that literature can offer valuable insight by incorporating quantitative ideas and critically reflecting on them. Drawing on Eric Garcia’s *Repossession Mambo* and Gary Shteyngart’s *Super Sad True Love Story*, the talk aims to analyze literary reflections of the growing “quantification culture” within biotechnology and medicine and highlight some of its pitfalls and problems. Both novels present futuristic scenarios in which biotechnology and medicine have ushered in a quite posthuman reality, where matters of life and death are determined by quantified data and individual agency is significantly reduced.

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