Nina Begus  
*Posthuman Neurotechnologies and Nonhuman Agency in Roald Dahl’s and James Tiptree’s Short Stories*

If a pygmalionesque lover suffers from pygmalionism, then its beloved must be paralyzed, many fictional texts argue. Analysis of such paralysis is rarely discussed in the pygmalionesque framework of creating and falling in love with artificial humans, be it fictional or real, and alarmingly overlooked in the posthuman field. This paper examines two short stories, Roald Dahl’s ‘William and Mary’ (1959) and James Tiptree Jr. (Alice Sheldon)’s ‘The Girl Who Was Plugged In’ (1974), in which a cyborg human is discriminated on the basis of their paralysis, and paralleled with two memoirs written by patients with locked-in syndrome. The questions of agency and autonomy abound in these texts and clutter around the convoluted means of communication. What are ethical ways of handling co-agency of neurotechnologies, especially those that allow for manipulation by another human being?

Elena Fratto  
*Endocrine Glands in the Anthropocene: Metabolic Storytelling in Mikhail Bulgakov’s Heart of a Dog*

In the wake of fin-de-siècle discoveries in the field of endocrinology, bodily glands, alongside the hormones they produced, featured prominently in the literary works, visual arts, and popular culture of early twentieth-century Europe. Experimental surgery, with gland transplantation and grafting, promised rejuvenation and intellectual vitality, while phenomena of all kinds began to be associated to hormone production in causal links—from bodily rhythms to behavioral patterns; from the pace of history to the trajectory of nations. In early Soviet Russia the increased interest in hormones went hand in hand with the experiments in eugenics. This paper analyzes Bulgakov’s “Heart of a Dog” through the lens of thing theory, posthuman studies, and narratology, and it shows how the activity of the pituitary gland does not only affect bodily functions, but also dictates narrative time and raises questions of narrative agency.

Sara Goering  
*Acting with “smart” brain computer interfaces: Semi-autonomous neurotechnology and becoming co-agents*

Neurotechnologies like brain computer interfaces are increasingly heading toward the use of machine learning and artificial intelligence, so that “closed loop” implanted neural devices will function semi-autonomously within a human, with the aim of helping individuals with motor impairments or psychiatric disabilities enhance their agency. But the “smarter” the device, the more it becomes a kind of agent in its own right (not through consciousness, but through its ability to collect and integrate complex data into an automatically triggered response). In this way, the implanted neural device may sometimes be perceived to be a kind of “third party” in the head. In this paper, I use framing from feminist relational identity and autonomy theory to investigate how we might think of human agents interacting with their “smart” BCIs as in a kind of relational co-agency. I compare human/technology interactions with human/human relational interactions that enable agency, to better understand how our fundamental notion of agency as an individual attribute need revisions. In laying out a framework for relational co-agency, I emphasize the significance of needing a period of getting to know each
other, working together to perform agency, and maintaining outside safeguards to protect against undue influence or manipulation.