Automation and Automatism/s

www.automationautomatisms.weebly.com

28th January 2023
King's College London (Strand Campus)

Keynote speaker: Dr Ben Roberts (University of Sussex)

Automation, it seems, plays an increasingly significant role in our lives. From supermarket self-checkouts to chatbots, from factory robots to driverless cars, the automation of human tasks is all around us. We may worry what this means for us, that tens of thousands of jobs will be lost as we struggle to adapt to what feels like unprecedented technological change. But our relationship with automation is not a new one, as machines like windmills and steam engines have long been used to multiply human muscle power.

At the heart of this is the interface between human and machine. As machines automate progressively more activities once carried out by people, the human, one might think, risks becoming an obsolete category. Does the future of humankind lie in refashioning ourselves as ever-more machine-like, ever-more automated and unthinking? If an essential distinction between human and machine is conscious thought, when human behaviour is no longer motivated by consciousness what results is automatism. On the other hand, how might automatism trouble notions of agency in relation to the racial and class dynamics of labour? Typically understood as a legal defence or a psychiatric diagnosis, this conference also aims to address metaphorical interpretations of automatism within European culture, literature and thought.

We invite scholars (particularly those early in their careers) and postgraduate researchers working in modern languages, literary studies, medical humanities, film studies, art history, digital humanities, cultural studies and beyond to submit proposals for 20-minute papers (in English) on topics including, but not limited to:

> Automation and automatism in literature ~ AI and robotics ~ Automated art ~ Psychologies of automatism ~ Human bodies and automation/automatism ~ Reproduction, pregnancy, birth ~ Dance and movement ~ War ~ Automatism and subjectivity ~ Mind-body dualism ~ Work ~ Repetition and automatism ~ Aesthetics of automatism/automation ~ Crowds and social interactions ~ Automatism and film ~ Mimicry/doubling ~ Anonymity ~ Domestic automation ~ Histories of automation and/or automatism

Please send abstracts of 250-300 words, together with your contact details and affiliation, to: automation.automatism@gmail.com by 30th November 2022.

The conference will take place in person, but hybrid facilities are available for those wishing to present remotely. We plan to produce an edited volume based on themes emerging from papers presented at the conference.

Conference organisers: Kate Foster (King's College London) & Molly Crozier (University of Liverpool)