Immortal Inequalities: Towards a Critique of Futurist Discourse

Wednesday, March 12, 2014
5:30 pm
Brown/RISD Hillel
80 Brown Street, 2nd Floor
Reception to follow
English Department Lounge
70 Brown Street

Donna V. Jones is Associate Professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley. Her 2010 book The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Négritude, Vitalism, and Modernity was awarded the Jeanne and Aldo Scaglione Prize in Comparative Literary Studies. Jones’ articles have appeared in such journals as Qui Parle, Modernism/Modernity, and Diacritics.

The February 2011 cover of Time magazine speculated that the year 2045 would mark a time in which humanity would achieve immortality; again in 2013 Time lent advanced advertising to the tech giant Google’s exploration into anti-aging therapies, hyping the venture as “Google vs. Death.” However, in literary and cinematic depictions and in philosophical reflections on the possibility of immortality, such as Bernard Williams’ famous essay The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality, we find unease and even horror at the evasion of the recognition of the need to die well. Yet the technophilic longevity seekers and the thinkers of finitude often share the assumption of an opposition between the creaturely and the immortal, an assumption that Professor Jones will critically explore in her talk.

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