

# Innocent by Contamination



## Queer World-Making, Ethnicity, and Technicity in Samuel R. Delany's, *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*

a talk by Professor Thomas Foster

My earlier work analyzed "the antinomies of posthuman thought," in the attempt to define a more productive relation between informational systems and material embodiment. This talk builds on that analysis in order to define a set of specific problems in theorizing the status of racial formations within technoculture contexts. What happens to race when the normative is no longer identical with the natural, as occurs under conditions of technosociality? When technological denaturalization becomes a social norm, what different consequences are there for race, gender, and sexuality? This talk addresses these questions through David Tomas' concept of "technicity" and its relation to ethnicity. I ask what difference it would make to Tomas' theory of technicity if it were grounded in an African-American text like Samuel R. Delany's 1984 science fiction novel *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*, rather than William Gibson's 1984 cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer*. Delany's work offers an alternative to a dominant narrative of technicity and technosociality as inversions of the relation between nature and culture and as involving the replacement of ethnicity by technicity, rather than a more radical displacement of the oppositions structuring these terms.

January 22  
12.15-1.30PM  
Scarfe 310  
Lunch provided, RSVP  
jason.wu@ubc.ca

Thomas Foster is a Professor of English at the University of Washington, and the former director of the Cultural Studies Program and an adjunct faculty member in Cognitive Science at Indiana University. He is the author of *The Souls of Cyberfolk: Posthumanism as Vernacular Theory*. This talk forms part of his current book project, which is focused on the expropriation of cyberpunk convention by writers and artists of color and is tentatively entitled *Ethnicity and Technicity: Race, Nature, and Culture in the Cyberpunk Archive*.

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