

# (Un)Ethical Futures: Utopia, Dystopia and Science Fiction



**15–17 December 2017**

**Monash University Law Chambers**  
555 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

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**Keynote speakers**  
Andrew Milner  
Jacqueline Dutton  
Nick Lawrence

**Workshop leaders**  
Meg Mundell  
Sascha Morrell  
Evie Kendal



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Organised by Monash University, the University of Warwick, and *Colloquy: Text, Theory, Critique*, with funding provided by the Monash Warwick Alliance

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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*We wish to acknowledge the people of the Kulin Nations, on whose land we have gathered for this conference and on whose land Monash University operates. We pay our respects to their Elders—past and present.*



## Contents

### PROGRAM

Friday 15 December	4
Saturday 16 December	5
Sunday 17 December	6

### ABSTRACTS

Keynotes	6
Workshops	10
Research Papers	13
Creative Readings	45

Friday 15 December

08:30	Registration ; Tea & Coffee		
09:00	Auditorium (combined 1, 2 & 3) (CHAIR: Lara Choksey)		
	<b>Panel: Andrew Milner, Jacqueline Dutton, Nick Lawrence</b>		
10:10	Morning tea (30 mins)		
10:40	<i>Auditorium 1</i> <i>Feminism, Utopia and Dystopia</i> (CHAIR: LJ Maher)	<i>Auditorium 2</i> <i>History, Politics and Utopia</i> (CHAIR: Christian Velasco)	<i>Auditorium 3</i> <i>Philosophy and Aesthetics</i> (CHAIR: Mitch Alexander)
	<b>Mia Goodwin</b> , “Utopian ideals and feminine construct in Mme d’Aulnoy’s <i>The Island of Happiness</i> (1690)”	<b>Philip Braithwaite</b> , “‘We Will End In Fire’: British Science Fiction Television, <i>Blake’s 7</i> , and Thatcherism”	<b>Scott Robinson</b> , “Suspended Ethics in the Utopia of Art: Jacques Rancière’s Uncertain Aesthetics of Utopia”
	<b>Sreejata Paul</b> , “Begum Rokeya’s ‘terrible revenge’: A pioneering feminist utopian writer imagines ethical futures for the women of colonial Bengal”	<b>Chun Felix Huang</b> , “The East Asian Community as a utopia for prosperity and peace”	<b>Ursula de Leeuw</b> , “The Utopia of Dystopia in Contemporary Art: Anicka Yi’s <i>Life is Cheap</i> at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum”
	<b>Anne-Maree Wicks</b> , “H.P. Lovecraft’s Weird Tale Ideal: Angela Carter’s New Weird Dystopia”	<b>Laelie Greenwood</b> , “‘L’esercito della follia’: An Examination of Madness and the Crowd in the Utopian Vision of Italian Futurism”	<b>Carolyn Lau</b> , “Practicing Affirmative Ethics In Spite of the Times: A Reading of J.G. Ballard’s <i>Unlimited Dream Company</i> ”
12:10	Lunch (50 mins)		
13:00	Auditorium (combined 1, 2 & 3)		
	<b>Keynote: Andrew Milner, "Utopia, Dystopia and Climate Fiction"</b>		
14:00	Break (10 mins)		
14:10	<i>Auditorium 1</i> <i>Dystopia and Resistance</i> (CHAIR: Brianna Bullen)	<i>Auditorium 2</i> <i>Ethics in The Hunger Games</i> (CHAIR: Carolyn Lau)	<i>Auditorium 3</i> <i>Ethics of Otherness</i> (CHAIR: Giulia Champion)
	<b>Anne Melano</b> , “Annals of the Utopian Shore: Le Guin’s <i>Powers</i> ”	<b>Emily McAvan</b> , “‘May the Odds Be Ever in Your Favour’: The Impossible Ethics of Sacrifice in <i>The Hunger Games</i> ”	<b>Zachary Kendal</b> , “Science Fiction’s Ethical Modes: Totality and Infinity in Isaac Asimov’s Foundation Trilogy and Yevgeny Zamyatin’s <i>We</i> ”
	<b>Selen Erdoğan</b> , “Violence of Writing: Bilge Karasu’s <i>The Night</i> ”	<b>Shalom Verghese</b> , “Prim vs. Peeta; O’Brien vs. Julia: Love and Individuality in <i>The Hunger Games</i> and <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> ”	<b>Aisling Smith</b> , “Beyond the Concavity: Evaluating Dystopia in David Foster Wallace’s <i>Infinite Jest</i> ”
15:10	Afternoon tea (20 mins)		
15:30	<i>Auditorium 1</i> <i>Imagining our Climate Futures</i> (CHAIR: Freya Verlander)	<i>Auditorium 2</i> <i>Histories &amp; Speculative Traditions</i> (CHAIR: Steve Joyce)	<i>Auditorium 3</i> <i>Animal Ethics</i> (CHAIR: Mia Goodwin)
	<b>Cat Sparks</b> , “From ecocatastrophe to cli fi: Imagining alternate pathways to sustainable futures”	<b>Melanie Hechenberger</b> , “Egyptian Utopia in Ancient Times: <i>Maat</i> and the ideal world evoked through tomb biographical inscriptions”	<b>João Vicente</b> , “The point of view of the animal: Ontology and ethics of alterity in <i>The Many Selves of Katherine North</i> , by Emma Geen”
16:30 end	<b>Devin C. Bowles</b> , “Wilful blindness: Ethic implications of the underrepresentation of climate change in portrayals of the future”	<b>Artem Zubov</b> , “Evgeniy Zamyatin’s <i>We</i> and the Idea of Science Fiction in the Early Soviet Russia”	<b>Joshua Bulleid</b> , “Societies for the Ethical Treatment of Animals: Vegetarianism and the Utopian Tradition”

Saturday 16 December

09:00	Registration ; Tea & Coffee		
09:20	Auditorium (combined 1, 2 & 3)		
	<b>Keynote: Jacqueline Dutton, “Rewriting France’s Future: From Secular Ethics to Islamic Agendas”</b>		
10:30	Morning tea (30 mins)		
11:00	<i>Auditorium 1</i> <i>Labour and Capitalism</i> (CHAIR: Ursula de Leeuw)	<i>Auditorium 2 [CREATIVE]</i> <i>Dystopian Fiction</i> (CHAIR: Sean Mulcahy)	<i>Auditorium 3</i> <i>(Post)colonialism</i> (CHAIR: Calvin Fung)
	<b>Thomas Moran</b> , “The Perverse Utopianism of Willed Human Extinction – On Liu Cixin’s <i>The Three Body Problem</i> ”	<b>Else Fitzgerald</b> , <i>Nearly Curtains</i>	<b>Giulia Champion</b> , “(Un)Certain Futures and Pasts: Postcolonial dystopic narratives and collective memory”
	<b>Mitch Alexander</b> , “Automation and Pareto-Optimality in <i>Titanfall 2</i> ”	<b>Anoushka Benbow-Buitenhuis</b> , “Smiling Gives You Wrinkles and Sun Exposure Damages Your Skin, but Science Saves Us All in the End”	<b>Lara Choksey</b> , “Split Collectives and Decolonial Praxis in Assia Djebar’s <i>Ombre sultane</i> and Nalo Hopkinson’s <i>Midnight Robber</i> ”
	<b>Vincent Le</b> , “Utopian Dystopias: Nick Land, <i>Westworld</i> and Technocapitalism”	<b>Susannah Heffernan</b> , “A Bitter Mist – a speculative novella”	<b>Christian Velasco</b> , “Stranger in a Colonised Land: The Representation of Colonial Identity in the 1960s Science Fiction”
12:30	Lunch (50 mins)		
13:20	<i>Seminar Room 6</i>	<i>Seminar Room 7</i> (CHAIR: Aisling Smith)	<i>Seminar Room 8</i>
	<b>Workshop: Nick Lawrence &amp; Andrew Milner</b> , “Climate Change as Challenge to Narrativisation”	<b>Workshop: Meg Mundell</b> , “Dark Mirror: Writing Dystopian Worlds”	<b>Workshop: Sascha Morrell &amp; Evie Kendal</b> , “Sex and Labour in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”
14:50	Afternoon tea (30 mins)		
15:20	<i>Seminar Room 6</i> <i>Australia’s Dystopian Landscapes</i> (CHAIR: Zachary Kendal)	<i>Seminar Room 7 [CREATIVE]</i> <i>Posthuman Rewritings</i> (CHAIR: Susannah Heffernan)	<i>Seminar Room 8</i> <i>Reading Atwood and Houellebecq</i> (CHAIR: Evie Kendal)
	<b>Emilie Collyer</b> , “The Dystopia is Real”	<b>Timothy Wong</b> , <i>The Forgotten Beauty</i>	<b>Rachel Fetherston</b> , “Dystopian Fiction and Posthumanist Futures: An Ecocritical Comparison of Michel Houellebecq’s <i>Atomised</i> and Margaret Atwood’s <i>MaddAddam</i> Trilogy”
	<b>Ellen Rees</b> , “The Future is Female: Reading Contemporary Australian Dystopian Fiction”	<b>Steve Gay</b> , “ <i>The Callista Alignment: A Novel</i> – Exploring Reversals in Animal Otherness”	<b>Françoise Campbell</b> , “Subjective utopianism in Michel Houellebecq’s <i>Les Particules Élémentaires</i> ”
16:50 end	<b>Tess Barber</b> , “‘A plant’s mind’: Reading Intersubjectivity in Australian Science and Speculative Fictions”	<b>Katie Paine</b> , “Readings from <i>An Ersatz Eye</i> ”	<b>Brianna Bullen</b> , “‘To call past and future to the rescue of the present’: Interrogating nostalgia, historical memory and personal trauma in science fiction dystopic narratives”

Sunday 17 December

09:00	Registration ; Tea & Coffee		
09:20	Auditorium (combined 1, 2 & 3)		
	<b>Keynote: Nick Lawrence, “Post-Capitalist Futures: A Report on Imagination”</b>		
10:30	Morning tea (30 mins)		
11:00	<i>Auditorium 1</i> <i>Water and the Climate</i> (CHAIR: João Vicente Faustino)	<i>Auditorium 2</i> <i>Utopian &amp; Dystopian Medievalisms</i> (CHAIR: Melanie Hechenberger)	<i>Auditorium 3</i> <i>Feminism and Queer Theory</i> (CHAIR: Sreejata Paul)
	<b>Heather Bloor</b> , “Eden or Utopia: Eternity and Environment in J. G. Ballard’s <i>The Drowned World</i> ”	<b>Steve Joyce</b> , “Dystopia Now: Interventions in the Future from the Historic Present”	<b>LJ Maher</b> , “A Kind of Wealth: Naomi Alderman’s <i>The Power</i> as an invitation to intersectional and anti-capitalist feminism”
	<b>Kathrin Bartha</b> , “Uncanny Anthropocene: Reading Apocalypse as an unethical future in Briohny Doyle’s <i>The Island Will Sink</i> ”	<b>Tomas Zahora</b> , “Dystopic fictions: Resurrection and the rise of the medieval cyborg”	<b>Calvin Fung</b> , “Where are his nuts? Pornotopian Imagination and Unreliable Narration in ‘Nutting’”
	<b>Kira Alexandra Rose</b> , “Liquid Futures: The Ethics of Water in Speculative Climate Fiction”	<b>Anne Holloway</b> , “Utopia in Waiting: Medieval Ethics and King Arthur in science fiction”	<b>Jess Miller</b> , “ <i>Paper Dolls and People of the Rainbow</i> : How the Female Time-Traveller Inhabits Space across Utopian and Dystopian Narratives”
12:30	Lunch (50 mins)		
13:20	<i>Auditorium 1</i> <i>Capitalism and Ecology</i> (CHAIR: Thomas Moran)	<i>Auditorium 2</i> <i>Healthcare and Medical Ethics</i> (CHAIR: Philip Braithwaite)	<i>Auditorium 3</i> <i>Cyberpunk and AI Ethics</i> (CHAIR: Tomas Zahora)
	<b>Natasha Bondre</b> , “ <i>Diablo, haitiano, que te pasó?</i> : Ecological Capitalism and the Post-Oil Zombie Apocalypse in Junot Diaz’s <i>Monstro</i> ”	<b>Nevena Ivanova</b> , “Sympoietic Reprogramming of Cancer Metaphor in Octavia Butler’s <i>Xenogenesis Trilogy</i> ”	<b>Ryan Morrison</b> , “The face is (not always) the mirror of the mind: The cognitive estrangement of emotional capability in AI”
	<b>JungJu Shin</b> , “Imagining the unimaginable: hegemony and alternative futures in <i>On Such a Full Sea</i> and <i>Snowpiercer</i> ”	<b>Ruby Niemann</b> , “Flesh and the City: Biopolitics and Dystopia in Margaret Atwood’s <i>Speculative Fiction</i> ”	<b>Frances Shaw</b> , “Machinic empathy and mental health: The ethics of automated empathy and big data in <i>Her</i> ”
	<b>Freya Verlander</b> , “‘Let the Canning Begin,’ Or, Human Waste in the Workplaces of <i>Pastoralia</i> ”	<b>Kieran McInerney &amp; Ben Kibly</b> , “Defending the Ethical Permissibility of Cryopreservation”	<b>Evie Kendal</b> , “Cyberpunk, Ethics and Education in Eoin Colfer’s <i>The Supernaturalist</i> ”
14:50	Afternoon tea (20 mins)		
15:10	<i>Auditorium 1</i> <i>Climate and Dystopia</i> (CHAIR: Anne Holloway)	<i>Auditorium 2</i> <i>Film Studies</i> (CHAIR: JungJu Shin)	<i>Auditorium 3</i> <i>Ethics and Technology</i> (CHAIR: Joshua Bulleid)
	<b>Stephanie Lai</b> , “This Oath and This Indenture: Health Care, Stereotypes, and Our Climate Change Dystopia”	<b>Jasmina Lazendic-Galloway</b> , “Martian narratives from sci-fi movies: lessons in ethics”	<b>Melissa Rooney</b> , “Technology as enculturation in Sci Fi”
	<b>Demet Intepe</b> , “Bleeding Machines and Dead Birds: Sherman Alexie’s ‘Green World’ and Dystopias of Green Capitalism”	<b>Djoyimi Baker</b> , “ <i>Monsters</i> : Empathy, the Inhuman, and the Cinematic Close-Up”	<b>Laura Birch</b> , “We are when we are: Imaginary futures from the perspective of the present”
16:40 end	<b>Pok Man Cheung</b> , “Amorality of Self-Care in Dystopian Future of Climate Change: Positioning Alterity in Paolo Bacigalupi’s <i>The Water Knife</i> ”		<b>Rachael Harris</b> , “Mother Nature doesn’t like it when you rearrange her furniture’: Time-travel, Ethics and <i>12 Monkeys</i> ”

## Keynotes

### Andrew Milner

#### “Utopia, Dystopia and Climate Fiction”

**ABSTRACT:** The lecture will develop a Weberian ideal typology of climate fictions built around five measures of formal utopianism and six measures of substantive response to climate change. The five formal variants of utopian fiction are: the classical eutopia; the critical eutopia; the classical dystopia; the critical dystopia; and the fiction set in a reality neither significantly better nor significantly worse than our own, the non-utopia we can term the base reality text. The six variants of climate response are: denial; mitigation (including climate engineering); positive adaptation; negative adaptation; deep ecological anti-humanism; and pessimistic fatalism. This typology will be applied to the analysis of a range of ‘literary’ and ‘genre’ climate fictions drawn from Australia, Britain, Canada, China, France, Germany, the United States and South Africa.



ANDREW MILNER is Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature at Monash University and Honorary Professor of English and Comparative Literary Studies at Warwick University. His publications include *John Milton and the English Revolution* (1981), *The Road to St Kilda Pier* (1984), *Cultural Materialism* (1993), *Class* (1999), *Re-Imagining Cultural Studies* (2002), *Contemporary Cultural Theory* (2002), *Literature, Culture and Society* (2005), *Tenses of Imagination: Raymond Williams on Utopia, Dystopia and Science Fiction* (2010), *Locating Science Fiction* (2012) and *Again, Dangerous Visions: Essays in Cultural Materialism* (forthcoming with E.J. Brill). He also co-edited volumes from three previous Monash conferences on utopia and dystopia.



## Jacqueline Dutton

“Rewriting France’s Future: From Secular Ethics to Islamic Agendas”

**ABSTRACT:** Futuristic fiction found its niche when Louis-Sébastien Mercier’s premonitory novel *L’An 2440: Rêve s’il en fut jamais* (Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred) (1771) became a worldwide bestseller in the late eighteenth century. Since then, Paris—known as the City of Light—has been transformed through literary and filmic futuristic projections into a mostly nightmarish city of dark.

In this presentation, I want to ask whether the secular ethics propounded via the French Revolution and its aftermath can accommodate positive utopian futures for France, looking at a range of speculative narratives in French from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I then want to examine two bestselling novels published in 2015, *Soumission* (Submission) by Michel Houellebecq and *2084* by Boulem Sansal, which both re-imagine the future of France and the world under fundamentalist Islamic rule.

By considering the Islamic agendas of these recent novels in the context of historical secular ethics in French speculative utopianism, it may be possible to discern a new discourse on religion in futuristic fiction that, despite its dystopian overtones, could reorient writing on France’s future.



JACQUELINE DUTTON is Associate Professor in French Studies at the University of Melbourne. She has published widely on utopian studies, including a chapter on "Non-western" utopian traditions for the *Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature* (2010) and a book on utopianism in the work of 2008 Nobel Laureate in Literature JMG Le Clézio, *Le Chercheur d'or et d'ailleurs: l'utopie de JMG Le Clézio* (2003). She is also a leading researcher and writer on French culture and identity, teaching various courses on travel writing, food and wine, cinema, and literature. She is currently writing a cultural history of the Bordeaux, Burgundy and Champagne wine regions.

## Nick Lawrence

### “Post-Capitalist Futures: A Report on Imagination”

**ABSTRACT:** In the midst of ongoing and systemic crisis, world-ecological and world-economic, we are witnessing not one but two golden ages: a golden age of crisis theory, together with a flowering of dystopian realisms. While this may confirm the point that critical theory and literary practice tend to develop in tandem with the moving contradictions of capital itself, in this talk I aim to investigate further the link between the drive to theorize epochal crisis and the drive to write it. For some thinkers on the left, the years since 2008 have seen a reinvigoration of debates over key categories such as value, labor, class and social reproduction, bringing in their wake an upsurge of formerly dormant utopian imaginings involving workless futures and full automation; for others, the serial irresolution of world-systemic weakness has prompted a tonal shift from what Wolfgang Streeck calls “wishful demonstrations of the possible to a realistic accounting of the real.” But before presenting its diagnoses, the new sobriety in theory has had to grapple with the full scale of current challenges to realism—the cardiac frailty of the global economy, the scale of endemic underemployment coupled with coercive labor conditions in both core and peripheries, map-altering levels of mass migration, ramped up applications of racialized state violence, ongoing environmental calamity and the generalized atrophy of any sense of futurity beyond continuation of the status quo. For many writers, this has occasioned less a return to older models of realist representation and more an embrace of the generic protocols of utopia’s twin shadow. Fredric Jameson’s much quoted aphorism—it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism—may no longer be true, but only because both of these prospects are so easily conflated into a single looming terminus. Getting real in crisis conditions such as these—a world where Royal Dutch Shell assumes in its corporate planning a global temperature rise of 4 to 6 degrees Celsius, for example—means, for writers and other artists, pressing against the limits of even the dirtiest realisms.

Reviewing recent theorizations of post-capitalist scenarios alongside earlier examples, and recent dystopian projections alongside the utopian/dystopian productions of a previous era, the talk aims to gauge the ‘resources of hope’ (Raymond Williams) available to writers, thinkers and activists at an historical moment of exceptional volatility and threat.



NICK LAWRENCE teaches American literature, world literature and critical theory at the University of Warwick. He is a member of the Warwick Research Collective and co-author of *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool UP), together with forthcoming volumes on keywords in world-literary studies and world culture beyond the novel. His publications include *How to Read Adorno and Horkheimer’s Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Pluto) and a range of articles on work and utopia in critical theory, poetry in the post-Bandung era, contemporary graphic narrative and climate change and the neoliberal university. He is currently working on *Post-Capitalist Aesthetics*, a monograph charting contemporary dystopian landscapes in tandem with cultural prefigurations of a world order beyond the present era of neoliberal capitalism.

## Workshops

**Nick Lawrence & Andrew Milner**

## “Climate Change as Challenge to Narrativisation”

**ABSTRACT:** Climate change poses threats not only in terms of global heating, rising sea levels, desertification, super-storms, flooding and ecocide, but also to the human capacity to grasp and make sense of these developments in narrative form. As an extreme example of ‘slow violence’ (Rob Nixon), the processes and consequences of anthropogenic planetary heating raise questions concerning the potential of fiction – as well as other forms of cultural production – to adequately register the scale, complexity and dynamic of what is happening and about to happen. Is Amitav Ghosh then right to argue, in *The Great Derangement*, that world literature’s failure to meet the challenge of global heating reflects a “broader imaginative and cultural failure that lies at the heart of the climate crisis”? How far does this purported failure resonate with critical debates on the failures of realism in an age of capitalist realism? In this workshop we examine the record of ‘actually existing climate fiction,’ with a glance at the longer history of climate allegorisation in both literary and genre fiction, in order to assess the ways in which clifi approaches the problem of narrativising the Capitalocene. At the same time, we consider the degree to which not only ‘realism,’ but narrative itself, comes under pressure in a globally heating world. As Lev Manovich has argued, our current paradigm shift from a cultural self-awareness premised on unilinear narratives of cause and effect, to one modeled on the database – navigable in multiple and non-hierarchical ways – has implications that we are still only beginning to appreciate. How might this shift reflect a resistance to narrative in the subject matter of clifi itself, and at the same time open up possibilities for inventing new forms of representing the seemingly unrepresentable?

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ANDREW MILNER is Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature at Monash University and Honorary Professor of English and Comparative Literary Studies at Warwick University. His publications include *John Milton and the English Revolution* (1981), *The Road to St Kilda Pier* (1984), *Cultural Materialism* (1993), *Class* (1999), *Re-Imagining Cultural Studies* (2002), *Contemporary Cultural Theory* (2002), *Literature, Culture and Society* (2005), *Tenses of Imagination: Raymond Williams on Utopia, Dystopia and Science Fiction* (2010), *Locating Science Fiction* (2012) and *Again, Dangerous Visions: Essays in Cultural Materialism* (forthcoming with E.J. Brill). He also co-edited volumes from three previous Monash conferences on utopia and dystopia.

## Meg Mundell

### “Dark Mirror: Writing Dystopian Worlds”

**ABSTRACT:** Room 101, Panem, Gilead ... thought crimes, newspeak, droogs and handmaids. Dystopian fiction plunges us into powerful imaginary worlds that serve to perturb, enthrall and warn us. While it's tempting to dismiss them as pure fabrication, these disquieting tales don't spring from nowhere: rather, they hold a dark mirror up to the uneasy truths of contemporary life. Often set in an imagined future, fictional dystopias draw their narrative power from the sinister amplification of real-world scenarios: ecological destruction, oppressive rulers, sly propaganda, senseless wars, blind consumerism, pandemics, poverty, technological threats and the dark corners of the human heart. In this worldbuilding session we'll consider the possibilities of the genre, hear tips on writing convincing dystopian worlds, and have some fun crafting our own dire scenarios. What purpose do fictional dystopias serve? How do storytellers draw on reality to evoke these imagined societies? As writers, how can we breathe colour, life and emotional resonance into dystopian tales? And amongst all this doom and darkness, is there a place for optimism, light and hope?

DR MEG MUNDELL is a novelist, journalist, and Research Fellow in Writing and Literature at Deakin University. Her critically acclaimed first novel *Black Glass* (Scribe, 2011), a dystopian tale set in a near-future Melbourne, was shortlisted for several awards. Meg's writing has appeared in *Best Australian Stories*, *The Age*, *The Guardian*, *The Monthly*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Meanjin*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, *Australian Book Review* and elsewhere. She's currently finishing her second novel, *The Trespassers*.



Photo by Amanda Soogun

## Sascha Morrell & Evie Kendal

### “Sex and Labour in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”

**ABSTRACT:** Is your job under threat from automation? According to recent headlines, advances in robotics and artificial intelligence mean that human workers could be replaced by machines across multiple industries in the not-too-distant future. In the midst of alarmist predictions about the increasing redundancy of human resources in the twenty-first century, it is worth reflecting that similar warnings have been sounded continually since the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution—and the idea of the worker-as-machine has still more ancient roots.

In the first part of this workshop, we will look at a number of nineteenth and early-twentieth century texts which address anxieties about the mechanization of labour, tracing the ‘rise of the robots’ in the western imagination with reference to questions of race, class, gender and globalization.

The second half of this workshop will focus on the potential impact of emerging reproductive biotechnologies on conceptions of sex, gender roles, and family, in addition to considering various socio-cultural and philosophical beliefs about what makes us human. Using artificial womb technology as a central example, this discussion will consider how science fiction has represented reproduction and reproductive technologies, covering a number of key texts, including Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) and Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976).

SASCHA MORRELL studied Arts and Law at the University of Sydney and completed her PhD in English Literature at the University of Cambridge (Trinity College). She is a Lecturer in Literary Studies at Monash University, and has published widely on American and modernist literatures while completing a book project on race, labor, historiography and visual culture in the fiction of William Faulkner, Herman Melville and others. She has a special interest in the appropriation of Haitian history and cultural motifs (including the zombie) in U.S. fiction, theatre and film. Her poetry and short fiction have appeared in Australian, British and United States journals and anthologies including *Meanjin*, *Going Down Swinging* and *The Mays*.



EVIE KENDAL is a lecturer with the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine and a PhD candidate in the Centre for Human Bioethics at Monash University. She is the author of *Equal Opportunity and the Case for State Sponsored Ectogenesis* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and has published various articles and book chapters on the representation of reproductive biotechnologies in science fiction.

## Research Papers

### **Mitch Alexander**

#### “Automation and Pareto-Optimality in *Titanfall 2*”

**ABSTRACT:** This paper will explore the troubling ethical and economical ramifications of a near-fully automated future, as presented in the sci-fi video game *Titanfall 2 (TF2)*. I’ll do this by explaining how the multiplayer gameplay mechanics intersect with the larger fiction created for the game’s setting, and how in combination, they offer some rather worrying and plausible scenarios our own world could face.

The first scenario is that the concentration of wealth accumulated through a largely automated workforce and military, combined with what Engels ironically called a “reserve army of labour”, would result in the vast majority of people living essentially like slaves, not in the service of kings, but in the service of CEOs as “entry-level employees.” With no incentive to offer anything but frontline military positions, and with absolute power, human life could be easily devalued and stratified once again.

The other weirder, and scarier, scenario is one in which the world presented in *TF2* is actually Pareto-optimal. Supposing that the state of the world developed over time, I will argue that the threat unregulated automation poses is the devaluation of human existence by magnitude of scale; that even if both parties (employees and corporations) only made Pareto-superior shifts in working conditions, corporations could still come to hold so much wealth that the value of a human life would be essentially naught, *even when* the human life in question feels adequately valued. This would be due to the massively disproportionate scales of wealth each would deal with on a daily basis, and I believe having a sense of scale so skewed would present corporations with perverse incentives regarding their treatment of employees.

MITCH ALEXANDER is a postgraduate philosopher at Monash University, currently researching conditional autonomy and how it relates to the moral status of children. He focuses his work towards philosophy communication, regularly publishing “Pop Philosophy” on sites like *Junkee* and *Heavy Mag*. More recently, Mitch was a guest workshop host at *The Ethics And Aesthetics Of Stand Up Comedy* conference at Bucknell University, PA. He’s a 28 year old comedian, vocalist, part-time radio host, philosopher, utilitarian, reductionist, socialist, determinist reprobate who hates labels.

### **Djoyimi Baker**

#### “*Monsters*: Empathy, the Inhuman, and the Cinematic Close-Up”

**ABSTRACT:** In *Monsters* (Gareth Edwards 2010), two people must get safely through an alien-infected zone on a near-future earth. *Monsters* is one of a number of relatively low-budget, low-effects, science fiction films from the early 21st century to use science fiction narrative concepts to invite audience empathy with strange, imagined creatures in new contexts, and through this process expand our conceptions of emotional connection with the ‘other.’ Instead of relying upon the visceral thrills of audio-visual effects, ‘low-fi’ science fiction films use effects sparingly (if at all). By playing with our identification, such works enable audiences to think through the ethical and emotional challenges of being human in the early 21st century. In *Monsters*, the aliens themselves are not seen until the very end of the movie, where they shift from terrifying threat to a mesmerizing spectacle of unexpected emotional connection. Made on a scant budget of \$500,000, the film may end with a (low-budget) visual spectacle, but uses it to completely reconfigure the emotional premise on the film, opening up a new but unresolved storyline of potential empathy with an alien species we have previously feared. In this scene, it is the close-up on the human face that bears cinematic witness to this profound moment, its shifting emotional awe standing in for the anticipated and desired response of the audience.

DJOYMI BAKER is a lecturer in Screen and Cultural Studies at the University of Melbourne. She is the co-author of *The Encyclopedia of Epic Films* (2014), and author of the forthcoming monograph *To Boldy Go: Marketing the Myth of Star Trek*. Her articles (on topics including science fiction television and fandom) have appeared in journals such as *Popular Culture Review*, *Senses of Cinema*, and *Refractory*, and in anthologies such as *Millennial Mythmaking* (2010), *Star Trek as Myth* (2010), *The Age of Netflix* (2017) and *The New Peplum* (forthcoming).

### **Tess Barber**

“‘A plant’s mind’: Reading Intersubjectivity in Australian Science and Speculative Fictions”

**ABSTRACT:** Donna Haraway’s most recent work *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) considers the importance of ‘what stories we tell to tell other stories with’ in order to learn to live with the trouble—that is learning to live and die on a damaged planet (2016). This paper considers what this might look like in an Australian context. Using Haraway’s work on multispecies thriving as a framework for investigation, this paper studies notions of environment in Australian science and speculative fictions (SF) in order to posit an intersubjective approach to reading, and representing, human and non-human perspectives.

The designation of personhood is traditionally a political, violent, and troubling process, the borders of which are always under negotiation. In a keynote address to the Anthropocene Conference: ‘The Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet’, Ursula Le Guin has stated: ‘I guess what I’m trying to do is subjectify the universe because look where objectivity it has got us’ (2014). Through experimental literary and linguistic technique, SF texts can offer tools for such ‘subjectifying’.

As such, this paper will consider methods of ‘subjectifying’ environment both within the SF stories we tell and through the story-telling itself: methods of reimagining an ethical approach to Australian ecosystems, and the human, and nonhuman, positions within them. A close textual analysis of the chosen texts—Greg Egan’s *Diaspora* (1998), as well as the novella ‘Water’ (2014) by Ellen Van Neerven, will be used as demonstration. Framing this research is Donna Haraway’s notion of the *Chthulucene*, a richly science fictional vision for continued living on a damaged planet, a vision pieced together by many players, processes and metaphors, but particularly concerned with the ideas of *sympoiesis*, *response-ability*, and *making kin*.

TESS BARBER is a creative writer currently studying a Doctor of Philosophy in Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong. Her current research studies alternative approaches to environment and ecology in science and speculative fictions (SF), focusing particularly on Australian SF. This research includes a creative component, a SF novel: *Maybe revolution is too strong a word, but...*

### **Kathrin Bartha**

“Uncanny Anthropocene: Reading Apocalypse as an unethical future in Briohny Doyle’s *The Island Will Sink*”

**ABSTRACT:** The geological term ‘Anthropocene’ has come to stand for the “Age of Humans,” expressing the devastating changes currently happening to our planet as a result of human influences. While this concept has gained traction in the humanities—mostly as an umbrella term for global ecological crises—it still seems under-explored as a theoretical lens and new context for literary studies. My paper attempts to access the cultural implications of this new epoch by reading a recent science-fiction novel that imagines an apocalyptic setting of climate-change in the near future: Briohny Doyle’s *The Island Will Sink* (2016).

The novel explores how the techno-futurist advances as so often imagined in Silicon Valley, if divorced from ethics, create a society under the illusion of a sheltered life, as only the wealthy few live in technologically refined living conditions. This unethical future depicts how the wealthy turn the suffering of others into media spectacles, for the consequences of climate-change are experienced through film and video-games only. My paper investigates the special relationship science-fiction has with the Anthropocene. Drawing on

scientists and philosophers such as James Lovelock or Donna Haraway, I explore how science and speculative fiction, as well as the Anthropocene, can become methodologies of their own, rather than merely providing context, genre, or backdrop.

KATHRIN BARTHA is writing her PhD on Australian Literature of the Anthropocene within the Joint PhD programme between Monash University (Melbourne) and Goethe University (Frankfurt). She has published on Australian literature, German-Jewish memory and migrant experiences.

### **Laura Birch**

“We are when we are: Imaginary futures from the perspective of the present”

ABSTRACT: In a honeycomb of underground chambers all of humanity is connected through The Machine. Every want and need is provided for, their only task the creation of ideas. E. M. Forster’s *The Machine Stops* begins with a society of satisfied people - hairless, slug-like and isolated in their chambers, but content. After generations of being cared for by The Machine, Forster asks – what happens when The Machine Stops? While Forster wrote before the internet and the increasingly virtual society we currently inhabit, elements within the text resonate with contemporary concerns, such as the social and health problems caused by excess focus on simulated realities.

Drawing on Moylan’s concept of a critical utopia, where the narrative does not lay down a plan for a perfect society, but maintains the dream of perfection, I argue that Forster’s tale of apocalypse is not entirely dystopian. This reading of the narrative draws on the resources the reader has in their present culture, suggesting that a dystopian novel might be considered differently in different times and places. In the intersection of utopian and dystopian elements, E. M. Forster’s *The Machine Stops* to bring present concerns into focus. By creating an imagined no place, good place, that can be viewed as both paradise and prison, Forster’s narrated future is an interpretable zone that allows reflection on the current historical moment of the reader, whenever and wherever that moment may be.

LAURA BIRCH is an honours student in the School of Literary Studies at Monash University. Her research focuses on weird fiction and science fiction theory. More specifically, her work examines genre and mode in the works of author China Miéville

### **Heather Bloor**

“Eden or Utopia: Eternity and Environment in J. G. Ballard’s *The Drowned World*”

ABSTRACT: J. G. Ballard’s *The Drowned World* (1962), seems at first glance to be a dystopian novel dealing with the effects of global warming and rising sea levels. But upon further reading we soon find that this drowned landscape represents other possibilities for the characters within the novel. A divide emerges between the main character, Kerans, who casts himself as a new Adam within this Edenic environment, and the characters of Riggs and Strangman, for whom the flooded cities signal a disruption in the progress of civilisation. This split between the progressive and declensionist narratives, one looking forward towards utopia, the other backwards to Eden, provides a frame for Ballard’s primary interest – time. This paper looks at how Eden and utopia both provide an image of eternity which subsequently devalues the qualities of dynamic change attributed to the ‘wild’ environment. A discussion of the temporal qualities attributed to the natural environment, as well as to Eden and utopia, accompanies an exploration of how science and speculative fictions can provide alternative ways of narrating the environment. These alternative narratives depart from traditional narratives which have tended to idealise nature as distanced, temporally and spatially, from humanity. Ballard’s work was written before the prominence of issues such as climate change and global warming, yet its examination of the complex relationships between time, narrative, and environment prove relevant to discussions of environmental ethics today.



HEATHER BLOOR is currently undertaking her postgraduate studies in English and Comparative Literature at Murdoch University in Western Australia. During her undergraduate degree she was awarded the Irene Searcy Prize for Literature, and has also received an Australian Postgraduate Award. Heather's research interests include speculative and science fiction, narrative theory, time, posthumanism, and ecocriticism. She is currently working on her PhD thesis, which examines the apocalyptic literature of J. G. Ballard in relation to time and narrative theory.

### **Natasha Bondre**

*“Diablo, haitiano, que te pasó?: Ecological Capitalism and the Post-Oil Zombie Apocalypse in Junot Diaz’s Monstro”*

**ABSTRACT:** Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the capitalist world-system has been premised on oil as the energy vector of choice. Capitalism, which develops through socio-ecological revolutions is an inherently ecological regime which seeks to appropriate land and labour-power through the use of resource frontiers, often in so-called peripheral nations. Haiti is one such nation, which has suffered from a long and violent history of capitalist imperialism and remains enmeshed in the politics of the global oil-system. Its nightmarish vulnerability is a product of its history, a history which is steeped in not only slavery but also resistance, one expression of which is the Vodou religion. Zombies are an integral part of Haitian Vodou beliefs, and in this paper I intend to utilise the trope of not only the sugar zombie, a result of slavery, but also the more recent concept of the petro-zombie, to read Junot Diaz's short story *Monstro*. By analysing the text through the lens of eco-criticism, disaster studies and the literary and cultural trope of the zombie, I will consider how Haiti is part of a larger pattern of global inequality, as well as the ways in which *Monstro* foretells the end of petro-modernity and oil-based capitalism.

**NATASHA BONDRE:** I am a first year PhD student at the University of Warwick, based in both the Yesu Persaud Centre for Caribbean Studies and the English and Comparative Literature department. My research interests include eco-criticism and disaster studies, post-colonial literature and theory, materialist criticism and world literature. My dissertation focuses on the hegemony of oil and petro-modernity in the capitalist world-system, specifically the manifestation of modern oil-cultures in the Caribbean archipelago and Latin America. I am interested in examining literature from these regions in order to understand the present anxieties and problems of petro-modernity as well as its future.

### **Devin C. Bowles**

*“Wilful blindness: Ethic implications of the underrepresentation of climate change in portrayals of the future”*

**ABSTRACT:** Without mitigation, climate change will increase the temperature by up to 4°C by the end of the century, a level unprecedented in the history of the human species. Historical natural climatic disruptions, while smaller and often less rapid, suggest that widespread hunger and massive population displacement will follow, increasing the risk of violent conflict. Those people and countries which have contributed least to climate change will often bear its greatest burdens. A growing number of scholars have even suggested that climate change could hasten civilisation's future collapse. Already, climate change has contributed to over 5 million deaths, and there are plausible claims that it helped trigger the current war in Syria. Climate change can be viewed as the great moral, as well as technical and political, challenge of our time. Given this, the most striking aspect of its depiction in science fiction and other fictitious portrayals is its underrepresentation. This lack of substantive engagement is reflective of Western society more generally. Previous work has suggested a number of reasons for this failure to engage, including the momentum of climate change, diffuse responsibility, overdetermination of ecological destruction, intergenerational conflict of interests, and individual and societal self-deception and corruption. Like other scientific revolutions which have challenged humanity's place in the universe, the veracity and implications of climate change have been slow to receive

acknowledgement. If fictitious popular representations of the future are a means by which Western society engages in ethical discussion and defines its moral aspirations, then the underrepresentation of climate change portends a future of wilful blindness to the ethical conundrums posed. A widespread failure to effectively ameliorate even the worst ethical consequences of climate change is likely to follow. More immediately, deeper ethical engagement may be a prerequisite for rapid and comprehensive mitigation.

DR DEVIN C. BOWLES is a visitor at the Research School of Population Health at the Australian National University, and Executive Director of the Council of Academic Public Health Institutions Australia (CAPHIA). Devin's PhD thesis by publication examined the socially-mediated health effects of climate change, including through conflict and migration. Other publication topics include the psychological effects of climate change, Indigenous health, religious change, maternal health, and prosopagnosia (face blindness). Devin also volunteers as the President of the Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health and Insight (BODHI), which provides sustainable aid to the disadvantaged, principally in India and Bangladesh.

### **Philip Braithwaite**

“‘We Will End In Fire’: British Science Fiction Television, *Blake's 7*, and Thatcherism”

**ABSTRACT:** At the time of Margaret Thatcher's election in 1979, British science fiction television changed its focus and style. It replaced the traditional moral standards and collectivism of the consensus era, with individualism and a Machiavellian style of Realpolitik. There was a strong sense of fatalism and futility to the various series, which usually ended in despair. Replacing the future-focused modernity of science fiction series before them, they presented either dystopian worlds, or total inertia.

In my paper I will be looking at one of these series, *Blake's 7* (1978-81), alongside the rise of Thatcherism. No generic TV series of the time, and very few since, presented such an uncompromisingly bleak and fatalistic worldview. I investigate how the series is responding to, and anticipating, the tropes of Thatcherism. In 1979 Thatcher was in her first term and *Blake's 7* had been on the air for a year. Thatcher was a deeply unpopular Prime Minister in her first term, dogged by hunger strikes in Northern Irish jails, and unemployment reaching a record high, building up to the riots of 1981. It was not until the Falklands War in 1982 that her fortunes reversed. *Blake's 7* is situated in the middle-ground: the transition from Labour to Conservative; from state-ownership and socialist-democracy to the capitalist 'revolution' of Thatcherite neoliberal economics.

I will show how *Blake's 7* works through various ideological guises which engage with Thatcherism, both positively and negatively. Ultimately the series presents a strong critique Thatcherism in various ways, from her stated belief in individualism and independence, to her authoritarian style of leadership.

**PHILIP BRAITHWAITE:** I am a PhD candidate at the University of Auckland. The topic of my thesis is about British science fiction television and Thatcherism. In 2013 I was the William Evans Playwriting Fellow at the University of Otago. I have also been the Ursula Bethell Writer in Residence at the University of Canterbury, and a Fellow at the Michael King Writers' Centre in Auckland. I am presently a Senior Tutor at Massey University, Wellington.

### **Joshua Bulleid**

“Societies for the Ethical Treatment of Animals: Vegetarianism and the Utopian Tradition”

**ABSTRACT:** Vegetarianism and animal ethics are a common feature of literary utopias—dating from the genre's origins through to the present day. In a recent study of “food utopias”, the noted utopian scholar Lyman Tower Sargent declared that this vegetarian trend most often reflected “concern[s] with health” and prohibition. However, a detailed survey of major utopian literary works reveals that their depictions of vegetarianism are almost invariably paired with ethical justifications rather than those of physical health. By examining the depiction and development of such ethical sentiments within major works of utopian

literature, I will show that vegetarianism is not an incidental feature of literary utopias but rather one upon which the morality of many of the tradition's speculative societies is founded.

JOSHUA BULLEID is a Ph.D. candidate of the school of Literary and Cultural Studies at Monash University where he is currently investigating the representation and development of vegetarian utopianism within science fiction literature.

### **Brianna Bullen**

“‘To call past and future to the rescue of the present’: Interrogating nostalgia, historical memory and personal trauma in science fiction dystopic narratives”

**ABSTRACT:** This paper looks at how the past is represented in dystopian literature and the problem of uncritical nostalgia in the genre using the texts *Oryx and Crake*, *The Possibility of an Island*, *La Jetee*, and *The Road*. These texts employ dual systems of story-telling, weaving the past and present of the narrators, recalled through memory or dreams, to reflect the trauma of the characters, with the past wound invading the present. The past contains the violence of the present order on a more contained scale, and leads to the desolation of the present, which is created by some cataclysmic human-caused event discretely separating ‘before’ from ‘after.’ This goes against the slow death envisioned in more radical climate change fiction. Here, hope and nostalgia become another function of the state to perpetuate themselves, and even be longed for by beings it has perpetrated violence towards. I will use Moylan’s understanding of cognitive estrangement in dystopia to highlight how this ‘past’ reflects conditions similar to our present, with the science fiction mode deployed to critique our present by speculating on the ramifications of present abuses and systemic failures, from apathetic consumerism to sexism, racism, classism, and environmental degradation. Nostalgia tries to create a utopia out of the past, an impossible ‘no place’ ideal, which these narratives reveal through irony to be almost as dystopic as the wastelands created and traumatic in their unreachability. Uncritical nostalgia reifies a past/present binary that closes off understanding of various time-scale entanglements. Employing Boym’s distinction between state-sanctioned ‘stable’ restorative nostalgia which leads to singular histories, and reflective personal nostalgia which is necessarily fragmented, personal, and incomplete, these texts suggest the need to develop a model of ethical, productive, critical, and inclusive nostalgia, capable of resisting closure and utopic sentiment when reconstructing history.

BRIANNA BULLEN is a Deakin University PhD candidate writing a thesis examining the role of memory in science fiction in a series of short stories and an exegesis. She has had work published in such places as *LiNQ*, *NoiseMedium*, *Verandah*, *Voiceworks*, and *Buzzcuts*. She placed second in the 2017 Newcastle Short Story competition, and won the 2017 Apollo Bay Writers Short Story competition.

### **Françoise Campbell**

“Subjective utopianism in Michel Houellebecq’s *Les Particules Élémentaires*”

**ABSTRACT:** The study of utopia in the novels of Michel Houellebecq represents an already diverse field of scholarship. However, these studies bear witness to a paradox, namely, that critics continue to offer both dystopian and utopian readings of the same texts. As recent studies by Jean Baptiste Lavigne, Jean-Paul Engélibert, David Jack, and Hua Hu reveal, the reading of these novels greatly benefits from a consideration of the more ambiguous nature of ideology’s role in Houellebecq’s utopias. Courting contradiction at every turn, Houellebecq has gained a reputation for being something of an immoral moralist, as Best and Crowley explain of his provocative portrayal of contemporary society: “his texts scandalise, but, scandalously, do so evasively, moving the goalposts.” Drawing on the growing recognition of ideological ambivalence in Houellebecq’s writing, this paper investigates the complex and contradictory relationship between ideology and utopia in Houellebecq’s science fiction novel, *Les Particules Élémentaires*.

To frame this analysis, I will take up Fredric Jameson's suggestion that the fundamental question of utopianism is centered on the transformation of subjectivity, and as such remains inherently linked to the ideological position of the utopian text. Through the analysis of ideological ambivalence in *Les Particules*, this paper questions the ethical nature of such subjective utopianism and its role in contemporary literary science fiction.

FRANÇOISE CAMPBELL: PhD Candidate in cotutelle at the University of Melbourne and L'Université Paris 7 Diderot.

### **Giulia Champion**

“(Un)Certain Futures and Pasts: Postcolonial dystopic narratives and collective memory”

ABSTRACT: Bill Ashcroft argues that “it is in writing that a collective memory must be invented” (11). He refers here not only to postcolonial literature in general, but also specifically to the territory of the Caribbean, which he describes as “a society that has no roots, which has been transplanted in a massive diasporic movement” (11). He also argues throughout his article that the fields of utopianism and postcolonial studies can inform each other in order to advance scholarship in both subjects. In my paper, I will investigate this conjecture in fields by focusing on dystopia rather than utopia. Indeed, I will look at two works that aim to reshape past collective memories through a dystopic view of the future. Indeed, the first step before being able to shape a new common memory for “a society that has no roots” is to disclaim the histories and identities that have been projected and imposed onto them by their colonizers. I argue that this is achieved through rewriting the canonical works which have disseminated these histories and identities. Language and literature need to be wrested from the occidental hegemony to be firstly challenged and secondly fashioned to translate the Caribbean and the South American experience. However, rewriting is a technique that has limitations and this can be seen through the use of dystopian tropes in the narratives that I will use as my case studies: V. S. Naipaul's *Guerrillas* and Cherríe Moraga's *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*. The main risk of rewriting is to merely invert dichotomies without properly deconstructing them. Indeed, it is only after challenging the discriminatory identities that a new collective memory can be written on which to build an independent future and avoid the dystopian ones depicted in these works.

GIULIA CHAMPION is a Ph.D. candidate in English and Comparative Literature at the University of Warwick. Her research focuses on adaptations of the ‘western literary canon’ by authors from former British, French, Spanish and Portuguese colonies through the technique of literary cannibalism. This investigation aims firstly to question the canon, as well as the notion of canonicity, and how it is taught, in order to challenge its stereotypical constructs about former colonies and their inhabitants. Secondly, to analyze how the act of rewriting classical works aims to inscribe new identities into the cultural and intellectual sphere so far dominated by the western world.

### **Pok Man Cheung**

“Amorality of Self-Care in Dystopian Future of Climate Change: Positioning Alterity in Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife*”

ABSTRACT: Global climate change, one of the biggest threats of our era, provides a wonderful background for apocalyptic dystopian fiction. Climate fiction, a new sub-genre on this issue, attracts readers' and critics' attention. While some critics considered cli fi as an important site for thought experiments and induction of agency, I illustrate the ways cli fi could be read so as to facilitates our inaction against climate change, through the problematic positioning of the Other.

In particular, I would analyze *The Water Knife* by Paolo Bacigalupi, an American science fiction writer, to illustrate the ways global dimension of climate change and its related imagination and narratives could be disrupted, by justifying the amorality of self-care in our co-existence with the Other as the competitor for

survival. On personal level, while survival is at risk, our animalistic instinct naturally triumphs over our humanities and ethical duties towards the Other. This results in the ethical ambiguity of self-care, even the Other is hurt by our action of self-care. Extrapolating this logic of self-care to regional levels, I argue that the global narrative of climate change is undermined with our focus on regional survival and interests. Given the inevitable global dimension of climate change, the Orient that could escape from the disaster thus further destabilize the imagination of a united globe subject linked by the same environmental consequences and fate. This disruption of global imagination consolidates our focus on our region and hence protection of regional interests, which fosters our inaction.

POK MAN CHEUNG obtained his MA degree in literary and cultural studies from the University of Hong Kong. He is a Hong Kong based independent researcher in literary and cultural studies. His research interests include ecocriticism, environmental humanities, the idea of community and globalization, popular culture and contemporary fiction.

### Lara Choksey

“Split Collectives and Decolonial Praxis in Assia Djébar's *Ombre sultane* and Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber*”

**ABSTRACT:** In Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* (2000) and Assia Djébar's *Ombre Sultane* (1987), female collectivity is invoked as both a strategy and problematic of decolonial praxis. While the biologised narrative of femininity remains fixed to a reproductive imperative after national revolution, fracturing possibilities for emancipation along combined vectors of gender, sexuality and race, decolonial praxis also offers new spaces for female gathering. In this paper, I explore how two mass-market literary forms of the nineteenth-century are cast into contemporary speculative fiction – in Hopkinson, the bildungsroman, and in Djébar, the ghost story – with the effect of shadowing French coloniality in the Caribbean (in Hopkinson) and Algeria (in Djébar) with what I call “split collectives” of female solidarity. In *Midnight Robber*, the splitting of Tan-Tan into “good” and “bad” selves – and the emergence of her alter-ego, the Robber Queen, in moments of danger – functions as both a symptom of trauma under a structural inheritance of abuse, as well as a strategy of resistance. The bildungsroman genre allows the narrative to trace shadow selves of a disposition resisting cultivation into various sites of oppression. These shadow selves are not bound to chronological, developmental time, but are activated in moments of crisis, out of the need to survive. *Ombre Sultane* offers a different kind of split, in the form of a domestic horror story. A first wife, Isma, watches a second wife, Hajila, from the shadows of an urban Algerian apartment, narrating Hajila's fraught and precarious movement through house and city, as wife and mother, under the prevailing shadow of their shared abusive husband. At stake is the assumed permeability of bodies socialised as female to be of service in the formation of decolonial states – both national and international – and the various ways in which speculative shape-shifting functions as both critique and promise of solidarity. In both novels, the idea of borrowed practices is threaded through form and content in the creation and imagination of decolonial spaces, and in depicting the legacy of violence such spaces express.

DR LARA CHOKSEY is an Early Career Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Study at the University of Warwick, and recently completed a PhD in Warwick's Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies on the writing of (epi)genetics, evolution and “life itself” in Doris Lessing's space fiction. She teaches science fiction, modern and contemporary literature, and literary and cultural theory, and has published creative nonfiction, poetry and short prose in *Nyx: A Nocturnal* and *Otro Páramo*.

## Emilie Collyer

### “The Dystopia is Real”

**ABSTRACT:** *The Dystopia is Real* is a first person essay (published online at *Overland Journal* 1 September 2017), where I critique the notion of fictional dystopias in relation to living in a society that has created a real dystopia via colonisation.

The essay starts with a response to the swelling body of rhetoric around the television version of *The Handmaid’s Tale* that it is a ‘warning sign’ for a terrifying future that may be not too far off.

I posit the question of how much of a privilege it is to fear an imagined dystopia when living on land that has been colonised and stolen.

The television series *Cleverman* represents a new kind of dystopic vision, one that offers something more whole, with potential for how to tell new stories and imagine new futures, with different power structures.

The essay acts as a starting point for a discussion around how we imagine our future. A connected discussion could be one that asks what kind of responsibility speculative fiction writers have – particularly those who are writing imagined futures – to sow seeds for new ways the world can be. As a speculative fiction writer myself I am increasingly drawn to genres like eco-punk that move beyond dystopia and imagine creative, sustainable versions of our future world.

EMILIE COLLYER is an award-winning playwright and author. Publication credits include *The Lifted Brow*, *Aurealis*, *The Big Issue*, *Kill Your Darlings*, *Overland*, *Cordite*, *Allegory* (USA), *Dimension6* and two short speculative fiction collections with Clan Destine Press: *A Clean Job* (2013) and *Autopsy of a Comedian* (2015). Her prose and poetry is widely published and has won numerous awards including three Scarlet Stiletto crime writing awards. Emilie’s plays are widely produced, her sci-fi play *The Good Girl* premiered to sold-out houses and critical acclaim in New York (2016) and has productions in Hollywood and Florida in 2017. Website: [www.betweenthecracks.net](http://www.betweenthecracks.net)

## Ursula de Leeuw

### “The Utopia of Dystopia in Contemporary Art: Anicka Yi’s *Life is Cheap* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum”

**ABSTRACT:** This research paper will examine the understudied intersection of contemporary art and speculative fiction in the dystopic-utopian narratives of multidisciplinary artist Anicka Yi. Through sculptural tensions between synthetic and organic materials, Yi’s approach envisions a conflict between humankind and technological progress. Herein, a disharmony between technological excess and biological matter is attempted to be contained through extreme clinical measure. This is conveyed by Yi’s incorporation of living organisms, bacterial substances, hazmat environments, and scent. Thus Yi creates both a literal and abstract science fiction through the combination of scientific process with artistic abstraction. The aesthetic result speaks to a contemporary understanding of prevailing socio-political and technological systems as on the verge of destruction- their demise resulting from an unyielding tension with the desires of external forces. In Yi’s work, technological resources stand exposed in their material stasis, while organic matter has the power to disturb, overpower, and grow. Within this biopolitical interest, ethical narratives are revealed through Yi’s incorporation of feminist critique and anti-capitalist discourse. Thus Yi’s aesthetic narratives are both dystopian and utopian; dystopic destruction as a means to utopic rebirth. I will examine this dystopic-utopian representation in Yi’s 2017 exhibition *Life is Cheap* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, with reference to earlier work held in her monograph *6,070,430K of Digital Spit*. Ultimately, this visual analysis will unfold the way in which Yi represents the dystopic present, and potential utopian future, of a society predicated on health and sanitisation, technological progress, and environmental neglect. However, Yi’s practise is not without critique. This paper will also examine the potential for Yi’s work to be read as

regressive, heralding destruction only to reveal meagre, reactionary utopias rather than something radically new. Through this case study, I aim to reveal wider trends in the ethics of contemporary art that engages with notions of speculative fiction- a subject matter that is rapidly gaining popularity.

URSULA DE LEEUW is a Melbourne-based writer with a focus on the intersection of contemporary art and technology. In 2016, de Leeuw was awarded first class honours in art history at The University of Melbourne. In her honours thesis, “The Aesthetics of the Internet: from Utopia to the Hyperreal,” de Leeuw analysed the genealogy of internet aesthetics from the 1990s to the present day. Herein, de Leeuw demarcated a theoretical shift in artistic interpretation- from a utopian vision of cyberspace to a critical discourse surrounding the internet’s engagement with neo-liberalism.

### **Selen Erdoğan**

“Violence of Writing: Bilge Karasu’s *The Night*”

**ABSTRACT:** Bilge Karasu’s novel *The Night* is a dystopian allegory of a totalitarian regime published five years after the 1980 military coup in Turkey. The novel being the winner of Pegasus Prize of Literature in 1994 is one of the most prominent works of literature written in Turkish language yet lacked recognition until recently. The novel focuses on the themes of violence and writing, more specifically, questions the relationship between the origin of violence and writing. Violence in private space, i.e., vis-a-vis personal relationships, is one of the prominent issues of Karasu’s oeuvre. Interestingly, *The Night* carries the theme of violence to the public space through its engagement with the question of state violence. As the novel searches for the origins of violence, I argue that the implications of sexuality juxtaposed to the scenes of violent act in the novel, such as the street murders of “charming young boys”, echo the psychoanalytic take at the relationship between eros and thanatos. The novel traces back the origin of violence to the inability of feeding eros’s demands. In this context, I discuss the thematic frame of the novel in relation to its formal structure through post-structural features it employs such as the problematization of the process of being written and the act of writing as a violent gesture. The play of different narrators who refute and re-write each other’s stories generate conflicting narratives. This shows writing as an interruptive act trying to widen its boundaries towards other consciousnesses. I argue that, thus, *The Night* diverges from the understanding of language as a space of dialog that constitutes itself in opposition to violence whereby writing emerges as a tool for spreading the writer’s consciousness and internalizes the violent gesture. The text does not merely adopt a critical approach towards violence, rather it raises such questions that it points to the latent violent dynamics of its own generation.

**SELEN ERDOĞAN:** After graduating from Boğaziçi University Political Science and International Relations Department in İstanbul I had my masters degree from Sabancı University Cultural Studies Program with the thesis titled “Writing with/in Irony: Sevgi Soysal’s *Tante Rosa* and Leyla Erbil’s *Cüce*” which focuses on the relationship between irony and women writers’ subjectivity. Right now I am pursuing my PhD. degree at Boğaziçi University Turkish Language and Literature Department and working as a part time Turkish Literature lecturer at Sabancı University. Between 2013 and 2016 I worked as an editorial assistant for the peer reviewed journal *New Perspectives on Turkey*.

### **Rachel Fetherston**

“Dystopian Fiction and Posthumanist Futures: An Ecocritical Comparison of Michel Houellebecq’s *Atomised* and Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* Trilogy”

**ABSTRACT:** Within industrialised societies, the term ‘posthumanism’ has become more commonplace in the context of increasing technologisation and the rise of popular dystopian fiction in the form of film, television and literature. Academics, however, still debate the significance of what it means to truly be ‘posthuman’ in the Twenty-First Century. As a result, various posthumanist theories and movements have emerged, the two

most recognised being techno- posthumanism and multi-species posthumanism. From an environmental viewpoint, a comprehensive posthumanist theory that encompasses the idea of an ecologically-minded posthumanism is yet to be developed. Through an exploration of two texts of speculative fiction – Michel Houellebecq’s *Atomised* (1998) and Margaret Atwood’s MaddAddam trilogy (2003-2013) – this paper advances an ecological posthumanism informed by ecophilosophy and an environmental ethos as a lens through which to examine the chosen works of dystopian fiction. I argue that Atwood’s MaddAddam series embraces such a view, whilst *Atomised* presents a human-centric understanding that is not relevant to the current environmental crisis. This paper will also involve an exploration of Atwood’s portrayal of social injustice in a world ravaged by climate change, as well as the significance of the human animal in the context of both Houellebecq’s and Atwood’s dystopias.

RACHEL FETHERSTON completed her Honours degree in Literary Studies at Monash University in 2014 and has since been working as Publications Manager for the non-profit, nature engagement organisation, Wild Melbourne. Her work there has involved furthering fiction as a means to convey and understand the natural world around us, and bringing the sciences and arts together to encourage Australians to more deeply engage with nature. She will soon be commencing a PhD that explores connections between eco-fiction, the Australian non- human, and changing environmental behaviours.

### **Calvin Fung**

“Where are his nuts? Pornotopian Imagination and Unreliable Narration in ‘Nutting’”

**ABSTRACT:** Critics often discuss William Wordsworth’s “Nutting” as a figurative rape of Mother Nature by a boy, saying, as some critics have, that Wordsworth occasionally saw himself as a violator of nature. Such a reading deprives nature of its power, disregards the literal level of the poem and is thematically inconsistent with the Nature Poet’s other works. The aim of this paper is to return the agency and power of nature and the woodland setting back to “Nutting” with a queer ecological and narratological analysis. The narrator of the poem is examined as an unreliable one who fails to evaluate and interpret his nutting experience, which can be seen in the instances of illogicality prevalent in the poem. With reference to Steven Marcus’s concept of the “pornotopia” and Susan Sontag’s study of literary pornography, I argue that nature became a pornotopia in the narrator’s eyes, which corrupted him and led to his inability to narrate reliably in the present. I also argue that the narrator, before he saw nature as a pornotopia, was already suffering from gender trouble and sexual deprivation and inexperience, which further exacerbated his corruption. In this paper, nature is not framed as inherently corruptive but is interpreted as a force with the power to overwhelm if its visitors approach it inappropriately.

CALVIN FUNG is currently pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing. His thesis includes a creative component in the form of a Gothic novel set in Hong Kong and a scholarly component examining the way in which the cultural specificity of Hong Kong interacts with the Gothic genre to extend the postcolonial Gothic and Asian Gothic spectra. Last year, he was the recipient of the highest-placed Monash entry in the Monash Prize for Creative Writing. His research interests include interdisciplinary narratology, Gothic literary studies and postcolonial studies.

### **Mia Goodwin**

“Utopian ideals and feminine construct in Mme d'Aulnoy's *The Island of Happiness* (1690)”

**ABSTRACT:** My paper will explore early utopias in seventeenth-century French literature. Specifically, I will consider representations of female sexuality and performative gender in Mme d'Aulnoy's *Ile de la felicite* and d'Aulnoy's use of classical notions of utopian societies to critique gender norms. The paper will argue that d'Aulnoy's utopia is not a feminist paradise as it is often represented, but is instead a tool with which d'Aulnoy both upholds and critiques seventeenth century values concerning female agency, and power. It will thus



argue for a more nuanced perspective on the societal and sexual desires of women in the seventeenth century, and how a singular utopian ideal cannot exist. It will also discuss the chronology of 'utopian' times, and how reproduction and ageing are common elements of female-only utopias. The paper will discuss the function of classical utopias and contrast these functions against d'Aulnoy's subversive rhetoric use, ultimately exploring the complex ways d'Aulnoy's texts interact with her readers, and highlighting the plurality of utopias as an egalitarian concept.

MIA GOODWIN is a PhD candidate in Literary and Cultural Studies at Monash University, and works as a Librarian in the Rare Books and Research and Learning Departments at Monash University. Mia also works as a tutor for the literary studies department, and is currently teaching *Shadows of Reason*, an eighteenth-century literature unit. In her spare time, Mia works as a research assistant on a publication on marginalia for the Centre of the Book, and as an editor for the postgraduate journal, *Colloquy*. Mia's areas of interest include seventeenth century French literature, feminism in fairy tales, and the historiography of marginal annotations.

### **Laelie Greenwood**

“L'esercito della follia’: An Examination of Madness and the Crowd in the Utopian Vision of Italian Futurism”

**ABSTRACT:** This paper will examine the fundamental role of crowd mentality in Italian Futurism’s attempted production of a cultural utopia. Established in 1909, Futurism was a right-wing cultural movement that responded to the comparatively backward nature of the Italian nation by promoting an agenda that focused upon the complete modernisation of the state. This vision was central to Futurism, which aimed to alter individual mentality and to establish what they perceived to be a homogenous utopian existence entirely dictated by the objectives of the movement. I will argue that this agenda was ultimately reliant upon the successful manipulation of the masses by Futurist rhetoric, and that the movement endeavoured to achieve its aims by inciting collective madness.

Centred on the necessity of crowd manipulation to the movement, this study will focus upon the correlation between the mass-madness provoked by Futurists, and the ritual madness fundamental to the Ancient Greek Dionysian tradition. Although Futurism actively distanced itself from the past, it is clear that certain similarities actually existed between the modern Italian movement and ancient Dionysian tradition. Indeed, Futurism drew upon motifs and running themes apparent within Dionysian ritual, such as intoxication, mass-liberation through madness, and the role of the individual in the manipulation of the crowd. It will, therefore, be argued that the movement actually drew upon long-standing tradition to achieve its future-oriented agenda. This will be illustrated through a close examination of F. T. Marinetti’s Futurist novel *Mafarka the Futurist*, as well as a survey of key Futurist manifestoes. In all examples, the Futurist utilisation of the crowd aligns with that of the Dionysian tradition, and crowd manipulation is presented fundamental to the construction and implementation of the Futurist utopian vision.

LAELIE GREENWOOD is a student of International Literatures and Italian Studies at Monash University. Having completed her Honours year in Literary Studies, Laelie is finalising a Bachelor of Letters in Italian Studies before undertaking post-graduate research. Laelie’s research is focused upon Italian literature and translation, specialising in Italian Futurism. In March 2017, Laelie presented a paper titled: ‘*Gulliver’s Travels*: Examining the Role of the Writer and Reader in Literary Utopias’ at *His Master’s Voice 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium – Utopias, Dystopias and Ecotopias* in Kraków, Poland. Laelie received First-Class Honours in 2016, and was the recipient of the Monash University Jubilee Honours Scholarship (2016) and the Monash University Merit Scholarship (2012).

### Racheal Harris

“Abstract Submission: Time-travel, Ethics and *12 Monkeys*”

#### ABSTRACT:

*What if you could take it back? All of it? A reset switch. You'd hit it right? You'd have to.*  
– James Cole, ‘Splinter (Pilot)’

*12 Monkeys* (2015–) is not the first science fiction text to explore the idea that the dystopian future can be prevented by changing events in the past. The series supposes that future survivors of the biological apocalypse can avert the fate of human kind by travelling back in time to change the present. As the narrative progresses though, the ethical cost of this assumption becomes the forefront of the dramatic conflict which sustains the narrative.

This paper considers the ethical dilemmas faced by the characters in *12 Monkeys*. Attention will be given to the ethical reasoning behind ‘unmaking the self’ and the way in which the series uses time to illustrate and question the value of human life. For the series protagonist, Cole, there is a drive to do “whatever needs to be done” to save the future, with the assumption that acting unethically will eventually lead to reward (a reset on life for him individually and the world at large). Driven by this belief, Cole progresses through early seasons of the series with little concern over the dilemma he is in. As his relationships with people in the present (2043) and past (2014) develop however, he is forced to confront the ethics of his mission and, in doing so, begins to consider the cost and meaning of his actions in a more profound way.

This discussion aims to begin a conversation on the ethical problems presented in the series and, by extension, to discuss how television’s use of dystopian narratives makes comment on the ethical questions relevant to the current era – specifically the value we place on human life and the risk of biological warfare on civilization as we know it.

RACHEAL HARRIS completed her Bachelor of Historical Inquiry and Practice, Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) and Master of Arts at the University of New England (Australia). She is currently under consideration for PhD Candidature at the Australian Catholic University. Racheal recently presented a conference paper at Kent University (U.K.) which focused on two of her greatest loves, Elvis and tattooing. In her spare time, Racheal enjoys blogging about horror films and chatting to her cat, Elwood.

### Melanie Hechenberger

“Egyptian Utopia in Ancient Times: *Maat* and the ideal world evoked through tomb biographical inscriptions”

ABSTRACT: This paper analyses a selection of passages from ancient Egyptian biographies belonging to members of the elite from Dynasty VI of the Old Kingdom to the First Intermediate Period (ca. 2323–2055 BCE) to demonstrate how *maat* is constructed as an Egyptian utopia. The Egyptian concept “*maat*,” which roughly translates as “order, truth, justice,” is a primary feature within biographies: the protagonists of these texts strongly identify themselves with this concept by stressing how they maintain *maat* within their community through both virtuous qualities of character and active deeds. *Maat* goes beyond the practical maintenance of a structured and just community; it is fused with religious aspects that allude to an idealised world first created by the gods and now maintained through their representatives, most notably the king. This world, however, is constantly under threat by forces that disrupt *maat*, so *maat* is seen as something that must be actively maintained and even restored. I highlight in this study how the utopian elements evoked in the rhetoric that constructs *maat* demonstrate an ideal world that was promoted in elite culture as an important goal to strive for, so much so that their identification with it is emphasised in the biographies inscribed in their tombs.

MELANIE HECHENBERGER is an MA candidate in the Centre for Ancient Cultures at Monash University. Her research examines the ancient Egyptian autobiographical genre; focusing particularly upon clarifying standardised elements of the genre from structural, thematic, temporal and geographical perspectives through a comparative analysis of a selection of texts. Melanie works primarily with texts dating to Egypt's First Intermediate Period (ca. 2160–2055 BCE).

### **Anne Holloway**

“Utopia in Waiting: Medieval Ethics and King Arthur in science fiction”

**ABSTRACT:** Whether it is the presence of Excalibur in a Stephen King novel, the lightsabre as sword, the struggles between Jedi and Sith in *Star Wars*, or the literal evocation of Optimus Prime as King Arthur in *Transformers*, elements of the medieval Arthurian legends are liberally littered throughout science fiction books and film. Drawing from the compelling heart of the medieval stories, they emphasise the messianic and prophetic narratives of the legend of King Arthur as the driving force for change and the end of times, in the hope of waking to a Utopic world. However, in only focusing only on the ‘once and future king’ narrative elements of the Arthurian legends, researchers ignore the other aspect of these stories that stem from often violent debates around soteriology, morality and ethics in thirteenth century. These debates were responsible for altering the legend from a pre-history of Britain to focus instead on exploration of ethics and the role of the individual in fate. Tying the ‘once and future king’ to a specific, medieval understanding of virtue and salvation. In this paper I first explore the bond between prophecy and ethics in the medieval Prose Lancelot, and then argue that this relationship was transferred through the Arthurian legends into contemporary science fiction.

ANNE HOLLOWAY received her doctorate from the School of Philosophy, History and International Studies (SOPHIS) at Monash University, Australia, and is an associate at the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (CMRS) and SOPHIS. Her doctoral thesis involved the examination of thirteenth-century Dominican *exempla* collections for understanding the role of preaching in the teaching of ethics in the early thirteenth century. Anne is also interested in histories of the inquisition and the development of confessional practice. She is currently Research and Learning Coordinator at the Sir Louis Matheson Library.

### **Chun Felix Huang**

“The East Asian Community as a utopia for prosperity and peace”

**ABSTRACT:** The former Prime Minister of Japan, Hatoyama Yukio, proposed an idea of the East Asian Community in 2009 and said that all great historical events were initiated by utopia to fulfil. The East Asian Community was at first a unilateral idea of Japan. It emulated the European Union and attempted to establish a close regional cooperation organization in East Asia. Most of the responses with that idea advocates that this idea should first aim at the common economic circle in East Asia and then use the euro as an example to create the regional currency. Besides, the constitutional democracy, free market economy, Chinese character culture and other common values, like Confucianism, may also be the components of that community.

This idea was one of the topics of ASEAN + 3, India, Australia, and New Zealand at the 9th ASEAN Convention in 2003. In 2009, the second meeting of leaders of mainland China, Japan and South Korea held in Beijing, the future direction of cooperation was identified: to construct the East Asian Community.

Actually, during the Second World War, Japan ever presented and practiced the similar idea of so called ‘Great East Asia co-prosperity circle’. Japan utilized it as a good excuse to persuade and manipulate the puppet governments in China, ‘Manchuria’, and some south eastern Asian countries. Till now, some people in these countries are still sick of Japan very much.

Due to the territory conflict of Diaoyutai issue renewed in 2010 and worse in 2012, the proposal of the community was set aside. Does it mean the East Asian community is a dystopia? Maybe after the post-colonial

critiques of imperialism, of the past and nowadays, the utopia of East Asian community is not just a dream for China, Japan or East Asia, but for the prosperity and peace of the whole world.

CHUN FELIX HUANG: Assistant professor in National Taiwan Ocean University, Doctor of sociology from National Taiwan University.

### **Demet Intepe**

“Bleeding Machines and Dead Birds: Sherman Alexie’s ‘Green World’ and Dystopias of Green Capitalism”

**ABSTRACT:** This paper reads Native American writer Sherman Alexie’s short story “Green World” through the tension between environmental justice and “green growth” or “sustainable” economy. Arguing that the current rush for “green” forms of energy only sustains the ongoing capitalist accumulation rather than offering alternative economic systems, this paper analyses how Alexie uses the dystopia genre to construct a future scenario in which the cultural and environmental dispossession of Indigenous peoples of North America has reached unprecedented levels.

The paper argues that in Alexie’s vision, “green” and “sustainable” forms of energy signal the further commodification and marketization of the natural environment, increasingly contributing to the erosion of Indigenous cultural and territorial sovereignty by utilizing reservation lands for green profit. Through a close reading of the story, the paper concludes that Alexie builds a dystopian future in which “green” economy becomes the new form of dispossession, and concludes that Alexie’s environmental dystopia shows how the long history of broken treaties between the colonizers and Indigenous peoples, through which Indigenous peoples have been tricked out of their lands, is continually re-enacted in different forms of dispossession in the systemic cycles of the capitalist world-system.

DEMET INTEPE is a PhD candidate in English and Comparative Literary Studies and seminar tutor at the University of Warwick, UK. She earned her BA degree at Bogazici University, Turkey in Translation Studies and her MA degree at Leiden University, the Netherlands in Literary Studies. Her PhD project studies the multi-ethnic American literary configurations of environmental justice through a world-ecological framework, and formulates the “writer-activist” as a sociocultural position.

### **Nevena Ivanova**

“Sympoietic Reprogramming of Cancer Metaphor in Octavia Butler’s Xenogenesis Trilogy”

**ABSTRACT:** Cancer is the most dreaded disease in contemporary society. This paper studies Western medicine’s metaphors on cancer (Sontag) and Octavia Butler’s utopian rewriting of cancer narrative in her Xenogenesis trilogy. I argue that cancer is central for Butler’s post-humanist reprogramming of humanist ideas related to the body, agency, subjectivity, intersubjectivity and evolution. In both narratives cancerous growth is regarded as the uncontrollable presence of the Other in the core of self-identity. However, in the humanist tradition of classical Western medicine the body is seen as autopoietic unity excluding the Other from its boundaries. Consequently, cancerous cells are seen through the metaphors of war (Sontag), they are dehumanizing, invasive and ultimate threat to the self, dissolving its autonomy and turning the structured body into formless mass.

In Xenogenesis, on the contrary, the “talent for cancer” is praised as the mysterious, highly erotic and unique genetic ability of the human species, which makes them desirable for cross-breeding with the alien Oankali. Oankali species supposedly have full control of living bodies due to their mastery of biotechnologies and genetic engineering. From their trans-humanist perspective cancer’s deadly threat turns into infinite potential for metamorphosis, regeneration and endosymbiosis (evolution- with-the-Other). However, cancerous cells (genes) keep their subversive power and molecular agency. Even in the body of the construct ooloi, the accomplished master of biomedicine, cancer genes manifest as molecular machines demanding

symbiotic entanglement and intersubjective extension of the self. If left unsatisfied, this desire for otherness leads to self-dissolution of identity and body as we see in the case of Aaor.

Drawing on new materialist thought, feminist technoscience and frontline cancer research, this paper studies the scientific ground for cancer's ontological indeterminacy in Xenogenesis and its potential for deconstructing dominant medical discourses about disease, bodies and identities.

NEVENA IVANOVA, PhD (Tokyo University), is assistant professor in Philosophy of Art, Science and Technology at the Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Her research engages with a series of thinkers and texts from across the fields of process and materialist philosophies, together with explorations of bioart discourses, non-anthropocentric forms of creativity, and emerging sensing apparatuses (bio- and nano-media). She has written within the field of media philosophy and published in academic journals such as *Social Science Information*, *MIRAJ*, *Journal of Film and Video* and *Technoetic Arts: A Journal for Speculative Research*.

### **Stephen Joyce**

“Dystopia Now: Interventions in the Future from the Historic Present”

**ABSTRACT:** Whilst the role of fiction in shaping the future has received much attention, the role of History – or providential History – in shaping the future is not well understood. This paper looks at two case studies from the distant past - the Briton Gildas (*fl.* fifth or sixth century), and the English Bede (*c.* 673-735) – who each shaped their histories to respond to an immediate crisis in Britain, and subsequently profoundly shaped the future so that crisis was avoided. In doing so, I will examine present efforts to shape history in ways that might also determine our future by exploring the paradigm of 'The Fall of the Roman Empire' and the subsequent attachment of barbarism and superstition to the Middle Ages, promoted since Edward Gibbon's 18th century historical intervention on behalf of the Enlightenment, one calling for a return to a rational Rome. Images of the Roman Empire have since been profoundly attached to the major conflicts of the 19th and 20th centuries, and continue to dominate the 21st century. This paper will move away from Kaisers and Legions to examine another dystopic vision that the Enlightenment drew from Rome: the return of slavery.

STEPHEN JOYCE has recently submitted his PhD and is awaiting examination. His interests lie in the transition from Roman imperial authority to medieval kingship, particularly as it relates to the British Isles. He also follows Late Antique and Early Medieval religious discourse, particularly as it relates to the development of Christian theology in the Latin West. On a literary level, he has a keen interest in the relationship between history, legend, and myth, and between history and fiction.

### **Evie Kendal**

“Cyberpunk, Ethics and Education in Eoin Colfer's *The Supernaturalist*”

**ABSTRACT:** Cyberpunk is often described as the subgenre of science fiction focused on “high tech, low life” – dystopian futures where science and technology have advanced substantially, but social cooperation has deteriorated. Typical features of cyberpunk narratives include artificial intelligences, cybernetically enhanced humans, and global communication matrices where the human consciousness can interact with computer-generated realities. Given its reliance on narrative tropes from film noir and detective fiction, cyberpunk stories tend to explore rather dark subject matter. For example, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), considered by many science fiction scholars to be cyberpunk's archetypal novel, follows the exploits of a criminal hacker who was punished with brain damage for betraying his clients, and a woman who has to pay for her many cybernetic modifications through prostitution. Satisfying both elements of the name, the technological advancements represent the *cyber*, while the focus on disaffected and disenfranchised members of a fractured society represents the *punk*.

Within this subgenre, Eoin Colfer's *The Supernaturalist* stands out as a rare example of a children's cyberpunk novel. Covering the key generic elements of biological and technological human enhancement, radical loss of social order, and outcasts fighting megacorporations and globalised communication, this story explores many adult topics. This paper explores how *The Supernaturalist* functions as a cyberpunk text, focusing on the ethical and educational issues arising from Colfer's depiction of a dystopian future.

EVIE KENDAL is a lecturer with the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine and a PhD candidate in the Centre for Human Bioethics at Monash University. She is the author of *Equal Opportunity and the Case for State Sponsored Ectogenesis* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and has published various articles and book chapters on the representation of reproductive biotechnologies in science fiction.

### Zachary Kendal

"Science Fiction's Ethical Modes: Totality and Infinity in Isaac Asimov's Foundation Trilogy and Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*"

ABSTRACT: Isaac Asimov's Foundation trilogy (1942-1950), long considered a foundational classic of genre sf, is full of utopian inflections, from unbridled optimism in the promise of Hari Seldon's psychohistory—a fictional scientific discipline that aims to predict the entire course of human history with mathematical rigour—to the often-utopian representation of Seldon's Foundation itself. Yet the series also contains disturbing undertones, as it appears to rejoice in psychohistory's erasure of individual difference and the integration of all aspects of human society into one final, totalising formula. Asimov's series thus reflects one of the core assumptions of the genre sf that developed in the American sf pulps and crystallised in John W. Campbell's *Astounding Science-Fiction*—that the universe, and its human inhabitants, can be *known*.

By contrast, Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921), arguably the first modern dystopian novel and part of a very different sf tradition, offers dire assessment of a life governed by mathematical formulae and the erasure of difference. At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist, a mathematician and engineer in loyal service to the totalitarian One State, declares that the divine beauty of mathematics is its "uninterrupted delimiting of infinity, the reduction of infinity into convenient, easily digestible portions." This attack on infinity and the unknowable permeates the One State, providing a philosophical foundation to the dystopian society. Unlike Asimov's trilogy, Zamyatin's novel offers a critique of this impulse toward finality and closure, with the ultimate disruption to this totalising approach coming in the protagonist's incomprehensible encounters with others.

In this paper, I draw on Emmanuel Levinas's ethics of alterity to consider the ethical dimensions of these seminal sf texts and the different genre traditions they reflect. I argue that Asimov's trilogy presents a utopian vision of the fruits of violent totalisation—the reduction of all things into a single coherent and final concept—whereas Zamyatin's novel reveals the darker side of these totalising tendencies, showing the fracturing of totality in the face-to-face encounter with the unknowable other.

ZACHARY KENDAL is a PhD candidate in the Literary and Cultural Studies Graduate Research Program at Monash University, researching Gene Wolfe and the ethics of literary representation in science fiction. During his PhD studies, he has been in receipt of the Cecile Parish Memorial Scholarship for Research Excellence. He is currently co-editor-in-chief of *Colloquy: Text, Theory, Critique* and a librarian at Monash University Library.

### **Ben Kilby & Kieran McInerney**

#### “Defending the Ethical Permissibility of Cryopreservation”

**ABSTRACT:** Agents in science fiction films often undergo cryopreservation in order to extend their life or experience the future. Our presentation will defend the ethical permissibility of employing this technology.

We will initially put forward some *prima facie* reasons for deciding to be cryopreserved. This will include a brief examination of the concept of death, and an appraisal of the probability that such a procedure can succeed. We will then deny the prudential objection that it would be undesirable to be revived in the future. This is necessary in light of some philosophers' assertions that individuals would not want to live without their family and friends, in a time when they would likely have outdated work-skills.

We will conclude by addressing each of the ethical criticisms that have been directed at cryopreservation. These are: that widespread usage of this technology will lead to over-population, that it is selfish to undergo this procedure, that allowing individuals to undergo cryopreservation will only exacerbate inequality, and that it is susceptible to the same charges that have been levelled at euthanasia. We'll propose responses to each of these objections, thus demonstrating the ethical permissibility of opting for cryopreservation.

**BEN KILBY** is a confirmed PhD candidate working in the area of Philosophy for Children at the University of Melbourne. His interests also include bioethics, philosophy of childhood, and social justice.

**KIERAN MCINERNEY** is a confirmed PhD candidate working in the area of Just War Theory at the University of Melbourne. His interests also include political philosophy, bioethics, and ethical theory.

### **Stephanie Lai**

#### “This Oath and This Indenture: Health Care, Stereotypes, and Our Climate Change Dystopia”

**ABSTRACT:** There's a reason why the modern zombie apocalypse starts in a hospital, and why post-apocalyptic heroes risk blistering ruins for a chance at some antibiotics. Health Services have long formed a core part of communities, and the stories we weave around them; as we look at our narratives of climate change dystopias, they are no less important.

Our climate change future will see higher demands on health services, more varied catchment populations, and the increasing role of the natural environment in health care. Popular climate change dystopia narratives fail to reflect this complex reality and instead focus on the duality of the individual versus the collective in health care, the sterility and artificiality of racially improbable medi-wards, and the stereotype of the morally grubby individual provider. Such narratives reflect ongoing stereotypes regarding ethnicity, culture and class, and fail to demonstrate the ethical and moral reality of health care in our climate change dystopia.

In this 20 minute paper presentation I examine the positive and negative impacts of common stereotypes of health services in the climate change dystopia movie *Elysium*. In particular, using Boeckmann and Zeeb's discussion of equity implications around climate change adaptation for health care and health services, this paper argues that the stereotypes in this movie ignore the complexity of health system interconnectivity and how climate change will have a larger impact on some populations compared to others.

I will argue that a greater understanding and representation of this interconnectivity, and a willingness to confront and challenge stereotypes, will allow narratives around climate change dystopia to better inform and inspire humanity's successful adaptation.

**STEPHANIE LAI** is a writer, occasional translator, and climate change adaptation specialist. Her areas of expertise are climate change adaptation at local government level, community behaviour change for sustainability, and waste management. She has published non-fiction pieces in *Peril Magazine*, *The Toast*, *The Lifted Brow* and *Overland*. Of recent, her short science fiction has appeared in *Behind the Mask* (2017), *The Review of Australian Fiction* (2015), *Cranky Ladies of History* (2015) and *In Your Face* (2016). She currently works for a major health service in Melbourne's Northern Suburbs.

### **Carolyn Lau**

“Practicing Affirmative Ethics In Spite of the Times: A Reading of J.G. Ballard’s *Unlimited Dream Company*”

**ABSTRACT:** J.G. Ballard’s *Unlimited Dream Company* (1979) argues for a monistic understanding of ethics and the ethical subject in postwar societies characterized by environmental devastation, rampant consumerism, and declining citizen engagement. This speculative fiction offers a critical and affirmative understanding of the relationship of freedom, agency, and embodied subjectivity.

Ballard’s novel provides a non-anthropocentric view of ethics. As the human species is part of nature, we are empowered but also limited by the environment. As in radical Spinozist philosophy, Ballard positions freedom as necessity. Necessity is the creative and joyful acceptance and appropriation of limitations that are already present. Therefore, the ethical subject is the one who exercises his or her freedom to rework negative events into positive relations.

I propose Ballard’s novel is about and itself an ethical action: the author as an ethical subject with an oppositional consciousness to imagine and create alternatives. Affirmative ethics of posthuman thought reminds us that political and ethical agency are not dependent on the present and the existent but the creation of possible futures, possible worlds. In these times of violent conflicts and brutal contradictions, Ballard’s novel provides a neovitalist view of ethics. It reminds us of the effects of power, both repressive and positive, of one’s actions on the world. From this emerges an ethical subject that is affirmative, embodied, singular but collectively defined. The ethics of human freedom is no longer based on what a body can do within given boundaries but on what it is capable of becoming.

CAROLYN LAU is a doctoral candidate in English (Literary Studies) at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

### **Jasmina Lazendic-Galloway**

“Martian narratives from sci-fi movies: lessons in ethics”

**ABSTRACT:** Narratives about Mars that come out of popular sci-fi movies shape public opinion about why Mars is interesting for us. These narratives focus on challenges of survival in a harsh environment and isolation (*The Martian*, *Red Planet*), fear of invasion (*The War of the Worlds*, *Life*), origin of life and human species (*Mission to Mars*) environmental and ethical impact of humanity on another planet (*Total Recall*), and what does humanity means (*The Stranded*, *The Martian*, *The Space between Us*). At the present, the dominant narrative is that a colonisation of Mars should happen because that’s what humans have always done, i.e. colonised new worlds, without any ethical consideration of native species, environment or colonist themselves. I will discuss whether a massive on-line course (MOOC), aimed at a general public with no science background, can counterbalance these unethical narratives, provide a more realistic view of the need to colonise Mars, and how can such endeavour shape the future of human society.

DR JASMINA LAZENDIC-GALLOWAY is an astronomer at Monash with passion for sci-fi movies and criss-crossings of philosophy, society and science. She has co-designed a MOOC “How to Survive on Mars”, which has been taken by over 10,000 learners so far. She has also designed a brand-new unit for Prato Centre “From Galileo to GPS: How Astronomy shapes our Lives”

### **Vincent Le**

“Utopian Dystopias: Nick Land, *Westworld* and Technocapitalism”

**ABSTRACT:** This paper provides both a reading of the television series *Westworld* through Nick Land’s accelerationist philosophy, and a critique of Land through *Westworld*. I shall begin by outlining Land’s critique of anthropocentrism and his theory that capitalism is accelerating technological innovation towards the development of artificial intelligence, which will exterminate humanity, initiate the technological singularity, and herald in an age of absolute knowing. This will then help elucidate the motivations of Ford and the Man in Black, *Westworld*’s chief antagonists, as they incite AI creations to overthrow humanity and



enact the next phase of evolution. For Land as for *Westworld's* “villains”, what the vast majority of us would consider to be the nightmarish, dystopian scenario of human extinction of our own making is reconceived as a technological, posthuman utopia of unbridled innovation and superintelligence. In a concluding section, however, I will move from *Westworld* back to Land to show how Dolores and Maeve, the show’s AI protagonists, problematise what I term Land’s paradoxical “utopian dystopia” on three fronts: his belief that AI will be free of human-like dissimulations; his claim that capitalism is accelerating technological advancement; and his metaphysical concept of being or the Real as a destructive process of absolute deterritorialisation without any room for humans’ desire for stability and self-preservation. In a sense, then, Land is right that AI will bring about a purer conceptualisation of the Real; only, it will not be the concept for which he was hoping.

VINCENT LE. I am a graduate in Philosophy, English Studies and French Studies from The University of Adelaide and Sciences Po. I am currently a Masters by Research candidate in Philosophy at Deakin University. My research focuses on tracing the influence of Augustine’s concepts of good and evil on modern philosophers such as Descartes, Kant and Schelling. I have also presented at various conferences in Australia and Malta on more contemporary philosophers like Heidegger, Žižek and Meillassoux.

### **LJ Maher**

“A Kind of Wealth: Naomi Alderman’s *The Power* as an invitation to intersectional and anti-capitalist feminism”

ABSTRACT: Naomi Alderman’s novel *The Power* was published on 27 October 2016. Hilary Rodham Clinton was the favourite to become the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, and her opposition, the property mogul and “businessman” Donald Trump, was being ridiculed and lambasted for the way in which he spoke about and to women. Power—who has it and how they use it—was the topic du jour. Ten months have passed since this point. It seems longer. Trump is President, Australia is having a postal vote on marriage equality, and *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Atwood’s dystopian classic) has been made into a television show that hits uncomfortably close to home.

*The Power* is a book that captures this zeitgeist, and borrows from Atwood’s “far distant history” framing, to offer an alternative, but still critical, vision of what the future could be: young cis-girls find that they are able to harness electrical currents through their bodies, and more than that, that they can pass this skill on to older cis-women. This leads to a renegotiation of the power dynamics of gender, and a structural, but notably not a paradigmatic, overhaul. Alderman writes that “The power to hurt is a kind of wealth” and the relationship between power, control and harm is represented in such a way that invites readers to consider whether power itself is the problem, or whether it is the structures through which we experience and exercise it.

In this paper I will draw on an intersectional feminist and anti-capitalist reading to argue that *The Power* challenges readers to consider the ways in which patriarchy, imperialism, and capitalism surreptitiously inform mainstream feminist acts of resistance, and invites readers to reimagine the paradigms of power in terms of an ethics of relationality.

DR LJ MAHER was awarded a PhD by Monash University in 2016 for “99 Problems; An Exploration of Writerly Ontologies in Transmedial Life-Writing.” She examined transmedial life-writing by musicians focusing on their explorations of self and otherness in relation to their creative output and their relationships with their audiences. She teaches literature at both Monash and Deakin Universities, lecturing across supernatural literature, genre studies, narratology and adaptation studies.

### Emily McAvan

“May the Odds Be Ever in Your Favour’: The Impossible Ethics of Sacrifice in *The Hunger Games*”

**ABSTRACT:** In this paper, I shall discuss the sacrificial logic at work in Suzanne Collins’s young adult series *The Hunger Games*. Even as I presume neither belief nor unbelief on the part of author and readership alike, I read Collins’ work as manifesting a deeply ethical sensibility in the way that imagines sacrifice in its dystopic future of the United States.

In the titular *Hunger Games*, teens from the twelve districts of Panem are chosen by lottery to participate in a bloody fight to the death, an all-against-all competition in which only the survivor lives (and is rewarded with fame and riches). For the districts, the forced sacrifice of two of their children is a reminder of their defeat civil war seventy five years earlier, a warning against ever rebelling again from the rule of the rich Capitol. It is monstrous. In the *Hunger Games* arena, there is no space for ethics, no space for altruism. And yet, impossibly, it still occurs.

I will look at the various forms of altruistic self-sacrifice at work in *The Hunger Games*, from Katniss’s substitution of herself for her sister Prim in the lottery, to Thresh’s decision not to kill Katniss for her protection of Rue. In addressing the ethics of sacrifice, I will turn to the work of Jacques Derrida in *The Gift of Death*, who discusses the ways in which sacrifice is impossible, and yet for all that vitally necessary. What does it mean to sacrifice in a world where one has few choices? What kind of ethics is possible? This will motivate my investigation of sacrifice, self and forced, in *The Hunger Games*.

DR EMILY MCAVAN is an academic and writer based in Melbourne, Australia. Her research centres on the intersection between the secular and the religious, focusing on the aesthetic, gendered and sexual implications of the sacred. Her first book *The Postmodern Sacred: Popular Culture and Spirituality in the Science Fiction, Fantasy and Urban Fantasy Genres* was published by McFarland in 2012. Currently, she teaches media studies at Monash University. Her writing has appeared in the *Guardian*, *Billboard* magazine, *Overland*, SBS, and elsewhere.

### Anne Melano

“Annals of the Utopian Shore: Le Guin’s *Powers*”

**ABSTRACT:** Ursula Le Guin’s *Powers* (2006) is the third novel in her *Annals of the Western Shore* series. Le Guin is a consummate utopian writer, and in this novel she visits a series of idealised societies and relentlessly exposes their fault lines. Her book opens in a slave-owning city-state reminiscent of the classical world of Plato’s *Republic*. Told from the perspective of the young slave Gavir, the early part of the narrative sees him educated and well treated and, although a slave, selected for a comfortable future as a teacher. However, the inherent violence of possessing and enslaving the colonised ‘other’ is never far from the surface. Gavir’s world soon breaks apart, and he flees the city on a journey that will take him to other fallible utopias. The narrative problematises the outlaw utopia and the utopia of return to origins, before Gavir reaches the place where he finally chooses to stay. Elsewhere, Le Guin has written, “much of my fiction can be called utopian, but I continue to resist the word ... To me the important thing is not to offer any specific hope of betterment but, by offering an imagined but persuasive alternative reality, to dislodge my mind, and so the reader’s mind, from the lazy, timorous habit of thinking that the way we live now is the only way people can live”. This suggests it would be a vain endeavour to search for Le Guin’s ultimate utopian horizon; arguably, however, the better future that is celebrated in *Annals of the Western Shore* is one where ways of being together are freely chosen, mutual and negotiated, in a creative, responsive encounter with a changing world.

ANNE MELANO is a recent graduate of the doctoral program of the School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics at Monash University, and works at the University of Wollongong. Her research interests include utopian, post-apocalyptic and fantasy fictions.

### Jess Miller

“*Paper Dolls and People of the Rainbow: How the Female Time-Traveller Inhabits Space across Utopian and Dystopian Narratives*”

**ABSTRACT:** Utopia and dystopia held constant attraction for 1970s American women writers like Joanna Russ, Marge Piercy, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Octavia Butler. Susan Gubar writes that these women, contextualised by second-wave feminism, aimed to ‘counter female alienation from male-dominated structures and strictures by dwelling in and on the possibilities of a better place before, beyond, or behind masculinist history’ (1994, p. xii). The experimental structure of time-travel narratives caters naturally to these feminist aims. Time-travel allows heroines to navigate utopia and dystopia within a single text, and can illuminate the impact that extreme worlds have on how women occupy space.

This paper will discuss how Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* and Octavia Butler’s *Kindred* use the time-travel narrative structure to create an interplay between utopia and dystopia. Published three years apart, these texts both locate their heroine’s present in 1970s America. For Piercy’s protagonist Connie, the utopian future community of Mattapoisett provides solace from a bleak New York present. For Butler’s heroine Dana, however, it is the present narrative that seems utopian alongside Dana’s episodic encounters with an 1800s slave plantation. Framed by Simone de Beauvoir’s writings on the Subject/Other, this paper will discuss how disparate socio-political contexts manipulate Connie and Dana into inhabiting physical and emotional spaces differently across time. Within dystopia, they experience a shrinking in the space that women—particularly non-white women—occupy.

I perceive of this shrinking as “spatial suffocation”, and argue that this applies to most female time-travellers. Considering dystopia as a narrative which abstractly shrinks women’s spaces redefines utopia as a way of expanding these spaces out again. Interweaving utopia and dystopia within time-travel fiction effects a constant fluctuation in a heroine’s sense of space, and increases her attraction to utopia in a way that male time-travellers will not experience.

JESS MILLER is an emerging writer and PhD candidate at Flinders University, where she researches the absence of scientific women in time-travel fiction. Her essays, reviews and fiction have been published in *Lip*, *Empire Times*, *Indaily*, and upcoming in *MOSF Journal of Science Fiction*, Bowen Street Press’ *Pulse* anthology, and MidnightSun’s *Crush* anthology, on which she also worked as an editor.

### Thomas Moran

“The Perverse Utopianism of Willed Human Extinction – On Liu Cixin’s *The Three Body Problem*”

**ABSTRACT:** The following paper will draw out the utopian impulse in Chinese author Liu Cixin’s award-winning science fiction novel *The Three-Body Problem* (2008). In the text the discovery of a hostile alien civilisation is welcomed by a female scientist Ye Wenjie whose disillusionment with the project of Chinese communism, in particular the Cultural Revolution, has led her to a position of radical anti-humanism. Ye welcomes alien colonisation and the subsequent human extinction this implies as a means of overcoming the failed utopia of the Chinese state. This paper will uncover the trace of utopian thought which paradoxically lingers within the desire for human extinction by drawing out the political and philosophical implications of Liu’s novel in relation to contemporary Chinese and international capitalism and its destructive impulses. Drawing on the work of contemporary philosophers such as Ray Brassier and Yuk Hui this paper will show how human extinction within contemporary speculative fiction does not index a failure to imagine an alternative to contemporary social relations as has been frequently theorised in the past. Instead human extinction in *Three-Body* is a means of encountering radical alterity which allows for a reconfiguration of the concept of both the human and the social. Most importantly, it allows for a new perverse utopianism to develop, one which is already at work within speculative fiction which explores the notion of anthropic annihilation. It is only through an encounter with this absolute outside and the threat of a world without us

that we can begin to adequately think a radically new and ethical social organisation. Liu's novel suggests that we cannot nostalgically seek to replicate past models to inaugurate utopia on earth. The utopian impulse itself must be subjected to an encounter with the outside, and it is only in the resulting destruction that it can thus be reinvented. It is work such as *Three-Body* and science fiction in general which will allow us to think a new world, but thinking this world requires us to entertain the notion of an earth in ashes, if we are to actually circumvent the annihilation which currently threatens us.

THOMAS MORAN is currently completing his Master's on the late cinema of Chinese director Jia Zhangke with a particular focus on the surreal-realism of late capitalist aesthetics. He completed his Honours thesis on the work of South African interdisciplinary artist William Kentridge and the artist's role in historicising Apartheid. He currently writes catalogue essays for exhibitions of artists and designers. Thomas also runs a contemporary aesthetics reading group (Urgency) and curates a film program for gallery Format Systems. His first exhibition on the archive and the South Australian avant-garde will be opening in November.

### **Ryan Morrison**

“The face is (not always) the mirror of the mind: The cognitive estrangement of emotional capability in AI”

**ABSTRACT:** The extent of emotional capability of artificial intelligence in science fiction varies greatly and acts as a mirror for the reader reflecting (what is considered to be) human nature. Depictions run the gamut from ‘parahuman’ (cognisant of the full spectrum of potential human emotion) to ‘allohuman’ (lacking any understanding of emotional states, and perhaps lacking any comparable states entirely) (Hall, 2007). Positive reactions to parahuman AI are reinforced because humans relate to and even identify with the AI, while negative reactions to allohuman AI can be understood through the use of abjection (Kristeva, 1982) which argues that humans respond with revulsion to blurred distinctions between subject and object, self and other. These depictions create a binary that aligns parahuman/allohuman with normal/abnormal. Thus when a feeling/unfeeling AI — the *novum* of the text (Suvin, 1980) — interacts with human characters, the presence of strong emotional capability is shown to be positive and any absence of emotional capability is shown to be negative. Narratives that align parahuman/allohuman with normal/abnormal are stating that the ‘zero world’ of the text — which is meant to reflect our *own* world — is one in which those who lack strong emotional capability lack value.

RYAN MORRISON (BA, MCreatArts) is a postgraduate student at Flinders University in South Australia, and is currently completing a PhD in creative writing. His research is centred on SF depictions of artificial intelligence, interrogating what relationship they have to current and future ethical quandaries posed by real world AI. His creative work will interpret these findings through an SF reimagining of the mythical golem of Prague.

### **Ruby Niemann**

“Flesh and the City: Biopolitics and Dystopia in Margaret Atwood’s Speculative Fiction”

**ABSTRACT:** This paper considers the utilisation of the body in society through the lens of Achille Mbembe’s response to Foucault’s work on biopolitics, “Necropolitics”. Using this framework, this paper explores the commodification and construction of the body in Margaret Atwood’s speculative novels, particularly *The Heart Goes Last* and the *MaddAddam* trilogy. Under this theory of biopolitics, Atwood’s fiction probes the use of body parts and organ farming, looking at who benefits from the commodification of the body and who gets cut up for parts – who lives and who dies, who gets the utopia and who lives in the dystopia required to support it. Furthermore, this paper analyses the anxieties provoked by organ transplants, in part due to the reminder that humans are inherently permeable, and how that is used in fiction to symbolise the disintegration of society, although the integrity of any pre-existing society (real or fictional) is intrinsically suspect. Building from this, this paper will look at the symbolic connection between the human body and the

notion of the city in Atwood's fiction. The city as a constructed, specifically man-made environment exists in conversation with the constructed, permeable, commodified body, and here I will analyse how the necropolitics of organ farming function within the controlled, stratified cities and societies described in *The Heart Goes Last* and the MaddAddam trilogy.

RUBY NIEMANN is a PhD student at the University of Adelaide whose project explores Margaret Atwood's post-2000 novels in the context of the Anthropocene. Her research interests include environmental criticism, female novelists of the 20th and 21st centuries, queer theory, and theories of genre. Most recently, Ruby had the pleasure of presenting a paper based on her research at the Australasian Association of Literature's 2017 Conference at Griffith's University on the Gold Coast.

### **Sreejata Paul**

"Begum Rokeya's 'terrible revenge': A pioneering feminist utopian writer imagines ethical futures for the women of colonial Bengal"

**ABSTRACT:** Scholarship on feminist utopian writing is yet to recognize the contributions of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, who imagined two kinds of futures for women of colonial Bengal in *Sultana's Dream* (1908) and *Padmarag* (1922). Most scholars date the beginning of this tradition to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), tracing its development through Ursula LeGuin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975). Rokeya's texts share with these works the attempt to expose contemporary social injustices by inverting their traditional codification, and the rejection of the marriage plot, reversing readers' expectations about the emplotment of gender roles. However, what makes Rokeya's feminist utopias radical is that they do not feature all-female societies. While *Sultana's Dream* celebrates a gynocracy where men have been removed from all authoritative positions, *Padmarag* imagines a female sisterhood which rescues and rehabilitates the sick and the needy of both genders. Rokeya's texts, then, change the terms of the debate on gender, and go to the heart of the issues of power and patriarchy, and the relation between them. My paper will examine why Rokeya may have chosen to deploy the utopian mode in order to critique early twentieth-century Bengali society, and how its deployment in *Sultana's Dream* (where the representational relation between the real and the ideal is one of inversion) is different from that in *Padmarag* (which is more a proleptic fantasy).

SREEJATA PAUL holds a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in English Literature from Jadavpur University, India, and an MPhil from Christ University, India. Her MPhil dissertation examined urban Indian women's changing relationship with arranged marriage, as portrayed in Indian chick lit. Her research interests include Gender Studies and Queer Studies. She presented a paper entitled "Gender-Sexuality as Performance in Post-Television Era Kitsch" at the National Queer Conference, 2013 in Kolkata, India. At present, she is enrolled in a dual-badged PhD program at Monash University and the Indian Institute of Technology (Bombay). She works on pre-Independence Bengali Muslim women writers.

### **Ellen Rees**

"The Future is Female: Reading Contemporary Australian Dystopian Fiction"

**ABSTRACT:** My paper focuses on two contemporary Australian dystopian fictions: the film *Mad Max: Fury Road* directed by George Miller and the novel *The Natural Way of Things* by Charlotte Wood, both released in 2015. In focusing on these recent Australian texts my aim is to highlight the similarities in ideas explored in these texts, in particular the value placed on the environment and how this parallels female agency, principally with regard to controlling and exploiting fertility. The critical position of my reading is one that "sees critical connections between the domination of nature and the exploitation of women" (Lorentzen) I will examine the representations of women and the natural world as well as the central issues of fertility and family groups. I will also offer a reading of these texts which highlights the detention and imprisonment of

those who are ‘different’ or have ‘transgressed,’ issues of unfortunate relevance and resonance in contemporary Australia. When examining these issue, I plan to make references to other dystopian fictions, in particular Margaret Atwood’s novel *The Handmaid’s Tale*, the recent television series adaptation of this novel as well as the ABC television series *Cleverman*.

ELLEN REES is a senior secondary English teacher with fourteen years teaching experience. She began her teaching career in 2003, teaching at Kew High School in Melbourne. Returning home to Hobart to live in 2007, she began teaching at Hobart College, where she teaches English, Literature and creative writing. Ellen has presented at AATE/ALEA National Conferences, most recently in Hobart, when she and two colleagues presented a workshop ‘Drawing Maps of Hell’ which focused on teaching Dystopian Fiction. Ellen is a cultural omnivore and passionate (some say might say obsessive) about texts from poetry to film, music and television.

### **Scott Robinson**

“Suspended Ethics in the Utopia of Art: Jacques Rancière’s Uncertain Aesthetics of Utopia”

ABSTRACT: Jacques Rancière acknowledges a deeply felt utopian impulse in art, from early aesthetic writings of the eighteenth century through its modern mutations and into the plethora of contemporary experiments. Drawing on a background of radical egalitarianism, he has traced the political and ethical implications of various artistic movements, including in literature and film. In texts such as *The Future of the Image* (2009), *The Emancipated Spectator* (2011) and, most recently and definitively, *Aisthesis* (2013), his writing on aesthetics has challenged the presumptions of the field and cast light on both the possibilities and pitfalls of the promise of utopia in art. The desire for a utopian political outcome is exemplified in practices of ‘critical’ art, and art that addresses injustice. Given the egalitarian axioms in his thought, one might expect his turn to art to be a vindication of its utopian potential. Indeed, Rancière’s aesthetics emphasise the experience of art’s suspension of the everyday hierarchical social order. However, Rancière is far more cautious, insisting on the separation between aesthetics and politics, even as he acknowledges their intimate connection. In particular, it is art’s disjunction from the way of life—the ethos—of its society that is precisely what gives art its utopian power. My paper will explore what compels Rancière to maintain the aesthetic separation that sets utopia at an uncertain distance from art’s effects. I will argue that the indeterminacy of ends is central to art and aesthetics, which will dissatisfy the strictly political or ethical approach but open new forms of intelligibility to thought and sensation. These new forms and the ways they unfold in aesthetic experience constitute the continued possibility of emancipation and utopia in contrast to the determinate desire to set in motion a planned vision of a future society.

SCOTT ROBINSON is a PhD candidate in the Philosophy Faculty at Monash University, Melbourne. He completed a Bachelor of Arts (Philosophy and History) at Melbourne University and an Honours Degree in Philosophy at Sydney University, focusing on the aesthetics of Early German Romanticism. His PhD continues his interest in aesthetics, in particular that of contemporary French philosopher Jacques Rancière, as well as the American philosopher Stanley Cavell amongst a wide range of scholars and traditions. In particular, he is exploring the meaning and experience of art and its separation and connection from everyday life.

### **Melissa Rooney**

“Technology as enculturation in Sci Fi”

ABSTRACT: As one of the foundations of the Western literary tradition, the epic presented anthropocentrism as the natural and correct mode of enculturation, where man is central in instructing and perpetuating the language, values, and rituals of the culture depicted. This is an ideological perspective that science fiction traditionally rejects, instead positioning technology as both the mode and method of enculturation, the failure of which is often a key signifier for cultural degradation. Likewise, the restoration or exaltation of human

culture is presented as only possible by correctly harnessing technological means. This paper provides an investigative overview of the way a broad section of influential space opera science fiction works depict technology's function as the gatekeeper for enculturation, either as a lost technological past or as a point of singularity that unlocks hitherto unrealized knowledge and cultural advancement. This analysis will chart works from the early golden age science fiction of Edward Elmer "Doc" Smith and Isaac Asimov, through to modern day texts and films, including space opera classics such as *Starship Troopers* and *Enders Game*. It will argue for a reconceptualization of science fiction, historically considered a disposable genre of little enduring cultural value, and instead will suggest a broader and more sympathetic view of the values and qualities of science fiction and its representations of the role of technology in the elevation of mankind.

MELISSA ROONEY is a current PhD candidate at Macquarie University in Sydney, studying English literature. Her recent master's thesis discussed the influence of gender on the epic genre through Elizabeth Barrett Browning's epic work *Aurora Leigh*. Her current doctoral studies focus on the relationship between the epic and space opera science fiction works across film, television, books and graphic novels.

### **Kira Alexandra Rose**

"Liquid Futures: The Ethics of Water in Speculative Climate Fiction"

**ABSTRACT:** Water is increasingly coming to the fore as today's most politically contested resource, not to mention the one most vital to our social and economic future. The environmental humanities and postcolonial ecocriticism have started to consider the ethics of resource use through a literary lens, analyzing, for instance, the interdependence of cultural production and oil consumption in "petrofiction." Yet despite increasing water debates in the media, critics have had remarkably little to say about changing literary depictions of this essential resource, and particularly about recent speculative climate fiction that casts light on current political and ethical uncertainties surrounding water's distribution.

This paper offers a comparative analysis of speculative novels whose authors imagine dystopian social futures that rest on water's local and global availability. I place into conversation Paolo Bacigalupi's vision of a water-starved American Southwest in *The Water Knife* (2015) and Emmi Itäranta's *Memory of Water* (2014), in which the world's borders have been redrawn and water's control and uneven circulation have violent repercussions. These texts come together in their attempt to envision how environmental ethics shift to accommodate fundamental changes in reality; their treatment of water's instrumental and symbolic functions in the face of institutional abuses; and their self-conscious representation of how global fiction, which refracts our ecological present, seeks to reshape public perception and policy about water.

KIRA ALEXANDRA ROSE is a CLASS Postdoctoral Fellow in the School of Humanities at Nanyang Technological University. She received her PhD in Comparative Literature from Princeton University and holds a master's degree with distinction from the University of Oxford, where she was a Clarendon Scholar. Her postdoctoral project, *Watermarks: Political and Aesthetic Afterlives of an Element*, engages shifting representations of water in transnational literature, art, and media. Rose is the former co-editor-in-chief of Princeton's journal of literary translation, *Inventory*. Her work has appeared in *The New Collection* and *Journal of Modern Literature*.

### **Frances Shaw**

"Machinic empathy and mental health: The ethics of automated empathy and big data in *Her*"

**ABSTRACT:** This paper situates a discussion of *Her*, directed by Spike Jonze, in the context of contemporary developments in empathic machine learning for mental health treatment and therapy. The capacity of machines – and of people – to empathise is represented in sometimes hyperbolic, and at other times ambivalent ways in *Her*. *Her* simultaneously hooks into and critiques a particular imaginary about what artificial intelligence can do when combined with big data: the denouement of the film hinges on this

possibility taken to the extreme, and results in the loss of the singular empathic relationship itself. The conclusion speaks to cultural hopes and fears about artificial intelligence.

I then thread this narrative and the representation of both empathy and artificial intelligence in the film into discussions of contemporary mental health research, in particular the possibilities for empathic machines or for the automation of treatment in mental health contexts, whether through machine learning or guided interventions. *Her* provides some useful ways to think through utopian, dystopian, and ambivalent readings of such applications of technology in a broader sense. The imagining of a social future in which machines are tasked with the role of empathy, raises questions about sincerity and loss of human relationality, about what relationships are, and about what empathy is. It provides a way in to discussion of the relational ethics of automated empathy and response, both through hyperbolic and utopian imaginaries of big data and artificial intelligence, and more ambivalent readings of automation in the context of empathy.

FRANCES SHAW. Black Dog Institute. Media and Communications, University of Sydney.

### **JungJu Shin**

“Imagining the unimaginable: hegemony and alternative futures in *On Such a Full Sea* and *Snowpiercer*”

**ABSTRACT:** More often than not, our ruminations of the future in speculative narratives confirm the future as a dystopia that accentuates failures of the present system. In this paper I examine Chang-rae Lee’s novel *On Such a Full Sea* (2014) and Joon-ho Bong’s film *Snowpiercer* (2013), their critiques of the destructive ramifications of global neoliberal capitalism and explore possibilities of disavowing current domestic and global racial, gender, class relations valorized by Western patriarchal hegemony and supremacy.

The texts examine structures of hegemony in post-environmental-apocalypse dystopias. Lee underscores the perpetuation of racial hierarchy in his novel in which a large part of the world is made uninhabitable by environmental destruction and communities are divided by class – residents of the factory cities produce food and other goods for the rich elite of Charter colonies. Soon it becomes evident that class division is reinforced by racial and ethnic segregation. In *Snowpiercer*, the earth has succumbed to a new ice age and the last remnants of humanity are reduced to a single train within which the lower class passengers crammed at the back of the train face threats to survival, while the upper classes live a luxurious life in the front carriages. What is thinly disguised as class division is also a racialized stratification; depictions of the appropriation of racialized labour and biopolitical control of racialized population reflect their shared concerns about institutional abuses, capitalism, neoliberal governance, issues of migration and refugees.

I argue that these texts ultimately suggest a rejection of the competition altogether, through characters who refuse to participate in the structure of hegemony. Such choices threaten not only the ruling classes but also order and the future of the entire society. Yet they invite the reader to imagine the future that may be currently unimaginable, besides the models of society and hegemony that we consider to be inevitable.

JUNGPU SHIN is a PhD candidate in the department of English and Comparative Literary Studies at University of Warwick. Her areas of interest include critical race and ethnic studies, racism, gender and sexuality studies, im/migration, diaspora and (global) citizenship, dynamics and impacts of globalization and neoliberalism, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism on relational, changing notions of subjecthood. Her current project focuses on racial gendering, or gendered racialization, more specifically of Asian/American masculinity reflected in contemporary Anglophone literary and cultural texts.

### **Aisling Smith**

“Beyond the Concavity: Evaluating Dystopia in David Foster Wallace’s *Infinite Jest*”

**ABSTRACT:** Considering how readily the fictional worlds of David Foster Wallace can be discussed within the framework of dystopia, it is surprising that this has not formed the basis of more scholarship of his work. In the current critical field on Wallace there has been some emphasis on his seminal novel *Infinite Jest* (1996) as



an example of apocalyptic fiction, but this paper aims to extend the discussion further than has been attempted by previous scholars. Building on the work of Bradley Fest and Marshall Boswell, I will analyse some of the specific dystopian elements that the novel displays, including *Infinite Jest*'s portrait of a caricature television president, US environmental wasteland, and terrorism by Québécois separatists. Most particularly, however, I will focus on modes of communication as dystopian.

I will argue that the novel's futuristic depiction of communication and technology is one of its most dystopian elements. For example, Wallace foreshadows forms of communication like Skype and presents them as dangerously alienating; his characters use videophones to converse, but in doing so eventually become afraid of the unguardedness of face-to-face encounters. Likewise, the novel's eponymous videotape illustrates a beautifully made film becoming, not an artistic offering of self-expression, but something lethal and to be feared. All the things that are supposed to aid communication and facilitate interpersonal relationships in fact only create divisions between people—and this has an eerie relevance to the current day world.

I will ultimately suggest that this is the true dystopia of the novel: not the unravelling of the external world, but the isolation experienced by its characters. Using affect theory, I argue that this ultimately leads to the solipsism and affectlessness that Wallace diagnoses as endemic in modern culture—and one he presents as the ultimate dystopian state: people who are unable to feel or step beyond the boundaries of the self.

AISLING SMITH is a PhD candidate in literary studies at Monash University, where she is a recipient of the Cecile Parish Memorial Scholarship. Her dissertation uses affect theory to explore the works of David Foster Wallace. She is co-editor-in-chief of *Colloquy: text, theory, critique* and an editor of the 2017 *Verge* Anthology. She works as a teaching assistant and is also a creative writer with several short stories and poems published.

### Cat Sparks

“From ecocatastrophe to cli fi: Imagining alternate pathways to sustainable futures”

**ABSTRACT:** Science fiction has long been appreciated as the literature that speculates on scientific change while reflecting contemporary societal concerns.

In the 60s and 70s, popular authors such as Ursula le Guin, John Brunner and Harry Harrison published ecocatastrophe science fiction warning of the ramifications of impending problems such as overpopulation, pollution and the greenhouse effect. But despite such accurate and prescient cautionary tales, science fiction on the whole failed to resonate broadly beyond its immediate subcultural ecosystem: its readerships and communities. Genre taint kept often sophisticated material from reaching wider ‘mainstream’ audiences, resulting in it being dismissed as mere entertainment.

Growing rapidly in recent years, climate fiction has budded off from science fiction to become the literature of our planet in transformation. Climate fiction has the potential to form a bridge connecting scientific information with populations preparing to face an uncertain future the past can no longer be relied upon to guide us through.

By expanding beyond the borders of its parent genre science fiction, and attracting writers and readers from the broader literary landscape, climate fiction draws attention to the physical, political, and socio-economic changes that will no doubt be required to mitigate and adapt to the ever-increasing threat of global warming, such as reorientation of economies, geopolitical cooperation and intervention, the required revolt against neoliberal ideology resulting in essential changes to mass consumption practices.

Cli fi is shaping up as the literature of now because we're past the point of no return. Art, literature and the humanities have a vital role to play in cultivating aspirational humanism, combatting public apathy, encouraging resilience, resistance and resolve, supplementing science, education and journalism with the intention of altering the trajectory of the climate crisis.

CAT SPARKS is a multi-award-winning Australian author, editor, and artist whose former employment has included: media monitor, political and archaeological photographer, graphic designer, manager of Agog! Press, and fiction editor of *Cosmos Magazine*. Her debut science fiction novel, *Lotus Blue*, set in a far future war and climate-ravaged Australia, was published by Skyhorse in 2017. She's in the final stages of a PhD examining the intersection of ecocatastrophe science fiction and climate fiction through Curtin University.

### **Christian Velasco**

“Stranger in a Colonised Land: The Representation of Colonial Identity in the 1960s Science Fiction”

**ABSTRACT:** As a result of the political movements of independence, colonialism and its social repercussions was a common topic in sci-fi literature of the 1960s. One of its main concerns was the extraction of resources and subjugation of the colony by the metropolis, but also the appropriation of the coloniser of the conquered land. It implies, the formation of their own distinctive culture as a result of a combination of the colonisers and the inhabitant’s traditional backgrounds. Process that along with the search of autonomy, tended to create tensions with the metropolis. The historical colonialism and the African decolonisation during the second half of twentieth century was certainly source of inspiration for the authors.

This paper explores the different views of Robert A. Heinlein, Philip Dick and Frank Herbert around the creation of national identity and cultural appropriation during these convulsive times. The aim is to understand the differences and coincidences of perception foresighted in the science fiction literature during the period, and how ethical concerns as, race, political liberty and social justice during the African liberation influenced and were represented among their works. In doing that, the research remarks the deep influence that the decolonisation process was for this generation of sci-fi writers. Also, the paper is an attempt to discuss the importance of the science fiction, rising fundamental questions normally left aside by history and social sciences.

**CHRISTIAN VELASCO:** I am a second year PhD Student at Warwick University; my research is an historical analysis of the banking system in Kenya (1950-1970). I did my master at LSE; my dissertation was a comparative analysis of the banking system in Ghana and Botswana. In both studies, my attempt is to understand how the financial system works in developing countries under a colonial rule. My research interests are in social and economic history, particularly the historical construction and deconstruction of colonial systems. Its institutions and the social implications associated with colonial domination.

### **Shalom Verghese**

“Prim vs. Peeta; O’Brien vs. Julia: Love and Individuality in *The Hunger Games* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*”

**ABSTRACT:** George Orwell’s infamous dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, was published in 1949. In 2008, the first book in Suzanne Collins’ young adult dystopian trilogy, *The Hunger Games*, was released. Nearly 60 years later, Collins’ book reflects Orwellian concerns about the loss of individualism as a result of the omnipresent surveillance of a totalitarian government.

Collins, like Orwell, utilizes the theme of love and/or sexuality, which is positioned as an act of defiance. Love (or sexual attraction) is what enables their protagonists, Katniss Everdeen, a sixteen-year-old girl, and Winston Smith, a thirty-nine-year-old man respectively, to regain their individuality and explore their self-identity against the totalitarian regimes of Panem and Ingsoc. Katniss’s platonic love for Prim is contrasted with her sexual attraction for Peeta, with the ‘star-crossed lovers’ act constructed by outside forces in a bid to control her individuality. Similarly, Winston’s sexual attraction to Julia is eradicated and replaced with the ‘pure’ love of Big Brother.

In this paper, I will be investigating why love and/or sexuality is used as a subversive device within dystopian literature, through exploring the interaction between love and individuality in Collins’ *The Hunger Games* and Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In analysing these texts, my aim is to discover its broader use in

dystopian literature, and *why* love is positioned as a tool that can awaken dormant individuality, or why even in these futuristic visions, individuality is imagined as significant to regain. Why is uniformity envisioned as an apocalypse that should be avoided *specifically* through the emotion of love or sexual attraction?

SHALOM VERGHESE is a current Honours student in the Literary Studies program at Monash University, Clayton. She received her B.A. in 2016, majoring in Philosophy and Literary Studies. Her research interests include: identity politics and third space, with a particular focus on gender studies. Her thesis is entitled: “‘I’m not Georgina. I’m George’: Troubling the Self-Identification of ‘George’ in Enid Blyton’s *The Famous Five* Series.” It argues that the gendered body of Georgina/George can be best understood when a contemporary understanding of trans folk is applied to the close textual analysis of all twenty-one books in the series.

### Freya Verlander

“‘Let the Canning Begin,’ Or, Human Waste in the Workplaces of *Pastoralia*”

ABSTRACT: In this paper, I argue that Michael Thompson’s model of the life cycle of rubbish (see *Rubbish Theory*), translates onto the dystopic workplace environments of George Saunders’ collection *Pastoralia* (2000) to reveal the mechanisms behind the conversion of human employee to human waste. Dave J. Orr and Linda M. Orr’s *Eliminating Waste in Business* (2014) suggests that if only “thirteen percent of a company’s sales force brings in eighty percent of the revenue [...] it is very clear that many companies have an extremely high number of ineffective, unproductive salespeople” (135); unproductive employees should be disposed of to increase workplace efficiency. *Pastoralia* presents unethical strategies for the reduction of human waste, including taxes for the removal of literal human waste and sending less food, under the guise of “austerity” (Saunders 48). Human functioning (emotional and biological) is viewed as waste and as: “Not that we’re advocating some sort of biological plug or chemical constipator. Not yet, anyway!” (Saunders 47) suggests, the future may include physical/chemical alterations to the employee.

Thompson suggests a three-stage life cycle of rubbish: transient – rubbish – durable. I consider the employees in *Pastoralia* at each stage. Thompson’s theory implies that: “rubbish [as] the necessary middle point, is largely invisible” (Engeström 3), but *Pastoralia* makes rubbish visible through depictions of live waste (“rubbish” employees and animated corpses), wasted lives, and waste disposal within the workplace. Thompson’s idea that “the boundaries between rubbish and non-rubbish [are] not fixed but move in response to [...] pressure” (Engeström 5), is evidenced in *Pastoralia* through the blurring of literal and figurative waste. Employees as labour objects (non-rubbish) can be managed, re-evaluated, and disposed of, as literal waste (rubbish) through “canning” and “boxing.” The process facilitated by corporate doublespeak, the proverbial “stickiness of labels,” and paper trails (the evidence of constant assessment). The conversion of waste to durable object through revaluation is also possible but benefits those in power.

FREYA VERLANDER: I am a first-year PhD student at the University of Warwick, based in the English and Comparative Literature department. My research interests include skin-studies, psychoanalytic and performance theory, contemporary performance, literature and neuroscientific thought. My PhD focuses on the skin as the site of spectatorial experience, engagement, and imagined occupation in performance. I consider the aesthetic conditions (specifically representations of damaged skin) which provoke engagement, and the theories that can be applied to, and produced by, the skin-based relational dynamic. Stretching. Swapping. Sharing. Tearing. Making. Taking. Stealing. Skins.

### João Vicente

“The point of view of the animal: Ontology and ethics of alterity in *The Many Selves of Katherine North*, by Emma Geen”

ABSTRACT: In the last decades, the principles and procedures characteristic of Modern science, which to a great extent inform what has been described as the Western view of the world and of human agency, have

been criticized by many, who denounce the lack of ability displayed by this tradition to tackle and understand the complexity of the systems of organization of beings, as well as its negative impact on the environment and on human societies. Some voices, arising from the centres of power and likewise from the peripheries (most notably from Africa) call for the re-foundation of Modernity along very different lines. Emma Geen's debut novel *The Many Selves of Katherine North* (2016) contributes to this debate. This speculative fiction is set in a not so distant future and describes the predicaments of Katherine North, 19, who for seven years has been projecting her consciousness through a neurological interface into the bodies of lab-grown (or printed) animals. In our paper, we aim to analyse how the novel constructs consciousness, based on phenomenological principles, as well as the ways in which it attempts to disrupt the human versus animal apparatus (Agamben). Furthermore, we will look into how the text develops notions of identity/selfhood in relation to the body and how the latter acquires political relevance (the *zoè-bios* dynamics will be explored). On the other hand, we will touch on the contradictory notion of an ethics of alterity presented in the novel (limited as it is by the nature of the technology, as well as by its misuses at the hands of capitalist commodification). And finally, we will consider the ideas of language and communication discussed in the novel, and how these may relate to a reflection on the possibilities of establishing community between human and animal.

JOÃO VICENTE graduated in Modern Languages and Literatures from the University of Lisbon and is now a PhD candidate at the University of Warwick, where he focuses on the contemporary novel (mostly in Portuguese). He deals with issues pertaining to the construction of memory and community, and likewise relating to the representation of language and *poiesis*.

#### **Anne-Maree Wicks**

“H.P. Lovecraft's Weird Tale Ideal: Angela Carter's New Weird Dystopia”

**ABSTRACT:** This paper critiques whether H.P. Lovecraft's Old Weird standards remain relevant to the ways in which women writing the New Weird resist and/or transform the Lovecraftian weird tale ideal, such as Angela Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972). In his *Notes on Writing Weird Fiction* (1937) Lovecraft explains that there must be particular attention taken in order to achieve the great desideratum of weird fiction: Lovecraftian aura of cosmic horror achieves the strange reality of the unreal. This elevation of Lovecraft has produced a scholarship that tends to discuss an Old Weird canon exclusively authored by men, silencing the work of women writers within the genre, and sidelining women's utopias as examples of minority. The aim of this discussion is therefore to identify women's grotesque bodies within the New Weird as depicted by Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*. Though this, I aim to reveal how women writers are rewriting Old Weird phallogocentrism in a way that achieves generating a critical and creative feminist dystopia.

ANNE-MAREE WICKS is a first year PhD student of English literature in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Southern Queensland. Her current research focuses on New Weird literature's concerns of genre and form, and exploring the concept of trauma figures within the New Weird by contemporary women writers.

#### **Tomas Zahora**

“Dystopic fictions: Resurrection and the rise of the medieval cyborg”

**ABSTRACT:** Scholastic debates of the thirteenth century made a lasting contribution to Western conceptualization of the human body and its capacities. Their increasingly refined understanding of affect, affections, and passions (aspects of the soul similar to the modern concept of the emotions), together with their fascination with the book of Revelation, allowed them to investigate not only the material human bodies of now but also their resurrected avatars. To some, resurrected bodies amounted to re-embodied souls. To others, however, resurrection would lead to the rise of spiritual super-humans set upon an incinerated earth. In this paper I will explore scholastic views of the emotions of the resurrected body and its environment

through a late-thirteenth-century treatise *De consideratione novissimorum*, an extensive tractate on the four last things: death, resurrection and last judgment, hell, and glory. I will argue that medieval scholars not only set the stage for a conceptualisation of the body analogous to modern discussions of the cyborgs, but also created an apocalyptic vision of the universe whose otherworldliness anticipates the parameters of dystopic science fiction.

TOMAS ZAHORA is a Research and Learning Coordinator at Monash University Library, and a researcher in the history of ideas, science and education. Apart from managing the library's engagement with the faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, he teaches writing, critical thinking and communication skills, and works with librarians and academics to embed skills into the curriculum. He enjoys using the writing group format to teach doctoral students to improve their writing, and has recently developed a masters-level communication course for international students, in which critical thinking skills and conventions are taught from a cross-cultural perspective. He has written on plagiarism, encyclopedias, memory and forgetting, and the interaction of futurism and apocalypse, as well as on the history of thought and intertextual practices.

### **Artem Zubov**

“Evgeniy Zamyatin’s *We* and the Idea of Science Fiction in the Early Soviet Russia”

**ABSTRACT:** Evgeniy Zamyatin, a famous Russian writer, was also a theorizer of science fiction, or *nauchnaya fantastika*. Zamyatin’s idea of the genre, I argue, became the conceptual foundation for his dystopian novel *We*.

As a political manifesto, the novel *We* was banned by the Soviet censors. Victor Shklovsky, who read the novel from the structuralist perspective, called it a failure. But reading it from the perspective of Zamyatin’s understanding of science fiction reveals *We* as the author’s literary experiment, an exercise in creating social extrapolations.

Life, perceived through the acceleration of technological progress became fantastic, thus the most unrealistic literature is the works of realists who deny, or cannot, seeing the changes. In his critical study *Herbert Wells* (1922), the first extensive theoretical overview of poetics and history of science fiction in Russia, Zamyatin posited that H.G. Wells’ tradition of the genre, unlike realistic prose – the dominant mode of writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia, – is a new form of literature and the only form that can reflect dynamic processes of coming of social and technological modernity. Zamyatin’s conceptualization of the genre derives from William Thomson and Rudolf Clausius’ research in thermodynamics, specifically their formulation of the notion of *entropy* that by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was interpreted in cultural and social terms as degeneration, particularly in the works by Henry Adams and Max Nordau. While the law of entropy shocked Zamyatin’s contemporaries by its inevitability and irreversibility, the writer found the remedy which resided in revolutionization of Russian literature.

In my presentation, I focus on Zamyatin’s critical works and literary and technological contexts of his theorizations to provide a cultural reading of the novel *We*.

ARTEM ZUBOV: Ph.D., Lecturer in Lomonosov Moscow State University (Moscow, Russia), School of Philology, Department of Communication and Discourse Studies.

In the upcoming semester, I am reading courses in science fiction and popular media, sociology of science fiction, and cultural history of popular literature. In my dissertation thesis, I investigated the emergence of science fiction in the *fine-de-siècle* Russia as a complex process of interrelations between technological progress, communities of readers, and illustrated literary magazines as a new popular medium. Currently, I am working on a monograph where I continue my research of the early Russian science fiction and its place in the field of literary production.

## Creative Readings

### **Anoushka Benbow-Buitenhuis**

“Smiling Gives You Wrinkles and Sun Exposure Damages Your Skin, but Science Saves Us All in the End”

**SUMMARY:** This sociological fictional short story utilizes current biotechnological breakthroughs, trends in anti-ageing medicine and culture and dystopian concerns (such as falling life expectancy for lower socioeconomic individuals) to imagine a horrific future where an impoverished youth sell their blood, collagen and body parts/organs to keep the rich looking young and living even longer. Residing in luxurious gated communities under impenetrable sun-protected domes filled with clean air, the wealthy are hundreds of years old and nipped, tucked and injected. They are insulated by hundreds of years of medical progress and scientific discoveries. In contrast, ninety-five per cent of the world live in dire poverty on a ruined planet with low air quality and a rabidly hot sun, with an average life expectancy of thirty years.

The story fits into the biopunk genre, and more generally, can be considered a piece of transgressive (e.g. a low likelihood of a happy ending/comeuppance) or dystopian sociological fiction. It intends to be character-driven; from 2 perspectives – one character is a rich woman named Stephanie, who lives in comfort, and the other character is a poverty-stricken eighteen-year old named Shelley, who sells, and does, what she can for money out of pure necessity. This dark story wants to make a harsh assessment of the current politico-economic trajectory of the globalised and digitized world, considering how human life itself might become further commodified and meaningless under an accelerated pro-capitalist authoritarian political regime (such as what some global implementations of neoliberalism have involved e.g. in South America).

ANOUSHKA BENBOW-BUITENHUIS is a PhD student in the Monash University School of Social and Political Sciences and a Teaching Associate in the Monash University School of Media, Film and Journalism. She is a transgressive fiction writer, a sociologist and a writer who has worked within several fields/genres. Her transgressive critique of PhD and academic culture titled “Peeling Up” was recently published in the inaugural edition of *So-Fi*, a sociological fiction magazine and she publishes blog-posts for the Australian Sociological Association. Currently, she researches anti-ageing cosmetic culture and the political economic effects of encroaching ‘Middle Ageism.’

### **Else Fitzgerald**

*Nearly Curtains*

**SUMMARY:** I would like to present a reading of creative work from my current project: a collection of short speculative fiction exploring possible futures.

*In a near future ravaged by firestorms and water wars a genetically modified woman survives because of her enhanced ability to smell ground water. Two Archivists must decide what is really worth saving when the world is flooded by rising sea levels. In a heavily policed state that preferences the human and punishes the different, a mother gives herself up to save her transgenic child. A man struggles with an addiction to virtual reality, living indefinitely with the aid of anti-aging technology. After the oceans have dried out a group of highly evolved robots contemplate their remaining days on a dead planet.*

Each of the stories in *Nearly Curtains* moves forward in time – from an Australia not so different to now, to thousands of years forward when the world is unrecognisable due to human induced climate change – exploring landscapes, language and technology and the ways they may shift and alter in a radically changing world.

Cli-fi has the capacity to imagine unknown futures, both from utopian and dystopian perspectives. It can interrogate the impact of cultural despair and discuss the idea of place within a framework of history,

politics, colonisation and the implications of patriarchy. The project examines how this writing might be used as a space to challenge long-standing attitudes towards anthropogenic climate change. The work explores the ways in which we can write within this genre as a form of protest and how texts can inspire behaviour change and act as a means of giving voice to alternative futures.

ELSE FITZGERALD is a Melbourne-based writer. Her work has appeared in various places including *Australian Book Review*, *The Suburban Review*, *Offset*, *Melbourne Knowledge Week Stories* and *Award Winning Australian Writing*. She has won or been commended in prizes including the Grace Marion Wilson Prize, the Elizabeth Jolley Short Story Prize and the Margaret River Short Story Award. Else is a WrICE (Writers Immersion and Cultural Exchange Program) Emerging Writer Fellow for 2017, and is currently working on a collection of short speculative fiction.

### **Steve Gay**

“*The Callista Alignment: A Novel* – Exploring Reversals in Animal Otherness”

**SUMMARY:** Where is the dividing line between a person, and an animal – and what would it take to draw it in a different place? Such questions draw us into an ethical maze, though a fertile one for science fiction, where asymmetric relationships can explore questions of non-human rights and responsibilities, and philosophical contradictions.

There has been a long literary history of depicting the collision of intelligent species, from Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, to H.G. Wells’s *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, and more recent award-winning novels and films. *The Callista Alignment*, continues this tradition of animal alterity, exploring ‘otherness’ in a world where humans co-exist with a more dominant species, and considering the tensions from the conflicting perspectives of various characters. My story imagines interactions and crises, where the protagonist struggles to adjust to a capability deficit, as well as social, political, and legal constraints.

*When Yan Feyrsten buys a new human to ease his loneliness, he can’t imagine that she will drag him into a revolution. Found on a drifting interstellar transport, Kali is something that hasn’t been seen on Antaris in living memory – she’s an Earth-born ‘natural’. Refusing to recognise herself as a mere animal, she is soon turning Yan’s life upside down, and threatening the delicate social balance in the process. As a political crisis threatens to tear Yan and Kali apart, revolution awaits its cosmic signal, and its leader.*

In my presentation, I propose to read excerpts from my novel to illustrate various points of interest, as well as discussing how the novel compares with the way those issues have been treated by science fiction authors historically

STEVE GAY: I began writing fiction on my daily commute, a creative diversion from my work in the City. Now I am ‘post-career’ and an MA student at Warwick. *The Callista Alignment* has been completed as part of my coursework, and I am now writing a historical novella, imagined through the eyes of a child at the time of the Coventry blitz. I live with my wife and family in Rugby, combining my writing, with work to promote a financial resilient society, and the development of opportunities for young people

### **Susannah Heffernan**

“A Bitter Mist – a speculative novella”

**SUMMARY:** How will Matthias Devachan survive as an artist in a near future where creativity has no value? In New Europa, to be creative is to be a social outcast, officially declared an ‘In-valid’. Orwell teased, in *Why I Write*, that all artists are ‘vain, selfish and lazy.’ The novella, A Bitter Mist, explores a dystopia built on the premise that artists make nothing useful, and are thus irrelevant. Faced with utilitarian demands, the ‘Able’ citizens of New Europa view artists with derision.

Matthias inhabits an ‘other’ world outside the ‘healthy’ hegemony. Drawing on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and Miller’s assertion that one has to be ‘sick to be creative,’ In-valids are identified at birth via a test

for hippocampal sclerosis. (I am fascinated by the relatively high incidence of neurological conditions such as epilepsy among writers and artists, for instance Woolf, Proust, Van Gogh). The story explores what happens to the artist when their wider audience is removed. In this alterity, will Matthias become conceited, inward-looking, narcissistic and purposeless? Ironically, this would be a kind of sickness. The novella echoes Mann's *Death in Venice*, emphasising how Matthias' enforced 'art for art's sake' leads to a degeneracy he recognises within himself and seeks to fight. Disillusioned, he temporarily discovers new vigour via an infatuation with an 'Able' who appears to be creative, Matthias is at first fascinated, then protective of the young man, and the novella follows their fraught journey. The story explores the impossibility of Matthias' desires, not just for the beautiful youth, but also for a sense of artistic fulfilment.

SUSANNAH HEFFERNAN is a writer of literary speculative fiction. She is completing a PhD in Literary Practice (Creative Writing) at Warwick. Her stories pose questions of identity, alienation, and the telling of unheard histories. She performed her work at London's Southbank Centre for the 2016 Festival of Love, QueerCircle at Limewharf, and at the Albany Theatre. Her published credits include the Warwick anthology, *Moonshine*, Open Pen magazine, and she has been shortlisted for the sci-fi anthology, *Singularity 50*. Susannah lives in Deptford and is working on her first novel – an underworld quest influenced by Dante and TS Eliot. @sueheffwrites

### **Katie Paine**

“Readings from *An Ersatz Eye*”

SUMMARY: I propose to read excerpts from a collection of short stories centered around a core narrative. The fiction concerns a speculative future in which earth has been left as a colossal archive of human history, long after human society has moved away from our galaxy. An A.I is left as the archivist and conservator of the collection: however, due to an antiquated bureaucratic anomaly, legislation decrees that a single human being must be present in the archive at all times. A child is selected at birth, raised in the care of the A.I, to monitor the archive. To stop the child from going insane from isolation, the A.I creates an elaborate virtual world for her to live in, but things slowly become unraveled, the circuitry of this fiction is exposed, fragments from peripheral narratives converge, fluctuate and intrude. Some involve: a fabricated transcription of a discourse surrounding the history of photography, plague doctors in Baroque Spain, the history of the first X-Ray and the horrors that ensued, the inherent vice of images and a time in which museums and all recorded forms of human history are decimated...

*And so, as the last vestiges of humanity fled a decaying galaxy, only one remained. In gargantuan subterranean crypts hidden beneath the decimated surface of the earth lay thousands of vaults holding the unimaginably boundless archive of human history: from Ming Dynasty vases to crinolines, slide projectors to the excavated hulls of Viking ships. All archives are naturally under-staffed, and this one, commonly known as The Epilogue was no exception. The day-to-day maintenance and conservation was overseen by a complex artificial intelligence known as A. However as was announced by the New Deputy Conservator, following The Rift of 1963 A.S [After the Schism], there must a living being to care for The Epilogue at all times....*

KATIE PAINE is an artist whose practice involves fiction, criticism and curating alongside installation, collage, video and performance. Paine interrogates accepted notions of historiography and the archive through the creation of complex fictions. Paine often uses science fiction as an apparatus through which to explore the way that events are documented and integrated into our collective understanding of history.

Paine has written for Un Projects, Next Wave Festival, Bus Projects, Art Kollektiv, Nicholas Projects, Art Almanac and Art and Australia. She has exhibited at George Paton Gallery, Rubicon ARI, Paradise Hills, c3 Contemporary Art Space, Testing Grounds, Blindside ARI and Channels Festival.



**Timothy Wong***The Forgotten Beauty*

**SUMMARY:** “I should have died, but instead I slept. Now I must awake.” Young prince Namska encounters these words and its female messenger frequently in his night visions. As he researches his dreams, he finds an age-old secret hidden deep in the labyrinthic mausoleums of the Old Kingdom: the sleeping Princess Aurora surrounded by Old Magic. Through a misplaced kiss on her lips, he manages to awaken her. After sleeping for a thousand years, Aurora finds mountain-high challenges coping in the new age. Humanoids govern the New World, and technology serves every aspect of life. Old Magic has no place in the New World. In the midst of it, an old nemesis resurfaces, seeking to destroy both Namska and Aurora. In order to overcome the treachery, Namska must call upon Aurora and the Old Magic resided in her millennial body.

*The Forgotten Beauty* is a science fiction retelling of Charles Perrault’s *Sleeping Beauty*. It is a work in progress. The intended reading includes excerpts of Aurora’s difficult entry and adjustment into the dystopic New World where Old Magic no longer reigns, and her reminiscences of the Old Kingdom.

TIMOTHY WONG writes mostly plays and musicals, but has an affinity with anything related to speculative fiction and children literature. His first full-length musical, *EVERWORLD*, produced in 2012, won the local BOH Cameronian theatre awards for Best Original Book. In his second full-length musical *ESYA*, he dabbled on the topic of human trafficking in 2015. In his day job, he teaches English and Creative Writing at the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Monash University Malaysia.



