Vniversitat id de València
Facultat de Filologia, Traducció i Comunicació

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

25th

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE
UTOPIAN STUDIES SOCIETY/EUROPE:

Ageing, Intergenerational Relationships and Utopia

July 2-4, 2025

Faculty of Philology, Translation and Communication
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PLENARY LECTURES

1ˢᵗ PLENARY LECTURE

Wednesday, 2ⁿᵈ July, 10:00-11:30h

(Faculty of Philology, Translation and Interpretation)

Utopia and Ageing: an intriguing relationship

Prof. Vita Fortunati[1]

1. Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna, Italy

My paper intends to investigate the complex and intriguing relationship between Utopia and Ageing. The general working hypothesis is that the approach and perspective of utopian writers toward aging are informative to understand how its conceptualization has changed over time, in different historical periods and societies. Accordingly, I will divide my paper into three parts. In the first part I will explore the general reasons why utopian writers have difficulties in addressing/accepting ageing, finitude and death. To this regard, in the second part I will illustrate the different strategies adopted by classical utopian/dystopian writers such as Thomas More, Jonathan Swift and William Morris. In the third part I will address the new scientific scenario focused on rejuvenation and its impact on new possible utopias.

Bionote:

Vita Fortunati was Professor of English and Comparative Studies and the Director of the Centre of Utopian Studies at the University of Bologna. Her main areas of research are Modernism, utopian literature, women's writing, cultural memory, the representation of female body, aging between culture and medicine. Her most important publications on utopia are *Dictionary of Literary Utopias* Paris, Champion, 2000 (with R. Trousson*); Histoire Transnationale de l'utopie littéraire et de l'utopisme*, coordonnée par V. Fortunati et R. Trousson, Champion, 2008. "Utopia/2010:is it time for Meta-Utopia?" in *The Good Place: Comparative perspective on Utopia*, Mussgnug F.,Reza M.(eds.) Peter Lang, Oxford, 2014. "The Rhetoric of Thomas More's *Utopia*: a Key to grasp its Political Message" *Utopia:500 years* ed. by Pablo Guerra, Ediciones Universidad Cooperativa de Columbia, Bogotá Columbia, 2016. "Mort" in *Dictionnaire critique de l'utopie aux temps des Lumières*, sous la direction de B.Baczko, M. Porret et F.Rosset, Geneve, Georg Editeur, 2016 A.Huxley, *Una società ecologica e pacifista,* Milano, Jaca Book, 2017."Literary Utopias: My Personal Journey" Caietele vol.46, 2024.

2nd PLENARY LECTURE

Thursday, 3rd July, 11:00-12:00h

(Faculty of Philology, Translation and Interpretation)

"They still had hopes for themselves and those they loved": Ageing and Intergenerational Relationships in late 20th-century and Early 21st-Century Utopian/ Dystopian World Literature

Prof. Barnita Bagchi [1]

1. Chair and Professor of World Literatures: English, University of Amsterdam

This lecture will focus on aging and intergenerational relationships in late 20th-century and early 21st-century women-authored fictions from different parts of the globe, from an intersectional feminist perspective, and based on notions of world literature, literature that is produced or circulates or is received beyond merely national borders. Engaging in detail with Nabaneeta Dev Sen's Bengali novel translated into English, *Sheet Sahasik Hemantalok: Defying Winter* (1988/2013) Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* (2019), and Shankari Chandran's *Chai-Time in Cinnamon Gardens* (2022, the work from which the quotation forming the sub-title to this lecture is drawn), I examine how framings such as young adult fiction, realistic fictions that are nonetheless in speculative mode, and transcultural avatars of heterotopia help us in considering ageing, ageism, as well as intergenerational relationships in recent utopian and dystopian fiction. How do intersectional categories round race, gender, health, and class play out? How are intergenerational contestations as well as solidarities represented? How do the work of care, and places of care for the ageing, such as homes for the elderly, get inflected in such fiction? What place is offered for the work and value of writing in such fictions, and what new insights emerge when we take age and intergenerationality as key referents in relation to views of writing? What insights emerge in such fictions round differentials of power, globalization as well as round the ongoing work of decolonization?

Bionote:

Barnita Bagchi is Chair and Professor of World Literatures in English at the University of Amsterdam. She worked previously at Utrecht University in the Netherlands and at the Institute of Development Studies Kolkata, India. Educated at Jadavpur, Oxford, Cambridge universities, she is internationally recognized for her academic work on utopia, histories of transnational and women's education, and women's writing in western Europe and south Asia. Her articles have appeared in a wide array of journals, such as *Utopian Studies*, *Religion and Society: Advances in Research*, *Mobilities*, *Paedagogica Historica*, *New Cinemas*, *Open Library of Humanities*, *Mobilities*, and *Women's History Review*, and she has published numerous chapters in edited volumes, with recent publications in *Olive Schreiner: Writing Networks and Global Contexts* (Edinburgh University Press, 2023), *The Palgrave Handbook of Utopian and Dystopian Literatures* (2022), and *Sultana's Sisters: Genre, Gender, and Genealogy in South Asian Muslim Women's Fiction* (Routledge, 2022). Her book-length publications include *Pliable Pupils and Sufficient Self-Directors: Narratives of Female Education by Five British Women Writers, 1778-*

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1814 (New Delhi: Tulika: 2004), a part-translation with introduction, *Sultana's Dream and Padmarag: Two Feminist Utopias*, by Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (New Delhi: Penguin Classics, 2005; renewed Penguin USA edition, 2022), and the edited volumes, *The Politics of the (Im)possible: Utopia and Dystopia Reconsidered* (SAGE, 2012; republished by Atlantic, 2024), *Urban Utopias: Memory, Rights, and Speculation* (Jadavpur University Press, open access, 2020).

3ʳᵈ PLENARY LECTURE

Friday, 4ᵗʰ July, 11:30-12:30h

(Faculty of Philology, Translation and Interpretation)

"Janus Unmasked: Aging, Gerontocide, and the Dystopian Pursuit of Happiness in Utopian Fiction."

Prof. Miguel Martínez López [1]

1. Professor of English Studies, University of Valencia.

This lecture explores the paradoxical role of aging in utopian and dystopian literature, arguing that gerontocide—whether framed as euthanasia, expulsion, or extermination—reveals the genre's Janus-faced relationship with societal different concepts of 'betterment'. Beginning with Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), which seems to rationalize euthanasia as a sort of merciful release for the terminally ill, this analysis traces how later works such as Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1626), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Anthony Trollope's *The Fixed Period* (1882), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915-1979), Isaac Asimov's *Pebble in the Sky* (1950) or Hugh Howey's *Wool* (2011–2013) weaponize aging populations as threats to utopian stability or subvert ageist tropes.

The philosophical and juridical background to the themes of aging, suicide and euthanasia are discussed, in connection to the modern foundation of contemporary debates on this topic, from G.K. Chesterton's reformulation of A. Trollope's approach in *The Fixed Period* to Fredric Jameson's concept of utopian bricolage in *Archaeologies of the Future*, which explain how these narratives reconfigure societal anxieties about aging, resource scarcity, productivity and human dignity.

This lecture concludes by examining the legal and ethical implications of these narratives for our contemporary societies. While More's *Utopia* and R. Williams' Victorian-era essays are often thought to frame gerontocide as a civic duty, modern and contemporary dystopias like *Logan's Run* (1967) or Chie Hayakawa's film *Plan 75* (2023) reveal the totalitarian underpinnings of age-based utopianism. Ultimately, the genre's obsession with aging reflects a broader cultural tension: the pursuit of collective happiness often seems to demand the sacrifice of many citizens, yet true utopianism cannot exist without intergenerational solidarity and elderly experience.

Bionote: Miguel Martínez López is Full Professor and Chair of English Studies at the University of Valencia. He has held positions in Spain's foreign service, serving as Consul of Education in Miami and as Education and Science Commissioner at the Spanish Embassies in Washington, D.C., and Ottawa. A former Fulbright Visiting Fellow at Yale University, Prof. Martínez has authored over one hundred publications, with a primary research focus on utopian literature. His recent books include El Ocaso de Koinonia. La Distopía en la Literatura de los EE.UU. (with A. Burgos, 2024) and the edited volume Thomas More and Spain (2025), as well as articles such as "Ius ad bellum and ius in bello in Thomas More's Utopia" (Glossae. European Journal of Legal History, 2022).

ROUNDTABLE

Wednesday, 2nd July, 16:30-17:30h

(Faculty of Philology, Translation and Interpretation)

"Literature and the science of aging"

Roundtable with Prof. Claudio Franceschi[1] & Prof. José Viña[2]

[1] Claudio Franceschi is at present Professor Emeritus of Immunology at the University of Bologna, Italy, and Editor-in-Chief of Ageing Research Reviews (IF: 12.5), and his main scientific interest is the study of the aging and longevity (centenarians) in humans, with particular attention to immunosenescence and age-related diseases. To this regard he: 1. is author of about 900 papers (H index: 155, Google Scholar, June 2025); 2. proposed the general theories of "inflammaging", "immunobiography" and "garbaging"; 3. received grants from Italian institutions, and coordinated projects funded by European Union and Russian Federation; 3. received several *laurea honoris causa* and international awards.

[2] Professor José Viña is a Professor of Physiology at the University of Valencia. He is Professor of Physiology at the University of Valencia. José Viña leads a successful research group called FRESHAGE that works on different aspects of aging, including healthy aging and its application to Alzheimer's disease. His main contributions include: the first determination that mitochondria are key targets for aging; identification of molecular mechanisms to explain why females live longer than males; identification of new longevity-associated genes, particularly those involved in p53 pathways, telomerase, RAS/GRF1, and antioxidants (G6PD), among others. Dr Viña's papers have been quoted over 25,400 times, yielding an h-Index of 78. His academic awards and recongnitions include, among others, being Doctor Honoris Causa from the Universities of Rennes2, 2012, France and Buenos Aires, 2008, and Past President of the Society for Free Radical Research (Europe) and of the Society for Free Radical Research International (2020- 2022).

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THEMATIC PANELS

The Old as Obsolete: Dystopian Imaginaries of Democracy/Politics Today

Francisco José Martínez Mesa[1]. The Fall of the Old and the Rise of Technocapitalism: Dystopia as Anti-Democratic Discourse

Javier Álvarez Caballero[2]. Eco-Anarchy, Posthumanism, and the Ageing of Democracies: A Utopian Framework through Atwood's MaddAddam Trilogy

Manuela Ceretta[3]. From Aldous Huxley to Nicolò Ammaniti: When Young Means Lawless

Alessandro Dividus[4]. Seniores Priores': Is Every Democracy a Gerontocracy? Dystopian Imaginaries and Intergenerational Conflicts

[1] *University of Zaragoza / HISTOPIA / THE POSTHUMAN WOUND*
[2] *Universidad Complutense de Madrid / HISTOPIA*
[3] *Università di Torino*
[4] *University of Parma / University of Aosta*

The new dilemmas facing our societies today are forcing states and citizens to make decisions on issues and in scenarios that, in many cases, were unprecedented just a few years ago. A significant portion of these challenges stems from the prevailing technological and economic landscape, as well as the globalization of increasingly competitive markets that are, consequently, more voracious and aggressive.

This framework of growth, innovation, and acceleration—which, for some scholars, is constitutive of the lifestyle model imposed by Modernity—has significantly impacted the strategies and actions of political actors—parties, state institutions, individuals—who are increasingly called upon to make progressively more complex and urgent decisions. Despite the growing blur of the national state's role, expectations placed on it remain focused on fulfilling commitments often viewed as failed and disappointing.

It could be said that, just as living organisms, politicians and, in this case, Western democracies have also reached a stage of aging or senescence. This set of changes, arising from the passage of time, leads to a decrease in adaptability and a diminished ability to respond to harmful agents. Narratives centered on children and youth in dystopian fiction reflect a parallel critique, portraying adult society as obsolete and corrupt, while presenting intergenerational conflict as a metaphor for political stagnation. Similarly, works like The Rise of Meritocracy challenge gerontocracies, highlighting tensions between experience-based power and the utopian promise of merit-based renewal.

At the same time, contemporary literature and philosophy offer imaginaries to rethink this decaying political framework. Works like Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy explore how the interplay between eco-anarchism, posthumanism, and the moral implications of technological and ecological acceleration challenge obsolete democratic structures. These narratives envision alternative societal frameworks where humans, posthumans, and hybrids redefine governance, democracy, and intergenerational collaboration.

The growing prominence of this perception, promoted from various spheres, has provided a basis for renewal projects presented as solutions to the current climate of stagnation and inefficacy. However, one must not forget that many imaginaries, often rooted in utopianism, act as engines of ideas, myths, and convictions, shaping how we think and act.

This panel analyzes some of these proposals, which, from utopian or dystopian perspectives, critique politics and democracy as decaying realities. At the same time, it highlights how utopian narratives offer perspectives on renewal and resistance against stagnation.

Bionotes:

[1] Javier Álvarez is a PhD student in the University of Zaragoza and a member of the research groups HISTOPIA and THE POSTHUMAN WOUND. His research investigates the connections between Eco-anarchy and Posthumanism in Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy, arguing that capitalism is a fundamental cause of the ecological dilemmas portrayed in the novels, and finding a link between these two concepts. He has previously taught at Trinity College Dublin and Maynooth University. His most recent publication is "From Modernity to Dystopia: Debord's The Society of the Spectacle in Atwood's Oryx & Crake as an Outgrowth of Bauman's Liquid Modernity." (Futuri, 2024).

[2] Francisco José Martinez Mesa is a Senior Lecturer in Political Theory at the Complutense University of Madrid and a member of the HISTOPIA research group. His work focuses on the study of utopias and dystopias from a multidisciplinary perspective. Among his recent publications are "The Role of Mythical Dystopias in the Age of Fear" (Echinox Journal, vol. 46, 2024), "La insoportable transparencia del ser" in Urraco, M. and Arrieta, C. (eds.), La transparencia. Escritos en torno al centenario de Nosotros (Madrid, 2024), and "When the Frame Becomes Hope: Lights, Shadows and Mirages in Dystopian Films in the Twenty-First Century" (Futuri, 2024).

[3] Manuela Ceretta is full professor of History of political thought at Turin University and she is currently Rector of the University of Valle d'Aosta-Université de la Vallée d'Aoste. She has been working on the utopian/dystopian tradition since years: she edited two collections of essays on George Orwell (2007) and Aldous Huxley (2019). Among her recent publications are: From Darwin among the Machines to Black Mirror: Rise and Fall of a Technological Paradigm, in Dystopian Worlds Beyond Storytelling (Ibidem-Verlags, 2024); Immaginari dell'emergenza o emergenza degli immaginari? in Dis-ordine virale. Politica e linguaggi della crisi, ("Polis" - Roma TrE-Press – 2024).

[4] Alessandro Dividus (1989) holds two PhDs in Political Sciences (University of Genoa; University of Pisa). He is actually a Post-doc researcher with a project on contemporary dystopian literature and meritocracy (University of Parma), and an Adjunct Professor of political philosophy at the University of Aosta. His research areas include British idealism, utopian and dystopian studies, in particular concerning the notion of meritocracy, and the debate regarding positive and negative freedom. He published several articles and essays, two monographs and attended numerous international conferences.

Intergenerational justice as prefiguration of utopian city? Antifragility and inclusivity: reducing inequalities and building sustainable cities and communities

Virgilio Cesarone[1]. Urbanocene and intergenerational (in)justice.

Sergio Labate[2]. From the working-city to the expulsive work: fighting the dystopia of waste

Mariateresa Giammetti[3]. Inhabiting transition.

Carla Danani[4]. Cohousing: seeds for utopia?

[1] *Università degli Studi "G. d'Annunzio" Chieti – Pescara (Italia)*
[2] *Universidad Complutense de Madrid / HISTOPIA*
[3] *Federico II University*
[4] *Università degli Studi di Macerata*

In a global context that can be characterised as Urbanocene, the panel addresses the issue of intergenerational justice, through the lens of antifragility and inclusiveness, as an intersectional principle for building more equitable and sustainable cities for all. In this perspective, some dimensions relevant for an utopian vision – in particular the forms of living and working – are reconsidered

Virgilio Cesarone, Urbanocene and intergenerational (in)justice - The word "Urbanocene" introduces into the history of civilization a fundamental discrimen for understanding our contemporary world and the threats to which it is subjected. Attention must be directed not only to transformations of the earth's environment, but to revolutions in socio-political-economic and personal living as result of the role assumed by the city. With the consumption of resources proceeding superlinearly, as opposed to biological systems growing up sublinearly, this leads to pressing questions on justice and responsibility towards future generations.

Sergio Labate, From the working-city to the expulsive work: fighting the dystopia of waste - Modern cities promised to mean public spaces and generational intersections. The modern utopia of work synthesised precisely this promise. Work did not only represent the economic fact of exploitation, but also the social fact of solidarity. The "division of labor" as social fact was capable to ensure permanent public encounter and knowledge exchange among generations. The contemporary privatization of labor signals a counter-utopian trend, a dystopia where work is no longer space for meeting but rather for (inter)generational isolation.

Mariateresa Giammetti, Inhabiting transition - The word 'transition' – with utopia, architecture and city – help to develop a reflection centred on the current historical conjuncture that has brought and will bring changes. Transformations take place in architectural and urban space and affect intergenerational relationships. Oscillation and topology may be special categories for analysing the 'transition' and declining architectural and urban themes such as density, mobility and environment.

Carla Danani, Cohousing: seeds for utopia? - Ageing populations demand new housing models that ensure dignity and sustainability across generations. Utopian dwelling envision spaces that balance equality, security, and environmental stewardship, ensuring that both present and future generations thrive in interconnected, resilient environments. Co-housing and social housing are suggestions to foster intergenerational justice and building anti-fragility by creating supportive communities.

Bionotes:

[1] Virgilio Cesarone Virgilio Cesarone is Full Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University "G. D'Annunzio" of Chieti-Pescara, where he teaches Philosophy of Religion and Social Ontology, and a member of CISU. His publications and research interests focus on the intertwining of anthropology, religion and politics according to a hermeneutic-phenomenological reading key. Books: Mondo e mito. L'analisi dell'esistenza mitica in Martin Heidegger, Levante, Bari 2001; Per una fenomenologia dell'abitare. Il pensiero di Martin Heidegger come oikosophia, Marietti-1820, Genova-Milano 2008; Nel labirinto del mondo. L'antropologia cosmologica di Eugen Fink, ETS, Pisa 2014; Rimanga il ringraziamento, Orthotes, Napoli 2020, Gestures, Mimesis International, Milano 2023.

[2] Sergio Labate is Associate Professor of Theoretical Philosophy and member of CISU. His research themes were first oriented towards contemporary French philosophy (he has two monographs and other works on authors such as Levinas and Marcel) and then slowly shifted to specific thematic areas: a philosophical exploration of the theme of the gift; a theoretical reflection on hope; a contemporary rehabilitation of the philosophy of work. These three thematic axes remain at the centre of an organic constellation within which he ultimately seeks to move.

[3] Mariateresa Giammetti is Associate Professor of Architectural Composition at the Department of Architecture, University of Naples Federico II. She is a member of the board of the PhD programme of the Habit Department of Excellence, and she is a member of CISU. Her research concerns places that the transformative processes of contemporary urban metabolism have turned into spaces of abandonment and waste. Moreover, she deals with type-morphological issues concerning spaces of the sacred, in particular the design of new spatial typologies for interfaith prayer places dedicated to the three Abrahamic confessions and their impact on the possible hybrid and intercultural spatial dimensions of contemporary European cities.

[4] Carla Danani is Full Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Macerata, where she also teaches Political Philosophy and Philosophy of Dwelling. She is a member of the Board of the Doctorate Course in Humanism and Technology and is Director of the "G. Leopardi" School of Advanced Studies. She is Director of C.I.S.U. (Centro Interuniversitario di Studi sull'Utopia), coordinates many research projects and is on the editorial board of international journals and publishing series. Her most recent research focuses on the meaning of dwelling and place for human beings, on utopian intentionality, on ethics of care and on "spatial justice".

Beyond the Nation: Utopian Imaginaries in Eastern Central Europe

Zsolt Czigányik[1]. The nation on the Central European utopian horizon

Iva Dimovska[2]. Rewriting the Nation: Feminist Utopias and Dystopias in Yugoslav Socialism

Daryna Koryagina[3]. Broadening the scope of utopian literature: the case of Ukraine

[1] *Central European University and Gerda Henkel Foundation*
[2] *Central European University and Gerda Henkel Foundation*
[3] *Central European University and Gerda Henkel Foundation*

As opposed to Western European utopias that tend to be global or universal, the nation has been an important aspect of Central European utopianism. We will attempt to provide a panorama of Central European utopian writings that convincingly support the argument that the concept of the nation is of primary importance to the Central European utopian writer.

We begin with The Voyage of Tariménes (1804) by the Hungarian György Bessenyei and Przedwiośnie (Coming Spring, 1925) by the Polish Stefan Żeromski, both of which foreground the interplay between national identity and utopian ideals. These works are complemented by theoretical reflections by the Romanian philosopher E. M. Cioran, especially his History and Utopia.

While much scholarship on Eastern European utopianism prioritizes Russian texts, this panel highlights Ukrainian utopianism in the 1920-30s, which is a space, canonically limited by scholars to one book - The Sun Machine by the exiled Ukrainian writer Volodymyr Vynnychenko. Based on this case, we aim to discuss why and how the framework of utopianism in literature should be broadened beyond genre definitions and what discoveries about the nature of social dreaming in the case of a subjugated nation await us, when we do so.

The panel also explores the utopian and dystopian motifs embedded in Yugoslav feminist thought during the mid-20th century. The establishment of Yugoslavia after World War I was itself predicated on a utopian ideal: the harmonious coexistence of diverse national communities. However, as feminist writers like Judita Šalgo (1941–1996) reveal, this ideal was fraught with contradictions. Through an analysis of Šalgo's works, we trace how Yugoslav feminists employed utopian and dystopian imagery to critique socialist Yugoslavia's successes and failures in creating an equal, multi-national society. These feminist utopias and dystopias expose the nuanced struggles of Yugoslav feminism within the broader socialist project.

By bringing together these diverse perspectives, our panel underscores the centrality of the nation and its intersections with socialism and/or feminism in Eastern Central European utopian thought. Through a comparative approach, we aim to emphasize the region's unique contributions to utopian literature and its broader cultural and political significance.

Bionotes:

[1] Zsolt Czigányik is a literary scholar, the leader of the 'Democracy in East Central European Utopianism' research group at the Democracy Institute of Central European University, funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation. He gained his PhD in 2010 and habilitation in 2019 at ELTE University, Budapest. He is an associate professor at the English Department of ELTE. Between

2013 and 2020 he worked as a Humanities Initiative Fellow at CEU. He is the secretary of the Utopian Studies Society. His latest book is Utopia Between East and West in Hungarian Literature (Palgrave, 2023).

[2] Iva Dimovska is a postdoctoral fellow, currently working on her project "Utopia and Nationalism in the Formation of Socialist Yugoslavia" within the "Democracy in East Central European Utopianism" research group (2022-2025) funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation, based at the Democracy Institute in Budapest. She holds a PhD (2021) in Comparative Gender Studies from the Central Europea University in Vienna. She has taught courses in feminist and modernist literature and gender studies at universities in Budapest and Vienna. Iva's research interests include modernist literature, utopia and utopianism, socialism, 19th and 20th century literature, gender studies and feminism, and queer theory.

[3] Daryna Koryagina got her BA at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and her MA at Central European University, both at the respective departments of political science. She is currently a PhD student at the department of comparative history at the Central European University and part of a research team of the "Democracy in East Central European Utopianism" project. Her current work is aimed at examining the elusive and complex nature of Ukrainian utopian literature in the 1920-30s.

Temporal Turns: Rethinking Aging, Time, and Utopias in Europe's Deindustrialised Places – The Waste/Land/Futures Project

Anamaria Depner[1]. Chair

Viktoria Greber[2] Katrin Lehner[3]. In the long run: Future perspectives and practices of centenarians

Fiona Schrading[4]. Feeling the future: Utopian affects in Saarland

Andrei Mihail[5]. Entering the field through archives: print media's role in understanding the past's futures

Hannah Spruce[6]. Writing the past: Glaswegian dystopias in Scottish literature

[1] Goethe-University, Frankfurt, Germany
[2] Karl Landsteiner University of Health and Sciences
[3]Karl Landsteiner University of Health Sciences, Krems a.d. Donau, Austria
[4]Goethe-University, Frankfurt, Germany
[5] National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania
[6] Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK

How do people who live in places that have been labelled 'abandoned', often characterized by depopulation or economic decline, feel about the future? How do communities within these 'abandoned' places, tell stories about the past, present, and future of the place they live? How is a utopian future imagined in later life? And how might we refuse binary and problem-oriented understandings of demographic change and intergenerational relationships and begin, instead, to think about living and aging otherwise? These questions are central to our project: Waste/Land/Futures: Intergenerational Relations in Places of Abandonment and Renewal across Europe, which is at the heart of this panel.

The Waste/Land/Futures project is developing intergenerational, future-oriented utopias that allow those usually excluded from speculation about the future to have a stake in it. We draw from critical future and utopian studies and take a pluralistic approach to time encompassing 'generational time' (Woodward 2020, 54), 'geological time' (Chakrabarty 2015), and 'temporal inequalities' (Sharma 2014) in our approach to producing utopian visions of the future. Refusing linearity as a hegemonic temporality, we see the past and the present as critical elements of generating utopian futures, which we see as improvisational, creative, and ongoing (Levitas 2013).

To think through the process of researching dystopian and utopian futures, our panel brings together researchers working in the contexts of Austria, Germany, Romania, and the UK. We focus on methodological approaches to and literary and sociological perspectives on dystopia, utopian futures, and aging. Drawing from (1) ethnographic research – including participant observation, interview data, and archival documents, (2) methodological considerations – regarding the way in which site-specific futures can be ethnographically researched through the perspectives of different generations, (3) future-oriented practices of centenarians and (4) literary aspects on the narration of dystopias, this panel will explore how a research agenda on dystopian and utopian futures can be conceptualized and developed across diverse disciplinary and regional contexts.

This panel does not seek to present definitive conclusions but aims to provide a platform for critical dialogue. By emphasizing discussion and collaborative reflection, the session intends to generate constructive feedback and foster innovative approaches to the study of aging, intergenerational relations, and futures.

Our panel chair is Dr Anamaria Depner from Goethe-University, Frankfurt. Anamaria is Principal Investigator of the Waste / Land / Futures project.

Bionotes:

[1] Dr Anamaria Depner (Panel Chair) is a cultural anthropologist by training with experience in several interdisciplinary contexts. Working as a postdoctoral researcher since 2013, she applied classical ethnographic methods and designed approaches to meet the challenges and requirements of a research design that focuses on both materiality and human-environment relations. Currently, Dr. Anamaria Depner works on theoretical issues of space and ageing in sociology and gerontology and has the scientific lead in the international Research Project "Waste/Land/Futures: Intergenerational relations in places of abandonment and renewal across Europe", funded by Volkswagen Foundation at the University of Frankfurt/Germany.

[2] Viktoria Greber is a research associate at the Karl Landsteiner University of Health and Sciences and a master´s student in sociology at the University of Vienna. Her research experience is both quantitative and qualitative, with a focus on aging and old age. In the interdisciplinary Waste/Land/Futures project she works alongside Katrin Lehner on the themes of aging, agency, and the future.

[3] Katrin Lehner is a social gerontologist at the Karl Landsteiner University of Health Science and a PhD student in sociology at the University of Vienna. Her research explores the social construction of age(ing), focusing on practices through which age(ing) is shaped, maintained, and negotiated across diverse societal contexts. As an expert in qualitative and participatory research methods, she employs innovative approaches to understand how roles in later life are navigated and redefined in evolving social landscapes. In the interdisciplinary Waste/Land/Futures project, Katrin is addressing themes of age(ing), agency and the future.

[4] Fiona Schrading is a research assistant at the Goethe-University Frankfurt and a PhD student in media and culture studies at the University of Düsseldorf. In her PhD project, Un/Doing Time. Re-localisations of Pasts and Futures in the Anthropocene, she explores the question of how hegemonic concepts of time can be disrupted and how different doings of past and future become possible. Her research interests include Anthropocene studies, critical temporality studies, theories of (queerfeminist) New Materialism, feminist science and technology studies, post- and decolonial theory and affect studies.

[5] Andrei Mihail is a Bucharest-based anthropologist working for the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration. His scientific interests revolve around health and sport. He aims to develop projects that combine ethnographic methodologies with activism so that research results contribute to the positive transformation of documented social phenomena. Since 2018, he is documenting the history and the social role of Bucharest's mass sports infrastructure to determine its contribution to the quality of life in the city's neighbourhoods. He is the author of the FC Newsletter, in which he comments, from an anthropological perspective, on events in contemporary football.

[6] Hannah Spruce works as a Research Fellow in the English and Creative Writing department at Leeds Beckett University, where she researches contemporary literature, medical humanities, and reading communities. Hannah is currently writing her first book, Destabilising Psychopathy

Myths through Contemporary US and Canadian Women's Writing, for the series Contemporary Cultural Studies in Illness, Health, and Medicine at Edinburgh University Press. Hannah leads the work package for science communication on the Waste/Land/Futures project.

Utopia and the technical politics of ageing

Graeme Kirkpatrick[1]. Technical politics and utopias of ageing management

Daniele Fazio-Vargas[2]. Singing as a Form of Intergenerational Solidarity: The Role of Music in the 2019 Chilean Uprising

Xin Li[3]. Between Urban Acceleration and the Promise of Digital Utopia: Exploring Older Adults' Douyin Practices in China's New First-Tier Cities

Tom Redshaw[4]. Digital Inclusion as Utopian Ideal: A study of Greater Manchester's Digital Inclusion Action Network

Zhang Yuze[5]. Digital Utopias in the Twilight Years: Digital Addiction, Intergenerational Relationships, and Democratic Participation among Rural Older Adults in China

[1] University of Manchester
[2] University of Manchester
[3] University of Manchester
[4] University of Salford
[5] University of International Business and Economics (UIBE).

This panel looks at the technical politics of ageing with a shared focus on utopian issues. The five papers share a 'critical constructivist' approach to technology design and use, viewing it as shaped by the competing perspectives of rival social groups. This process is ineliminably political and it involves strategies and tactics that shape both the form taken by technical artefacts and the actors involved in the struggle for control. The papers combine theoretical analyses and empirical case studies, with the latter covering such topics as new media, 'douyin' use by older people in Chinese cities; singing and music streaming services and intergenerational solidarity in Chile; local government digital inclusion strategies in Manchester; and older peoples' addiction to technical media in rural China. In each case, both older people and technologies emerge as socially shaped in ways that reflect and reinforce social inequalities and the struggle to articulate political views and values that challenge those inequalities. An intersectional approach to ageing and socio-technical disadvantage views it alongside those of class, gender and ethnicity. The papers vary in their identification of the utopian element in these struggles over technology and societal design, with some viewing it negatively as an attempt to impose a single vision on older people and technology design and use while others find promise in the, often unreflected upon, immanent utopian potentials of the situations under investigation. The result should be a (near-)global appraisal of the intersections of technology, ageing and utopia.

Between Urban Acceleration and the Promise of Digital Utopia: Exploring Older Adults' Douyin Practices in China's New First-Tier Cities
Xin Li

Digital Inclusion as Utopian Ideal: A study of Greater Manchester's Digital Inclusion Action Network
Tom Redshaw

Technical politics and utopias of ageing management
Graeme Kirkpatrick

Digital Utopias in the Twilight Years: Digital Addiction, Intergenerational Relationships, and

Democratic Participation among Rural Older Adults in China
Zhang Yuze

Singing as a Form of Intergenerational Solidarity: The Role of Music in the 2019 Chilean Uprising
Daniela Fazio-Vargas

Bionotes:

[1] Graeme Kirkpatrick is Professor of Social and Cultural Theory at the University of Manchester, UK. Recent publications include Marxism, Religion and Human Emancipation (Palgrave 2022) and Technical Politics (MUP 2020). Long-standing interest in the neglected utopian dimension of critical theory.

[2] Daniele Fazio-Vargas is a Final-Year Sociology PhD Student at the University of Manchester. She holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy and a bachelor's degree in history from the Universidad de Los Andes (Bogotá, Colombia), where she did her Master's in Sociology. In her PhD research, she has been exploring the political significance of music in the context of the 2019 Chilean uprising. Throughout her career, she has been interested in analysing the interplay between arts, politics, and social transformation. Her main areas of interest include the Social Movements Studies, Philosophy of Arts and Aesthetics and Latin American Popular Music.

[3] Xin Li is a PhD candidate in Sociology at the University of Manchester, focusing on the intersections of urban environments, digital platforms, and visual media. Xin serves as a peer reviewer for several journals, including Globalizations published by the Taylor & Francis Group. Her research articles have been featured in journals such as Disability & Society.

[4] Tom Redshaw is Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Salford. He holds a doctorate from the University of Manchester and has published on socio-technical politics, including several articles on social applications of blockchain technology and the progressive potential of alternative currency systems.

[5] Zhang Yuze is a Lecturer in the Department of International Journalism and Communication at the University of International Business and Economics (UIBE). He holds a PhD from Renmin University of China and has been a visiting student at the University of Manchester. A recognised photographer and documentary filmmaker, his work has been featured on China Media Group (CMG) and other prominent media outlets. His research interests focus on media technology, international communication, and photojournalism.

Utopian studies initiatives from Spain

Juan Pro[1]. The HISTOPÍA team, a new journal and a laboratory of utopia

Hugo García Fernández[2]. The HISTOPÍA team, a new journal and a laboratory of utopia

Carlos Ferrera[3]. The HISTOPÍA team, a new journal and a laboratory of utopia

[1] *CSIC*
[2] *Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM)*
[3] *Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM)*

The panel presents several recent contributions from members and former members of the HISTOPIA team, founded in 2015 at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and currently linked to the CSIC. All of them arise from the reflection of this group of researchers on the centrality of the utopian impulse in the modern world and share their objective of researching it in a historical, transnational and interdisciplinary perspective. The panel is intended both as a presentation of these specific contributions and as a call to debate the ideas that inspire them.

1) Juan Pro: The HISTOPÍA team, a new journal and a laboratory of utopias

After a brief presentation of the HISTOPIA Team and its trajectory, two new initiatives will be presented:

The Journal of Utopian Studies (REUTOPIA), whose first issue will appear in 2025, an open access, multilingual and interdisciplinary scientific publication, published in Spain by Editorial CSIC and directed by Juan Pro.

The Utopia Lab, a space for social interaction to raise and discuss utopian proposals.

2) Hugo García: A Reader on Utopianism in the Hispanic world

Presentation of the English and Spanish versions of the same work (Hugo García, Juan Pro and Emilio Gallardo, Hispanic Utopias: A Historical Reader, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2025; and Juan Pro, Hugo García and Emilio Gallardo, Utopías hispanas: historia y antología, Granada, Comares, 2022), a critical anthology of utopian texts from Spain and Latin America and a systematic study of utopian speculation written in Spanish or other Hispanic languages since the sixteenth century.

3) Carlos Ferrera: An overview of utopianism in history

Presentation of the work Sueños de la modernidad: la utopía en la historia [Dreams of Modernity: Utopias in history], by Carlos Ferrera and Hugo García (Madrid, Akal, 2025), an overview of the manifestations of the utopian impulse in world history, in particular in the modern era. The book tries to go beyond the available syntheses by discussing the ways in which utopianism has manifested itself in different cultures and contexts and how it has circulated, been discussed and influenced experiences, movements and policies.

Bionotes:

[1] Juan Pro is Research Professor at the Instituto de Historia del Consejo Superior de

Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) and director of the Revista de Estudios Utópicos. Since 2015 he coordinates the HISTOPIA research team and the Transatlantic Network for the Study of Utopias. He has been a member of the Academia Europaea since 2020. Recent works: Diccionario de lugares utópicos, Juan Pro, dir. (Madrid: Sílex, 2022), Utopías concretas: el anarquismo trasatlántico de Giovanni Rossi (2022, with M. Parisi), Comunidades intencionales: utopías concretas en la Historia (2022, J. Pro and E. Di Minico, eds.), Utopias in Latin America: Past and Present (2018, J. Pro ed.).

[2] Hugo García is a lecturer in Modern History at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, a member of the research groups Escalas. Grupo de investigación en historia conectada de la contemporaneidad and Grupo de Investigación Complutense de la Guerra Civil y el Franquismo and head of the Spain section of the Worldwide Antifascist Research Network. His latest publications include "World Capital of Anti-Fascism? The Making and Breaking of a Global Left in Spain, 1936–1939 ." In Anti-Fascism in a Global Perspective: Transnational Networks, Exile Communities, and Radical Internationalism, Edited by Kasper Braskén, Nigel Copsey, David J Featherstone, London, Routledge, 2021, pp. 234-253.

[3] Carlos Ferrera is Honorary Professor in the Department of Contemporary History at the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM). Recent works: Spanish edition of Charles Renouvier's Uchronie (l'utopie dans l'histoire) (1876), Madrid: Akal (2019). Edition of Camilo Millán's Un drama del siglo XXI (1903), Madrid, Gaspar&Rimbau, 2023. 'The utopian ideals of Josep Lluis Sert and Antonio Bonet Castellana: from GATEPAC in Spain to the Latin American reality'. LC. Revue de recherches sur Le Corbusier, Nº 10, 122 - 140.

WORKSHOPS

Workshop Horizon: A Utopian Game Experience

Fátima Vieira[1].

Joana Caetano[2].

Marinela Freitas[3].

[1] Universidade do Porto
[2] Universidade do Porto
[3] Universidade do Porto

Horizon is a collaborative utopia-building game, initially conceived by a group of young researchers under the coordination of Luciano Moreira within CETAPS' research area 'Mapping Utopianisms', facilitated by Fátima Vieira. The game emerged from extensive discussions within the group. It later evolved through collaboration with André Novoa, an award-winning game designer, invited to develop the narrative and finalise its design. Horizon is available for download on CETAPS' website. We plan to bring a printed version to the USS Conference.

By inviting USS delegates to play Horizon, we aim to explore the hypothesis that a board game can serve as a mini laboratory for examining our choices for the future. Through gameplay, participants can test their capacity for agency, envision alternative outcomes, and reflect on how decision-making shapes possible futures. Horizon challenges players to reimagine urban spaces in visionary ways. By stepping into the roles of key stakeholders, participants engage in negotiations over conflicting interests, gaining insight into how horizontal, collectivistic societies can be constructed. Hopefully, as USS members of different age groups will participate in the workshop, it will contribute to a better understanding of the conference's general theme, 'Ageing, Intergenerational Relationships and Utopia'.

This workshop is rooted in our belief that fiction influences reality. Just as reading a transformative book can shift perspectives, engaging with a utopian game can inspire real-world problem-solving. Horizon is about making new possibilities visible through transformational play, inviting participants to step beyond the limitations of the present and imagine alternative futures.

The two printed versions of the board game used in the workshop will be drawn among the participants.

Participants

Up to 20 (2 groups of 10 players)

Format – 120'

10' for an introduction to the concept

100' to play the game (2 groups)

10' to interact with the other group, sharing and reflecting on the experience.

Bionotes:

[1] Fátima Vieira is a Professor of English at Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, where she started teaching in 1986. She received her Doctoral degree in 1998, with a thesis on William Morris and the British Utopian Literary tradition. From 2006 to 2016, she was the Utopian Studies Society/Europe chair. She is the Coordinator of the University of Porto's branch of CETAPS, where she leads the research project "Mapping Dreams: British and North American Utopianism". She has coordinated several research projects in Portuguese Utopianism and Utopia and Food. She created the ARUS Post-Doctoral Programme (Advanced Studies in Anglo-American Studies) at the University of Porto in 2016.

[2] Joana Caetano Joana Caetano is a research member of CETAPS-Centre for English and Anglo-Portuguese Studies and a collaborator at U.Porto Press. She also teaches a course on Utopian Studies at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto (FLUP). Since 2024, she has been the Executive Editor of VIA PANORAMICA: A Journal of Anglo-American Studies. She obtained her a PhD in Literary Studies with a thesis entitled Hainish Hospitalities: Ursula K. Le Guin's Constellation of Utopian Care at FLUP, in 2023, with a scholarship from the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology. She has published book chapters, reviews and articles in several scientific journals, namely Utopian Studies Journal, Cadernos de Literatura Comparada and BANG! Magazine, in which she has a column dedicated to Ursula K. Le Guin. More info: https://www.cienciavitae.pt/portal/B61D-3628-76EA

[3] Marinela Freitas is Assistant Professor of the Department of Anglo-American Studies of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Margarida Losa Institute for Comparative Literature (ILCML), where she coordinates the research group Intersexualities, and she is a collaborator of CETAPS. She has several publications in the fields of Feminist Studies, Comparative Literature and Utopian Studies. She is a member of the Coordinating Team of *«She Thought It: Crossing Bodies in Sciences and Arts»,* a database with entries on women whose steps have significantly marked history in fields such as sciences, arts, music and literature.

Utopia in Fragments: Cognitive Mapping. Aging, and Anarchist Futures

Nathaniel Coleman[1].

[1] *Newcastle University*

Prompted by my forthcoming book, Recoding Architecture Pedagogy: Insurgency and Invention this paper examines several threads related to aging-out. While redundancy is imposed from above on individuals, groups, activities, subjects, and disciplines, the term is empty. Deeming anything/anyone surplus to needs is imposed from the outside as a fundamentally depersonalizing anonymous abstraction for estimating individual or economic worth. In Modernity and the Holocaust, Zygmunt Bauman offers a cogent analysis of modernity as indelibly marked by dehumanizing processes reducing individuals to resources to be exploited, spent, and disposed of (which from More onwards are also risks of Utopia).

Growth excellence, and entrepreneurialism are markers of human resource agents compliant with the dehumanizing logic of bureaucratic rationality that infects self-description, thinking, and action in all quarters of life in the over administered world most of us are condemned to inhabit. In this context, growing old is a serious liability, defined by rising costs, sharper demands, and declining productivity. Bureaucratic rationality shapes modernity's emptiness, encouraging deeming worthless the critical historical perspectives of wisdom – age and experience. Accordingly, Utopia mirrors the world (literature and media) as it is. In it, as almost everywhere, old age is construed as a disease requiring a cure. From fantasies of uploading consciousness to digital networks, fighting off aging at any cost, to exiting life, escaping old age takes on the shape of neoliberal capitalist, and right libertarian terror of decline.

Revaluing old age demands recoding it, fully aware that impulses to do so are utopian to the core. Reimagining the richness of experience that only old age can bring to individuals, family groups, and societies, demands overturning the world as it is through insurgence, not revolution, policy, or education. Only resistance: changing individual relationships holds out any promise of recuperating the value of old age from productivist notions of existence and worth. Crucially, this depends on left-libertarian mindsets of anarchist Utopia deployed against conceptions of human resources, entrepreneurial selves, neoliberal identity formation, and bureaucratic rationality. Liberal-Utopia, Marxist-Utopia, and techno-Utopia will not do. In their stead, decline, fallibility, failure, and reuse are asserted, of a sort elaborated on in my book Recoding Architecture Pedagogy: Insurgency and Invention, as a philosophy of generative practices developed in architecture school design studios but relevant for reimagining (social and spatial) structures of any sort more tolerant of imperfection.

Bionote:

[1] A world-leading architecture and utopias scholar, Nathaniel Coleman leads design studios and theory seminars considering reconstructing architecture through inventing anarchist spatial practices, and the limits and possibilities of architectural neo-avant-gardes. His books include 'Recoding Architecture Pedagogy: Insurgency and Invention' (2025); 'Materials and Meaning in Architecture: Essays on the Bodily Experience of Buildings' (2020); 'Lefebvre for Architects' (2015); 'Utopias and Architecture' (2005); and as editor, 'Imagining and Making the World: Reconsidering Architecture and Utopia' (2011). Book chapters include 'Making Sense of Fragments: Utopian Prospects for Architecture and Cities Now' (2024) and 'Rehabilitating Operative Criticism: The Return of Theory against Entrepreneurialism' (2022).

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

"Yeah, It Takes All the Fun Out of Dying:" The Politics of Old Age in 1970s Science Fiction Cinema

Medhi Achouche[1]

[1]*Sorbonne Paris Nord University*

Science fiction cinema from the 1970s is replete with depictions of older characters inhabiting various dystopian or anti-utopian futures, and while their presence is often as supporting characters, their thematic importance is central. There are of course the demo-dystopias, with Sol Roth as the living memory and conscience of a fallen world (Soylent Green), or Doctor Herrick in Z.P.G Zero Population Growth (Michael Campus, 1972) guiltily spending his idle days in Twilight City. But there is also Old Man (Peter Ustinov) in Logan's Run (Michael Anderson, 1976), the last old person in a post-apocalyptic world only inhabited by hedonistic young people with no respect for their elders (the word "ageism" was coined in 1969). Meant as a satire of the counterculture and the NOW, "don't trust anyone over thirty" generation, Logan's Run has its senior character stand for the values defended by the U.S. conservative movement at the time of the U.S. Bicentenary: he lives in the ruins of the Capitol, next to the U.S. flag (which features even more stars than today), and will reintroduce the protagonists to monogamous love, the institution of marriage and the traditional family. All are presented as inherent to the human condition, part of the natural process just like ageing and mortality. Post-apocalyptic wastelands are in fact seemingly full of lone wandering elderly men (rarely women), and the young people born after the disaster must often try to make sense of them. In Glen and Randa (Jim McBride, 1971), for example, Garry Goodrow plays Magician, an arthritic showman who demonstrates to the apathetic survivors of World War III the wonders of science and consumerism by mimicking live shopping channel demonstrations (a blender!) and reciting old ad slogans ("buy Xerox!"). European post-apocalyptic films would often follow similar paths, with Ondrej Jariabek playing Old Man in Late August at the Hotel Ozone (Jan Schmidt, 1967), or Marco Ferreri playing the dead body of one such character in The Seed of Man (1969) (the young couple moves into his house and tries to reproduce his lifestyle, similarly to what Glen and Randa did in the last act of their own tale). Although there are exceptions, most often these elderly characters are meant as censures of younger characters who have gone feral and lost their way. Such a narrative pattern points at the essentially anti-utopian nature of many of these films.

Bionote: Mehdi Achouche is an Associate Professor in Anglophone Cinema and American Studies at Sorbonne Paris Nord University. His research deals with representations of techno-utopianism, transhumanism and the posthuman in cinema and television, as well as depictions of progress more generally. He is currently completing a manuscript on the science fiction cinema of the 1965-1977 period.

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"The Politics of Hope. Breaking with the age taboo in Ali: Angst Essen Seele Auf by Rainer Werner Fassbinder"

Wiktoria Adamczyk[1]

[1]University of Illinois at Chicago

According to Elisabeth Vanderheiden and her case study research on love relationships between older women and younger man in her essay "'A Matter of Age?' Love Relationships Between Older Women and Younger Men:The So-called "Cougar" Phenomenon" people follow so called lovemaps and love scripts, that are very often conceived as culturally imprinted. The scripts are telling the person how they should love and whom they should love; according to Susan Sontag in the modern Western society there exist some double standards on patterns of the love scripts that man and women follow, which lead to some disadvantages for women. According to Sontag and Vanderheiden older women with the moment of ageing become less attractive and sexually ineligible in the contrary to how man are perceived by the society. In my conference essay entitled "The Politics of Hope. Breaking with the age taboo in Ali: Angst Essen Seele Auf by Rainer Werner Fassbinder" I would like to present how Fassbinder breaks with the taboo of romantic relationship between an older German women also a widow and an younger man "Gastarbeiter" from Marocoo. With help of mise-en-scene, aesthetics of contrast, and music Fassbinder not only criticize the status quo in his films (in this case in Ali: Angst Essen Seele Auf) but also elevates his critique to creating space for something "New" thus for the change. In my essay I would like to analyze his film from a different angle i.e. through a utopian lens, as his films represent a lack of something, longing for something better, freedom on any plane of life, emancipation of women, emancipation of " the Other", emancipation of "the ageing" as E.Bloch and T.W. Adorno put it aptly: "[…]utopia- that is the meaning of Brecht's short sentence: something's missing[…]". In my essay, I will look at the particular scenes through the prism of utopian aesthetics, specifically focusing on moments of utopian potential in his movie and explorer these moments of utopian potential in the context of the intergenerational (interracial and class) romantic relationship between and older women and a younger man in post- World War II German society and it's challenges as I think the above mentioned constellation of romantic relationship can be still shocking in the contemporary society and older women were and are still viewed as less attractive for a man and sexually less eligible in today's Western society.

Bionote: Wiktoria Adamczyk is an A.B.D. Ph.D. student in Germanic Studies. Her dissertation "The Politics of Hope. Utopian Aesthetics in Films by Rainer Werner Fassbinder," is focused on Rainer Werner Fassbinder and his oeuvre. She traces moments of utopia in Fassbinder's films and analyzes its aesthetics through the lens of Utopian studies. She would also like to work on another future project entitled: "Rethinking Heimat. Traces of Utopia in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's Oeuvre," and focus specifically on Fassbinder's imagination of future Germany. She has conducted research at the DFF Fassbinder Center in Frankfurt. Her research interests include German Cinema, Utopianism, hope and resistance, historical materialism, translation studies, Polish-German translations, the function of language in society, comparative literature, cognitive poetics, and philosophy. She received her B.A. in Jewish Studies in 2015 from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków (BA thesis, "Life is a poetry. An Avant-garde life of Else Lasker Schüler (11.02.1869- 22.01.1945)"). Jewish life in Poland, Hebrew, and Yiddish were her major fields of research at that time. She has always been interested in language, culture, history, philosophy, art, political science, and German literature and culture. In Fall 2019 she earned her M.A. in Holocaust Studies at Haifa University in Israel, where her research projects included "The Linguistic Violence of Nazi Propaganda" and "The Representation of Polish-Jewish Relations in Polish Art after '89." This experience afforded her the opportunity to enmesh herself in the complexities of Jewish and Israeli histories. In 2021 she earned an MA in German Philology from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland (M.A. thesis: „Explikation als eine Übersetzungsstrategie. Eine translatorische Analyse der polnischen Übersetzung des Romans Vielleicht Esther von Katja Petrowskaja").

Contradictory Perspectives on Age and Aging in The Hunger Games and MaddAddam Book Series

Catana Adela[1]

[1]*Ferdinand I Military Technical Academy*

At the beginning of the new millennium, 'age' matters more than ever. Perceived as a biological stage and a cultural construct, 'age' incites both public and academic discourses and deserves a multidisciplinary analysis. In literature, the process of aging has been depicted in various forms since antiquity, generating recurrent themes such as the relentless passing of time and the ephemerality of the human being, the implications of becoming an adult, the memory of and the longing for childhood.

The idea that 'age' embodies just like class, gender, race, ethnicity, or ableness an identity category that generates 'otherness' and power relations, emerged during the last century only to culminate in the 2000s with a new wave in utopian literature. The purpose of this article is to analyze the concept of 'age', emphasize its impact on utopian literature, and examine its relevance in two North-American book series: Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam and Suzanne Collins's The Hunger Games. It uncovers the contradictory perspectives on age, aging stereotypes, and age-based relationships that the two authors chose to portray to their readers, particularly for the purpose of educating young adult readers.

Bionote: Adela Catană has a PhD in Philology from the University of Bucharest and is currently working as a Lecturer for the Commission of Foreign Languages of the Ferdinand I Military Technical Academy, in Bucharest, Romania. During her career, she has been a visiting scholar at several universities in the U.K., Germany, Belgium, Italy and Bulgaria. Her academic interests include, among others, British and North-American studies, Utopianism, military culture, gender studies and have been materialised in numerous papers presented in national and international conferences, and published by various IDB indexed journals. She is also the author of Social Concepts in Contemporary Utopian Discourse (ArsDocendi, 2018).

Forbidden Kinship: The Horror of Intergenerational Transmission in Lovecraft's Fiction

Taha AlSarhan[1]

[1]*University of Pécs*

While utopian literature often presents intergenerational relationships as a means of fostering continuity, wisdom, and social cohesion, H.P. Lovecraft's fiction inverts this trope, transforming inherited knowledge into a source of horror. His stories frequently depict ancestry as a curse rather than a gift, where familial lineage determines one's inevitable descent into madness, monstrosity, or existential annihilation. In The Shadow over Innsmouth, The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, and The Dunwich Horror, revelations about one's genetic or intellectual inheritance do not lead to empowerment but rather to the loss of selfhood. Unlike utopian narratives that celebrate intergenerational bonds as a foundation for societal progress, Lovecraft's fiction suggests that the past is an inescapable horror—one that dooms individuals to the fate dictated by their predecessors. This paper will explore how Lovecraft's treatment of intergenerational transmission functions as a dystopian counterpoint to utopian literature's ideals. His depiction of heredity and knowledge transmission aligns with his broader anxieties about racial purity, cultural contamination, and forbidden knowledge. By examining his work through the lens of intergenerational horror, this paper will contrast his fatalistic vision with utopian literature's emphasis on constructive generational continuity. Additionally, it will engage with contemporary discussions of lineage, heritage, and identity, questioning whether Lovecraft's terror of inherited traits can be read as a radical rejection of the utopian promise of generational progress.

Bionote: Taha AlSarhan is a 3rd year PhD student at the University of Pecs currently researching the field of the Weird and New Weird with special emphasis on the sublime in H.P. Lovecraft's works. He also researches topics related to different media adaptations of Lovecraft's works, such as comic books, video games, films, and tabletop games. His other interests include Postcolonial horror, Eco-criticism and Environmental studies as well as the Fantasy Genre under a postmodern lens.

Los últimos días de Robert Owen (The last days of Robert Owen)

José Ramón Álvarez Layna[1]

[1]*Universidad de Alcalá*

The article or research paper explores the final days of Robert Owen (+1858) from a historical and methodological perspective, focusing on the interpretation and critical analysis of documentary sources. On the one hand, this approach seeks to reconstruct the final events in the life of the Welsh thinker. On the other hand, it aims to reflect on the challenges faced by historians when working with materials of various types. Private resources and direct access to key documents held at the National Co-operative Archive and the John Rylands Research Institute and Library at the University of Manchester enable a detailed examination of the most significant sources.

During the later years of his life, Owen resided more steadily at Cox's Hotel in London, financially supported by funds his children sent from America. Although lacking the energy that characterized his earlier years, Owen continued to spread his ideas and participate in key events, such as the founding of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science in 1857. Though he could not attend personally, he sent his work The Human Race Governed Without Punishment, demonstrating his intellectual commitment until the end.

The analysis focuses on key sources, both primary and secondary, such as the Correspondence of Manchester, the Rational Quarterly Review, and the works of George Jacob Holyoake, especially his account Life and Last Days of Robert Owen. Holyoake, a disciple and friend of Owen, provides a rich but inevitably subjective narrative. This study examines how his perspective has influenced the interpretation of Owen's last days, comparing it with corrections and nuances provided by later sources or research.

Through an emphasis on methodological aspects, the research raises fundamental questions: How can the sentimental or idealized nature of certain sources be balanced with a rigorous historical reconstruction? What challenges arise when combining archival documents or primary sources with later narratives? Furthermore, it highlights how the sources reflect the tensions between the public perception of Owen and his personal reality in his final years.

The study shows that, although Owen's final days were characterized by reduced activity, they represented a significant transitional period for his legacy. This analysis not only enriches knowledge about Owen and the cooperative movement, but also offers valuable insights into the work of historians and the critical use of sources in nineteenth-century historiography.

Keywords: Robert Owen, documentary sources, historical methodology.

Bionote: José Ramón Álvarez Layna, Doctor Internacional en Historia y Pensamiento por la Universidad de Alcalá (2013), galardonado con el Premio Extraordinario de Doctorado de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Alcalá por su tesis. Su investigación se centra en Robert Owen, así como en historia, en filosofía, en religión, en artes liberales o en didáctica de las ciencias sociales. Ha realizado estancias de estudios en los Estados Unidos, en el Reino Unido, en Francia y en otros países. Actualmente, es Profesor Ayudante Doctor en la Universidad de Alcalá, con experiencia docente a nivel de Grado y Postgrado en asignaturas como Didáctica de las Ciencias Sociales, Geografía General, Innovación Docente y Enseñanza de la Historia en el Bachillerato. Está habilitado profesionalmente para ejercer en España, Inglaterra y Gales, y es funcionario en excedencia de la Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid, con veinte años de experiencia en Enseñanzas Medias, en departamentos de Geografía e Historia y en programas bilingües inglés-español. Supervisor: Dr. Julio Seoane.

Progress and Degeneration in English fin de siècle Utopias and Dystopias

Eva Antal[1]

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In my readings, degeneration is first thematised in the early dystopian passages of Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1726) where the author satirises not only the belief in progress, presenting the degenerate mental and physical state of man, but he also caricatures the myth of eternal life. While Thomas More's Utopia (1516) is rather concerned about spatial relations (in its generic timelessness), temporality is questioned by dystopian writers, who, moving beyond one's longevity, tend to elaborate on future progress and development of the race; or on its lack. In my paper, I will study several Victorian, fin de siècle utopias and dystopias and the way the authors discuss human time, while their works are intricately connected.

In his utopian News from Nowhere (1890), William Morris presents an idyllic, socialist community that lives without any scientific achievement in the future, rejecting consumerism and industrialisation. The subtitle of the novel, "An Epoch of Rest" sounds like bliss, or a curse; the narrator, the nineteenth-century dreamer (cf. Guest) finds it utopian though. The American Edward Bellamy writes his antithetical novel when he projects his ultra-modern utopia into the future Boston in 2000. In Looking Backward 2000–1887 (1888), the nineteenth-century time traveller cannot be accustomed to the progressive changes in time, and he shows the symptoms of mental illness (poriomania). Then H. G. Wells publishes the ironic versions of the two dream-narratives in When the Sleeper Wakes (1899) and The Time Machine (1895); the former foretells a scientifically advanced dystopian future in London in 2100, the latter envisions the end of the earth. Wells, having been influenced by Max Nordau's degeneration-theory and T. H. Huxley's criticism of Darwin's evolution, questions the belief in progress, and he presents his pros and contras in his critical utopias.

Bionote: Éva Antal is a professor of English Literature and Philosophy at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Eger, Hungary. In 2001 she defended her doctoral dissertation at Debrecen University (Hungary) since then she has been teaching eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literature, contemporary literary theory, and aesthetics. In 2010 she was a Visiting Grant Scholar at NIAS (The Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences) and in 2011, she successfully obtained a tenured professorship in philosophy at Debrecen University (dr. habil.). Currently, she is working on an educationalist project, focusing on women's philosophy of education in European Enlightenment. In autumn 2019, she was a visiting researcher at the University of Glasgow and in January 2020, she was a guest professor at the research centre IDEA, University de Lorraine (Nancy-Metz, France).

Mapping Old Age in Utopia

Sorin Antohi[1]

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"no miserable old age came their way" (Hesiod, Works and Days)

In the very beginning of the utopian tradition, the first book of Plato's Republic (ca. 375 BC) addresses the problem of old age. Socrates asks old Cephalus: "is life painful at that age, or what report do you make of it?". Cephalus answers that "old age brings us profound repose and freedom from […] passions. […] It is like being delivered from a multitude of furious masters." Consequently, Cephalus can dedicate himself to sacrifices and justice to prepare for the afterlife. Then the interlocutors move from aging to a debate about justice (that ends in aporia), and thus enter the very core of utopianism.

The topic of aging was already a trope in Greek culture by the time Socrates/Plato picked it up for philosophical scrutiny. Around 700 BC, Hesiod had written about a Golden Age in which the first people (only male!), although mortal, where living like the gods, their immortal creators. Without experiencing sorrow, hard work, pain, and any form of physical decay. When "they died, it was as if they fell asleep".

This paper addresses the problem of aging in Utopia in connection to other alternative, competing, and frequently entangled worldviews (mythical, religious, mystical, esoteric). While old age is defined differently in different contexts, one could generate a complex map of ages, aging, and Ages. A similar approach was used by Ioan Petru Culianu (1950-1991) to map Gnostic dualisms. It can be expanded to other mental objects. In this particular case, classical utopian texts will be organized according to their take on old age. When does it begin? What does it look like? How long does it go? How does it relate to other ages? And to other Ages? What position for the elderly in society? Are they integrated or segregated? Are they a majority or a minority? What is their power status? What about death? Is it inevitable, voluntary, mandatory, assisted? Is there a spiritual/metaphysical/mystical/etc. significance of old age and death? And so on.

Bionote: Sorin Antohi (b. 1957) is a historian of ideas, essayist, translator, and consultant based in Bucharest. He has studied English, French (University of Iași, Romania), and History (EHESS, Paris). He has taught mainly at: University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; University of Bucharest; Central European University, Budapest (where he served as Academic Pro-Rector and founded Pasts, Inc. Center for Historical Studies, under the honorary presidency of Paul Ricoeur). Has conducted research at institutes of advanced study and other institutions in Paris, Bielefeld, Stanford, Vienna, Essen, Berlin, Leipzig, etc. Has published (thirteen books, eight co-written; eight edited/co-edited; seven co-translated with Mona Antohi from English and French into Romanian; hundreds of book chapters, articles, etc.) on intellectual history, history of ideas, Romanian studies, historical theory and history of historiography, utopianism, etc. Has lectured, attended and (co)organized conferences in over thirty countries. Has served on various academic, editorial, and civic governing or advisory bodies, e.g., member of the Board, International Committee of Historical Studies, and secretary general of the International Commission for the Theory and History of Historiography. Member of the Writers' Union of Romania, Member of the Committee, Utopian Studies Society / Europe (2018-). Member, Academia Europaea (2018). www.sorinantohi.org.

Intergenerational Futures: Honouring the Past and Shaping the Future in Ali Smith's Autumn

Emra Atasoy[1]

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Utopian, dystopian, and post-apocalyptic narratives provide a compelling lens through which to examine societal structures and envision alternative futures. Among the critical issues these narratives address are aging, intergenerational relationships, and communication across generations. From Thomas More's Utopia (1516), which emphasises respect for the elderly and their essential societal roles, to contemporary visions such as Jeanette Winterson's The Stone Gods (2007), these narratives have long grappled with the complexities of aging and intergenerational dynamics. Over time, portrayals of aging in these works have oscillated between reverence for the wisdom of the elderly and concern over their marginalisation and isolation. Enriched by both written and oral traditions, these narratives play a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes and behaviours, influencing how communities perceive and interact with older individuals. By perpetuating or challenging stereotypes, they highlight the consequences of elder isolation—not only for those directly affected but also for society at large, which is deprived of the invaluable guidance and knowledge of those who have experienced transformative historical and personal events.

Some utopian narratives envision societies where intergenerational collaboration forms the foundation of communal success, presenting alternative frameworks for inclusivity and equality, whereas some dystopian works expose the devastating consequences of fractured intergenerational ties, critiquing societal failures by examining the challenges and marginalisation experienced by older generations. In some extreme depictions, the elderly are portrayed as expendable, through mechanisms such as euthanasia or voluntary suicide, highlighting the societal disregard for this age group. By navigating these themes, such narratives encourage readers to reconsider the societal value of aging, offering pathways toward more inclusive and egalitarian communities that honour the wisdom and contributions of all generations. This talk examines Ali Smith's Autumn (2016), focusing on aging and intergenerational communication through the relationship between Daniel and Elizabeth. Through its exploration of the past, the future, hope, and despair, the novel highlights the transformative power of cross-generational connections in addressing divides and political fragmentation.

Bionote: Emrah Atasoy, Associate Professor of English, is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Warwick, UK. A Fellow of Advance HE and former Marie Skłodowska-Curie Cofund Fellow at Warwick, he held research positions at Harvard, Oxford, Pompeu Fabra University-Barcelona, and Penn State. He is the author of Epistemological Warfare and Hope in Critical Dystopia (2021) and co-editor of Utopian and Dystopian Explorations of Pandemics and Ecological Breakdown (Routledge 2024). His work appeared in Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction, Studies in the Novel, and Utopian Studies. He is the section editor for utopian, dystopian, and speculative fiction at The Literary Encyclopedia.

An Age-Old Question: The Destruction of the Elderly in Huxley's Brave New World

Ozan Aydın[1]

[1]Fatih Sultan Mehmet University

Since the beginning of the human civilization, old age has been held in high esteem and even thought of as a gift from the gods themselves. While it has also been used derogatorily in recent years, Gerontocracy was considered as the natural order of the rule, and it prevailed for a considerably long period of history, stretching from ancient Spartan civilization to the Modern Ages. While its utopian interpretations have been prevalent, dystopian literature, on the other hand, had significant examples against the concept of age and many of its associations, such as traditions and accumulated wisdom of the generations, as well as the interactions between these generations. Plenty of theorists have written about the concept of age, but considering its implications within the society, Gramsci's interpretation of the concept of hegemony becomes highly important for such discussions. The case of Aldous Huxley on the concept of aging is the foundation of this research, and, alongside with other theorists and historians, such as Hobsbawm and Said, the research is going to look into the question how the concept of Gramsci's hegemony can be applied and how traditional approaches towards the elderly have been demolished within the narrative of Brave New World, Huxley's most influential dystopian novel. Using Huxley's novel as its basis, the research is going to focus on how the destruction of traditional societal values of old age and generational accumulation of wisdom has been employed as a method of suppression of the society within the novel, as well as how Hobsbawm's concept of "invented traditions" as well as Said's stance on the concept of memory can be observed and applied in the narrative of the text. The research will also include how Marxist approaches to the old age can be applied to the text, since the eradication of old age is perfectly in line with the capitalist and utilitarian societal structures of today's world.

Bionote: Currently a PhD candidate at Yeditepe University and a Lecturer in Fatih Sultan Mehmet University, Ozan Aydin has a specific interest in dystopian literature, and has produced a Master's Thesis about dystopian writing as well. His other areas of research interest are colonialism, political satire, political science, Modernist writing and 20th century British novel. His paper "A Dehumanization Protocol", published on Septet, Yeditepe University's online journal, has focused on Orwell's dystopian community and he has since continued his research into dystopian literature in a broader sense.

No Room for the Aged and Animalised (Clone) Women: David Mitchell's "An Orison of Sonmi-451"

Adem Balcı[1]

[1]*Independent Researcher*

Drawing on Carol J. Adams's vegan-feminist theory of "the sexual politics of meat" and concept of "absent referent," this paper aims to explore the butchering of the cloned women at the intersection of ageing and animalisation in the "An Orison of Sonmi-451" chapters (Chapter 5 and Chapter 7) of the British writer David Mitchell's Cloud Atlas (2004). The book consists of six different yet similar and inextricably linked stories that span a wide range of landscapes and timespans. The fifth story of the book, "An Orison of Sonmi-451," which is set in a dystopic corpocracy in Nea So Copros, the future name of Korea, shines light upon the maltreatment of cloned women in a patriarchal and capitalist society. Sonmi-451, the protagonist, and the other waitresses working for the capitalist entrepreneur Papa Song are the "fabricants" (clones) artificially bred in the "wombtanks" and programmed to serve the "purebloods" (humans). These female fabricants work in Papa Song's fast-food restaurant for nineteen-hours a day with no break for twelve years. After years of hard work, they are promised a lifelong retirement in Hawaii. However, Papa Song's Golden Ark, which supposedly takes them to Hawaii, is indeed a slaughterhouse, in which the fabricants are butchered. Their meat is used for the "Soap," the only food that the fabricants can consume, and the rest is served to Papa Song's clients. Although their ages are not specified in the book, the fabricants are very young when they are slaughtered. However, since they do not go through a natural ageing process, they are aged by the dehumanising labour that they got involved in. Building my argument on Adams's sexual politics of meat, I claim that these female fabricants, who replace the livestock of the 21st century, become absent referents when they are transformed into pieces of meat. What renders this dreadful process possible is the animalisation of women that is born at the interlacement of sexist, speciesist and ageist discourses and practices of this patriarchal society.

Bionote: Adem Balcı, PhD, is an independent researcher. He earned his BA (2011), MA (2014), and PhD (2022) degrees from Hacettepe University's Department of English Language and Literature with the theses entitled "Animals in Saki's Short Stories within the Context of Imperialism: A Non-anthropocentric Approach" (MA) and "Architectural Psychology in Utopias/Dystopias: William Morris's News from Nowhere, George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four and J.G. Ballard's High-Rise" (PhD). Balcı's research interests include Anglophone utopian/dystopian fiction, British novel, short story, theories of space and spatiality, literary representations of architecture, critical animal studies, material ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and the blue humanities. He has published several articles and book chapters in national and international journals and books on John Burnside, Yaşar Kemal, Latife Tekin, Ruth Ozeki, Saki, the Anthropocene, the blue humanities, critical animal studies, and material ecocriticism.

Ageing On the Road. Jessica Bruder's "Nomadland" and the Hopes and Hardships of Workamping

Maria Barbu[1]

[1] Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

As flat wages fail to keep pace with the steadily increasing costs of rents and mortgages, aging has become a source of growing concern and anxiety for much of America's middle class. Unable to afford retirement and struggling to find ways of survival after losing their savings and jobs in the Great Recession, a big percentage of the Baby Boomer Generation has resorted to living in mobile homes and to travelling from one seasonal job to another. Jessica Bruder's "Nomadland" (2017) is the result of the author's three-year long investigation of this social issue, and my paper aims to examine this "workamping" phenomenon (i.e. the action of camping for work rather than for pleasure) in all its utopian and dystopian aspects. At a first glance, the latter seem to outnumber the former: most of the workampers are in their sixties or older, and the jobs they usually get hired at – ranging from campground hosting to sugar beet harvesting or handling packages at Amazon warehouses – are strenuous, dangerous and not properly paid. However, despite being mostly solitary, this lifestyle also fosters the creation of utopian – online or physical – communities, where the nomads help each other navigate the difficulties of ageing on the road. Finally, in a truly American fashion, what keeps everyone in motion is the hope that something better awaits ahead, thus proving that the promises of the open road are still as luring nowadays as they were for the first colonizers.

Bionote: Maria Barbu is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Her PhD thesis analyses the presence of anarchetypal patterns in post-1950 North American travel literature. She has a Master's and a Bachelor's degree in Universal and Comparative Literature, as well as a second Bachelor's degree in Art History, so her research interests combine the two fields and add themes or theories from philosophy, history of religions, study of the imaginary or sociology. She is the author of a chapter on "(Post)Modern Wanderers: Anarchetypal Literary Journeys Across North-America" in a collective volume about Anarchetypes, coordinated by Corin Braga (Tracus Arte, 2024), and she has published several other scholarly articles in Romanian scientific magazines. She has also been involved in organizing the 2023 Utopian Studies Society's conference in Cluj-Napoca and in editing the volume with the conference's proceedings.

Celestial Bodies: Menopause, Ageist Narratives, and the Utopian Reimagination in Select South-Asian Speculative Fiction

Argha Basu,[1] Dr. Debashrita Dey[2]

[1] SRM Institute of Science and Technology (KTR)
[2] Symbiosis Law School, Pune

This paper examines the intersection of age, reproductive capacity, and surreal utopian imagination through a feminist lens, focusing on Vandana Singh's anthology, The Woman Who Thought She Was a Planet. Singh's work uniquely bridges the domestic and the speculative, interrogating systemic patriarchal structures that regulate female subjectivity while addressing the physical and emotional challenges of ageing. Through its layered narratives, the anthology critiques ageist paradigms that reduce women's worth to their reproductive roles and explores the transformative potential of ageing bodies. Among the collection's feminist themes, this paper centres on the eponymous short story, which delves into post-menopausal crises through an innovative and surreal framework.

Using a post-menopausal theory of non-reproductive crises, this study critiques societal narratives that equate menopause with a loss of identity and purpose. Singh's story disrupts these reductionist views, reframing menopause as a period of profound potential and transformation. Kamala, the protagonist, experiences a surreal metamorphosis, perceiving herself as a planet and, through this cosmic reimagining, transcending the limitations imposed by patriarchal norms. Her transformation challenges societal constructs that conflate ageing with decline and obsolescence, presenting the menopausal body as a site of radical reinvention.

This paper situates Kamala's journey within feminist and surrealist theoretical frameworks to explore how speculative fiction subverts traditional narratives of ageing and reproductive identity. By employing surreal imagery and speculative storytelling, Singh reclaims ageing bodies as sites of empowerment and renewal. Kamala's planetary embodiment becomes a metaphor for infinite possibilities, challenging the biological determinism that often constrains female identities. The story illuminates how speculative fiction provides a platform to critique ageist and patriarchal ideologies while envisioning emancipatory futures where identity and purpose are untethered from reproductive capacity.

This paper argues that Singh's The Woman Who Thought She Was a Planet exemplifies the liberatory potential of speculative fiction to reimagine menopausal existence. Through its feminist and surrealist aesthetics, the anthology foregrounds the transformative possibilities of ageing, asserting that post-reproductive life can be a site of cosmic and personal empowerment, transcending societal limitations and envisioning alternative modes of being.

Bionote:
[1] Argha Basu is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Foreign Languages at SRM-IST, Chennai, India. He has completed his PhD from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Patna. His areas of interest include Dystopian Fiction, South-Asian Fiction, Feminist Epistemology, Contemporary Feminist Theory and intervention of AI in literature and language.

[2] Dr. Debashrita Dey is an Assistant Professor of English at Symbiosis Law School, Pune. Her research areas comprise Ageing Studies, Feminist Studies, Care Narratives, and Disability Studies. She has published in Journal of Postcolonial Writing (Taylor & Francis), Journal of Aging Studies (Elsevier), National Identities (Taylor & Francis), South Asian Popular Culture

(Taylor & Francis), and the International Journal of Human Rights in Healthcare (Emerald Publishing). She has also presented her research at several international conferences

Dreams and Nightmares of Bertrand Russell

Jorge Bastos Da Silva[1]

[1] Universidade do Porto / CETAPS

As a renowned polymath and an influential public intellectual, Bertrand Russell lectured and wrote extensively as a mathematician, as a philosopher, and as a social commentator. He often presented himself either as an atheist, a secularist or a rationalist (the terms tended to be interchangeable in the relevant context). His vast oeuvre engages with matters that range from the calculus to nuclear power, from formal logic to current affairs, from conscience to consciousness. In his less specialized writing, he repeatedly expresses opinions that involve a negotiation between scepticism and hope. This paper attempts to establish the outlines of Russell's views as they pertain to utopianism, taking as its cue the political fable "Zahatopolk" from the 1954 collection of short fiction Nightmares of Eminent Persons and other stories.

Bionote: Jorge Bastos da Silva (University of Porto) works chiefly in the fields of English Literature and Culture (especially the period between the Restoration and Romanticism), Intellectual History (namely bearing on Utopian Studies), and Translation and Reception Studies (with a focus on the cultural exchanges between Britain and Portugal). He is the author and editor of a number of books, among which: Faces of Revolution in British Culture: Politics, Language and Literature, 2024; Em Torno de Walter Scott. Problemáticas de Identidade, 2021; Anglolusofilias. Alguns Trânsitos Literários, 2018; English Literature and the Disciplines of Knowledge, Early Modern to Eighteenth Century: A Trade for Light, 2017; Tradução e Cultura Literária. Ensaios sobre a Presença de Autores Estrangeiros em Portugal, 2014; The Epistemology of Utopia: Rhetoric, Theory and Imagination, 2013; A Instituição da Literatura. Horizonte Teórico e Filosófico da Cultura Literária no Limiar da Modernidade, 2010; Shakespeare no Romantismo Português. Factos, Problemas, Interpretações, 2005.

Swans of Solitude: Aging, Landscape and Transformation in The Significance of Swans

Elinor Bates[1]

[1] *University of Valencia*

Rhiannon Lewis's dystopic novel The Significance of Swans presents a poignant narrative of transformation and liberation through the lens of a "middle-aged" Welsh woman who finds herself alone after the other residents are mysteriously "removed". This presentation will explore the intersection of aging, ecofeminism, and personal growth, focusing on, in particular, how the protagonist's relationship with the Welsh landscape mirrors and helps her on her emotional and spiritual journey that sees her break with the confines of the feminine milieu.

The protagonist, Aeronwy, who, like many women, finds herself long defined in relation to her roles as mother, wife, and caretaker, awakens in a solitary, desolate landscape void of any human interaction. Through her profound connection to the Welsh Landscape that is intertwined with her own personal history, she transcends the confines of loneliness and despair to find strength and renewal by connecting with her land and heritage. She begins to reframe her experience as not one of absence and suffering as is so common in dystopic narratives but one of possibility. This shift reflects an ecofeminist reading of the text, where Aeronwy's rediscovery and reconnection to the landscape of Wales allows her to reclaim agency over her life and body.

The paper will explore how Lewis uses the metaphor of the swan- birds that appear throughout the iliads of Welsh literature and folklore – known for their long migrations and symbolic ties to both love and freedom – in order to frame the protagonist's journey. The migratory cycle of swans, who migrate from their home territories to find new spaces, mirrors the protagonist's own migration: from one as a wife, mother, and "middle-aged" woman to an empowered woman who embraces solitude and self. Through this reading, and within the scope of aging and old age, this paper shows how this twilight period can indeed deviate from the stereotypical age of decline and dependency to something empowering and transformative.

Bionote: Elinor Bates holds a BA in English Studies from the National University of Distance Education (UNED), Spain, an MA in Advanced English Studies with an outstanding award for academic excellence (University of València), and an MA in Secondary Education (UNED). CELTA-certified ESL and literature teacher at the British School of Gandía, she is currently a PhD candidate in English Literature at the University of València under the supervision of Miguel Martínez López. Her research focuses on Anglo-Welsh literature, feminist criticism, and the intersections of gender, identity, dystopia, and national heritage. Her work explores how early twentieth-century women writers in Wales represented women's experiences, particularly motherhood. By focusing on maternal relationships, her research examines how these narratives shed light on the complexities of gender, identity, and cultural resilience.

Growing pains: age and (yo)ut(h)opia in *Barbie* (2023)

Vera Benczik[1]

[1]*Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary*

Greta Gerwig's 2023 portal fantasy addresses a wide range of issues, from a separation of spheres by gender, over the rocky road of growing up, to how corporate capitalism and its mercantile logic influence consumption practices within society. All defamiliarized satirical reflections on society tend to combine utopian and dystopian aspects, and Barbieland is no exception to this rule. While the film has been widely hailed as a feminist utopian approach to patriarchal society, the oppressive dystopia the Kens experience rather models the same power imbalance 19th century women experienced within Western societies: no access to higher education or certain professions, no political power, and very limited rights to property ownership. One could argue that its feminism lies not in empowering women, but in showing the mechanisms by which such a world could change. The utopian experience for the Barbies within Barbieland is based on the stability and balance within the world: eternal sunshine, unchanging routine, and bodies that are aesthetically hypersexual, yet functionally asexual. In this world designed for and by pre-pubescent children through their interaction with their Barbie dolls, growing up is a threat to the order of things. The present paper looks into how childhood and utopia are interconnected, and how certain works within the fantastic present coming of age as a threshold that leads from utopian order into dystopian chaos—William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson's Logan's Run, or Arthur C. Clarke's Childhood's End come to mind, both novels with different outlooks on what coming-of-age and transformation mean for humanity. Questions explored in connection with Barbie will include: how are sexualization, transformation and body utopia interconnected within the film? Does the nostalgic longing for a prepubescent Golden Age point beyond the individual's regressive fantasies into the realm of historical and political commentary, and if yes, how is prelapsarian innocence used a tool of social criticism?

Bionote: Vera Benczik is currently Senior Assistant Professor at the Department of American Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, where she teaches courses on American and Canadian literature, science fiction and popular culture. Her research interests lie mainly in the field of science fiction, with special emphasis on the works of Ursula K. Le Guin; her current projects focus on the spatial discourse of post-apocalyptic science fiction narratives, and objecthood, spatial discourse and gender in Margaret Atwood's dystopian fiction.

Tracy K. Smith's "Sci-Fi" and the Critical Function of Utopia

Felipe Benicio[1]

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Published in 2011 as part of the poetry collection Life on Mars, by North American author Tracy K. Smith, "Sci-Fi" is an example of what has been called science fiction poetry (Elgin, 2005; Hong, 2008), a less studied genre in the field of literary studies that has among its practitioners authors like Edwin Morgan and Andrew Joron, and whose main characteristic is the incorporation, or transposition, of science fiction tropes to the poetic diction. In "Sci-Fi", the speaker envisions a far-fetched future, full of devices and machines that seem to have come directly from space opera pulps, but also full of subtle hints at the troubles we are facing right now on Earth, both in micro and macroscale. One can say that through this process of speculative imagination, the poem sheds light on contemporary society, turning the present into a kind of negative image, or inverted mirror, of this imagined tomorrow. From the perspective adopted in this paper, such a process illustrates the critical function of utopia as theorised by Ruth Levitas (2013), for whom the envisioning of alternative societies is inextricably linked to a thorough examination of the current state of affairs. Therefore, this paper aims at analysing Tracy K. Smith's "Sci-Fi", focusing on the utopian dimension that lies at the very heart of the process of creative and speculative imagination of the future, observing how current social issues —like health, cyberspace, environmental crisis, gender inequalities—are dealt with. For that purpose, this analysis will consider the formal aspects of the poem, such as voice, imagery, structure (Borges, 2000; Eliot, 1988; Fussel, 1979; Oliver, 1994) and the science fiction tropes (Suvin, 1979; Seed, 2011; Stockwell, 2000) recast in the poem. In addition, it should be added that the critical reflection here proposed aims also at contributing to the understudied interplay between utopia, science fiction, and poetry, thus offering the opportunity to broaden the methodological approaches and thematic horizons that form the ever-growing field of the Critical Utopian Studies.

Bionote: Felipe Benicio is a Professor of English Language Literature at Universidade Federal de Alagoas, in Brazil. He holds a PhD in Literary Studies, and his research interests include utopianism, dystopian fiction, science fiction, poetry and the relationship between literature and cinema. As a member of the research group Literatura e Utopia, he has co-edited the volumes "Trânsitos Utópicos" (2018) and "Utopia, Distopia e Outras Topografias do Pensamento Crítico" (2024). He is also the author of "O Neodistópico: Metamorfoses da Distopia no Século XXI" (2023), which is a revised version of his homonym PhD dissertation.

Traces of Private Conversation in Early Modern Utopian Literature

Liam Benison[1]

[1] *University of Verona and CETAPS, University of Porto*

Utopian discourse is profoundly dialogical in both its generic and narrative structures, as Vita Fortunati, Chloë Houston, and others have demonstrated. Some early modern utopias, such as Thomas More's 'little golden book', *Utopia* (1516) and Margaret Cavendish's Description of a New World, Called *The Blazing World* (1666), also contain several suggestive traces of conversations that the authors might have had in real life. These traces are represented in dedicatory paratexts and in dialogues between characters. Although it is impossible to determine the extent to which these traces reflect real-life conversations, they offer a window to examine the pre-history of a published work and the transfer of an author's private ideas and discussions into publication. They open a window on the threshold between private and public, and furnish evidence to study past notions of privacy and the role of the private in utopian visions. In this paper, I will explore and compare some examples of traces of private conversations that can be identified in More's *Utopia* and Cavendish's *Blazing World*, and consider their implications for our understanding of conceptions of privacy in early modern utopianism, including with respect to gendered differences between men's and women's construction of the authorial and 'private' self. This paper will contribute to research on the early modern history of utopian thought, privacy, gender, and the self.

Bionote: Liam Benison is a researcher in the Department of Cultures and Civilizations, University of Verona and in the Centre for English Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies (CETAPS), University of Porto. His current project "Privutopia" is a study of the conception of privacy in early modern utopianism (c. 1516–1750), funded in Italy via the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Seal of Excellence scheme. He is an affiliated scholar of the Centre for Privacy Studies, University of Copenhagen and teaches library science in Italian at Verona. His edited volume *Utopian Possibilities: Models, Theories, Critiques* is published by U.Porto Press (2023).

Braiding Intergenerational Knowledge: Utopian Restorative Hope in Indigenous Climate Crisis Fiction

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The concept of anthropogenic climate change, anchored on a discourse of undifferentiated collective responsibility, facilitates frames of understanding that isolate older generations and blame them as a whole for the creation of a fossil fuel-based life model that has led to the present crisis. Dystopian literature that represents scenarios of a world damaged by environmental threats has frequently engaged the intergenerational blame motif, as is the case of John Lanchester's The Wall (2019), where, for young characters, "the olds" are perceived as responsible for the Change, the environmental disaster that had caused drastic sea rising levels and extreme weather phenomena across the globe.

In contrast, climate change critical dystopias that tell stories of the climate crisis from the point of view of those who were excluded from decision-making processes have been exposing the historical equalities that undermine the collective generational responsibility premise. This preoccupation is pervasive in postcolonial and environmental justice narratives, which present very different readings of inter-generational relations. Climate change dystopias authored by Indigenous authors from English-speaking countries, who write against a history of cultural effacements, frequently focus on the trauma of losing that knowledge and mediate senses of environmental healing with the impulse to recover what had been forcibly erased, a process that can only be achieved through intergenerational cooperation.

This paper will analyse the critical dystopian novel The Marrow Thieves by the Métis Canadian writer Cherie Dimaline, examining how it creates an alternative frame to the generational culpability paradigm, presenting older adults in scenarios of environmental devastation, not as adversaries, burdened with guilt, but as fundamental agents in the construction of the spirit of resilience and resistance of young characters, and as carriers of memories on which the cultural and environmental restorative hope is grounded.

Bionote: Teresa Botelho is Associate Professor of American Studies at The Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, NOVA University of Lisbon. She is a member of the research group Mapping Utopianisms (CETAPS) and convener of the research strand American Intersections at the same research center. She is also a member of the Challenging Precarity Global Network, and of Rihua, the Ibero-American Network of Environmental Humanities. She has published extensively on African American and Arab-American literature, on theater, utopian and dystopian literature and literary satire. Her current interests include climate change fiction, representations of environmental justice and refugee literature.

Ageing, Virtual Immortality, and Father-Daughter Ties in Tod Machover's Ustopian Opera

Alina Bottez[1]

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Blending hermeneutics and transmedia, this paper analyses the futuristic world constructed in a science-fiction opera in light of Margaret Atwood's notion of 'ustopia' – a dystopia that embeds little utopias. "Death and the Powers" (2010) was composed by Tod Machover, the head of the MIT Media Lab's Opera of the Future group, on a libretto by US Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky. In a text with deeply symbolic names, magnate Simon Powers, aged and dying, 'uploads' himself into his environment, gradually transmogrifying into 'The System' – "a computerized infrastructure he has embedded throughout his house in order to preserve his consciousness and agency upon his death" (Peter Torpey). His given name is probably a homage to the first instance of such a transfer in the history of science fiction – the character in Edmond Hamilton's "Captain Future" pulp series (1940-44), scientist Simon Wright, whose body is old and diseased.

Miranda, the daughter of the disembodied Prospero of the future, is appalled at this new world, which she cannot find brave, but cowardly, estranged, cold, and incomprehensible. The intergenerational clash is expressed through the notion of light. Counterintuitively, Simon, the older of the two, perceives light as the cold electronic glow of the digital universe, while young Miranda, repository of traditional values, sees light in terms of warm human worth and beauty. The modern ending is open, giving the spectator no other details except the knowledge that, in the end, this new dystopian world will literally have no people in it.

The narrative is transhuman, posthuman, and post-organic. In a bout of linguistic-philosophical curiosity, the robots that have replaced human beings try to understand the term death and decide to enact Simon's ritual drama. They download memories and stage this opera within an opera with AI-recreated characters. The conclusion of the libretto is sinister, as liberation from 'the meat,' from physical frailty and decay, and virtual immortality do not lead to the anticipated freedom to love and help mankind, but to the rejection of humanity. The paper concludes that the authors of this SF opera do not see escaping into cyberspace as a valid solution to ageing and death, and that salvation can only come from retrieving the values of humanness in order to thwart the advent of a literal posthuman age.

Bionote: Alina Bottez is Associate Professor of British Literature, Cultural Studies, and Adaptation Studies at the University of Bucharest, as well as a performing soprano. She is, among others, the author of a chapter in "Othello in European Culture" (John Benjamins, 2022) and two books – "A Confluence between Masterpieces: Operas Inspired by Shakespeare's Plays" (Editura Muzicală, 2015) and "Avatarurile mitului oedipian în cultura modernă" (Eikon, 2022). Her chapter on two ustopian operas will be published by Springer Nature shortly. She is a member of ESRA, ISA, SEDERI, and the Shakespeare and Music study group (supported by the Royal Musical Association, UK).

Intergenerational relationships and ageing in utopian and dystopian fiction by Olaf Stapledon, Lois Lowry and George Orwell

Iren Boyarkina[1]

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Age, ageing, and intergenerational relationships are important aspects of society in many works of utopian and dystopian fiction. Many utopian writers explored these aspects in their fiction and offered their solutions for improving intergenerational relations in society and the position of ageing people in it. The present paper aims at exploring utopias and dystopias in the works by George Orwell, Lois Lowry and Olaf Stapledon, while focusing on the issues of ageing and intergenerational relationships and their contribution to the social fabric and structure in these novels.

Orwell emphasizes the importance of intergenerational relationships but in his *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) intergenerational relations become also a powerful instrument of spying and controlling people. The same tendency we observe in the novel *The Giver* (1992) by Lowry, where family members are spied by each other, not to mention the Elders who can spy everyone in their community and appear in the family houses any time they want. In this community, children are born of women who are assigned that profession, so there are no strong natural intergenerational emotional bonds between children/ parents/ grandparents. At a later stage of their life, babies are given to adoptive families, which are not based on love and emotional bonds; in fact, they are called family units. To make the life of the community easier, older people live separately but are helped by volunteering children; at a certain age they are killed. On the other hand, some cooperation between generations is observed in this community between *The Giver* and *The Receiver*. The former usually is a very old person enriched with almost unlimited knowledge that he/she has to transmit to the young receiver of the memories. The author emphasizes the importance of healthy intergenerational renations for the wellbeing of the community. The author points out that *The Giver* and *The Receiver* need to understand each other for the sake of the continuity of the system and sometimes they fail to do so. Also, Olaf Stapledon emphasizes the importance of intergenerational relationships for the improvement of the human species in his fiction, especially in *Last and First Men* (1930), which the present paper is going to explore.

Bionote: Iren Boyarkina received her PhD from the University of Rome "Tor Vergata", studied at Cambridge University. Her PhD thesis focused on the narratives by British science fiction writer and philosopher Olaf Stapledon. She has done extensive research in English and American science fiction literature, English and American literature of the XIXth and XXth centuries, feminist literature, cognitive linguistics, Translation studies, etc. She published a monograph on English and Russian science fiction (2020) and works dedicated to Stapledon, Lessing, H.G. Wells, Arthur Clarke, Orwell, Mary Shelley, Anne Tyler, Henry James, Joyce, Dickens, Wharton, Bulgakov, Tolstoi, Yefremov, Belyaev, and Chekhov, among others. She also edited "Passages through Enclosures and the Spacetime Continuum in English and American Science Fiction"(2022) by Cambridge Scholars Publishing. She teaches English language and literature at the University of Rome La Sapienza.

Living to Tell: A Narrative Analysis of Intergenerational Storytelling Workshop in the LGBTQ+ community in Taiwan

Svetozara Bozhilova[1]

[1] *University of Amsterdam, Netherlands*

Georgi Gospodinov's novel *Time Shelter* (2020) offers a dystopian imagining of the condition of presentism (Hartog 2015) in Europe and specifically in postsocialist Bulgaria, delving into the urgency of individual and generational responsibility in a setting where people are eagerly given the right to decide which year or decade to revert to and live in. Particular focus is placed on the case of Bulgaria during a referendum on the past and the role of agency and responsibility in a post-dependence (Tlostanova 2017) setting where intergenerational relationships are a core concern. While the older generations can rely on lived experience of the recent past and feel certain sentimentality about their youth, they find each other in conversation with a younger generation without any lived memory of the recent past. In this interplay, however, the different generations are not at odds with each other but rather take up different approaches to glorifying the past.

In the midst of a memory crisis in the Bulgarian context characterized by retrotopia and the failed striving for authenticity, the novel explores how the destruction of the grand utopian narratives of the 20th century and the disappearance of embodied memory in the present blend to produce a national identity crisis in contemporary Bulgaria. The result is foremost a problematization of time: not only is any notion of linear or forward-moving time abandoned but the present moment stretches out exponentially as the future becomes unimaginable and slippery, and the past – entirely distant and 'other'. Nostalgia over the repressive socialist past embodied in socialist kitsch and selective remembering settle nation-wide; Ersatz memory confuses history with lived experience; nationalism sprouts out of proportion in reenactments. Apocalypse and dystopia begin to permeate the imagination, and everyone, willing or not, is sucked into the artificially created memory vacuum. This study thus aims to explore the artistic representation of non-linear temporal experiences in the novel and their relation to memory and erasure studies and intergenerational relationships in postsocialist Bulgaria.

Bionote: Svetozara Bozhilova is in her final year as a Research Master student of Literary Studies at the University of Amsterdam. This is her second time attending a conference of the Utopian Studies Society. While her previous study into dystopian literature raised questions on morality in the genre, this time her interest lies in the intersection of dystopia and Bulgarian postsocialism. She finds connection between the two in memory and erasure studies and the manipulation of history for political and ideological purposes.

Immortality as a Dystopian Counter-Ideal

Corin Braga[1]

[1] *Babes-Bolyai University, Romania*

Pain, sickness, ageing and death are some of the flaws of human nature that more ambitious utopians tried to expose by imagining different solutions for eradicating them. However, the attainment of immortality, as the supreme remedy for old age and death, was not seen by everyone as an affordable or desirable ideal. Dystopian writers offered a different perspective, showing that extinction is inherent to all beings and that avoiding it would destroy humanity itself. To allow this conclusion to emerge, one of the dystopian devices they used was reductio ad absurdum. Staging some kind of "thought experiment", dystopian writers took on the utopian premises for obtaining eternal life and put them to work, in order to show that the final results to which they inevitably led were not eudemonic, but nightmarish. I analyse in this paper how such a demonstration a contrario functions in some significant works, from the classical to the modern age. I will focus on the ideological and cultural background that nourishes the disillusioned vision of these authors. Jonathan Swift, in Gulliver's Travels, displaying a deep personal misanthropy based on the Christian anthropology of the decayed human being, suggests that neither the spiritual existence of the ghost-like souls in Glubbdubdrib (the Island of necromancers), nor the bodily persistence of the Struldbruggs in Luggnagg offers a happy alternative to death. As the title Erewhon suggests (by reversing the name of the utopian no-place), the world imagined by Samuel Butler is an upside-down polity in which current vices are virtues, life is lived in a reverse order, from death to birth, so that, in contrast with Christian afterlife, Erewhonians praise existence before naissance. Criticising 19th-century economic and social utopias, H.G. Wells envisions, in Time Machine, a future in which the pure, childish, angelic race of the Elois (children of the Ancient Testament Elohim), is the meat stock for the underground, brutal, monstrous Morlocks (people of Moloch). The last sample, David R. Bunch's Moderan (1971) heralds postmodern transhumanism, presenting a postapocalyptic humanity who reaches immortality by translating their psyche from bodies of flesh to metallic carcasses (fortresses).

Bionote: General and Comparative Literature and Vice-President of the Centre de Recherches Internationales sur l'Imaginaire (CRI2i). He has published books in comparative and world literature, imagination studies, and religious imaginaries, such as 10 studii de arhetipologie [10 Studies in Archetypology] (1999, 2007); Le Paradis interdit au Moyen Âge. 1. La quête manquée de l'Eden oriental (2004), La quête manquée de l'Avalon occidentale. Le Paradis interdit au Moyen Age – 2 (2006), De la arhetip la anarhetip [From Archetype to Anarchetype] (2006), Du paradis perdu à l'antiutopie aux XVIe-XVIIIe siècles (2010), Les antiutopies classiques (2012), Pour une morphologie du genre utopique (2018), Archétypologie postmoderne (2019), Enciclopedia imaginariilor din România (ed.) [The Encyclopaedia of Romanian Imaginaries] 5 vol. (2020).

Metaphysics for Utopia inspired by Hegel's Comic Consciousness and Harari's Garden Mythologies

Andrew Bridges[1]

[1] California State University, Fullerton

This paper begins with an examination of Hegel's portrayal of the Comic Consciousness (i.e., the form of Self-Consciousness Hegel associated most closely with the Ancient Greek art of Poetry within the genre of Comedy), found in his presentation of Greek Religion within the Phenomenology of Spirit. Particular attention is paid to the freedom and perceptual creativity Hegel understands the Comic Consciousness to possess, which is understood as the unique shape of mind and experience of the Comic Consciousness. I then relate Hegel's portrayal of the Comic Consciousness to Yuval Noah Harari's portrayal of humanity in both the Myth of the Garden of Eden and the Myth of the Garden of Woolsthorpe (Harari's reference to his portrayal of the Newtonian worldview). When comparing these portrayals of humanity, the focus of the paper turns to the significant changes in perceptual and phenomenological experiences Self-Consciousness undergoes, and to the utopian and dystopian implications of such radical potential to change perceptual and phenomenological experience. I conclude by attempting to sketch a metaphysical viewpoint that accurately captures the shared insights of these aforementioned portrayals of humanity by Hegel and Harari and I reflect of humanity's utopian and dystopian potential given the implications of this metaphysical viewpoint. The ideas utilized to explore such utopian and dystopian potential include the realization by humanity that they are the creators of their concepts and experiences of the divine, as well as the creators of the forms of rationality they utilize to form coherent understandings of the world. When describing the Comic Consciousness and its transition to the Unhappy Consciousness, Hegel utilizes the figurative expression "God is Dead," to describe this realization humanity experiences. Harari suggests a similar realization experienced by humanity with the continued advancement is artificial intelligence, which essentially removes the human being, as such, from the world reducing humanity to a predictable biological algorithm. Such a portrayal can likewise be figuratively expressed, not as the death of God, but as the death of humanity.

Bionote: Andrew Bridges teaches at California State University, Fullerton, in both the Religious Studies and Philosophy Departments. His research interests include, Epistemology, Metaphysics, Ethics, Jain Studies, and Utopian Studies.

Gray Feminist Cyborgs: Old Women and Forever-Young Men in the Gerontocracy Dystopia

Celia Brightwell[1]

[1] *Chair of Digital Cultures, Technical University of Dresden*

Author Sylvia Wrigley has discovered there are only 36 English-language science fiction novels that feature an old woman as a major character, highlighting a missing cultural imaginary of elder women in visions of the future. When old women are included in science fiction, it is often so they may be made young again through techno-scientific intervention. This paper connects the feminist technoscience concept of the 'gray cyborg' – an old person who ages with technology – to the cyberpunk short story 'Forever' by xenofeminist theorist and author Amy Ireland. Forever centers on a conflict between wealthy male gerontocrats undergoing a radical de-aging surgery, and a group of gray-haired feminist anti-immortality activists called White Cell that sabotages the procedure. Through my reading of this text as xenofeminist theory-fiction, I interpret the sabotage as directed not towards the material technology but instead the systemic power disparities that it risks entrenching in perpetuity. I argue that the story's network of aging activists represents a feminist posthumanism capable of politicizing the application of technologies for anti-aging and immortality. I locate the visibly aging female body as a locus of resistance within the advanced technological orthodoxy that characterizes the cyberpunk gerontocracy dystopia. Through a process of 'reading the cyborg' in Forever, combining literary and STS (science and technology studies) analysis, I identify a critical difference between technologies designed to enhance the body and those intended to preserve it. I argue that the visibly aging female protagonist of gerontocracy dystopias embodies the process of change required for a new distribution of power in a new world order. This paper challenges prevalent narratives about aging within gerontocracy dystopias and demonstrates how xenofeminist theory offers possibilities for situating aging with technology within broader, critical, understandings of bodies, technologies and their interfaces.

Bionote: Celia Brightwell is a PhD candidate and research associate at the Chair of Digital Cultures. Her doctoral research project Cybercrones examines how age is produced culturally and technologically through a selection of paired science fiction texts and body technologies. As a research associate, her work focuses on the concept of securitization and hacking in healthcare. She completed a B.A. in English literature and an M.A. in communication at the University of Melbourne.

Temporal Constructs and Technological Oppression in Postapocalyptic Narratives

Marta Bubnowska[1]

[1] University of Gdańsk

How we perceive time and count days, years, or millennials depends on the constructed timeframe we are put into. The structure, however, can be imposed on societies based on specific historical events, such as Jesus Christ's birth. Then, the reality we perceive starts to be controlled by religion or, as in other narratives, by technological advancements, which I aim to discuss in my research. In postapocalyptic narratives, including TV series, video games, literature, and films, one can notice that the timeframes of the presented world differ from how we perceive time and, as follows, reality.

The main point of my research is to investigate and present how the timeframes in the chosen postapocalyptic dystopian narratives depend on technological advancements or disconnection from them. I aim to demonstrate that technology and the instances that control it in the presented narratives impose the perception of time and, hence, the reality and identity of the characters, which is a form of oppression. Then, the analysis pursues the reason for imposing time-related oppression in the storyworlds, including the characters' usefulness or lack thereof for the controlling instances in the narratives. My goal is to clash Foucault's understanding of the relation between power and knowledge with the notion of timeframes in the narratives focused on the futuristic visions of storyworlds in the examples of the TV Show *Silo* (2023), the novel by Diane Cook, *The New Wilderness* (2020), and the video game *Harold Halibut* (2024).

Bionote: Marta Bubnowska — a graduate of English Philology at the University of Gdańsk, researching the topic of technology and feminism.

Through the Feminine Lens: Expanding Utopian Studies

Delia Budeanu[1]

[1] Universidad Carlos III de Madrid

The evolving landscape of Utopian Studies reveals an increasing relevance of feminist utopias, a shift that invites a broader examination of the field. Traditionally dominated by male, Eurocentric texts such as Thomas More's Utopia, Tommaso Campanella's The City of the Sun, and Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward, the canon has reflected a limited view of ideal societies. While these foundational texts have shaped the discipline, they reflect predominantly masculine and Western ideals of ideal societies. Given the increasing body of feminist utopian literature, there seems to be a compelling opportunity for Utopian Studies to reconsider the traditional canon and explore how these works, with their distinct perspectives on gender, social structures, and justice, could contribute to a broader and more inclusive understanding of utopia.

Despite the increasing recognition of feminist utopias in academic discourse, there remains an opportunity for a more focused and systematic exploration of these works within Utopian Studies. Feminist utopias often challenge conventional ideas of power, hierarchy, and social organization, offering critical perspectives on issues such as gender, equality, and justice. Incorporating these works into the existing framework of Utopian Studies could enrich the field, broadening the understanding of ideal societies and providing new frameworks for imagining social transformation.

There seems to be an emerging possibility within Utopian Studies to more systematically engage with feminist utopias, thereby expanding the scope of the field. By incorporating feminist works into the existing canon, the discipline could enrich its exploration of ideal societies and offer a more nuanced view of utopia. Feminist utopias provide alternative visions of the future, highlighting issues such as gender equality, the redistribution of power, and the reorganization of social structures, which could offer new insights into the potential for societal change.

Ultimately, expanding the utopian canon to include feminist works could enhance the relevance of Utopian Studies, allowing it to address contemporary global challenges, such as inequality, environmental degradation, social justice, aging, caregiving, and the need for more equitable intergenerational dynamics. This expanded approach could provide a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of utopian thought, fostering a richer discourse on the possibilities for imagining alternative futures.

Bionote: Jurista por la Universidad Carlos III de Madrid; máster de Estudios Avanzados en Derecho Público en la misma universidad; contratada FPI Universidad Carlos III de Madrid desarrollando el proyecto de tesis con título "Sororidad y derechos de mujer. Una propuesta desde la literatura distópica feminista"; miembro del Grupo de Investigación sobre el Derecho y la Justicia (UC3M) y del Comité de edición de la revista Eunomia. Revista en Cultura de la Legalidad.

Bonds or Affordances? Ageing In(to) a Digital Utopia

Anna Bugajska[1]

[1] *Ignatianum University in Cracow*

In the times of increasing gadgetification and sousveillance, many aspects of human lives are at least partially moved online or are heavily dependent on smart companion machines. This includes a sector vital for the ageing developed societies that is healthcare. Digitalization and, more broadly, technological progress hold great promise for the individuals seeking to live long and healthy lives: from the examination of genomic data, through personalized diets and treatments, to the advanced prophylaxis in the smart home environments and the access to telemedicine and virtual support groups. It seems that we are on the brink of entering a digital utopia of health, longevity, and unlimited care. What is more, this type of utopia belongs to the more general utopia of autonomy and self-reliance that permeates the contemporary world, impacting also biopolitics relating to the ageing participants in these utopias.

The contemporary commentators and studies notice challenges to this utopian ideal. Among others, they mention the algorithmic paternalism replacing doctors' paternalism (Parsons 2019) and the tension between real-life intimacy and digital intimacy (Sisto 2022), which stems – among others – from the distinction we can make between bonds and affordances (Latour 1999), and emotions and "electronic emotions" (Vincent and Fortunati 2009). They also notice the increase, rather than decrease of the workload for the human caretakers (Wright 2023). In my paper, I would like to discuss these issues with relation to the debates within Humanization in Health HEST group, and to the study I performed in an ongoing project of LifeScience National Cluster in Krakow in 2022, during an annual Hackathon on how to improve the stay in hospitals. The aims of the Hackathon include the development of solutions for healthcare institutions that are applicable in the current system. The study of the ideas generated in the Hackathon, and the results of the contest, testify to an overarching need for the human contact that is imperative especially for the ageing participants in the digital utopian vision of the world.

Bionote: Anna Bugajska is an Associate Professor at the Ignatianum University in Cracow, the Head of the Department of the Language and Culture Studies and the Institute of Modern Languages. Gives classes in ethics, utopian studies and biopolitics. She is a member of Utopian Studies Society Europe, Humanization in Health group, and City and Philosophy Association. She is the author of Engineering Youth: the Evantropian Project in Young Adult Dystopias (2019), and of numerous articles within the range of posthumanities, literary studies and philosophy of technology. Her current research interests revolve around digital utopianism.

Re-growing roots to withstand the flood: Intergenerational bonds in Darcie Little Badger's *A Snake Falls to Earth*

Andrea Burgos Mascarell[1]

[1] Universitat de València

Over the past couple of decades, indigenous authors of current-day North America have begun to explore speculative fiction, asserting their perspectives on current global debates, such as the climate crisis or capitalism, by drawing on their traditions, beliefs and stories. Some of these works follow dystopian genre conventions, such as métis author Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* and *Hunting by Stars*, while others include elements that may be considered fantastic. Drawing on Darcie Little Badger's young adult novel *A Snake Falls to Earth*, I draw attention to the importance of establishing significant and strong connections between younger generations and the older/oldest ones.

The recent flash floods in Valencia have taught us a few lessons concerning climate change and the importance of traditional knowledge. Most people from older generations know the courses of ravines. What they lacked was the information explaining that the ravine had overflooded upstream and the pace at which the water level was increasing. Youngsters, on the other hand, mostly lack such knowledge but are constantly receiving information from online sources. Regardless of the appalling negligence of politicians, a combination of both, prowess with technology and traditional knowledge could have prevented many deaths.

Little Badger's novel explores such an alliance, where Nina, a 16-year-old girl, with the help of figures of traditional storytelling, manages to use technology to their advantage, works to decipher her great-grandmother's language, and preserves her grandmother's life and home. She does not understand her grandmother's reluctance to leave her home, but then she discovers that her grandmother is the last connection between the spirit world and our world, which turns her grandmother's home into a sanctuary, a utopia for species at risk of extinction.

Besides the obvious ecological lesson and the importance of traditional knowledge, the story aligns nicely with the aftermath of the flash floods in Valencia. As in the floods, where for a few days only the volunteers walked for miles to help us wash the mud from our homes, to provide us with food and water, to help the elders who mostly lived in ground-floor houses, Nina and her family cannot rely on any authorities, but manage to achieve their objective. I suggest that the novel offers an original perspective on apocalyptic stories, where traditionally people are lost without authorities and sink into chaos and despair, to show that in times of crisis, people's own will is capable of the most outstanding achievements.

Bionote: Dr Andrea Burgos-Mascarell is an assistant professor at the University of Valencia, where she got her PhD on 21st century dystopian fiction. Her field of study involves contemporary speculative fiction with a particular focus on literature for young adults. She has recently co-authored the monograph *El Ocaso de Koinonia: La distopía en la literatura norteamericana* (2024).

The Acculturation of Tom Hazard Through Longevity and Identity Crisis in Matt Haig's *How to Stop Time*

Öznur Cengiz Çeliker[1]

[1] *Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University*

Matt Haig (1975-   ) is a contemporary English author and journalist who has a number of novels and children's books. His science fictional work, How to Stop Time (2017), is based on the story of Tom Hazard, currently a history teacher, in a delicate condition which he is four hundred thirty-seven years old. Through his enormous life span, he has witnessed historical events and met notable names such as Captain Cook and F. Scott Fitzgerald. In spite of his unique feature of longevity, he has to conceal his identity and feature in order to stay alive. The Albatross society, a secret group, intends to protect people sharing the same feature financially and sustain new identities regarding to keep secret. However, Tom is tired of moving regularly, struggling with loneliness, longing for his daughter who is like him, and being stuck in bitter memories of his family. Although he has a chance to experience different lives, jobs, environments, friendships, and is able to ensconce himself in the new place, to live in such a tortuous path causes him to be exposed to the pain of emotional crisis like bereavement and of identity crisis with a new name and in any place of the world. Accordingly, this paper aims to elucidate vagaries of the long-life span of the protagonist in terms of longevity and identity crisis that are concomitant to repeated failures and unaccomplished chapters of his life. In addition to reunion with his daughter and the partner he is in love at the end, his fragmented life including a considerable number of identities is representation of his assimilated self tantamount to a clandestine personality without any specificities. Thus, the core of this study will be harsh experiences/memories of the protagonist in search of identity from the viewpoint of the transformation he has undergone.

Bionote: Öznur Cengiz Çeliker completed her BA and MA at the Department of Western Languages and Literatures, Dumlupınar University (Kütahya). She prepared her PhD thesis on science fiction at the Department of Western Languages and Literatures (English Language and Literature), Graduate School of Social Sciences, Ankara University. Since 2009, she has been working at the Department of Western Languages and Literatures, Faculty of Sciences and Arts, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. Her current studies are on posthumanism, dystopia, science fiction, and ecocriticism.

Dystopia for Ageless "Ruined(s)": Bloody Revenge of an Elderly Woman in Margaret Atwood's "Stone Mattress"

Arzu Çevirgen[1]

[1] Yozgat Bozok University

Accepted as one of Canada's most prolific living writers, Margaret Atwood (1939-) uses ageing, an effective theme explored in dystopian writing in particular, to subvert the stereotypes of elderly women as powerless, inactive and asexual figures. In her collection of short stories entitled Stone Mattress (2014), which includes "nine wicked tales," Atwood touches upon various representations of elderly women influenced by their traumatic pasts. Especially in the title tale "Stone Mattress," she, through her interpretation of the intersection of ageing and gender, presents how an elderly woman can overcome the problems and restrictions the elderly face. The dystopian narrative revolves around an old woman named Verna, who focuses on murdering men. As a widow, her ambition to control men pushes her to seduce, marry, and ultimately murder three of her suitors. In time her thoughts about men change, and she decides not to seduce and kill them until, on a cruise, she encounters Bob Goreham, the man who had raped her in his car during her high school years. This results in her reputation being "ruined" in the town, with locals and high school students mocking and gossiping about her. Although she is the victim, Verna is held responsible for this traumatising incident. Upon discovering her pregnancy, she is taken to a convent to endure her pregnancy and subsequently give the child for adoption upon its birth. Atwood illustrates society's hatred against a woman considered "ruined" and thus "different." Verna confronts her traumatic past, and as an elderly woman, she manages to get rid of the burden of the past by taking revenge on Bob, whose actions destroyed her youth. By killing him, she converts the so-called weaknesses attributed to her gender and youth into power thanks to her maturity and experience now as an elderly woman. In this respect, the primary objective of this paper is to discuss how Margaret Atwood subverts the standardised behaviour and representations of old age in "Stone Mattress" by redefining the role of an elderly woman as strong, active and sexual figure.

Bionote: Arzu Çevirgen received her MA degree in 2017 from the Department of English Language and Literature at Hacettepe University with her thesis entitled "Ted Hughes's Use of Myths in Crow and Prometheus on His Crag." She received her Ph.D. in 2024 from the same department with her dissertation entitled "Science, Politics and Utopia in Margaret Cavendish's Works." Currently, she is working at Yozgat Bozok University as a research assistant. Her research interests are twentieth-century British poetry, myths, Ted Hughes, seventeenth-century British poetry, utopia, and Margaret Cavendish.

Aging and Technological Utopia in Stanisław Lem's Philosophy: Between Hope and Alienation

Denis Chiriac[1]

[1] Moldova State University

The work of Stanisław Lem profoundly examines the tension between human aging and technological utopia, highlighting both hopeful aspirations and deep existential alienation generated by scientific progress. Central to Lem's work is the notion of technological advancement as a double-edged sword: on one hand, it promises to overcome the biological limitations of aging; on the other, it intensifies a profound sense of alienation from the very essence of humanity.

This paper investigates Lem's interpretation of aging as a fundamental human vulnerability, which technology aims to eliminate through utopian projects such as immortality or significantly extended lifespans. The analysis focuses on selected philosophical essays and literary texts, including "Solaris," "The Futurological Congress," and "His Master's Voice," emphasizing Lem's nuanced skepticism towards technological utopianism. For Lem, radically extending lifespan does not simply resolve human anxieties or existential dilemmas; instead, it often deepens the alienation from oneself and one's community.

The article also explores Lem's critique of utopian ideologies that idealize technological solutions to deeply human problems, cautioning that such approaches risk reducing human existence to mere biological processes. Lem's philosophical reflections reveal the paradoxical outcomes of technological progress, which, while alleviating certain forms of suffering, simultaneously introduce new forms of psychological and social alienation.

Therefore, Stanisław Lem's philosophy views aging not merely as a biological issue requiring technological solutions, but rather as a complex ethical and existential challenge. By situating Lem's thought within contemporary debates on transhumanism and bioethics, this paper underscores its prophetic relevance. Lem invites reflection on the profound implications of pursuing technological immortality for individual identity, social relationships, and the human condition in general. Thus, his philosophy remains an indispensable critical resource for understanding the complex interplay between hope and alienation inherent in technological utopian visions. Keywords: aging, technological utopia, alienation, transhumanism, bioethics.

Bionote: Denis Chiriac is a researcher specializing in philosophy, Slavic literatures, and religion. He is currently a PhD candidate at Moldova State University. His doctoral thesis, titled "The Concept of the New Man: Between Cosmism, Communism, and Transhumanism," explores intersections among philosophical ideas, ideological constructs, socio-spiritual aspects, and emerging technologies. Besides his research, he translates books from Russian and actively participates in international conferences. His academic background in Orthodox theology, Slavic languages and cultures (Russian and Polish), and the history and culture of religions enables him to undertake original inter- and transdisciplinary approaches in his research.

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Thomas Paine and Generational Rights

Gregory Claeys[1]

[1] University of London

During the epoch of the American and French Revolutions the most famous invocation of generational rights was that offered by Thomas Paine, in his Rights of Man (1791-2). Here, arguing against Edmund Burke's insistence that the constitutional settlement reached in Britain in 1688-89 meant that no further reform was possible, and that "our heirs and our posterity, to them, their heirs and posterity" were bound "to the end of time." Against this Paine insisted that "the vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave, is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies." This meant that "Every generation is equal in rights to the gen-erations which preceded it, by the same rule that every individual is born equal in rights with his contemporary." This paper explores the extraordinary ramifications of this attack on a key principle of conservative politics, and particularly its implications for what would come to be called "originalism", the idea that the intentions of the "Founding Fathers" should be resolutely followed by subsequent generations.

Bionote: Gregory Claeys is Professor Emeritus at the University of London and Chair of the Utopian Studies Society. His books include Searching for Utopia: the History of an Idea (Thames & Hudson, 2011), Dystopia: A Natural History (Oxford University Press, 2016); Marx and Marxism (Penguin Books, 2018), and Utopianism for a Dying Planet: Life After Consumerism (Princeton University Press, 2022).

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Muddied Histories: Unearthing Utopian Longing and Fascist Undercurrents in the Tartary Conspiracy Theory

Callum Copley[1]

[1] *Sandberg Institute*

From El Dorado to Atlantis, mythic cities and lost civilizations have captivated human imagination for centuries, embodying collective hopes of utopian possibility. More recently, however, pseudohistorical conspiracy theories—such as those pertaining to a so-called Tartarian Empire—have proliferated online, presenting an alternative and more troubling utopian vision. This particular theory celebrates a supposedly globe-spanning, technologically and culturally advanced civilization known as Tartary or the Tartarian Empire. The theory posits that this Empire was ultimately destroyed by a cataclysmic "mudflood," leaving its remnants buried underground or hidden in plain sight within modern cities. Advocates claim that this true history has been deliberately and nefariously concealed from the world.

Central to the Tartary conspiracy is its preoccupation with monumental architecture (either still standing or since demolished), which is claimed to be the surviving evidence of this utopian empire. This paper argues that this focus on grandiose buildings—ranging from the Great Pyramids of Egypt to late 19th and early 20th-century structures in the U.S.A.—represents a utopian desire rooted in nostalgia for a perceived "golden age" of human achievement. Furthermore, I will show how this longing is entangled with a fetishization of imperialism itself, revealing the ideological convergence of these fantasies with contemporary right-wing movements.

This paper seeks to explore the reasons behind the growing popularity of the Tartary conspiracy and adjacent "new chronology" theories, analyzing them as expressions of utopian longing. At the same time, it will contextualize the rise of these ideas within a broader rejection of consensus reality and the erosion of meta-narratives in contemporary society. By unpacking the ideological underpinnings of the Tartary conspiracy, I will argue that it reflects a broader right-wing turn within Western society and that its romanticized depiction of empire serves to support growing nationalist and authoritarian sentiments.

In addition, the paper will investigate how online conspiracy communities appropriate archaeological methods to legitimize their claims, connecting this to broader issues surrounding the instrumentalization of archaeology by nationalist and authoritarian regimes who attempt to manipulate historical narratives to justify territorial claims and assert cultural superiority. By situating the Tartary conspiracy theory within a wider socio-political and cultural context, this paper aims to contribute to the growing body of scholarship on pseudohistory, conspiracy theories, and the ideological functions they serve in the present day, contributing to an understanding of the dual potential of utopian thinking to inspire collective hope or perpetuate regressive ideologies.

Bionote: Callum Copley is a researcher, writer, and editor whose work investigates how speculative fiction functions to articulate materialist perspectives. His work often explores decolonial, Indigenous, and ecological viewpoints, with a particular focus on the practice of world-building. He has taught at the Design Academy Eindhoven and the Sandberg Institute, Amsterdam, where he graduated from the Critical Studies Master's program in 2018. He is co-founder of 'Schemas of Uncertainty,' an ongoing research initiative exploring the role of prediction in contemporary society, and founder of Green Screens, a series of screenings on the relationship between environment, ecology, and cinema. He is also the editor of Reworlding:

'Ramallah, Short Science Fiction Stories from Palestine' (Onomatopee, 2019) and author of several books of original speculative fiction.

For a "sustainable" utopia of the future: solidarity and bonds of "generative trust"

Giovanna Costanzo[1]

[1] *University of Messina*

Every space of human existence is now shaped by the network of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and artificial intelligence (AI) systems that together make up the digital environment in which we are immersed and perpetually connected. The increasing progress of new technologies and the possibilities opened up by AI systems pose the ethical urgency of reflecting not only on how technology structurally changes human beings and the way we inhabit the world, but how it transforms intergenerational relationships.

In fact, the 'digital divide' is defined as the generation gap between the youngest and the oldest. The former are so familiar with the use of electronic devices that they turn them into opportunities for success and happy inclusion in everyday life. The latter are at risk of being sidelined in an increasingly digitised society and thus forced to require constant assistance in performing the simplest, everyday tasks. This phenomenon is compounded by the planned obsolescence, i.e. the rapid obsolescence of electronic devices and the continuous turnover of digital devices. This phenomenon also causes the progressive exclusion of those who cannot make the necessary upgrades, leading to the awareness of being 'outdated', destined to feel 'older' all the time.

We are thus faced with a world destined for increasing ageing, due to the increase in the number of elderly people in society and the disability caused by the awareness of being 'outdated' in relation to our surroundings. This raises the question of whether and how technology can help to re-weave the frayed links between generations and promote responsible care for the environment in which we live.

In fact, technology has a positive impact if it is used as an opportunity to pass knowledge between different generations (in the world of work, school, university); if it becomes an opportunity to improve living conditions, especially of the elderly and vulnerable; if it contributes to elaborating visions of sustainable development in contrast also to the growing digital pollution. This different attitude toward technology is possible if all people cultivate an utopian tension aimed at imagining a less hopeless and hyper-technological future. A future built by the supportive and trusting actions among different generations who believe that any progress must be accompanied by care for what is fragile and concern for the whole eco-system. A future to be imagined as a precious legacy to be handed over re-generated to those who will come after us.

Bionote: Giovanna Costanzo is currently Associate Professor (with habilitation to Full Professor) of Moral Philosophy at the University of Messina (Italy). Her current research is on the theoretical constitution of contemporary ethics, particularly in the Phenomenological and Hermeneutical French Thought. She is also interested in modern and contemporary Jewish Thought, particularly in the scientific literature after the Holocaust. She has participated as a speaker at national and international conferences.

Ageism, Dystopia, and Intergenerational Futures in Margaret Atwood's "Torching the Dusties"

Özden Dere[1]

[1] *Iğdır University, Turkey*

Margaret Atwood's "Torching the Dusties," the concluding narrative in her anthology Stone Mattress (2014), explores the problematic dynamics between the elderly and younger generations in a dystopian near-future. The story takes place in a distinguished retirement community threatened by aggressive anti-elder factions, exposing the dangers of systemic ageism and the socio-political factors that deepen intergenerational divisions. This study analyses Atwood's depiction of ageing in relation to utopian and dystopian studies, emphasising how "Torching the Dusties" critiques the dehumanisation of the old and the repercussions of social neglect. The narrative highlights the vulnerability of the elderly while also illustrating the persistent endurance of human ties, revealing instances of solidarity despite turmoil. Atwood's work examines the cultural narratives that depict ageing as a liability, exposing its dystopian consequences while proposing the utopian possibilities of intergenerational harmony. This analysis employs gerontological utopianism and feminist theories of ageing to contextualise Atwood's narrative within wider discussions on age-related inequalities intergenerational fairness, and the function of speculative fiction in imagining alternative worlds. Through the contrast of dystopian violence and instances of subtle resistance, Atwood pushes readers to imagine more inclusive and egalitarian communities that appreciate the contributions of all age groups. This paper thus reveals how speculative fiction may oppose ageist structures and predict transformational intergenerational interactions through its focus on "Torching the Dusties."

Bionote: Özden Dere works as an assistant professor of English literature at Iğdır University, Turkey. They got their PhD in 2024 in English Literature at Hacettepe University with their dissertation analysing Edward Bond's The War Plays within the context of Zygmunt Bauman's insights into utopian imagination. Their research interests are utopian and dystopian studies, contemporary British drama, gender studies, and digital storytelling. They have published on topics such as gender studies, eco-criticism, and the intersection of literature and social justice. They have a particular interest in how speculative fiction and literature in general critiques cultural narratives of marginalization while imagining transformative futures. Özden Dere has presented at several national and international conferences, contributing to scholarly discussions on various subjects such as environmental studies, gender studies and contemporary British drama.

The Collapse of Utopia: Ecology, Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Nostalgia in Sofia Rhei's "Newropía"

Elisabetta Di Minico[1]

[1] Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Written by Spanish author Sofia Rhei, "Newropía" is a 2020 young adult novel dedicated "to the people who actively fight for the rights of all living beings". The story talks about ecology, capitalism, advertising, feminism, and nostalgia through a paradoxical construction of various topoi, utopian and dystopian. After a global bioterrorist action that infected and destroyed oil wells, the world order changed. The brutal resource crisis forced European authorities to take desperate measures that lead to the annihilation of the "old" Europe and its archaic values and the creation of a new, young, fragmented Europe, composed by 10,000 micro-utopias. The continent became an immense amusement park where any desire, any idea, any historical time can find its place and generate profit, from Nazi realities to hippie communities, from lands with dinosaurs to vegetarian zones, from hyper-technological areas to medieval worlds, and many more. Newropía recalls the carnival of Bakhtin, "a temporary liberation from the dominant truth and the established order, […] a suspension of rules and prohibitions", but privileges, exploitation and structural injustice here are preserved. The protagonists of the story are Verbena, a militant witch from the Forest, a matriarchal and ecocritical state that tries to preserve nature and to destroy the capitalism, and Elliot, a boy from Xanadu, a world of nostalgia and retrofuturism inspired by the 80s. Their coming-of-age journey will bring them to reshape not only Newropía's utopias but the very real concept of utopia.

The presentation will be focus on themes: 1) the conflicting ideas of utopia and the borderline separation between "good" and "bad" places; 2) the capitalist and patriarchal power relations that justify the novel's abusive political systems; 3) the intergenerational relationships and the nostalgia in Newropía, and 4) the role of technology, social media, and advertising on the construction of society.

Bionote: Elisabetta Di Minico is a UNA4CAREER postdoctoral researcher with a project on the "Enmity of Otherness" at the Complutense University of Madrid (Faculty of Political Science and Sociology). Her studies focus on the relation between fiction and history. She deals primarily with dystopia, control, otherness, and violence (racial and gendered). She uses novels, comics, movies, and TV series to provocatively analyze the real "bad places" of contemporary society on a historical and sociological level. Ph.D. Cum Laude in Contemporary History from the University of Barcelona, she is part of the HISTOPIA research group.

Biopolitics and Ageing in *Woman on the Edge of Time*

Şeyma Dinç Tosun[1]

[1] Istanbul Aydın University

Marge Piercy's 1976 novel Woman on the Edge of Time depicts a state where ageing is no longer represented with the emotions of fear, loneliness, or alienation toward a utopian vision. Through the lens of a thirty-seven-year-old protagonist named Connie, Consuelo Ramos, Piercy narrates the story of a woman who embarks on a journey to explore a utopian state set in 2137 called Mattapoisett. In the state where a time-traveller introduces Connie, Luciente draws an alternative perception where elders are respected as vital members of society and remain working and living among the younger generation by contributing their talent and experiences. As a middle-aged person, Connie does not feel the same way since her perception of age is related to race. The novel has two distinct representations of age, reflecting the cultural and political states of utopian and dystopian individuals. The concept of 'biopolitics', as theorized by Foucault, can be elucidated within the framework of ageing, underlining that age is a multidimensional concept, and in this novel, it is observed within the themes of race, health, education, and the human body since Mattapoisett's social structure devalues the modern concept of ageing by providing freedom and a place for the old to contribute to the social good of the state, a key aspect of biopolitics. This paper explores shifting politics from Connie's actual world and the Mattapoisett and how a utopian state, although using technology to produce children in artificial wombs, grounds biopolitics to achieve detachment from dystopia.

Bionote: Şeyma Dinç Tosun is a PhD student in the English Literature program at Istanbul Aydın University and a lecturer at Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University. She has delivered papers at various academic conferences, including "A Nietzschean Reading of Euripides' Medea" and "Interpreting the Subconscious: Dystopian Madness in A Clockwork Orange and The Power." Beyond her academic endeavours, she is an avid writer, contributing as an amateur author to a literary fanzine. Her primary research interests include utopian and dystopian fiction, critical theory, and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche.

Taboos in Time

Sheri Dorn-Giarmoleo[1]

[1] *ARI A Research Institute*

The purpose of this paper is to explore George Bernard Shaw's commitment to the potential of human agency to transform social relations in time, as he puts forth in his controversial play Back to Methuselah (1921). My intent is to intertwine this 5 part play, expounding Shaw's philosophy of "creative evolution." A philosophy Shaw sustained vehemently where "significant changes from one generation to the next were possible if human will expressed itself sufficiently" (Utopiana Drama, Adiseshiah, Sian 2023) together with Dr. Mario Martinez's research on healthy centenarians as presented in his book The Mind Body Code (2014). Dr. Martinez coined the term biocognition in 1998 to define his theory of mind -body-culture.

Dr. Martinez's biocognitive theory proposes that cognition and biology co-emerge within a cultural history to find maximum contextual relevance. Biocognition challenges the limitations of the conventional sciences that reduce life to its biological components and dismiss the mind as a neurochemical expression. Rather than an epiphenomenon of biology, cognition emerges with biology in an inseparable co-authorship of phenomenology and physicality within cultural horizons. This together with Shaw's use of fantastical elements in Back to Mesthuselah for instance - a human life span of thousands of years, symbolic of what Piers J. Hale states, 'eventually, the build up of this "life force" and creative desire to change the world would be irresistible.' (H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw, Journal of the History of Biology 43.1, 2010) Meaning too, a far more advanced quality of life, with a true healthy well being in a post- capitalist society.

I shall also argue, we are a species designed to transcend reality, specifically in utopian thought as Shaw distinctively created for us, together with the support of a timely understanding of our profound social connection to human health as in the work of Dr. Martinez - each of us may contribute to imaging that which isn't.

Bionote: Sheri Dorn-Giarmoleo is a transdisciplinary researcher. Her current research is focusing on ideological mapping (How do we get to think the way we think?) as a part of Utopian thought in theatre (past and present) Critical Race Theory, Gender as Power and Control, Economics and Concepts of Privilege. Her primary research methodology is Performance Ethnography, but not only.

Challenging the utopia of a world without ageing: gendered and socio-economic implications of ageing in Michel Houellebecq's La Possibilité d'une île

Gabrielle Fath[1]

[1] *University of Limerick*

A world where ageing and death have been eradicated might seem ideal, as explored by Michel Houellebecq in his science-fiction novel La Possibilité d'une île (2005), whose title echoes Aldous Huxley's Island (1962). However, as this paper will argue, Michel Houellebecq challenges this 'utopia', which quickly reveals itself to be a dystopia. In so doing, the novel reflects the dangers of ageism in the modern West, from gendered and socio-economic perspectives.

In the novel, Houellebecq imagines a society where humanity has been augmented, rendering humans unable to age, as they are reincarnated into new versions of themselves, called "neo-humans". Yet, this utopian ideal hides nefarious ageist, as well as sexist, attitudes in the modern West, as this paper will explore. Reflecting the contrast between present and future societies, the chapters are alternatively written from the point of view of Daniel, a successful but depressed middle-aged comedian and his troubled relationships with women, and his two successive clones, called "neo-humans", Daniel24 and Daniel25, who live in isolation in a dystopian future. Drawing from works in gendered ageing studies, as well as utopian studies, this paper envisions ageing as socially and culturally realised.

Firstly, attention will be dedicated to the gendered implications of ageing in the novel, as Michel Houellebecq exposes how women are subject to a "double standard of ageing" (drawing from Susan Sontag's essay of the same name published in 1972). As Sontag argued, women are doubly affected by ageism, and marginalised as they age. However, socio-economic realities portrayed in the novel will be closely examined, as capitalism views ageing bodies and minds as undesirable. Finally, this paper will investigate how the treatment of ageing in the novel acts as a mirror of society more generally, allowing us to diagnose our contemporary social ills.

Bionote: Gabrielle Fath is a PhD student in comparative literature at the University of Limerick and was awarded the Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship by Research Ireland. She researches the representation of women's ageing in post-war short fiction by writers from Ireland, Scotland and Switzerland, focusing especially on how the narratives (re-)write the ageist and sexist tropes used to represent older women.

Embracing The Change: Postmenopausal (Utopian) Gifts

Aline Ferreira[1]

[1] University of Aveiro, Portugal

A recent cluster of novels dealing with older, postmenopausal women highlights the widespread ambition on the part of this large cohort of the female population to be seen and heard and to be perceived as worthy and valuable members of society. Salient examples of this thematically linked group of novels include Kirsten Miller's The Change (2022), Joanne Harris's Broken Light (2023) and Fran Littlewood's Amazing Grace Adams (2023). The protagonists share a (utopian) desire for change, wishing to build a society which will see them as effective and significant individuals, not diminished by ageist stereotypes and prejudices. They are determined to eradicate what Susan Sontag described as the "Double Standard of Ageing" and to address the lack of representation of this group of women by reversing the pervasive narrative of patriarchal ascendency. The women in these novels refuse to become invisible, developing skills or (utopian) gifts that enable them to feel empowered and to vent their consuming rage against those men who feel entitled to exert power over women.

While Ursula K. Le Guin described menopause as "probably the least glamorous topic imaginable" (in "The Space Crone"), there has been a shift in attitudes towards this life phase in what Deborah Jermyn has called the "menopausal turn" (2023), which is receiving growing attention from the medical profession but also from the cultural and social spheres. This paper will analyse these novels in the light of recent work on menopausal studies and the increasing perception that women at that stage in their lives are currently developing a voice of their own that demands to be heard. They must not be silenced or demonised by discourses that turn them into modern-day witches, as Victoria Smith observes in Hags: The Demonisation of Middle-Aged Women (2023).

Bionote: Aline Ferreira is an Associate Professor at the University of Aveiro in Portugal where she teaches English Literature and Cultural Studies. She holds a PhD from the University of London (Birkbeck College). Her main interests comprise the intersections between literature and science, bioethics, feminist utopias and gender studies. Publications include I Am the Other: Literary Negotiations of Human Cloning (Greenwood Press, 2005) as well as numerous articles in international journals. She is now finishing a book provisionally entitled: The Sexual Politics of the Artificial Womb: Fictional and Visual Representations.

From a citizen's diary to a "Midwinter Night's Dream." Formal variety of British and American 19th-century Dystopias

Justyna Galant[1]

[1] *University of Gdańsk*

In his essay from 1990, Richard Toby Widdicombe addressed scholars and readers of fin de siècle utopian fiction with a plea: "I am arguing for a more sophisticated reading of Utopian texts, one which looks at them as something other than repositories of ideas by which the reader can be schooled." Widdicombe's challenge is still very much relevant, with few studies of 19th-century dystopias doing justice to the most significant era in the genre's development, outshined only by our present times' obsessive preoccupation with scenarios of the end. As an encouragement to a thorough and nuanced reading I will offer an overview of one of the most prominent features of 19th-century dystopias, namely their formal complexity. Discussing the range of narrative solutions employed in the body of fiction I will look at how the satirical Menippean roots of the genre are manifested and transformed by their entanglements with a variety of other generic influences.

Bionote: Dr. Justyna Galant is an assistant professor of English literature at The University of Gdansk, Poland. In 2015 she authored a monograph on Renaissance drama, Painted Devils, Siren Tongues: The Semiotic Universe of Jacobean Tragedy (Peter Lang). During the following years she published widely on literary utopias, co-editing two book publications in the field. She is a Kosciuszko Foundation Fellow, reviewer and member of advisory board for the journal Utopian Studies, and in the years 2017–2023 the Secretary of the Utopian Studies Society/ Europe. Her academic interests include utopian literature, drama, and the works of Lionel Britton.

Hartmut Rosa: denigration of the elderly due to social acceleration

Mónica García Pardo[1]

[1] Universitat de València

Unfortunately we see how, both in literature and the media, as well as in the collective imagination, the vital stage of old age is often denigrated, betting on the contrary on a utopian eternal youth, which has dire consequences for intergenerational relationships. In this case, we will turn to the philosopher Hartmut Rosa and his theory of social acceleration.

Regarding the acceleration of social change, we experience how the replacement of our cultural structures, our values, way of communicating, etc. is accelerated. In the case of the family, unlike the intergenerational rhythm of early Modernity, in late modernity we experience an intragenerational rhythm. That is to say, the family is no longer articulated around family ties that are maintained for generations but around members who are perceived as out of sync, with different needs, and where young and old people live isolated from each other. Furthermore, there seems to be an advantage for young people. The figure of the wise old man who enjoyed a good status precisely because of his experience is no longer valued, but is instead considered obsolete, devalued, who is not able to keep up with the pace of society.

On the other hand, Rosa points out how a cultural promise would be one of the causes of this social acceleration and the consequent stigmatization of the elderly. In a secularized society, the great promise no longer lies in achieving eternal life but in living the maximum of experiences. Thus, acceleration seems the solution: if we experiment faster we can experience twice as much, before death imposes a definitive end to our ability to be happy. This is where the utopian obsession with youth appears. We denigrate old age at all costs because growing old means approaching the moment when we will no longer be able to continue living or experiencing.

According to Rosa, this leads to alienation from others. If we don't have time for anything and we live fast, the last thing we want to hear are the stories of our elders' lives. Accelerated industrial societies lead us to instrumental, alienated, and transitory relationships in which the rhythms of the elderly represent a hindrance. However, the serious consequences of this are evident. A society that denies aging and healthy intergenerational relationships is an impoverished society, since it lacks those who can offer us their experience to shape our personal and social identity.

Bionote: Monica Garcia Pardo es Graduada en filosofía. -Máster en Ética y democracia. -Máster en Profesorado de Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria. -Profesora sustituta del departamento de Filosofía moral de la Universidad de Valencia.

Old Women's Bodies as a Resource for Horror: Hagsploitation Films and Societal Fear of Aging Reflected in the Feminine Physique

Marta González Cañete[1]

[1] Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Women have been used in horror films to represent the consequences of not following the traditional moral values of chastity and obedience. While women who defied these rules were eventually slaughtered by the villain of the film, those who conformed to them survived to see their happy ending. However, an issue arises when society begins to see signs of old age as a punishable disruption of the moral code, since they directly stand against Patriarchal beauty standards.

It is not uncommon for women in roles that, in one way or another, rely on their beauty – such as actresses or models – to see their careers die as they become more and more aged. This is precisely the scenario that constitutes the foundation of the film genre known as "Hag Horror" or "Hagsploitation Films," of which the first example can be considered to be Robert Aldrich's What Ever Happened to Baby Jane? (1962). This film features an old woman who experiences madness as she is unable to accept that her golden days are over, given that she is no longer a young successful actress but rather a forgotten one. However, while this 54 year-old is undoubtedly staged as the horror element the audience is expected to be afraid of, the narrative also urges the audience to wonder whether they are afraid of Jane or if what is truly scaring them are the social consequences of aging as a woman.

It is true that signs of aging in women are used to represent monstrosity in films, an example of which would be Coralie Fargeat's The Substance (2024). Nevertheless, it also demonstrates an understanding towards the mental and emotional aftereffects of growing old as a woman in Western societies. Therefore, it can be stated that the mere use of these older bodies as a monstrosity demonstrates an understanding, whether conscious or not, of the social ostracism that women experience when they are no longer considered attractive by social standards that demand an everlasting youth. By turning these women into monsters, they are stripped of their humanity. At the same time, nonetheless, it can be understood that this phenomenon is presented in horror films as a reflection of a social reality, which paves the way to a more empathetic reading of the Hag horror genre.

Bionote: Marta González Cañete, currently on a break from her studies, graduated with honours in English Studies from the Complutense University of Madrid before earning a postgraduate degree in Children's Literature from Trinity College Dublin. Her main areas of research include vampirism in literature as a metaphor for reinforcing Christian morals in Western society, as well as the intersection of feminism and lesbianism with witchcraft as a means of criticizing the Church in Irish young adult literature. ORCID: 0009-0009-5747-6417

Later Life and (Climate) Change in Jessie Greengrass's *The High House*

David Gray[1]

In her study "Popular Views of Old Age in America, 1900-1950" and using American popular literature, Laura Hirshbein has argued that a shift was taking place which can be broadly defined by the increasingly negatives views of old age, or later life. A representation of old age as synonymous with knowledge of history and wisdom was being replaced by one where old age began to be seen more and more as a social and medical problem - a problem to be professionally and scientifically challenged. In somewhat contrast, Adeline Johns-Putra has argued that a feature of the often postapocalyptic and dystopian genre of climate fiction is the symbolic value of the child as a figure for posterity. The "child-as-posterity trope is […] designed to elicit anxieties for a contemporary, or globally-warmed, reader around the ethical failure to act on climate change, just as the parental/guardian figure of these narratives experiences the anxieties of caring for a child in a climate-changed world." (Gray, 2023, p. 155). Characters in later life, thus, often function as short hand for an older generation who were aware of climate change but did nothing to prevent it; younger characters, in contrast, often heroically, deal with the consequences. This creates something of a temporal double-bind in relation to representations of later life in contemporary fiction broadly and climate fiction more specifically: a social and medical problem in the present, and ethically irresponsible in a climate-changed future. Focusing on Jessie Greengrass' The High House (2021), this paper argues that an earlier version of later life as a positive carrier of history, wisdom and (in this case) knowledge of the natural world is realised through the local East-Anglian character, Grandy. Moreover, this renegotiation of later life comes in the context of a climate fiction novel that despite its bleak postapocalyptic setting, is far from being characteristically and socially dystopian, suggesting some renegotiation of the genre.

Bionote: David Gray is currently a senior lecturer in English at the School of Language, Literatures and Learning in Dalarna University, Sweden. His academic publications cover British and Irish literature from the Renaissance, the eighteenth century and the Romantic era, along with studies of twentieth and twenty-first century fiction. Specifically, he has published on Ulster-Scots poetry and the natural world, ecocriticism in Shakespeare studies, as well as representations of the Nordic countries in twentieth-century life/travel writing, and contemporary climate fiction. For several years he was also editor for the e-journal Landscapes: the Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language.

The Criminalization of Wrinkles: Ageing, Beauty, and Bonds in Samuel Butler's Erewhon

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Samuel Butler's Erewhon (1872) is a satirical exploration of Victorian societal norms, including its treatment of intergenerational bonds, ageing, and perceptions of physical beauty and illness. This paper examines Butler's critique of societal attitudes toward ageing and the elderly, situating these themes within the broader cultural framework of his time. In Erewhon, the inversion of typical Western ideals—where sickness is criminalized, and physical beauty becomes a moral imperative—serves as a provocative lens through which to analyze intergenerational relationships and the alienation of the ageing population.

The novel's treatment of ageing reflects the tension between individual worth and societal utility, as Erewhonians prioritize youthfulness and aesthetic appeal. Physical beauty is elevated to a virtue, equated with moral and social desirability, while ageing is subtly stigmatized as a sign of decline and diminished value. Such portrayals echo Victorian anxieties surrounding industrial progress and the increasing marginalization of older generations in a rapidly evolving society.

The criminalization of sickness in Erewhonian society further complicates the narrative surrounding ageing and intergenerational care. By treating illness as a moral failing rather than a natural human condition, Butler highlights the lack of compassion for those perceived as weak or unproductive, a stance that implicitly critiques the erosion of familial and societal responsibilities toward the elderly. This dynamic fosters alienation between generations, as the older, less physically appealing members of society are implicitly excluded from the Erewhonian ideal of perfection.

Through a close reading of key passages, this paper explores how Butler's satirical world-building reflects and critiques Victorian ideals, emphasizing the moral and societal dilemmas surrounding ageing and intergenerational bonds. Butler's commentary remains prescient in contemporary discussions about the pressures of maintaining youth, the fear of obsolescence, and the responsibilities of younger generations toward the elderly. By framing physical beauty and wellness as ethical mandates, Butler reveals the dehumanizing potential of societal norms that prioritize superficial attributes over empathy and genuine intergenerational connection.

Bionote: Ercan Gürova has been working at Ankara University, at the School of Foreign Languages since 2005. He graduated from Hacettepe University, in the English Language and Literature Department. He received his M.A. from Anadolu University, from the Turkish Language and Literature Department. He received his Ph.D. from Atılım University, from the English Culture and Literature Department. His recent works are: "Mars and the Martians as Others in Philip K. Dick's Story and Its Film Adaptation" in Science Fantasy by Lexington Books; "Human Vulnerability in Jack London's The Scarlet Plague" in Depictions of Pestilence in Literature, Media, and Art by Cambridge Scholars Publishing. He is also the translator of the recently published book Freshwater – Virginia Woolf and Elizabeth Barrett Browning – Selected Poems. His research interests are Science Fiction, Apocalyptic Narratives, Robot Ethics, Animal Studies, and Translation Studies.

Mars – A Utopian Planet B?

Kenneth Hanshew[1]
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T-shirts popular with climate activists proclaim there is no planet B, yet in the not too distant past there was an alternative to Earth, at least in literary imagination, the planet Mars. Inspired by Giovanni Schiaparelli and Percival Lowell's mappings of and musings on the red planet in the late 19th century, Mars frequently served as the other place for envisioning a new, better civilization from the turn of the 20th century in Kurd Laßwitz's Auf zwei Planeten or Aleksandr Bogdanov's Krasnaia Zvezda to its end, most prominently in K.S. Robinson's Mars Trilogy. This paper endeavors to expand on Robert Markley's 2005 study of Mars in science and imagination, Dying Planet, by examining whether Mars continues to inspire better ways of being in the 21st century and giving particular emphasis to works of Czech and Polish literature that were outside the scope of previous studies such as Jan Kovanic's Zapomeňte na Mars and Rafał Kosik's Mars.

Bionote: I am employed at the Center for Czech Studies at the University of Regensburg, where I began teaching as an assistant and associate professor in the Slavic Department in 2004 and completed my post-doctoral thesis (habilitation) on Slavic utopian and science fiction literature in 2015. I teach courses in comparative literature and film as well as Czech and Czech cultural studies and publishes on the theory and practice of adaptation, utopianism and science fiction literature and film from their beginning to the present in Czech, German, Polish, Russian and BCMS.

Cultivating Change: Intergenerational Democracy and Utopian Survival in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*

Jonathan Caleb Imdad[1]

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In Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, Earthseed serves as a response to the collapse of conventional communities where the tradition of participatory intergenerational democracy challenges the oppressive structures of governance. This paper examines how shared survival strategies and collective ideals make Earthseed a utopian praxis. Through the theoretical lens of Carole Pateman's participation and democratic theory, it is argued that Earthseed community is a participatory-democratic practice as it emphasizes the meaningful involvement of all members of the community (young and old) in the decision-making process as well as in the crafting of collective goals. The society of Earthseed in Butler's novel involves the recognition of a spirit of participation, in which the community takes charge of its destiny while it deals with the vulnerabilities of a living on the edge of dystopia. The guiding principle of the Earthseed philosophy is "God is Change." This ethos cultivates inclusivity and resilience, allowing for diverse perspectives to be heard, and be a part of the oddities of life, including that of older generations who hold the key to an accrued wisdom that offers humanity a foothold in navigating the difficult landscapes of Butler's imagined future. In opposition to dominant narratives that marginalize or isolate the elderly, the denouement of Parable of the Sower imagines intergenerational bonds as necessary to survival; the formation of community; and the articulation of utopian visions. The involvement of the elders of Earthseed contradicts a societal trend of marginalizing older populations and makes explicit the need for intergenerational solidarity for the achievement and maintenance of democratic and utopian values. This research highlights Pateman's focus on participatory practices in contributing to personal empowerment and collective self-governance and examines how Earthseed represents a "participatory society" wherein the common pursuit of survival is framed as an authentic utopia. Ultimately, Butler's Earthseed offers an optimistic, concrete lens to analyze the real challenges of impending ecological collapse, social discord and the chasm between generations, and emphasizes that participation in intergenerational democracy is the key to having a flourishing and successful community.

Bionote: Jonathan Caleb Imdad is a Lecturer in the Department of English at Forman Christian College (A Chartered University). He has experience in teaching literature and writing courses and is passionate about advancing knowledge and teaching critical thinking skills to his students. His research interests include Postcolonial Literature, Postmodernism and Science Fiction. Through research, he aims to develop an intellectual discourse and promote independent thinking. https://www.fccollege.edu.pk/wps-members/jonathan-caleb-imdad/

Departament de **Filologia Anglesa i Alemanya**

Dystopia, Transhumanism, and Ageing in Shusterman's *Arc of the Scythe* Series

Joanna Johnson[1]

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Neal Shusterman's young adult Arc of the Scythe series, presents a futuristic, post "Age of Mortality" society where transhumanism plays a constant, and often unsettling, role. Ruled by an AI entity, the "Thunderhead," this existence thwarts natural death, prolonged pain, and ageing; the human life span could be indefinite. Consequently, population control falls to the "Scythedom," who adhere to killing, or "gleaning," quotas. As young adult fiction, the story follows two reluctant new recruits, Citra and Rowan, as they face the challenges of scythe apprenticeship. However, in addition to exploring the ethics of sanctioned murder, the novel poses complicated questions regarding ageing and beauty. Citizens can now "turn a corner," setting back their physical state to a chosen age, while still maintaining their same emotional maturity and memories.

While the ethics of sanction killing function as the primary controversy in the series, ageing, and its associated fears, runs an important second. Reversing ageing presents interesting, sometimes messy, issues within the novel as it not-so-subtly comments on society's, particularly American society's, strong aversion to physical ageing. Unlike plastic surgery that focuses on external appearance, those who opt to turn a corner (which they can do multiple times) are made biologically younger as well. Discord often occurs when parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents set back their clocks to younger than those of their offspring. Some in this society still adhere to traditional ideas of "family" and associated appearances of age. As Werner Delanoy and Iris van der Horsts observe about the series, "It invites debate on how people want to live their lives in the future and what the role of technology will be in future life-worlds."[1]

The series mirrors as an important cultural obsession with youth and its perceived physical perfection. While often dismissed because of its disenfranchised and underrated audience, young adult literature, specifically dystopian YA literature, invites important scholarly conversations. Arguably, the teenaged protagonists, seeing their world through youthful eyes, present a fresher view of their world than would a more-jaded adult character. My paper will explore the series' multi-level and multi-audience critique on perceptions of ageing and what constitutes a "utopian" world.

Bionote: Dr. Joanna Johnson is an award-winning Senior Lecturer. She has taught composition, creative writing, technical writing, and children's and young adult literature at the University of Texas at Arlington for 30 years. She frequently presents on Young Adult Literature and its complicated place in society and academics. Her work and courses also explore issues in food culture and food politics, as well as the function of food in literature.

Tiempo incontable: la migración sin fin de Gloria Gervitz (México 1943-2022)

Christina Karageorgou-Bastea[1]

[1] Vanderbilt University

En los primeros versos de Migraciones. Poema (1976-2020), la obra que ocupó toda su vida, Gloria Gervitz despliega la genealogía de mujeres que será junto con la reflexión sobre el oficio de la poeta el centro de su preocupación lírica durante más de dos mil versos y cuarenta y cuatro años. El tiempo de Migraciones va marcado por el relevo generacional. La historia del poema abre con la abuela que emigró desde Kiev; pasa por la madre, su vida y muerte en México, para culminar en la búsqueda histórica y poética de la hija. Paralelo al tiempo contado, corre otro en el que pasado, presente y futuro se mezclan en la fusión de las tres mujeres que protagonizan el poema. Escribe Gervitz: "la abuela enciende las velas sabáticas desde su muerte y me mira / se extiende el sábado hasta nunca hasta después hasta antes". La figura familiar de la abuela marca el inicio de la diáspora; sin embargo, en su carácter hierático se amalgaman la madre omnipresente y la Pitonisa, poseedora de la palabra. Mito, historia, autobiografía, sacan la genealogía de mujeres de la linealidad del tiempo histórico y la arrojan a la utopía y la ucronía. En mi ponencia indagaré, pues, este gran tiempo humano, distendido entre calendarios, movimientos migratorios masivos, eventos históricos, discursos autobiográficos y espiritualidades híbridas. Mi propósito es explorar la fuerza interpretativa del diálogo entre las voces que narran el tiempo pasado, plasmado principalmente en la senectud sagrada de la abuela, y la esperanza de un tiempo infinito, cristalizado en la multiplicidad de ecos que logra la enunciación del yo lírico en tanto voz principal refractada.

Bionote: Christina Karageorgou-Bastea is Professor of Hispanic Literature at Vanderbilt University (USA). She is the author of Beyond Intimacy. Radical Proximity and Justice in Three Mexican Poets (2023), Creación y destrucción del Imperio: nombrar en Tirano Banderas de Valle-Inclán (2013), and Arquitectónica de voces: Federico García Lorca y el Poema del cante jondo (2008). Her field of specialization is modern poetry from Mexico and Spain, and the particular relation of this genre with justice and social movements.

Stuck in the Present, Forever Young, Consumed: Nicola Barker's *H(a)ppy*

Burcu Kayışcı Akkoyun[1]

[1]*Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Türkiye*

The conflict between the younger and the older generations allows the authors to explore origins, transformations, decline, and endings in literature at micro and macro levels. Utopian and dystopian speculative fiction is particularly convenient to portray socio-cultural as well as biological implications of this conflict. The cultural imperative of "ageing well" may be reflected as transhumanist dreams of eternal life within works that depict technological and scientific advancements. Works of speculative fiction may also express fears concerning the obsession with progress that severs ties with the past instead of confronting former wrongdoings. This paper examines Nicola Barker's intriguing engagement with this separation in her 2017 novel H(a)ppy. The novel is a dystopian speculation on a collective digital utopia, unsettling not only deep-seated narratives of youth and improvement but also the very conventions of narrative itself through typographical play. Barker imagines what Zygmunt Bauman would call a "brave new liquid world" inhabited by the Young within the System. The Graph and the Sensor of the System constantly monitor the lives of the subjects and collect their personal and social data. Any dangerous or excessive feeling or thought that could threaten the mental stability of the Young is detected through the coloring of certain words in the (hyper)text. The controllers of the System use chemicals to ensure that the Young remain "perfected," "innocent," "clean," and more importantly, "unencumbered" by "the manacles of the past" as stated by Mira A, the protagonist of the narrative (or lack thereof). Although Mira A strives for following the path of the Young, her individual yet collective and transparent narrative is literally and symbolically disrupted by incongruous fragments from Paraguay's colonial history. Barker's stylistic gestures and subversive fragmentation of the text remind the reader about the oppression and violence behind the happy present and future. As I will attempt to demonstrate in my paper, H(a)ppy preserves its cautionary potential as a provocative dystopia by consuming its own narrative while inviting the reader to actively engage with it and consider alternative stories.

Bionote: Burcu Kayışcı Akkoyun is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Western Languages and Literatures at Boğaziçi University, Türkiye. She completed her PhD in Literary Studies at Monash University (Melbourne) in 2015 with a dissertation on the literary representations of the end in contemporary literature. Her fields of interest are utopian and dystopian fiction, feminist speculative fiction, twentieth- and twenty-first century literatures in English, identity politics, ecocriticism, and narrative theory. She has published in national and international journals, and edited collections.

A Womanist Utopia: Aging and Empowerment in *The Color Purple*

Aateka Khan[1]

[1]Bharati College, University of Delhi

Alice Walker's The Color Purple stands as a landmark text in feminist and African American literature, offering a profound exploration of resilience, healing, and liberation through an intergenerational lens. This paper examines how Walker envisions the novel as an intergenerational utopia, a space where women transcend systemic oppression, personal trauma, and societal constraints through solidarity, spiritual growth, and economic empowerment. Central to this vision is the theme of aging, which Walker portrays not as a stage of decline but as a source of wisdom, renewal, and reconciliation. The novel's epistolary structure bridges temporal and spatial divides, amplifying the voices of women across generations and creating a dialogue that transcends time. Celie, the protagonist, evolves from a silenced and abused young woman to a self-empowered matriarch, embodying the transformative potential of aging. Her relationships with characters like Nettie, Shug Avery, and Sofia highlight the importance of intergenerational bonds in fostering personal and collective healing. Aging becomes a pivotal aspect of this process, as older characters serve as mentors and sources of guidance, while younger ones challenge and inspire change, creating a cyclical flow of growth and resilience. Spirituality also plays a central role in this intergenerational utopia. Walker redefines traditional patriarchal notions of God, presenting a more inclusive spirituality rooted in nature, love, and interconnectedness. This evolving spiritual understanding allows characters like Celie to find empowerment and joy in their lives, regardless of age or circumstance. Similarly, economic independence is a key element of the novel's utopian vision. Celie's pants-making business becomes a metaphor for creativity, autonomy, and empowerment, offering a model of self-sufficiency that resonates across generations. By situating *The Color Purple* within the broader frameworks of feminist and womanist thought, this paper explores how Walker reimagines family, community, and spirituality as inclusive, transformative, and liberatory. The novel also incorporates Afrofuturist elements, connecting African heritage with a vision for a more equitable future. In doing so, Walker challenges linear perceptions of time and emphasizes the importance of intergenerational dialogue and solidarity. Ultimately, *The Color Purple* serves as a timeless blueprint for healing and empowerment, demonstrating how aging, when embraced as a process of growth and renewal, can create opportunities for transformation and liberation across generations.

Bionote: Dr. Aateka Khan has been teaching English to undergraduates at Bharati college, University of Delhi from 2005. She is interested in post-colonial interventions in reading literature as well as interrogating hegemonic discursive practices. She is also interested in Modern European and Jacobean Drama. She won the Katha Prize for best translation of a short story from Urdu to English in 2002. She has presented papers at international conferences in Oxford and Berlin and has also published several articles. Her PhD thesis was a critical study of Richard Burton's travel writings.

Human / Android Life, Death and Beyond in "Mars Express" by Jeremie Perin

Barbara Klonowska[1]

[1]The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

Set in the 23rd century on Mars and Earth, the dystopian animated film Mars Express (2023, dir. Jérémie Périn) follows the story of two detectives, a human and android one, investigating a murder case. Behind the neo-noir poetics of a crime story and the allusions to the 'robot rebellion' theme, the film – echoing such classics as Bladerunner, Ghost in the Shell, The Matrix or Black Mirror – poses more profound existential questions concerning humanity, identity or death and afterlife. Indirectly, too, it leads to the reflection on aging and malfunctioning as reasons for human / technological deficiency. The planned presentation aims to analyse the film as a relevant voice in the trans/post-humanist debate on limits and merits of biological and mechanical life in its various stages pointing to the assumptions made in it concerning the usefulness or uselessness of both.

Bionote: Barbara Klonowska works in the Institute of Literary Studies at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland. She teaches British literature and culture and has published on contemporary British fiction and film; her studies include Contaminations: Magic Realism in Contemporary British Fiction (2006), and Longing for Romance. British Historical Romances 1990-2010 (2014). She has also co-edited volumes on utopia/dystopia: Echoes of Utopia: Notions, Rhetoric, Poetics (2012) and (Im)perfection Subverted, Reloaded and Networked: Utopian Discourse across Media (2015) and a special issue Brave New Human in (Trans/Post)Humanist Dystopias of Roczniki Humanistyczne 66.11 (2018). Her research includes contemporary literature, literary theory, magic realism in fiction and film and cinematographic utopias and dystopias.

Materiality, senescence, and utopia: the case of Elizabeth Moon's *Remnant Population*

Marta Komsta[1]

[1]*Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin*

Published to considerable critical acclaim, Elizabeth Moon's 1996 SF novel *Remnant Population* interrogates the complexity of humans' relationship with our environment through the lens of senescence that underpins the narrative's symbolic domain. Crucial in Moon's work is the trope of the ageing body, which I focus on via two corresponding aspects: as the site of intersection between materiality and selfhood as well as the signifier of interconnectedness between material and biological environments. The novel follows Ofelia Falfurrias, an older space colonist, whose refusal to leave her home planet becomes an act of defiance against exploitative corporate policies and a watershed moment in the protagonist's attempt to reclaim her sense of agency. In what follows, Ofelia's gradual transformation is facilitated by the materiality of her survival, which enables the female protagonist to reaffirm her identity beyond ageist, patriarchal categorizations. At the same time, I contend that the ageing body in Remnant Population functions as the core element within the framework of human and nonhuman relations and their utopian potentiality. By employing theoretical concepts by Jane Bennett, Timothy Morton, and Bill Brown, I will thus delineate the novel's emerging utopian paradigm; central to this context is the symbolic and political model of a weak utopia, founded upon heightened ecological awareness that encompasses the rejection of the discourse of domination as well as intentional surrender to what Morton identifies as "the mesh," a realm of encounter between humans and nonhumans. The notion of weakness is of particular importance here, approached in terms of biological ageing and as an ethical factor, encouraging interspecies communication (highlighted in the novel by Ofelia's meeting with a sentient nonhuman species) and, in extension, a new model of ecological identity.

Bionote: Marta Komsta is Assistant Professor of English Literature at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. She has published extensively on utopia and dystopia in film and literature; her other areas of interest include contemporary ecocriticism, spatial semiotics, and theories of materiality in literary narratives. She is the author of Welcome to the Chemical Theatre: The Urban Chronotope in Peter Ackroyd's Fiction (Peter Lang, 2015) and the co-editor (with Justyna Galant) of Strange Vistas: Perspectives on the Utopian (Peter Lang, 2019).

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Resisting Ageing and Embracing Chaos: Ageing and its Absence in Drew Magary's *The Postmortal*

Twinkle Kumar[1]

[1]Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur (C.G.) India

Staying young forever and avoiding death are humans' most ambitious but unfulfilled desires. Science and technology have already conducted extensive research in this area, and plenty is already on its way. Drew Magary's *The Postmortal* (2011) imagines a near future world after the discovery of the cure for ageing. At first what seemed as a miracle of medical science turned out to be a total disaster. This progress in the field of medical science has boosted men's confidence into believing they can accomplish anything they set their minds to, and when they do, it makes them feel like gods. Humans are bound to do certain things at certain age only but the agelessness has brought the luxury of time to them and it has drastically transformed the human body, marriages, religion and the way people live their life. In the narrative presented, agelessness begins as a utopian concept, but what occurs when it is actually achieved is terrible. Magary's postmortal society is a perfect example of making a mistake first, then trying to find the most unethical way to fix it. The novel explores the issue, if not death, then what will be the end of humanity? How far can people go to acquire agelessness? This essay is an attempt to analyse how does the "cure" redefine what it means to grow old? Does the absence of natural ageing improve or worsen the human experience? How do characters' attitudes towards love, family, and responsibility change in an ageless world? How trauma, loss, and the passage of time affect "ageless" people. Another aim is to examine how does eliminating physical ageing can create new societal crises? And lastly to comprehend what ethical compromises do individuals and society make in this ageless world?

Bionote: Twinkle is a research scholar. Her area of interest is science fiction. Through her research, she wants to contribute to the study of dystopian literature and the future of the society which is being affected greatly by the use of science and technology. She is also interested in studying the aftermath of the introduction of transhumanism in the lives of humans, their identity, and independence.

Old World and Its End, What Lays Beyond? As Imagined in Robert Hugh Benson's *The Lord of the World* (1907)

Hubert Łaszkiewicz[1]

[1]University of Warsaw, Poland

Apocalyptic vision of the end of the Old World is linked with Christ's Parousia. This concept is used not only in various religious vision of the future but also non-religious ones. In Christian vision of history the Old World has its end due to the corruption caused by Antichrist under the cover of overwhelming Good. The final battle between the Devil and Christ will be the final challenge between the true and untrue Good. In non-religious vision the world beyond might be different. The aim of the paper is to discuss the influence of R. H. Benson dystopia on apocalyptic visions in Europe.

Bionote: Hubert Łaszkiewicz (1961) – historian of Russia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Early Modern Era. Studies in history at the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) (1980-1985), PhD in 1997, habilitation in 2008. Now works in the Center of East European Studies at the University of Warsaw. He deals with social, religious, economic and cultural history.

Old age on a cruise ship? A dystopian vision of age in Dirk van Versendaals novel *Nyx* (2017)

Susanna Layh[1]

[1]*University of Augsburg*

More and more super-rich people are planning their retirement on floating islands these days. Spending old age on a cruise ship instead of in a retirement or nursing home has long been a welcome luxury alternative for those who can afford it. In 2004, geriatrician Lee Lindquist from the Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago states in an article in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society: Living on a cruise ship provides a better quality of life and is cost effective for elderly people who need help to live independently. In his second novel *Nyx*, German journalist Dirk van Versendaal uses these facts as a reflective starting point for his fictionalised outline of a dystopian society of senior citizens who are living on a cruise ship for years. Four and a half kilometres long and one and a half kilometres wide, the Nyx is a gigantic ship colossus serving as a retirement and nursing home, constantly travelling the world's oceans. A floating big city full of retirees, where everything is available to them according to their needs. But this apparent utopia of a potentially happy retirement community in the near future increasingly turns into pandemonium for all the protagonists. Versendaals novel is a generic hybrid of dystopian and science-fiction elements embedded in an apocalyptic thriller plot. The theme of age is, thereby, used as a literary foil to raise other contemporary social issues. What are the ethics of medicine and research today? What are the limits of genetic engineering? What will the relationship between man and machine look like in the future? What problems does the ageing of society pose and how can this be encountered? But above all, what does it mean to grow old with dignity?

Bionote: Dr. Susanna Layh is Senior Lecturer at the Chair of Comparative Literature at the University of Augsburg, Germany. Main areas of research and teaching: Utopian/ Dystopian Studies; post-apocalyptic literature, (post-apocalyptic) robinsonades; literary theory; rhetorics; contemporary theatre, drama theory and analysis of enactment; film (history, theory and analysis); city novels; the artificial (wo)man as literary motif; alternative facts and history in literature and film. She is the author of Finstere neue Welten. Gattungsparadigmatische Transformationen der literarischen Utopie und Dystopie, 2014 (= Dark New Worlds. Paradigmatic Genre Transformations in Literary Utopias and Dystopias) and committee member of the Utopian Studies Society-Europe since 2018.

Perspectives of Aging in the Interwar Dystopias *Kallocain* and *We*

Signe Gammelgaard[1]

[1]*Lund University*

In Karin Boye's novel *Kallocain* one of the main characters states that "no fellow soldier over forty has a really clear conscience."[1] The protagonist-narrator himself is approaching forty when the story takes place and – similar to most literary dystopias – his story is one of gradually becoming aware of the repressive nature of his society. The World State he inhabits focuses on productivity and efficiency, and a sacrifice for the State is considered the best thing you can achieve. This highly planned and surveilled society relies on fear and propaganda to keep reproducing the proper servile attitude, yet the comment that no one over forty has a clear conscience connotes an internal shift that can be likened to a mid-life crisis: a phase where your goals, values, and sense of identity is brought into turmoil and generates a reorientation. In Kallocain, there are no elderly characters to act as a kind of guide through this process, but in Yevgeny Zamyatin's We, an old woman represents wisdom, luminosity, and love in a society where such traits are banished. The old woman guards an ancient house, filled with old culture and new experiences for the protagonist, and it shelters a passage to the outside world. Thus, the old crone emerges as an archetypal figure of the wise of woman in a fairytale, and she augurs the eruption of disorder into the perfectly organized and mechanical OneState. As the protagonist disintegrates in a similar fashion to Leo Kall in Kallocain, she comes to represents a kind of divine grace and an ancient form of maternal love. In this paper I shall discuss these narratives and contextualize to the birth of the welfare state in Sweden and the socialist program in Soviet Russia. I will emphasize the way these narratives highlight categories that are linked to knowledge derived from lived experience as opposed to the rationality of these highly organized societies. I will finish by reflecting on the role of literature, specifically, to highlight such kinds of knowledge.

[1] Karin Boye, *Kallocain*, trans. David McDuff, 1st edition (Penguin, 2019), 43.

Bionote: Signe Leth Gammelgaard, postdoc at Lund University. My research focuses on the intersection between literary and economic history, and my current project examines the interwar dystopia in a comparative perspective. My work has appeared in various international and Scandinavian publications, including Utopian Studies, b2o review, and Exploring NORDIC COOL in Literary History.

Planning the End to Deny the End: Pagan Horror and Human Sacrifice in *Midsommar* (2019)

Ildikó Limpár[1]

[1]*Pázmány Péter Catholic University (Budapest, Hungary)*

Midsommar, a Swedish folk horror film centers around the idea of sacrifice—voluntary and involuntary alike. Presented as a Midsummer pagan ceremony that may be witnessed by some privileged, invited outsiders, an isolated community with utopian turns out to be the absolute horror for the visitors, who need to unsuspectingly watch the voluntary sacrifice of some members first and then (with one exception) are turned into sacrifices too to ensure a renewal that defies the idea of permanent death. Included in the series of rituals is the voluntary sacrifice of two elders, linked to the general practice of senicide at the age of 72 in the community, which provokes the question whether such a planned parting from life may contribute to a more meaningful life for the individual and/or the community. The paper will discuss the overall phenomenon of *Midsommar* rituals that focus on regeneration and dignity. The theme of dignity will be analyzed in the context of allowing one to keep their integrity thanks to the sense of belonging and reciprocity. It will be looked at from (at least) two perspectives: for one, the protagonist's Dani loneliness and loss of mental stability as a result from losing her family (her parents and her sister as a result of the sister's careless suicide) will be juxtaposed with the sense of belonging to a community while also suffering a great loss (via facing her partner's infidelity / betrayal) and becoming a mistress of life and death. However, regaining dignity and renewal links with horror, too, as it will be highlighted. The discussion of the theme will specifically focus on how dignity is established in this cultish community with a reconsideration of one's life's worth in relation to others in a tight network of people and how it affects the way the elderly behave. The presentation will consider how the presentation of a perverted utopia suggests contemporary society's problematic attitude to the idea of aging, dying and death. The strategy of linking the utopian with the horrific and linking the monstrous-mythical with the idea of renewal will be shown to reflect on contemporary western society's guilt considering caring for the aged and the dying and its being at loss concerning how to address this issue properly on the societal level.

Bionote: Dr. habil. Ildikó Limpár is an associate professor at Pázmány Péter Catholic University (Budapest, Hungary), widely publishing on the fantastic and the monstrous in fiction and films. She is author of The Truths of Monsters: Coming of Age with Fantastic Media (McFarland, 2021), associate editor of Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies and has edited anthologies on fantastic narratives and the monstrous in English and in Hungarian. Her most recent research focuses on the horror that emerges from monster narratives with themes of apocalypse, ecofear/climate anxiety, and the Anthropocene.

The Lost Keepers of Memory: The Elderly in Mandarin Translations of Orwell's Dystopias

Yi-Chun Liu[1]

[1]*Feng Chia University*

Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) *and Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) portray elderly figures as repositories of lost memory, often grappling with how or whether to pass on their knowledge to the younger generations. This paper examines how the Mandarin translations of Orwell's twin masterpieces have shaped the interpretations of this theme, focusing on Benjamin the Donkey in Animal Farm and the prole in Nineteen Eighty-Four. I analyse the translation variations that affect the portrayal of their speech, characterisation and fatalism, questioning whether certain renditions emphasise or downplay the intergenerational gaps in memory and knowledge transmission. By comparing these translations, this paper asks how translatorial mediations influence the reception of Orwell's critique of historical erasure and the role of the elderly in preserving—or failing to preserve—collective memory, an issue that resonates with concerns about intergenerational disconnection.

Bionote: She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Feng Chia University, Taichung, Taiwan. She holds a PhD from the Text and Event in Early Modern Europe (TEEME) Programme, where she was an Erasmus Mundus Fellow at Charles University, Prague, and the University of Porto. Her areas of interest lie in utopian/dystopian literature, translation, paratextual writing and gender studies. My forthcoming book chapter in the Routledge Companion to George Orwell, co-authored with Professor Henk Vynckier, is due to be published in 2026. At the heart of her current research is a project funded by the National Science and Technology Council of Taiwan, 'Reassessing Orwell's Literary Reputation in Taiwan: Translation and Afterlife Post-2014'.

Beyond Geronticide in Dystopian Short Stories: Intergenerational Bonds and Conflict in George Saunders' "My Flamboyant Grandson" and Hanif Kureishi's "The Land of the Old"

Àngels Llurda Marí[1]

[1]Universitat de Lleida (UdL)

This paper examines two short stories—George Saunders' "My Flamboyant Grandson" and Hanif Kureishi's "The Land of the Old"—to explore how dystopian fiction can challenge the decline narrative and subvert the literary tradition of geronticide by inverting standardized behaviors of their old age characters. The decline narrative, that is, the dominant ideology and its subsequent discourses that frame aging as an inevitable path towards frailty and decline (Gulette, 2004), has significantly influenced perspectives on aging. A prevalent ageist ideology together with the belief that an aging population entails an overuse of resources, has fueled a generational divide between the young and the old. This clash becomes more acute within our Western and capitalist ethos in which old age is stigmatized as unproductive and consequently irrelevant within the mechanism of production and consumption. Contemporary dystopias, particularly demodystopias—narratives that "explicitly address demographic shifts and present them as critical societal issue" (Domingo, 2008: 275) —articulate anxieties through specific scenarios and characters that act as mirrors to the otherwise culturally unacceptable fears (Pogońska-Baranowska, 2023). Such generational discomfort, often manifested in the long tradition of geronticide in dystopian and speculative fiction, is challenged in the analyzed short stories from two different, but equally subversive, approaches. On the one hand, set in a futuristic and hyper-capitalized North America, Saunders' story portrays an intergenerational bond between a grandfather and his grandson, offering a representation of a caring old man who, far from being an agentless burden, proves his social value and agency outside neoliberal and consumerist practices. On the other hand, Kureishi's "The Land of the Old" imagines a gerontocratic society where young people are subordinated to the whims and desires of the old, thereby subverting the intergenerational clash between old and young presenting a dystopian, yet alternative, solution to the overused geronticide motif in demodystopias.

Bionote: Àngels Llurda is a full-time PhD student at the University of Lleida, and a recipient of a Joan Oró grant (FI 2023) for PhD research, funded by Generalitat de Catalunya. She is working under the supervision of Dr. Maricel Oró and Dr. Isabel Santaulària, and her thesis aims at exploring age and masculinities in contemporary short story writing. Her research contributes to the project Profiguration: intergenerational relations and overcoming ageism through narrative (PRO-SUEDAD) which focuses on the analysis of age-related issues from a critical perspective through literature and cultural gerontology.

Intergenerational Memory and Utopian Impulse in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls*

Shwetha Louis[1]

[1]*Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur*

Manjula Padmanabhan's feminist dystopian duology, *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls*, is primarily centered around the country, Brotherland, whose invention of cloning technology, renders women redundant with regard to reproduction. It deems them Vermin and wasteful, and therefore deserving of elimination through genocide. Much has been written about the gender politics present in the text, which also presents the coming-of-age story of Meiji, the only surviving girl, raised in secret by her older male family members and, narrates her attempt to escape the governing regime, while coming to terms with her own body and identity. This paper, however, aims to explore the correlation between intergenerational relationships and memory and the utopian impulses present in them, which makes the texts eligible to be termed critical dystopia – for their preservation of hope in the dystopian narrative. Intergenerational transfer of memory is widely acknowledged as a source of social or collective memory apart from written documents or books which codify history. In the absence of books and formal education, which leaves the younger subjects of the regime illiterate, the memories of the older generation who have lived through the years before the genocide becomes the primary source of collective memory. The paper argues that these memories of the time before act as the repositories of utopian impulses in the dying society. Intergenerational memory becomes the medium through which utopia, as Ruth Levitas sees it – the desire for being otherwise, individually and collectively, subjectively and objectively – is preserved and disseminated. This is demonstrated not only through the reading of Meiji's relationship with her uncles in the first book, but that of the Mentors' relationship with the Candidates on the island as well. In addition to the transfer of memory and knowledge she received through her older relatives, the paper finds that what makes Meiji different from the other Candidates on the island is her memory of the intergenerational bonds she had shared with her father and uncles. Thus, shaped by the utopian impulses offered by memory, it is not merely a shared past that is forged, but they also transform Meiji into a distinctively critical dystopian subject.

Bionote: Shwetha Elsa is currently pursuing doctoral research in English at IIT Kanpur, India. Her research interests include utopian studies, graphic narratives and translation studies. She is currently working on Indian dystopian narratives.

To Die Trying: Intergenerational Conflicts over Life and Feminism in Louise Katz' Patriarchal Utopia *The Orchid Nursery*

Almudena Machado Jiménez[1]

[1]*University of Jaén*

When Mica initiates her crusade outside the borders of Perfect State to rescue her friend, Pearl, an accident compels her to spend her days at Hagovel with the most fearful creature in the legends of Australand—the Hag. In *The Orchid Nursery* (2015), Louise Katz combines the folktale character of the witch at the crossroads with a modern representation of Lilith to expose the radicalisation of patriarchal dogmatism and demystify Perfect State's authorised version of history. The representation of monstrosity through the ageing body of Jenny Patel (i.e. The Hag) does not only challenge the normative representations of contemporary patriarchal womanhood, but it also unveils the failing social mechanisms that sustain the fallacy of utopian perfectibility and immutability. This research focuses on the intergenerational conflicts between Mica and the Hag in their antagonistic discourses on history, feminism and the concept of freedom, and how—despite Mica's continuous attempts to repress tenderness towards her enemy—the characters forge emotional bonding and care as a form of transgressive utopianism, instigating Mica's ideological shift from radical complicity with the system to her awakening. Particularly, I examine the clash between the feminist waves represented in these characters, with the author harshly criticising commodity feminism for being compliant with the oppressive structures that prevent female solidarity. The closing section of this presentation explores Katz's representations of death as a (counter)hegemonic strategy. For this, I resort to critical theories on the biopolitical administration of women's lives through resilience. Katz narrates how girls' upbringing in Perfect State to attain the status of (wo)manidols is deeply "routed through death" (James 2014, 49) despite being still alive—secluded, muted and mutilated to bear children at the Orchid Nursery underground. Her illustration of neoliberal resilience combines girls' enforced living with their assigned disposability by endeavouring their termination dates silently (for the acknowledgement of death would remind individuals of their finitude). Nonetheless, the novel also displays (biopolitical) death as a form of resistance: this form of "'dying' means living a supposedly unviable life, a life that isn't profitable [...], a life whose support diminishes the resilience of other, more elite groups" (James 2014, 50). Mica's killing of her mentor in an attempt to kill her growing dissidence unveils intergenerational ties as an effective method of interdependence and resistance, as well as her epiphany to live outside Civilisation, incarnating the role of the new Hag, willing to help future generations.

Bionote: Almudena Machado-Jiménez is a Lecturer in the Department of English Philology at the University of Jaén, Spain, where she holds an international PhD in Literatures in English. She has also been a visiting researcher at SOAS University of London and ULICES University of Lisbon. Her research focuses on gender studies and contemporary dystopian narratives, particularly on the conception of patriarchal utopias. Besides, she has been actively engaged in the field of English Studies, having served as President of ASYRAS, and currently working as AEDEAN's community manager and as an associate editor for the journals *Gaudeamus* and *The Grove*.

Revisiting Huxley: Assessing the Foresight of His Views on World Change

Annette M Magid[1]

[1]*State University of New York: Erie Community College*

Aldous Huxley, who wrote in the 1930s, is famously remembered for his novels *Brave New World* and *Island* as well as for the essays he wrote for William Randolph Hearst. Jerome Meckler's "Aldous Huxley: Dystopian Essayist of the 1930s." reviews some of Huxley's writing. The focus of my paper is to assess Huxley's writings in relationship to present day issues of culture and diversity. For example, he wrote about immigration policies that should discriminate against stupidity instead of race which could also reflect issues of discriminating against aging ("Racial History," Heart Essays 346). He also wrote about drug issues and predicted the failure of all wars of drugs ("Poppy Juice," Heart Essays 7 January 1932). At the time, there were vain attempts by the League of Nations to control trafficking in illegal substances such as morphia and cocaine. He also wrote that humans continually "invent new moral problems to take the place of those mechanically eliminated by the improved techniques of living" (500 Prophets," Heart Essays 296). How does this present possible templates for evolving culture even as the average age now is reversing its rise? What present day issues do you see reflected in Huxley's Brave New World , Island or his other writings? How does Huxley tentatively resolve some of the same issues we face in our present society? Are there any redeeming considerations in his dystopian treatises? Are Huxley's views on disarmament, decentralization, as well as educational and Ideological reforms feasible?

Bionote: Publications of Professor Annette M. Magid, Ph.D., retired from SUNY Erie Community College, Buffalo, NY, USA. include: Speculations of War: Essays on Conflict in Science Fiction, Fantasy and Utopian Literature, 2021; Quintessential Wilde: His Worldly Place, His Penetrating Philosophy and His Influential Aestheticism, 2017; Apocalyptic Projections: A Study of Past Predictions, Current Trends and Future Intimations as Related to Film and Literature, 2015; Wilde's Wiles: Studies of the Influence on Oscar Wilde and His Enduring Influences in the Twenty-First Century, 2013; You Are What You Eat: Literary Probes into the Palate, 2008 and a volume of poetry, Tunnel of Stone, 2002. In addition, she has published articles in a variety of Utopian journals and monographs. Her areas of expertise include American/ British Utopian literature and film, poetry, theater, Science-Fiction literature and film, as well as children's literature.

Ageing, gender, care and the welfare state: A critical reading of *Plan 75* in Dystopian Japan

Meiko Makita[1] and Scott Morris[2]

[1]*University of Dundee*
[2]*Indpendent scholar*

In this presentation we offer a critical reading of the portrayal of ageing, gender and care in the recent Japanese film *Plan 75* (2022). We do this through the lens of welfare state, social and cultural gerontology theories, and semiotics. We analyse how this film reflects and critiques Japan's evolving welfare state, which historically relies heavily on informal caregiving provided by family members, particularly women. *Plan 75* presents a dystopian vision of Japan where older adults are pressured to euthanise themselves, highlighting societal ageist attitudes. We discuss the themes of isolation, loneliness, societal value, autonomy, and the gendered nature of care, showing how cinema mirrors and challenges existing cultural and gendered norms. The use of semiotics enriches the analysis by exploring key symbolic meanings embedded within the film's visual and textual elements. Our analysis contributes to the understanding of ageing and social care in contemporary Japan, providing insights into the intersection of culture, policy, and the lived experiences of older adults. Ultimately, this presentation aims to add to the discussions on how cultural narratives influence and reflect broader social issues surrounding ageing and care, underlying the complexities and challenges faced by ageing individuals, the family, community and the state in modern Japanese society and beyond.

[1] **Bionote**: Meiko Makita is a sociologist committed to interdisciplinary and participatory research. Her work primarily focuses on ageing, health and care inequalities, and gendered disparities, with a particular interest in the lived experiences of older adults. By integrating perspectives from sociology, and social and cultural gerontology, she is interested in how cultural narratives shape the experiences of ageing and influence policy development. Meiko's research aims to shed light on the social determinants of health and care, contributing to broader discussions on the complexities surrounding ageing and old age, and aiming to inform more equitable approaches to healthcare and social care.

[2] **Bionote:** Scott Morris holds qualifications in engineering, but his passion lies in cinema. Based predominantly in Scotland, he began writing about film in 2002, which then expanded into the realm of podcasting in 2007; a pursuit that continued until 2022. While professional and family commitments have led to a temporary pause in publishing, Scott remains deeply engaged with global cinema, with a particular interest in Asian film, influenced by an early exposure to anime, bombastic action, and martial arts films. His ongoing interest in cinema encompasses both its cultural significance and its role as a medium of artistic expression.

The environmental conditions of Aristotle's ideal polis

Egidijus Mardosas[1]

[1]*Leuphana Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture and Society, Leuphana University of Luneburg, Germany*

After claiming in the Politics that all actually existing political constitutions are flawed (1260b35), Aristotle turns to describe a polis in which the best possible life for humans could be realised. Before giving concrete details of the best possible polis in the books VII and VIII, Aristotle reminds that two kinds of material are needed to make a polis: people and territory (1326a). Aristotle discusses such environmental aspects as the location of the ideal polis in relation to mountains and sea, its soil, as well as its climate. Admittedly, his discussions on the environmental (territorial) aspects are much shorter than the discussion on the social relations within the polis, yet they are clearly important in Aristotle's theory. Aristotle is concerned with what the philosopher Pierre Charbonnier calls "the political affordances of the land" (Charbonnier 2021). Yet contemporary discussions on Aristotelean ethics and politics focus almost exclusively on the human element. If the environmental conditions are recognized, they are hardly ever treated as an integral element of the political theory of the best life. For example, in his otherwise admirable, vast, and authoritative study on Aristotle's political philosophy, Richard Kraut (2002) glosses over the environmental aspects of Aristotle ideal polis with a single observation that "the ideal city will be constructed on the new site, carefully selected for its advantages" (p. 196). Yet what makes precisely those aspects, as highlighted by Aristotle, to be advantageous for the political project of the best possible life? Clearly, it is not a straightforward assumption that contemporary readers will find those and not some other environmental conditions as advantageous without further argumentation. Furthermore, how exactly their advantageousness is expressed? What is the relation between these environmental conditions and the political, cultural, economic life of the polis? What precisely are the mechanism by which the environmental imposes itself on the political, and the way in which the political inscribes in the given natural environment? In this paper, I seek to offer a way to start answering these questions drawing on the method of "the environmental history of political ideas", proposed by Charbonnier (2021). This method seeks to bring forward the (often implicit) assumptions about the natural environment that underly various political ideas, uncovering concrete entanglements of the social and the natural. Such investigation of Aristotelian ideal polis is part of the larger project of enquiring into the environmental presuppositions of Western utopianism."

Bionote: Dr. Egidijus Mardosas is currently (for 2025/26) a Fellow at the Leuphana Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture and Society at Leuphana University of Lüneburg (Germany), where he pursues a research project on the environmental presuppositions of Western political utopias. Previously, in 2020 – 2024, he was a post-doctoral researcher at Vilnius University, Faculty of Philosophy. He is the author of "Revolutionary Aristotelianism and Ideology" (Bloomsbury, 2024) and many articles on neo-Aristotelian social and political theory, critical theory, and environmental critique. Dr. Mardosas was also a visiting scholar at the Vienna Anthropocene Network in 2023.

Letters from Purgatory: A Romansh Afterlife Journey from Dystopia to Eutopia in the Age of the Theology of Liberation

Mariano Martín Rodríguez

Independent scholar

Utopian literary fiction is often about describing secondary worlds appearing as heavens (eutopias) or hells (dystopias) on earth. Both major varieties evolved in Europe, among others, from the religious models embodied in the received visions of the Christian afterlife. In modern times, those religious visions have often been secularised in fiction in such a way that the featured Christian afterlife worlds have become akin to utopian ones. In this new sort of afterlife vistas, sins and virtues defining them are rather of social nature, and they reflect the political stances of their authors rather than their religious beliefs. A significant example of this is the modernisation of Dantean circles of Purgatory by Romansh writer Ursicin G. G. Derungs (1935-2024), whose «Correspondenza cul purgatieri» (Letters from Purgatory), from his book Il saltar dils morts (The Danse of the Dead, 1982). Its main character, a recently deceased countryman from Switzerland, undergoes a purification journey to heaven through a series of afterlife societies from the closest one to hell, where social evils such as greed prevail, to the nearest one to heaven, where unselfishness and solidarity prevail. These Purgatory circles illustrate the ideal of an ascensional development of human society defined by human ethical and political choices as seen from the perspective of a Catholic writer and former priest inspired by the concerns and ideals of the so-called Theology of Liberation, this most utopian among contemporary schools of Christian thought.

Bionote: Dr. Mariano Martín Rodríguez is a translator and independent scholar living in Brussels (Belgium). He obtained his Ph. Doctorate in Philology at the University Complutense (Madrid) in 1994. Since then, he has published numerous studies in different languages related to modern drama, scientific romance, and utopian, speculative and science fiction, in Spain and in Europe, as well as several critical editions of translations from different Romance languages and English into Spanish, and several critical editions of Spanish works of utopian, fantastic, speculative and science fiction. He is currently co-editor of the online journal on speculative fiction Hélice (www.revistahelice.com).

The family in Italian early modern utopias

Laura Mattioli[1]

[1]*Durham University*

The few studies devoted to the role of women in the Italian utopia of the 16th and early 17th century have focused on what is often the only relevant aspect discussed by utopists: the preservation or abolition of the family. Following the dual model established by Plato and Aristotle, utopists founded their ideal societies on traditional family values or on the common ownership of wives and children. However, scholars have often focused exclusively on the consequences of one or the other model for women, usually arguing that the abolition of the traditional family is more emancipatory for women than its preservation. Although this approach has been helpful in giving visibility to the prominent and highly ambiguous question of the role of the family in utopia, and in comparing historical reality with early modern men's notions of the ideal status of women, the binarism that underpins it readily exhausts itself into a critical impasse. The issue of the family, which appears all throughout the utopian tradition from its early modern conception to contemporary dystopias, calls for further investigation. This paper seeks to break out of the impasse by studying the family as a cornerstone of the political structure of utopia. At the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, the genre of economica (i.e. the government of the household), of Aristotelian and pseudo-Aristotelian origin, gained new vigour with the publication of various treatises. These indicate that the family is the pillar on which society is formed, as it comprises the first experience of political rule that prepares the individual for life in the state. The Aristotelian notion that the family unit represents the necessary basis for building cities was widely accepted in Renaissance political thought; to imagine a city without families would be to shake the very foundations of society. This is what happens with the utopias of Doni, Campanella and, partly, Patrizi. To imagine a better world means also to question society's most basic structures, which, in Renaissance thought, link back to the nuclear family. This contribution therefore adopts a new perspective to highlight the political aspects hidden underneath the question of the family.

Bionote: Laura Mattioli is a PhD candidate in Italian studies at Durham University. Her PhD thesis, titled 'Women in the Italian Renaissance Utopia', studies the role of women and the expression of female subjectivity in utopian spaces. Her research interests include early modern Italian and Spanish literature, utopian narratives and women's writing. She has previously published an article on travel and female alterity in Cervantes's Persiles and is currently working on a project on Anton Francesco Doni for publication in an edited volume.

A New Social for Trans Liberation

Michael Mayne[1]

[1]Denison University

Transphobia has become a priority of conservatives. In the United States, 669 anti-trans bills were considered in 2024. While many of these bills are ostensibly motivated by a concern for children, activists and legislators have revealed their true goal: the elimination of trans people from society. Speaking before Donald Trump at the 2023 Conservative Political Action Conference, Michael Knowles was cheered for insisting that "there can be no middle way in dealing with transgenderism [sic]. . . . Transgenderism must be eradicated from public life entirely." Matt Walsh concurred: "He is of course completely right about this. . . . . The fight to save children from this lunacy is but one phase in the overall war." Michigan and Ohio conservative state representatives clarified this "endgame" in a January 2024 meeting: use transgender care for minors "to move the window to say that this isn't just wrong 0-18, it's wrong for everyone." Some states have already made that shift with bills that would deny transgender adults healthcare, public services, and legal protection. The United States is not exceptional; as Jules Gill-Peterson points out, "anti-trans politics are increasingly the glue" of international conservative movements. Transphobia acutely represents the goal of conservative revanchism: a static social order governed by an orthodoxy trans people can never affirm. Because trans identities challenge the legitimacy of orthodoxy by revealing the ability of individuals to exceed assigned social categories, the transgender child presents an acute threat to these social orders. This paper discusses new social figurations in Eman Abdelhadi and M. E. O'Brien's utopian novel, Everything for Everyone: An Oral History of the New York Commune, 2052-2072, and argues that the novel's representation of generational conflict provides an object lesson in countering transphobia. I am especially interested in the novel's use of family abolition to represent one crucial element of trans liberation. While the increase of anti-trans rhetoric corresponds with record amounts of anti-trans violence, figurations of transgender futurity model alternatives to this reactionary logic.

Bionote: Michael Mayne is an Assistant Professor of English and the Chair of Queer Studies at Denison University. His research interests include literary studies, cultural studies, queer studies, and critical theory. Recent publications include "Postnaturalism and Rivers Solomon's Monsters" in _Transgender Science Fiction_ (2025), "The Radical Novel as Trans Literature" in _The Routledge Handbook of Trans Literature_ (2024), and "Heterostalgia: The Rhetoric of Antifeminism" in _The Routledge Companion to Masculinity in American Literature and Culture_ (2021).

Inter-Generational Utopia and the Law

Karim Medjad[1]

[1]*Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers*

On occasion, lawyers produce utopias to serve their legal purposes. For example, corporate law is a domain that is totally based on a mythical character – the legal person. Likewise, human rights embody a quest for an ideal world that nobody expects to ever exist. But this apparent familiarity is one-sided: utopists are not welcome in the legal world. Nobody expects - nor wants - them to produce actual laws, even when, as in the case of Thomas More, the ideal society they propose is literally made of legal rules. There are a few exceptions, however: some utopias do make their way in the legal system. In such instances, a social acknowledgement of an imaginary legal rule over generations eventually forces the legislator to pass a formal law to align the reality with the utopia. One of such cases of "utopia-made laws" took place in the former Yugoslavia after WWII, when Tito's socialist regime decided to establish labor-managed enterprises on a massive scale. Labor-managed did not mean labor-owned, but the workers saw in this reform the realization of some sort of Proudhon-style utopia. One generation later, the whole population was convinced that an enterprise was owned by its workers. This utopia was put to test in the 90s when, after the collapse of the country, the main international financial institutions forced the newly independent former Yugoslav republics to undergo a massive privatization process. Lawyers said these enterprises were public. Workers said they owned them. And the workers' view prevailed. The purpose of this presentation is to build on this case to describe the circumstances that are typically associated with utopia-made laws and to discuss possible implications.

Bionote: Karim Medjad is the holder of the Chair "International development of the enterprises" at the Innovation Department of the Conservatoire National des Arts et Metiers in Paris (CNAM) where he teaches globalization and scenario planning. A lawyer and an economist, both his practice and his academic research focus on foresight studies and narrative studies. He has published articles in major European and American journals and contributed chapters to various scientific books.

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"The numbers on her arm—they were a problem": Old age and intergenerational conflict in Shalom Auslander's novel *Hope: A Tragedy*

Laura Miñano Mañero[1]

[1]*Universitat de València*

This paper examines old age and intergenerational tension in Shalom Auslander's darkly humorous novel *Hope: A Tragedy* (2012). Situating the novel within the broader framework of speculative Holocaust fiction, this study engages with the concept of uchronia to explore how imagined, counterfactual histories disrupt linear narratives of time and memory. In doing so, the novel reveals the paradoxes of collective trauma, particularly when historical events are envisioned outside the boundaries of realist representation. By presenting an alternative post-Holocaust reality where Anne Frank survives, Auslander constructs a literary uchronia that challenges the sanctity of historical symbols and the institutionalization of Holocaust memory, compelling readers to reconsider the ethical dimensions of commemoration and remembrance. The novel explores this tension through Solomon Kugel, a young Jewish professional haunted by anxiety and an obsessive fear of danger, shaped by a childhood overshadowed by inherited trauma. Kugel's attempt to escape these burdens by relocating his family to a secluded rural farm ironically intensifies his psychological turmoil when he discovers Anne Frank, now an elderly, reclusive woman hidden in his attic, alongside his aged mother, an abrasive Brooklynite who falsely claims to be a Holocaust survivor. Anne's existence as a decrepit, forgotten woman, coupled with Solomon's delusional mother, allows Auslander to unravel the paradoxes inherent in the institutionalization of the Holocaust, the psychological burden of collective memory, as well as vicarious trauma and inherited guilt. Shaped by the speculative genre's potential to challenge deep-rooted assumptions and dominant cultural narratives, Auslander's transgressive deconstruction of historical memory and sanctioned discourse enables us to delve into intergenerational tension, while also critically engaging with the representation of old age in the context of traumatic memory. This uchronian lens invites reflection on the utopian impulse inherent in counterfactual histories: the desire to concoct alternative scenarios as a means of grappling with present reality. By invoking uchronia, the novel reframes historical trauma through speculative disruption, carving out a space to interrogate both the ethics of remembrance and the dimensions of reimagining the past.

Bionote: Laura Miñano-Mañero is an assistant professor at the University of Valencia, Spain, at the Department of English and German Philology. She holds a PhD from the University of Valencia in the field of sociolinguistics, with a thesis focused on language contact in Nazi concentration camps. Her research interests lie in multilingualism in extreme contexts, postmemory and intergenerational transmission of trauma, and the intersection of Holocaust studies with gender in literary discourse.

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"Le Prince de Miguasha" de Serge Lamothe: teatro minimalista, distópico e intimista

Evelio Miñano Martínez[1]

[1]*Universitat de València*

Serge Lamothe es un escritor quebequés de expresión francesa, autor de varias obras que se podrían encuadrar entre las distopías o, como el propio autor prefiere, en la literatura prospectiva. Se trata ante todo de relatos, entre los que destacan Oshima y Tras el final, traducidas y publicadas recientemente en España (Verbum, 2023 y 2024). Le Prince de Miguasha, cuya traducción al catalán está actualmente en prensa, es la única pieza teatral dedicada a este ámbito hasta la fecha por el autor. En ella dos personajes, ÉL y ELLA, de los que muy poco se sabe entablan una conversación en un espacio cerrado y angustioso. Aunque hay muchas incertidumbres, parece que están esperando ser rescatados después de una catástrofe climática de tintes apocalípticos. Su diálogo repasa todas las cosas, desde las más grandes a las más pequeñas, que ha perdido la humanidad, pero se adentra también en sus desencuentros y conflictos personales. Nuestra ponencia se centrará en el estudio de la vertiente social e íntima de esta distopía y en el universo dramático reducido a lo esencial en que se enmarca. Serge Lamothe es un escritor quebequés de expresión francesa, autor de varias obras que se podrían encuadrar entre las distopías o, como el propio autor prefiere, en la literatura prospectiva. Se trata ante todo de relatos, entre los que destacan Oshima y Tras el final, traducidas y publicadas recientemente en España (Verbum, 2023 y 2024). Le Prince de Miguasha, cuya traducción al catalán está actualmente en prensa, es la única pieza teatral dedicada a este ámbito hasta la fecha por el autor. En ella dos personajes, ÉL y ELLA, de los que muy poco se sabe entablan una conversación en un espacio cerrado y angustioso. Aunque hay muchas incertidumbres, parece que están esperando ser rescatados después de una catástrofe climática de tintes apocalípticos. Su diálogo repasa todas las cosas, desde las más grandes a las más pequeñas, que ha perdido la humanidad, pero se adentra también en sus desencuentros y conflictos personales. Nuestra ponencia se centrará en el estudio de la vertiente social e íntima de esta distopía y en el universo dramático reducido a lo esencial en que se enmarca.

Bionote: Catedrático de literatura francesa, de la Universitat de València. Investigador en literatura de lengua francesa. Traductor literario. Traductor de obras del autor Serge Lamothe e investigador sobre su obra.

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The Utoposphere: locating utopic systems and utopianisms through spatial play

Linda Naughton[1]

[1]*University of Manchester*

Utopia and space are inherently tied by both etymology (the Greek 'topos' meaning place from which More created the neologism 'utopia') and narrative where the utopian imaginary creates the idealised alternative land/nation/city which counters the associated problems of its time (Wegner 2022). Within studies of utopian literature there have been approaches to the use of space in terms of spatial play, (Marin 1984), frontiers (Marin 1993), nation states (Wegner 2002), spaces of feminist resistance (Pohl 2006, 2007), public versus private space (Benison 2023; McKeon 2005) but these spatialities remain an under-researched area. This paper develops an experimental spatial framework, which allows for the analysis of more partial, incomplete and momentary utopias to co-locate alongside forms that might be considered more complete according to Sargent's (1994) "three faces" of utopianism: literary utopias, utopian social theory, and utopian experiments. Following Lotman's (1990) concept of 'semiosphere' as the ground from which culture/communication emerges, I propose the 'utoposphere' as the ground from which utopic systems emerge. This space is developed using Deleuze and Guattari's (1994, 2004) 'state' and 'nomadic' systems of thought, and Bell's (2010, 2013, 2017) nomadic and state utopianisms. Drawing on this work and the wider field of utopian studies, the paper proposes a utopic system (desire/impulse, intrinsic/extrinsic horizon, method/programme). The paper demonstrates how a spatial lens allows us to re-locate utopianism beyond the binaries of utopianism/anti-utopianism and create a space for all utopianisms – nomadic, state, green, feminist, ageing, intergenerational and more.

Bionote: Linda Naughton is a research fellow on the Ageing in Place in Cities project in the Department of Sociology at the University of Manchester. Her PhD is in Human Geography and her research interests include geographies of ageing, narratives of city development, creative/spatial methodologies, van-dwelling as a form of nomadic utopianism, and utopian experiments.

Age, Motherhood and Pity: A Comparative Analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale* and Its Screen Adaptation Through the Portrayal of Serena and June's Dynamic

Catalina Nazario Abbott[1]

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Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) has become a modern classic of feminist dystopian literature, and both the novel and its 2017 series adaptation have deeply influenced modern feminist movements. Heavily researched and thoroughly studied, the original text and its many iterations have become a staple and reference for many movements in defence of women's reproductive rights. Because of this, after reading Atwood's description of Serena Joy as "no longer [having] a flawless cut-paper profile, her face is sinking in upon itself" (Atwood 52) and whose "left hand [rested] on the ivory head of her cane, … which must once have been fine and was still finely kept" (Atwood 20), one must find oneself surprised when Yvonne Strahovski, of 34 years of age, is presented six minutes into the series adaptation as this very same character. Despite the many changes needed to bring a 1985 novel to nowadays screens, ageing down one of the main characters is a choice that elicits many questions. Motherhood and age have always been intertwined subjects, as the ability to bear children dwindles with time and menopause becomes a feared by many deadline, after which the idea of giving birth must be abandoned. Pregnancy is also argued to disrupt the dichotomy between the young, sexual body and the old, non-sexual body (Shildrick), and thus the idea of an elderly mother sits outside of the norm, becomes Othered and rejected. In this paper, I aim to delve into the reasons behind Serena Joy's rejuvenation within the series adaptation of The Handmaid's Tale, focusing specifically on the intersecting roads of youth and pity and the discrimination of elderly female bodies. I will analyse June and Serena's dynamic within both the novel and the series, juxtaposing the age differences between both iterations of the characters, and the subsequent effect this has on their relationship, specifically on June's ability, or lack-there-of, to empathize and pity Serena.

Bionote: Catalina (Cata) Nazario is a first year PhD student at the University of Valencia. She is currently researching within the field of queer studies, specifically lesbian studies, and is focusing on the intersection of sexuality and gender within lesbian narratives of the 20th century. She began her research journey with a master's thesis on *The Handmaid's Tale* and the queer interpretation of June and Serena's dynamic through a psychoanalytic lens.

Sugar-Coated Utopia? Subjectivity, Mediation, and the Pharmakopolitics of Diabetes

David Levente Palatinus[1]

[1]*Technical University of Liberec*

If there ever was a moment that altered the embodied experience of living with diabetes, it is now. The current, utopian wave of technological supplements transforms the diabetic experience, mediating bodily states through devices that operate with an immediacy and precision unimaginable even two decades ago. Treatment options now include systems that close the gap between body and data through intelligent closed-loop pump-sensor systems and tools for external monitoring and control. These tools promise enhanced control over blood glucose levels and a significant improvement on the prospect of longevity. On the other hand, they keep patients irreversibly dependent on technologies that rely on a complex economic and institutional infrastructure of for-profit tech firms, insurance companies and policy makers, and a culture obsessed with restorative health care and longevity. These notions are inexorably linked to the politics of accelerating progress that inevitably reduces the human to clusters of machine-readable data that is, in turn, easily monetized. This heterotopic in-betweenness of patients' experience unfolds through what this talk refers to as the 'pharmakopolitics' of diabetes. This talk examines how such technologies mediate the lived, phenomenological experiences of diabetic bodies, situating them within the pharmakopolitical framework of chronic illness. On social media, a new kind of influencer has emerged—figures whose content centres around life with diabetes, and particularly around their interactions with insulin pumps and glucose sensors. Using examples from creators like #shesdiabetic, #typeonetalks, #typeoneamy, and #diabeticdanica, this talk will explore how these content creators actively navigate and respond to the dehumanizing potential of these technologies—the "dangerous supplement" that both empowers and objectifies. Through these creators, a counter-narrative takes shape: a re-humanization of the diabetic experience that becomes both exportable and profitable, as their lived experiences with health tech are shared and monetized globally. Inhabiting diabetes becomes, then, a form of extimacy — a lived duality of intimacy and estrangement, as the technological ""other"" integrates with and sometimes alienates the body. This dual existence prompts a constant phenomenological oscillation, where users both affirm and question their bodily boundaries within the tech-mediated self. By examining these mediated testimonies, the paper aims to shed light on how these narratives might inspire therapeutic and policy considerations globally. Ultimately, it addresses the existential tethering of patients to technological supplements, highlighting the embodied nuances of living with—and through—Type 1 diabetes.

Bionote: David Levente Palatinus is Associate Professor in Digital Media and Cultural Studies at the Technical University of Liberec, also holding a secondment at the University of Trnava. He is founder of the Anthropocene Media Lab. He works on screen studies, digital media, and cultural theory. He has written on violence in serial culture, technology and subjectivity, sci-fi and fantasy, and human-nonhuman relations in the Anthropocene. He is co-editor of the ECREA section of CST Online, and of Bloomsbury Studies in Digital Cultures (Bloomsbury Publishing, UK). His recent publications include Itinerari LIX (Thematic Issue): Perspectives in the Anthropocene: Beyond Nature and Culture (Mimesis Edizioni, 2020, with Stefania Achella), and J.R.R. Tolkien in Central Europe: Context, Directions and the Legacy. Routledge, 2023 (with Janka kascakova). His book Human / Non / Human: Technics and Subjectivity across Media is forthcoming with Americana E-Books.

The Pathologization of Old Age through Vampirism in Elise Kova's Dystopian Novel *Duel with the Vampire Lord* (2022)

Dina Pedro Mustieles[1]

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The term speculative fiction refers to fictional works that explore the fantastic and the unfamiliar and is usually subdivided into three subgenres: fantasy, science fiction and horror (Wilkins 39). Speculative fiction is characterized by the use of fantastic elements "represented in a realistic way if they are to be effective" (Wilkins 40), as in the case of vampire fiction. The vampire is a fluid character that is used to represent human fears, including the fear of ageing. Vampires encapsulate the human fantasy of eternal life and youth, and are "a momentary escape from the psychological and social horrors of the senile body" (Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska 35). Until the twentieth century, living a long life was fairly uncommon, so elderly people were "treated as non-normative" (Small 6). Hence, "the social disease of ageism" (Miquel-Baldellou 96) started to emerge: a type of discrimination and stereotyping of elderly people that stems from our fear of growing old. Some of the stereotypes that society associates with old age include being "senile, rigid in thought and manner, and old fashioned in morality and skills", but also sexually inactive and economically unproductive (Butler 41). In this social context, all our concerns related to "ageing, dieting, and externalised angst", as well as the need to modify our bodies to remain artificially young, are represented through the vampire, who remains eternally thin, young and attractive (Fhlainn 103). In this paper, I analyze Elise Kova's *Duel with the Vampire Lord* (2022), a speculative and fantasy dystopian novel that follows Floriane, a forge maiden who lives in Hunter's Hamlet, a town haunted by ruthless and blood-thirsty vampires. On the night of the Blood Moon, she is kidnapped by the vampire lord, Ruvan, who is later revealed suffers from a condition –known as the curse– that makes him look like an ancient "walking corpse" (33). His ageing features can only be concealed when he drinks human blood, which acts as a youth elixir for him and the vampires that inhabit a vampire kingdom known as Tempost. Consequently, old age is pathologized in the novel, as it is portrayed as both a disease and a curse that needs to be broken, so that vampires can look young and beautiful again. Thus, the novel arguably contributes to the demonization of old age and the perpetuation of negative connotations and stereotypes, equating youthfulness to health and vigor, whilst portraying ageing as decadent and feeble.

Bionote: Dina Pedro is Assistant Professor at the Department of English and German at the University of Valencia (Spain). Her research focuses on intersections of gender and trauma in neo-Victorianism and Gothic on screen, with an especial interest in the medical humanities. She is member of the research project 'Re-orienting Assemblage Theory in Anglophone Literature and Culture' (RELY), funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain (Ref. PID2022-137881NB-I00). She is also a co-editor of the 'Lost, Unhappy and at Home': The Impact of Violence on Irish Culture (Vol. 1 and 2, Peter Lang 2024).

Still too young, already too old: the age issue in "The Giver" by Lois Lowry

Giulia Pellegrinotti[1]

[1]*Università di Pisa*

This paper intends to examine how the dystopian novel *The Giver* (1993) by Lois Lowry explores the complex issue of representing aging and intergenerational relationships in literature. At a first glance, in the community depicted in The Giver everyone takes care of children and respects the elderly; in fact, these two age groups are equally placed at the margins of society, and they are rarely allowed to come into contact with one another. I will focus on passages from the book to provide evidence of how both groups are treated as if they were almost different citizens, subject to different rules in terms of privileges, and deprived of freedom by a system that focuses solely on its own utilitarian progress. I will also show how this mechanism is highlighted by the only positive intergenerational relationship in the book: the one between the Giver, an old man who alone stores the memory of how the world was before the desire for a perfect utopia erased all colors and emotions, and Jonas, the twelve-year-old protagonist, who will eventually inherit those memories. Above all, what the bond between Jonas and the Giver highlights is how damaging the lack of such a nurturing relationship can be, even in a society as seemingly perfect as the one portrayed in *The Giver*.

Bionote: Since November 2024, she is a Foreign Languages and Literature PhD researcher at the University of Pisa. In October 2024, she also mastered in Euroamerican Languages, Literatures, and Philologies at the University of Pisa (110L/110), with a thesis on the issue of worldbuilding in fantasy literature. In September 2022, she obtained a bachelor's degree in Modern Languages and Literatures at the University of Bologna (110/110) with a thesis on the problematic translation in both Italian and English of the Nadsat, the language invented by Anthony Burgess for his novel A Clockwork Orange. My current research interests, besides general English literature, mainly focus on the correlation between forms of rebellion/discrimination represented in fantasy literature and the way these dynamics influence and are influenced by the fantasy world; she is also interested in everything connected with fantasy, dystopia, scifi, and literary representations of injustice and oppression.

Failed paterno-filial relations in the dystopic city of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*

Eva M. Pérez Rodríguez[1]

[1]*Universitat de les Illes Balears*

Readers of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* (1995) follow the oneiric events, actions and experiences of its protagonist, Ryder, in an unnamed, probably central European city, which he has visited in order to give a piano concert. As a city which has lost its cultural status and its social fibre, this indeterminate setting may serve as a representative of a dystopian society searching for a remedy to its ailments. That neither the causes nor the consequences of this downfall are even obliquely expressed endows the narrative with a pessimistic, demoralised aura that never lifts from the novel pages. One of the ailments that afflict this heterotopic city is the strained relationships between children and their parents, an intergenerational dynamic which Ishiguro has explored repeatedly throughout his fiction. Ryder himself has disappointed his parents, and perhaps failed to raise Boris, who may or may not be his own son. Other characters have equally defective connections as parents or sons and daughters, in authentic or surrogate familial relationships. Some city elders, former musical luminaries, have also decayed in their social status, leaving their fellow citizens bereft of authority figures. Ishiguro explores these bonds with poignancy in a repetitive pattern that suggests the failure of the family as the basic component of society. The claustrophobia and anxiety these tensions provoke, expressed through an extensive dreamlike succession of events, build in the reader an impression of ruination – physical, cultural, and emotional.

Bionote: Eva M. Pérez-Rodríguez teaches English literature at the Universitat de les Illes Balears (Spain). She holds an MPhil (University of Bradford) and a PhD in English Philology (Universidad de Oviedo). After working on the radical writings of William Godwin, in particular his Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft, her research focused on contemporary British fiction related to World War II, a result of which was her volume How the Second World War is Depicted by British Novelists since 1990 (Edwin Mellen Press, 2012). She has also published on popular romance, psychogeographical fiction, and the prevalence of various eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British authors (Daniel Defoe, Walter Scott, etc.) in contemporary culture and society. She is currently working on an annotated bilingual edition of Romantic verse.

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Alternative history as retrospective utopia: Glimpses of a happier age in Vilmos Kondor's Second Hungarian Republic novels

Karoly Pinter[1]

[1]*Pazmany Peter Catholic University, Budapest, Hungary*

Vilmos Kondor is the pen name of a successful and productive Hungarian author of mystery novels who prefers to keep his real identity a well-guarded secret. Beginning with his internationally successful hard-boiled detective fiction Budapest Noir (2008), Kondor has produced more than a dozen mystery stories that all take place in a distinctive period of 20th century Hungarian history and rely on a careful recreation of the contemporary social-political atmosphere. In his most recent trilogy of novels (entitled the Second Hungarian Republic series), however, Kondor ventured into alternative history: his last three books (2022-2024) all take place in Budapest of the 1960s, but this fictional Budapest is the product of a different sequence of events than actual post-war Hungarian history. In Kondor's fiction, Hungary managed to strike an armistice deal with the Soviets and turned against Nazi Germany in late 1944, this way avoiding permanent Soviet occupation and developing into a multi-party, free-market democracy which maintains a careful neutrality between the two hostile blocs of Cold War Europe. While Kondor's attempt to imagine an alternative historical timeline based on an imaginary turning point in a country's past is far from novel in Western fantastic literature, he is almost without forerunners in Hungarian literature. His fiction is also distinguished by a careful attention to detail and a convincing and memorable description of the architecture and material culture of his imaginary Budapest as well as the strikingly different political atmosphere in which famous historical personalities pop up in unexpected positions (e.g. János Kádár, the long-time Communist leader of Hungary acts as chief of the Budapest police in his books). In my presentation, I wish to argue that the spectacular success of Kondor's novels is due at least partly to the surprise, excitement and occasional ironic parody his retrospective utopian vision offers his readers. While his alternative Hungary is far from perfect or ideal (after all, his protagonist is a police detective investigating murders and other crimes in his fictious world), the background of the stories provides tantalizing glimpses of a different, more democratic and fruitful historical path the country could have taken to avoid both the oppressive Communist dictatorship of the late 20th century and potentially the distortion and failure of the democratic experiment after 1990 which ultimately produced the current regime of Viktor Orbán."

Bionote: Károly Pintér is associate professor and currently chair of the Institute of English and American Studies, Pázmány Péter Catholic University (PPKE), Budapest. He holds MA degrees in English and History, and received his PhD in 2005 from ELTE University, Budapest. Within literary studies, he specializes on utopian studies as well as H. G. Wells and classic English-language SF, the subjects of his book Anatomy of Utopia (2010). His other area of expertise is American studies: he has published essays on American presidential elections, church-state relations in the US and the phenomenon of American civil religion. In 2017 he was Visiting Fellow of the Nanovic Institute at Notre Dame University.

Human, Alien, (Br)Other: Utopian Possibilities of Close Encounters in Doug Johnstone's *The Space Between Us* and *The Collapsing Wave*

Katarzyna Pisarska[1]

[1]*University of Coimbra / CETAPS*

Doug Johnstone (b. 1970), a Scottish singer, songwriter, and nuclear physicist by education, is primarily known as an acclaimed author of crime novels, the most recent ones being a series of thrillers about the Skelf family women. However, Johnstone has also ventured into the SF genre, investigating the ramifications of an encounter between humans and beings from outer space. In his novel The Space Between Us and its sequel, The Collapsing Wave, Johnstone traces the relations between earthlings and octopus-like refugees from Enceladus, one of Saturn's many moons, who find a new home in Scottish waters and are doggedly pursued by secret services and the military of the UK and the US. This allows him to reflect on the nature of humanity, the necessity of communal bonds, and the role of empathy in the forging of equitable and sustainable relationships with other humans, other species and the natural world. This paper analyses the utopian possibilities of the close encounter depicted in the two novels, which reflect on humans' alienation from the non-human world, questioning their strictly rationalist, scientific outlook and their mercenary attitude towards the natural environment and its different life forms. It is my contention that by bringing humans in contact with an intelligent telepathic alien species in which one is part of a larger community, biologically, psychologically and emotionally, the novels offer hope for a global evolution of human sentiments, which will lead to understanding, tolerance and non-violence. Last but not least, the novels can be treated as a powerful commentary on recent conflicts and resulting migrations, and on how we can create a better world if we transcend existing prejudices and hostility to difference by acts of kindness and feeling for the other.

Bionote: Katarzyna Pisarska, PhD, is Invited Assistant Professor at the University of Coimbra and a researcher at CETAPS (Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies) at the University of Porto, Portugal. She is the author of Mediating the World in the Novels of Iain Banks: The Paradigms of Fiction (Peter Lang, 2013) and Reversed Food Chains: Humanity, Monstrosity and an Evolutionary Utopia in Colin Wilson's Spider World Novels (U.Porto Press, 2019), and co-editor of The Lives of Texts: Exploring the Metaphor (Cambridge Scholars, 2012). She has published articles and book chapters on British and American literature and utopian cinema and fiction. Her main research interests include Scottish fiction, Utopian Studies, the Gothic, adaptation, and myth in literature and culture.

Utopia and Dystopia in the Aestheticist "contes philosophiques" of 1920s Japan

Pau Pitarch Fernández[1]

[1]*Waseda University*

The Japanese literary scene of the 1920s is often characterized as being split into two main camps: the Proletarians and the Aestheticists. The latter were the heirs of a cosmopolitan tradition that had started with the 19th-century modernization of Japan, developers of Romanticism and Symbolism into Japanese literary styles. The former were a new force in the Japanese literary world, inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1917 and a programmatic zeal to turn literature into a weapon to raise awareness about the grim conditions of Japanese workers, and raise their consciousness so they became active revolutionary subjects. Within this paradigm, Aestheticists have been understood as militantly anti-political, eschewing any discussion of current economic conditions as unartistic. By looking at a set of Utopian and Dystopian short stories by two of the most well-known Japanese Aestheticists of the era, Akutagawa Ryunosuke (1892-1927) and Sato Haruo (1892-1964), I want to challenge this view, instead arguing that Aestheticist works also engaged with their contemporary social issues, albeit with a different focus and set of preoccupations than Proletarian authors did. The main texts I will analyze are 1) Akutagawa's "Kappa" ("The Kappa," Kaizo, March 1927), a Swiftian tale about a mental patient who claims to have visited the country of the Kappa (a water-dwelling magical creature in Japanese folklore), and is having trouble readjusting to human society, just like Gulliver had after returning from the land of the Houyhnhnms; 2) Sato's "Nonsharan kiroku" ("A Record of Nonchalant," Kaizo, January 1929), a proto-cyberpunk story about a vertical world where social classes are segregated by depth that may have been inspired by Thea von Harbou's novel Metropolis (itself the source for Fritz Lang's famous 1927 film). Reading these two texts together with some of Akutagawa's minor Utopian works like "Mensura zoili" (Shinshicho, January 1917) or "Fushigi na shima" ("Wonder Island," Zuihitsu, January 1924), I propose to interpret this corpus an Aestheticist take on the "conte philosophique" that, instead of working off a class struggle model, tackles the question of how art is affected by its absorption into the capitalist commodity economy, and what its utopian potential is to liberate individuals from social and economic structures that threaten to stamp out their individuality and turn them into commodities themselves.

Bionote: Pau Pitarch Fernandez is Associate Professor of Modern Japanese Literature at the Waseda University School of Culture, Media and Society. He holds a MA in Language and Information Sciences from the University of Tokyo (Japan), and a PhD in Japanese Literature from Columbia University. His research focuses on the interactions between literature, psychology, and publishing culture in early twentieth-century Japan.

Time, order, and creativity: utopian aesthetic and literary figures for the salvation of an aged world

José Eduardo Reis[1]

[1]*University of Porto*

The idea of saving the world is an enthralling and compelling provocation regarding the necessity, feasibility, or futility of such an endeavour. This paper attempts to respond to this challenge by drawing on quantum physicist David Bohm's concept of 'implicate order', a physical dimension underlying the world of phenomena defined by the inseparability of consciousness and matter, as well as by the heuristic value he places on metaphorical thinking. The paper explores Bohm's ideas through utopian passages from Homer, Portuguese author Ferreira de Castro, poet Ana Luísa Amaral, and artists Anthony Gormley and Kazuaki Tanahashi.

Bionote: José Eduardo Reis is a researcher at the Institute of Comparative Literature of the Faculty of Letters of Oporto University. As a comparatist, he has published regularly with a main focus on the topic of literary utopianism. He is a reviewer for the American Journal of Utopian Studies and a member of the USS committee.

Oshima, de Serge Lamothe

Quentin Rodríguez[1]

[1]Universitat de València

En un mundo erosionado por el colapso de las estructuras políticas, ecológicas y simbólicas, Oshima interroga la posibilidad misma de la herencia. El relato se abre con el retorno del protagonista a la isla donde pasó su infancia, llamado por el silencio de un padre moribundo, desconocido para él, pero cuya presencia aún desea alcanzar. Este desplazamiento geográfico activa otro tipo de movimiento, más interior, en el que las figuras que encuentra se convierten en depositarias de un pasado que el presente apenas logra nombrar.

En este estudio, analizaremos cómo ciertos personajes, todos marcados por la edad y el retiro, asumen sin declararlo la función de lugares de memoria, en el sentido definido por Pierre Nora: no como vestigios estáticos, sino como presencias habitadas por la Historia. Por su sola forma de estar, estas figuras evocan una casa olvidada, mantienen un refugio, hacen sobrevivir un mito, transmiten un mensaje o llaman sin palabras; inscriben, en el presente, las huellas del pasado. Las personas mayores actúan por fidelidad a lo que fue, a quienes amaron, pero también como portadoras de una forma de utopismo: la posibilidad, aún desde el colapso de su sociedad, de imaginar una continuidad humana que no se base en la restauración, sino en la transmisión de una memoria vivida. Esta se articula en el gesto, el cuidado y la persistencia; sostiene la idea de que algo todavía puede preservarse. Analizaremos cómo estas figuras influyen en el recorrido del protagonista, Akamaru, receptáculo de la memoria colectiva encarnada por la vejez. Su silencio no impide la transmisión, sino que se convierte en una forma de memoria que el texto articula a través de la escucha y la observación a lo largo de su viaje.

Bionote:
Quentin Rodriguez es profesor de francés como lengua extranjera, actor e investigador. Doctorando y titular de un máster de investigación en literatura antigua, es uno de los especialistas en Francia de *Don Quijote*, obra emblemática de las tensiones entre ideales y realidad, tema central de sus trabajos. Su experiencia teatral en Francia y España enriquece una pedagogía viva, centrada en lo humano. Acompaña a sus alumnos con cercanía y confianza, trabajando especialmente la pronunciación y la conversación. Convencido de que el aprendizaje pasa por el intercambio y la curiosidad, crea espacios donde lengua, cultura e investigación se encuentran.

Defying Ageism in Otherworldly Environments

Elizabeth Russell[1]

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Leonora Carrington's *Down Below* (1972) and *The Hearing Trumpet* (1976) take the reader into surrealist worlds of the weird and wonderful: a mingling of escaping from, and an arrival into a world of her own making. British born; her childhood was not a happy one as she was expelled from school several times because of her "rebellious nature". Sent to various art schools (Florence and London), she became fascinated by surrealism and the "community" of surrealist painters. Its characteristics were freedom, the unexpected, revolution, the unconscious and the uncanny. Carrington's otherworldly utopia aimed at revolutionizing human experience … most significantly women's experience in old age.

Bionote: Although retired, she still works in the Department of English and German Studies. She has co-organised the USS Conference on three different occasions in Tarragona. Her interests are in Utopian Studies, feminisms, and Literature.

Intergenerational confrontation: The ageing of people and the planet in climate change dystopias

Stefania Rutigliano[1]

[1]*University of Bari*

In literature of all times, the relationship between generations is a constant theme that serves to narrate the complex interweaving of old and new, past, present and future, often by observing family events (as in family saga novels), which mirror the changes taking place in society. Utopias and dystopias deal with issues related to intergenerational relations in a peculiar way by deforming, exaggerating and exacerbating issues that are urgent and recognisable in the present world outside the fictional boundaries, thus with the obvious purpose of helping to address them. I am especially interested in considering the way dystopias, particularly those dealing with climate change, address intergenerational confrontation and the issue of ageing in relation to both the human species and the planet: Indeed, dystopian projections, generally set in a more or less apocalyptic future, thematise old age within the relationship between the different generations – ranging from the conflict implicit in the quest for eternal youth to the rediscovery of the wisdom of past times –, but also as the autumn of an entire species in a world so close to the end that it marks the need for radical change (which often takes on the features of a return to the eikos). Survival, which also means the possibility for the young to become elderly, can prompt a solidarity-based collaboration between different age groups; indeed, bewilderment in the face of an inhospitable world is often dealt with by recovering the teachings and habits passed on by the elderly. The thread of intergenerational memory constitutes an interesting object of investigation even in dystopian narratives, which push towards a balance between human and non-human species that evidently presupposes a harmonious solution to the intergenerational conflict as well. In the light of the above considerations, I would like to analyse among my case studies Margaret Atwood's Maddaddam trilogy – *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and *Maddaddam* (2013) –, McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140* (2017), but also Paul Auster's *In The Country of Last Things*(1987) and in some respects Alfred Döblin's *Berge, Meere und Giganten* (1924) in which, in fact, the food for thought that I have mentioned regarding old age and human and environmental ageing find substance and lend themselves to further considerations on the role that dystopian literature takes on with regard to urgent questions of existence and its future.

Bionote: Stefania Rutigliano is Associate Professor in the academic discipline COMP 01/A at the Department of Humanistic Research and Innovation of the University of Bari, where she teaches Comparative Literature in the Master Degree Course in Modern Philology (LM 14), Literature and Intermediality in the Bachelor Degree Course in DAMS - AUDIOVISUAL, MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS DISCIPLINES (L 3) and Literature and Performing Arts in the Master Degree Course in Performing Sciences (LM 65). Further information can be found on the lecturer page: https://www.uniba.it/it/docenti/rutigliano-stefania

The haunted past: a paradoxical utopian impulse in Juan Rulfo's novel
Pedro Paramo

Antonis Sarris[1]

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Nowadays, the crisis of utopia, announced by many sides, is accompanied by an expansion of the definition of utopia, which, although beneficial, has led influential theorists of utopian studies (Levitas, Kumar) to point out the danger of conceptual indeterminacy. The treatment of indeterminacy is solved by the assumption that Utopia is thematized (although not constituted) in the West. This assumption discloses a peculiar ageism. There is an inherent distrust and hesitation on the part of postcolonial criticism in associating a consolidated notion that continues, despite its deconstruction, to be linked to Western thought, especially when Western utopias are often the realized dystopias for West's others. Starting from the above problem, I will analyze a significant novel of Latin American modernism, Pedro Paramo by Juan Rulfo, which, in my opinion, highlights the difficulties that any attempt to articulate a post-colonial utopia must undertake. Initially, on a formal level, the novel problematizes the rigid distinctions of the literary genre of utopia. The apparent proximity of its content to dystopia or critical utopia is meaningless due to their constituting a response to the crises of Western utopia. This is not the case with Rulfo due to the lack of an explicitly formulated Latin American utopia. Nonetheless, in terms of content, Bloch's distinction between abstract and concrete utopia also encounters interpretive obstacles. If the concrete utopia is conspicuously absent from the novel, the utopian impulse confronts the same difficulties—anticipatory illumination collides with the significance of the unresolved past in Pedro Paramo. The myth of progress, the foundation of utopian thought, is negated by the persistence of a past that cannot be explained away, ending up haunting the present and inhibiting the future. In the town of Comala, where the imaginary intertwines with the real, the dead coexist with the living, the linearity of time dissolves, and Rulfo oscillates between hope and nostalgia. At this level, referring to the theory of Boaventura De Sousa Santos, I will argue that the novel replaces the Blochian non-synchronicity of the contemporaneous with a simultaneous juxtaposition of the present and the past. The not-yet-conscious gives way to a still-not-conscious. A subaltern intertemporality (Santos) is thus articulated that must resolve its past for it to decide if a different notion of the future and, consequently, another postcolonial anticipatory illumination can emerge.

Bionote: Antonis Sarris holds a PhD in Cultural Studies from the Mass Media and Communications Department at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Currently, he is a postdoctoral researcher with a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowship at the University of Cyprus. His research project entitled "Recontextualizing Utopian Poetics: The Futuristic Reenactment of the Past in Juan Rulfo, Miguel Asturias, and Alejo Carpentier" concerns the possible intersections between Utopian and Postcolonial Studies, focusing mainly on the work of Ernst Bloch and Édouard Glissant. He is also interested in ecocriticism, interculturality, and the relationship between Literature and Philosophy.

Negotiating intergenerational queer utopias in the Radical Faeries movement

Mila Seppälä[1]

[1]University of Turku, Finland

Radical Faeries are a loose network of queer people broadly characterized by their beliefs in secular spiritualism, environmentalism and anarchism. The movement has its roots in the counterculture movement of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in the Gay Liberation Front that was part of the more radical liberation groups of the time. Throughout its existence, the Radical Faeries movement has had to content with tensions over different kinds of queer identities, members understanding of masculinity and femininity as well as how to include class solidarities into an identity-based movement. More recently, the movement has had to negotiate intergenerational conflict as understandings about queer identities become more complex, and the political landscape and activism that has happens within it has shifted further away from for example Marxists ideas about the importance of class. Radical Faeries engage in multiple forms of prefigurative practices that encourage alternative ways of being in the world. These include both non-fictional and fictional writing about queer consciousness and its utopian power, seminars, social gatherings and workshops (see e.g. Mitchell 1977; Read Her: Faerie Finishing School (n.d.)). Radical Faeries have also created sanctuaries for Faeries to live together communally and practice paganism and radically sustainable living. Prefiguration or prefigurative politics questions the idea that social change can only be implemented through top-down institutional power, and instead emphasizes how imagining and embodying different kinds of futures in the present can trigger transformation at a societal, bottom-up level (Monticelli 2022; Yates 2021). In this presentation, I examine the tensions and congruities between different queer generations of Radical Faeries, how different visions for the future have been and continue to be negotiated and elaborated between these generations, and how different generational experiences influence the type of utopias that are being imagined in the movement. This research is part of the Emil Aaltonen Foundation funded "Politics at the Brink of Collapse" project that will begin in the spring of 2025. As part of that project, I will travel to the United States to conduct in-depth interviews and participant observation at the Radical Faerie Sanctuary in Ramah, New Mexico in the fall of 2025. This presentation will be an overview of Radical Faeries and how theories of prefiguration (Monticelli 2022; Yates 2021) and utopian praxis (Cooper 2014; Firth 2012; Shenker 2010), and queer and generational politics (Binnie & Klesse 2013; della Porta 2019) will frame my coming fieldwork period in the United States.

Bionote: Mila Seppälä is working on her Ph.D. dissertation (defense scheduled for fall 2025) at the John Morton Center for North American Studies at the University of Turku. Her research focuses on youth activism and political imagination in the gun violence prevention movement in the United States. In July 2025, she will begin working on the project "Politics at the Brink of Collapse," where she will examine utopian praxis in intentional communities. She has published articles in Political Behavior (2024), Journal of American Studies (2021), and a book chapter in the open-access volume Up in Arms: Gun Imaginaries in Texas (2022).

Intergenerational Relationship, Womanhood and Identity: A Study of Critical Dystopias *Escape* by Manjula Padmanabhan and *The Lesson* by Sowmya Rajendran

Syeda Shehnaz[1]

[1]*Aliah University*

This paper examines how intergenerational relationships function as both a medium of violence and a form of resistance in critical dystopian fiction by Indian women writers. It focuses on *Escape* by Manjula Padmanabhan and *The Lesson* by Sowmya Rajendran, both of which portray patriarchal dystopias. The paper will first explore how women's identities are shaped in the novels who are trapped in a cycle of intergenerational violence. It will be argued that in the novels at the center of this intergenerational violence is the figure of mother. In Escape, the absence of a mother figure to guide Meiji through her adolescence leads to self-hatred. In The Lesson, the protagonist, "the second daughter," experiences a strained relationship with her patriarchy-conforming mother, which impairs her ability to recognize the abuse inflicted upon her. As a result, she gradually succumbs to self-doubt, struggling to assert her agency. The next section will explore moments of intimacy shared between women and their biological/non-biological 'mother' figures, through which the characters may potentially discover their sense of self. For example, despite its problematic nature, the relationship between Meiji and Youngest serves as a catalyst for Meiji's deeper understanding of her identity in Escape. ""The second daughter,"" in The Lesson, experiences a renewed sense of courage when her mother expresses her love in her own restrained manner. In the final section, it will be argued that novelists use the form of critical dystopia to highlight the need for asserting one's identity as a form of resistance against oppressive forces. This resistance serves to sustain the 'utopian impulse' for future generations, both within the narrative and beyond it. By addressing the issues and concerns of contemporary Indian society and offering possible solutions, the writers emerge as mother figures, writing to preserve hope for future generations. Thus, it can be argued that the novels emphasizes on recuperating inter-generational, parent-child relationships to challenge the normative boundaries surrounding the idea of femininity. On the one hand, they disrupt the long-standing patriarchal idea of woman as eternal sufferers; on the other hand, they do not conform to the stereotypes with regards to womanhood promoted by feminists. Instead, the women characters hold ambiguous position--neither completely submissive nor, entirely subversive thereby problematizing existing binaries associated with womanhood. It is to be noted that for the purpose of this study, theoretical concepts such as 'critical dystopia,' and 'mothering' will be pertinent."

Bionote: Syeda Shehnaz is a committed Ph.D. scholar in the Department of English at Aliah University. Her research focuses on Utopian Literature, exploring the theme of utopianism emerging from the writings of Indian Women Writers. Through her work, she aims to contribute to contemporary discussions in utopian studies, gender studies, critical animal studies etc. Her research interests include literary theory, cultural studies, feminist literature, Indian literature etc. She has actively engaged in academic discourse through conference presentations. Beyond her research, Syeda Shehnaz has been involved in academic activities such as teaching, organizing seminars, or participating in research groups. Passionate about interdisciplinary research, literature's role in social change, etc., she aspires to make meaningful contributions to the field of English studies through critical inquiry and scholarship.

Slotte Dufva: Writing Dystopia and Humanity: Merete Mazzarella on Aging, Care Ethics, and Neoliberalism in November and Den goda beröringen (The Good Touch)

Johanna Slotte Dufva[1]

[1] Åbo Akademi University

Merete Mazzarella (b. 1945), a Finland-Swedish author, has produced a rich and varied literary corpus spanning over thirty publications, blending essayistic works with fiction. A frequent contributor to daily media and an honorary doctorate in medical humanities at Uppsala University, Mazzarella's writing often engages with pressing societal and ethical questions. This presentation focuses on Mazzarella's dystopian short story collection November (2004) and its companion work Den goda beröringen (The Good Touch, 2005). Set in a near future where elderly individuals are seen as societal burdens or mere consumers, November critiques the commodification of aging and death, exemplified through the rise of private thanatologists offering "death services". In contrast, Den goda beröringen serves as a manifesto for ethical care, exploring what constitutes meaningful caregiving and a ""good death." The latter work presents the life story as a key to individualized care, while the former emphasizes individualism in a commercial sense. Through an analysis of these works, this presentation explores Mazzarella's critique of neoliberal society and its enduring relevance in contemporary Finland. Additionally, it considers how her vision of humane, ethical care from Den goda beröringen could be actualized, offering a counterpoint to the dystopian future imagined in November.

Bionote: Johanna Slotte Dufva is a doctoral student at the Åbo Akademi Univerity in Turku, Finland. Her dissertation examines aging as a theme in the Finland-Swedish author Merete Mazzarella's works. The dissertation analyzes aging both as a personal experience and as a cultural phenomenon situated within a specific cultural and temporal context. The theoretical framework of the dissertation is Age Studies, and the research is conducted within the field of literary studies.

Retrofuturism in Action: New Human in Early Soviet Sci-Fi

Tatiana Sokolova[1]

[1]*Russian Society of the History and Philosophy of Science*

In my talk, I focus on the early Soviet "optimistic" science fiction period that started approximately after the Revolution of 1917 and ceased to exist around 1957—the first Sputnik launch. Early Soviet sci-fi projects are mostly based on the Marxist view on human nature in (1) the thesis "being determines consciousness" and (2) the idea of emancipation for those who were underrepresented within an 'old' social order. The old world with all its atrocities and injustices had to vanish and be replaced by a new one, the basic features of which were still to be speculated on but should definitely lead to universal progress and prosperity. Writers like Alexander Belyaev or Vivian Itin created imaginary worlds where technologies could alter human consciousness in a way to make possible collaborations between those who had previously been isolated and stuck into their limited areas (women, children, elderly people). In these extremely optimistic utopias, outsiders and misfits of the past not only win against 'previous elites' but also create a new type of human being—an engineer. The figure of the engineer unites all the virtues necessary for the new communist era: profound theoretical knowledge of scientists, real labor experience of workers, audacity and curiosity of children, and the type of caring attention usually associated with women. On the basis of some examples from the literature and movies, I am going to provide an epistemological research into the image of the future and social transformations within early Soviet science fiction, concerning the role of scientific knowledge and technological development. Early Soviet science fiction not only envisioned a radically transformed future but also offered a compelling narrative of how technological and social progress could harmonize to shape a new, more equitable human identity. But at the same time, it also revealed the tensions between idealized notions of collective transformation and the authoritarian undercurrents of a state-driven project, where the engineer, though celebrated as a hero, often symbolized both progress and control.

Bionote: PhD in Philosophy from RAS Institute of Philosophy (2015), her main research interests are within epistemology (specifically French historical epistemology) and philosophy of sciences, the concept of scientific rationality, and the role of a priori in scientific and everyday knowledge. From this perspective, she deep dives into early Soviet science fiction as a source of social imagination in a fragile world, but also as a potential warning of totalitarian tendencies.

"I am seen, therefore I am": The Networked Self in the Contemporary Dystopia

Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga[1]

[1]Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland

The paper proposes to examine the construction of the networked identity in contemporary dystopian novels. It will focus on digital dystopias, moulded by social media and surveillance capitalism, in which citizens, recast as commodities, contribute to their own oppression. The paper will argue that the nightmares of the digital era differ significantly from those portrayed in classical dystopias. As Zygmunt Bauman argues, we live in the post-panopticon age, when the Cartesian notion of "I think, therefore I am" has been replaced by "I am seen, therefore I am". In classical dystopias, borne out of the totalitarian systems of the early twentieth century, there is a centralized system of individual control and oppression. Contemporary dystopias, reflecting the era of fake news, post-truth and personalized echo chambers, pose very different challenges to individual agency, responsibility and citizenship. The paper will discuss the shift in the relation between the individual and the system and the threats it poses for contemporary societies.

Bionote: Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga is Associate Professor in British and American Studies at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University. Her main research interests focus on the contemporary dystopia in literature and film, semiotics of space and manorial tradition in fiction. In 2022, she was awarded a grant funded by the Polish National Science Centre for a three-year research project focusing on digital dystopia in contemporary literature. Her book publications include Dreams, Nightmares and Empty Signifiers: The English Country House in the Contemporary Novel (2015) and Space in Literature (ed.) (2018).

Imagined longevity as a tool for long-term thinking

Philipp P. Thapa

[1]*Sustainable Europe Research Institute Germany*

Individuals, institutions, and societies often fail at long-term thinking and action, and more so for periods beyond the usual human lifespan. On a global scale, this is obvious in many aspects of the world's failing attempt at sustainable development, including climate change. But what if, as individuals and as a generation, we managed to think and act as if we were still going to be alive and active, not just in a few more years or decades, but in centuries? Arguably, we might make different decisions today. The same challenge applies to telling stories about larger events and processes. Narratives are shaped by the fact that readers, listeners, or viewers find it easier to follow stories that revolve around individual protagonists. In historiography, because long-term societal development is difficult to narrate grippingly, the focus has often been on individual historical figures who take action at pivotal moments. Many works of utopian fiction struggle to reconcile storytelling with their main objective of explaining the structure of an imagined society (not to mention narrating long-term, open-ended change), which often results in lame stories such as the prototypical guided tour of Utopia. However, two major works by American author Kim Stanley Robinson (born 1952) successfully meet the challenge – by giving their protagonists extremely long lives. In the Mars trilogy (1992–1996), some of the first Mars colonists live for more than two hundred years, thanks to medical longevity treatments, supporting the narrative arc through successful terraforming and the development of a planet-wide polity. In contrast, Robinson's novel The Years of Rice and Salt (2002) uses reincarnation as the device of long-term storytelling, following a group of souls through various lives from the 14th into the 21st century. Identified by their personalities and the initials of their names, the shapeshifting protagonists anchor an alternate global history based on the premise that a much more severe version of the Black Death plague effectively wiped European civilisation off the map around 1350. Drawing from Robinson's works and related examples, and adding to my previous work on the conception and use of ecological utopianism, I explore the philosophical potential of imagining extremely long individual lives as a tool for long-term thinking.

Bionote: Philipp P. Thapa is an ecologist, philosopher, and writer. His current research focuses on the use of the imagination in environmental ethics and sustainable development. As a fellow of the Sustainable Europe Research Institute Germany, he contributes research to The Big Green, an EU project on sustainable development and the creative sector, and hosts a related online seminar series, the Green Academy. Philipp has taught at universities including Freiburg, Lübeck, Rostock, Greifswald, and LMU Munich. He is a visiting instructor at Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development and a PhD researcher at the Institute for Science in Society, Radboud University, Nijmegen.

Houellebecq on Aging, Religion, and Ustopia: From Militant Atheism to Postsecularism

Camil Ungureanu[1]

[1]*Universitat Pompeu Fabra*

This paper examines Michel Houellebecq as an author who has practically dedicated his entire literary oeuvre to exploring the theme of aging. More specifically, it delves into the different "solutions" that Houellebecq proposes to address the existential problem of aging, both at the personal and socio-political levels. These solutions, which he often refers to as "second chances," take on forms that are simultaneously utopian, dystopian, and occasionally paradoxical. A central aspect of this exploration is the evolution of Houellebecq's views on religion, faith, and the changing relationships with oneself and the others. While much of his earlier work was marked by militant atheism, this paper argues that critics have overlooked the substantive shifts in his perspective, especially as he moves towards a more nuanced stance—what can be identified as postsecularism and even antisecularism in later works under the influence of social thinkers like A. Comte. In this context, I analyze Houellebecq's articulation of what can be described as an "ustopia" (Margaret Atwood)—an unstable hybrid of utopian and dystopian elements. By tracing these shifts, the paper provides insights into Houellebecq's evolving vision, of aging gender and sex, faith, and society, while shedding light on the underlying philosophical-literary tensions within his work.

Bionote: Camil Ungureanu is Serra Húnter Associate Professor of Political Philosophy at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. His research interests are contemporary political philosophy; Critical Theory; religion, law, and politics; art, politics, and philosophy (with a focus on contemporary cinema and literature). He has published extensively in top-tier academic journal, including on Michel Houellebecq.

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Unveiling the Spanish reality in *Utopia de Thomas Moro*, the 1637 translation of *Utopia*

Inmaculada Ureña Asensio[1]

[1]Universidad de Jaén

Gerónimo de Medinilla published a translation into Spanish of Thomas More's most famous work, Utopia, in 1637, shortly after becoming governor of the city of Córdoba. The text, which only rendered Book II, is accompanied by a set of paratexts written by men involved in the political life of the city. Additionally, the Spanish poet Francisco de Quevedo and the humanist Bartolomé Jiménez Patón also contribute to the introductory section, both writing recommendation texts. From the beginning, Medinilla warns the readers that his translation style is rather free. According to him, he aims to preserve the main idea while using his own words, which becomes evident when comparing the Latin original text with the translation: some parts of the text are omitted, others summarized, and others interestingly adapted to the Spanish context. For example, chapter two reveals images commonly found in seventeenth-century Castile and Andalusia, and chapter three contains adaptations to the Spanish administrative organization. Nonetheless, there are further particularities in Medinilla's rendering. The translator, due to potential inquisitorial censorship, removes some references to the role of religious figures, as occurs on chapter nine, and, very surprisingly, self-censors certain passages on private property, especially those fragments where Hythloday criticizes the rich. The present paper wishes to explore this particular omission. If the Spanish governor targeted a specific audience, likely a political one, what might have this signified to them? More broadly, this study will analyze how these textual modifications align with the ideological and political context of seventeenth-century Spain.

Bionote: Inmaculada Ureña Asensio is a PhD candidate at the Universidad de Jaén. For her thesis dissertation, she is creating a digital edition of the Spanish 1637 translation of Thomas More's Utopia with accompanying texts: the 1518 Latin original and the 1551 English rendering by Ralph Robinson. Her research interests are the vernacular translations of Utopia in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe and the reception of Thomas More in Spain in the Early Modern Period.

The control of the elderly and its artefacts by means of the manipulation of historical and collective memories in Orwell's *1984* and Dave Eggers' *The Circle and The Every*

Ana Valverde González[1]

[1]Universidad de Jaén

In this day and age characterised by the primacy of immediacy in interpersonal interactions and the aspiration to identify with a group, the neglect of our elderly population, who nurture our identity and embody our cultural heritage and historical legacy, appears unreasonable. Maurice Halbwachs, in his book The Collective Memory, asserts that "our memories remain collective, however, and are recalled to us through others". This affirmation emphasizes the interdependence of individuals in recollecting the collective memory of a society, and the necessity of preserving historical records as a means of maintaining accurate historical knowledge. In this sense, Orwell's novel sheds light on our current socio-political situation. In 1984, Orwell exposed that the control over discourse and language were key for totalitarian states to dominate the society they governed. In the same vein, the control of the past and what Oceania's citizens can remember, is also key in demonstrating the efficacy of manipulating individual thought by altering historical records in the way that best suits the sphere of power.

For the purpose of this paper, I will focus on the significance of building a single narrative that aligns with a specific political agenda, allowing states to manipulate their citizens' thoughts. I will concentrate on Winston's search for the seniors of Oceania to support his cause, his pursuit of a faithful representation of historical facts that have been modified to adjust with the narrative of the moment. As Halbwachs claims, for memories to continue existing throughout the years it is key "to write them down in a coherent narrative", for it is the written text that persists at the end of the day.

I will argue that the control of the narrative through historical facts and its artefacts plays a similar role in contemporary society to that described in 1984, with global authoritarianism on the rise and the prevalence of manipulated narratives impacting on our democracy. I will draw parallels between the treatment the eldest and its ancient objects receive in Orwell's novel and that of the most mature individuals in Dave Eggers' The Circle, if they are reluctant to accept the rules imposed by a new kind of government—a multinational company and its CEO's. Furthermore, the treatment of the objects from a past life in Dave Eggers' The Every—the sequel of The Circle—will also be analysed.

Bionote: Ana Valverde González es una estudiante de doctorado en el departamento de Filología Inglesa en la Universidad de Jaén, donde está llevando a cabo su análisis sobre la relevancia de las técnicas de desinformación e hypervisibilidad de la obra de George Orwell Nineteen Eighty-Four en la narrativa actual. Ha publicado artículos en revistas como Atlantis, Anglica (en coautoría con Beatriz Valverde) y Forum for World Literature Studies y ha presentado comunicaciones en congresos como ESSE, AEDEAN, EAAS o Northeast Modern Language Association. Sus intereses incluyen literatura modernista y posmodernista, cultura popular, periodismo, sociología e historiografía. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8788-1263

Justice or Revenge: Intergenerational Conflict in Dawn King's play, *The Trials* (2021)

Maria Varsam[1]

[1]*The University of the Peloponnese*

Inspired by Greta Thunberg's activism, Dawn King wrote this speculative play in response to the future possibility of climate-change induced catastrophe. Rather than play out the process of this catastrophe, her dystopian drama deals with its consequences, whereby the 'guilty dinosaurs' – older generation – are taken to court by a jury of 12 teenagers tasked with the mission of deciding if their actions deserve exoneration or the death penalty. This younger generation, aged between 13 and 17, negotiates the intersection of the ethical and political, both in relation to their own responsibility to the future as well as their predecessors' in an effort to mitigate against further catastrophe but also in the desire to do justice to their generation's continued existence on planet Earth. They consider the reliability of the democratic process, the utility of capital punishment and the more complex issue of culpability. Heated arguments arise, without conclusive resolution, on the definition of guilt and innocence, the relationship between affect and action, and ultimately, the personal and political. The burden of passing judgement in public court on three defendants who make their case based on widely different ethical and political arguments inevitably leads to a discourse-based analysis when fact-based testimony proves insufficient. However, their deliberations in all 3 cases lead some jurors to adopt extreme positions, while others remain sceptical and undecided, leading to more debate. Finally, it becomes clear that in order to do justice to the past, present and future, some members of the jury are motivated more by revenge than justice, thus highlighting a key feature of dystopian literary aesthetics which exaggerates present social conditions in order to ask of the audience/reader to consider their own response to the question of 'what if…' and specifically, what if their present destructive actions to the environment were judged unforgivable by their own offspring – would they have acted differently?

Bionote: Maria Varsam is a Lecturer at the University of the Peloponnese, in the Department of Performing and Digital Arts (School of Arts) where she teaches courses in Utopian and Dystopian British Drama, Gender and Performance, Contemporary American Theatre and English for Academic Purposes. She holds an MA from Lancaster University, an MPhil from the University of Glasgow, and a Ph.D. from the University of Nottingham, with a doctoral thesis on Anglo-American Dystopias. Her research interests are in dystopian fiction, trauma studies, neo-slave narratives, the Bible as literature, friendship, and (self)sacrifice. Her recent publications include 'Romanticism's Futures: Mary Shelley's Proto-Dystopian Narratives' in Romantic Futures (Routledge, 2023); and 'Love's Reason: Dystopia, Genre and Sacrifice in Lois Lowry's The Giver' in Reinventing Utopian Spaces (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2022).

To Escape Loneliness in a Young World: Utopia and the Old Planet

Ondřej Váša[1]

[1]*Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Humanities*

I would like to approach the "ageing process and utopia" from the perspective of the "old planet" trope. However, rather than addressing solely the sci-fi tradition with its focus on archaic Mars – the planet we approached "only in the last moment of its long history" (Robinson 1992) – I will engage in a thematic stereoscopy with the *Sunset Years* series (2019) by Sophie Ristelhueber. This is not a random choice: the images of the dried-up Dead Sea that Bruno Latour associated with the dead Martian surface addresses the ageing of our world, which becomes old by becoming lifeless (Latour 2020). On these coordinates, I will reverse the causality described in A Canticle for Leibowitz, where Lazarus "insists on living like a hermit to escape loneliness in a young world" (Miller 1959). For my question is: what kind of attitude would correspond to utopian aspirations if it were not man but the world itself that was old? How does Lazarus' remark relate to Ristelhueber? Her cycle dreams a "dream of a black planet […] in a final movement" (Wat 2019): which imagination is clearly akin not only to the post-apocalyptic deserts, but also to (post-)Lovecraftian sci-fi fictions about uncovering an old un-life. It is significant that what they share with the utopian prospects of cosmic colonization – the terraforming returns to the Garden of Eden, to the immaculate youth of man – is the dichotomy of the youth of life vs. the old planet: which must be made permanently young or exited from. I will then try to defend the view that while this form of utopian youth represents a centripetal trap with no escape and corresponds to a shipwreck (noticeable in More, Bacon, or O'Neill), the "aged" surface offers a surprising answer to the question about the affective dimension of the old world: in the intentions of landing. It is no coincidence that Ristelhueber's lens points straight down, not unlike the cameras of landing modules: if the utopian journey points towards "à-venir", then its temporal dimension is hope, itself grounded in the present waiting. The old surface would be its universal territorial translation: as the platform of the event of young life (Deleuze 1969). It represents a surface on which life lands, resurfaces or is just present as an event of conscious and non-obvious abiding. Abiding that, for a change, has the nomadic dimension of relocation as becoming present.

Bionote: Mgr. Ondřej Váša, Ph.D. (https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ondrej-Vasa) is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University in Prague. He has long focused on the interdisciplinary overlaps of philosophy, science and art, with particular emphasis on the utopian/dystopian visions of "man's place in the universe". He is the author of numerous studies and five books, in 2023, he edited a special issue of the Philosophical Journal, devoted to the ideas of the "worlds without people", and co-edited a special section of the American journal Semiotica, dedicated to the phenomenon of inhumanity.

Generational Ruptures as Utopian Possibilities in the novels of Julie Otsuka

Gabriella Voo[1]

[1]*University of Pecs Hungary*

In the novels of Japanese-American writer Julie Otsuka, ruptures between generations are central: they explore the gaps in communication and memory affecting intergenerational relationships. In her three novels published to date—When the Emperor Was Divine, The Buddha in the Attic, and The Swimmers—disruptions are caused by historical, cultural, and personal traumas. The forced relocations of Japanese-Americans during WWII, the cultural estrangement resulting from migration, and the cognitive isolation induced by dementia keep elders from narrating their experiences and expressing their feelings. In all three works, Otsuka employs innovative narrative voices—restricted focalization in When the Emperor Was Divine, we-narration in The Buddha in the Attic, and you-narration in The Swimmers—to mediate these ruptures from the perspectives of younger generations. Otsuka refrains from directly representing the subjectivity of elderly characters. Instead, she constructs "fictions of invisibility," where their experiences are reconstructed as imaginative possibilities. This narrative strategy addresses the broader invisibility of aging individuals in Western societies, suggesting that while their inner lives remain inaccessible, they are transformed into collective memory through the interrogations of younger generations. Thus, Otsuka's work engages with the themes of aging, intergenerational disconnection, and the utopian potential of imagining connections across the silences caused by trauma and age. Her novels challenge readers to consider how the fictionalization of elder subjectivities can simultaneously acknowledge their inaccessibility and affirm their enduring presence in collective histories.

Bionote: Gabriella Vöő is Associate Professor at the University of Pécs, Hungary. Her fields of teaching and research are US-American Studies, nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature, and Reception Studies. She has published critical articles and two books in these areas. Her research interests include historical and utopian fiction, as well as ecocritical theory.

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Democracy: Disillusion, Disengagement

Miłosz Wojtyna[1]

[1] University of Gdańsk

Democracy: Disillusion, Disengagement, and Depression. On a Game We Have All Played

In the 2024 Budapest conference, I ran an imagination-cum-communication workshop called "How to Kill Citizen Engagement" (the general premise of which is presented here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwKylbZxtVQ). With a fictional utopian scenario, participants observed how the oppressive, anti-engagement demobilization policies and actions of real-world public institutions contribute to a faltering sense of purpose among citizens. In the workshop, we used a narrative simulation of a fictional civic society that gets "attacked" by representatives of an emergent antagonistic institution. We observed the nature of citizen engagement and the mechanics of dystopian institutional oppression, we analysed instances of "invisible violence", and diagnosed the conditions that make the decline in community-building citizen activities a global problem.

During the 7 months since that conference, I ran the workshop several other times, with participants of various origins, ethnicities, nationalities, educational and professional backgrounds, and age groups. I continue to test the hypotheses, and improve the game we play in the workshop. In July in Valencia, I would like to summarise the observations me and the participants have made on defence mechanisms citizens can employ, on the complex rhetoric of "invisible violence", and on how game mechanics not only reflects some of the dystopian parameters of institutional oppression but also offers a surprisingly fertile ground for meditation on failure, resistance, and resilience.

To address the general subject of the conference, I will also address issues related to the position senior citizens take in the communitarian interactions with oppressive political agents, and to intergenerational solidarity as a utopian ideal of political resilience that relies on empathetic communication and anti-feudal, anti-capitalist cooperation models.

Bionote:
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Donna J. Haraway confesses that she has "always preferred biology to psychoanalysis" because it offers many possibilities for telling stories that seem to touch upon our historical, psychological, and political existence. "Psychoanalysis – Haraway writes – is too quick to pin us down – it may capture part of the truth, but not the most interesting part." I would like to take Haraway's hypothesis seriously to take biology and the forms of life it analyzes as resources for designing a different human life, more socialized, integrated, and focused on the collective and relationships rather than individuals and singular interests. Haraway's distance from psychoanalysis does not mean its invalidation. Drawing on the work of Herbert Marcuse, I will show that utopia is not a non-place but a material place, not that which is not but rather a place blocked by the force of established reality. The zone of freedom must appear within necessity. The zone of freedom (liberation from natural coercion) is immanent to the zone of necessity (submission to the compulsion of work). What we need is a reunification of what capitalism has separated – productive sublimation and unproductive gratification. This unification is possible only on the condition of developing a new concept of the unconscious based on the reproductive practices of the fern rather than the nuclear family. This new "unfamiliar unconscious" takes us beyond the nuclear family. It is not about suppression in family, but – to use the concept proposed by Alice Rohrwacher – enlargement in the chimerical family (La chimera).

Bionote: Szymon Wróbel is a full professor of philosophy at the Faculty of „Artes Liberales" at the University of Warsaw and the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He is the author of numerous books and articles scattered in various scientific journals. Together with Krzysztof Skonieczny, he is co-editor of four books – Atheism Revisited. Rethinking Modernity and Inventing New Modes of Life (Palgrave Macmillan 2020), Living and Thinking in the Post-Digital World (Universitas 2021), Regimes of Capital in the Postdigital Age (Routledge, 2023), Rethinking Materialism. Making The World Material Again (Springeer Nature, forthcoming). Currently, he is the head of the experimental Laboratory of Techno-Humanities at the Faculty of „Artes Liberales" where for several years he realizes the "Technology and Socialization" project.

Subversion of a Later Generation: A Marxist Analysis of Fahrenheit 451's Intergenerational Relationships

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Marxist theory considers literature as a product of historical materialism, suggesting that cultural artifacts both reflect and challenge the economic foundation that shapes society. This perspective highlights the dialectical relationship between the base and superstructure including institutions, norms, and ideologiesand the economic forces that support them. Within this framework, intergenerational relationships often serve as platforms for revealing the contradictions inherent in oppressive systems. Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 illustrates these dynamics through the relationship between Guy Montag and Clarisse McClellan, showcasing how ideological control is hindered through dialectical conflict and transformative resistance. Montag, a fireman responsible for burning books, represents the alienation formed by a capitalist system that prioritizes consumerism and conformity over individuality and intellectual freedom. His role embodies how the superstructure sustains the capitalist system by suppressing protesting ideas and strengthening materialistic values. In contrast, Clarisse acts as a subversive force within this ideological construct. Her curiosity, critical thinking, and rejection of social norms challenge Montag's conditioned acceptance of his assignments. Her incitive questions related to happiness, identity, and purpose serve as a dialectical stimulant, revealing the system's contradictions and encouraging Montag's ideological awakening. From a Marxist viewpoint, Clarisse assumes the role of a destabilizing agent that brings to light the oppressive nature of the capitalist superstructure. Nonetheless, Montag's transformation is fully comprehended only through his interactions with Granger and the Book People. Granger's mentorship provides Montag with a historical awareness, enlightenment and a vision of solidarity grounded in Marxist principles, especially the importance of collective action in dismantling oppressive regimes. Together, these relationships emphasize the capacity for intergenerational collaboration to challenge hegemonic ideologies and picture an alternative social order. Bradbury's narrative emphasizes the Marxist assertion that meaningful change arises from dialectical struggle. The exchange between Montag and Clarisse demonstrates this process, as their relationship critiques the alienation and conformity demanded by capitalism. Ultimately, the novel advocates for solidarity and praxis to resist ideological domination and envision a more equitable and liberated society. By integrating these principles into its narrative, Fahrenheit 451 provides a profound criticism of capitalist alienation while confirming and fostering the transformative power of collective countermovement.

Bionote: As a lecturer of Beykoz University of Istanbul, Gozde Zahireci is an aspiring researcher into the field of literature. Graduated from Istanbul University's French Language and Literature Department, she started her Master's Studies in Istanbul Aydın University. Her research interests include dystopian fiction and women's writing, as well as French literary classics.