SUS 2012 Abstracts

Mark Allison, Ohio Wesleyan University

“‘Society is a Beautiful and Simple Science’: The Aesthetics of Owenite Socialism.”

The socialist culture of late nineteenth-century Britain is frequently described as “aesthetic” or “artistic.” By contrast, the Owenite socialism of the first half of the nineteenth century is regularly characterized as “Spartan” or “austere.” The great scholar of Owenism, J. F. C. Harrison, maintained that “Owenites did not produce creative works of high literary quality, nor did they make any distinctive contributions in other art forms. There was nothing like the work of William Morris and the artistic socialists of the 1880s, nor was there anything resembling the communitarian architecture and furniture of the Shakers.”

In this paper, I make a case for the aesthetic character of Owenite socialism. More precisely, I argue that Robert Owen’s utopian Plan for a “new moral world” includes a crucial aesthetic substratum. I consider Owen’s tripartite promise of a new society, a new science, and a new life, and find in each attributes that merit the appellation of aesthetic. If time permits, I may discuss the social and intellectual sources of Owen’s aesthetic canons, and speculate on why this dimension of Owenism has been neglected.

Mosab Bajaber, University of North Dakota

“Utopian Hybridity in Arabic Utopian Science Fiction: A Reading of Imran’s *A Hole in the Wall of Time* and *Secrets from the City of Wisdom*.”

This paper argues that many contemporary Arabic utopian works are manifestations of Bhabha’s concept of hybridity. They resemble in their form, plot and subject utopias written in the West. Yet, this resemblance is utilized to: first, resist and undermine Western utopian concepts of idealism perceived by Arab writers as imperialistic and hegemonic in nature; and, second, to present certain ideological, religious, or philosophical Arabic thought in a Western literary form as to prove this thought more ideal and workable to humanity than that presented by Western - supposedly imperialistic - writers.

In specific, the paper will examine two utopian works by Dr. TaIib Imran – a Syrian scientist and novelist dubbed as the first Arabic science fiction writer – to illustrate this form of utopian hybridity. Imran’s two novellas *A Hole in the Wall of Time* and *Secrets from the City of Wisdom* bear resemblance to Western utopian science fiction writings in terms of plot, form, and subject. Yet, this resemblance is utilized to advance Arabic nationalist utopian ideology - particularly that of the Ba’ath Socialist Party that runs on the premise of Anti-Imperialism, Pan-Arabism and Arab Socialism - as the ultimate desired form of governance as opposed to that of imperialistic Western thought.

The hope from this examination is to introduce a postcolonial reading to non-Western utopias and to stir a discussion on whether the utopian genre can be successfully utilized by the colonized as a form of resistance and writing back to the colonizer.

Jeffrey Barbeau, Queen’s University of Canada

“‘A New Art of Living in Society’: Felix Guattari’s Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm and Everyday Utopianism.”

I will explore the theme of occupation writ large, that is, of occupation as a process of being disposed-toward, or of being oriented-toward a project that is incorporated into the performance of oneself. This will be undertaken through an engagement of the late work of Felix Guattari, in particular with his notion of how an ‘ethico-aesthetic’ approach to the production of subjectivity can provide traction for a utopian space of becoming in relation to our selves. In this sense, to be occupied is not only an acute episode of domination, but can be seen to describe what it means to be run through with the momentum of particular disposition (say, for instance, neoliberalism or settlerism). Guattari’s ‘ethico-aesthetic paradigm’ draws together recent interest in affect theory, new materialist feminism, and the nonhuman as elements in the constitution and recalibration of what it actually means to be a proper subject in the twenty-first century.

Wesley Beal, Lyon College

“Visualizing *The Whole Family*.”

This paper studies shifts in family at the turn of the century and at the intersections of realism and modernism. I argue that the serialized form of *The Whole Family* (1907-08) undermines the cohesion of the institution—or at least the narrative cohesion envisioned by the project’s organizer, William Dean Howells. Howells planned the composite novel to follow a patriarchal, tree-like outline that would render the family a hierarchical unit. Using the visualization techniques of the digital humanities, this paper argues that, instead of a hierarchical family tree imagined by Howells, *The Whole Family* represents the family as a decentralized social form that is in dialogue with the institution’s evolving structure during the period, and that liberates the family from its patriarchal form so that it can begin to be understood as a Utopian formation.

Jill Belli, New York City College of Technology, CUNY

“The Rhetoric of Resiliency: Complicating the Core Values of the United States Army Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program”

This year’s paper grows out of the work I have presented at SUS the past two years: positive psychology and happiness studies in dialogue with the utopian impulse (2010) and the emerging field of positive education, or curricula for teaching well-being (2011). This year I continue these conversations by examining the rhetorical and pedagogical functions of the United States Army Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) program. CSF is a mandatory positive psychology curriculum for soldiers aimed at decreasing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and suicide, and increasing resiliency, psychological fitness, and strength in four areas: emotional, social, family, and spiritual. I will demonstrate CSF’s rhetoric and pedagogy straddle (often unsuccessfully and unconsciously) self-help and positive psychology discourses. In doing so, they showcase the competing tensions of individual improvement and social justice, apolitical progress and politically engaged action, and descriptive reporting and prescriptive advice. CSF shares in self-help and positive psychology’s mission of increasing flourishing by equipping our nation’s soldiers with decontextualized tools and strategies for coping with war without appropriately considering their relevance to the realities of life in (or post) combat. What makes CSF a particularly important site of inquiry is that it is “a hugely consequential national issue” (Quick 645).[[1]](#footnote-1) The program affects individual soldiers, their families, and DA civilians as well as the international community impacted (directly or indirectly) by United States military actions. Additionally, CSF leaders, developers, and advocates have repeatedly announced a clear intention to roll out the program to other military branches[[2]](#footnote-2) and to model future civilian programs on CSF, so both the stakes and the stakeholders go far beyond the soldiers for whom CSF is currently mandatory.

Robert Birdwell, Pennsylvania State University

“Realism and the Utopian Appeal in Donnelly, Bellamy, and Howells.”

In his essay “The Unknowability Thesis,” Fredric Jameson argues for “our constitutional inability to imagine Utopia itself,” but there is a problem of relativism by which we can imagine but not know utopia. The problem results from a double bind that Donnelly, Bellamy, and Howells encounter in their utopian novels. The double bind consists of imperatives in opposition to one another: to represent realistically the bourgeoisie’s knowledge and to appeal plausibly to readers to believe in utopia. A realistic representation of the bourgeoisie’s knowledge almost inevitably involves an implausible utopian appeal, and an unrealistic representation of the bourgeoisie’s knowledge almost inevitably involves a plausible utopian appeal. Donnelly and Bellamy succeed in making plausible the utopian appeal as a consequence of the bourgeoisie’s absolute knowledge or absolute ignorance, respectively, but they thereby render the rich and middle class incredible. Howells finds the key to making the representation of these classes credible by showing how the middle class and rich have a human knowledge relative to their classes. Altruria can be imagined, but its claims about morality are only true for its own society. This relativism, with which Howells challenges readers as well as characters, means that the plausibility of the utopian appeal to transcend social constraints on knowledge and attain Altrurian knowledge is difficult to establish. A leap of faith for readers and characters from America to Altruria is Howells’s quasi-religious solution to the problems of relativism and the double bind. In strictly secular terms, however, these problems remain insoluble.

Aisling C. Blackmore, University of Western Australia

“To make vivid and creditable”: Le Guin and Utopian scholarship in the twentieth century.”

This paper argues that the definition of utopia evolved significantly during the twentieth century and uses critical interpretations of Ursula Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Dispossessed* between 1965 and 2010 to illuminate the evolution of scholarly discourse on utopia. The title draws on a quote from H.G. Wells, who claimed in 1908 that “Our business here is to be Utopian, to make vivid and creditable if we can, first this facet and then that, of an imaginary whole and happy world.” The idea that to create a utopia is to create a fully realised and perfected world shifted during the twentieth century, and manner in which academia has understood utopian novels continued to evolve. By analysing the changing scholarly understanding of Le Guin’s two texts, patterns of change of continuity can be discerned within the academic debates.

Jim Block, DePaul University

“From Occupy to Aquarius: Social Transformation in a Consensual Age.”

Tocqueville in the 1830s warned that revolution would be almost impossible in a popular society. Coups perhaps, but revolution by the people against a government that claims to represent the people – not traditional elites – was almost unthinkable. A further complication inhibiting such revolutions is posed by the serious – and diverting – misapprehension of social activists since the French Revolution (and its canonization by Marx) about the nature of political and societal transformation. Marx’s elision of institutional replacement and the more decisive long-run transformation of social consciousness has created a distorted sense of expectancy: lasting social change that hinges on internal shifts in meaning, motivation, and aspiration does not and cannot occur swiftly. The mythology of instant revolution in this sense impedes the larger project of mobilizing to produce a post-liberal world.

How, then, do we develop the consciousness that recognizes and evolves beyond the limitations, the cracks, in the liberal claim of popular legitimacy based on the consensual nature of contemporary society? Beginning with the argument of my new book, *The Crucible of Consent: American Child Rearing and the Forging of Liberal Society* (Harvard U. Press, February 2012), I will show how liberal society is indeed rooted in consent, but that this consent is constructed and appropriated through an intricate project of citizen formation employing novel New World institutions of child socialization (which are now being spread through global modernization). In this way, by the time that the structures of social voluntarism are opened to questioning, evolving liberal subjects are already fully enmeshed in socially conformable and institutionally sustaining incentives and behaviors.

The development of a post-liberal consciousness thus requires recognition and the subsequent reworking of the subject’s shaping to liberate those wishes and demands for new incentives, relations, and institutions that have been repressed and marginalized. In this paper, I will analyze the ways of developing insight into this process and excavating the potential for social transformation. I will connect this project of social reeducation to the Occupy movement, and to my work and writing around Occupy that seeks to mobilize a liberationist project of building transformative consciousness and genuinely consensual communities, that is, the long slow work of revolutions that do effect change.

Stephanie Boluk, Vassar College

“Of Metagames, Metafiction, and Money: Towards a Statistical Hermeneutics and a Nonhuman Model of Spectatorship.”

As Steven Connor describes in *The Philosophy of Sport*, “[a]ll sports involve numbers...we can say that scoring involves a conflict and convergence between two entirely incommensurable orders, the qualitative syntax of bodily motions and actions (*kinesis*), and the quantitative calculus of number (*ratio)*.” This tension between digital and analog, between information and embodied action, is what informs the vision of baseball in Michael Lewis’s creative nonfiction novel *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game* (2003) and its fictional precedent, Robert Coover’s *The Universal Baseball Association, Inc., J. Henry Waugh, Prop.* (1968). Using utopian theories of sport and game as seen in the work of Edward Castronova, Bernard Suits, and McKenzie Wark, my paper examines the relationship between statistics, finance capitalism and metagames in relation to two depictions of America’s favorite pastime. Both *Moneyball* and *The UBA* depict the utopian and dystopian consequences that arise through the traversal and erosion of the metaleptic orders between game and metagame. In Coover’s novel, financial accountant Henry Waugh removes the physical aspects of baseball entirely to invent his own elaborate game *about* baseball in which actions are determined through the roll of dice. While the concept of metafiction and metagame are generally conceived as distinct, Coover blends the ludic and the narratological through the rich hermeneutic strategies that Henry creates out of his statistical play. Lewis’s *Moneyball* explores the way in which the Oakland Athletics rose to the top of the league by rewriting the rules through which baseball is played. *Moneyball* depicts a real-life model of the UBA that comes to serve as a powerful critique of the modernist myth of the American sports hero. By substituting bats, caps, and gloves for statistics, spreadsheets, telephones, computer algorithms, and payroll ledgers, both *Moneyball* and *The UBA* metagame baseball through the tools of finance capital transforming this utopian field of dreams into a field of schemes.

Mark Brack, Drexel University

“A Solitary Utopia: The Hermitage in the 18th Century Picturesque Garden.”

Throughout history, landscape design has been employed to create paradises on earth--that is *utopias*--that reflected the ambitions and desires of landowners and the societies they inhabited. One of the most convincing, gorgeous and long-lived models of a garden utopia was the English picturesque landscape. Combining naturalistic aesthetics with erudite references embodied within garden follies, the Arcadian ideal so long desired by Western culture was here incarnated.

Although many 18th-century garden follies still grace British gardens, there was a type of folly that has almost completely disappeared—the rustic hermitage. Rudely constructed of stumps, logs, roots and branches, the rustic hermitage was doomed to decay. Yet it was built in the same gardens that boasted Greek temples and Palladian bridges and hermitages were equally important as props for those gardens’ utopian conceits. In the midst of perfected nature and classical reverie is an object that represented extreme piety at a time and place not known for such fanaticism. And how does one reconcile an image of abject poverty in a setting made possible by tremendous wealth? This paper will analyze how the rustic hermitage became a critical feature in a utopian narrative—a narrative that disguised the dispossession of the rural poor and the refashioning the countryside more exclusively for the landed elite.

Christina Braid, University of Toronto / Crescent School

“Engaging Students and Teachers in Dystopia: Understanding McCarthy, Huxley, and Orwell through Creative Writing, Art, Technology.”

This paper presents an overview of various creative methods of teaching three dystopian texts: Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road,* Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* and George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-four* as a means to address the pedagogical need to develop of a student's authentic voice and deepen critical thought on the role of the selfhood / subjective experience in dystopia beyond the typical “essay” assessment format. This paper argues how mining the imaginative qualities of dystopias through creative writing projects provides students with very direct ways of discovering big picture concepts like freedom, equality, justice, morality, ideology, revolution, gender, ethics, at the visceral level, while assisting contemporary readers with the task of making relevant the cautionary lessons of dystopia in light of the political and social realities of our world today. The first portion examines ways to engage students in the dystopian setting of McCarthy’s post-apocalyptic fiction via ghostwriting and analytical context projects. The second portion explores creative uses of technology, media studies, and critical thinking lessons (logical fallacies) to help students unravel Huxley’s principle focus on the role of amusement and pleasure in regulating power in the World State. The final portion investigates the use of Multi-genre Research Papers to engage students in producing very personal responses to the world of Winston Smith’s Oceania. The presentation will share examples of work created by Senior English students at Crescent School. To close, I shall touch briefly upon *The Teacher as Muse,* a course for English teachers I am developing for the University of Toronto: this project stems from a desire to empower the role of the contemporary instructor as a facilitator of creative expression via meaningful reader responses via multimedia, art, and technology.

Delilah Bermudez Brataas, Sør-Trøndelag University College

“The Doctor and the Bard: *Doctor Who*, Shakespeare, the Gendering of Utopia.”

In this paper, I consider elements of gender and utopia in a 2007 television episode of the BBC’s new *Doctor Who*, “The Shakespeare Code.” I propose that the episode liberates women in/through utopia by granting women’s words the power and potential to forge their utopia with words alone, which the episode contrasts to the “masculine” power of science and numbers. The women are thus empowered in science fiction by the specific element by which they were declared “witches” in the early modern. Their empowerment thus echoes Shakespeare’s comedic heroines who were similarly empowered with more effective words. However, the episode ultimately encloses the women in an effort to silence the chaotic fluidity that their utopia threatens, thereby demonstrating the popular early modern utopian theme of single-sex enclosure and a celebration of Shakespeare as the greatest wielder of powerful words. I will show how this episode demonstrates a rich fusion of utopic and science fiction themes to offer a critical example of the development of utopia, and utopian literature, from Shakespeare’s theater with its early modern origins to its current science fiction expressions. The intricate connections between Science Fiction and Utopia become more evident when they are anachronistically dramatized in early modern England when utopian literature was developing because of the increasing New World exploration and the popularity of the stage as a utopic space, as I will show.

Katherine R. Broad, Independent Scholar

“‘The Dandelion in the Spring’: Utopia as Romance in Suzanne Collins’s The Hunger Games Trilogy.”

This paper looks at the overlap between recent popular YA dystopias and traditional romance literature, using Suzanne Collins’s blockbuster trilogy *The Hunger Games* (2008-2010) as a representative example. *The Hunger Games* has been widely celebrated for its feminist portrayal of a tough-minded teenager who challenges authority and takes charge of her world, overthrowing a dystopian regime to inaugurate a better society. But closer attention to the way the dystopian narrative is organized around the conventions of romance will suggest a more complex reading of Katniss’s character and the utopian world she imagines.

Highlighting how the romance plot shapes the fight against dystopia, it becomes apparent that Katniss’s limited fight against tyranny is not simply for democracy, but for a stable home in which she can raise children. Caught in a love triangle that keeps readers guessing until the very end, Katniss’s motivations in choosing a mate come to hinge on which boy, Peeta or Gale, can offer this reproductive future. The resolution of the romance plot and the utopian plot through marriage and the nuclear family ensures the overthrow of the existing order results in a strangely familiar world, a cooptation of rebellion for conservative aims. Reading the slippage between utopia and romance ongoing throughout the novels suggests the message of social change ostensibly put forth in the YA dystopian genre might be more limited than many scholars suggest.

Andrew Byers, Duke University

“The Progressive Body: Utopian Ideals and Fantasies of the Body during World War I.”

The onset of American intervention in the First World War brought renewed concerns among many moral reformers – members of the Progressive movement – about the sexual dangers that newly-conscripted U.S. soldiers would face before they ever reached Europe’s shores. To many Progressives, wartime represented tremendous dangers and opportunities. They believed the bodies of soldiers would be exposed to both moral corruption and venereal diseases. Their views on the bodies of the women with whom those soldiers would come into contact were bifurcated. Some women – soldiers’ wives and sweethearts – were seen as physically and morally pure. Other women were perceived as prostitutes, or at least as “promiscuous women,” who would lead soldiers astray and infect them with venereal diseases, which the soldiers would then pass along to their wives and children after the war. While many Progressives were pessimistic about the perils American Doughboys would face, they expressed optimism about their ability to inculcate young Americans with a newfound sense of morality. They would, in essence, craft utopian bodies, protected from and trained to resist the dangers posed by unbridled sexuality. After the war, Progressives thought, these utopian subjects would help to socially and morally reform the nation as a whole. Though the Progressives’ plans to reshape postwar American society along the lines of their utopian vision did not come to fruition, during the war they created a federal bureaucracy that administered the first national sexual education program, eliminated 110 red-light districts, and imprisoned more than 30,000 women accused of being prostitutes or promiscuous women who might introduce moral or physical corruption into soldiers’ bodies.

David Ciepley, University of Denver

“Progressives and the Corporation, Then and Now.”

The home tone of the Occupy movement has been a protest against the capture and perversion of the political system by corporations. The early 20th century progressive movement also had the problem of the corporation as its center of gravity (then spoken of as the problem of the “trusts”). This paper compares the two problem situations for the purpose of assessing the prospects for, and likely shape of, a new progressive movement developing out of the Occupy movement. Points of comparison include the corporate issues involved, the relative thickness of available intellectual resources for analysis and sense-making, the avenues for information dissemination, the institutional nodes for socialization and organization, and the disposition of the parties, the churches, the non-corporate business and worker formations, and other social actors, conventional and unconventional.

Frank L. Cioffi, Baruch College/Graduate Center, CUNY

“Solipsism and Utopia.”

At first glance, the two concepts—solipsism and utopia—seem to inhabit opposite ends of a metaphysical spectrum. The one suggests that a single entity (an “I”) exists, and the whole universe is a projection of that single entity’s consciousness, while the other posits and explores the perfect society, the “good” place, the ideal world.

This paper analyzes two works that bring together these disparate notions. The 1949 novel *What Mad Universe* by Fredric Brown, imagines a universe composed of an infinite number of parallel worlds, one of which, a projection of the main character’s fantasies, emerges at the novel’s conclusion. But before getting to that world, the main character has to inhabit his idea of another character’s ideal world, which makes for problems, largely because that character is an avid science fiction fan. What Brown’s novel seems to be getting at, though, is that if infinite parallel universes exist, if the multiverse is in some sense a compendium of all possible solipsistic imaginings, then whose world are we in now? And how might we get to our own vision of utopia?

I would also like to look at a second work, Charles Yu’s 2010 *How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe*, whose protagonist, also named Charles Yu, repairs time machines and counsels time travelers on the ethics and etiquette of time travel. It seems that everyone wants to go back to change some element of the past. Essentially this novel imagines a universe of overlapping solipsisms, in which the characters live in their own very isolated worlds and try to make that personal world the actual, ideal, wider world—the no place that is also the good place. My argument is that like Brown, Yu longs for an ideal world, but worries that such a place will usurp a self. And only multi-solipsisms are strong enough to hold utopia in check.

Nathaniel Coleman, Newcastle University

“Scotland is to England, as Canada is to the USA, as Catalonia is to Spain?”

Beginning with the motto: “Work as if you live in the early days of a better nation” (attributed to Scottish poet and artist Alasdair Gray, author of *Lanark: A Life in Four Books*, but actually drawn by him from Canadian author Dennis Lee’s long poem *Civil Elegies*, where he writes: “And best of all is finding a place to be in the early years of a better civilisation”, the new Scottish Parliament building (1999-2004), designed by Catalonian architect Enric Miralles (1955-2000), is considered as possibly the *first* building of a *better nation* (or a *better civilisation*). Despite being ridiculed for taking longer to construct and costing much more than anticipated, the Parliament building, which has attracted relatively little commentary, could be a manifestation of Scotland’s *difference* (no university tuition fees, free prescriptions, etc.) from its dominant southern neighbour (in terms of social justice, for example), and that Gray’s borrowing of his motto – which adorns the building – from a Canadian poet (preoccupied with the dominance of Canadian consciousness by the USA) suggests the Parliament may also be an expression of civic (rather than ethnic) nationalism, an assertion encouraged by its design by a Catalonian architect: the relation between Catalonia and Spain, and Canada and the USA, is analogous to that between Scotland and England. As a European building with a regional accent, the Scottish Parliament is more assertively cosmopolitan than the Palace of Westminster, for example. Arguably, if the Scottish Parliament building is all these things, it is Utopian as well.

Jonathan Cope, College of Staten Island, CUNY

“The Politics of Scarcity and the Dystopian Imagination.”

This paper argues that—especially since the 1970s—dystopian visions of material limits in the West are a product of specific historical, social, economic, and environmental developments. Since the 1970s two kinds of dystopias have emerged. One simply acts to resolve existing social contradictions and bring about a dystopic break with contemporary social reality. The other kind of dystopia that this paper describes is what I call the *meta-hegemonic dystopia.* These are dystopias in which utopian visions emerge from dystopias that do not seek universal immediate societal transformation—the establishment of new, alternate hegemony—but instead serve as decentered autonomous guideposts in search of a holistic ecological vision.

The development of environmental politics and the post-scarcity utopianism of Herbert Marcuse and Murray Bookchin undergird the construction of my meta-hegemonic dystopian category. I investigate the concept of freedom as it relates to material limits in the “ambiguous utopia” of Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* before I scrutinize the meta-hegemonic dystopias of Margaret Atwood’s *The Year of the Flood* and Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* as exemplifying the utopian elements in narratives based on a reframing of society’s relation to material growth from within dystopic imaginings. It is this search for an ecological vision of the whole that compels such meta-hegemonic dystopian imaginings to occur in a different register than both the utopian imaginings of the 19th century and the anti-utopian visions of the 20th and links these visions with concerns expressed by contemporary social movements the such as 2011’s occupy movement.

Francesco Crocco, CUNY-Borough of Manhattan Community College

“*The Hunger Games* and the Instrumentalization of Play.”

Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* trilogy describes a post-apocalyptic society where children are forced to fight to the death. North American has collapsed and the nation of Panem has risen from the ashes, consisting of a high-tech Capitol ringed by twelve exploited districts. After a failed rebellion by the districts, the Capitol begins holding annual Hunger Games in which twenty-four contestants—a boy and girl from each district—must fight to the death in a televised battle royal. This paper will discuss how *The Hunger Games* complicates our understanding of play by converting it into an instrument of social control. Johann Huizinga and other ludologists posit that the first criterion for play is free choice. However, in the Hunger Games, players are forced to compete against each other as part of an intentional divide-and-conquer strategy meant to ensure the Capitol’s dominance. The protagonists, Peta and Katniss, dramatize this conflict by struggling to maintain their identity in a game in which they are pawns. Even the spectators—the decadent citizens of the Capitol—are pawns because the gladiatorial games operate as a form of “soma” that extracts complacency. *The Hunger Games* is the latest addition to a rich sub-genre of dystopias and utopias in which play is instrumentalized (e.g., *Punishment Park*, *Death Race 2000*, *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*, *The Running Man*, *Battle Royale*, *Gamer*, and *Ecotopia*). Ultimately, this genre suggests a different relationship between play and utopia than the theory of utopian play proposed by Bernard Suits in *The Grasshopper*.

Claire Curtis, College of Charleston

“Disability and the Utopian Imagination: Sheri Tepper’s *The Margarets*.”

Utopias exclude. Principles of membership, boundaries and rules for living together are all potentially exclusionary. However, exclusion is not simply a matter of determining who will and who will not become a full member of a community. Literary exclusions also occur through absence. One such absence in fictional utopias is that of people with disabilities and most particularly people with cognitive or intellectual disabilities. While these exclusions can be overt (for example Plato uses infanticide to omit from the kallipolis any infant that is “born defective” (Republic, V, ll. 460 c.)) the absence of people with disabilities is far more common. Are utopian authors imagining that utopia is a world without disability?

How should utopian scholars analyze this absence? One method is to start analyzing those texts on the margins of utopia/dystopia that present worlds of difference and to examine those differences attuned to the idea of ability/disability.

This paper will look at Sheri Tepper's *The Margarets* (2007), paying particular attention to disability and its meaning. *The Margarets* is not a book “about” disability. Yet disability is clearly present in the novel: Margaret herself is potentially disabled, cats are disabled members of the Gibbekot species, and the line of Margarets has a genetic tendency toward conjoined twins. This is a useful text for thinking through the intersection of utopia and disability by raising questions about normality, human improvement, and bodily/cognitive difference.

Spencer Dew, Centenary College of Louisiana

“‘All Merchandise (Printed or Otherwise)’: C. Kirkman Bey and the Struggle for Utopia in the Moorish Science Temple of America Movement in the 1930’s and 1940’s.”

I will focus on that branch of second generation Moorish Science  
Temple of America under the leadership of C. Kirkman Bey, exploring two facets of Bey’s career in relation to the theme of utopian desire. First, I will examine the struggles for ownership of symbols and control of ideology reflected in Bey’s two important texts, “Rules and Regulations,” from 1934 and The Mysteries of the Silent Brotherhood of the East, arguing that with these texts Bey is following the pattern of MSTA founder Noble Drew Ali and that with both figures the desperate negotiation of power is a far more important theme than any sort of “charisma.”

Second, I will offer a reading of Bey’s push for agricultural settlements as a rejection of the Great Migration’s move to the industrial north. Drawing on original archival research to describe Bey’s utopian mission as a reimagining of his southern youth, I will note various influences—both positive and negative—on Bey’s vision of self-sustaining and all black settlements, noting the shifting economic and gender politics that resulted.

My paper will conclude by suggesting that the struggles of Bey and his  
faction can be seen as early harbingers of the sorts of creative responses to social pressures that led later Moors to borrow “sovereign citizen” theories from extreme libertarian, states’ rights, militia, and even white power groups from the 1980s on to the present day and that Bey’s fixation with control over the distribution of texts and symbols finds a parallel in contemporary Moorish obsession over the possession of affidavits, treaties, and deeds.

Tamas Dobozy, Wilfrid Laurier University

“Pynchon's Requiem for Utopia.”

Thomas Pynchon's recent novel, *Against the Day*, is an exploration (in part) of late 19th and early 20th century utopian movements. From its treatment of frontier masculinity, workers movements, anarchism, the “new science,” futurism, communism, jazz, *Against the Day* tells the story of collective and individual attempts to escape from, outwit, or coopt the onset of modernity and global capitalism (at least in its nascent stage). This conference paper will discuss Pynchon's treatment of these utopian movements, and what he regards as the forces that oppose and ultimately defeat many of them, to argue that ultimately it is the novel itself that emerges as the last and only viable utopian medium for Pynchon, insofar as it memorializes the voices of those who worked “against the day,” or the social forces that continually reinforced the visibility of the “possible” (which in Pynchon corresponds to the “permitted”) by extinguishing—usually by violent force—those movements whose visions of collective life ran counter to the hegemony of capital. While *Against the Day* is not an optimistic novel in the utopian sense, it does locate a tactical response to social oppression in the movement of the novel itself by tracing the continual return of utopian currents, and by preserving the “night” of the “impossible” within the gestures of the text.

Kyle Dugdale, Yale School of Architecture

“Die Materielle Richtung der Utopieen:Sloterdijk’s *Babel, Birnbaum, and the Death of God*.”

Within the next few months, *Semiotext(e)* is scheduled to publish the long-awaited translation into English of the second volume of Peter Sloterdijk’s *Spheres* trilogy, the *magnum opus* of an author who is currently intensely fashionable among architects.

Sloterdijk embeds within that text what might appear at first to be a staggering claim: that architectural aspiration is ultimately responsible for the very conception of the Judeo-Christian God. This claim is validated by reference to the figure of the Tower of Babel, long a marker both of utopian aspiration and of anti-utopian doubt, a tower constructed within the enclosure of city walls that were themselves, in Sloterdijk’s account, designed to protect the utopia of a tight community against the threat of an expanding world consciousness.

Curiously, Sloterdijk illustrates his text with an image taken from Uriel Birnbaum’s 1924 *Der Kaiser und der Architekt: Ein Märchen in fünfzig Bildern*; itself a re-telling, in magnificently illustrated form, of the story of Babel.

Birnbaum’s book was one of the items on display in a 1993 exhibition entitled “Expressionist Utopias: Paradise, Metropolis, Architectural Fantasy.” And yet, in fact, Sloterdijk’s adoption represents a perfect inversion: not only is Birnbaum himself radically opposed to utopian thought, whether artistic or political; but his text might more readily be associated with Nietzsche’s account of the death of God than with Sloterdijk’s account of the birth of that God.

This paper will explore the curious ambiguity of Birnbaum’s position, drawing in part on the conclusions of his unpublished manuscript entitled “Wesen und Geschichte der Utopie.”

Sema E. Ege, Ankara University

“The ‘Jolly Corner’ of the ‘Buried Alive’: The ‘Utopia’ of the Distressed Individual in W. Irving, O. Wilde, A. Bennett, H.G. Wells, and D. Lessing.”

J. Donne’s line, “No man is an Island”, recalls the basic tenet of utopianism: conformity for the sake of stability and the happiness of the greater body. Donne’s calling the ‘intruding’ “Sun” “unruly” also signals at the importance of individuality which O. Wilde put as: “He is what he is. Public opinion do[es] not alter a man”, “even in prison a man can be quite free”. Feeling that they cannot combat the gigantic social forces they believe threaten their uniqueness, several fictional characters create their own ‘island’/‘prison’ -in Henry James’s words, “the jolly corner” to assert their individuality.

A study of Irving’s *Rip Van Winkle*, Wilde’s “The Sphinx Without a Secret”, Wells’s *The History of Mr Polly*, Bennett’s *Buried Alive*, Lessing’s “To Room Nineteen” -all about an individual’s having a ‘secret’ -a private ‘space’ wherein s/he is her/himself, reveals that the common man -dismissed by the advocates of “Superman” as ‘dull’- is imaginative, hence, can create an infinite variety of ‘utopian’ worlds -whether mundane or unusual.

Studying the ‘escapism’ of these characters denied of self-realization -paradoxically, their ‘defiance’ of society’s expectations, the paper also seeks to highlight the writers’ attempts to raise a greater awareness of man’s uniqueness and reconcile life’s two indispensable opposites, social norms and individual freedom -the dilemma which preoccupied the minds of writers of dystopias, even utopians like Bellamy who championed a rational society, and thereby suggest that even the writer devising no “ou topos” can be read as a ‘utopian’, albeit an ‘unacknowledged’ one.

Judy Ehrentraut, University of Waterloo

“Marxists, Socialists, and Intentional Communities: The Imperfection of ‘Utopia’”

In his essay, “Progress versus Utopia; Or, Can We Imagine the Future?” Fredric Jameson argues that utopias exist in order to “defamiliarize and restructure our experience of our own present” so that we can see its “radical insufficiency.” When thinking of utopia, the words “perfect” and “idealistic” come to mind, but it is difficult to imagine if such a society can actually exist. When the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat was in its early development, the early nineteenth century saw a new kind of political activism spearheaded by the “utopian socialists,” a group of individuals that sought to bring visions outside of the known reality into practice. Marx and Engels used the word “utopia” and its negative connotations to differentiate from their own communist movement, though their contemporaries never thought of themselves as utopians. These activists sought to improve society through cooperative socialism established among groups of like-minded people who were willing to seclude themselves from mainstream society. Yet, were these alternative, planned communities at all sustainable? By looking at early utopian socialists such as Henri Saint-Simon, Robert Owen, and Charles Fourier, this paper examines “intentional communities” and their grounding in utopia, not as a product of hypothetical wish fulfillment, but as a tool for installing logic and reason into the realm of existing social imagination. Through investigating the merits and conflicts associated with these communities, this paper will also investigate how utopian socialists defined modern socialist thought while heavily influencing Marxists and other early socialists who initially disregarded their work.

Walid El Khachab, York University

“Muslim Utopia and the Politics of Global Welfare: Al Farabi’s Ideal City.”

Al Farabi’s 10th century “Republic” – a Muslim version of Plato’s - is interestingly coming back to the centre of attention in current debates in the Middle East. Since the aftermath of the “Arab Spring”, proponents and opponents of secular society debate about the best framework for collective organization and governance. The choice seems to be between a secular society and a “secular society with an ‘Islamic reference’”.

Al Farabi’s utopia is of seminal importance here, because it provides the grounds for a secular organization of the city, in the Platonic tradition, while using terminology informed by the vocabulary of Islam. His utopia can appeal both to constituencies keen on using an Islamic reference and to secular ones.

The “Ideal City” (in Arabic: Al Madina Al Fadhila) or the “Virtuous City” is not just organized through collective processes of decision making. It is one of the first intellectual efforts in the history of thought aiming at conceptualizing a government of the world, through consultation between all the “Ideal Cities” on the planet. The goal of this consultation, and ultimately the goal of any ideal city in Farabi’s words, is “to achieve happiness”.

These three main characteristics of this 10th century Muslim utopia make Al Farabi of great value in today’s debates taking place in the Muslim-scape. This paper plans on analyzing Farabi’s utopia and heuristically distinguishing the secular and the religious in it. The objective is to study how it is used today to strategically serve the cause of non confrontational secularist discourses in the Muslim world, particularly the Arabic speaking one.

Cameron Ellis, Trent University

“The Ethics of Unseeing: Exploring Utopia Between Mièville and Agamben.”

The proposed presentation places certain ideas found in China Miéville’s *The City and The City* (2009) in conversation with certain ideas found in Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s *The Coming Community* (1990). The presentation is divided into two parts: In part one, I am interested in exploring what I consider to be the ‘ethics of seeing and unseeing’ as these two latter terms are utilized in *The City and The City.* To flesh out the implications I will contrast seeing/unseeing with the concept of the ‘whatever singularity’ as it is developed by Agamben. Part two is interested in plumbing the depths of the idea of a no-place in the abstract sense of the term (again as developed in the work of Miéville’s *The City* and the use of Copula Hall, ‘crosshatch’, and Breach) and placing this in dialogue with Agamben’s idea of Threshold (inside/outside). In all, I argue that the concepts examined in Miéville and Agamben can be brought together for the purposes of helping us understand utopia today.

Jessica Evans, Middle Tennessee State University

“Moral Education as the Key to Feminine Freedom in Sarah Scott’s *A Description of Millenium Hall*.”

Not only does Sarah Scott offer women a haven from the persecution of a male-dominated society in her utopia *A Description of Millenium Hall* (1762), but she also constructs an improved curriculum of education for women, placing more emphasis on their moral, intellectual accomplishments than their outer accomplishments (such as dressing fashionably). Scott dares to share with readers her social dream of a utopian society where women are safe from the persecutions of men. A close examination of *Millenium Hall* will reveal how Scott views moral education as the key to feminine freedom that will give women the opportunity to reach their full potential or at least will offer them a way to evade the dystopian male-dominated society in which they live by using their intellectual accomplishments and moral values.

Mark Ferrara, SUNY Oneonta

“Distinguishing Truth and Fiction: Jia Bao-yu and Zhen Bao-yu in Dream of the Red Chamber.”

The celebrated eighteenth century Chinese novel Dream of the Red Chamber (Honglou meng, 紅樓夢) by Cao Xueqin (曹雪芹, c. 1715–1764) contains more than 400 characters, many of whom are deliberately paired with other characters in a variety of ways, for instance by name, birthdate, gender, personality, clothing, and so forth. While such patterns of complementary bipolarity, or counterpoise, in the narrative have been identified by scholars such as Andrew Plax, Angelina Yee, and Anthony Yu, little critical attention has fallen on the use of doppelgängers and the principle of doubling in the novel. In fact, the use of doppelgängers, as well as spatial doubling, by Cao Xueqin reinforce the soteriological and utopian dimensions of the text and provide the reader with important clues not only about the “mistaken marriage” but also the content of Bao-yu’s enlightenment and his subsequent renunciation of the world.

Elton Furlanetto, University of São Paulo

“The ‘Marriage’ of Utopia and Dystopia: Marge Piercy Facing the Challenges of her Time.”

Although the 1970’s in the US was a period of struggle and political optimism and a considerable number of literary utopias were written then, some dystopian elements are also represented as part of that “structure of feeling” (Raymond Williams). The ensuing decades were responsible for a political dystopian turn (Tom Moylan), in which dystopia was to be the prevalent and hegemonic force in most of the artistic production. However, some utopian elements were also present in the form and content of some works and the intermixture of these elements could be said to create a very interesting tension that informs us a great deal about our contemporary form to relate to the world. The example of the two modes of writing – the mostly utopian with some dystopian features and the mostly dystopian with utopian glimpses – can be found in the body of works of Marge Piercy. *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) and *He, She and It* (1991) serve as examples of the two sides of this same tension and by discussing the way utopia and dystopia interconnect in these novels, we are invited to think about the limits and potentialities of our imaginations.

Peter Janos Galambos, New School for Social Research

“A Republic of Shame: Pride, Shame, and the Problem of Punishment in Thomas More’s *Utopia*.”

Thomas More’s *Utopia* is a particularly enigmatic piece of writing. Riddled with tensions in both its literary form and argumentative content, More’s work presents a challenge for even the most careful of readers. This paper explores these tensions with the aim of illuminating one of the most curious elements of More’s metaphorical island – the role of shame. While much has been written about the role of pride in More’s *Utopia*, this paper argues that there is a hidden dynamic within *Utopia* that sees shame mobilized in order to solve a social dilemma, more specifically what I call More’s problem of punishment. Furthermore, by elucidating this curious and often overlooked dynamic, I propose that in describing his Utopian civilization – a civilization that boasts a lack of both lawyers and laws – More was attempting to locate a new method for enforcing moral behavior – namely, the political mobilization of shame.

Margaret Galvan, CUNY Graduate Center

“Underground Relations: 1970s Women Comics Artists and the Digital Archive.”

This paper assesses the limits of the digital archive as a recuperative space by focusing on Alexander Street Press's Underground and Independent Comics database. In the two years since its creation in 2010, this database has grown exponentially, offering thousands more pages and titles every few months. This growth parallels the developing field of comics studies, and this database is very much a utopian project in its striving to provide a complete picture of the underground comics world, such that new names other than R. Crumb and Art Spiegelman can emerge and be known.

However, the database remains and will likely continue to remain a very incomplete picture. My work with the database centers on two all-female produced series, *Wimmen's Comix* and *Tits & Clits Comix*. These titles originating out of the 1970s San Francisco underground practice collective editing and anthology format, such that each issue contains multiple editors and creators. Because of this system and the necessity of gaining permission to digitally reproduce the material, no issue is fully available online. Rather, prominent names in the women's underground like Trina Robbins and Lee Marrs predominate, creating a skewed relational map that obscures other prominent creators who have chosen not to participate as well as lesser known figures. I seek to chart out a more complete picture of the community of 1970s women comics artists by completing physical archive work this summer in underground collections held by Washington State University and Michigan State University. By engaging my materials in both digital and analog spaces, I will consider how these spaces together act as a utopian whole with the digital serving as the gateway to endangered spaces and texts. Yet, I will also emphasize the restrictions of the digital and what sort of inequities and holes in knowledge it reproduces and enforces.

Amir Ganjavie, York University

“The Critical Role of Utopian Urban Design.”

Utopian thinking has always played a central role in the literature of urban design. Utopians were the first urban designers. More importantly, many utopian projects have been, throughout history and until recently, a research laboratory for urban designers. The following paper generally aims to understand the role that contemporary urban utopias can playin thinking about the structure of cities and how this can be useful for urban designers. More specifically, it proposes to look into the relevance of recent utopias (or utopia-driven urban projects) as models for the development of the city. The paper will compare two cases: Km3, MVRVD, and The Local Project, Alberto Magnaghi, by examining their conceptual and textual content. Through this analysis, the paper will argue that several of Magnaghi’s and MVRDV’s proposals are not impractical or futuristic, but founded on well-known concepts of urban design and in this regard both of them are “concert” utopias in Blochian term. Furthermore, the paper suggests that utopian approach has two functions for the contemporary practice of urban design, it provides a unified external standard of criticism to diagnose the urban challenges by looking at the city as a whole, and it provides an approach in which catastrophic scenarios can be used to educate citizens.

Matt Garite, University at Buffalo

“To the Edge of the Construct and Beyond: Hollywood Dystopias of the Last Half-Century.”

Hollywood dystopias of the 1970s, including pictures like *Silent Running*, *Soylent Green*, and *Logan's Run*, are often said to have registered fears of a coming age of scarcity and ecological degradation, wherein following a long bout of unsustainable world-economic expansion, natural limits reassert themselves. My paper will suggest, however, that while certainly engaging with these fears through topical references, films of this sort were in fact terrified more by the prospect that such limits *wouldn't* reassert themselves: that “nature” had been fully conquered or even eradicated by capitalism at that point, and that the world was now a fully artificial, self-sufficient construct, thus signaling the arrival of the end of history. Moreover, I argue, fears of this latter kind wax and wane in the genre in subsequent decades, returning again most vividly in the so-called “Edge of the Construct” films of the late 1990s, including movies like *The Matrix*, *Dark City* and *The Truman Show*. By the early 2000s, though, the moment of these films had passed. Since then, scarcity has reemerged as a key concern in dystopian SF, this time provoked by fears of an approaching peak in world oil supplies and the onset of global warming. By situating an analysis of several representative dystopias from the seventies through the oughts amidst an account of capitalism's unceasing efforts to forestall twin economic and environmental crises during these decades, I show that changing cinematic conceptions of the future register similarly timed expansions and contractions occurring in the economy as a whole.

Diana M. Garno, Trustee, French Icarian Colony Foundation

“Stimulating Female Desires For the Icarian Emigration.”

As the plans for Étienne Cabet’s emigration to America project were being formulated, an influential group of women blocked its development. Icaria was to be an egalitarian-family society where everyone was married. However, a group of recalcitrant wives recognized their exclusion from this process. Although the May 9th 1847 announcement that they were going to found the utopian Icaria was met with great enthusiasm, by August, Cabet acknowledged in his press that there was great concern about women. It was expressed by a correspondent, H.P., who asked, “Do you think there will be enough women who will decide to leave? I’m very fearful that they will not.” This paper will examine the rationale for women’s utopian desires, protests, and the responses Cabet utilized to overcome this primary obstacle. A final summary statement will evaluate specific areas where Cabet’s pleasant promises did not match his chauvinist reality in the American Icarias for the next fifty years.

Vincent Geoghegan, Queen’s University of Belfast

“Does a utopia require humans?”

The paper explores why one might wish to construct, or positively engage with, a ‘utopian’ vision of the future where the defining feature of the ‘goodness’ of this ‘good place’ is the absence of humanity. It looks at the development of the humanist utopia in Francis Bacon, the ‘sublime’ reaction in Burke (and its contemporary echo in Charles Taylor), and the attempt of Ernst Bloch to construct a notion of co-productivity between humanity and nature. It then considers contemporary conceptions of the passing of humanity, distinguishing between self-loathing and self-critical perspectives, looking at the work of some extreme deep-ecology groups, the work of John Gray, and recent popular science work on the end of humanity. It concludes by seeking to make a case for the utility of a humane anti-humanist utopianism.

Joshua Gooch, D’Youville College

“Figures of Nineteenth-Century Biopower in Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon*.”

In this presentation, I argue that Samuel Butler’s utopian satire *Erewhon* can be usefully read as a reflection on nineteenth-century ideas of biopower by exploring what Butler termed the text’s “crime-disease analogies.” These analogies construct explicit and implicit sets of contraries, which I map and analyze to argue that Erewhon’s ironies reach beyond their contemporary targets to encapsulate emerging ideas about power’s relation to the production and control of life. My analysis of these analogies draws on Butler’s journals and other works, Darwin’s *Descent of Man*, and Walter Bagehot’s writings of the late 1860s and early 1870s, to elaborate the connection between evolutionary thought, Britain’s imperial project, and finance. Butler’s satire connects these strands to reveal the contours of nineteenth-century biopower in the novel’s minor characters, even though these characters may initially be understood as satires of doctors, the clergy, and financiers.

Sean Grattan, Queens College: City University of New York

“Utopia and the Scene of Writing: Colson Whitehead and the Apocalyptic.”

Colson Whitehead’s highly acclaimed first novel, *The Intuitionist* ends with a moment typical of much utopian literature: an author, huddled at her desk, trying to bring utopian thought into being. As Phil Wegner has persuasively argued, utopian literature attempts to produce utopian communities. These communities, however, often exist in a space of deferred hope. The open ending of *The Intuitionist* creates an ambiguous tension between hope and the apocalyptic. My presentation, “Utopia and the Scene of Writing: Colson Whitehead and the Apocalyptic” considers the act of producing utopian writing, while engaging with the often ambivalent attitude towards utopianism embedded within contemporary American literature.

Brian Greenspan, Carleton University

“‘The Noise of a Distant Crowd’: Simulating Collective Belief.”

This paper describes research undertaken as part of the BELIEVE theme of the GRAND National Centre of Excellence, a Canadian initiative to script “believable” non-player characters (NPCs) for animations and video games. Team efforts have focused on avatar puppeteering, photo-realistic animation, and semantic webs to produce characters with believable appearances, performances and contextually relevant dialogue.

When large numbers of NPCs are involved, however, the production of realism depends less upon each character’s individual appearance and dialogue than upon their collective movements and interactions. Game designers rely increasingly on autopoietic algorithms and emergent systems to reinforce the realism of their characters by creating collective behavioural patterns far more complex than that of any individual agent. On this view, games don’t merely simulate self- organizing behaviour, they *exhibit* it, prompting ready comparisons to urban swarms, flash mobs, and other “emergent” forms of activism. Such comparisons risk confusing computational and social complexity, and further mystifying the dynamics of collective action and belief systems. In fact, the closer that digitally rendered crowds come to simulating real-world protests and occupations, the greater the uncanny valley between them becomes, and the more unsettling the simulated collectivity appears.

Yet, precisely because they fail to act believably, interacting with NPCs and other self-organizing systems can help us to imagine a collective subject of history. I will describe a number of narratives, games, social networks and transmedia artifacts that motivate the specific affordances of digital media to challenge, rather than reinforce, collective belief systems.

Helena Gurfinkel, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

‘‘The Leaden Heart and the Dead Bird’: Oscar Wilde's Dystopian Vision in ‘The Happy Prince.’”

In Wilde’s fairy tales, the devastating pessimism of endings, often involving the premature death of a protagonist, is concealed by a veneer of salvation, redemption, and the triumph of good over evil. “The Happy Prince” (1888) is no exception. While, ostensibly, the tale follows a utopian, ethical narrative, ultimately, the tale reverts to a dystopian aestheticism.

The eponymous protagonist, having lived a carefree life of pleasure, owes a debt to his city, the dwellers of which suffer economic privation. The Happy Prince and the Swallow, a same-sex couple, attempt to help these denizens.

Initially, the function of the Prince’s statue is to fulfill the aesthetic maxim “All art is quite useless.” The statue exists in order to give the townspeople the non-utilitarian ability to read and enjoy it as a work of art. Subsequently, the statue transitions from an object of art into a material entity, the components of which (gold and jewels) can be usefully exchanged for the well-being of a sick boy, homeless children, a young artist, and an abused girl who sells matches. Thus, the Prince and the Swallow ostensibly work together for a common good and their own redemption.

However, in the end, the tale queerly recuperates its dystopian aesthetic principle. On seeing the ravaged statue, the irredeemably aesthetically-minded citizenry says, “As he is no longer beautiful he is no longer useful” (323). The tale halts the emerging transition from “useless” aesthetics to “useful” ethics by rendering the Prince and the Swallow queer, non-procreative, and self-destructive.

Sarah Hakimzadeh, University of Pittsburgh

“‘It’s Perfectly Legal!’: Maintaining Utopia in Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Pacific Edge*.”

With his novel *Pacific Edge*, Kim Stanley Robinson breaks with a long tradition in utopian and dystopian literature that demonizes law and especially lawyers. In his depiction of the boundaries of law in *Pacific Edge* and the role that lawyers play in achieving meaningful legal reform, Robinson enables us to think through the utopian potential that inheres in the legal institution. In this paper, I explore the depictions of law and lawyers in *Pacific Edge* to draw attention to some of these possibilities. I argue that the text presents a legal positivist conception of law, one that stands not as a central regulatory institution that intrudes on the daily lives of the utopians, but rather consists in a set of rules that everyone, including the politically powerful, must play by. I also show how legal reform can act as a “revolutionary power” (in the words of one of the novel’s central characters) without risking the violence and unpredictability of a revolution if it accounts for the dynamism and ambiguity of human nature.

Christian Haines, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

“The Body Utopian, or What Does Biopolitics Have to Do with Utopian Studies (and Vice Versa)?”

In this paper, I argue that the discourse of biopolitics provides a path navigating around a central impasse in postmodern utopian thought, namely, the sense that we no longer possess the capacity to imagine *systemic* alternatives to global capitalism. If, as Fredric Jameson argues in *Archaeologies of the Future*, utopia can now only be thought in terms of its material impossibility, the question becomes how can one conceive of a *positively* articulated utopian *praxis* in terms of this historically-situated impossibility? Discussing the work of Ernst Bloch, Michel Foucault, and Antonio Negri, I contend that one can produce a concept of utopian *praxis* by reconsidering Bloch’s notion of the utopian impulse in light of Foucault’s understanding of biopolitics as the entry of the fact of life into the domain of politics. Such a theory has as its object the consideration of how the utopian imagination always involves the anticipation of a transformed human body.

I focus on a neglected piece by Michel Foucault, “The Utopian Body,” in which Foucault argues that utopia emerges from the body only to forget its origins. Utopia is that immanent surplus of social and political being which requires one to think transcendence without recourse to theology. I argue that Bloch’s notion of concrete utopia (cf. *The Principle of Hope*) and Negri’s notion of “dis-utopia” (cf. *Insurgencies*) enable one to think this immanent surplus as a material social *practice*. A utopian biopolitics allows for the material investigation of the potentiality of/for utopia, while utopia, in its turn, is revealed to be the secret motor of biopolitics. To concretize my analysis, I turn to the desire for universal healthcare in the context of the neoliberal United States, contending that the very desire for it demands a radical reconfiguration of the socialization of bodies, and as such, a renewal of our capacity to envision systemic alternatives.

Sam Hamilton, University of Pittsburgh

“Teaching Metaphors and Learning Problems: The Limits of Digital Classrooms.”

In the 1960s, educators the world over envisioned pedagogies reflecting the utopian vision of a student-centered classroom. Emerging from and contributing to the radicalism of the era, these pedagogues framed their visions as counterpoints to metaphorical castings of old models of schooling. Marxists such as Paulo Freire promoted problem-posing pedagogy to replace banking education. Jerry Farber suggested a bodily and sexually liberated pedagogy to counteract studentsʼ metaphoric enslavement at Cal State. And the Free Speech Movement decried students as “cogs in the machine,” promising a post-Fordist pedagogy eschewing production in favor of process, discussion, and consilience. Today, the student-centered vision subsists, but is itself cast against a larger metaphorical backdrop: the digital classroom. While many educators, radical (see Henry Giroux) and institutional (see Arne Duncan) alike, view digital spaces as a key element of future classrooms, few recognize the stultifying limitations of so-called digitally liberated pedagogy. Through the work of scholars such as Freire, Farber, the FSM, Giroux, and others, this paper seeks to catalog the pedagogical limitations of digital classrooms. My overall purpose is not to advocate for a kind of neo-Luddism in envisioning future learning spaces, but rather to demonstrate how, if not thoughtfully constructed, these spaces will not only repeat the metaphorized problems of old models of schooling, they could reify them.

Carter F. Hanson, Valparaiso University

“Lost on Gulliver’s Island: Language and Anti-Utopianism in Sándor Szathmári’s *Voyage to* *Kazohinia*.”

My paper examines the novel *Voyage to Kazohinia* by Hungarian author Sándor Szathmári (1897-1974). Written in 1935, *Voyage to Kazohinia* was first published in Hungary in 1941; the novel became a popular cult classic in the author’s native land but was never published in English outside of Hungary until 2012. *Voyage to* *Kazohinia* tells the story of Gulliver, a shipwrecked English naval surgeon who washes up on an unknown island in the Indian Ocean in 1935. The island’s inhabitants, the Hins, are technologically far superior to Europeans (and more peaceable), but live without emotion, kinship, or intimacy. Weary of the “hopeless boredom” of his static life among the Hins, Gulliver asks permission to join the quarantined Behins, who while passionate, live “bestial,” violent lives devoid of reason. My paper argues that while *Voyage to Kazohinia* can be read as either dystopia or utopian satire, using Lyman Sargent’s definitional categories, the novel is best understood as an anti-utopia. Szathmári shares Jonathan Swift’s satirical edge (Szathmári’s modern Gulliver is just as blind to the shortcomings of English society as Swift’s), but whereas Swift envisions a utopian space—the kingdom of the giant Brobdingnagians—that conforms to his ideals of benevolence and practical wisdom and realizes the potentiality of human nature, Szathmári offers no such vision. I argue that Szathmári’s anti-utopianism derives primarily from his skepticism about language—from the human tendency to radically circumscribe our understanding and experience of reality through limiting linguistic concepts or frameworks. Both the Hins, with their overriding concept of *kazo*, and the Behins, with their lexicon of terms that induce belief in the opposite of what is self-evident, display this tendency, and neither Gulliver nor Száthmari propose a viable alternative.

Karl J. Hardy, Queen’s University of Canada/New Mexico State University

“Unsettling the 99%: Settler Colonialism and Occupy Wall Street.”

I will offer review the emergence of “anti-colonial” or “decolonizing” discourses within the Occupy Wall Street movement. Hardy will highlight the role of Indigenous and other activists' challenges to the substantially white and settler Occupy Wall Street movement. Such critical interventions have, at moments, had the effect of destabilizing the Occupy Wall Street narrative, which purports to advocate on behalf of the 99%--a claim refuted by some Indigenous and other peoples who question the utilization of a discourse and tactic of “occupation” on colonized lands. Particular attention will be paid to the counter-narrative put forth by anti-colonial activists within (and without) the Occupy Wall Street movement. This will include an assessment of the respective utopian and dystopian potentialities of the Occupy Wall Street movement to contribute to an emancipatory, decolonizing project or further the naturalization of the settler-colonial reality of the United States and Canada, among other nation-states.

Paul Harrison, University of Toronto

“Ficino, Pico and Imminent Perfectibility.”

Though the Renaissance produced a rich flourishing in the arts and expanded knowledge in a plethora of ways, its philosophical developments have generally been overlooked or underplayed in the history of philosophy. Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola are, however, among the period’s most important thinkers, especially in respect to utopian thought. Through their quests to syncretize various forms of ancient wisdom with Christianity, they walked a particularly thin line at times. Neoplatonism, Platonism, Hermeticism and Cabbala were of particular interest to both Ficino and Pico, and through these systems they came to what might be called utopian solutions; Ficino hoped that his brand of repackaged Neoplatonism could perfect the academies of his day, especially his own Studium Generale. As he saw Florence as a New Jerusalem, he believed it was his school’s job to destroy the “perverse philosophies” taught elsewhere (mainly in Paris), which would transform Christendom, and bring about a sort of golden age. Pico’s philosophy was even more daring, as it led him to espouse the doctrine of the imminent perfectibility of man, making him a crucial thinker in the history of utopianism.

My paper will discuss how both Ficino and Pico came to their conclusions, and what repercussions these had for them and for their society. Furthermore, I will look at the continuity of their philosophical systems, with particular regard to the modern political thinker, Linden Larouche. Larouche, who is perhaps most famous for his “beam the bomb” campaign, which inspired Regan’s Star Wars program, is in a direct line of continuity with Ficino and Pico; this comparison will also shed some light on the oddity of Larouche’s politics.

Martin Hébert, Université Laval

“Raymond Roussel’s impossible art installations: *Locus Solus* as Utopia.”

In his 1914 novel *Locus Solus* Raymond Roussel structures his narrative as a guided tour offered by Marial Canterel, inventor extraordinaire, through a series of mechanically and geometrically impossible installations. These devices appear strange and incomprehensible at first glance, but as they are explained to the visitors and reader layers upon layers of meaning are revealed. We will examine *Locus Solus*, the roaming property of Professor Canterel, as a fictional space built as a romantic counterpart to other real-world “invention shops” of the period. These shops, with Thomas A. Edison’s Menloe Park laboratory as their epitome, were built on principles of pragmatism and empiricism, and rapidly transitioning toward an outright industrial model of technical innovation. Given the triumph of Edison at the 1889 Paris World Fair, and his cult-like following in France in the following decades, we read Raymond Roussel’s novel as an effort, conducted through utopian space, to propose an alternative view of technology, commodification, and the possibilities for a meaningful, and not just useful, engagement with technological artifacts.

Sarah Hogan, Drake University

“Utopia, Occupy, and the Commons.”

If references in the mainstream media and blogosphere provide any measure, Thomas More’s *Utopia* continues to speak across centuries, most recently to the topic of Occupy as a utopian social movement. Indeed, one might even go so far as to say that the genre-pioneering *Utopia*--and its long, controversial history of reception—exerts a pressure on the present movement, just as contemporary sensibilities, our imperfect historical narratives, and the weight of interpretive tradition inevitably shape the modern critic’s engagement with More. But what kind of explanatory power does More’s sixteenth-century book provide in the context of the contemporary financial crisis? How do contemporary readings outside the academy make urgent an alternative, historically-minded presentism engaged with the meanings of *Utopia* then and now?This talk will survey a body of popular literature on Occupy that invokes More in order to consider what a longer tradition of utopian (literary) discourse can teach 21st-century subjects about the potential and problems facing the Occupy movement (of which I am an unabashed member), and simultaneously, to consider how the recent mass mobilization impacts contemporary understandings of foundational utopian texts, More’s book chief among them. I’ll argue that Occupy might be seen as the latest phase in modernity’s increasingly complicated, ambivalent relationship to utopianism (and *Utopia*), but that if it is to continue its inspiring resistance to the corporate Neoliberal State, it will need to combine utopian aims with its oppositional rhetoric. Following Jodi Dean and Marco Deseriis, I’ll argue that Occupy might find a general commonality of aims—rather than just a commonality of grievances—by recovering and rejuvenating the idea of the commons.

Robert Hunter, Independent Scholar

“Sounding Utopia in the Structure of Music.”

In the special issue of Utopian Studies devoted to music and utopia Ruth Levitas and Tom Moylan formulated a “central conundrum”: that it “remains difficult to identify what is specifically and particularly utopian about music or even what, exactly, it means to describe music as utopian”.

This paper will address that topic directly, not by hunting down an ascribed utopian essence and thence making a general descriptive claim - which may be the outcome anticipated in the formulation - but rather by examining what is entailed in its presentation as a conundrum: the affective and cognitive properties of musical expression, the distinctions between what Broch might term its syntactical abstractism and its figurative vocabulary, how these are conjoined in the social conventions of musical recognition which in turn are constitutive elements in music’s signifying structure.

Using examples of music by, among others, Bruckner and Beethoven, the paper will also distinguish two strands of conceiving music’s utopianism, drawing on the work of Maynard Solomon, Benjamin Korstvedt, Alex Ross, and the perspectives of Adorno and Bloch.

Michael Jackson, University of Sydney

“Why dine in common? The theory of dinner.”

Plato, Francis Bacon, Thomas More among the theorists, along with the practices of Oneida, Amana, and a myriad of other utopian communities have included common, public dining as part of their civil society. Why? Of course, at times common dining has been a necessity. But it has also been chosen on its own merits. What are those merits and what do they contribute to utopia? Some answers to these questions can be found by returning to the source of so much European thought, Plato and Aristotle. Each has some claim to a place in the development of utopia thought. These two giants, different on so many points, agreed that common meals were essential to the very best polity. Though Aristotle in the *Politics* was alive to the financial and agricultural necessities, he did not recommend common meals as a way to save time, money, or labor, but rather because of the positive value he saw in the practice. The focus on the positive impact of common meals is even more pronounced in Plato, and it is there in both his most famous and sustained work, The *Republic*, often cited as a foundation text in the utopian tradition, and in his most detailed book, *The Laws*. Common meals are a part of Platonic communism among the Philosopher-Monarchs in the *Republic*. Common meals, *syssitia* as they were called in Greek, are also a feature of the society depicted in Plato’s *Laws*. Such meals serve a number of moral, political, and educational purposes that give them a place in utopias of words and deeds. These purposes will be identified and assessed in the paper.

Mark S. Jendrysik, University of North Dakota

“Becoming what you eat: food, dining and community in utopia.”

Food, both in its production and consumption plays a critical role in utopian projects. The growing, processing and consumption of food is seen by a number of utopian authors as vital to the creation the bounds of solidarity necessary to create and maintain utopian society. This paper will examine a number of utopia works to determine how various authors use food to reinforce the values of their utopian societies. This paper will also consider the problematic nature of food, particularly in terms of who labors to produce it and how its consumption is understood in moral terms.

Clint Jones, University of Kentucky

“Ursula Le Guin Contra Aristotle: Dispossessing the *Politics*.”

My essay uses the anarchist society of Ursula le Guin’s novel *The Dispossessed* to challenge the notions of state, family, and citizenry in Aristotle’s political writings. The focus of my challenge is to attempt to construct an argument about how a future utopian society might function once out of the shadow of Ancient Greece. More importantly, I argue that creating a utopian vision capable of motivating the citizens of the present age to work toward a better, that is, more utopic, future will require the breakdown of seemingly timeless philosophical ideas about how the political arrangement of human society ought to function. My essay focuses on the interpersonal estrangement of people committed to an Aristotelian, and, perhaps, in a more Marxist vein, capitalist, commitment to private property. Marx eschewed the idea that Communism was the last stage in human social development. Rather, he thought there was quite possibly more to follow, but Marx was unsure of what that might be. My argument is that the anarchic possibility le Guin pursues in her novel gives us great insights into the best possible future for human society.

Carolyn Jong, Concordia University

“Gathering the Army: Collective Impulses in *Dragon Age: Origins*.”

*Dragon Age: Origins* is a popular digital role-playing game developed by BioWare (2009) and set in what is frequently described as a “dark fantasy world.” This paper argues that despite an apparent emphasis on political intrigue, racial tensions, and social inequalities, the game allows the player to overcome these difficulties through a series of symbolic acts that seem to be reflective of a utopian drive towards collective harmony. While *Dragon Age: Origins* does not necessarily project the image of a perfect society, the process of gathering an army does provide opportunities for players to imaginatively resolve what Frederic Jameson refers to as “unresolvable social contradictions.” Drawing on examples of subjective responses to several of the game’s main quests, the author explores how binary oppositions between good and evil, nature and culture, chaos and order are understood in relation to contemporary sociopolitical issues, including the subjugation of aboriginal peoples and the war on terrorism.

Hee-Jung Serenity Joo, University of Manitoba

“Reclaiming Genre, Resisting Eugenics: Critical Race Theory in the Fiction of W. E. B. Du Bois.”

W. E. B. Du Bois, Harlem Renaissance scholar and co-founder of the NAACP, is perhaps more famous for his writings on critical race theory than his fiction. His literary works are much less appreciated, if not outright dismissed, for their adherence to generic conventions (science fiction, romance, and mystery). My essay presents a re-evaluation of his science fiction short stories included in *Darkwater* (1919) as well as his utopian romance novel, *The Dark Princess* (1928). I argue that Du Bois’s fiction presents, precisely through the conventions of science fiction and utopian fiction, an anti-biological, anti-scientific, and anti-nationalist theory of race. I show how Du Bois, reacting against *biological* understandings of race disseminated by the eugenics movement of the early twentieth century, deliberately turned to popular literary forms in order to provide a *cultural* definition of racial difference, one that understood race itself as a fiction. My essay provides a larger re-evaluation of the “limits” of genre, pointing to the possibility of a formalist critique of race within science fiction.

Matthew Wilhelm Kapell, Swansea University

“Gerard K O'Neill’s ‘High Frontier’ as a Technological Frontier Utopia: Confronting *Limits to Growth* through a non-critical Utopia.”

Gerard K O'Neill spends an inordinate amount of time in his 1977 bestselling book *The High Frontier* claiming that his proposals for orbiting colonies with populations in the millions are not Utopian. His claim can only be accepted by accepting his definition of “Utopia” which includes the idea that a Utopian ideal is, by its very nature, impractical. Nonetheless, O’Neill’s notion of orbiting colonies, built by Space Shuttle crews, and designed to offer unlimited energy and manufacturing for the Earth, also was to have provided an environment of unlimited social experimentations. Critics of O’Neill have generally explored his utopian pretentions as a reaction to the 1972 Club of Rome volume, *The Limits to Growth*. However, *Limits* is merely a culmination of a long line of primarily American dystopian non-fiction works including Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, Paul Ehrlich’s *The Population Bomb* and others. By placing O’Neill’s Utopian frontier vision in stark contrast to that non-fiction genre I call “models of doom,” it is possible to interrogate O’Neill’s concept of Utopia as a technologically- and scientifically-driven future in which a continuation of the industrial revolution into Earth orbit represents a vision of an endless frontier of energy, materials, and “lands.” Thus, O’Neill’s technological Utopia is traditionally American, informed by the need to find a “new frontier” and exploit it. And, unlike other Utopian texts of the period, O’Neill’s High Frontier is explicitly non-critical, likely accounting for the lack of attention paid to it by scholars studying the “critical Utopias” of the period.

Dwight C. Kiel, University of Central Florida

“The Return of Utopian Imagination in Environmental Thought.”

In the last two decades two scholars have reintroduced the need for utopian speculation in the environmental political thought. Ulrich Beck and Jane Bennett have both sought to explore utopian perspectives that challenge the inertia of politics as usual. I will focus on Beck’s *World Risk Society* and Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter*. Beck explores the politics of action in a globalized community and Bennett confronts us with fresh thinking about the world around (in) us. I conclude the paper with a discussion of Dan Sabia’s work in political theory and its connection to environmental thought.

Kerry Koitzsch, Independent Scholar

“Mrs. Atwood and the Utopian Tradition: A 19th-Century Alchemist as Utopian Theorist.”

Mary Anne Atwood nee South (1817 - 1910) is known to history as one of the last genuine alchemists of the nineteenth century. Born in Gosport, Hampshire [England] and receiving the tutelage of her father, Thomas South, from an early age, Mary Anne became an expert in early alchemical history and its literature, as well as Neoplatonism and Mesmerism. Mary Anne South assisted her father in his authoring of an early work, “Early Magnetism in its Higher Relations to Humanity” (1846). As a kind of philosophical reaction to the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and the early “modern science” movement, Mrs. Atwood developed a kind of “occult chemistry” -- a combination of natural philosophy, modern scientific method, theosophy, and psychology -- in direct opposition to contemporary atomic theory and “mundane chemistry” or “scientism”. She elaborated on her philosophy in her magnum opus, “A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery” (1850), as well as a vast body of unpublished correspondence archived at the Hay Library in Providence, Rhode Island.

In addition to being a natural philosopher, author, and scientist, Mrs. Atwood was also a utopian theorist. Inspired by a utopian writing tradition which included Francis Bacon, Samuel Hartlib, Comenius, and others, Mrs. Atwood’s utopian theories were influenced by the Philadelphians, Pietists, and Pansophists, as well as the early feminist movements in Great Britain and the United States. Her thinking influenced generations of “esoteric thinkers”, including Isabelle de Steiger, G.R.S. Mead, and even Carl Jung.

In this paper, I explore the published and unpublished works of Mary Anne Atwood and her circle of friends, while sketching an outline of her utopian conception and the traditions from which it sprang -- emphasizing her influence on later utopian thinkers and movements. In conclusion, I describe directions for further research and future projects to explore Mrs. Atwood’s life and work.

Adeline Koscher, Independent Scholar

“Rewriting the World: Teaching Rhetoric and Composition through Utopia.”

Teaching utopia as part of a writing curriculum has three related results:

✒ The development of a willingness to take creative and

intellectual risks,

✒ The development of a critical mind engaged in the creation

and evolution of the world,

✒ The development of an authentic voice.

To imagine a world other than the extant one – a society with a different social and political structure – a writer has to let go of the familiar. Writing utopia requires world building. Such a focus engages students in meaningful re-visioning of their world, daring them to think beyond the familiar and the comfortable in the invention stage of writing. Teaching writing through the genre of utopia emboldens students to examine and articulate radical ideas in order to persuade their audience to reconsider the world.

In *College English* Sidney J. Black examines “the Utopia Project” of the 1950s at Boston University. He explains, “each student is put in the position of a creator, a mythmaker, discoverer, researcher, and explorer.” Arthur B. Shostak also suggests in “Teaching Utopia” that incorporating utopian material into the curriculum will help to re-instil hope in tomorrow’s leaders. Utopian studies, Shostak claims, is the balm for this ailing society.

The teaching of utopia invites the development of critical thinking and exigence. Teaching utopia in the composition classroom also demands of the student writer effective development of rhetoric – from invention to the marriage of content and form to an awareness of audience.

W.S. Kottiswari, Mercy College, Kerala, India/York University

“The Confluence of Feminist Ideology and Utopian/Dystopian Vision.”

This paper highlights the subtle connection between Feminist Ideology and Utopian/Dystopian vision by applying theoretical paradigms to two novels taken up for discussion namely, Gilman’s *HERLAND* and Atwood’s Dystopian novel *THE HANDMAID’S TALE* .Literary Utopias have a history of both reducing and reinforcing women’s lack of agency within Utopian societies. Feminist Utopian narratives, on the other hand, are spaces, as Judith Butler notes, where “theory takes place” or is in the process of being examined and unpacked by the authors of these narratives. Feminist Utopian authors create worlds within their narratives to demonstrate future possibilities for women to gain agency that are not defined by their biological sex. Gilman’s *HERLAND* is one such Utopian novel which proves that Feminist utopias are a literary space in which critical theory not only takes place but is foundational to the emancipation of women enchained. *THE HANDMAID’S TALE* ,unlike *HERLAND*,is a Dystopian novel which pictures a nightmarish regime into which women are caught. Though, on the surface level, the novel appears to be one which pictures the suppression of women, it is not so in actuality. What is interesting is the rebellious act which the protagonist brings about on a very personal level, namely through language. Julia Kristeva’s theory on “semiotic” language enables one to understand how language can be used not only in favour of the ruling authorities but can help one to rediscover a lost aspect of their personal identity which is precisely the case in Atwood’s novel. Thus, theoretical and Ideological frameworks serve as springboards to analyse the projection of Utopian/Dystopian vision as seen in Feminist Discourses.

Jane Kuenz, University of Southern Maine

“The Girls from District 12: Race, Region, and Media in *The Hunger Games*.”

This paper examines Suzanne Collins’s dystopian novel *The Hunger Games* (2008) in relation to Appalachia as a cultural trope and as region with a real history of poverty and labor resistance. In American culture, Appalachia is marked as both racially pure yet distinctly other, a sort of uncorrupted Anglo-Saxon enclave, outside the history of slavery and racial violence in the deep south and unaffected by immigration and industrialization to the north. I will position Katniss Everdeen alongside Jessica Lynch and Lynndie England, two other young women from West Virginia who “volunteered” for military service in part to escape from poverty and lack of opportunity and whose identities and service were subsequently manipulated by mass media: the filming of Lynch’s phony “rescue” from an Iraqi hospital and the pictures taken of England at Abu Ghraib. Though Lynch’s star treatment reflects the tradition of figuring Appalachian whites as representative of “true Americans,” England’s fate illustrates how easily the same people can be converted to “hillbillies” in order to explain away any national responsibility for the torture at Abu Ghraib. As a subject in a global power that, like the U.S., exports war and entertainment, Katniss embodies the nation’s ambivalence about “progress” that leaves out so many or includes them only as sacrificial victims for show. At the same time, her ambivalent racial coding—olive skinned and dark haired, but with a fair mother and younger sister—radically disrupts the usual narrative about Appalachian people in a way that more accurately reflects the region’s history of racial intermingling. That her actions in the games spark a rebellion she eventually leads produces a utopian conclusion as it reaffirms the region’s history of authentic and effective resistance led by people just like her.

Brigitte Lane, Tufts University

“The Death of Utopia as Collective Dream and as Literary Genre in JMG Le Clézio’s *The Giants* and *Ourania*.”

In these two novels, published more than thirty years apart, JMG Le Clézio (Nobel Prize 2008) questions the concept of utopia within today’s world. In *The Giants* (1973), undoubtedly influenced by Huxley and Orwell as well as by surrealist writers and Lautréamont, he presents to us a futuristic world in which language has lost its original intent of emotional expression only to serve marketing purposes. “Hyperpolis” (not far from Lang’s “Metropolis”) is a gigantic mega/supermarket and a “City” ruled by “the Masters” who are never seen, but whose agents are eternally clad in dark grey suits. The only elements of rebellion here represented are three youths who will be led to ritual suicide along with a “Child Savior” figure (Bogo the Mute). In fact, Bogo can talk, but has chosen silence as a weapon in order to preserve his freedom.

In *Ourania* (2006), on the other hand, Le Clézio takes us through a more realistic contemporary setting (Mexico) where poverty, forced prostitution, slave labor and illness are just commonplace. Three attempts at utopias are here exposed: one intellectual, one both social and spiritual (Campos) and a purely spiritual one (that is the survivors of Campos). All three seem to fail or to be doomed to do so.

The two questions that I therefore want to raise in this paper are:

One: Is Le Clézio condemning the utopian tradition both as a manner of thinking and acting as well as a literary genre, and is he telling us that the Thomas More “model” has lost its factual dynamic power? Or is he asking us, his readers, to view the world in a different way?

Two: When interviewed by P. Lhoste in 1969 Le Clézio defined war not only in military but also in existential and social terms, namely as “a permanent feeling of aggression”. One aspect we might want to consider then is: what distinguishes in both novels the different kinds of exerted violence? Has language become today dangerous, because of its performative, market and media-driven power increased by technology? Are the forces of dystopia necessarily dependent on language as a form of persuasion? Are emotions and individual positive actions still viewed as an alternative means toward the elaboration of social dreams leading to a better world? In other words, is the power of the utopian tradition all lost, obsolete and defunct, and are we henceforward condemned to witness an endless rise of dystopias or not?

David Lemke, North Dakota State University

“It’s the End of the World as We Know It: Reading Walter Miller's *A Canticle For Leibowitz* as a Critical Dystopia.”

In this paper, I argue that while Walter Miller’s *A Canticle for Leibowitz* has been interpreted as a dystopian commentary on the state of Cold War politics in the United States, critics have been hesitant to apply Raffaella Baccolini’s definition of a critical dystopia as a text that “maintains a utopian core” and helps “to deconstruct tradition and reconstruct alternatives” to Miller’s work. While Miller’s novel can easily be read as a warning against the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons, I argue that the cyclical narrative of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* reflects on the importance of historicized and contextualized knowledge. In particular, Benjamin the Old Jew and Mrs. Grales offer alternative interpretations of history that deconstruct the causal opposition of science and religion found explicitly throughout the novel, and explore the role that tradition and human knowledge have on meaning-making.

Wylie Lenz, University of Florida

“‘I Would Prefer Not To’: Work-less Utopian Visions.”

In Melville’s short story “Bartleby, the Scrivener,” the titular character seeks to extricate himself from his workplace responsibilities by responding to (and thus exasperating) his employer with the repetition of a single phrase: “I would prefer not to.” In the end, he brings his practice into conformity with his desire, utterly refusing all directives. Bartleby’s motives remain obscure to his boss and biographer, as perhaps they do to many Melville’s readers, even if he expressed them so concisely. Yet, when the predominant ideology of the work ethic is set aside, this rejection of work (or any unpleasant activity) seems perfectly rational. Any committed utopianist must confront the problem of work—determining what needs to be done, who will do it, and how it can be done in the least unpleasant way—but only a vocal few offer programmatic schemes that would extend Bartleby’s seemingly eccentric and individual refusal to society as a whole by banishing work entirely, insisting that it is both oppressive and unnecessary. These programs have been put forth by revolutionaries, philosophers, literary producers, academics, and crackpots, and are variously informed by Marxism, anarchism, hedonism, and nihilism. My paper will offer a survey of such utopian programs that hinge on the rejection of work, focusing in particular on their particular rhetorical strategies for confronting the ubiquitous ideological presumptions that renders this rejection so baffling to so many, as it was to those who witnessed Bartleby’s refusal.

Ruth Levitas, University of Bristol

“Utopia as Method, Utopia as Grace.”

Over the last decade I have been working on the idea of utopia as method. The concept of utopia as the expression of the desire for a better way of living and of being generates utopia as an analytical and heuristic method, excavating and recovering the utopian aspects of a range of cultural expressions. Utopia as method in the sense of the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society is, at first sight, somewhat different. In so far as it is concerned with images of the good society, it seems to imply a definition of utopia closer to that of a description of an alternative society. But IROS has three modes, always in practice intertwined: an archaeological aspect, which entails excavating images of the good society that are implicit rather than explicit; an ontological mode, which addresses the kinds of people interpellated in such images; and an architectural mode, which is the most familiar form of utopian construction. Both archaeological and ontological modes are strongly related to the heuristic method. I want in this paper to argue that there is also a common thread of concern running through the heuristic and reconstitutive methods, encapsulated in the idea of grace. Ernst Bloch’s concepts of the fulfilled moment and of *heimat* bear strong similarities to Paul Tillich’s notion of grace. This suggests that the quest for utopia is in part a secularised version of the quest for grace. And a wholly secular reading of grace is also at the core of the ontology proposed by Roberto Unger. It becomes a utopian relational goal which has implications for the institutional structure of society, thus underpinning utopia as method in its architectural mode, and providing a critical tool for critique in the archaeological mode.

Ruth Levitas, University of Bristol

“The Fat Lady and Her Son: an ambivalent rereading of Huxley's *Island*.”

2012 is the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Aldous Huxley’s *Island*. There are many ways in which Huxley’s text has contemporary relevance, not least in the depiction of a way of life geared to sufficiency rather than expansion, consumption and resource depletion.But Huxley’s Mahayan Buddhist paradise of Pala is invaded, and among the agents of this downfall are the constitutional monarchy of Pala itself, the young Raja Murugan, about to turn 18 and thus come to power, and his mother, the Rani. Pala is effectively brought down by the fat woman and her son, revealing Huxley as both sexist and homophobic. The destruction of means that the book is only ambiguously utopian: it works against the view expressed at the end of Morris’s *News from Nowhere*, ‘if others have seen it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream’, conveying the Trotskyite message that utopia, or socialism – especially a pacifist utopia - is impossible on one island. But the last paragraph of the book is even more ambiguous, claiming as it does that ‘the fact of enlightenment remains’. This paper therefore considers why Pala might be relevant to our present situation; the implications of the fat woman and her son; and what we are to make of the ending.

Wade B. Linebaugh, Lehigh University

“‘So Social Justice is a Boat?’: Nella Larsen’s Transatlantic Utopianism.”

In *Quicksand*, by the Harlem Renaissance author Nella Larsen, Helga Crane experiences a divided life: “physical freedom in Europe and spiritual freedom in America,” which is much more than simply, as Helga says, “unfortunate, inconvenient, expensive.” Violence forms the obverse of these limited freedoms: in America, Helga faces the physical violence of lynching; in Europe, the spiritual violence of being a spectacle. Helga’s untenable position perhaps suggests, as this paper investigates, that we must look elsewhere to find anything utopian. This paper primarily examines an early section of *Quicksand*, Helga’s first passage across the Atlantic, in an effort to discern a formulation of the utopian shining through Larsen’s otherwise bleak portrait of the types of violence that pen in racial existence in modernity. Helga’s time on the ocean liner coincides with a temporary suspension of the nation-states that ratify racialized violence, which I argue suggests a limited, contingent vision of utopia. While Larsen’s novella is an unexpected locus for the utopian, it fits into a broader project of understanding modernism as a particularly utopian literary phenomenon. Modernism often presents truncated, contingent formulations of the utopian but understanding them as, indeed, utopian is important to understanding how modernism interacts with the political.

Alex MacDonald, Campion College, University of Regina

“William Morris and Aesthetic Utopianism.”

It might be said that there are three streams of Victorian aesthetic utopianism. One of these is the yearning to escape what Keats calls the “fever and the fret” of modern life into a world of intense sensuality, sometimes to the point of oblivion. Such impulses are central in works such as Tennyson's “The Lotos-Eaters,” Christina Rossetti's “Goblin Market,” and Swinburne's “The Garden of Proserpine.” Morris expresses this world-weary longing in the famous “Apology” to *The Earthly Paradise*. He defines the second stream of aesthetic utopianism in *News from Nowhere*. This utopian world is not an escape but the culmination of a revolutionary struggle. However, many critics have regarded it as escapist because it dismisses nearly all of the modern industrial world and focuses so intently upon the pursuit of beauty in everything from belt buckles to artistically arranged landscapes. A third stream of aesthetic utopianism, also suggested by Morris, consists of actual, real-world experiments such as intentional communities devoted to arts and crafts, design focused on alternative forms of material culture, and experiments in city planning.

Clifford T. Manlove, Penn State Greater Allegheny

“‘Chanting Down Babylon’ & ‘Returning to Zion’: Rastafarians on Utopia & Dystopia.”

This paper explores the crucial places for *utopia* and *dystopia* in the Rastafarian worldview and philosophy. Unlike some philosophies that tend to acknowledge the existence of only one or the other in their world view—seeing the other as a myth or fantasy—Rastafarians see the entire world as defined by *both* utopia and dystopia, with a severe demarcation between the two and no place on earth in between or exempt. Put simply, “Babylon”—what Rastafarians identify as the modern, developed world most of us (“baldheads”) live in and take for granted as the unmarked norm—is *dystopia* or, more specifically, a negative utopia in the here and now in the spirit of both Orwell and Huxley simultaneously (operating with bi-polar economies of pain and pleasure). While “Zion” is—or will be Rastafarians reason, if certain conditions and labors are fulfilled—”Mother Africa.” Babylon rules everywhere else in the Rasta worldview. Rastafarian understanding of utopia and dystopia derives largely from the Bible and, of course, their own reasoned experience of modern (colonial/postcolonial) life in urban Jamaica. However, unlike some traditions, Rastafarians do not view utopia and dystopia as being—like the Christian Heaven or Hell—elsewhere or “nowhere.” Rather, by way of the Babylonian conspiracy (between organized religion, capitalist commerce, and the nation-state) to thwart the possibilities and potential of Zion, dystopia is composed of the many objects and institutions that make material life in the “developed” world what it is. Rastafarians reason that Zion will be reincarnated when Africa has freed itself from the Babylonian conspiracy.

Regina Martin, Denison University

“The Economics of Family and Nation in the Modernism of John Maynard Keynes and Virginia Woolf.”

John Maynard Keynes has been appreciated by one modernist scholar as “The supreme modernist economist” for the ways in which Keynes conceives of economics as a problem of aesthetic representation. However, in his most influential economic treatise, *The General Theory of Employement, Interest, and Money*, which grapples with the economic turmoil of what has come to be known as the Great Depression, Keynes expresses nostalgia for a very traditional notion of family that stands in sharp contrast to the representations of family that appear in the work of his friend and fellow Bloomsbury member Virginia Woolf.

In the *General Theory*, Keynes attributes the economic troubles of the Great Depression, in part at least, to the decreasing influence of the family-owned firm in Britain. Having long served as the foundation of Britain’s globally dominant economy, the family-owned firm was rapidly being replaced in the early decades of the twentieth century by the limited-liability, investor-owned corporation popularized in the Unites States. In the *General Theory*, Keynes argues that the increasing influence of the limited-liability corporation encouraged a culture of speculation that had brought the international economy to the brink of collapse.

Keynes’s nostalgia for the family-owned firm relies on a conventional definition of family at the same time that Virginia Woolf proposes a new kind of family in her novel, *The Waves*. This paper investigates the ways in which the two contrasting models of family find their corollaries in the institutions of the changing economic landscape of the early twentieth century. If Keynes’s argument locates the foundation of economic stability and Britain’s global economic dominance in the traditional family, Woolf’s novel turns to a new definition of Utopian kinship relations to understand Britain’s changing relationship to global networks of economic power. In turning to kinship, this study argues for a spatial reconsideration of the Utopian family form.

Michael Mayne, Kennesaw State University

“There’s Always Tomorrow, Nostalgia, and Utopia.”

There are at least two dramatic recourses to the social order of the present. Of these alternatives, one is a progressive, dialectical version, which I call utopia, and the other is a reactionary, anti-dialectical version, which I call nostalgia. Here, utopia recognizes that what follows the present always remains undetermined, and an investment in this system encourages a critical comprehension of the past as a movement towards something different and something always determined by the agency of individuals. On the other hand, nostalgias are intrinsically reactionary, not because they always define a reactionary social order, though they usually do, but because they always insist that a more perfect order once existed, and our longing for this past moment of social cohesion and the absence of scarcity, of the unalienated social incorporation of the individual forestalls our conscious investment in the dialectical-materialist process of history. While nostalgia reifies the future, utopia is simply an authentic version of the future, one that encourages a critical comprehension of the past as a movement towards something different and something always determined by the agency of individuals. This project investigates the logic of nostalgia, contrasts nostalgia with utopia, and examines a 1956 film by Douglas Sirk, *There’s Always Tomorrow*, which exemplifies tensions between these visions of the social.

Paul Mazzocchi, York University

“The Politics of Persistent Utopia: Miguel Abensour and the Opening of Insurgent Democracy.”

This paper seeks to offer a constellative reading of the core concepts that make up Miguel Abensour’s oeuvre in order to develop a political reading of his conception of persistent utopia. In conceiving democracy as an an-archic break with foundations and an insurgent act, Abensour would seem to be withdrawing democracy from any association with utopia. And yet, this chasm is bridged by his re-definition of utopia as *persistent* utopia: utopia is the summary denial of a fixed political form, rooted in an emancipatory impulse that opens up the possibility of continual creation and innovation. In these terms, utopia becomes a non-identical concept, which refers more to a form of action and becoming than to any settled state of existence or being. This very notion of action/being is contained in his attempt to redefine institution as a social matrix that facilitates an open realm of human action, rather than as a static set of physical institutions. In developing a theory of insurgent democracy that aims at creating a social institution striving towards non-domination while never realizing it, Abensour aims to redefine and reconfigure what is at stake politically in the very meaning of utopia.

Andrew Milner, Monash University

“Technology and Cultural Form: Utopia as Hörspiele.”

My title is taken from the subtitle to Raymond Williams’s groundbreaking 1974 study ‘Television: Technology and Cultural Form’, one of the foundational texts for contemporary television studies. An interesting feature of this work is Williams’s insistence on treating television as radio with pictures rather than cinema in the lounge room. So his focus rests uncharacteristically on the commonality as drama between popular theatre and the cinema, and that as broadcasting between radio and television. Drawing on this insight, the paper will apply Williams’s cultural materialist method to the short and relatively unexamined history of radio drama, with special reference to three science fiction plays, two of which are arguably utopian: Orson Welles’s ‘The War of the Worlds’ (1938), Friedrich Dürrenmatt’s ‘Das Unternehmen der Wega’ (1955) and Nadia Molinari’s BBC  
dramatisation of Iain M. Banks’s ‘The State of the Art’ (2009). Germanophone radio plays and their successor forms in CD are known in their own countries as Hörspiele, that is, literally, hearing-plays. The term has no direct equivalent in English, so will be used here to indicate the whole range of actual and possible audio-dramatic forms.

Tom Moylan, University of Limerick

“‘And we are here as on a darkling plain’: Reconsidering Utopia in Huxley’s *Island.*”

In his last book, Aldous Huxley returned to the question of utopian possibilities in the face of the alienation, exploitation, and repression of modern capitalism and imperialism. Whereas *Brave New World* (1932) has been received by most readers as a dystopia, *Island* (1962) has been taken up as a utopian novel, seen by many, including Huxley himself, as a “corrective” to that earlier work. In this paper, I take another look at *Island*, especially in the context of the utopian writing that emerged later in the 1960s and 1970s. Is it indeed a utopia, or even an earlier instance of a critical utopia? Or, is it a much darker work, an anti-utopia?

Graham J. Murphy, Seneca College

“Insect Poetics and Dystopian Arc-Hives in Post-Cyberpunk”

The configuration of the negative utopia as comparable to an insect colony has been *de rigeur* in dystopian fictions: E. M. Forster’s classic “The Machine Stops,” Yevgeny Zamyatin’s *We*, Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, the wasp-like perversity infecting the Tessier-Ashpool clan in William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*, and the insectoid Hive of “Swarm” are only a few cases of this insectile association. In many instances the dystopian arc-hive is an archive wherein the (post)human subject is ‘stored’ or archived, seemingly enhancing the dystopian nightmare as subjectivity becomes embalmed and indebted to the dominant programming of the insectile arc-hive.

After establishing and elaborating upon this framework wherein posthuman subjectivity, archive fever, and the dystopian arc-hive intersect in the figure of the *insect*, this paper will focus largely on the post-cyberpunk dystopia of Kathleen Ann Goonan’s *Queen City Jazz,* a near-future negative utopia wherein nanotechnology has run amuck and the Queen City of Cincinnati has become a nightmarish archive, having lost itself in the madness of its Queen Bee. Unlike the dominant trend established by its predecessors, *Queen City Jazz* positions the insect colony as a positive force, functioning as counter-resistance to the archiving dystopian arc-hive, offering escape, if not transcendence, for posthuman subjectivity and enabling alternative ways of thinking about the material relationship of *human* to *animal* when that animal is the insect.

Nancy L. Nester, Roger Williams University

“The Empathetic Turn: The Relationship of Empathy to the Utopian Impulse.”

In many texts imbued with utopian themes, empathy plays a pivotal role, variously dividing and bonding humans, triggering kindness and cruelty, even humanizing and demonizing. In Philip Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, for example, empathy distinguishes humans from their mechanized counterparts; in Octavia Butler’s *Mind of my Mind*, the empathetically attuned are tormented by what they feel, and they will kill to preserve their similarly sensitized progeny.

Jeremy Rifkin, in the *Empathetic Civilization* claims that when we empathize, we are most alive because we are employing a capacity for which we are genetically soft-wired (167). Yet he maintains that empathy and utopia are antithetical. “Empathetic consciousness would be strangely out of place in either heaven or utopia” he writes (168). “Empathy does not exist in utopian worlds, where suffering and death are eliminated” (345). Perhaps this is true in heavenly places where pain is atavistic and death vanquished. But in the historical and imaginary utopian spaces I study with my students, the potential for suffering and the reality of mortality are very much on the minds of the people who populate them. Empathy, in fact, appears to be a key factor in the quest for utopia, the antidote to sorrow and cruelty.

This paper continues my study of empathy as a motivating and sustaining force in utopia. I examine classic texts such as *Herland*, *Looking Backward*, *Republic*, and *Walden Two* and draw on contemporary theorists who posit that empathy informs the zeitgeist, one boldly claiming that we live in the “Age of Empathy” (Frans De Waal). Still, I do not come at this subject uncritically. Empathy is normative and potentially dangerous. Thus I will discuss the complexity of empathy--what is at stake, what is to be gained, and what is lost in the turn toward empathy.

Justin Nordstrom, Penn State Hazleton

“A Nostalgic Eutopia/Dystopia: Examining *Ready Player One*.”

Ernest Cline’s 2011 novel *Ready Player One* is a treasure trove for utopian scholars, since it offers an imaginary world that is simultaneously eutopian and dystopian, and is important for gamers and game analysts because it portrays an immersive game-obsessed world that fuses high-tech virtual reality with 1980s nostalgia. The characters contrast their grim apocalyptic reality with escapism through worldwide gaming in the OASIS, a massively-multiplayer VR world allowing players to travel into space, experience high fantasy, attend lavish parties, or simply socialize with friends. The narrator and protagonist achieves stardom in the OASIS by finding keys to a giant puzzle, inserted into the VR environment as a decades-long Easter Egg hunt. In so doing, Wade taps into the trivia of the 1980s (the decade in which the OASIS was being programmed). As a result, the novel is a montage of futuristic dystopianism, retro 80s kitsch, and virtual reality, all in the form of a Willy-Wonka-esque quest to find a “golden ticket” in an over-the-top fantasy setting. Cline’s novel achieved significant acclaim but few writers have considered the scholarly merits of the book, particularly as an example of the overlapping functions of gaming and utopianism. This paper examines *Ready Player One* alongside Bernard Suits’ philosophical approach to defining games and utopia. *Ready Player One* explicitly plays with ideas of eutopia and dystopia, games within games, reality and escapist play. As such, it is an excellent environment to examine Suits’ philosophy of games and showcase why gaming is essential to utopian fiction, particularly in the early twenty-first century. For Suits, games are essential to eutopia because they allow residents to engage in creative activity despite the fact that their needs are fulfilled by the utopian environment itself. Yet, for Cline, games are equally necessary for a dytopia for much the same reason—they allow a creative and social “escape hatch” from the grim realities of futuristic decline.

Justin Nordstrom, Penn State—Hazelton

“‘And Serve the Cause of Freedom’—Food Conservation and the Patriotic Ideal in World War I America.”

Food, produced without arduous labor, distributed equitably, and in amounts sufficient to satisfy the needs of all, is an essential part of nearly all utopian aspirations. Yet, as Martha Finch points out in *Eating in Eden: Food and American Utopias*, regulating and restricting the consumption of food through communal fasting can also serve to strengthen social bonds and group identity. The notion that food consumption and fasting can both serve as utopian symbols was particularly evident during The First World War (1914-1919), in which Americans proudly proclaimed that “Food Will Win the War” and would secure victory for the United States and its allies overseas.

The U.S. Food Administration, charged with reducing waste and consumption of vital war foodstuffs, boldly declared “America’s Food Must Save the World.” These statements embodied the Wilsonian ideals of the Great War itself, presenting an overtly optimistic and nationalistic perspective on conservation and wartime propaganda. Unlike other nations (and unlike Americans’ later experiences of World War II) the United States did not enact mandatory rationing during the 1910s. Instead, government agencies exerted a significant social and moral pressure to limit access to foodstuffs. As one newspaper declared to American women “Upon you at the cookstove depends the issue in this war.”

USFA publications relied on prevailing concepts of gender and domesticity on one hand and attitudes toward children and child welfare on the other. The 1910s witnessed dramatic changes in these social views (as expressed by women’s suffrage and child labor reform movements). Studying the propaganda of food conservation allows historians to examine the political aspects of food and conservation, and how seemingly ordinary actions like reading a cookbook or preparing the evening meal can take on significant symbolic meaning. Ironically, while we look toward times of national feasting (like a Thanksgiving banquet) as deeply symbolic of our national identity, wartime food restrictions functioned like a nation-wide fast, helping civilians to feel connected to the war effort, an idea that was strongly encouraged, even demanded, by USFA advertising. By infusing eating and fasting with utopian symbolism, the USFA ensured compliance with government directives and wartime solidarity on the American home front.

Dominic Ording, Millersville University of Pennsylvania

“Don’t Worry, Be Sappy: Top 40 Music and the Vietnam Conflict.”

This presentation examines varieties of American Top 40 popular music during the period of the most active involvement of U.S. military troops during what we call the Vietnam War in Southeast Asia (c. 1964-1975). From an interdisciplinary cultural studies perspective, the main focus will be the juxtaposition of the pop music on the airwaves with the socio-political events on the ground. The presentation will also compare the dystopias portrayed in the well-known protest and counter-cultural music (e.g., Edwin Starr, The Beatles, Marvin Gaye, et al.) with the often bubble-gummy top hits that speak ostensibly to themes of war but in if not utopian, then seemingly apolitical or even reactionary, terms (e.g., “Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree” and “Billy, Don’t Be a Hero”). And there are plenty that attempt to occupy multiple ideological positions simultaneously (e.g., “One Tin Soldier” and “Leaving On a Jet Plane”). The methodology in this study will include humanistic and social scientific approaches. It will examine the aesthetic dimensions and artistic production of the musical artifacts as well as their representations in the media and their reception by audiences.

Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi, Western University

“District 9 and the States of Africa.”

Although it was a widely acknowledged as a financial success, *District 9* drew a lot of criticism about its supposedly racist overtones. Critics commented, especially, on the negative portrayal of Nigerians as well as its “neglect” of Black South Africans in the contemporary post-Apartheid era. As commentators such as Achille Mbembe, James Ferguson, and Jean Comaroff have observed, it is extremely difficult to speak of Africa evenly in respect to the emergence of contradictory, contemporaneous cultures of law, governance, and politics evoked under the banner of globalization. The continent can be examined not only as a series of national/regional territories but also as a series of disconnected populations who participate selectively in the benefits of the contemporary global order.

Increasingly, writers and filmmakers respond to this complexity by coupling dystopian near-future narrative premises with counterfactual scenarios. The combination produces dialectical images that combine all the contradictory elements of “Africa.” In this paper, I will argue that the anti-Utopian poetics of *District 9* constitute part of a growing trend in which writers and filmmakers consider not the Utopian world to come, but examine the loss Utopian privilege. *District 9* does not present an imagined future renaissance. It should be read as a counterfactual meditation on the loss of white privilege. As such, it responds to the Utopian project of Afrikaner nationalism.

Andrew J. Paravantes, York University

“The Utopias and Pragmatopias of Charlotte Perkins Gilman.”

Utopianism and pragmatism are often pitted against each other. The first offers a vision of total social transformation; the second, an ad-hoc, situational, and provisional set of reforms. For this conference presentation I propose to *read across* four works by Charlotte Perkins Gilman: *What Diantha Did* (1909-1910), *Moving the Mountain* (1911), *Herland* (1915), and *With Her in Ourland* (1916). In the Herland/Ourland novels, Gilman contrasts the Wellsian “God’s eye view” of three *androcentric* explorers against the “worm’s eye view” of the residents of Herland. (Perhaps surprisingly, it is the piece-meal and rather myopic Herlandian perspective that produces a critical assessment of social arrangements, not the *aeroscopic* viewpoint of the Ourlandians.) More intriguing, though, is what happens when we read the realistic novel *What Diantha Did* alongside the utopian romance of *Moving the Mountain*. What begins as a tentative experiment in professionalizing housework in the earlier text blossoms into a fully “humanist” social system some forty years in the future in the later one. Gilman is teaching us something important here, I think: utopias begin with small measures, not grand designs. The “good society” is cobbled together, through trial and error, and is only labelled “good” *retrospectively* because it works – a perfectly pragmatic conclusion.

This paper builds upon recent arguments made by McKenna (2001), Jacoby (2005) and Levitas (2008) on the relationship (and tension) between pragmatism and utopianism, as well as older studies by Hayden (1981) and Kessler (1994) on Gilman’s material feminism.

Jason H. Pearl, Florida International University

“Utopias of the Early English Novel.”

This paper argues for the centrality of utopian thought in the early English novel, that is the genre’s more experimental phase, roughly from the 1660s to the 1730s. More specifically, I show how utopian geographies get converted into utopian subjectivities, how distant utopian lands get self-consciously reconfigured into new states of interiority that accommodate utopia, sometimes uncomfortably, at home in England. For instance, the third volume of *Robinson Crusoe* elucidates the possibility of recreating Crusoe’s desert island solitude in the middle of London’s bustling Royal Exchange. More broadly, this paper intervenes in commentary on the English novel, which remains invested in notions of “formal realism,” and historiography of utopian thought, which generally recognizes a shift from spatial or geographic models of utopia to temporal or historical models, sometime during the long eighteenth century. I uncover a genealogical link between utopias of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and novels of the eighteenth century and show how early novels sought to make utopia available here and now, rather than in distant locations or in the remote future. The specific utopian content is new imaginative practices that come with contracted and oblique forms of social engagement. This paper is part of an introductory chapter for an ongoing book project.

Cristina Perissinotto, University of Ottawa

“Eat, Pray, Buy a House: Utopian Visions of Italy in the New Millennium.”

My paper explores the peculiar combination of literary memoir, utopian dream and material culture that sprung from a number of memoirs written about Italy (living in Italy, buying a home in Italy, moving back to Italy) in the new millennium.

The famous *Under the Tuscan Sun,* published in 1996, constitutes an early precedent for this new genre. According to the lesson learned in the *Tuscan Sun* book, it is not longer enough to travel somewhere, but the traveler needs to commune with the land by owning a piece of it.

So far both Italian and American academia have ignored this particular sub-genre, defined by a critic “brick and mortar travel memoir.” However, because of its theoretical underpinnings, it is well worth analyzing.

Memoirs about living, as foreigners, in contemporary Italy are weaved with the utopian dream of finding something both real and absent in more industrialized societies: a real sense of community, real food, real feelings, real love, plus a landscape where human intervention has been gentle, therefore capable of creating real beauty.

My paper analyzes these memoirs of Italy from the point of view of utopian studies, exploring issues of authenticity and materiality, thereby offering an analysis of the way Italy is nowadays perceived, imagined and idealized in contemporary literature.

Murielle Perrier, Princeton University

“Circular Narratives: the Case of the Utopian and Libertine Novels in the Eighteenth Century France.”

This paper will provide an examination of eighteenth-century utopian and libertine novels in France. By demonstrating how their narratives function, I will argue that utopian and libertine authors mock these literary *genres* in order to reject the concept of the ideal society. Indeed, they tend to include in the middle of their novel a utopian or dystopian episode, which they criticize, as they denounce social perfection. However, I will claim that through this dismissal of ideal, and because of narrative codifications- a novel requires a plot and a *denouement*- these authors cannot help but offer other forms of sterile societies, which demonstrate a circular way of thinking. Therefore, in this paper, I will demonstrate with the marquis Boyer d’Argens’ *Thérèse philosophe*, Voltaire’s *Candide* and Sade’s *Aline et Vacour* that the fabrication of utopian narratives, which automatically involve a contradiction between the limit of text and its purpose in a broader sense, constitutes an allegory to freedom.

Jonathan Powers, McGill University

“Control and Creation: Two Expressions of Utopian Power.”

In a contemporary context, the concept of Utopia, borrows many of its political connotations from the notion of *control*, with which it finds itself often paired. The apparent naturalness of this conflation owes a great deal to Thomas More’s interest in depicting his “*optima res publica*” as a grand social instrument for the subjugation of pride and greed (as Jack H. Hexter has decisively demonstrated). Just so, the majority of literary utopias describe the political and social *structures* of ideal states—which is to say, the legal and customary means whereby behavior is controlled.

Late modern attempts to found ideal communities have confronted the more thorny problem of the *creation* of new laws, customs, and systems of production—which is to say, the actual generation, refinement, and perpetuation of political and social institutions. The distinction between expressing extant modes of social control and constituting novel social forms finds its most pointed expression in the domain of architecture, in which existing edifices control behavior even as the processes of remodeling and building anew self-consciously engage the possibility of developing novel social forms.

This paper will use the *Libro Architettonico* (c. 1464) of Antonio Averlino (usually known by his nickname, “Filarete”), in which is described the fictional bricks-and-mortar construction of an ideal city, to explore a notion of social power best described as *creative*. The notion of creative power will be explicitly contrasted to the *controlling* power exemplified in Thomas More’s *Utopia* and in contemporary planning and designing practices.

Gib Prettyman, Penn State Fayette

“The Evolution of Critical Utopianism in the Work of Kim Stanley Robinson.”

In this paper, I consider the evolution of utopianism in Kim Stanley Robinson’s oeuvre, including his latest novel, *2312*. I also examine Robinson’s recent account of his utopianism in “Remarks on Utopia in the Age of Climate Change” (*Arena*, November 2011). Robinson is often cited as continuing the critical utopian tradition that emerged in the counterculture of the 1960s. Some of his early works (*Pacific Edge*, the Mars trilogy) are clearly critical utopias. Many of his subsequent works take up issues of utopianism in more diffused ways without (perhaps) rising to the level of what Jameson calls the Utopia proper. Are these later works evidence of the further evolution of the critical utopia, or do they represent a falling away from the genre? What does Robinson’s work suggest about the historical situation of critical utopianism? I argue that Robinson is stretching the critical utopia to fit historical conditions, and that the crucial generic elements that Moylan described still generally apply. If necessary, we could follow Jameson’s distinction and talk about “critical utopianism” and the critical Utopia proper. However, the critical nature of the critical utopia seems to assure that generic experimentation will stay ahead of generic definition, so I argue for using “critical utopia” as an encompassing designation for contemporary literature that explores utopianism and seeks utopian possibilities.

M. Shawn Reichert, Independent Scholar

“Arthurdale: Failed New Deal Program, Interesting Socialist Experiment.”

One of the more interesting and least known of the New Deal programs was the attempt to establish subsistence homestead communities. Although begun with government sponsorship and support, these communities were intended to become self-sufficient within a short period of time. The original subsistence homestead community was known as “the Reedsville Project,” then as Authurdale. Authurdale's primary purpose was to help mining families in West Virginia that had been displaced by the Great Depression. Although the socio-economic experiment that includes Authurdale and other subsistence homestead communities was short-lived, 1934‑1947, the experiment was a mitigated failure. While families benefitted from the program, government and public support could not be sustained due to the inability of the subsistence homestead communities to be self-sufficient or profitable. This paper both discusses the limited success of the subsistence homestead project and explores the causes of its demise. Particular focus is placed upon the difficulties of implementing limited socialism within a broader capitalist structure.

Ellen M. Rigsby, Saint Mary’s College of CA

“The Politics of Posthumanism’s Colonial Topos: time and politics in far-future fiction of McDonald, Morgan and Robinson.”

Far-future fiction is often relegated to the category of space opera, and left to molder among the serialized novelizations of popular science fiction television series. Nonetheless, several examples of this sub-genre of fiction offer the opportunity to think about the reach and purpose of many aspects of human culture. The texts in this paper by Morgan, McDonald and Robinson speculate about what remains of politics and political action in the context of the colony unmoored from the structures of traditional democratic politics of the classical republic. Richard K. McDonald’s *Brasyl*, Morgan’s Kovacs trilogy and Robinson’s *2312* consider what a democratic politics is when they make the colony the center of the political world rather than its margins. Each of these texts uses tropes of posthumanity to express some of the ways that democratic politics changes when it is outside of the traditional bounds of a classical republic, particularly though the distension of time though extension of human life. The texts are utopian (in the sense of no-place) and are both utopian and dystopian in their outlooks: they serve to displace the reader from the concept of the shared third-person narrative world, and in doing do, create a space between the narrative and the reality of the reader for something like the reconsideration of the roots of democratic politics.

William Robinson, Concordia University

“Bloodstained White-Collars: Meaningful Labour in the Age of Corporate Zombie Iconography.”

Bernard Suits’s philosophical work *The Grasshopper* (1978) provides the most analytically useful definition of games to date by arguing for the necessity of a player’s positive intrinsic valuation. In doing so he is able to demonstrate that games belong to a utopian future. When all of our material needs are met, once we have accrued enough knowledge and our machines can perform all of our labour, our days will be filled with play. Entrepreneurs, Seth Priebatsch and Byron Reeves, have been outspoken in presenting their attempts at creating such a utopia. By building structures that convince people that they are doing intrinsically valued actions at the office (rather than producing extrinsically valued capital), labourers might find meaning in their work. This emerging discourse on gamification, along with its academic critiques, has appeared in parallel with the icon of the corporate zombie: the unthinking, unfeeling, and uncreative monster born out of the white-collar industries. This cultural object can be found on t-shirts, in movies, on pamphlets, on television, in music, as dolls, and even in games. I argue that this zombie is a representation of a social fear that new profits will not stem from creative work, but from a mind numbing office life.

In some perfect coalescence of all these disparate elements: zombies, games, late capitalist workers, and gamification, a site for research and resistance has emerged: PopCap Games’s *Plants vs. Zombies* (2009). This paper will discuss the cultural significance of this game and the corporate structure that produced it, but also highlight its ideological stance on the alternatives to the gamification of work, the zombification of office culture and the promise of meaningful labour.

Beate Rodewald, Palm Beach Atlantic University

“Utopian Dreams and Real Places: varieties of community building in the last 100 years.”

After Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City Movement, probably the most influential of community-building programs, the last century has seen innumerable plans for communities that combined practical considerations of architecture, geography, and environment with visionary dedication to a wide variety of social programs running the spectrum from religious to secular, rural to urban, conservative to progressive, communal to capitalist, etc. This presentation will visit several representative examples of such community-building efforts, including Lightmoor, UK, partially managed by the Bournville Village Trust, Arcosanti in Arizona, Ave Maria, Florida, and Palm Beach, Florida, which celebrated its centennial in 2011. The general conceptual framework for this presentation is provided by Bloch’s Principle of Hope.

Peter Sands, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

“Varieties of Utopian Potentiality in three Dystopian Films: *Blade Runner*, *Dark City,* and *Sleep Dealer*.”

*Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1983), *Dark City* (Alex Proyas, 1998), and *Sleep Dealer* (Alex Rivera, 2008) are unquestionably dystopias. Each presents dark themes, ranging from *Blade Runner*’s multicultural degeneration and decay, to the malleable alien city of *Dark Cit*y, to the near-future cyberpunk Mexico of *Sleep Dealer*. Each obsesses over memory and the posthuman. Each locates the dystopian in varieties of corporate consumption of powerless individuals. But each also allows for the potential for resistance and community. *Blade Runner* permits emotional maturation and community of its Replicants. *Dark City* presents a choice between a happy ending of willful blindness or a darker ending of revelation leading to a paranoid but pragmatic view of the universe. *Sleep Dealer* closes with reconciliation and resistance against the Global North by the South. Where the usual SF dystopia reifies militarism and vigilantism, these three illuminate, with varying success, utopian possibilities that do not depend on violence or an endless cycle of utopianism/dystopianism. *Blade Runner* locates its utopian moment in a necessarily restricted community of short-lived Replicants, *Dark City* ends perched between utopian success and the possibility of dystopia’s return, as the dominant alien collective race has been replaced by the posthuman gnostic John Murdock, who frees the city but contains the power to return it to its previous condition. These two films thus ultimately minimize the possibility of utopia. But *Sleep Dealer* locates its utopian moment in affective human connections that are linked to a wide network of social and political resistance movements, raising the possibility that the forces of surveillance and domination can be successfully countered.

John Scheckter, Long Island University

“Witkacy’s ‘Tropical Madness’ and the End of Civilization.”

Like many European artists of the interwar period, the Polish artist and writer Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885-1939) attempted to locate and project mythic foundations underlying contemporary society, particularly in the representation of primal urges, anxieties, and eruptions. Developing the avant-garde persona of “Witkacy,” he became well known in a several media for a totalized dystopic expression; plays such as *Mr. Price, or Tropical Madness* (1920)and *Metaphysics of a Two-Headed Calf* (1921), novels such as *Insatiability* (1930), and paintings produced over several decades parallel the thought of Oswald Spengler as they depict a Western society that is collapsing irreversibly under the influences of government (totalitarian or democratic, equally repressive) and of economics (collectivist or capitalist, equally corrupt). Individuals who participate in this world, whether accepting or rejecting its invitations, are degraded by personal delusion, distraction, and stupidity. The best lack all conviction: artists alone, capable of accepting both absurdity and the “pure form” of ideas, have the potential to counteract this collapse, but they are hopelessly powerless even when sober. Futility is absolute.

This paper will examine Witkiewicz’s apocalyptic vision, particularly as it gains concretion and objectification through his journey to the “tropical” and “savage” territories of Ceylon and Australia in 1914 in the company of his best friend, the anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski.

Elizabeth Schreiber-Byers, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

“200 Years Past, Present, and Future: History and Fantasy in Pieter Harting’s *Anno 2065*.”

Dreams of technological advances, universal literacy, and supranational European unity mark Dutch scientist Pieter Harting’s 1865 work of utopian fiction, *Anno 2065*. Published in three editions between 1865 and 1870 and translated into German (1865), French (1870), and English (1871), the work was the piece of fiction by the scientist known for his work in the fields of microscopy and botany. While his text has been criticized both at the time and by contemporary scholars as advancing a vision of the future firmly rooted in nineteenth-century sensibilities and technology, the short work is of interest from a literary perspective for its weaving of fantastical and historical elements like the inclusion of medieval scientist and friar Roger Bacon, who guides Harting’s literary alter ego, Dr. Dioscorides, also named for an ancient Greek scientist, through a world 200 years in the future. This paper attempts to salvage Harting’s work as a piece of literature focusing on these meta-textual elements and considering how they contribute both to our understanding of the text and its appeal to German-, French-, and English-language readers between 1865 and 1871.

Robert Seguin, Hartwick College

“Consumerism and the Spectre of Declassing: From DeLillo to McCarthy”

Rebecca Solnit, in her recent work *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster,* explores the powerful equalizing effect that “natural” disasters can have, as disparate people come together to work in common and marks of social status and distinction are frequently ignored. Solnit reads many signs of Utopian hope in this process, but clearly such social displacement and erasure has the potential to generate great unease within a certain formation of classed subjectivity, one made anxious about real or symbolic declassing. In this essay I put into dialogue two texts that shed light on these matters: Don DeLillo’s *White Noise* and a novel that I argue makes more than implicit reference to this last, Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*. In DeLillo, the protagonist Jack Gladney is unnerved by the approach of a toxic gas cloud -- this is not, he thinks, the sort of thing that typically happens to middle-class professors like himself. Jack’s self-identity is deeply rooted in the practices of consumerism, and I want to suggest that his increasing obsession with death is less a matter of some putative crisis of meaning, as is sometimes suggested, than it is of a social crisis: death here is the symbolic detachment from those middle-class practices and values that confirm and justify his existence. This, I argue, is even more starkly the case in *The Road*. McCarthy’s post-apocalyptic denizens famously push shopping carts across the blasted landscape, but more than this, the novel is replete with social indices that testify to the shifting class fate of its protagonists: not just the world in general has been negated in the novel, but very specifically consumer capitalism and its technological integuments. The father and son come to occupy a precise social and literary space, that of the fugitive slave, a category that accounts both for the dramatic dangers of their story as well as those crucial Utopian motifs which fleetingly traverse this otherwise harrowing vision. In the end *The Road* emerges as a precise inversion of the world of *White Noise*, reverse but parallel dramatizations of the trauma of the loss of class standing.

Adnan Selimović, York University

“Youth Politics and the Ideologies of Responsibility.”

This is a critical response to the popular treatment - both journalistic and scholarly of the Occupy movement in its entirety. The public attempts to understand the youth stance during Occupy have been more self-assuring than insightful. Surely the youth's statements are reported, but the problem lies in the widespread presumption about where those statements fit, how they should be read, and what intentions underlie them. I believe that there is another story hiding behind the image of the young person holding up a “I want a job” placard at OWS or chanting against corporate greed. The message behind the placard is readily subsumed in the dominant discourse at the risk of another foreclosure on the possibility of a much needed radical critique of the basic assumptions of the contemporary society -- a critique which only newcomers might still embody to recall. In this paper I will attempt to carve out a theoretical space in which the youth politics in its own novelty might have a better chance of surfacing.

Nicholas Serruys, McMaster University

“The Figurative (Dis)simulation of Reality: Overarching Metaphors in Early Contemporary Science Fiction from Québec (1979-1985).”

**Overview**. This paper represents an ongoing in-depth inquiry into the relevance of metaphors in early contemporary Québécois science fiction (QSF) from 1979 to 1985, the period spanning the immediate lead-up to the first referendum on sovereignty, the event and its fallout. We hypothesize that these metaphors will frequently – though not exclusively – be extrapolated in the stories to allegorically represent, from a uniquely displaced perspective, the concurrent discourses surrounding federalism, independence and syncretism in Québec.

**Context and corpus**. Through radically different representations of techno scientific innovation and social speculation, science fiction (SF) literature offers a unique perspective on the contemporary world’s aspirations and apprehensions. A central characteristic in the textual exhibition of an SF universe is the presence of metaphors that express microcosmically the story’s global message. In many instances within the QSF corpus, we need look no further than the title of the work to find productive examples: J.P. April’s “Le vol de la ville” [The Flight/Theft of the City], A. Guitard’s “Les virus ambiance” [The Ambient Viruses] and D. Sernine’s “La planète malade d’humanité” [The Planet/Earth Sick of Humanity], to name but a few of the 60 examples thus identified from this period.

**Theory**. SF and metaphor share traits both in the form of their expression and in the reception of their imaginative discourse. Indeed, the cognitive oscillation between the distanciated universe and the empirical reality of the SF reader is precisely the process that underlies the reading of metaphor: a comparative interplay between two domains of information, one that is familiar and another that is unfamiliar, in some way related to the familiar, yet requiring interpretation as a result of the figurative nature of their juxtaposition.

**Method**. Metaphor being a vast, recurring phenomenon in virtually all literature, the starting point for establishing a specific corpus and for facilitating the revelation of relevant rhetorical figures is thus the identification of metaphors in the titles of the works. Secondly, I take stock of the metaphor’s elaboration throughout the story. Finally, through formal analyses of select texts, I examine the global meaning of each work according to the development one of its most minute units of expression: metaphor. I will draw conclusions on the meaning of the metaphors’ recurring themes and forms through a comparative evaluation of the individual analyses.

Maxim Shadurski, University of Edinburgh

“Landscapes and Identity in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*.”

This paper situates *Brave New World* (1932) in the context of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (1926) and Huxley’s own excursions into ‘alien Englands’ of the industrial north (1931). Where London’s high-rise architecture dominates the cityscape of the World State, England’s natural landscapes are marginalized to a few cursory glances in the novel. Satellite suburbs surrounding future London present a travestied version of Garden Cities, exposing both social inequality and the derelict state of nature. Most probably equipped with helipads, the Lake District equally disallows going off-piste and appreciating the uncharted wilderness. The Wey valley near Godalming, punctuated with abandoned lighthouses, is shown as barren and irredeemable territory invoking Eliot’s image of the waste land and Auden’s post-industrial landscapes. The novel arguably conflates the increasing stress on land due to population growth and reckless industrialization with preservationist attempts resulting in the commodification of landscapes. Where ‘flowers and landscapes are not gratuitous’, England’s identity becomes disingenuous. In contrast, the open seascape offers a brief liberating insight into nature, yet Englishness is rendered impossible to authenticate.

Stephen Sheps, Queen’s University (Kingston, Ontario)/Hebrew University of Jerusalem

“Occupy amidst Occupations: Can utopian social movements co-exist with the enduring occupation of Palestine?”

I will discuss the notion that race is an “enduring occupation” of modernity with an emphasis placed on the Israel/Palestine conflict and the work of critical race scholar David Theo Goldberg, who examines the various ways occupation can be constructed and determines that occupations in the modern era are always racially charged. In the context of Israel and Palestine, a rather literal example of an “enduring occupation,” the result is a series of small isolated communities that suffer from repression, annexation and social suffocation. Occupation and militarization are the two central planks of this process. Occupation provides the impetus for the perpetual militarization of the economy and society, and this militarization acts as the defining characteristic of what it means to be a “model” Israeli citizen. Of course these two themes reify each other and, accordingly, enable the state to justify the way it controls life and death (Goldberg, 2008, 133). Palestine has become a permanently temporary state, almost a state of meta-exception. Given the fluidity of boundaries both physical and socio-psychological, the state of temporary temporality (or permanent exception) can be seen as an ontological condition as well as a political and military one. How then, despite residing in the shadow of the Arab spring and the reawakened protest movement in Europe and the West, can the “occupy movement” find a way to exist in an ever-present enduring occupation?

Alex Shishin, Kobe’s Women’s University

“The Writing of a Utopian Novel.”

This paper will discuss the presenter’s experience in writing and publishing a utopian novel and his subsequent reevaluation of the utopian novels that most influenced him. Considered along with the presenter’s Nippon 2357: A Utopian Ecological Tale (earlier version: Real Time: A Japanese Utopian Romance) will be Edward Bellamy’s Looking Backward, William Morris’s News from Nowhere, H.G. Wells’s Men like Gods and Ernest Callenbach’s Ecotopia. Topics discussed will include, the problem of creating believable ways of getting the visitor protagonist to utopia, the problem of the “dating” of a future-oriented utopian work when the real future time arrives and passes, and questions of conflicts between didactic and aesthetic necessities. Outside of this, the presenter will consider the commercial and political problems attending the publication of a utopian novel and compare the publishing histories of the previously mentioned utopian novels to his own utopian novel. Specifically, the presenter will consider the ease or difficulty of publishing a socialist utopian novel. In regard to the latter, the presenter will discuss the utopian writer’s need to have control over his or her text and how he or she can benefit from the Internet and ebook publication.

Lynda Schneekloth, University at Buffalo, SUNY

“The Shadow of Human Making.”

Human beings, *homo faber*, ceaselessly make the world in order to meet the needs of people, cultures, profit and personal satisfaction. From home repair projects to city building to drilling deep in the ocean for oil, we engage in making, shifting, moving, and transforming the world. And we assume that this will continue without end, living in a utopian fantasy of endless bounty and infinite resources.

But there is a shadow to our making – unmaking. Everything we make, unmakes something else; every act of creation contains acts of destruction. Although the invisibility of the unmaking is embedded in the imagination of our culture, the shadow is emerging and becoming more evident daily. This paper will address four kinds of unmaking and their consequence: unmaking spatial practices, unmaking places, unmaking the earth, and the possibility of unmaking utopian fantasies and thought structures.

Daniel Sipe, University of Missouri, Columbia

“Living Fiction: Literary Imagination and Cabet’s American Icaria.”

In nineteenth-century France the rise of scientific socialism was often accompanied by the stigmatization of the literary imagination. If this is so, it is primarily because many of the social and political scientists who were generating projects for the amelioration of contemporary society were eager to distance their rational systems from the literary tradition of utopianism. How, then, are we to interpret Etienne Cabet’s *Voyage en Icarie* (1840)? For this work stands as perhaps the only nineteenth-century French utopian novel written by a self-proclaimed social scientist. What are the consequences brought about by Cabet’s muddling of the neat distinction between the discourses of social-scientific and of literary expression that writers of his persuasion had so jealously defended over the course of the nineteenth century? How, in turn, is the public’s imaginary and libidinal investment in the novel’s characters and plot exposed in the cultural by-products novel engenders? In this presentation the author presents evidence to suggest that Cabet’s rationally constructed social theories may not have been the real catalyst behind his followers decision to embark on a perilous journey to found a real Icaria in the New World.

Yevgenia Skorobogatov-Gray, SUNY Brockport

“Worlds of Saints: Tragedy and the Saintly Identity.”

This is a study of the conditions of the possibility of saintliness. Inspired by Wyschogrod’s *Saints and Postmodernism* (University of Chicago Press, 1998), it explores texts in continental philosophy to articulate the problematic of the saintly identity.

Can we define saintliness? Can genera retain set boundaries as we become aware of the complexity of the real? A dialogue between works depicting paradigm-shuttering forms of saintliness (Coetzee’s *Disgrace*, Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*, etc) and traditional philosophical norms provides a hypothesis.

What is the relation between the saintly identity and tragedy? From Heidegger we inherit the spacious formula that the human present, and therefore a saint’s present, is inextricable from past and future. The temporality of the saintly identity, with its origin in the ordinary, non-saintly time, unfolds while being underpinned by the horizon of tragedy. As Gadamer testifies, tragedy, the experience of human finitude, is not an accidental companion, but a fundamental characteristic of the human condition. The saintly identity, as every identity, is shaped by the effort to understand the relation between tragedy and its counterforce, utopia. This study explores the narratives saints form to prevent, in the language of Girard, the sacrifice of their luminous utopian aspirations to the predatory force of their historical memory of tragedy. In what ways do Prince Myshkin of Dostoevsky’s *Idiot* and Paul Farmer of Tracy Kidder’s *Mountains Beyond Mountains* respond to the challenge of tragedy, that is, the knowledge that our best impulses, our best laid plans, are precarious and death is inevitable?

Dan Smith, Chelsea College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London

“Mega-City One as a Space of Hope”

This paper will explore notions of space, medium and drawing through the lens of Mega-City One, the fictional setting for the long running comic series Judge Dredd. Mega-City One is approached here as a complex and visually extraordinary critical dystopia that was invented for a readership of children, and that has continued to age with its audience.

Mega-City One offers more than an envisioning of a city that appears shocking and immediate. It generates these qualities as productive forces that disrupt perceptions of the present. This is a city of critical engagements, not passive spectatorship. The creation of a dystopian space is simultaneously offers the construction of concrete spaces of hope, found within acts of reading.

This paper will build upon Moylan’s assertion that sf can both re-vision the world and recreate the reader’s world as an elsewhere, rendered here in a sensorial engagement with the technology of comics as a medium. The reading of the comic page can be slowed down, reversed and paused in practical ways that may be possible for other visual media, but would not be integral to the viewing experience. There is a potential for slowness within comics which is inherent in the medium. Mega-City One, as a space of reading, reconfigures the temporality of the urban. It operates through the mobilisation of sensation and the creation of an active engagement within a critical dystopia.

Dina Smith, Drake University

“Facing a Prefabricated Future: Hollywood’s Take on the Postwar Housing Shortage.”

“Facing a Prefabricated Future” begins with one of Hollywood’s most indelible scenes of postwar reconversion from *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946). As former fighter pilot Fred Derry wanders into a yard filled with disposed WWII planes, an apt metaphor for his orphaned war memories, he steps up into the cockpit of a plane much like the one he flew in the war. The subsequent point-of-view shot frames Fred against a haunting backdrop of abandoned planes, destined to become prefabricated housing. The film ends with him finding employment in the prefabricated housing sector, an appeal toward a postwar future that yokes (military) technology with housing. The film thus signals the growth of the U.S. prefabricated housing industry that turned on the rhetoric of mobility and futurity. Indeed, in a 1947 article titled, “The Industry Capitalism Forgot,” *Fortune*, diagnosing the pre-war inefficiencies in house construction, predicted: “[o]nly major money and modern organization, plus brains, will ever rescue the house building business from its feudal controls and its chronic incompetence.” That same year Warner Brothers released *It Happened on Fifth Avenue*, a film that narrativized the postwar housing shortage and the desire for alternative housing options. The film ends with a similar utopian longing: to solve the housing crises, a group of 200 veterans form a housing collective in order to design affordable family housing out of a repurposed military base. This paper will use these two films as an entry point into the postwar fascination with with prefabricated designs, and the crucial role prefabricators (often heavily subsidized) played in postwar reconversion.

Eric D. Smith, University of Alabama—Huntsville

“There’s No Splace Like Home: Domesticity, Difference, and the Long Space of Short Fiction in Vandana Singh’s *The Woman Who Thought She Was a Planet*.”

In *The Woman Who Thought She Was a Planet*’s brief coda “A Speculative Manifesto,” Singh observes that “[s]o much modern realist fiction is divorced from the physical universe, as though humans exist in a vacuum devoid of animals, rocks, and trees” (201). Calling for a more materially responsive aesthetic to address the exigencies of this “*one* *world*,” she notes that while speculative fiction, “dominated as it has been by white, male, techno-fantasies—Westerns and the White Man’s Burden in Space. . . has not yet fully realized its transgressive potential,” it may yet offer the conceptual means to “rise above this pathologically solipsist view and find ourselves part of a larger whole” (201-2). Though Singh does not further specify the culprit charged with the production of this pathological solipsism and its abstraction from both materiality and the “greater universe,” the majority of the collection’s stories can be classified as domestic fictions, as narratives situated within (if critically engaging) the chronotope of the home. In this way, *Planet* reflects the broader division of Indo-Anglian fiction into, on the one hand, epic and magical realist categories and, on the other, domestic realism. While there is certainly no dearth of the former, it is the latter that has—since the 1865 publication of the first Anglophone Indian novel, Bankimchandra Chatterjee’s *Rajmohan’s Wife*—achieved an undeniable primacy, if not hegemony, in modern Indian literature. In this paper, I explore ways in which Singh’s unique brand of Indian SF juxtaposes the abstract space and homogeneous empty time that characterize the deeply imbricated forms of home and nation with a differential chronotope, what Peter Hitchcock calls the “Long Space” of transnationalism, reorienting postcolonial Indian fiction toward a comprehensive imaginative horizon that is all the more urgent in the moment of globalization: the creation of a world.

Patricia Stapleton, University of New Hampshire

“The Utopian Drive in Biotechnology.”

Proponents of biotechnology tout it as a salve for many of the world’s ills, claiming it can be harnessed to perfect the future. Yet, opponents assert that biotechnology will be the basis of a dystopian nightmare for generations to come. This paper will explore the utopian drive behind the research and development of biotechnology processes – the answer to world hunger, the end to congenital diseases, the preservation of the environment – by examining the achievements that scientists have pioneered in the last three decades in the field of biotechnology. In particular, the paper will address how these innovations are part of a broader utopian discourse of what the world could/should be. Finally, the paper will engage with the political decisionmaking that occurs in the regulation of biotechnology, in order to reveal who gets to frame this “utopian” vision.

Peter G. Stillman, Vassar College

Huxley's *Island*: his utopian critique of the modern Western paradigm of progress and power

A central theme of Huxley's *Island* is the criticism what might be seen as the modernist Western paradigm of continual progress, where progress is seen as increasing material abundance (and hence increasing productivity and satisfaction of human material wants), expanding scientific and technical knowledge, the rationalising of the social order, and the extending of human control over nature. In *Island*, Huxley calls each aspect of that paradigm into question, proposes alternatives, and indicates how someone who believes in those modern Western values might come to see alternatives as possible and desirable.

In this paper, I propose to evaluate key points in Huxley's criticisms and alternatives. I am interested in the contrast with *Brave New World*, especially in light of *Brave New World*'s satirical treatment of that same modernist Western paradigm: e.g., in the hands of the modern Western world, drugs are used for indoctrination and pacification, on Pala they are used for enlightenment and individuality. I am interested in the criticism that Huxley does not pay enough attention to politics in *Island*, and wish to explore what "politics" means in Pala. Finally, I am interested in how Will Farnaby, as a somewhat cynical embodiment of the Western paradigm, responds to utopia, overcoming Western divisions and dualisms, at the same time that Pala itself falls prey to those who support Western ideals of progress and power.

Stephanie Stripling, University of South Carolina

“*Three Hundred Years Hence*: Redefining the Critical Utopia.”

When Tom Moylan coined the term “critical utopia,” it was prescribed very specific boundaries relating to post-World War II instability and the constant threat of Cold War; according to Moylan, the “critical utopia” as a form is a child of the Cold War. In an effort to defend the idea that the critical utopia needs to be redefined as a utopian literary form with the fluidity to describe and understand broader cultural trends, I intend to paint the critical utopia without these historical constraints.

Mary Griffith’s *Three Hundred Years Hence*, an American Science-Fiction Utopia written in 1836, is an example of a “critical utopia,” long before the genre was acknowledged. I want to promote Griffith’s text as a critical utopia that existed over a century before the Cold War. I will aim to appropriate the generic formula of the critical utopia to a text that does not fit the historical parameters ascribed by Moylan. I propose that broadening the historical horizons of the critical utopia, and recognizing its form in moments of instability beyond the Cold War, will increase the utility value of the critical utopia in future scholarship.

Robert T. Tally, Jr., Texas State University

“The Scandal of Qualitative Difference: Fantasy, Utopia, and New Spaces of Liberty.”

In his provocative lecture on “The End of Utopia,” Herbert Marcuse confronts both those who dismiss Utopia as an escapist impossibility and those who imagine Utopia as the realization of short-term, practical aims (like the satisfaction of basic needs, such as food and shelter). Instead, Marcuse argues that utopian thought must come to terms with “the scandal of qualitative difference.” That is, rather than capitulating to the *status quo* or succumbing to a logic of unilinear, gradual progression, Marcuse argues that “these historical possibilities must be conceived in forms that signify a break rather than a continuity with previous history, its negation rather than its positive continuation, difference rather than progress.” The radical alterity of Utopia, like that of fantasy, allows us to see—if only in glimpses and sketchily—a world unlike our own, from which we may extrapolate alternative trajectories. Drawing upon Fredric Jameson, China Miéville, and others, I will argue that the Marcusean “end” of Utopia opens up new spaces of liberty, and establishes new ways of mapping such spaces.

Sawako Taniyama, Kobe Women’s Junior College

“A Comparative Analysis of Dystopia in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* by Haruki Murakami and *Nineteen Eighty-four* by George Orwell.”

Japanese writer Haruki Murakami wrote *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* in 1985. This book has two narratives that appear in every other chapter. Murakami describes two worlds that are a “hard-boiled wonderland” and “the end of the world” which are narrated by two first-person narrators (the formal *watashi* is used for the former and the informal *boku* is used in the latter). This paper will discuss how Murakami’s two worlds are connected to the dystopian world of *Nineteen Eighty-four* by George Orwell. The paper will also offer a comparison of Winston Smith in *Nineteen Eighty-four* and the two protagonists in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World.*

May Telmissany, University of Ottawa

“Liberation Square in Egypt: Utopian and Dystopian Functions.”

Representations of Liberation Square (*Midan el Tahrir* in Egypt) as a utopian space for liberty and resistance played an important role in nourishing the public sphere with images and graphics of the revolution, and encouraging street protests and demonstrations to achieve the goals of the revolution: bread, freedom and social justice. However, one could argue that the square had a dominant utopian function and many dystopian functions produced by and promulgated through social media and cyber-activism. This paper will analyze the shifts and tensions between utopian and dystopian functions of the square while focusing on two crucial episodes of the Egyptian revolution: from January 25 (the beginning of protests) to February 11, 2011 (the fall of Moubarak); and the day of commemoration, one year after, when the Muslim Brothers occupied parts of the square to celebrate their success in parliamentary elections. The utopian function of the square was established during the first episode, and dismantled during the second episode. In both cases, images of the square were produced by the revolutionary and anti-revolutionary forces to highlight or diminish this utopian function, criticizing what exists and deconstructing the illusion of fast and radical change.

William Thompson, Grant MacEwan University

“A Question of Girl Power: The Romantic Trope in Dystopian Writing for Teens.”

The success of Susanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* as both a series and a film has helped create a new place for dystopian writing for teens. Most recently, Collins’ *Hunger Games*, Lauren Oliver’s *Delirium*, and Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* represent girls as tough, female protagonists who have the capacity for both emotional complexity and excessive violence. The popularity of these girl characters arises out of their toughness and their determination to challenge societal rules; however, their romantic attachment to a male counterpart undercuts the position of these girls as powerful young women with a clear sense of their own agency.

The romantic trope that informs such dystopian writing for teens sets it apart in the wider tradition of dystopian writing for young readers. The teenage romance and the literary dystopia come together to form a hybrid text: one that employs a strong female protagonist who rebels against an oppressive government or social system and who simultaneously defines herself in terms of the desire for her male counterpart. I want to propose a paper that addresses the romantic trope dominating such teenage dystopias, which both undercuts the agency of the female protagonists and alters the way these girls see themselves in relation to their respective dystopian futures.

Kristen Tobey, University of Pittsburgh

“Gathering the Saints: Missionary Training Manuals and the Cultivation of Mormon Community.”

From its earliest days, mission work has been at the heart of the religious world of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Mormons believe that the eschaton, in which Jesus is expected to return to lead the faithful to a glorious afterlife, is preceded by various forms of “gathering” in this life. In early Mormonism this “gathering of the saints” referred most immediately to the establishment of a utopian community where all Mormons could gather. As the church evolved and Mormonism’s utopian vision changed in response to simultaneous growth and hardship, so did the understanding of “gathering.” Today it refers to an ongoing process that comprises much of Mormon life – its regular meetings and services and conferences but also, crucially, the act of bringing non-Mormons to the faith through proselytizing. During the mission, specially trained and ritually prepared young Mormons gather converts to the church, aided by elaborate training programs and materials developed over decades of church expansion. A new training manual introduced in 2004 signalled a radically new approach to the training of missionaries and to the missionary endeavour in general. Previous manuals were based on the rote memorization of six gospel “discussions” in the mission language; 2004’s *Preach My Gospel* instead claims to cultivate an individual’s ability to be guided by the Spirit in conveying the gospel message. And while previous manuals were intended only for field missionaries, *Preach My Gospel* is to be used by all Mormons. This paper aims to explore the implications of the new manual – and with it, a new view of mission – on the role of the Mormon missionary in bringing about the utopian “gathering” that precedes the eschaton.

Juan C. Toledano, Lewis & Clark College

“Beyond Socialism: Utopia and Cuba in Agustín de Rojas’ Novels.”

In September 2011, Cuban author Agustín de Rojas died in a hospital in his native Santa Clara, after refusing to accept being “fed by the tyranny,” according to his closest friends. This early mythologizing of Rojas’ sudden death, fits the author’s attitude toward Cuban reality and politics. Rojas pretended to be crazy during the horrors of the Special Period in order to avoid persecution while speaking publicly against the system. He also published the short story “Aire” (Air) that criticized bureaucracy and government officials. A censored version of “Aire” was published in Cuba only after the original version was published overseas, making obvious the existence of censorship on the island. In 1990, Rojas published *El año 200*, considered one of the best novels of science fiction in Cuba. It is a novel that reads like a staunch defense of communist principles and the Cuban Revolution, and puts the future of humanity in the hands of the universal triumph of socialism.

Given Rojas’ public criticism of the Castro regime and the way in which he died, how should we read *El año 200*? Should we read the novel as a eutopia that goes beyond real socialism, approaching a communist paradise never achieved in his life, or as another satire of current political affairs in Cuba? *El año 200*sold40,000 copies on the island and has been read by many as a clear critique of those Cubans who still believed in Castro´s project at the end of the 80s. *El año 200* was also Rojas´ last science fiction novel, since, according to his own words, the socialist universe that was the background for his stories and ideas had disappeared together with the Soviet Union. Reading Rojas one wonders, is the defense of Cuban particular socialism a bad dream, but still a dream?

I argue that Rojas’ contradictions are not unique or rare in Cuba, and that his masterful work of science fiction and politics encapsulates much more than a literary exercise of escapism. *El año 200* can be read as an eutopia as much as a satirical dystopia, and his analyses can helps us understand better the contradictions of an entire generation of Cubans who dreamed an impossible dream. I show that even those who were most critical of the Castro’s regime, nonetheless shared the Cuban dream of Revolution.

Csaba Toth, Carlow University

“‘Woe to him who treads through Guilt to Truth!’ Antisocialist pseudo-utopias in Wilhelmine Germany.”

The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) re-surfaced after twelve years of illegality in 1890 and found its mass base not only intact but also in rapid expansion. Big electoral gains in successive elections led to utopian hopes and a thirst for future blueprints among the SPD rank and file. In this expectant milieu, the only utopian compass available to German workers was August Bebel’s *Woman under Socialism* and the German translation(s) of Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*.

Demands for futuristic images were unmet in a political culture where the SPD’s leading theoretician Karl Kautsky would claim that “[o]ne of the most important and most welcome” recent development in the party’s history was that “utopianism and fantasizing about the future state has, on the whole, disappeared.” Social democratic leaders shared a scientific stagist view of history (historical developments could not be “rushed”) and their day-to-day political practice pursued a “war of attrition” in the Parliament. Discussions of blueprints of a socialist future were therefore at the very least discouraged as unscientific and hotheaded.

Various antisocialist and right-wing movements also gathering strength at around the time had no such qualms and made aggressive cultural efforts to divorce labor from the socialists and, importantly, scare the middle sectors off a potential alliance with the SPD. Part of this intellectual offensive included the production of what I call *pseudo-utopias*, that is, the publication of future blueprints written from a seemingly socialist perspective, which depicted a tomorrow that looked so diabolical and grossly out of sync with the lives of ordinary people that they—in the absence of rebuttal—generated hostility against the socialists. My presentation will examine three such instances of pseudo-utopias at the nineteenth century’s turn: Emil Gregorovius’ *Der Himmel auf Erden* [Heaven on Earth]; Eugen Richter’s *Sozialdemokratische Zukunftsbilder* [Pictures of the Socialistic Future] and Franz Stolze, *Das entschleierte Bild zu Sais* [Secret of Sais Exposed—the title is allusive to a famous ballad by Schiller]. What bind these three pseudo-utopian novels together are not only their masquerade as socialist texts (and as such aiming to denigrate an alternative future) but also their common web of reference to Bellamy and Bebel and, in the case of Stolze, even to Richter’s anti-Bebel/anti-Bellamy book.

Kyla Turner, University of Toronto

“Queering the Ark: Dystopia is Not Wanted on the Voyage.”

In Timothy Findley’s *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, Noah and his family descend into a Godless, hopeless world aboard the ark. As the ark drifts, Noah Noyes becomes increasingly tyrannical. Faced with prospect of Noah’s absolute power, Mrs. Noyes prays for rain. Her prayer for the world’s permanent destruction demonstrates her family's failure to create a clean, new world. They are incapable of fulfilling their Biblical destinies because of their queerness, and the queerness of time in which the story is set. Findley’s ark exists outside time. Mrs. Noyes, whose characterization is based on Medieval mystery plays, sings British naval songs, and the Noyes’ compound resembles Findley’s southern Ontario home. It’s the queerness of *Not Wanted*’s temporality, its indeterminable place within time, which prefigures the ark’s inability to return to Eden or reach land. With its own temporal location unknown, the ark can move neither backward to an idyllic past nor forward to an exultant future. As time passes aboard the ark, it becomes apparent that the Noyeses cannot repopulate the world. The depictions of sex and reproduction, in which Shem’s wife delivers Noah’s stillborn bastard, and Noah rapes Japeth’s adolescent bride, are violent and disturbing. Ham’s wife, who remains untouched by Noah is, in fact, Lucifer disguised as a courtesan. Lucy’s slow reversion into a masculine, but sexless angel mirrors the descent of the Noyeses into chaos. This paper shall explore how temporal and individual queerness leads to a dystopian ending of *Not Wanted*, where no future is possible.

Christina Van Houten, Brittain Postdoctoral Fellow, Georgia Institute of Technology

“‘Besides raising six children by three marriages’: Kay Boyle and the Politics of Late Modernism”

In his *Esquire* essay, “The Last of the Lost Generation” (1963), Malcolm Cowley situates Kay Boyle as peripheral to modernism: “When she was a girl in Cincinnati, she met a French engineer who married her and took her to Paris in 1922. She was then a rather elfin creature, and one looks back with amazement at the work she has accomplished. Besides raising six children by three marriages, she has written twenty volumes of fiction and three volumes of poetry” (77). In this summary, Boyle is characterized as peripheral and formally and politically conservative because literary critics like Cowley read work that in theory and practice engage questions of gender, sexuality, domesticity, kinship, romance, etc. as marginal to the larger aesthetic concerns of modernism. And yet, Boyle is significant for a historical narrative of modernism especially for the cultural estrangement that female modernists experience in the postwar moment.

Emma Vossen, University of Waterloo

“Sex, Romance and Monogamy as Survival Technique and Coping Mechanism in Robert Kirkman’s *The Walking Dead*.”

Robert Kirkman's ongoing comic series *The Walking Dead* chronicles the survival of protagonist Rick Grimes and over one hundred other characters after society crumbles due to the zombie apocalypse. The characters seek and find shelter, weapons, and food, but it soon becomes clear that having these luxuries does not necessarily give one the will to live. The most desirable commodity in this dystopian landscape is a romantic partner and the foremost survival technique becomes having copious amounts of sex. In Kirkmanʼs future, sex is one of the only comforts that is entirely free and attainable, as long as one can find a partner. Gay sex, interracial sex, and sex between people of greatly varying ages becomes socially accepted as the availability of sexual partners is limited. Despite this liberal shift, monogamy becomes more prevalent as Kirkman's characters look desperately for partners and become extremely dependent on the ones they find. In fact, characters often site their post apocalypse losses as harder than losing their original families.The survivors attempt to build many settlements predicated on bringing people together and protecting the family unit. Mental stability is found most frequently in the characters who have little problem shooting and killing zombies all day and who have a caring and active sexual partner to come home to at night. This paper will examine the prevalence of monogamy and lack of individualism in *The Walking Dead* and consider how relationships and family structures affect the way these characters construct their future society.

Nader Vossoughian, New York Institute of Technology

“Collecting Paper: Die Brücke, the Bourgeois Interior, and the Architecture of Knowledge.”

In a number of recent studies, the rise of standard paper sizes in 20th-century Europe has been framed within the context of the history of information and media studies. In this essay, I want to make the case that it is useful to interpret their development from the standpoint of architectural history and utopians studies as well. My argument is that standard paper sizes were introduced to stem the crisis of bourgeois subjectivity that emerged with the advent of industrial capitalism. As Walter Benjamin notes, the liberal bourgeoisie grew strongly attached century to the practice of collecting in an effort to remedy the experience of alienation that accompanied the rise of industrial capitalism. Over the course of the 19th century, it transformed the domestic sphere, and the private living room specifically, into a hermetically-sealed “box in the theater of the world” in an effort to cope with its experience of self-estrangement. In like fashion, advocates of standard paper formats – and the members of the Munich-based group Die Brücke more specifically – set about regularizing the dimensions of paper in an effort to alleviate the “crisis of the room” or “Raumnot,”as K.W. Bührer put it, that afflicted the modern collector at the start of the 20th century. Die Brücke collaborated with artists such as Emil Pirchan in an effort to articulate this position, and in this paper I demonstrate how examining the group’s cultural commitments can help one politicize the history of Die Brücke– and its role in the history of standard paper formats more generally.

Jennifer Wagner-Lawlor, Pennsylvania State University

“At the Threshold of the Stone House: The Utopian Imperative of Feminist Hospitality.”

From Sarah Scott’s *Millennium Hall* (1762)up to Jeanette Winterson’s *The Stone Gods* (2007)*,* the image of the stone house stands as a landmark signaling an alternative space to which women come as strangers but typically come to feel “at home” for the first time. The figure of the house as a safe haven in feminist utopian narratives might seem straightforward enough. In this talk I propose that the symbolic content of this figure has deepened in contemporary utopian literature. As feminist philosophers have intervened in a traditional and masculinist conception of hospitality, feminist writers have paralleled these investigations through a renewed attention to the figure of the house. Rather than functioning simply as a safe space within a culture inhospitable to women, the stone house is a figuring of utopian space *as* hospitality.

The talk will open with a review of the philosophical concept of hospitality, primarily through Derrida’s explication of the “impossibility” of absolute hospitality. Hospitality stands as an aporetic concept characterized by the simultaneous evocation of welcome and hostility, inclusion and exclusion. It is thus conceived as a kind of mutual hostage-taking being enacted by the host and guest. Feminist philosophers have challenged not only this inhospitable view of hospitality—but also the clearly gendered power dynamics described by Kantian/Derridean this form of “hostipitality” (Derrida’s neologism). Feminist philosophers, however, have demonstrated the masculinist bias at the heart of this characterization. In recuperating the possibility, and possibilities, of absolute hospitality, feminist interventions also enable consideration of “Utopia itself” in terms of hospitality.

In this context, I will argue, the significance of stone houses in women’s utopian literature deepens considerable. The attempt for “absolute hospitality,” if not its achievement, lies behind utopian texts as far apart in time as Sarah Scott’s *Millennium Hall* (1762) and Toni Morrison’s *Paradise* (2002). More recently, Jeanette Winterson’s *The Stone Gods* (2007) participates in this effort to locate a utopian space beyond the walls of such dwellings; and in this case, the recurrent appearance in the text of a seventeenth-century stone farmhouse marks the progress of this hero/ine’s journey toward a hospitable vision for not just her own future, but humanity’s future as well. The environment surrounding each instance of the stone house is hostile and indeed usually violent. But the effect of these expressions of hostility only foregrounds the urgency of *mobilizing* hospitality on behalf of a creating a more welcoming, inclusive, and equitable community. I conclude by suggesting that these texts’ advocacy of feminist hospitality *as utopia* extendsto their interest in both *nationalism* and in *environmentalism*.

A feminist conception of a hospitable utopia suggests a very different notion of social/political identities, and thus of citizenship. Toni Morrison’s *Paradise* is the finest rendering of this conception. But even in texts outside immediate Western influence, we see the same urgency in locating such a paradise: contemporary Muslim writers such Nawal El Saadawi, Sharnush Parsipur, Fatima Mernissi and Rajaa Alsinea deploy the same trope, and work the theme of hospitality into their texts in similar ways to Western women writers. Working toward a mobile structuring of hospitality, these texts offer a vision of community founded on a set of temporary affiliations, rather than on fixed identities that create a defensive stance *against* the other. Finally—though this can only be a gesture toward a future presentation—a feminist hospitality would insist, as ecofeminists long have done, on a very different notion of human/nonhuman affiliations, and on a kind of ecological and post-nationalist citizenship.

Kathi Weeks, Duke University

“‘A Manifesto for Cyborgs’: The Critical Manifesto and Utopian Politics.”

I want to make a case for Haraway’s famous 1985 essay, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs,” as a path-breaking utopian text. As a manifesto, its utopian credentials may already be apparent. Indeed, I claim that one way to understand the significance of the piece is to read it as an update of an earlier manifesto, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, one that replaces Marx and Engel’s mapping of industrial capitalism with an equally prescient account of its current post-industrial formation. But to appreciate the full force of Haraway’s analysis, one must also recognize the work it performs on the manifesto form itself; borrowing Moylan’s category of the critical utopia, I present a reading of the “Manifesto for Cyborgs” as a *critical manifesto*—a transformation of both the form and the content of the genre. It is both Haraway’s commitment to the tradition of the manifesto and her work of re-invention that account for the political relevance and analytical power of the text.

Phillip E. Wegner, University of Florida

“‘I was once cook at the Café Anglais’: Utopia, the Work of Art, and the Event in “Babette’s Feast’.”

In this paper, I discuss the profound meditation on Utopia to be found in one of the great mid-twentieth century portraits of the artist—an example of the literary genre of the *Kunstlerroman*—Isak Dinesen’s magnificent short story, “Babette’s Feast” (1953; reprinted in the collection, *Anecdotes of Destiny* [1958]). This paper is part of my larger ongoing project on what I theorize to be the four fundamental *evental genres* (*genre événementiel*) to flourish in the twentieth century: the *Kunstlerroman*; the film genre Stanley Cavell names “the comedy of remarriage;” what Susan Buck-Morss describes as the “universal history;” and science fiction. What distinguish the evental genres are their attempts to give form to what Alain Badiou theorizes as the *event,* an unexpected and unanticipated development that breaks utterly with the reigning (Symbolic) order. Such an event, in the form of a miraculous dinner party, stands at the very heart of Dinesen’s tale.

Unfortunately, for too many today, Dinesen’s story is know only indirectly, as the inspiration for the 1987 Gabriel Axel film adaptation. The film would go on to win an Academy Award, and shortly thereafter, spawn a veritable cottage industry of efforts to recreate the sumptuous meal staged in the film. It is in the film’s visual representation of the meal, however, that we have the first of a number of significant departures from Dinesen’s story: for in “Babette’s Feast,” the only details we are given is the main dish’s name. With this, Dinesen bears out a crucial point of Badiou (and before him, Ernst Bloch) concerning the unrepresentability of the truth content of the Utopian event. In this way, the work of art, this story thus teaches us, plays a crucial role, to use E.P. Thompson’s great phrase, in the “education of our desire” for Utopia.

Jude Welburn, University of Toronto

“Sheep Devouring Men: Messianism and Satire in Thomas More’s *Utopia*.”

In this paper I would like to explore the inverted, parodic messianism of Thomas More’s *Utopia.* Nowhere is this more evident than in the famous passage in the debate on counsel in which Hythlodaeus denounces the enclosure of common lands as the chief cause of the growing plague of theft, vagrancy and poverty in England. His description of the devastating social and economic consequences of enclosure opens with a striking image of the world turned upside-down, a world in which a growing wilderness swallows town and countryside, where churches are converted to sheep pens and sheep devour men: “Your sheep, … that commonly are so meek and eat so little, now, as I hear, have become so greedy and fierce that they devour human beings themselves. They devastate and depopulate fields, houses and towns.” Noblemen, gentlemen and even some abbots, he says, “leave no land free for the plough: they enclose every acre for pasture; they destroy houses and abolish towns, keeping the churches—but only for sheep-barns. … These worthy men turn all human habitations and cultivated fields back to wilderness.”

This image of sheep devouring men is not only an image of a *mundus inversus,* a world turned upside-down, it is also a satirical inversion or negative image of what we might call messianic utopianism, an inversion of the messianic kingdom in which “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together” (Isaiah 65.25) and harsh, predatory, unyielding nature will return to an edenic state of pacification, humanization and abundance. This parodic inversion of Isaiah is important, I think, because the (negative) eschatological topoi in *Utopia* have largely been overlooked or dismissed altogether. *Utopia* is most clearly modeled on the secular, ideal commonwealth of Plato’s *Republic* or Plutarch’s Sparta; it appears to be a this-worldly ideal. Even the fantastical elements of *Utopia* are more in the humorous mood of Lucian’s *Icaro-Menippus* than Isaiah’s prophesies. But I do not argue that the messianism in *Utopia* is expressed in any positive way. The topoi from Isaiah are inverted and satirized and applied to England, not Utopia. Utopia appears in More’s work as an inversion of an inversion of the messianic kingdom; utopian communism is not the restoration or reconstitution of an edenic or messianic order, but is rather the negation and sublation of enclosure and *res privatae*. It is precisely this sublation, not the simple negation of the messianic/edenic, that gives *Utopia* its modern character.

Toby Widdicombe, University of Alaska

“It’s What We Eat and How: Food as Rite and Aliment in Utopia.”

Levitas is fundamentally right that utopias concern themselves with “the expression of a better way of being,” but a focus on expression in a strict sense rather ignores the literally substantial: food. Yet, food is both essential to life and central to many utopias. For the sake of simplicity I will offer a brief reading of food as rite and food as aliment in representative utopias. I will being with *Utopia* (1516) itself and then look back to myths of the Golden Age, the Bible and the medieval Land of Cockaygne before moving forward to the Enlightenment and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The distinction between food as rite and food as aliment will be emphasized—in part because it is useful as an organizing principle and in part because it will allow me to make some useful generalizations about how different thinkers have viewed the utopian enterprise. My conclusion will be simply this: once you explain the centrality of food as rite and aliment a third value has been ignored by scholars: food as sales pitch. And that pitch applies as well to dystopia as to eutopia. For that reason, I shall pay particular attention to some of the more outré aspects of the subject. Texts to be discussed will include *Utopia*, *Works and Days*, the Bible, the Land of Cockaigne, The *Decameron*, *The City of the Sun*, *Voyage en Icarie*, *Looking Backward*, *Walden Two*, and *The Year of the Flood*.

Paul Wilson, Ithaca College

“Ephemerality and Utopia in Zwelethu Mthethwa’s Interiors.”

Zwelethu Mthethwa’s photographic series *Interiors* (1995-2005) depicts people inside their makeshift homes in the Crossroads settlement outside Cape Town. From its origin as an illegal black encampment during the Apartheid era, the houses of the settlement have always been temporary, constructed out of whatever discarded materials that are available to the residents. However, they transform these drab materials by covering them with paint, colored plastics, and newspapers. In the photographs these vibrant backdrops practically engulf the residents and their few modest possessions. As artworks, the photographs offer three intertwined utopian gestures. First, the photographs document the transformation of dead materials into living spaces. Second, the explosive color of the photographs dignifies and individualizes his subjects in contrast to the stark black-and-white photojournalistic images typically used to document the lingering effects of Apartheid. Third, the physical photographs are exhibited and sold in the global art circuit as extremely large prints mounted behind exquisitely shiny Plexiglas, conferring scale and permanence to images of impermanence. While art critics have focused on the utopian qualities of color, the complicated relationship between the first and third gestures has

not been addressed. Does the exaggerated permanence of the photographs, as art objects, contradict or reinforce the ephemeral beauty depicted within them? If utopian gestures point toward the future, what does it mean to freeze the ephemeral in the perpetual presentness of photography? While the tension between permanence and ephemerality is intrinsic to the medium of photography, the contrast between subject matter and form in this series warrants further exploration.

Samuel L. Wood, Independent Scholar

“Hythodeaus and the Humanist Ideal of Homelessness.”

During the early part of the sixteenth century, humanists like Thomas More sought to create a space which between the court, the universities and the merchants of London at the same time as they sought funding and work from these groups. In looking for a model for such an autonomous space and way of life, they frequently if ambivalently turned to the figure of the vagrant. This argument has implications for More's *Utopia*, which addresses vagrancy in Book 1 and tries to eliminate it in Book 2. It also calls attention to the role of Hythlodaeus, who is, on the one hand, the Republic of Letter's ideal citizen, and, on the other, himself a vagrant. Alongside these intellectual concerns, the paper builds on the work of such critics as Linda Woodbridge and Patricia Fumerton to look at the proximity of scholars and schoolmasters to vagrants and their place in the vagrancy laws. It also suggests that *Utopia* has a generic affinity with rogue literature - like them when it comes to looking for answers the storyteller has mysteriously disappeared.

Zac Zimmer, Virginia Tech

“Utopia and the Conquest of the Americas: Between Commons and Colony.”

This paper will build on my previous SUS presentation (“Utopia, Blank Slates, and the Conquest of the Americas”, 2011) critiquing the relationship between the concept of utopia and the late XV-early XVI conquest of the American continent. In my previous talk, I surveyed possible American sources for Thomas More's 1516 *Utopia*, and I concluded by advancing a structural connection between the post-More concept of utopia and the conquest of the American continent. The current paper will extend that line of inquiry through a survey of twentieth-century Latin American philosophers and essayists who have expanded on the temporal coincidence between Conquest and *Utopia* so as to advance a general maxim that expresses the ontological connection between utopia and conquest. I have provisionally grouped these thinkers into four broad categories which loosely reflect their respective geographical and methodological positions: 1) The Aztec Empire, the continuity of violence, and the sacrificial logic of Mexico (Alfonso Reyes and Octavio Paz); 2) Preconquest Incan communism/utopia (José Carlos Mariátegui); 3) Linguistic and/or racial utopias (Pedro Henríquez Ureña, José Vasconcelos); 4) Decolonial thinkers (Edmundo O'Gorman, Enrique Dussel, Aníbal Quijano). What all of these Latin American intellectuals share is a perspective–whether utopian or anti-utopian–from a subject position that would not have existed without the dystopian reality of the European conquest of the American continent.

1. Quick, James Campbell. “Missing: Critical and Skeptical Perspectives on Comprehensive

   Soldier Fitness.” Comment to *Comprehensive Soldier Fitness*. Oct. 2011 Spec. issue.*Psychologist* 66.7 (2011): 645. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. As of this writing (Summer 2012), the military has already rolled out a Global Assessment Test (GAT) for Airmen (Air Force) as well as a Sailor Tracker, Airman Tracker, and Marine Tracker (versions for the Navy, Air Force, and Marines of the Army Soldier Fitness Tracker). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)