

## Session VI 1:00-2:30

### 6.A. Genre and Utopia (Colonial East)

Braden Hammer, Mount Saint Mary's University, "Len Deighton and the Utopian Genre Tradition"

This presentation will argue that Len Deighton's debut series of spy novels can be included within the utopian genre tradition. Deighton's debut series, written between 1957 and 1966, represents a break from previous works in the spy genre with regard to narrative style and major themes, having grown out of a period of sociopolitical crisis and change in Britain. Previous advancements in popular literature that broke with the past similarly grew out of periods of crisis and change. Particularly relevant among these are the rise of the utopian genre in the early 16th century, notably with Thomas More's *Utopia*, and the rise of the counter-epic novel form during the late 16th and early 17th century, notably with Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. In addition to the importance of sociopolitical background, Deighton's debut series also shares several familiar features with works in the utopian genre. One shared feature is the pervasive feeling of questionable reality. This is accomplished on the level of the story, or through the author's stylistic narrative techniques that create a unique experience of the text for the reader and compel the reader to participate in meaning production. Deighton's early novels also feature such utopian genre elements as the individual's fraught relationship with the state, questions regarding the nature of identity, individuality, and liberty, the reality of the present versus that of the past, the horror of loss of liberty of thought through conditioning, and the conflict between personal perception and dogma.

Gib Prettyman, Penn State University, Fayette, "Utopian narrative labors in Robinson's *The Ministry for the Future*"

My paper explores the idea of utopian narrative labors through a close reading of Kim Stanley Robinson's novel *The Ministry for the Future* (2020). I argue that genre might more productively be conceived as something produced by specific smaller labors rather than as relatively static frameworks to which texts either conform or fail to conform. While narrative labors can take any form, engage any facets of our world, and strive to produce any outcomes, my paper explores narrative labors that overtly strive to be utopian. In many ways, questions of narrative effects (and related imaginative powers) constitute the core of utopian studies. Scholars want to assess what is and is not utopian, how utopianism works or fails to work, how utopia is or is not conceivable, what the unintended consequences of utopian forms might be, and so on. Robinson's story explores explicitly separate attempts to tell the problems of global climate change and how humanity might (or might not) successfully engage the problems involved. As Robinson noted recently, "The real story is the one facing us in the next 30 years. It's the most interesting story, but also the stakes are highest." Global climate change, and the Anthropocene more broadly, serve to clarify Robinson's utopian narrative labors.

Csaba Toth, Carlow University, “Collective Action and Community Building in William E. Trautmann’s Novel *Riot*”

William E. Trautmann’s novel *Riot* (1922) is based on the Pressed Steel Car Company strike in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania—a steel mill in the novel—which lasted for three months from July 13 through September, 1909. Trautmann was a founder (with Haywood, “Mother” Jones, etc.) and General Organizer of the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). In this latter capacity he coordinated the strike in McKees Rocks (a.k.a. Preston Valley). His role gives credibility to the novel’s quasi-factual rendering of one of the most important labor actions in the pre-World War I period. I argue that Trautmann as a syndicalist has identified labor’s hopes of a workers-controlled society – hopes that came to life for a long moment at Preston Valley. Leaders of the strike build their strategy on small work collectives within the factory, which are the strongest and most spontaneous source of bonding among workers. Embodied in them is the direct actionist approach of exercising continuous control in the workplace. Direct representatives of these well-organized groups call for the formation of councils that will represent labor at the point of production. Communities can organize horizontally, Trautmann understands, in contradistinction to strikers’ vertical, army-like system of command and control in this particular case which recalls the industrial army visions of Fourier, Marx, Bellamy, and DeLeon. Community members hold mass rallies at a meeting place called Indian Grave (!) where speeches by Debs and other supportive visitors foment communal cohesion. In the wake of victory, as the multitude hear workers led by the community’s multi-ethnic choir sing the Internationale, “jubilation” rings through the Valley and hope flies high that “prosperity and love” will come to the community.

## **6. B. Utopian Thought (Colonial West)**

Peter Stillman, Vassar College, “Uncovering Le Guin’s Utopian Alternatives: *The Left Hand of Darkness*”

This paper argues that Le Guin’s utopian alternative questions or contradicts many usual attitudes and assumptions of modern utopian thought. She herself insisted that *LHD* was not a utopia, and it certainly does not propose a blueprint or model for government. But she does put Winter or a different calendar (every year is the year one) and so a different view of time. In her criticizing of modern rationality, she emphasizes the importance of darkness as well as light. The past, in mythic form or remembrance, is present, and myths give insight and understanding to the present. Journeys are cyclical, not linear. To me, *LHD* presents the makings of a good society by exploring seemingly unconnected (and frequently seemingly un-utopian) issues, not by proposing a grand plan. I wish to use *LHD* primarily, because it is a fiction, not an essay (e. g., on Euclidean utopias), because its utopian aspects are even more ambiguous than *The Dispossessed*’s, and because it is better known than *Always Coming Home*, although I shall of course refer to those texts. (And of course I shall not ignore Gethenian sexuality and other well-studied *LHD* topics.)

Mark Allison, Ohio Wesleyan University, “*The Civil War in France*: Karl Marx’s English Utopia?”

This paper situates *The Civil War in France* (1871)—Marx’s profoundly influential defense of, and eulogy for, the Paris Commune—in a British cultural context. Taking as my points of departure Fredric Jameson’s claim that *The Civil War in France* can be classified as a utopian text and Gareth Stedman Jones’s observation that Marx’s pamphlet “was not only written in English, but for the English,” I explore a seemingly counterintuitive thesis: the *Civil War in France* may be profitably read as an English utopia. Specifically, I argue that *The Civil War in France* is carefully calibrated to appeal to the British social imaginary. In it, Marx knowingly presents an ideal-typical, imaginative reconstruction of the Commune’s structure and behavior that is intended to resonate with his British readership’s national sensibility and values. Audaciously, Marx’s pamphlet seeks to vindicate the Communards’ revolutionary experiment in self-government by depicting the Commune as an attempt to establish a utopia that accords with British ideals. Given the influence *The Civil War in France* has exercised on subsequent analyses of the Paris Commune (including analyses of the Commune as a utopia) and its centrality in interpretation of Marx’s political thought, my excavation of the British context of Marx’s pamphlet should be of interest to scholars with a wide range of interests.

## 6.C. The Child in Utopia (Citadel North)

We judge societies by how well children thrive in them. Children are key to utopias, showing its potential to create happy and healthy citizens. They reflect the values of a utopia and are emblems of its future. It seems that all utopias and dystopias emphasize the role of children in them as we either envy children in a utopia or fear for them in a dystopia. The three proposals on this panel all explore, in different contexts, the influence of the Romantic child in utopias and dystopias. The Romantics conceived of a child that was imaginative, innocent, carefree, playful, spontaneous, close to God and nature. Childhood was a protected space in which to engage in these qualities and foster the whole individual. Education reflects these values as the child learns from experience and mentorship rather than institutionalized indoctrination.

We explore childhood in three genres: children’s literature (Ostry), Victorian literature (Andreini), and dystopian film (Weaver-Seitz). Elaine Ostry analyzes *Orphan Island* by Laurel Snyder, which is about a utopian island inhabited only by children, who view their lives with a sense of adventure and harmony in a magically benign landscape. Rachel Andreini explores the role of children in William Morris’s socialist utopia, *News from Nowhere*. Both novels stress an unforced education that develops independence, cooperation, individualism, and agency. Although the children in both novels relish their carefree childhoods, they also cross into the realm of adulthood as they assume adult responsibilities, which challenges their depiction as entirely Romantic. Megan Weaver-Seitz examines the role of the child in dystopian film: they need to be protected, but they also are the key to uncovering dystopias and escaping them, even overthrowing them. As Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry observe, “[t]he idea of children ‘saving’ adults is a Romantic concept.” As with the other two papers, the role between child and adult is blurred even as the Romantic child is promoted. The children in *News from Nowhere* and dystopian film represent hope for the future.

Chair: Elaine Ostry, SUNY Plattsburgh

Elaine Ostry, SUNY Plattsburgh, “‘Nine on an Island, Orphans All:’ A Community of Children on *Orphan Island*”

*Orphan Island* by Laurel Snyder is a contemporary children’s book featuring a wonderful island. Only children live on the island and, in the absence of adults, they organize their lives with admirable harmony. Childhood on the island is carefree, innocent, and oriented towards nature, adventure, and laughter. In short, it is a Romantic childhood. Nature is benign, even magical: the winds allow children to leap off the cliffs with abandon, the snakes don’t bite, the sky puts on an amazing show every sunrise and sunset. But the island has rules: every year the oldest child must leave, and a young child arrives in a mysterious self-guiding boat. The child who is now the oldest must take care of the new arrival. Here the eldest child assumes an adult role, whether they want to or not, in preparation for leaving. The island’s pedagogical philosophy echoes Rousseau as children learn from experience and mentorship, developing autonomy outside conventional pedagogical institutions. Jinny, however, stumbles in her new quasi-adult role. She shuns growing up and even decides to stay on the island when the boat arrives again. As she swiftly and anxiously moves into puberty, the harmony and safety of the island collapse. The supporting winds stop blowing, the snakes bite, the sky is dull. The island, then, reflects her adolescent mood and less idyllic adult future. Here, utopia is a state of mind—that of a child.

Rachel L. Andreini, University of Kansas, “Educating the Romantic Child in *News from Nowhere*: Natural Forces in Utopian Reform”

Sally Shuttleworth notes that the nineteenth century brought an increased interest in children’s inner worlds, evident in Victorian debates on forced education and its potential to hinder or accelerate child development. She connects Romanticism to the child, stating, that “authority has switched to the natural, unself-conscious child” (7). Building on Shuttleworth, I focus on how William Morris’ representation of the Romantic child and unforced education converges in his socialist utopia, *News from Nowhere* (1890).

In this paper, I discuss how the developing child becomes crucial to the existence and conceptual framing of Morris’ social utopia, *Nowhere*. To do so, I explore the qualities he ascribes to the Romantic child – earnestness, precociousness, imagination, and rebelliousness – and demonstrate how these traits enable and maintain *Nowhere*. I suggest the Romantic perspective of childhood reveals the broader political notions of Morris’ utopia; because Morris maps the utopian future of England onto the Romantic child, education becomes an engine for utopian development. The child allows Morris to critique the underlying principles of forced education, namely the values of a competitive industrial economy, which he replaces with experience-based learning within the natural world. Although I contend that Morris’ utopia is founded upon an idealized vision of the child, this paper also demonstrates how Morris blurs the line between child and adult. Thus, the Romantic child is at the heart of Morris’ utopian design, restructuring the social relations of production.

Megan Weaver-Seitz, Asbury University, “A Lens of Hope: Children in Dystopian Films”

For decades films have proven to be a self-reflexive medium, built upon conversation with and for an audience, studied within both the creation and the viewing. They unearth, reveal and grant us perspective through the lens filmmakers thrust in front of us. Within the creation of popular dystopian films, the view on children and by children is a unique representation of how we see our world, its brokenness, and our answer for the future. Films like *The Children of Men*, *Birdbox*, and *Metropolis* depict a dystopian world through the adult perspective where children are cherished, sacrificed for, and protected. Through the lens of the child, films such as *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent* and even *Zombieland*, display a view of dystopia where the children fight, overthrow and escape the broken world around them. They become their own heroes. Films like *The Giver* challenge these perspectives further by featuring children that exist within an adult-built, literal utopia who eventually reveal the real dystopia under this façade and escape to an unknown future. Though the generational lens through which these stories are told is different, they are linked in their acknowledgement that children are the ones to be protected because only they can imagine a world away from the brokenness. They are the embodiment of hope for the future, suggesting that even in dystopian film, we believe in the resilience and imagination of a generation beyond our own.

## Session VII 2:45-4:15

### **7.A “Crafting Toward Utopia: Making and Unmaking with Zines” [Presentation and Demonstration] (Colonial East)**

Brit Schulte, University of Texas, Austin

How do zines become objects that thought-smuggle, intervene, and disrupt? How can zines also create opportunities for us to play, feel, and prepare our hearts and minds? Are zine makers and distributors agents of the utopic, of radical composition? Join educator, community organizer, and zine maker Brit Schulte for a creative session, combining presentation, performative demonstration, and discussion. This will be an exercise in composition as Brit presents a constellation of zines that explore the medium's potential for experimenting in utopian thought.

Brit Schulte is an Art History PhD student at the University of Texas at Austin, a community organizer, and zinester. They study print objects, as well as sex working, queer and trans\* histories. Their current organizing efforts involve criminalized survivors, prison/police abolition, and the decriminalization of sex work. Their writing may be found at *The Funambulist*, *In These Times*, *Monthly Review*, *The Appeal*, and *Truthout*.

### **7.B. Always Renaming Utopian Studies: the Palgrave Handbook of Utopian and Dystopian Studies (Colonial West)**

In April 2022, *The Palgrave Handbook of Utopian and Dystopian Literatures*, co-edited by Peter Marks (Sydney), Jennifer Wagner-Lawlor (Penn State) and Fátima Vieira (Porto), arrived in the world. With 56 commissioned essays covering the contemporary vibrancy of utopian vision, and its resiliency as an idea, genre, and critical mode, the Handbook is a global, cross-disciplinary, and comprehensive volume. A selection of contributors will formally “launch” through a panel discussion of the editorial principles behind the organization of the volume, and the central themes guiding the range of new topics selected for inclusion. Given this year’s theme of “make, unmake, remake,” we hope that the publication of this latest volume can contribute to the conference-long discussion, as well as the interrogation of the principle of hope. We welcome a discussion with audience members on new directions.

Chair: Jennifer Wagner-Lawlor, Penn State University

Participants:

Jennifer Wagner-Lawlor, Penn State University

Peter Marks, University of Sydney

## **7. C. Dystopian Textualities (Citadel North)**

This panel will explore texts and the discourse surrounding these texts that are being disseminated and floating around in the postmodern spaces that we all inhabit in various ways. While the internet allows for quick access to all sorts of information, it is not always a rosy scene. At present, the panel includes three presentations. Jill Craven will discuss David Byrne's *American Utopia*, and how it reads as a text, and transforms our views of the experience of going to a "Broadway show." Caleb Corkery will discuss the propaganda embedded in popular rhetorical discourse. Dominic Ording will discuss how language and texts and selves are banned in the contemporary educational system.

Chair: Dominic Ording, Millersville University of Pennsylvania

Dominic Ording, Millersville University of Pennsylvania, “Banned”

My paper "Banned" discusses what books are banned and why; how language used in the K-12 and college classrooms is monitored and sometimes banned; and how the Breedlove family in Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye" (a book often banned) are banned by society and ban themselves from existence.

Jill Craven, Millersville University, “Who's Got a Match? Burning Down the House with David Byrne”

Accepting the challenge to think differently can broaden the possibilities for our future, but we need to be open to doing the work. By structuring an inspiring narrative arc in stage patter, invoking unity in set design and choreography, challenging that unity in lyrics, and overcoming

those challenges through groove and harmonies, *American Utopia* becomes a journey that invites its participants to change their minds—both literally and figuratively. David Byrne models an aspirational utopia where we understand the impact and implied hierarchies of ossified structures, where we embrace new forms and unify into a community to build something meaningful (like America), where we respect the contributions of all community members and recognize that everyone can grow, and where we embrace inclusion and develop empathy to forge meaningful human connections.

## Session VIII 4:30-6:00

### 8.A. Speculation in Time and Space (Colonial East)

Robert Wood, University of California, Irvine, “The Mediocre Hobbyists of the Enterprise: *Star Trek*, Leisure, and Utopia”

One of the most significant shifts in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is the introduction of elements of daily life to the show. It holds on to the episodic nature of the original series but incorporates the private lives of the crew into the show. We’re given spaces of leisure in the form of ten forward and the holodeck, and we follow the crew as they play the trombone, put on theatrical works, learn to paint, and learn forms of Klingon martial arts. These day-to-day activities create an illusion of narrative continuity. The practices create a sense of life going on off screen, of the viewer entering and exiting the ongoing daily lives of these characters. But more significantly, those elements contribute to the utopian elements of the narrative, framing the Federation as an institution that creates spaces for creativity and self-discovery. Those leisure activities take the form of creative activities that allow for the crew members to explore interests dramatically outside their jobs and activities that they are often not very good at, whether in the form of Commander Riker’s missed trombone solos or Data’s dreadful poetry. That emphasis on self-exploration centers the utopian project of *Star Trek* on a sort of individual discovery of the self, the development of what it means to be human. My plan is to explore this utopian element of the show and its commitment to a deeply individualized freedom that often contrasts with the collectivist elements of the show.

Jenni Halpin, Savannah State University, “‘Meanwhile’ as ‘Otherwise’: Making the Past and Future in *Copenhagen*”

An iterative imagining of what might have happened when Werner Heisenberg met with Margrethe and Niels Bohr in September 1941, Michael Frayn’s *Copenhagen* sets its characters at work to make a shared past that will allow the world to linger in what Werner describes as “this most precious meanwhile” in his final speech of the play. The great threat to this in-between time is what Elaine Scarry has described as “thermonuclear monarchy”—a political and technological condition enabled by the nuclear weapons the 1941 meeting notoriously failed to prevent. As ghosts, Margrethe, Niels, and Werner find themselves imagining not only different actions and choices but different motivations for one another; they are, as Jacques Derrida would ask, taking time to listen to ghosts. This imagining—imagining otherwise as Emmanuel Levinas might have it—challenges each of their (often

faulty) recollections and moreover provokes changes that make themselves become otherwise than they had been in 1941. As they reenact—and differently enact—the meeting, I argue that they are rejecting historical possibilities and realities in favor of making possible a meeting that preserves their friendship and that such preservation is a precursor to preserving the world.

Thomas Horan, *The Citadel*, “The Surprisingly Secular Patriarchy in Bina Shah’s *Before She Sleeps*”

Recent feminist dystopian fiction tends to emphasize the sociopolitical importance of religion, either through theocratic repression and/or as an engine of resistance. Bina Shah’s *Before She Sleeps* challenges this paradigm of religious significance, reducing the Abrahamic religions to one insignificant sect: “[T]he three religions that had merged into one still have their followers, but we regard them as eccentrics now that science has become our way of life.... They’re too insignificant to be counted anyway” (25). Shah, like H.G. Wells, suggests that religion will atrophy swiftly, since the narrative transpires roughly fifty years from now in the ecofriendly, West Asian Green City that emerges following nuclear war. This relegation of organized religion to the periphery also recalls the secular feminist speculative fiction of the nineteen seventies. Is this collapse of monotheism in *Before She Sleeps* a mere plot point or a serious forecast? The nuclear fallout catalyzes a virulent strain of cervical cancer that decimates the female population. Does this imply that in a world where women constitute a superminority, the sexism fueling much institutional religion—and thus belief itself—becomes unnecessary to the patriarchy? Or is the rich cultural legacy of religion a liability in a technologically advanced society that believes its survival depends on disavowing the past? My analysis will explore such aspects of Shah’s surprising portrayal of a secular near future.

## 8.B. Global Migrancy (Colonial West)

Chair: Tricia Reagan, Randolph-Macon College

Jacqueline Shea, Arizona State University, “Harmonious Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contact and Creation in the Borderlands”

The U.S-Mexico border region is a place where identities and nations both clash and converge. In fact, despite the extreme contention that colors the mainstream portrayal of border towns, there is another reality that remains largely unpublicized: one where people grow up toeing the line between Mexico and America, Mexican and American, and, linguistically, Spanish and English. This mixing of what many would call “essential” aspects of reality and identity challenges the claim that each and any of these—nationhood, race, and language, respectively—contain a pure “essence” that can be clearly distinguished from one another. When these so-called “essences” come into contact, they tend to create something new that blends elements from each “essence” marker, thus implying their “essences” are actually “constructions.” This presentation, therefore, seeks to explore what has been and can be created when these constructions come into contact, both personally and interpersonally, on the U.S-Mexico border, through exploring 1) the history and results of contact between each binary construction and 2) the role that music as a mode of communication can play in



the facilitation and interpretation of their resulting creations. This analysis will provide the framework and context for a bilingual mashup of American and Chican@ folk music that I will share.

Tricia Reagan, Randolph-Macon College, “All that Glitters is Not Gold: The Jaula de Oro (Golden Cage) as a Dystopian Symbol in Migrant Narratives”

The description of the United States as a Golden cage is abundant in migrant narratives. Artists, composers, singers, directors, and activists alike have employed the metaphor of la jaula de oro, or the golden cage, to describe the situation of undocumented immigrants in the United States from at least the 1980s to the present day. The United States promises a utopia: riches, prosperity, and the dream of a better life to all that enter the country, but this promise, instead, becomes a trap, particularly for the undocumented immigrant who faces difficulties in every aspect of life, including fear of police detention and deportation, difficulty in obtaining work, cultural and familial disintegration, nostalgia for their country of origin, lack of health insurance, lack of access to public resources and higher education, and even driving privileges. For undocumented immigrants, the so-called “American Dream” becomes an impossible reality, a dystopia and although opportunity abounds, the immigrant is trapped by the United States. This study will provide a historical overview of the image of a golden cage as well as analyze its significance in 3 films, 4 songs and multiple pieces of artwork that use the image to represent that all that glitters is NOT gold in particular in U.S. migrant narratives.

