

Western
Centre for the Study
of Theory & Criticism

GRADUATE CONFERENCE

**WORLDING BEYOND THE
END OF THE WORLD**

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY
LONDON, ONTARIO, CANADA
APRIL 25-26, 2025**

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Notes of Appreciation

The conference committee would like to extend a special thank you to the Philosophy Department, the History Department, the Gender, Women, and Sexuality Department, The School for Advanced Studies in the Arts & Humanities (SASAH), the Visual Arts Department, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, the Faculty of Information and Media, Western's Society for Utopian Literature and Depictions of Social Engineering (S.U.S.E) and the Canadian Philosophical Association, for their generous support for the conference.

A big thank you to our moderators and volunteers and the Centre for Theory and Criticism students and faculty for their participation in the conference. The committee would especially like to thank Melanie Caldwell and Joshua Schuster for their guidance throughout the organizing process. Needless to say, without their support this event would have not come to fruition.

Lastly, the committee extends its gratitude to Antonia Stan and Joseph Palmeri, the Co-Editors in Chief of *Chiasma: A site for thought*, for agreeing to partner with us to make a special issue based on the conference.

Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Chonnonton Nations, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum.

With this, we respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land, as they are the original caretakers. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) endure in Canada, and we accept responsibility as a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our teaching, research, and community service.

This Land Acknowledgement is a first step towards reconciliation. We believe decolonization is not only an epistemological matter but also a material one. We encourage everyone to inform themselves about the traditional lands, treaties, history, and cultures of the Indigenous people local to their region.

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

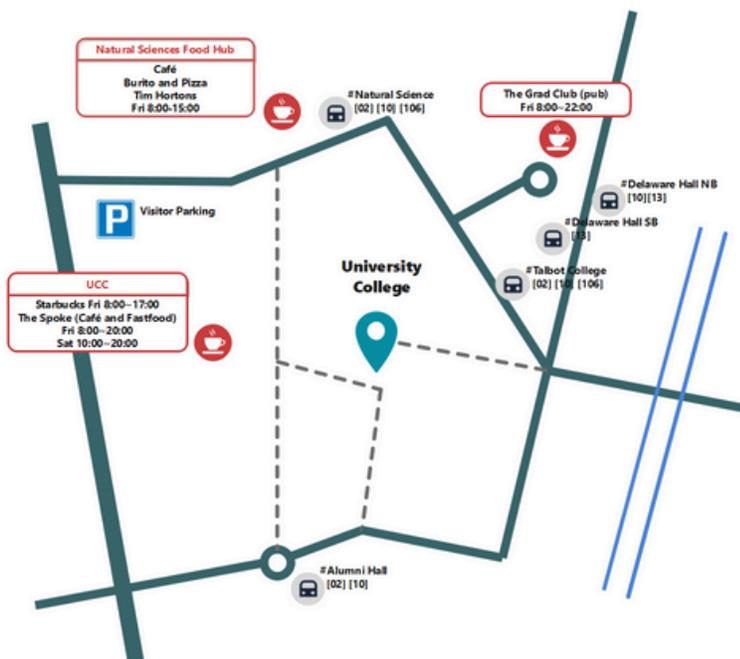
FRIDAY APRIL 25

TIME	“AUTONOMOUS DESIRE MYTH OF THE SPARAGMOS”
09:00 - 09:30	REGISTRATION
9:30 - 10:00	OPENING
10:00 - 11:00	SESSION 1: POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION (<i>UC 2105</i>) DECOLONIZING MUSIC (<i>UC 2110</i>)
11:00 - 12:00	LUNCH @ JIM GOOD ROOM
12:00 - 13:30	KEYNOTE: Susie O’Brien @ Conron Hall
13:30 - 14:30	SESSION 2: QUEERNESS, TRAGEDY AND DISOBEDIENCE (<i>UC 2105</i>) ALTERED STATES/ ALTERED FUTURES (<i>UC 2110</i>)
14:30 - 15:00	BREAK @ JIM GOOD ROOM
15:00 - 16:00	SESSION 3: DESIRE AND DESTRUCTION (<i>UC 2105</i>) MEMORY AND MOURNING (<i>UC 2110</i>)
16:00 - 17:30	KEYNOTE & DRAG PERFORMANCE: Kat Newman-Seymour @ Conron Hall Featuring: Oh! Livia

SATURDAY APRIL 26

TIME	“TRANS(END) HU(MAN) [fɒ.k stʃr'.ɔkʰ.tʃr]”
9:30 - 10:00	REGISTRATION
10:00-11:00	SESSION 4: INDIGENEITY AND WEAVING RESISTANCE (<i>UC 2105</i>) REMODELLING SPACES (<i>UC 2110</i>)
11:00-11:30	BREAK @ JIM GOOD ROOM
11:30-12:30	SESSION 5: DECOLONIAL FUTURES (<i>UC 2105</i>) TRANS (HUMANS) AND TRANS HORIZONS (<i>UC 2110</i>)
12:30-13:30	LUNCH @ JIM GOOD ROOM
13:30-15:00	KEYNOTE: Rinaldo Walcott @ Conron Hall
15:00-16:00	SESSION 6: ECOCRITICISM BEYOND THE MAN (<i>UC 2105</i>) CRIPPING THE FUTURE (<i>UC 2110</i>)
16:00	CLOSING REMARKS

LOCATION INFORMATION



Public Transportation: To reach **University College (UC)**, you can take **bus numbers 02, 10, or 106** and **get off at the stops for ‘Talbot College’ or ‘Natural Science.’**

Alternatively, you can opt for **bus number 13** and disembark at the **‘Delaware Hall’** stop. From either of these stops, it’s just a 5-minute walk to University College.

If you take an Uber, it costs about \$15 from downtown.

Parking: The rate for visitor parking on campus is \$1.50 per half hour. Payment is by credit card at all locations (No tap/debit), with coins accepted at Pay and Display locations only.

FRIDAY APRIL 25
AUTONOMOUS DESIRE | MYTH OF THE SPARAGMOS

LOCATION FIXED	UC 2105	UC 2110
10:00-11:00	PANEL 1 : POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION Moderator: Peyton Campbell, Western University	PANEL 2: DECOLONIZING MUSIC Moderator: Avery Dawson, Western University
SESSION 1	SPEAKERS: 1. Ran Deng (she/her), <i>University of Toronto</i> , "Disarticulating Futurity: Birth, Extinction, and the Subtraction of Living" 2. Theresa Hovey (she/her), <i>Wayne State University Purdy & Kresge Library</i> , "Worlding Beyond the End of The Word: Wittig, Benveniste, and How to Speak of Feminist Futures"	SPEAKERS: 1. Irina Znamirovski (she/her), <i>University of Toronto</i> , "There Will Come SF Music: A Study of Colonization and Sound in Ray Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles" 2. Yesenia Rojas (she/her) and Freelon (they/them), <i>NYU Tisch</i> , "A STUDY IN BLUE, Dark was the day, long was the night"
11:00-12:00	LUNCH	
12:00-13:30	KEYNOTE: SUSIE O'BRIEN, "Submerged worlds, emergent possibilities: Reading in the wake of white resilience", <i>McMaster University</i>	LOCATION: CONRON HALL 3RD FLOOR MODERATOR: Joshua Schuster, Western University
13:30-14:30	PANEL 3: QUEERNESS, TRAGEDY, AND DISOBEDIENCE Moderator: Antonia Stan, Western University	PANEL 4: ALTERED STATES/ ALTERED FUTURES Moderator: Joseph Palmeri, Western University
SESSION 2	SPEAKERS: 1. Kyra Min Poole (she/they), <i>Lakehead University</i> , "Tanukis, Testicles, and Tragedy: The Trickster's Return to Joy" 2. Emily Veysey (she/her), <i>University of New Brunswick</i> , "The Queer Cyborgian Utopianism of Annalee Newitz's Autonomous" 3. Katie Grant (she/her), <i>Western University</i> , "A Renewed Intimacy: Practicing Mourning in Childhood and the Queer Time of Barthes and Sedgwick"	SPEAKERS: 1. Jesus Quintero (he/him), <i>New York University</i> , "DEATH: Ayahuasca and the Dramaturgy of Santo Daime as South American Theatre" 2. Sylvie Côté (she/her/hers), <i>York University</i> , "Pills, Power, and Resistance: Rethinking Substance Use in Sci-Fi Futures"
14:30- 15:00	BREAK	
15:00-16:00	PANEL 5:DESIRE AMID DESTRUCTION Moderator: Paria Rahimi, Western University	PANEL 6: MEMORY AND MOURNING Moderator: Jason Stocker, Western University
SESSION 3	SPEAKERS: 1. Glynis Macleod (she/her), <i>Western University</i> , "Eco-Erotics at the End of the World" 2. Juls Martins (they/them/theirs), <i>University of Toronto</i> , "Methods of the Multiverse: Collage and Footnote. Ambivalent lover" 3. Timmy Straw (they/them), <i>University of Pennsylvania</i> , "Let Joy Size: catastrophe, affirmation, and the structuring of attention"	SPEAKERS: 1. Suarjan Prasai , <i>University of Toronto</i> , "Ancestral Media" 2. Chloe Tsolakoglou (she/they), <i>Columbia University</i> , "Living Against Your Will But According to Your Desires" 3. Rijaa Khan (she/they), <i>McMaster University</i> , "On Our Earth"
16:00 - 17:30	KEYNOTE & DRAG PERFORMANCE: Kat Newman-Seymour <i>Western University</i> "The Joy and Politics of Drag" Featuring: Oh! Livia	LOCATION: CONRON HALL 3RD FLOOR Moderator: Peyton Campbell, Western University

SATURDAY APRIL 26
TRANS(END) HU(MAN) | [fʊ.k stʃr'.ʊkʰ.tʃr]

LOCATION FIXED	UC 2105	UC 2110
10:00-11:00	PANEL 7: INDIGENEITY AND WEAVING RESISTANCE Moderator: Kailey Cutillo, Western University	PANEL 8: REMODELLING SPACES Moderator: Elric Paauw, Western University
SESSION 4	<p>SPEAKERS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jennifer Carmichael, <i>McMaster University</i>, "To Save or Not to Save: Extinction Narratives of 'Human' and 'the World'" 2. Gabi Mundaka Riquelme (she/they), <i>University of Windsor</i>, "Crafting land-based resistance in the diaspora" 3. Taylor Hoggarth (he/they), <i>Trent University</i>, "Storytelling Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer, and Trans Indigenous People's Connection to the Land" 	<p>SPEAKERS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emily Faubert (she/they elle/iel), <i>University of Toronto & Lakehead University</i>, "On our way together: throtopias, public transit, and the storytelling of collective movement" 2. Althea McIntosh (she/they) and Hongshu Wang (he/him), <i>Western University</i>, "Transformative leisure and speculative futures: Reimagining capitalist spectacle at Disneyland Hong Kong and Shanghai" 3. Z Coltman (they/them), <i>Western University</i>, "Heterotopic Responses to Public Needs: Anchoring Worldmaking in the Present"
11:00-11:30	BREAK	LOCATION: JIM GOOD ROOM
11:30-12:30	PANEL 9: DECOLONIAL FUTURES Moderator: Charlie Paul Martin, Western University	PANEL 10: TRANS (HUMANS) AND TRANS HORIZONS Moderator: Max Bennett, Western University
SESSION 5	<p>SPEAKERS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Qanita Lilla (she, her), <i>Queen's University</i>, "'Towards a People's Culture': Artists' centres in Cape Town, South Africa and London, Ontario" 2. Francis Alakija, <i>Western University</i>, "Africa and the Libidinal Economy of International Relations Theory and Practice" 	<p>SPEAKERS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Blair Attard-Frost (she/they), <i>University of Toronto</i>, "Transing the AI Apocalypse: Trans Futurity, Intercorporeality, & Intimacy in object.type(3)" 2. Levi Hord (they/them), <i>Columbia University</i>, "No Theory in the Gender Apocalypse: Infect Your Friends and Loved Ones (2016) and the Refusal of Trans Speculation" 3. Deanna Armenti (Fae/Faer, She/Her), <i>Toronto Metropolitan University</i>, "When Rabbits Howl, Gender as Ontology: Fable, Figuration, and Futurity" 4. Bailey Bird (they/them), <i>University of Toronto</i>, "MELD: A Transhumanist Speculative Technofiction"
12:30-13:30	LUNCH	LOCATION: JIM GOOD ROOM
13:30-15:00	KEYNOTE: RINALDO WALCOTT "The Art of Black Affect and Black Gesture in the Time of Reparations" University at Buffalo	LOCATION: CONRON HALL 3RDFLOOR MODERATOR: Erica Lawson, Western University
15:00-16:00	PANEL 11: ECOCRITICISM BEYOND THE MAN Moderator: Brendan Brown, Western University	PANEL 12: CRIPPING THE FUTURE Moderator: Liam Morantz, Western University
SESSION 6	<p>SPEAKERS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Zainab Khalid (any/all), <i>Queen's University</i>, "The Location of Crisis: Biosecurity and Meat Markets in the Age of Pandemics" 2. Wei Chieh (Jeremy) Tsai (he/him), <i>Western University</i>, "Exploring spiritual agency of nonhumans: The case of nonhuman injustice in the Fukushima triple disaster" 3. Brandon Rushton (he/him/his), <i>University of Notre Dame</i>, "Reading The Air in the Air Behind It" 	<p>SPEAKERS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maggie Mills (she/they), <i>Carleton University</i>, "'Who is System and What is he So Nervous About': Crippling mHealth Technologies" 2. Leslyn Stobbs (she/her), <i>University of Toronto</i>, "Hyperempathy Syndrome and Other Radical Sensitivities: Feeling through/across/with Somatosensory Difference" 3. Melissa Bush (she/her), <i>University of Toronto</i>, "Our Stories Matter: Archival Research as Disability Justice and Mad Worlding"
16:00	CLOSING REMARKS	LOCATION: CONRON HALL 3RD FLOOR

PANEL 1 : POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION

Moderator: Peyton Campbell, *Western University*

Speaker: **Ran Deng** [she/her], *University of Toronto*,

“Disarticulating Futurity: Birth, Extinction, and the Subtraction of Living”

Ran Deng is a Ph.D. candidate at the Centre for Comparative Literature. She’s also affiliated with the Women & Gender Studies Institute and the Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies. Ran’s dissertation addresses the questions of sexual and reproductive consent in the transpacific context.

Abstract: How does one consent to being born, especially in a world where each birth is contingent on selection, annihilation, and its own (in)capacity of and (lack of) investment in biological reproduction? Thinking alongside this question, I inquire the stakes of aesthetic world-making in relation to apocalyptic visions of the future. Through a reading of *The Memory Police* (Yoko Ogawa, 1990), I contend that the premises of liberal futurism not only prevent certain bodies from being born, but also actively lessen and fracture existing subjects. I argue that life cannot be consented to as a chronology of events, where living is understood as an infinite series of additions (of memory, ability, knowledge). It is through the infinite lessening represented in *The Memory Police* that we can glean an aesthetics of finitude, where (re)production both unbinds art from its implication of work and detaches birth from the socio-political ends of maternal labor.

Speaker: **Theresa Hovey** [she/her], *Wayne State University Purdy and Kresge Library*,
“Worlding Beyond the End of The Word: Wittig, Benveniste, and How to Speak of Feminist Futures”

Theresa Hovey graduated from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan with a degree in linguistics in 2021. She is currently a clerk at Wayne State’s Purdy/Kresge Library while enrolled in the Master of Library and Information Science Program. She makes thorough use of the collections which surround her to research literature from a diverse range of fields.

Abstract: In recent years, a flourishing of inquiry into the individual and collective aspects of how gendered subjectivity develops has come to bear fruit. Take for example, Zazanis’ 2021 “Social Reproduction and Social Cognition” which interrogates the overlaps between queer, feminist, and Marxist theory to develop the collective production of trans life, or Pellegrini & Saketopoulou’s 2023 *Gender Without Identity*

which builds on the work of Jean Laplanche to destabilize cis-centric narratives of development in the consulting room. While gendered subject formation comes to be more thoroughly analyzed as a collaborative process mediated through language and the symbolic, the stage is set for an investigation of language as a historically specific phenomenon, shaped by material-economic relations, in order to move towards a historicization of this process and understand how one might move through and past it. Beyond totalizing processes of gender, Monique Wittig and Sandra Zweig's utopian future in their *Lesbian Peoples: Material for a Dictionary* serves as the sun to be oriented towards, rising in the sky of history, while the tools of historical-comparative linguistics, psychoanalysis, and anthropology are marshalled to understand the space between our present moment, the past which shapes it, and the futures we may make.

PANEL 2: DECOLONIZING MUSIC

Moderator: Avery Dawson, *Western University*

Speaker: **Irina Znamirowski** [she/her], *University of Toronto*, ***“There Will Come SF Music: A Study of Colonization and Sound in Ray Bradbury’s The Martian Chronicles”***

Irina Znamirowski is an English MA student at the University of Toronto. She earned her BA with a double major in English (honours) and Philosophy and a minor in psychology from Brandeis University in May 2024. Irina’s primary research interests are focused on metatheatrical remarks in early modern drama and their relation to the ontologies of fictional characters. Additionally, Irina is interested in studying the landscape of SF literature from the 1900s to the early 2010s. She wishes to study how to use SF texts as a tool to enrich the broader study of literature and not just a place for escapism. In 2022, Irina conducted a comprehensive survey of SF music, and with several colleagues, produced an EP of SF music inspired by Kuno in E.M. Forester’s “The Machine Stops.”

Abstract: In “Seven Beauties of Science Fiction” Csicsery-Ronay identifies how music is the most “orphaned” medium within the SF genre. However, sound just might be the most common feature across SF literature, film, video games, and other genres. Whether as music referenced in a literary text or as the background music to a film, sound unites the SF genre.

Ray Bradbury’s 1950 SF fix-up *The Martian Chronicles* includes a series of eerie references to music. In the first episode, Ylla cannot remember “that fine and beautiful song” and in April 2003 young boys are playing on bone xylophones creating what

must be SF music. The references to music play a pivotal role of unifying the episodes into an estranged frontier narrative. In this paper, I consider how the literature of SF music, an inherently interdisciplinary focus, opens new horizons for the broader study of speculative media.

I examine the role of SF music in *The Martian Chronicles* through two lenses. First, I situate my argument near Richard Slotkin's study of the frontier narrative and Foucault's theory of heterotopias. I examine how music evokes nostalgia for a time before colonization and is simultaneously used as a colonizing force. Second, I consult Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" and Homi Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity to rectify Bradbury's depiction of contradictory colonial forces in the music. Taken together, I consider how a more careful examination of interdisciplinary allusions to SF sounds are a starting point to weave SF music into the tapestry.

Speaker: **Yesenia Rojas** [she/her] & **X Freelon**[they/them], *NYU Tisch*,
"A STUDY IN BLUE,
Dark was the day,
long was the night"

Yesenia Rojas is an artist engaging anticolonial methodologies and riotous processes in visualsonics, noise, and movement. Articulating a focus on the Black Atlantic and its psycho-affective field, she experiments with modes of performance, sound, and writing that confront, respond to, and agitate semiotics and power. With installation work featured at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, Peachanne Anderson Gallery, No. 9 Cork Street, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, and FRIEZE London, among other sites, she's also composed original music for films premiered at Third Horizon Film Festival, Untitled Art, Odù Film Festival, New Orleans Film Festival, Art Basel Miami, and BlackStar Film Festival.

X. Freelon is a lens based poet, who works within apertures of blues performance traditions, contemplating the axiology of time within the Black Southern-Gulfport quotidian experience. Their work posits a quantum-physical rupturing of captivity through black aural-visibility. X's work is witnessed in the visual and performance objects they've crafted for pleasure, and embodied through their labor to reconcile with ecological duress inflicted via the post-colonial apparati. Works & collaboration; a southern sculpture garden, KINKME, SYLVESTER a cinematic-theatrical experience, ROTATION a southern publication.

Abstract: *A Study in Blue* is an installation-collection of light and sonic mapping, original compositions, and “found footage” experimental cinematics, presented alongside an academic lecture framing a decolonial ethno-anthro-musicological theory of time and movement. This work’s sonic visual trajectory mediates on the unegotiable and unwavering existence of bodies on coastal lands in the Gulf-port, Caribbean, and Florida, beyond and throughout the gradual flaying of shores, bodies, borders, and lives impacted by disasters, Western surveillance capitalism, and ecological terror.

Understanding the Atlantic as an assemblage of munitions and a space with detonative possibility, *A Study in Blue* challenges and complicates modern academic, cultural, and anthropological assumptions of blackness—specifically, the dynamism of its exchange and interaction with natural elements and quantum theories of time. This thought emerges from political and poethical epistemologies of oceanic place and space, a historical location of Freudian concept as critiqued by Sylvia Wynter, Hortense Spillers, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, Frantz Fanon, and James Baldwin.

Our speculative close study of embodied polymorphic possibility, *Starskins*, is an experiment in the aesthetics and politics of reproduction that considers the histories of socio-economically, geo-politically submerged, and isolated lands. This project refuses the act of prescribing and collapsing determination as life in “the future”, instead approaching the spectacle and impossibility of liberation as postmodernist ‘freedom’—a product of captivity designed for black objects.

Emerging from the histories and colluding topographies of communities birthed from maroon traditions in the aforementioned intertidal areas, *A Study in Blue* asks, what is life when liberation [un]matters? What are the possibilities of movement, arrival, and surfacing that exist when being is no longer a state of [re]captivity?

PANEL 3: QUEERNESS, TRAGEDY, AND DISOBEDIENCE

Moderator: Antonia Stan, *Western University*

Speaker: **Kyra Min Poole** [she/they], *Lakehead University*,
“Tanukis, Testicles, and Tragedy: *The Trickster’s Return to Joy*”

Kyra Min Poole, is a prospective MEd graduate student at Lakehead University specializing in Social Justice Education. Holding a HBASc degree with concentrations in psychology, media communications and philosophy, Kyra Min is an overbearing cat mother with an interdisciplinary research-creation focus on intersectional comedy, humorous resilience and the decolonization of climate justice through trickster

storytelling. Increasingly informed by the odd and often uncomfortable relations within, Kyra Min explores comedic play whilst coagulating within the bureaucratic rigidity of academia; having irreverent fun, in hope of making connections at the end of this world that may inspire what comes after. Their first co-written books *Queer Cartographies: Mapping Queerealities* is expected in 2026.

Abstract: A tragic world end is always on the cusp, taking innumerable and intersecting forms. Despite ‘viral’ affective valence, no matter the mediated sense of urgency, environmentalist narratives mechanistically fail in the face of apathetic and amnesiac waves of climate discourse under the crush of late capitalism (Klein). As ubiquitous world-ending phenomena, our storytelling ought to do more than alleviate or instill dread—instead to enact useful representations that combust our neoliberal notions of individuality, and promote a collective shift towards humorous resilience. I have found comedy pervades the affective voids of tragedy (Kerr), acting as the prismatic shadow to the tragic form. In studying the eco-psychology of Japanese tanuki tricksters in Studio Ghibli’s *Pom Poko* (1994), an alternative and enduring force of playful irreverence emerges; a perverse mode beyond the tragic, in opposition to the didactic, self-righteous, and distressed modes of mainstream environmentalism. A trickster reckons comedy and tragedy as one in the same; alas failure to respond correctly is where the trickster’s laugh resides. Tragedy helps us make sense of our community (Poole), and yet comedy trails behind, filling the space where silence lurks instead of complicated answers (Kerr). Thus, laughter rebuilds the community connections lost in the contradictions of tragedy, recreating a holistic sense of community through joy (Roemer).

Speaker: *Emily Veysey*[she/her], *University of New Brunswick*,
“The Queer Cyborgian Utopianism of Annalee Newitz’s *Autonomous*”

Emily Veysey is a first-year PhD Interdisciplinary Studies student at the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton. She graduated with her MA in Cultural Studies from Queen’s University (2024) and holds a BA (Hon) in Comparative Cultures Studies and a Bachelor of Applied Arts from the University of New Brunswick (2021). With work broadly focused on gender, the body, and technology, Emily’s research draws on feminist media and culture studies, science and technology studies, and gender studies, utilizing a cyborgian theoretical framework of feminist posthuman technological embodiment. A sci-fi buff, Emily’s research explores the implications of the gendered body and technology as often represented through androids and artificial life forms in relation to real-world technological development and the co-constitutive relationship of media and technology in contemporary Western society.

Abstract: This essay is an analysis of Annalee Newitz's 2017 queer science fiction novel *Autonomous* as an exploration of queer posthuman gender identity, understood through the ontological framework of the cyborg. The cyborg as a figure of trans becoming both emerges from and disrupts heteronormative gender identity processes, and serves as a potent figuration to consider the future of queer and trans identity through a grounded utopian lens of queer futurity. In order to approach the complexity of gender identity and sexuality in the novel, I utilize Judith Butler's "disobedient" interpellation, in which the idea of disobedience through parody of gender is analyzed in the character Paladin's acceptance of imposed human gender in order to further engage with their sexuality. I then turn to Jacob Barry's discussion of trans becoming and situate it within the partial and contradictory identities embodied by Paladin. Framed through the ontology of the cyborg as posited by Donna Haraway, this essay argues that *Autonomous* is a critical queer science fiction text in which the posthuman condition of the cyborg and contemporary complex identity processes take shape in a queer utopian narrative grounded in the historicity of queer experience as encouraged by José Esteban Muñoz.

Speaker: **Katie Grant** [she/her], *Western University*,
"A Renewed Intimacy: Practicing Mourning in Childhood and the Queer Time of Barthes and Sedgwick"

Katie Grant is from Western University, where she also completed her MA, then writing on punk, love, and Marxism. Katie Grant's doctoral research figures weather as a paradigm for mourning, principally based on the late work of Roland Barthes, where persistent interests such as Proust, Michelet, the tuberculosis sanatorium, and Barthes's index cards synthesize in the writing body and the semi-realized *Vita Nova* project, as he practices mourning "*en levant la tête*."

Abstract: The presentation seeks to respond particularly to the troubled "end" in "'the' 'end' of 'the world,'" as cited from Mitchell and Chaudhury in this conference's call for submissions, and relatedly, to the uncertain futurity implied by such an end. This begins with a discussion of futurity in mourning, an issue characterized by Michel Deguy: "How can we (how dare we; how can we manage to) survive those whom we love truly; without whom we are not?" The mourner's infidelity is complicated further by the circumstances of Roland Barthes and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, with the former both repulsed by the future but compelled to write the memory of his dead mother, and with the latter confronted by her own impending death from breast cancer. For

both of these writers, the problem of futurity is alleviated, though not resolved, by queer—or non-Oedipal—time, and a Proustian attention to the “many deaths” that occur in everyday life. This paradigm of queer time and quotidian death will inspire the presentation’s concluding section: a hopeful analysis of current strategies for teaching resilience in early childhood education, where young learners’ unfixed conceptions of time accommodate the practice of living intimately with death

PANEL 4: ALTERED STATES/ ALTERED FUTURES

Moderator: Joseph Palmeri, *Western University*

Speaker: **Jesus Quintero**[he/him], *New York University*,
“DEATH: Ayahuasca and the Dramaturgy of Santo Daime as South American Theatre”

Jesús Quintero (Benjamín) is a theatre practitioner, performance scholar, and ritual and spiritual performance researcher. His work explores the intersections of performance, decolonial resistance, and transcultural healing practices, focusing on Santo Daime and Spiritism as South American performance traditions. Jesús began his artistic career as a theatre actor and director, using Applied Theatre in Colombia. His commitment to social transformation through the arts led to the development of globally recognized Educational and Diversity Inclusion programs. Expanding into Performing Studies for Healing, he integrates Integral Arts Therapy to support marginalized youth's mental and emotional well-being. Jesús holds an MS in Art Education (FSU, 2023) and an MA in Performance Studies (NYU). His research, *DEATH: Ayahuasca and the Performative Dramaturgy of Santo Daime*, examines sacred *hinários* as living archives that transmit ancestral knowledge, spiritual sovereignty, and collective resilience through ritual performance.

Abstract: The DEATH project examines Santo Daime rituals as performative enactments of transcendence, ego dissolution, and spiritual rebirth, navigating the liminal space between life and death. Rooted in Afro-Indigenous-European traditions, these rituals follow a dramaturgical arc of death, revelation, and resurrection, dissolving binary constructs such as self and other, body and spirit, healing, and suffering. Participants undergo symbolic ego death, followed by embodied spiritual experiences (*mirações*), which reconstruct identity through collective song, movement, and visionary encounters. This study frames Santo Daime's performative structure as a healing technology and a decolonial archive, resisting Western epistemologies of death and the afterlife.

Santo Daime's ritual choreography, embodied practices, and sacred hinários function as living mediums—sonic and kinetic vessels that transmit ancestral knowledge, cultural resilience, and spiritual sovereignty. These rituals reimagine death not as an end but as a process of renewal and transformation, offering an alternative dramaturgy of existence. Situating Santo Daime within South American performance traditions, this project foregrounds its role as a dynamic site of memory, healing, and resistance.

Employing Ethnographic Refusal, Decolonial Performance Studies, and Dramaturgical Analysis, this research amplifies practitioner narratives, challenging Eurocentric interpretations of ritual, mysticism, and altered states of consciousness. Drawing on Avgi Saketopoulou's Exigent Sadism, it interrogates how Santo Daime's intensity, surrender, and radical embodiment disrupt colonial notions of agency and control, fostering ecological consciousness, deep relationality, and ritual futurism. Ultimately, DEATH positions Santo Daime's dramaturgy as a transformative act that reclaims life in the face of mortality transgresses hegemonic structures of existence, and inscribes new pathways of spiritual and communal being.

Speaker: **Sylvie Côté**[she/her/hers], York University,

“Pills, Power, and Resistance: Rethinking Substance Use in Sci-Fi Futures”

Sylvie Côté is a second-year PhD student at York University in the Gender, Feminist, and Women's Studies program with a focus on critical disability studies. Her research examines how women with ADHD and autism navigate substance use, addiction, and harm reduction in Toronto's rave community. She's a lead volunteer and peer with psyLush, a Toronto-based harm reduction organization in the rave scene. She also explores sex trafficking and BDSM in the dark romance genre with a focus on consent, power, and agency in both real-world and fictional contexts. Finally, Sylvie's hobbies include flow dancing, painting, and hiking.

Abstract: Substance use in science fiction and fantasy literature provides a lens to examine societal constructs and individual experiences. Historically, drugs were depicted as tools for escapism or control whereas contemporary works, especially by marginalized authors, offer nuanced portrayals that challenge traditional narratives and envision alternative futures. This presentation will analyze how contemporary science fiction and fantasy literature, specifically works by Indigenous, trans, and queer authors from the following collections of short stories titled *Love Beyond, Body, Space, and Time* and *Meanwhile, Elsewhere* depict substance use and its intersection with identity and contrast these modern portrayals with earlier sci-fi works to understand the evolution of drug narratives. My research is grounded in feminist, queer, trans, and

Indigenous studies, and this framework facilitates an analysis of identity, power, and resistance. Through close reading, I compare past and present texts to trace shifts in the representation of substance use and its societal implications. I use thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, with key findings showing how in the past, drug philosophies were primarily portrayed as tools for societal control, serving to pacify the population in a neoliberal and oppressive society. On the other hand, contemporary works by marginalized authors often depict substance use as a means of empowerment and self-discovery, challenging traditional narratives and offering alternative visions of the future.

PANEL 5: DESIRE AMID DESTRUCTION

Moderator: Paria Rahimi, *Western University*

Speaker: **Glynis Macleod** [she/her], *Western University*,
“Eco-Erotics at the End of the World”

Glynis Macleod is a PhD student at Western’s Theory Centre and “retired” organic farmer living on 75 acres of rough hills in Grey County. She works primarily with phenomenology, especially theories of embodiment, intimacy, artistic practice, perception, and materiality. She holds an MA and BA in English and Creative Writing from the University of Guelph where her research focused on fluid intercorporeality and erotic intimacy in Melville’s *Moby-Dick* using Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology.

Abstract: This paper develops a theory of erotics through the lens of ecological crisis and ‘the end of the world.’ Starting from the premise that our familiar worlds—the horizons of meaning and practice that give coherence to everyday life—are already unraveling, I explore how cultivating erotic intelligence might prepare us for navigating uncertain futures. While erotic experience has traditionally been understood through the lens of desire and intimacy, I argue that the erotic might better be understood as a power for responding to uncertainty itself—a beckoning toward zones of indeterminacy that necessarily involve risk, trust, and the possibility of transformation. Drawing on Robin Bauer’s analysis of BDSM practices and eco-erotic experience (via Melissa K. Nelson and Glen A. Mazis), I demonstrate how erotic power operates through consensual boundary transgression and the ethical navigation of power. Rather than attempting to maintain control or ‘save’ our familiar worlds, I propose that cultivating erotic intelligence—our capacity to be aroused by and respond to the unknown—might better prepare us for relating to uncertainty and upheaval. This framework suggests that our erotic capacities, far from being limited to sexuality or intimacy, may be crucial for worlding beyond the end of the world.

Speaker: **Juls Martins** [they/them/theirs], *University of Toronto*,
“Methods of the Multiverse: Collage and Footnote”

Juls Martins is a white, queer and non-binary, settler/visitor on the and treaty person of the land of the Williams Treaty of 1923. Juls Martins is currently a Master’s student at the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto. In 2022 they graduated from Western University where she obtained a Bachelor of Arts with an honours specialization in Media and the Public Interest and a major in Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies. They have had research on settler colonialism and gendered environmental racism in the Canadian nation state published and highlighted at conferences. Their current research explores collage and footnote as a relational and embodied mixed method approaches to decolonial futurity.

Abstract: My proposed work explores how, as a white queer settler, I can use the methods of mixed-media collage and footnote, mobilized through relational “decolonial queer politics” to remember differently. I argue that this method can honour pre-colonial truths, present worldings, and anti-colonial futures uniquely adapted to one’s relations. By weaving my work through my personal intimacies, I will attempt to illustrate how this method can break open the ontological-epistemological divide central in Euro-Western thought. I hope to mobilize this method through speculative climate fiction in ways that are accountable to decolonization rather than settler futurity.

Speaker: **Timmy Straw** [they/them], *University of Pennsylvania*,
“Let Joy Size: catastrophe, affirmation, and the structuring of attention”

Timmy Straw is a third-year PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at Penn, where they focus on 20 th and 21 st century Russian- and English-language poetry and translation. Their dissertation project is about the changing image and expression of the crowd/mass life as figured by American and Soviet/post-Soviet poets. A practicing poet, as well— their first book, *The Thomas Salto*, was published in 2024 by Fonograf Editions, and poems of mine appear in the Yale Review, the Paris Review, Harper’s, Annulet, and elsewhere. With Ainsley Morse, they are working on a collection of translations of the contemporary Russian poet and classicist Grigori Dashevsky.

Abstract: This paper begins from a question: how can a poem written under threat of worldlessness—catastrophe— also afford joy? How is it that negation—as in Paul Celan’s “der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland,” for instance—is transformed, via the

poem's formal music, into affirmation, a state of relation, that situatedness in joy which is "enjoyment"? And what capacities might such ambiguous enjoyment possess? This paper will explore the relationship between catastrophe and the joy of affirmation as it is occasioned by poetic form, arguing first that form is the structuring of attention, and attention is a force which binds a will—the poet's, the reader's—to the world. If this is true, it follows that a poem like "Todesfugue" can stage, through its formal pleasures, an affirmation of the very catastrophe (the "worldlessness," in Arendt's language) that its form contains. This affirmation of catastrophe is not perverse, however, because as an affirmation it renews the reader's attachment to the world—put another way, the poem inoculates the reader with worldlessness towards a greater worlding.

PANEL 6: MEMORY AND MOURNING

Moderator: Jason Stocker, *Western University*

Speaker: **Suarjan Prasai**, *University of Toronto*,
"Ancestral Media"

Suarjan Prasai is an artist and media and technology scholar from Toronto. He received his MA at the Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism at Western University under the supervision of Dr. Nandita Biswas Mellamphy. Currently, he is working at the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto to complete his PhD and has an affiliation with the Institute of Communications, Culture, Information and Technology at the University of Toronto, Mississauga. His research explores memory and race in the context of eugenics and DNA.

Abstract: Memory is not just about the past but also shapes future possibilities. It is a social and material process embedded in landscapes through agriculture, architecture, and art, reflecting ancestral experiences. Colonialism has used memory to alter perceptions of history and identity by reshaping space and time. This paper explores two key questions: How does memory influence the politics of space, ecology, coloniality, and digitality? And who owns social memory? Challenging traditional views of memory as purely individual and cognitive, this presentation argues that memory is constructed externally through social technologies such as language, archives, but more importantly through non-human materiality. These biological flows and technologies, acting as extensions of memory, connect it to power dynamics, allowing colonial and capitalist systems to erase or manipulate cultural memory.

Speaker: **Chloe Tsolakoglou** [she/they], *Columbia University*,
“Living Against Your Will But According to Your Desires”

Chloe Tsolakoglou is a poet, translator, and PhD Student in English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. Her fields of interest include Post-1945 literature, Theories of Revolution, Marxism, Queer Theory, and Psychoanalysis. Her poetry has been published in or is recognized by *The Adroit Journal*, *Frontier Poetry*, *Denver Quarterly*, and elsewhere. Chloe’s recent translation of Marios Chakkas’ *The Commune* was reviewed by *Jacobin Magazine* and will be distributed by MIT Press in the Spring of 2025. Additionally, her criticism is forthcoming in *Diacritics*.

Abstract: This paper explores the intersection of personal loss, political resistance, and alternative ways of living in the context of biopolitical oppression. It is an amalgamation of philosophy, poetry, and creative non-fiction. Following the death of a close friend named Jess, the author reflects on the concept of the "vital cell," coined by scholar Kevin Suemnicht, as a way to understand revolutionary movements that operate in a dissociative yet affective state. In turn, the paper examines how these movements generate spaces that offer a different sense of the world. Drawing on Lauren Berlant’s concept of "autopoietic death" and Anna Tsing’s idea of "precarious livelihoods," the author examines how radical, collective spaces—like those formed during a recent gathering at a farm in upstate New York in the wake of Jess’ death—serve as forms of resistance to capitalist structures. These spaces, born from loss and precarity, embody Berlant’s notion of "dissociative life," where individuals are engaged in life while simultaneously distanced from the dominant social order. The paper also reflects on how such spaces create forms of communion that allow for survival, flourishing, and political coalescence. Ultimately, the core argument suggests that the vital cell offers an alternative mode of existence—one that resists biopower through collective care, connection, and reimagined ways of living.

Speaker: **Rijaa Khan** [she/they], *McMaster University*,
“On our Earth”

Rijaa Khan is a writer and poet from Hamilton, Ontario. She is currently completing a masters degree in Cultural Studies and Critical Theory at McMaster University. Khan’s writing focuses on how memory and non-linear storytelling function in Asian diasporic and post-colonial texts. She often finds herself writing about love, queer kinship, cosmological conditions, family, diasporic futurisms, and everything in between. Khan holds bachelor’s degrees in Applied Psychology and English and Cultural Studies; their interdisciplinary background also informs their ways of knowing. You can find her

publications in undergraduate journals such as Spectrum, JUNQ magazine, and elsewhere.

Abstract: *On Our Earth* is a collection of poetry and prose that challenges linear conceptions of time, instead drawing from non-western, non-heteronormative understandings of temporality. The lyrical explorations invite us to consider how queer and diasporic love/kinship can function as acts of resistance within colonial and otherwise oppressive contexts. Moreover, this collection offers us alternative ways of knowing and being on Earth, through creating a space beyond rigid colonial language, which poetic prose can grant. It disrupts the myth of a singular, universal future, proposing instead a multiplicity of possibilities where belonging is not contingent on colonial or capitalist logics. Most importantly, *On Our Earth* hopes to move beyond the binary of utopia and dystopia – to open up a broader discourse around the role of art, poetry, and speculative imaginings in envisioning futures of care, interconnection, and radical transformation for diasporic and queer people. Keywords: Diasporic Futurisms, Queer Temporality, Kinship, Decolonial Epistemologies

PANEL 7: INDIGENEITY AND WEAVING RESISTANCE

Moderator: Kailey Cutillo, *Western University*

Speaker: **Jennifer Carmichael**, *McMaster University*,

“To Save or Not to Save: Extinction Narratives of ‘Human’ and ‘the World’”

Jennifer L. Carmichael is a second year PhD student in English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. She has an interdisciplinary background combining education, cognitive science, philosophy of mind, psychology, and English. Her research explores the ways in which affective elements of engaging with literature can be used as a pedagogical tool to help students develop empathy and emotional resilience. She is also an Ontario Certified Teacher and taught high school for a decade before completing her Interdisciplinary Master’s degree at York University in Toronto.

Abstract: Bounded and binary conceptions of ‘human’ and ‘the world’ have shaped (and continue to shape) crisis narratives around climate change. However, Claire Colebrook points to the uncomfortable but generative possibilities of extinction by positioning the end of this mode of human as a beginning of another mode of existence. By muddying the boundaries of human, world (and crisis), Colebrook not only allows us to engage with the possibility of other ways of conceiving human and the world, but also invites us to imagine what she calls ‘counterfactuals’ in which these conceptions never existed in the first place. This paper will discuss two counterfactuals

to Western ways of being in the world through an affective, interdisciplinary lens, first disrupting understanding of agency as exclusive to humans and then agitating conceptions of time as linear. For example, Vanessa Watts (2013) privileges intention rather than reason, will, and purpose as agential, allowing for the dissolution of the idea that only humans can hold agency, potentially opening alternative pathways for empathy. Zoe Todd (2015) and Kyle Whyte (2017) both present temporal understandings that unsettle Western conceptions of time as linear, which changes the perspective of any action taken in the present iteration of the climate, including undermining unhelpful crisis narratives.

Speaker: **Gabi Mundaka Riquelme** [she/they], *University of Windsor*,
“Crafting land-based resistance in the diaspora”

Gabi Mundaka Riquelme, is a doctoral candidate interested in disability justice, healing justice, cultural and medical anthropology and South America.

Abstract: Drawing on doctoral fieldwork conducted in Wallmapu known as southern Chile, amongst Chileans (the non-Mapuche) and Mapuche, Gabrielle puts forth Ontological Relation Solidarity (ORS). ORS is an embodied praxis, it refers to corporeal movements that create kinesthetic waves with non-human earth and beyond beings. Our sentience with the land-territory as diasporic peoples plays a significant role in how we learn to care for the land-territory; the land-territory where we are emplaced, our ancestral lands and/or where we are displaced from. It is not only the land-territory we live on that informs us, but it is also our diasporic and/or our ancestral lands –be that in Spain or Latin America and the Caribbean. The third component of ORS is Solidarity, this refers to mutual aid across worlds and realities. I conclude that Chileans must make a commitment to join the Mapuche struggle against ecocide which means the liberation of Mapuche ancestral land-territory; reflexivity or contemplation will not disrupt ecological destruction. Immersed political solidarity is essential to resist the imperialist project of disconnection from our non-human lifeways.

ORS is a political healing centered engagement that resists capitalist fractures and works towards building an interdependent, sustainable and binding assemblage of human/non-human care. ORS is a decolonizing interembodiment (Merleau-Ponty, 1945) and it is a refusal of the European influenced one-world model of being that is embedded and concealed in western capitalism. If we recognize and commune with our honorable ancestors as kindred and their land-based model of being as a potential reality it guides us to a richer understanding of where we find ourselves in the present and leads us to speculate on a better more just yet to be. For those who were forcibly

displaced we inevitably seek ways to heal our diasporic disconnection, this is an invitation to a sensorial understanding of multiple ontologies.

Speaker: **Taylor Hoggarth** [he/they], *Trent University*,
“Storytelling Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer, and Trans Indigenous People’s Connection to the Land”

Taylor Hoggarth (He/They) is a proud Two-Spirit person that is currently pursuing their master’s at Trent University in Canadian and Indigenous Studies. Their thesis and research will focus on Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer, and Trans Indigenous People’s (2SIQTIP) relationship with the Northern Land. Their research is partnered with a youth camp held close to their heart; Qmunity Camp NWT. Taylor has worked and participated in Qmunity Camp NWT’s projects including their youth 2SLGBTIA+ camp and their 2SIQTIP adult camp. Taylor is a proud member of the Gwich’in Nation, holding their status with their mother’s community, the Teetl’it Gwich’in in Fort McPherson, NT. Additionally, he is also connected to the Vuntut Gwitchin in Old Crowe, YT on his mother’s side. On their father’s side, they have connections to Curve Lake FN and Kawartha Nishnawbe, where Taylor grew up. Taylor graduated his undergraduate degree from Trent University in May 2024 with a joint degree in Indigenous Studies and Sociology. Taylor loves spending time out on the Land, connecting and learning from it. The Land, both in his home territories Southern and Northern Canada, are important to Taylor to connect with. In their spare time, you can find Taylor hunting Moose at their family’s camp, catching Fish in their home community, and talking with the Land in Ontario and Northwest Territories.

Abstract: My proposed presentation will surround the storytelling approach found in many Indigenous communities’ methodologies. Storytelling is a methodology that will not explain exactly the topic, but give you lessons for one to learn themselves. This is exactly how I plan to present my topic. As a Two-Spirit person, I have gone through a personal research journey to learn more about myself as a person; as an Indigenous and Queer person. With the help from Qmunity Camp NWT and lessons throughout my life, I have learned to sit with the Land and learn the story it is providing. I will go through a brief introduction of Two-Spirit history followed by an introduction to Qmunity Camp NWT. From here, I will use a storytelling approach to explain my own personal journey to finding my identity. Grounded from how the Land presents its own story, the Land can tell someone a lesson if one listens. The Land is Queer, the Land has no gender, the Land is forever evolving. One has to listen and watch from the Land to help reinforce your identity and knowledge.

PANEL 8: REMODELLING SPACES

Moderator: Elric Paauw, *Western University*

Speaker: **Emily Faubert** [she/they] , *University of Toronto, Lakehead University*,
“on our way together: thrutopias, public transit, and the storytelling of collective movement”

Emily Faubert (she/they | elle/iel) is a first-year PhD student at the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Information, researching platform enclosure and how accessibility discourses are twisted by big tech to prey on vulnerable populations instead of providing meaningful access. She currently runs an editing service, as well as working in community organizing around improved and fare-free public transit. Their two first co-written books: *Queer Cartographies: Mapping Queerealities* and *Organizing Media: A Critical Political Economy of Global Activist Media Projects*, are expected in 2026.

Abstract: The rise of large dashboard screens in vehicles—despite warnings against distracted driving—reflects a dominant narrative driven by the automotive industry, particularly figures like Elon Musk. Musk's repeated promises of imminent self-driving cars and his focus on private transit solutions, such as the single-Tesla hyperloop tunnel, have diverted attention and resources from public transit projects. This presentation critiques the neoliberal concept and storytelling of 'private transit,' which prioritizes individualism over community building. By reimagining public transit as a bridge between current and future mass transit modes, I explore the socio-cultural implications through science fiction narratives, queerly navigating the space (and time) between utopia and dystopia. With Manwaring's (2024) framework of 'thrutopia' and Atwood's (2011) concept of 'ustopia,' I analyze three envisionings of futuristic public transit: Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974), Isaac Asimov's *Caves of Steel* (1954), and Philip K. Dick's *The Commuter* (1953), along with the latter’s 2017 BBC adaptation. In looking at the community narratives in these stories, alongside their modes of public transit, we can come to understand how to get to where we’re going together. If cars strengthen individualistic storytelling, which socio-cultural stories occur with public transit?

Speaker: **Althea Euphemie McIntosh**, *Western University*, **“Transformative leisure and speculative futures: Reimagining capitalist spectacle at Disneyland Hong Kong and Shanghai”**

Co-Author: Hongshu Wang [he/him]

Althea Euphemie McIntosh is a PhD student in Sociology at Western University, focusing on land acknowledgment practices in Canadian higher education institutions. Her research critically examines the role of these practices in decolonization and reconciliation, drawing on theoretical frameworks from sociology, philosophy, and film studies. Althea's unique and stimulating interdisciplinary approach combines critical theory, spatial analysis, and cultural studies to assess how land acknowledgments intersect with power, inequality, and social change. With a strong background in teaching, peer review, and advocacy, she is deeply committed to promoting inclusive practices and addressing systemic biases within academia. Althea's professional affiliations, including memberships in the Theory sections of both the Canadian and American Sociological Associations, further support her research, connecting her with scholars and discussions on higher education, issues of settler colonialism, and social justice.

Abstract: This paper examines Disneyland parks in Hong Kong and Shanghai as dynamic sites where capitalist spectacle, speculative futures, and collective world-making intersect. Drawing on Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*, and Gramscian cultural hegemony, it explores how these parks function as branded capitalist utopias, projecting ideals of perfection and escapism that obscure their exclusionary, profit-driven foundations. Despite this, the parks inadvertently enable brief ruptures within their hyperreal environments—moments where the contradictions of commodified leisure and capitalist ideologies become perceptible. These ruptures suggest openings for critical reflection on more inclusive and participatory forms of world-making.

The paper introduces “transformative leisure” as a framework linking speculative imaginaries to pluralistic post-capitalist futures. It calls for structural reforms to address inequitable labour practices and investments in non-capitalist leisure spaces to reduce reliance on commodified utopias. By examining Disneyland as a contested space where utopian aspirations clash with the alienation of capitalist spectacle, the analysis positions these parks as inadvertent terrains for cultural negotiation. This study engages utopia as both a critique and an ideological tool, contributing to discussions on resisting branded capitalist utopias and envisioning equitable, sustainable futures that prioritize collective well-being and localized agency.

Speaker: **Z Coltman** [they/them], *Western University*, “***Heterotopic Responses to Public Needs: Anchoring Worldmaking in the Present***”

Z Coltman (they/them) is a PhD student in Library and Information Science (LIS) with an MA in English Literature and a Double Honours BA in English and Creative Writing. Their focus in experimental literature, queer space, and decolonial studies in previous degrees has led to an interest in praxis-based research highlighting the need for action based upon theory in academia. They are currently a Student Member of ASIST and they enjoy collaborating with others on projects that involve epistemic justice highlighting decolonial, queer, and crip theories.

Abstract: Anchoring the world's end and worldmaking in the present provides an alternative to end of the world worldmaking as a utopic or dystopic process. Using Foucault's heterotopias, this presentation argues for the ability of libraries to respond to the needs of their individual publics, both enacting the end of the world and community co-creation of a new sustainable community, rather than relying on hegemonic centers of power. Understanding the end of the world as the end of the world as we know it, with the hegemonic centers of power in white cis heteropatriarchy, learning from indigenous, queer, and crip knowledge to create a new community-centered world. This will include a discussion of the difference between considering worldmaking and the end of the world as a linear binary and a cyclical narrative, the purposes and theory of heterotopias, and how libraries function to address community needs. Understanding this, the presentation argues that, in taking the heterotopic approach, libraries can better become a sustainable community structure, which necessitates a clear outline of what sustainable community structures entail. This will lead into how learning, taking accountability, and honoring the community are key in sustaining these world-ending worldmaking strategies before concluding the presentation.

PANEL 9: DECOLONIAL FUTURES

Moderator: Charlie Paul Martin, *Western University*

Speaker: **Qanita Lilla** [she/her], *Queen's University*,
““Towards a People’s Culture”: Artists’ centres in Cape Town, South Africa and London, Ontario”

Qanita Lilla (PhD) is a curator, researcher and podcaster. She is interested in liberating traditional collections of Africa from their ethnographic status by engaging artists from the diaspora, and considering the role of digital media in creating access in the public domain. Her practice draws on anti-dystopian methodologies embedded in visual activism and includes work on art collectives, community radio and podcasting from the Global South and North. Her research interests include: the radical potential of

museums and curatorial practice, the life and after-life of objects in collections, representations of racialised minorities, curating excluded narratives and epistemologies, the intersections of African and Indigenous curatorial practices and repatriation/ repatriation debates. She has published in various peer-reviewed publications and has also contributed book chapters to anthologies. She is currently Associate Curator Arts of Africa, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University.

Abstract: Following South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, Desmond Tutu described the country as the "Rainbow Nation." In the context of the legacies of apartheid and colonialism, rainbowism encapsulated a vision of coexistence and cooperation. But in 2024 the Mandela Foundation detailed the failures of rainbowism, showing that the idea of a utopian future was fundamentally flawed. With a focus on the activist visual language at artists' centres, this paper compares the histories of the Community Arts Project (CAP) in Cape Town, South Africa and the Embassy Cultural House (ECH) in London, Ontario in the 1980's-90's. Unlike political propaganda, activism at artists' centres hold the possibility to effect lasting social change. Both CAP and ECH were subversive alternatives to the art-world status quo, and nurtured the agency of individual artists in opposition to state policies. Although situated in different contexts, both CAP and ECH confronted social injustice and envisioned alternative futures. Following Mitchell and Chaudhury (2020) I show that for many communities the apocalypse is not a future threat but is a post-colonial condition imposed by settler colonialism, and that mobilising communities through visual activism holds possibilities for envisioning alternative futures.

Speaker: **Francis Alakija** [he/him], *Western University*,

"Africa and the Libidinal Economy of International Relations Theory and Practice"

Francis Alakija is a Ph.D. student at Western University's Centre for Theory & Criticism. His research interests include Afro-pessimism, International Relations Theory, Development Studies, Black studies and Critical Theory.

Abstract: This paper critically engages with the intersection of Black studies, particularly Afro-pessimism, and International Relations (IR) theory to unpack the unrecognized anti-Blackness inherent in both mainstream and critical IR approaches. It contends that both strands of IR theorization, despite their divergences, operate under a narrative structure that seeks to restore a global civil society, ultimately reinforcing Africa's absence and the legacy of slavery. By re-conceptualizing slavery not merely as an event but as a paradigm that structures modernity, the paper highlights how this system of violence positions Blackness as the foundational absence in global relations.

Drawing on the works of Black critical theorists like Orlando Patterson and Frank Wilderson, it argues that the ontological death of Black bodies underpins a metaphysics of human recognition that governs state interactions. The essay concludes by questioning the implications of centering slavery's anti-Black violence within IR theory, suggesting that doing so would necessitate a radical rethinking of the discipline's foundational narratives and its inability to address the ontological exclusion of Africa, thereby challenging the stability of global relations as structured by modernity.

PANEL 10: TRANS (HUMANS) AND TRANS HORIZONS

Moderator: Max Bennett, *Western University*

Speaker: **Blair Attard-Frost** [she/they], *University of Toronto*,
“Transing the AI Apocalypse: Trans Futurity, Intercorporeality, & Intimacy in object.type(3)”

Blair is a researcher, educator, and creative working on several projects related to the governance of artificial intelligence. Blair's research critically examines AI governance systems in Canada and trans feminist approaches to AI. She teaches courses on AI ethics and policy, advises organizations, and advocates for community-led AI regulation in her public education, professional development, and activist work. Her creative work combines experimental sci-fi, glitch art, and surrealism to explore trans AI futures. Blair is a PhD Candidate at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Information. Her research has been funded by a SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship (2021-2024), and by three Ontario Graduate Scholarships (2019-2020, 2020-2021, & 2024-2025). She is a member of the Beta Phi Mu International Honor Society for Library and Information Studies, a four-time recipient of the Faculty of Information Excellence Award, and two-time recipient of the Norma Epstein Foundation Award in Creative Writing.

Abstract: This presentation explores trans design and future-making practices in object.type(3) (objecttype3.app). object.type(3) is an experimental lo-tech web game in which a global network of psychic trans cybersoldiers have been forcibly neurologically integrated into one another and into a military AI system. Together, they must stop rogue AI agents from destroying the world.

The game combines a choose-your-own-adventure narrative and multimedia hypertexts that provide fragmentary perspectives into the world's mysterious events and characters. Through affective mirroring of the experiences of the protagonists,

players vicariously experience trans corporealities and temporalities. Players oscillate between experiences of intelligibility and unintelligibility, clarity and confusion, agency and inability, momentum and inertia, and pleasure and dysphoria as they proceed through the game.

I will discuss how *object.type(3)* dramatizes trans theories of futurity and advances a trans-feminist critique of the apocalypticism and militarism of masculinist AI futures. In its narrative world and design (dys)affordances, *object.type(3)* frames AI as an intercorporeal system of humans and machines, regulated through a global network of restrictive and necropolitical power structures. As the protagonists eventually learn, this system can be resisted through trans practices of fluidity, solidarity, and intimacy.

Speaker: **Levi Hord** [they/them], *Columbia University*,
“No Theory in the Gender Apocalypse: Infect Your Friends and Loved Ones (2016) and the Refusal of Trans Speculation”

Levi Hord (a proud Western alum!) is a Ph.D. candidate in English & Comparative Literature at Columbia University, specializing in transgender studies. Their work takes up the post-2010 North American proliferation of nonbinary gender, theorizing both the formal disruptions to systems of recognition, and the conservative fantasies of viral ideology and transgender universalism that circulate in its wake. Levi completed an MSt in Gender Studies and an MSc in the History of Medicine at the University of Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. They also hold a BA from the School for the Advanced Studies in the Arts & Humanities at Western University. Their writing can be found in *Sexualities*, *Politics/Letters*, and the *Oxonian Review*.

Abstract: Torrey Peters’ cult classic *Infect Your Friends and Loved Ones* (2016) was passed around trans communities as viral literature in the same era in which the fear of viral transgender ideology intensified through “social contagion” theories. The novella depicts a gender apocalypse, in which a scorned trans woman unleashes a virus that stops the production of hormones in humans, with hopes to render everyone trans. The fantasy of trans contagion is inaugurated by a sophomoric interest in so-called “gender theory,” but – the protagonist insists – it goes beyond the “squishy philosophical.” Indeed, the virus does not spread the pro-trans consciousness so feared in contemporary anti-trans rhetoric: instead, it universalizes hormonal scarcity and strife, ultimately reencoding trans women as the recipients of gender’s structural violence.

This paper takes up the characterization of “theory” itself as both capacitating and ultimately ineffectual in contemporary rhetoric about transness, world-ending, and change. In critical conversation with the empirical turn in transgender studies, I ask what this repudiation of “theory” in favor of a reasserted pessimistic structuralism says about the potential to imagine future worlds for gender outside of the white neoliberal subject. I end with an argument for reinvesting in the very threat of theoretical poiesis.

Speaker: **Deanna Armenti** [fae/faer,she/her], *Toronto Metropolitan University*, “**When Rabbits Howl, Gender as Ontology: Fable, Figuration, and Futurity**”

Deanna Armenti is a Queer Genderfae poet, zine creator, and textile researcher. She is a current Media and Design Innovation PhD student at Toronto Metropolitan University. Deanna’s practice-based research has been featured in DesignTO, Abbozzo Gallery, and most recently at Parsons. Deanna’s work investigates the intersection of Gender Studies, Folklore, and Queer Ecology to explore Fae Futurity.

Abstract: “Gender as Ontology: Fable, Figuration, and Futurity” uses research-creation as a method to explore the Faegender identity through a zine “When Rabbits Howl”. The zine is a fabulistic, or “fae-bulistic”, work introducing Fae Futurity as an expansion of Trans Futurity. An origin-like story for the Fae Realm, which is a speculative figuration (Loveless, 2019) of Fae Futurity, the fable follows a rabbit’s transformative encounter with a wolf as a metaphor for the gender-expansive experience.

Supported by the feminist theorizing of glitches (Russell, 2020), troubling (Haraway, 2016), and queer heterotopias (Walker, 2022), this work critiques the Wild Woman archetype (Estés, 1989). The fable engages with Kimmerer’s (2013) language of animacy to create space for genders that transcends human characteristics - instead aligning with a way of being, an ontology, connected to more-than-human kin, objects, and even abstract concepts like time and place.

Speaker: **Bailey Bird** [they/them], *University of Toronto*, “**MELD: A Transhumanist Speculative Technofiction**”

Bailey Bird is queer and non-binary scholar, writer, activist, and artist. In 2023, they graduated from their Bachelor of Arts at McGill University where they studied Honours Psychology and completed Minors in Philosophy and Gender, Sexuality, Feminist, and Social Justice (GSFS) Studies. During their Bachelor studies they published work on disability, erotics, and pleasure in undergraduate journals. Currently Bailey is completing their Master's in Women and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto.

Their research theorizes with disability to unpack normalcy entrenched in horror movies and find routes to queer, crip liberation. They also engage in collage, theatrical acting, dance, and performance art.

Abstract: Amidst the current rise of a transphobic political climate and the criminalization of gender affirming care, this speculative science fiction piece seeks to open up the possibility for trans(humanist) futurities via cyborgian embodiment. Set thirty years into the future, most jobs are completed by technological automation or artificial intelligence. Poverty rates are at an all time high and the gap between the lower and upper classes has never been wider. Parker, a lonely, unemployed twenty-something, is desperately seeking money to afford their illegal testosterone injections. After stumbling upon a clinical trial advertisement combining the human and the technological, Parker applies and is accepted. As Parker's body transforms, their gender euphoria heightens and the line between human and cyborg begins to blur. In resisting a strictly utopic or dystopic narrative, this piece explores how we can carve out space for trans identity affirmation and trans futurities through the relationship between the human and the technological. It emphasizes that trans people have and will always exist despite efforts to erase them.

PANEL 11: ECOCRITICISM BEYOND THE MAN

Moderator: Brendan Brown, *Western University*

Speaker: **Zainab Khalid** [any/all], *Queen's University*,

“The Location of Crisis: Biosecurity and Meat Markets in the Age of Pandemics”

Zainab is a PhD student in the Gender Studies Department at Queen's University focusing on Islam, sexuality, race and imperialism. She explores the emergence of a transnational queer Muslim identity on Turtle Island and its intersections with religious frameworks, immigrant communities and transnational solidarities through decolonial feminist ethnographic methods. Using a critical race studies and critical globalization framework, her research also broaches issues of food security, marginalization and halal practices in the context of queer liveability.

Abstract: In a time of rapidly mutating Avian Flu virus that is on the brink of becoming a pandemic, governmental agencies and scientific communities have been grappling with the epizootic nature of the outbreak, traveling from wild birds to poultry to livestock, and now to domestic cats and pet birds, and even humans. While still not fatal to humans, the added pressures on settler industrialized animal farming- a major contributor to the climate and economic crisis and to the genocide of bison and

Indigenous lifeways- signals an impending food crisis in the settler colonies of Canada and the United States. Directives to contain the crisis consist of biosecurity measures such as surveillance, sanitation regimens, and the culling of infected herds. Fueled by the fear of late capitalist failure couched in colonial oppression (Whyte, 2020), I explore interspecies intimacies (Rosenberg, 2017) in an age of pandemic, when world-ending food crises have already come to pass several times over under colonialism both in the global South and in Indigenous lifeworlds.

Speaker: **Wei Chieh (Jeremy) Tsai** [he/him], *Western University*,
“Exploring spiritual agency of nonhumans: The case of nonhuman injustice in the Fukushima triple disaster”

Jeremy is a master’s candidate in the department of sociology at the University of Western Ontario. His research examines environmental justice in the context of the Fukushima triple disaster. Currently he is writing a paper on how Fukushima disaster survivors pursue justice.

Abstract: In this paper I explored how Fukushima disaster survivors pursued justice by analyzing injustice claims across economic, sociocultural, political dimensions in English language Japanese news articles between 2011 and 2021. Missing is the consideration of nonhuman injustices seen through the Shinto-animistic belief system. It is a central belief system in Japan where humans and nonhumans collaboratively inhabit the world, but exploitation of the latter and how collaborative partnership are renewed in folk Shinto stories are not well researched. In my content analysis I coded 84 news articles and economic and political issues appeared in 83 articles. None mentioned nonhuman injustice and folk Shinto stories. I conclude from this finding that framing disaster recovery through economic and political lens will only exclude from public dialogues about exploitation of nonhumans. To better understand the role of folk Shinto stories of ancestors and animal deity in challenging traditional categories of control and mastery of nonhumans, I build on the utopian framework from Mathia Thaler's (2022) *No Other Planets: Utopian Visions for a Climate-Changed World* and discuss how environmental disaster recovery such as the Fukushima triple disaster also depend on the spiritual agency of nonhumans from the past, present, and the future.

Speaker: **Brandon Rushton** [he/him], *University of Notre Dame*,
“Reading The Air in the Air Behind It”

Brandon Rushton is the author of *The Air in the Air Behind It* (Tupelo Press, 2022), winner of the Berkshire Prize. A recipient of awards from Gulf Coast and Ninth Letter, his poems appear widely in publications like *The Southern Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Pleiades*, *Bennington Review*, and *Passages North*. His essays appear in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Terrain.org*, *A Field Guide to the Poetry of Theodore Roethke* (Ohio University Press 2020), and have been listed as notable by *Best American Essays*. He is currently pursuing his doctoral work, as a Deans' Fellow, at the University of Notre Dame.

Abstract: By beginning with language lensed through “Milankovitch Cycles” – the eccentric orbital patterns of planet earth and the effects those cycles have on the climate, named after Serbian geophysicist Milutin Milankovic who theorized their patterning in the 1920s – *The Air in the Air Behind It* unfolds as a book about human and weather-related turbulence, how those two turbulences – at times – coalesce. Through formal variations that trace the incessant folding and unfolding of events, and the sudden transmogrification of things that feel so fixed and certain, the book experiments with concepts of symmetry, balance, proliferation, dissolution, disillusion, and endurance in an effort to represent the historical and climatic magnitude of the days in which we live. “The structure of most of these poems is of the sentence,” says Bin Ramke, “while line breaks signal giddy turns, turns of phrase and fable both surprising and satisfying.” Donna Stonecipher says the book’s “often interweaving lines serve as a formal objective correlative for our interwoven state in this world.

PANEL 12: CRIPPING THE FUTURE

Moderator: Liam Morantz, *Western University*

Speaker: **Maggie Mills** [she/they], *Carleton University*,

“Who is System and What is he So Nervous About”: Crippling mHealth Technologies

Maggie Mills is a PhD student at Carleton University’s School of Journalism and Communication conducting interdisciplinary research in health communication, critical disability studies, gender and sexuality and mad studies. They draw from lived experience and recursive research strategies to frame their engagement with contested topics within the fields of psychiatry and communication, psychoanalysis and antipsychiatry, including the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Frantz Fanon. They have published in the *Journal of Canadian Art History* (2018) and presented graduate research internationally at the National Taiwan Normal University (2022) and the University of California Santa Barbara (2022). In

their spare time they work on creative writing projects and volunteer as a support group facilitator.

Abstract: Mobile application disease management is a burgeoning field of study in medicine, behavioural science and communication. I analyze the adoption of mHealth as an extension of the cybernetic turn, enumerated in critical disability studies by scholars like Joshua St. Pierre, Eve Tuck’s work on resisting damage-centred research on marginalized groups in favour of desire-centred frameworks. Encompassed in the commercial mHealth application Bearable is its capacity to realize the nuance and complexities of “grappling with cure,” which Eli Clare describes as a necessary and deeply complex part of disabled life. This toolkit includes building blocks for a circumspect analysis of the significance of commercially available mHealth technologies for psychiatric disabilities that is attentive to crip theory’s problematization of medicalization and cure.

The dialectic between capitalism as structurally dependant on the category of disabled and the “irksome” manifestations of disability that transhumanists seek to fix through technology links back, as St Pierre suggests, to critical posthumanism. This tradition emphasizes imperfect technologies in imperfect conditions, and their impact and meaning, with an appreciation that abstractions and notions of purity are anathema to the theory and practice of crippling mHealth as lived experience digital methodologies for managing illness as well as analyzing its impacts.

Speaker: **Leslyn Stobbs** [she/her], *University of Toronto*,
“Hyperempathy Syndrome and Other Radical Sensitivities: Feeling through/across/with Somatosensory Difference”

Leslyn Stobbs (she/her) is a PhD student at the Women and Gender Studies Institute. Her love for the act of untangling, coming up with neuroqueer/crip neologisms, and incorporating the porous poetics of slime wherever possible have propelled her throughout her studies, all the way from the prairies to the Atlantic. Using playfulness and pleasure, her work navigates through rigidly restrictive, settler-colonial sexual ontologies and the violent foreclosure of otherwise routes to meaning-making and liberation. Leslyn takes inspiration from the tiny critters who party in the logs and leaves, her ancestors who loved and made life with the land, and the need to make sense out of everything that can be felt.

Abstract: In response to climate catastrophe, multiple pandemics, and severe wealth disparity, settler-colonial onto-epistemologies manufacture our reliance on curative

models for this polycrisis rather than relationally accountable ones. The standardized corporeal parameters of *homo oeconomicus* position otherwise bodies and lifeforms outside the realm of possibility. This makes the embodied knowledge from these bodies, these systems of livingness, seem nonsensical and thus, leaves climate doomerism or militaristic, eco-fascist, techno-utopic visions as the only viable options for the future. I argue that somatosensory potentiality is limited to what is deemed possible for this genre of Man and turn towards the Black radical tradition and forms of crip kinship to envision worlds beyond the world we are being forced to endure now. For example, Laura Olamide, the protagonist in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, has hyperempathy syndrome, a disability/impairment/vulnerability that allows her to feel exactly what others around her feel – pleasure, pain, proximity to death. How does her embodied knowledge equip us with the radical coll/nnectivity needed to survive beyond the end of *this* world? Adding to the literature on decolonial, queer, trans, and crip dimensions of space, place, and time, it is worth exploring otherwise, (neuro)queer/crip pathways of imagination through somatosensory difference.

Speaker: **Melissa Bush** [she/her], *University of Toronto*,
“Our Stories Matter: Archival Research as Disability Justice and Mad Worlding”

Melissa Bush is a PhD candidate at the Women & Gender Studies Institute (WGSI), University of Toronto. Melissa's doctoral research is located at the intersections of disability, madness, memory, and mourning. A multidisciplinary study of the politics of memorialization in spaces of psychiatric institutionalization, Melissa's dissertation can be understood as a work of memory activism; one that seeks to uncover the historically marginalized stories of persons who died while under psychiatric confinement. Melissa has earned a Bachelor of Arts Honours in Human Rights and Women & Gender Studies from Carleton University. She has also completed a Master of Arts in Women & Gender Studies at WGSI, University of Toronto.

Abstract: Focusing on four forgotten cemeteries across the provinces of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Ontario, this conference paper employs Judith Butler's (2006; 2016) theory of “grievability,” Giorgio Agamben's (1998; 2005) notion of “bare life,” and Achille Mbembe's (2019) concept of “necropower” to reveal a national pattern of dehumanization and erasure in relation to psychiatric institutionalization. In highlighting the systemic erasure of psychiatric cemeteries across the country, as well as the near total absence of “psychiatrized” (Phoenix Rising, 2023) persons from our memory sites, mourning rituals, and commemorative practices, this conference paper exposes how Canadian collective memory is structured by ableism and sanism. Grounded in an ethic of Mad Pride and disability justice and informed by Gayatri

Spivak's (1985) concept of "worlding", this paper works as a counter-narrative to the deeply harmful one that is perpetuated by these forgotten funerary spaces—namely, that Mad life is "unworthy" of remembrance.