



Living in the End Times: Utopian and Dystopian Representations of Pandemics in Fiction, Film and Culture

A (Virtual) Interdisciplinary Conference
January 14 – 15, 2021

Venue: Cappadocia University, Mustafapaşa Campus, 50420 Ürgüp/Nevşehir/Turkey (Virtual-Microsoft Teams)

Keynote speaker: TBA

Description:

“The abandoned towers in the distance are like the coral of an ancient reef- bleached and colourless, devoid of life. There still is life, however. Birds chirp; sparrows, they must be...Do they notice that quietness, the absence of motors? If so, are they happier?” (Atwood, 2009, pg. 3).

The outbreak of COVID-19 has wrought spatial, socioeconomic and political upheavals of a severity and scale often only imagined in eco-dystopian fiction works such as Margaret Atwood’s increasingly prescient MaddAddam trilogy (2003-2013). The pandemic has laid bare existing structural inequalities within global capitalist systems. While multitudes face the economic hardships of a looming global recession, the planet’s wealthy elite have found refuge in their exclusive ‘utopias’ of private medical and security staff, escape mansions and luxury doomsday bunkers. Moreover, the pandemic serves as an augur of further socio-ecological perturbations to come should global capitalism’s relentless exploitation of species and ecosystems continue unabated. Perhaps most importantly, pandemics bring to light the intricate and inextricable entanglements between humans and myriad Earth others, and the realization that we are far from the only actors with the agency to engender world-shattering transformations.

Such times of widespread upheaval render the perennial utopian (and dystopian) imaginary especially valuable. While utopias offer imaginative projections of better worlds and ways of being, dystopias extrapolate from the deficient ‘present’ and offer projections of potentially nightmarish futures. Yet the critique, imagination and desire for the ‘better’ inherent within both are essential for building beyond the current ‘eco-dystopian’ era of pandemics, extinctions and ecological collapse. Pandemics and the spectre of eco-apocalypse don’t signal the end of *all worlds* or times but merely of the world *as presently constituted*; there is always the vital question of what comes after. Thus, we are thrilled to present this interdisciplinary conference for exploring literary, film, cultural and ethico-political representations of ‘living in the end times’. For instance, how do pandemics impact upon hope and utopian imaginaries? How do we co-construct more ethical and liveable worlds after ‘the end’, and what might these worlds look like?

We invite abstracts of up to 300 words for paper presentations of **15 minutes sharp** (+5 minutes Q&A) to be delivered live on the days of the conference. Panel submissions are also welcome. Please let us know in advance if you are willing to chair a session and if you need a certificate of participation. Paper/panel topics might include but need not be limited to:

- Plague, pandemic & epidemic representations in fiction & films
- Apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic/pandemic fiction

- Pandemic politics & praxis
- Capitalism and biopolitics
- Constructions of post-pandemic worlds/environments
- Post-humanism/post-anthropocentrism and multispecies interactions
- Theorizations of apocalypse or ‘end times’ (Žižek 2011; Latour 2017)
- Anthropocene, capitalocene, chthulucene, plantationocene
- Boundaries- ‘Self/other’, national, geographic
- Utopia and hope during times of crisis
- Eco-utopias & dystopias
- Cli-fi
- Technology and the future

Please send your abstracts (300 words), the application form, and a short bio of up to 150 words to pandemicimaginaries@gmail.com

The deadline for submissions is **November 6, 2020**. Participants will be notified of acceptance or rejection by **November 20, 2020**.

Please register for the event on our **Eventbrite page**:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/living-in-the-end-times-utopian-and-dystopian-representations-of-pandemics-tickets-117170820077>

Conference Webpage: <https://blog.kapadokya.edu.tr/akademik/ingiliz-dili-ve-edebiyati/international-conference-living-in-the-end-times-utopian-and-dystopian-representations-of-pandemics-in-fiction-film-and-culture>

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/625693911418546>

The selected papers presented at the conference will be considered for publication by a reputable international publisher (TBA).

Submission Deadline: **May 14, 2021**

Conference Fee

There is no fee to attend the conference. The conference will be conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams, which will be provided by Cappadocia University. The conference language will be English.

We very much look forward to receiving your submissions.

Warm Regards,

Conference Convening Team

Heather Alberro (Nottingham Trent University, UK)

Emrah Atasoy (Cappadocia University, Turkey)

Nora Castle (University of Warwick, UK)

Rhiannon Firth (University of Essex, UK)

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