



Utopian Acts 2018

1st September 2018

43 Gordon Square

Birkbeck, University of London

<http://utopia.ac/>

INTRODUCTION

To talk about Utopia in 2018 seems like an act of naive, reactionary optimism. In a moment marked by rising inequality, the displacement of vast global populations, the lived effects of anthropogenic climate change and widespread resurgences of populism, white supremacy, and fascism, what is the justification for a utopian frame of mind?

Far from dreaming of a secluded island or a happy but distant future, today's speakers are in various ways engaged with what we call *utopian activism*. They show us that utopia is unthinkable without the actions that create it, and that resistant action is infused with utopian potential. In offering this definition we hope to energise the discussions which will happen today and which will undoubtedly challenge, interrogate and reform our understanding of what utopian action can, and indeed must, be. The activists, artists, and scholars here today, along with the many people who fall into more than one of these categories, have all kindly given their time to what we have variously tried to identify as a conference, a festival and, perhaps vaguest of all, an 'event'. In the end, we think it is an experiment: an experiment in communicating outside of the well-fortified enclosures in which we normally discuss our efforts to imagine, an experiment which challenges us to create better worlds. To engage in utopian activism we must be willing to question ourselves, to make ourselves vulnerable, and to explore strange new ways of being in the world which force us to redraw the boundaries of what is possible.

We hope that Utopian Acts provides you with a space to do just that: to hope without embarrassment, to dream vividly and, most importantly, to act.

Katie Stone and Raphael Kabo

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As is appropriate for an event exploring utopianism, we could not have made it happen without the help of many, many wonderful people.

Thank you first and foremost to our supervisor Dr Caroline Edwards, who originally suggested that we organise a conference and then never once failed to be enthusiastic as we told her of our latest wild concepts.

We're very grateful to the support of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities and the Birkbeck Centre for Contemporary Literature, whose funding allowed us to pay some of our presenters, which we strongly believe is the right way to run a radical event under the current economic system. Thank you in particular to Lou Miller, Joe Brooker, Debora Quattrocchi, and Anthony Shepherd, our personal administrative superhero.

Thank you to Birkbeck's custodial staff, as well as the multitude of administrative workers, students, and scholars who keep the university ticking over.

We're grateful to Craig Smyth and the staff at Waterstones Gower Street for helping to organise our afterparty.

Thank you so much to Tanaka Mhishi for organisational support, and to our volunteers Izy Cowling, Harriet Israel, Valentina Salvatierra, Conor Byworth and Daniel Stebbings, who have given a great deal of time and energy to help us make this day work.

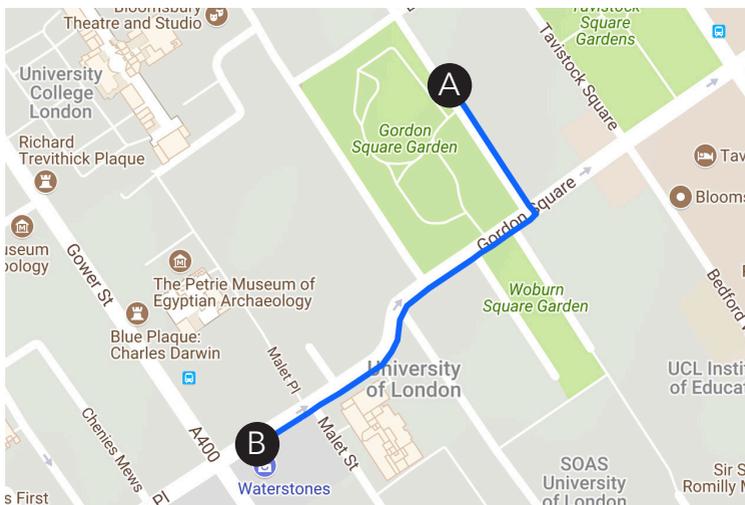
And lastly, thank you to all of our presenters, workshop organisers, and artists, who have come from all over the world to share their utopias with us.

Katie Stone and Raphael Kabo

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

The venue for Utopian Acts is the Birkbeck University School of Arts building, 43 Gordon Square, London, WC1H 0PD **A**. We will be using rooms G01, G02, B03 and B04, with tea, coffee and lunch served in G04. Programmes and assistance will be available in G04 from 8:30am.

The afterparty will take place at the café of Waterstones Gower Street, 82 Gower Street, London, WC1E 6EQ **B**. The venues are about a five minute walk apart.



43 Gordon Square is fully accessible and the building has disabled access toilets. For detailed accessibility information, please visit the following link: <http://www.disabledgo.com/access-guide/birkbeck-university-of-london/school-of-arts>. The cafe of Waterstones Gower Street is wheelchair-accessible, and the toilets are accessible via a lift. The nearest accessible Tube station to the venues is King's Cross St Pancras.

If you need any assistance throughout the day, please find one of the organisers or volunteers, who will be wearing lanyards.

SCHEDULE

	GOR G01 (Ground floor)	GOR G02 (Ground floor)	GOR B03 (Basement floor)	GOR B04 (Basement floor)
9:00 - 10:00 COFFEE (GOR G04)	WORKSHOP <u>The Art of Listening</u> Tanaka Mhishi + Silke Grygier			
10:00 - 11:00				KEYNOTE Professor Davina Cooper Why Conceptual Futures Matter (And How to Take Them Up)
11:00 - 12:30	WORKSHOP <u>Bystander Intervention</u> Molly Ackhurst, Hollaback! London	PANEL <u>Urban Utopianism</u> Dani Loader Martin Greenwood Anna Kamyshan	PANEL <u>Past, Future, Utopia</u> Dr Rose Simpson Professor Michael Robertson Helena Esser	PANEL <u>Queer Utopia and its Discontents</u> Tom Dillon and Dr Linda Stupart Sasha Myerson Rebecca Moses
12:30 - 13:45 LUNCH (GOR G04)	WORKSHOP <u>Punk zine making</u> Dream Nails			
13:45 - 15:15	PANEL <u>Building Utopia</u> ARTIST TALK Llew Watkins WORKSHOP <u>Feminist utopian architecture</u> Amy Butt	PANEL <u>The Radical Imagination</u> PAPER Dr Joan Haran WORKSHOP <u>Collective Imagining</u> Ibtisam Ahmed	PANEL <u>Utopianism Now</u> Kate Meakin Chase Ledin Nicole Froio	PANEL <u>Utopian Speculation</u> FILM SCREENING <i>When the Undead Dream of Living</i> (dir. Céline Keller and Louisa Beck) PAPERS Chelsea Haith Erin Andrews

	GOR G01 (Ground floor)	GOR G02 (Ground floor)	GOR B03 (Basement floor)	GOR B04 (Basement floor)
15:15 - 15:30 COFFEE (GOR G04)				
15:30 - 17:00	PANEL <u>Decolonizing Utopia</u> Dr Rehnuma Sazzad Dr Jan Etienne	WORKSHOP <u>Re-claiming Utopia</u> Molly Drummond, Eva Giraud and Susan Bruce		PANEL <u>Eco-utopianism</u> FILM SCREENING <i>In digo Zoom: The Awakening</i> (dir: Ayesha Tan Jones) PANEL Sheryl Medlicott Kavita Thanki Ayesha Tan Jones
17:00 - 18:00				KEYNOTE <u>Professor Lynne Segal</u> Resources for Hope: Moments of Collective Joy
18:00 - 20:00	Afterparty at the Waterstones Gower Street café, featuring: Dominica Duckworth YaYa Bones			

PROGRAMME

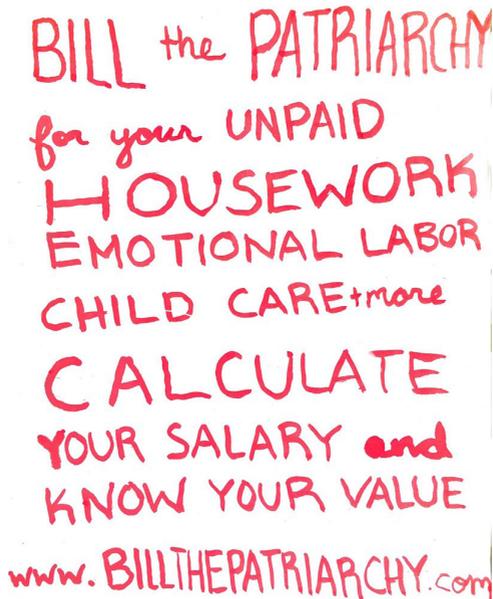
DIY WORKSHOP/ART INSTALLATION

Bill the Patriarchy

All day, GOR G04

Patti Maciesz

What would it be like if our society valued child care? Since we attribute value with money in capitalist countries, I began to bill the patriarchy for all my work as a new mom. I include emotional labor, opportunity cost, and invisible “women’s work” like house work and then fax the bills to my elected US officials. I built billthepatriarchy.com to help other women and non-binary people find out how much the patriarchy owed them. There you can calculate how many hours a week is spent on housework, caregiving, and emotional labor. So far, almost 3,000 people have taken the quiz and calculated almost 300 million dollars in lost wages. I believe that once we all know our value, we will not continue to work for free.



BILL the PATRIARCHY
for your UNPAID
HOUSEWORK
EMOTIONAL LABOR
CHILD CARE+more
CALCULATE
YOUR SALARY and
KNOW YOUR VALUE
www.BILLTHEPATRIARCHY.com

WORKSHOP

The Art of Listening

9:00 - 10:00, GOR G01

Tanaka Mhishi and Silke Grygier

With the #MeToo movement bringing more and more cases of sexual abuse and harassment to light, how do we handle hearing these stories in our personal and professional lives? This writing workshop proposes the listening space as a utopia of two, and will help participants build a personal code of best practice for navigating these tough conversations.

KEYNOTE

Why Conceptual Futures Matter (And How to Take Them Up)

10:00 - 11:00, GOR B04

Professor Davina Cooper

My talk explores the political work that concepts can do. Focusing on the state and gender, as two quite different concepts, I am interested in radical fantasies of what they might come to mean, and the different ways these imagined futures can be played out in the present.

WORKSHOP

Bystander Intervention

11:00 - 12:30, GOR G01

Molly Ackhurst, Hollaback! London

What's worse than being targeted with harassment because of your race, sex, religion, color, gender, size, orientation, disability, age, or origin? Being targeted while surrounded by bystanders who see what is happening, but then do nothing. It doesn't have to be that way. At this moment in history, we are witnessing a spike in public harassment, bias incidents,

and hate violence. As bystanders, we need to be especially vigilant and aware of what harassment, bias incidents, and hate violence look like in order to be able to stand up and intervene at a time when people need it most.

PANEL

Urban Utopianism

11:00 - 12:30, GOR G02

Chaired by Amy Butt

Dani Loader

In October 2017, Paul Powlesland saved a 130 year old cargo ship, MV Vriendschap, from the scrap merchant and ever since, he, his close friend Dani Loader and a crew of volunteers have been working to repurpose the vessel as sustainable, off-grid community centre and co-housing space. During this time, however, they have faced unending layers of often farcical bureaucracy seemingly intended to prevent the project's success. Dani will present this anti-utopian narrative using examples of their correspondence and interactions with the police, the port authority and local council.

Martin Greenwood - Push the Button and Wait for the Future: The Utopian/Utopical Pedagogy of UK Pedestrian Crossing

This presentation examines the political, pedagogical and utopian meanings of UK pedestrian crossings. It explores their controversial history, the messy choreography of their contemporary use, and their possible role in conditioning our ideas about the future. Can overcompliance at pedestrian crossings represent an 'oppositional practice' against compelled antipublic, utopical haste?

Anna Kamyshan

I propose for Utopian Acts a short narrative of my belief in the utopian future of the city, where an unneeded river becomes

a friend and a partner in urban action. The story of a project spoiled by bureaucracy, which became an activist one.

PANEL

Past, Future, Utopia

11:00 - 12:30, GOR B03

Chaired by Izy Cowling

Dr Rose Simpson - Utopias Revisited

In 1968 the Incredible String Band provided an ecstatic voice for hippy protests against war, scientific rationalism, capitalism, and urban life. Drawing inspiration from earlier Utopian ventures, we chose hopeful returns to the imagined paradise of small rural communities seeking personal renewal through Art, disparaging intellectualism and drawing mystic inspiration from astrology and Eastern religions.

Professor Michael Robertson - From William Morris to Wendell Berry: Arts & Crafts, the Food Movement, and Utopia

Historians have traced how the utopian dimensions of the Arts & Crafts movement inspired by William Morris dissipated in the early 20th century. Where can Morris's utopian desire for transformation of the everyday be found now? One possibility is the DIY and "craftivism" movements; another is the contemporary food movement.

Helena Esser - Saving Yesterday's Tomorrows: Steampunk Making as Utopian Activism

Steampunk makers believe that building a Victorian house on wheels can save the future. This paper will discuss steampunk making as an example of the utopian potential inherent in the steampunk aesthetic, which combines post-colonial impulses with science fiction techniques and art.

PANEL**Queer Utopia and its Discontents**

11:00 - 12:30, GOR B04

Chaired by Harriet Israel

Tom Dillon and Linda Stupart - Turning the Tables: The Table as Utopian Object

Instead of looking for objects that contain within them an immanent Utopia, we propose to queer the everyday object of the table for use in the contemporary struggle for a future egalitarian society, through demanding 'a place at the table' for marginalised groups and through 'turning the tables', transforming that everyday object into revolutionary barricade.

Sasha Myerson - Making Utopia Sexy: Anarchism, Desire and BDSM

I examine the role of consensual, and pleasurable, power exchange in utopia. I argue that utopianism constitutes a 'sexy' discourse, while the act of utopian thinking makes us and our desires vulnerable to criticism. I analyse several utopian-themed science-fiction texts, alongside the contradictions of my own public (anarchist) and private (kinky) desires.

Rebecca Moses - *Slam!*: Performance Poetry as a Reparative Practice Between Queer Theory and LGBTQIA History

How might an emphasis on 'queer' contribute to the erasure of marginalised individuals within the LGBTQIA community? How might the erasure of these individuals contribute to the erasure of the political and activist history of our community? How might we use queer methods in writing for performance to resist this erasure?

WORKSHOP**Punk Zine Making**

12:30 - 13:30, GOR G01

Dream Nails

The queer feminist punk witches from Dream Nails are running

a workshop to share their skills in zine making! DIY principles are central to everything the band does and zines are the perfect, most accessible thing you can make. Every participant will walk away with their own mini zine and the spirit of punk in their hearts!

PANEL

Building Utopia

13:45 - 15:15, GOR G01

Llew Watkins - Dressing Up Bars

A presentation of images of Dressing up Bars, an ongoing art and novel-writing project, which has at its heart the creation of a utopian community amidst the backdrop of a dystopic future city environment.

Amy Butt - Feminist Utopian Architecture workshop

Come and re-stage the imagined worlds of feminist utopian novels, in a workshop that asks you to build and occupy the spaces of science fiction. Through the collective process of make-shift construction, we will create a common ground to discuss how architecture can reflect, shape, or support utopian social practice.

PANEL

The Radical Imagination

13:45 - 15:15, GOR G02

Dr Joan Haran - The Imaginactivism of Utopian (Counter)Public Intellectuals (who would resist the term utopia)

My talk draws from current research for which I coined the term 'imaginactivism', a neologism combining imagination and activism. I trace the work of cultural producers, such as Starhawk, Walidah Imarisha, and adrienne maree brown, whose

interventions both proceed from their commitment to acting “in order to make the world a better place” and communicate this imperative to a wider public.

Ibtisam Ahmed - Collective Imagining workshop

Utopias have a tendency to be subjective and run the risk of prescribing narrow models of acceptability onto others. This workshop aims to explore these tensions by asking participants to visualise what their utopia would constitute and then collectively work through and reconcile differences.

PANEL

Utopianism Now

13:45 - 15:15, GOR B03

Chaired by Valentina Salvatierra

Kate Meakin - The Ambiguous Role of Utopia in Left Social Movements: Reclaiming Utopian Activism in the UK and Beyond

The role of utopian thought has been crucial in shaping modern Western liberal democracies. In challenging democratic failures, social movements have commonly been involved in the formation of counter-utopias. In this paper, I will consider the shifting shape of utopia as it relates to contemporary left activism in the UK.

Chase Ledin

As a researcher working on the sociology and cultural history of HIV in the UK, I hope to provide a glimpse into the utopian ethics and logics employed by community and activist organisations working in the pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and HIV movement, illuminating how utopian ideologies can have a profound and tangible impact on today's society.

Nicole Froio

This paper will emphasize the necessity of a non-carceral

approach to the #MeToo movement, arguing that the most vulnerable survivors must be prioritized and offering solutions drawn from decades of grassroots community organizing in the US. This paper will also hold abolitionist frameworks accountable to unequal power dynamics embedded in sexual violence, in an attempt to advance abolitionist discourse to benefit and centre survivors.

PANEL

Utopian Speculation

13:45 - 15:15, GOR B04

Chaired by Raphael Kabo

Céline Keller and Louisa Beck - When the Undead Dream of Living

An audiovisual exploration of the utopian potential of zombiism.

Chelsea Haith - Optimistic Pessimism: Exploring Utopian Potentialities in Speculative Fiction

I contend that dystopian speculative fiction provides a necessary opportunity to reflect on our flawed social structures and consequently endangered futures. This paper hopes to explore whether speculative fiction might offer an optimistic pessimism through which authors might productively allude to, in their very absence, utopian potentialities.

Erin Andrews - Octavia Butler's Anti-Military Imagination: Ambivalent Utopianism in *Xenogenesis*

This paper examines Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*, a work of post-apocalyptic science fiction about reluctant human-alien symbiosis. Though it doesn't present an idealized, nonviolent world, I argue the series makes a utopian connection between the abolition of complex military structures and the end of structural racism.

PANEL

Decolonizing Utopia

15:30 - 17:00, GOR G01

Chaired by Ibtisam Ahmed

Dr Rehnuma Sazzad - The Critical Importance of Utopian Thinking: Locating the Concept in the Present/Past Linguistic Struggles of South Asia

Following Fredric Jameson, I analyse if we are experiencing a crisis in representing socio-cultural systems. Particularly, I examine if women's participation in the socio-economic sector of decolonized South Asia produces a utopian upholding of a balanced social order or a dystopian delineation of their role as preservers of communal purity.

Dr Jan Etienne - Sisters, Challenge and Community: Thinking Radical Womanist Solidarity Inside the Academy

Can we imagine an academy unique from the tensions and manifestations of past and current racial hatred which stand in the way of progress and change for people of colour? This utopia is not naïve but hugely possible through Womanist activism which by itself is to be challenged.

WORKSHOP

Re-claiming Utopia

15:30 - 17:00, GOR G02

Molly Drummond, Eva Giraud and Susan Bruce

This workshop is an inter-generational collaboration, which consists of two short provocations followed by a zine-making workshop. The provocations set out two contrasting ways in which utopia has been (mis-)appropriated within contemporary political and activist contexts. In the zine workshop participants will be making mini-zines to critique and contest the co-option of utopia, as well as reclaim and reflect on utopia as an ongoing conversation.

FILM SCREENING

Indigo Zoom: The Awakening

15:30 - 16:00, GOR B04

Ayesha Tan Jones

Set in a future with no safe oxygen left to breathe, the big business corporation Yonivel.co has commodified air and is selling it to the masses. We follow a wayward hydrogen hacker on their quest to #breathefree.



Ayesha Tan Jones will talk about their film during the panel **Eco-utopianism**, which immediately follows the film screening.

PANEL

Eco-utopianism

16:00 - 17:00, GOR B04

Chaired by Katie Stone

Sheryl Medicott

This paper will argue for utopianism in our approach to climate

change. It is borne from a frustration with apocalyptic narratives around climate change and asks how stories can explore our relationship with others, both human and non-human, and the conditions in which we might thrive rather than portraying our inevitable demise.

Kavita Thanki - Discards and Salvage: There are Riches in the Ruins Waste, with its stench and contamination, with its broken promises, dirty provocations, with its affront to what's trending, is all that which is no longer wanted. But waste, with its radical potential for re-use, re-purpose, and reclamation, is also all that which has hope. Come let us consider this slippery thing called value!

Keynote

Resources for Hope: Moments of Collective Joy

17:00 - 18:00, GOR B04

Professor Lynne Segal

In popular culture around the globe, dystopian visions have all but obliterated utopian hopes for more favourable futures. Yet, resistance to the disorders of the present can also be seen rising and falling as circumstance allow, sometimes enabling us to renew our attachments to life by embracing both its real sorrows as well as its possible joys, while telling us that some form of utopian spirit is now essential for us to envisage any tolerable future at all.

Afterparty

18:30 - 20:00, Waterstones Gower Street café

Join us as we celebrate the end of Utopian Acts, and hopefully the beginning of many more utopian acts, with drinks, comedy, and live music. Information on how to get to the afterparty venue is on page 3.



Dominica Duckworth

An angry Australian queer with a fistful of glitter and a head full of thought experiments, Dominica Duckworth has been called “too didactic”, “weirdly angry” and “kinda dominating”.



YaYa Bones

YaYa Bones is the musical moniker of multi-disciplinary artist Ayesha Tan Jones. Coining their genre ‘dream n bass’, YaYa Bones makes protest music for witches, fusing opera melodies with earth core beats and UFO ritual rhythms.

PRESENTERS

Molly Ackhurst

@hollabackldn

Molly Ackhurst has a practice-based background, having worked in the specialist sexual violence sector for many years as a frontline worker with Rape Crisis. This combines with her extensive experience as a researcher and activist with Hollaback London and Sisters Uncut. She specialises in transformative approaches to trauma and justice - using arts and workshops to inspire direct action and intervention tackling the roots of everyday human violences, and bring about long-term change through creative and immersive projects.

Ibtisam Ahmed

@ibzor / Ibtisam.Ahmed@nottingham.ac.uk

Ibtisam Ahmed is a Doctoral Research Student at the School of Politics and IR, the University of Nottingham. His thesis aims to be a decolonial killjoy, critiquing how British colonialism tried to implement a utopian vision in toxic ways while uplifting anti-colonial voices aimed at genuine grassroots change.

Erin Andrews

erinandrews2013@u.northwestern.edu

Erin Andrews is a PhD candidate in English and Gender Studies at Northwestern University. She received a Master's Degree in American Studies from George Washington University in 2012. Her dissertation project analyzes the relationships between 20th century American science fiction and the U.S. military.

Louisa Beck

louisa.beck@gmx.de / louisabeck.com

Music composer and producer from Germany.

Amy Butt

@Amy_Butt_ / amyvictoriabutt.com

Amy Butt is an architect and lecturer in architecture at the University of Reading. Her research explores the way the fictional worlds we construct influence and reflect the world we inhabit, writing about utopian thought and the imaginary in architecture through science fiction literature and film.

Professor Davina Cooper

davina.cooper@kcl.ac.uk / davinascooper.wordpress.com

Davina Cooper is an academic at King's Law School, writing on radical government, social experiments and new conceptualising. Her last book was *Everyday Utopias: The Conceptual Life of Promising Spaces*. She has just finished a book on reimagining the state, and started a new ESRC project on the Future of Legal Gender. In the 1980s, she was a Haringey councillor.

Tom Dillon

Tom Dillon is a PhD student at Birkbeck, University of London, whose dissertation contextualises the radical change within science fiction in the 1960s, known as the 'New Wave', within the historical, political and cultural discourses of London counter-culture.

Helena Esser

Helena Esser is a PhD student at Birkbeck, University of London, whose dissertation examines the way in which London is received and re-imagined as a Victorian city in steampunk fiction.

Dr Jan Etienne

j.etienne@bbk.ac.uk / learninginwomanistways.com / [#BlackWomenHE](https://twitter.com/BlackWomenHE)

Dr Jan Etienne is Chair of the *Decolonising the Curriculum* Working Group in the Centre for Social Change and Transformation in Higher Education at Birkbeck. She is a Birkbeck Fellow and leads the 'Black Women, Womanist

Learning and Higher Education' Research Network, bringing together black researchers, lecturers and activists from across the UK academy, taking steps to tackle the under-representation of black women in British feminist research. Her forthcoming book is entitled: *Crisis, Education and Community: Black Women, Higher Education and the Challenge of Activism* (2019).

Nicole Froio

@NicoleFroio

Nicole Froio is a PhD student currently based at the University of York's Centre for Women's Studies. Originally from Brazil, she currently researches masculinity and sexual violence in the media but also writes about women's rights, books, Brazilian politics and much more.

Martin Greenwood

I am a Sociology MA student at the University of Manchester, currently researching pedestrian crossing practice in the city. I'm due to begin a PhD at the institution in January, which will explore the role of public services in imagining and implementing radical futures.

Chelsea Haith

@chelsea_haith

Chelsea Haith studied literature in South Africa before beginning her MA in Culture and Thought After 1945 at the University of York in 2017. In October 2018 she will be going up to Oxford to begin her DPhil. Her research interests include decoloniality, speculative fiction, and world literatures.

Dr Joan Haran

Joan has a BA in Literature and History, an MA in Gender, Society and Culture, and a PhD in Sociology. She was appointed as a Research Associate at the ESRC Centre for Economic and Social Aspects of Genomics (Cesagen) in 2004 and promoted to Research Fellow in 2007. Her

research interests revolve around gender, representation and technoscience, and she is particularly interested in the policing of boundaries between science fact and science fiction.

Anna Kamyshan

kamyshan.anna.33@gmail.com / <http://river.moscow>

Anna Kamyshan has a broad background in different fields, including art, sociology, architecture and urban design. She has been leading the project for the redevelopment of the Moscow River area since 2014. Currently she is involved in Moscow River Friends – a bottom up initiative, aimed at making the river a livable space in the city.

Céline Keller

krustelkram@gmail.com / krustelkram.com / [@krustelkram](https://www.instagram.com/krustelkram)

Independent utopian scholar and filmmaker from Germany.

Chase Ledin

Chase Ledin is a PhD student, queer theorist, and social historian. His research concerns the social history of HIV and AIDS in the UK and US, the sociology of chronic medicine, and the mechanics of cultural discourse(s) during the HIV treatment era (1996-present).

Dani Loader

Dani Loader is an industrial electrical engineer and post-graduate computer science student at the University of Oxford. Her primary interests are in distributed, renewable energy systems, decentralised political systems and the intersection of the two. She serves as the main engineer on *MV Vriendschap* while completing her dissertation on solar photovoltaics.

Patti Maciesz

www.artpatti.com / [Twitter @pattimaciesz](https://twitter.com/pattimaciesz) / [Instagram @artpatti](https://www.instagram.com/artpatti)

Patti Maciesz is a Polish-American artist based in Oakland. Her work imagines a world where motherhood is valued and housework, child care and emotional labor fairly remunerated.

She is the creator of www.billthepatriarchy.com and a recipient of the 2018 Money for Women Grant from the Barbara Deming Memorial Fund.

Kate Meakin

k.meakin@live.co.uk / [@katemeakin1](https://twitter.com/katemeakin1)

I completed my Masters in Gender Studies from the University of Hull, analysing Orange is the New Black and U.S. women's prison systems. I am now undertaking my PhD at the University of Sussex, considering contemporary UK activism alongside themes of utopia and dystopia in North American film and television.

Sheryl Medlicott

sheryl.medlicott15@bathspa.ac.uk / [@smmedlicott](https://twitter.com/smmedlicott)

Sheryl Medlicott is studying for a Masters degree in Literature, Landscape and Environment at Bath Spa University. She has spoken at conferences in the UK and internationally on ecocriticism, utopianism and approaches to climate change.

Tanaka Mhishi

tanakamhishi.co.uk / [@TKtheTwit](https://twitter.com/TKtheTwit)

Tanaka Mhishi is a writer and performer who works with stories surrounding sexual violence and masculinity. He is currently Poet in Residence with the Consent Collective and has written for BBC 3, the Brighton Festival and publications nationwide.

Rebecca Moses

[@londonqueerwriters](https://twitter.com/londonqueerwriters) / [@beckyajmoses](https://twitter.com/beckyajmoses)

Becky Moses is a queer identifying poet, writer for performance, and facilitator. Her honest and candid words reveal her experiences of sexuality and gender identity, often exploring the concepts of intimacy, relationality, and kinship. She is currently pursuing queer methods in writing for performance as a means of exploring the political and activist history of the LGBTQIA community.

Sasha Myerson

jmyers@mail.bbk.ac.uk / @Gear_774

Sasha is a PhD student at Birkbeck College. She also holds an MA in Creative and Critical Writing from the University of Sussex. Her research focuses on the overlap of digital and physical existence in the urban spaces of Cyberpunk Science-Fiction.

Professor Michael Robertson

mroberts@tcnj.edu

Michael Robertson is Professor of English at The College of New Jersey. His most recent book, *The Last Utopians: Four Late Nineteenth-Century Visionaries and Their Legacy*, was published this year by Princeton University Press. He is currently an Honorary Research Fellow at Birkbeck and is working on a biography of William Morris.

Dr Rehnuma Sazzad

rehnuma.sazzad@yahoo.co.uk / @putaierma

I am an Associate Fellow of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the School of Advanced Study, University of London. My first monograph, *Edward Said's Concept of Exile* (2017), evaluates the prospect of utopian intellectual practice today. My current book project focuses on language and nationalism in decolonized South Asia.

Professor Lynne Segal

Lynne Segal is Anniversary Professor of Psychology and Gender Studies in the Department of Psychosocial Studies at Birkbeck College. Her books include *Is the Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism*; *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*; and *Straight Sex: Rethinking the Politics of Pleasure*. She co-wrote *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* with Sheila Rowbotham and Hilary Wainwright. Her most recent book is *Radical Happiness*, which explores the radical potential of being together.

Dr Rose Simpson

With a degree in English from York I played with ISB for four years. After many and various jobs and another first degree in French and German from Aberystwyth, I recently completed a PhD on the popular novels of Vicki Baum and Ina Seidel, considering the conflict between modernity and radical anti-modernism. I am now an Honorary Lecturer at Aberystwyth University.

Dr Linda Stupart

@LindaStupart

Dr Linda Stupart is an artist, writer, and educator from Cape Town, South Africa. They completed their PhD at Goldsmiths in 2016, with a project engaged in new considerations of objectification and abjection. Their current work consists of writing, performance, curation, sculpture, drawing, and installation and engages with queer theory, science fiction, environmental crises, magic, language, desire, and revenge.

Kavita Thanki

@big2leg (Twitter and Instagram)

Kavita is a PhD candidate at Ulster University. She upcycles and forages, writes poetry, studies dystopian fiction and waste theory, and feels a great curiosity about (and often affinity with) all manner of rubbish, trashiness, by-products, wasters, effluvia, sewage, flotsam and jetsam and plasticisers.

Llew Watkins

Llew Watkins is an artist and writer based in Limehouse, London. His ongoing work Dressing up Bars draws on his practice as a sculptor, writer and model maker to explore a shifting world inspired by the celtic ogham alphabet, contemporary speculative fiction, and communities based around the Buddhist principle of natural hierarchy. Watkins is currently an MA student in Creative Writing at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Dream Nails

Dream Nails are renowned for their riotous live shows and powerful punk songs. Over the last three years the four punk witches have already built a name for themselves far beyond the DIY punk circuit and toured across Europe and headlined the Sisterhood stage at Glastonbury. Encouraging girls to the front and declaring all profits from their releases will go to Abortion Support Network, they're fearless in their beliefs throughout - and their political passion is matched by their brilliant musicianship.

Molly Drummond, Eva Giraud and Susan Bruce

Molly Drummond is studying for a PhD in Cultural Theory at Keele University, exploring expressions of utopia in the everyday. Her interest in zines as a form and method has informed her Masters' project and her current research, which will use zine-making as a research method. Susan Bruce teaches at Keele, and is co-Chair of the Arts and Humanities Alliance (<http://artsandhums.org/>). She is editor of *Three Early Modern Utopias* and has written on topics ranging from memory in inter-war literature and photography, to, most recently, TV medical drama and the NHS. Eva Giraud is a lecturer in Media and Culture at Keele. Her work explores tensions that surround activist attempts to communicate and articulate animal, environmental and anti-capitalist politics and has been published in journals including *Feminist Review*, *Theory, Culture & Society* and *Social Studies of Science*.

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