Futurities and Fictions Facing the Crisis of Imagination (Lüneburg, 4-5 Nov 26)

Lüneburg, Leuphana Universität, Nov 4–05, 2026

Paula Bertúa, Ciudad de Buenos Aires

Workshop – After Utopia: Futurities and Fictions Facing the Crisis of Imagination.
In one of Benjamin Labatut's novels, an anonymous character approaches Werner Heisenberg in a bar and confronts him: "And to whom do we owe this marvellous hell if not to you? Tell me, Professor, when did all this madness begin? When did we cease understanding the world?" If these questions strike such a chord today, it is because there is something in the intertwining of politics and technocentric ideals which, from modernity onwards, has fused science and fiction with messianic and evolutionist imaginaries oriented towards utopian aspirations that have only ever plunged deeper into failure.

Our present is shaped by a series of technical mediations embedded within a capitalist world--form: a totalising immanence that excludes the possibility of an 'outside' (Gambetti 2022; Biset 2026). Social reality is increasingly structured by presentism (Hartog 2015; Traverso 2024), sustained by a regime of immediacy that permeates the entire social body (Kornbluh 2024), intensifying its contradictions, mechanisms of control and forms of violence. This accelerationist condition is organised around certain Western technocentric narratives that emerge at the intersection of politics, science and fiction. Narratives that are frequently underpinned by evolutionary and futuristic assumptions, cloaked in messianic imagery and intertwined with mythologised pasts, often marked by colonial nostalgia (Nieva 2024; Gebru and Torres 2024).

Within this framework, totalising capitalism inhabits a presentism that erodes the historical constitution of the present itself. Competition appears as both the means and object of progress, yet offers no meaningful futurity beyond an endless daily struggle governed by algorithmic datafication and quantified forms of fulfilment. At the same time, presentism generates visions of technocentric futures in which rationality and messianism converge to negate the existing world — and with it humanism — in the name of a transhumanist sublime that seeks to transcend humanity and death itself.

The path towards this imagined conquest is entrusted to a select few who embrace the timelessness of capitalism and its hierarchies in order to secure their own immortal permanence, as illustrated by the increasingly close alliance between the new right-wing movements and the leading global tech elites. The immediacy characteristic of presentism further intensifies social stratification through promises—often articulated in quasi-revelatory terms—of a future in which both humanism and temporality are effectively nullified in the name of a progress that seems to defy modernity itself.

What, then, becomes of the notion of the future? What remains of utopia? How do hierarchy, control and violence operate within this convergence of presentism and messianism? And how might fiction help us to imagine futures other than those determined by the dominant paradigm, or possible alternatives to the current order as a whole? What kind of speculative narratives aimed at “understanding the world” are emerging at this juncture? These are the questions this workshop aims to explore.

Programme:

Wednesday, 4 November 2026
Leuphana University | Central Building | C40.704

12:00 – 12:30 pm
Introductory Words
by the Organisers
12:30 – 2:00 pm
Writers’ Session
“Creativity and Imagination after Utopia” with Daniel Falb and Michel Nieva
Moderated by Paula Bertúa and Adrià Alcoverro

2:00 – 2:30 pm
Coffee Break
2:30 – 4:00 pm
Session 2: Predicting Futures
Chaired by Maddalena Fragnito
From Swift to Hassabis: An Unorthodox History of Algorithmic Imagination
by Diana Klinger
NOASIS
by Laura Hille

4:00 – 4:30 pm
Coffee Break

4:30 – 5:30 pm
Session 3: Multitude and Heterotopias – A Conversation with Roberto Nigro
In Dialogue with Chiara Stefanoni

5:30 – 6:15 pm
Small Bites and Leaving for SCALA Cinema

7:00 – 9:00 pm
Film Screening
"Brown Girl Begins" by Sharon Lewis (Canada 2017)
Response by Verena Adamik
PostUtopia / Afrofuturism?
by Adyam Tesfamariam
SCALA Arthouse Cinema | Apothekenstraße 17 | 21335 Lüneburg

Thursday, 5 November 2026
Leuphana University | Central Building | C40.704
10:00 – 11:30 am
Session 4: On (Dis)Imagination
Chaired by Egidijus Mardosas
Owning the Future? Standardisation and the Regime of Disimagination
by Hernán Gabriel Borisonik
The Image of Futurization Without Image: The Fabrication of Transcendence from Popular Culture to the Extreme Right
by Adrià Alcoverro
11:30 – 12:00 am
Coffee Break

12:00 – 1:30 pm
Session 5: Structures of the Future
Chaired by Hernán Gabriel Borisonik
The Privatisation of Futurity: Preparedness, Tech Elites, and the Crisis of Imagination
by Maddalena Fragnito
Moving Image: Post-utopia, Orientation, and Political Inventiveness
by Ezequiel Gatto
3:00 – 4:30 pm
Keynote
“The ‘Failure’ of Utopianism” with Gregory Claeys
Response by Verena Adamik
4:30 – 5:00 pm
Coffee Break
5:00 – 7:00 pm
Session 6: Alternative Times for Other Utopias
Chaired by Sebastián Eduardo Dávila
Utopia on Neither Side: Afrofuturism and White Supremacist Propaganda in Early 20th Century USA
by Verena Adamik
“This Is a Transmission from a Future That Will Not Happen”: Unsettling Futures in Contemporary Latin American Cultures
by Paula Bertúa
Utopia Against Progress: Reading Abensour and Le Guin in the Anthropocene
by Egidijus Mardosas

Participation is possible without prior registration. To receive the texts for the writers’ session please send an email and register at lias.event@leuphana.de.

Organisation: Verena Adamik, Adrià Alcoverro and Paula Bertúa (paula.bertua@gmail.com).

Reference:

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