



CFP - IV SELGyC POSTGRADUATE AND EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS CONFERENCE

(Im)possible worlds: past, present, future

University of Valladolid, 10-11th February 2022

The creation of alternative worlds, along with both the utopian and dystopian imagination, are cultural constants that have historically found their way through different genres and media. The proliferation of narratives that reimagine, deconstruct or destabilise the pillars of our societies have acquired renewed intensity in contemporary products, in view of the uncertainty crises—environmental, sanitary, demographic, energetic, political—that are currently troubling humanity. Writing on his early twentieth-century text on utopias, Lewis Mumford discusses how the utopian force has often been based on an acute awareness of the anxieties of the present day. Even if this idea is arguably contemporary, the second component that Mumford attributes to the utopian imagination sounds slightly less relevant, namely, that the human adventure has just begun. The optimistic feeling of future projection does not seem to be present amid the concerns of generations that see, appallingly, how their future wanes—literally and metaphorically. This is not only about an alleged inability to imagine the possibility of a dignified life in a context of extreme precarity, but also about a new consciousness that cannot seem to envision a future at all. Philosopher Marina Garcés has commented upon this state of affairs, coining the idea of the "posthumous condition" to define “our time as the time of everything ending”. To a varying degree, the feeling of a certain—or a radical—unease in view of a present often perceived as problematic, has paved the way for a multitude of cultural manifestations that imagine alternative worlds as a way of thinking about our condition.

This conference welcomes proposals that explore the cultural manifestations of these concerns, both in their contemporary as well as their historical dimension. Beyond classic references like Thomas More’s 1516 *Utopia* or Jules Verne’s voyages, along with the well-established canon of authoritarian dystopias, numerous voices—both from the global South and North—have experimented with speculative genres in order to channel the anxieties, desires and concerns that are endemic to their cultural specificity. From Claire Vaye Watkins’ exploration of a dried-up California in *Gold Fame Citrus* to the segregated societies that Rita Indiana or Junot Díaz have imagined in a Dominican Republic devastated by environmental catastrophe, along with Colson Whitehead’s zombies infected with paralysing memories in *Zone One*, both traditional and more recent genres have managed to offer a glimpse into such issues. Likewise, films that range from the now classic *Star Wars* to the French *La Horde* (Yannick Dahan, Benjamin Rocher, 2009) have resorted to alternative worlds or fantastic creatures to reflect upon past, present and future. The IV Postgraduate and Early Career Researchers SELGyC

Conference aims to explore how alternative worlds are present in literatures and media from different canons and eras, and wishes to offer an opportunity to share ideas and concerns that affect the new generation of researchers in comparative studies. We encourage researchers that have not yet achieved their PhD degree, or that have done so in the past three academic years, to send their original proposals. Suggested topics include, but are not limited to:

- The creation of alternative worlds in new media
- Utopia, dystopia, heterotopia, retrotopia
- Fictional constructions of alternative worlds
- Sci-Fi
- Cli-Fi
- Speculative Fiction
- Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction
- Genre fiction
- Literary theory of the relevant genres
- Space studies in sci-fi and speculative fiction
- Pop culture and alternative worlds
- Patriarchal dystopias
- Technocracies
- Reimagining past aesthetic traditions: neo-gothic, new magical realism...

We also offer the opportunity to share and present different initiatives that early career researchers may be carrying out outside of the strictly academic format of conference presentations, i.e. (academic) blogs, creative initiatives, associations, etc. with the aim to promote and support the activities that are being done in the margins of traditional formats.

Prospective participants are expected to deliver 12-15 minute paper presentations, or 10 minute presentations in the case of early career researchers' initiatives. In both cases, an abstract of 300 words must be sent to ivencuentroselgyc@gmail.com no later than **December 3rd 2021**, following [the form available on the SELGyC's website](#). Proposals in English and Spanish are welcome. Additional information on registration and other matters is available at [the Conference's website](#).

References

Garcés, Marina. *Nueva Ilustración Radical*. Anagrama, 2017.
Mumford, Lewis. *Historia de las utopías*. Pepitas de calabaza ed., 2015.

Organising Committee

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