

**HI PhD Conference 2023 Panel Abstracts and Speaker Bios**  
**“Crisis: Resistance, Rupture, Renewal”**

**Panel 1: Ecology and Crisis**

**Christina Haupt, University of Passau, “Embracing Interconnectedness: The Transformative Power of Art in Tracking Identity and Climate Crisis” (in-person)**

**Abstract:**

The climate crisis challenges human self-perception and forces us to transform our (inter)actions. With the rise of sea levels, extreme weather events and biodiversity loss, the ecological consequences of human actions have become painful realities around the world. Today, we understand that “business as usual” is no longer an option if life on earth is to be maintained, however, it takes more than an awareness of the dire situation to achieve change. Thus, it is necessary to problematize one its root causes: the ‘norm’ of human supremacy. The myth of human exceptionalism crumbles in the face of the current crisis. It is challenged in the field of art (history) by illuminating interconnectedness and the dependency on nonhuman beings, and thus, opening up a door for transformation and alternative interspecies relationships. By introducing artistic examples of contact zones, the wounds of separating human from nonhuman life can work as a space of transformation and healing. Artists such as Patricia Piccinini dive into the experience of kinship and empathy. I argue that evoking the emotions of the audience inspires self-reflection and plays a key role in the combatting of the ecological crises. Furthermore, dissolving ‘otherness’ triggers a process of ‘becoming’ human with a post-anthropocentric identity. Without obscuring the tragic of the economic crisis, artistic productions offer a better understanding of its root causes and explore the potential for change. What if they were a means to foster engagement in the face of anthropogenic crises such as climate change and species extinction?

**Bio:**

*Christina Haupt is a lecturer at the department of art history and pictorial science at the University of Passau, Germany, with a focus on ecological crises and the human-animal relationship. Currently, she is pursuing a doctorate degree on Patricia Piccinini’s depiction of hybrid kinship at the University of Passau. Haupt previously studied in Germany, Ireland, Hungary and Austria and graduated in European Studies with art history as her main subject as well as Cultural Management. Besides her academic career, she is active as an artist. Her paintings, sculptures and interactive installations are mainly dealing with the human identity in the post-Anthropocene, biodiversity loss and the personal struggles – as well as hopes – connected to these challenges. In 2022 she was elected as spokesperson on art in education at the World Environmental Education Congress and conducted an art workshop at the Youth Environmental Education Congress in Prague. The previous year she gave lectures and workshops for the climate camp in Vienna. Furthermore, Christina Haupt works as an art mediator for refugee-children at the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich and in the communications team of the Jane Goodall Institute Austria.*

**Prerana Chakravarty, Tezpur University, “Spoiling Florida: Crisis and Moral Degradation in the Environmental Crime Novels of Carl Hiaasen” (online)**

**Abstract:**

Recent environmental changes have prompted crime writers to address the environmental crisis and create a body of work centered on the study of ecological injustice and environmental abuse, addressing issues of ecological crisis and human-induced environmental damage. Patrick Murphy states that these crime novels, which are nature-oriented help the readers to understand how “environmental consciousness and nature awareness has permeated popular and commercial fiction.” Carl Hiaasen, a columnist for the Miami Herald, began writing crime novels addressing environmental issues in 1986, beginning with *Tourist Season*. He set his stories in Florida, a city that witnessed rapid industrialization and its environment bore the brunt of the capitalist economy’s extreme callousness. The purpose of this paper is to look at how Hiaasen adopted the hard-boiled traditional characteristic of using environmental degradation and crisis to reflect society’s moral bankruptcy. It will examine how environmental issues endemic to Florida and its endangered wildlife are addressed in Hiaasen’s novels, as well as how Hiaasen depicts a world in which corruption and environmental damage have become so pervasive that the ordinary world has become criminal.

**Bio:**

*Prerana Chakravarty is a doctoral student at the Department of English of Tezpur University, Assam, India. She hails from Dibrugarh, Assam (India). Prerana did her Bachelor’s in English from Handique Girls’ College which is affiliated to Gauhati University, India. She completed her Master’s in English from Tezpur University. Her interest lies in the field of Detective Fiction studies and Postcolonial studies.*

**Ayushi Rai, Indian Institute of Technology, “The Mobility Paradox: Lives of Humans and Non-Humans in Nail” (online)**

**Abstract:**

The ecologically fragile and climatically vulnerable state of Uttarakhand in India is witnessing human-induced climate change due to unsustainable developmental initiatives impacting both human and non-human lives. The migration of the local population to the cities (plains) from the rural (hills) region results in depopulation, creating what is termed ‘ghost villages’. Depopulation causes land abandonment leading to the rampant growth of invasive plant species, which the people believe to be invasive, harming their agriculture. Along with the invasive species, these abandoned farms are increasingly being occupied by wild animals who earlier stayed on the fringes of the agricultural lands. Therefore, the human-animal conflicts in such areas have increased significantly, which causes further waves of outmigration from the villages. Based on the ethnographic fieldwork in a village called Nail in the Pauri-Garhwal district of Uttarakhand, this paper highlights how human mobilities in the form of outmigration lead to non-human mobilities of certain plant species and wild animals. Residents of Nail draw parallels between their mobility and non-human mobility by ascertaining that factors such as hunger and distress lead to both forms of mobility. The

paper argues that the outmigration of the people from Nail has resulted in ecological changes, which causes place-based distress. The immobile people lack the resources to move, hence learning to live with such distress. They experience 'solastalgia' (Albrecht et al., 2007), meaning desolation and distress caused by changes in their homes due to environmental degradation and climate change. As their place/village undergoes gradual ecological changes, they long for a return to the way things were before the onset of these changes.

Bio:

*I am a doctoral student at the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar. I have an Honours degree in Political Science from the University of Delhi, awarded in 2014, and a Master's in Public Policy and Governance from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. I have worked as a Research Intern with the World Wide Fund for Nature, Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group, and the Centre for Science and Environment. My research focuses on people-place relationships in the context of human mobility and ecological changes in the Pauri Garhwal district of Uttarakhand.*

## **Panel 2: Representational Crises in Literature and Visual Media**

### **Alessa Paluch, Greifswald University, "Breakdown Lockdown: Visual Representation of Crisis in Popular Music Videos" (in-person)**

Abstract:

Some of the most successful music videos of the last years can be interpreted as reactions to the crisis-driven times. By choosing specific filmic means like narrow spaces, a dark colour palette and intrusive close ups uncanny atmospheres are established. From an unsettling voyeuristic depiction of a toxic relationship like in Kendrick Lamars "We cry together" (2022) over a classic horror movie vibe in The Weeknds "Out of Time" (2022) to the claustrophobic rooms visualizing depression and heartbreak in Billie Eilishs "Male Fantasy" (2021), those music videos capture and exaggerate a feeling of uncanniness, helplessness and being trapped that a lot of people experienced during the Covid19 lockdowns. Based on John Fiske's Popular Culture Theory and the concept of people's active use of cultural products and their meaning this lecture will examine a vary of music videos from the last years which all have a representation of some kind of crisis in common. With a clear focus on the visual aspect of the presentation the videos will be analysed through a visual culture studies' point of view, asking how the videos in alignment with the lyrics and the persona of the performer present a visual world in which crisis is played out (safely) for the viewer. The thesis is that music videos which visually represent a crisis in one way or the other are more likely to work as a redirection activity or an escapist outlet than a call for action or a metaphorical mirror.

Bio:

*Alessa K. Paluch, born in 1981, is a Visual Studies scholar and art historian. She works as a research assistant at the Department of Art History at the Greifswald University with a teaching focus on modern and contemporary art. She received her PhD at the Free University Berlin and studied Theatre Science and Art History at the Leipzig University. In her PhD thesis she defined and analyzed Non-iconic Images like selfies, paparazzi photography and internet pornography and their impact on everyday visual culture. Her research focus is on vernacular visual culture, artistic visual practices and visual literacy. She currently works on artistic visual practices that incorporate found visual material. She lives in Berlin.*

**Catharine Dadcz, University of Bristol, “Maintaining through Malfunction: Gendered Embodiment in the Speculative Crisis of Speculative Fiction” (in-person)**

Abstract:

As a modern form, speculative fiction has been ‘attuned to the speculative and fantastical nature of capitalist economics’. Steven Shaviro (2016) explores how speculative finance works to ‘delimit the future by arresting uncertainty’, while speculative fiction embraces the alterity of futurity as ‘a riposte to finance’s predations on the future’. Speculation has become the predominant way to map reality; binding individuals to a ‘speculative engagement with the future’ through ‘shared experiences of volatility and precarity’ (Komporozos-Athanasios, 2022). This marks a shift from chrononormativity (Freeman 2009), a binding to normative linear continuity, towards a speculative time where the future is felt before the present. There is a change in how individuals register crisis. The conditions of speculative communities are bound inextricably with digital technologies, which pattern infrastructures through predictive modelling systems. In this paper, I explore the ways in which speculative fiction represents and registers this crisis in *Oval* by Elvia Wilk. With a focus on gendered embodiment, I look towards infrastructures of intimacy and eco-infrastructures. Experienced as shock, then habit, individuals come to inhabit the speculative time of digital technologies through emerging temporalities connecting material, affective and social aspects of infrastructures. Malfunction, decay, and maintenance map onto the affective registers of Anja, the female protagonist. Anja is reorientated towards non-reproductive futures and counter-speculative networks. *Oval* generates scenes of life away from the temporalities of speculative financialisation and predictive modelling systems.

Bio:

*Katy Dadacz is a Comparative Literature PhD student (GTA scholarship) at the University of Bristol. Their research explores the ways in which gendered and queer embodiments are affectively bound by digital infrastructures in contemporary literary texts and visual culture. Currently, Katy is interested in representations of digital time, glitches in infrastructures of intimacy in 21st century fiction and feminist/queer approaches to writing-with AI. They currently work for the Centre for Creative Technologies at the University of Bristol. They run a reading group on Speculative Futures with artists at the Pervasive Media Studios, as well as researchers at the University of Bristol and the University of West England. They have a*

*broad interest spanning philosophies of technologies, temporality, and affect theory, especially the writings of Lauren Berlant.*

**Taylor Follett, University College Dublin, “Unravelling Family Crises: The Failures of Family as a Narrative Structure in Elske Rahill’s *An Unravelling*” (in-person)**

Abstract:

In her introduction to *The ‘Irish’ Family* (2014), Linda Connolly writes that “the family is still considered the centre of intimate, personal relations through which people create and sustain meaning on a daily basis” (27-8). Using this centrality of family as a point of entry, this paper responds to claims that the family is in crisis, using Elske Rahill’s *An Unravelling* (2019) as a source text. In dialogue with Christine van Boheemen’s theory of the novel as a family romance, this paper argues that traditional heteropatriarchal, or nuclear, family produces a prescriptive structure of life which can be understood as a narrative structure. Building on an intersection of sociological studies of the family and narratology, this paper proposes that the family is not in crisis as an emotional entity, but rather as a narrative structure, turning to the deterioration of a family in *An Unravelling* to illustrate this. It views the novel as a discursive challenge of the use of familial structure as a national framing narrative, with the polyphonic narrative providing conflicting perspectives on shared family history that ultimately expose the failures of family narratives based on the institutionally sanctioned heteropatriarchal family. It finds that the novel ultimately is suggestive of more productive modes of family relation, although this is stymied by the pervasive institutional strength of the family narrative, leaving behind a nebulous uncertainty as to forward movement.

Bio:

*Taylor Follett (he/him) is a Ph.D. candidate at University College Dublin, where he researches women’s relationship to the family in Irish novels post-2010. Taylor’s research interests include contemporary Irish writing, LGBTQ+ representation in Irish literature and beyond, and queer and trans\* theory. He has previously published on Nicole Flattery’s short stories and Emilie Pine’s essays. Taylor holds a B.A. in English from U.C. Berkeley and an M.Phil. in Irish Writing from Trinity College Dublin. He lives in Dublin with his husband and pets.*

**Panel 3: Crises of History and Histories of Crisis**

**Samuel Barber, Mount Holyoke College, “Navigating Crisis in Late Ancient Italy” (online)**

Abstract:

Within the basilica of Sant’Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, the erstwhile palace church of Theoderic, ruler of Italy between 493 and 526, the king and his court were surrounded by

images manifesting royal authority over the Italian landscape. Alongside traditional iconographies of divine and secular power, the modern viewer is also confronted by an altogether more unusual scene: golden walls encircling a harbor within which ships lie at rest, labelled in an inscription as the CIVITAS CLASSIS, the “city of the fleet,” otherwise known as Ravenna’s port, Classe. Surprisingly, the ships of Sant’Apollinare Nuovo have elicited little commentary in scholarship. Yet they raise important questions. What was their purpose, and why were they represented so prominently in the palace church? What relation do the goods they carried have to the court assembled below? This paper explores the tensions between the rhetorics of political legitimacy in Italy in the fifth and sixth centuries CE and the changing strategies by which the peninsula was ruled in the decades following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. These tensions become especially conspicuous in moments of crisis, particularly the recurrent food shortages Italy experienced during this period due to the ravages of war. By exploring the relationship between the representational apparatus of royal power—for example, royal palaces, images, and urban assemblages—and the riverine and maritime infrastructures through which Italy’s food supply was secured, this paper will highlight the central role of “crisis” in the political discourses of post-Roman Italy.

Bio:

*Sam Barber studies the art and architecture of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (ca. 300–ca. 1000 CE), with particular interests in the history of secular architecture; concepts of landscape, space, and materiality; and the archaeology of urbanism. His book project, The Early Medieval Palace: Architectures of Authority, 300–800 CE seeks to return a paradoxically-neglected architectural type to the heart of our understandings of the transformation of the ancient world. Tracing the architectural and social formation of palaces from the age of the Later Roman Empire in the fourth century CE to the rise of new empires in the ninth, this study argues that palaces were not just passive backdrops for royal authority, but agents in its constitution: both architecture and institution. Sam completed his Ph.D. in the Medieval Studies Program at Cornell University (Medieval Art Concentration) in 2021. Before joining Cornell, Sam studied History at Durham University and earned a Master’s degree in Medieval Studies at the University of York in the U.K. From 2019 to 2020, he was a visiting doctoral student at the Freie Universität Berlin in the Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut (Department of History and Cultural Studies). His research has been supported by the Cornell University Graduate School, the International Center for Medieval Art, the Lemmermann Foundation, and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst.*

**Ilana Goldstein, Northeastern University, “The Value of Truth in Fiction: “Crisis of Witnessing” and Ethical Storytelling in Recent Holocaust Film and Television” (online)**

Abstract:

Elie Wiesel famously argued that only survivors can create Holocaust narratives; those who did not live through the atrocities, but attempt to tell the story of the Holocaust, disrespect the

dead and trivialize survivors' experiences. However, as the number of living Holocaust survivors continues to dwindle—and access to sites like concentration camps, ghettos, and mass graves is increasingly precarious due to the wars and rising Catholic Nationalism in Eastern Europe—the question Wiesel rhetorically poses remains: how do we transmit the message? And who gets to transmit the message when there are no survivors left? The question of how we transmit the memory of the Holocaust for future generations is of paramount importance. As only survivors have access to the atrocities of the Holocaust, filmmakers and artists create new ways to “witness” an otherwise inaccessible past. Holocaust representation in film and television offers a window to the past in a way that resonates with current viewers. In this essay, I analyze David Weil's action TV series *Hunters* (2020), Taika Waititi's comedy film *Jojo Rabbit* (2018) and László Nemes's drama film *Son of Saul* (2015). Recent Holocaust films and TV shows reflect the crisis of representation. I pose the questions: How do current films and television shows straddle the uncomfortable line between realism and sensationalism in their depictions of the Holocaust? How might visual media offer future generations the opportunity to witness an unrepresentable past? In this digital age, how do we transmit the story of the Holocaust with respect and reverence?

Bio:

*Ilana Goldstein is a PhD student at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, where she studies English with a focus in Holocaust and genocide studies. She also currently teaches advanced interdisciplinary writing to undergraduate students in Northeastern's Writing Program. Ilana is a graduate from George Washington University's English MA program. While at GW, she focused on generational divides as represented in novels, graphic memoirs, and film to explore the narrative fractures that occur when inherited Jewish traumas grate against American identity and cultural practices. Upon graduation, Ilana published her Master's thesis on “Narratives of Second-Generation Holocaust Trauma: Artistic Expression and Jewish-American Commemorative Practices in the Works of Spiegelman, Roth and Potok” in the spring of 2020.*

**Geli Mademli, Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis, “Between Marble and Marbles: The Film Archive as Interface for Greek Crises” (online)**

Abstract:

The presentation proposed draws on my ongoing research project, which focuses on film archival practices in Greece and examines the discipline of film heritage through the concept of crisis – both as a qualifier of change, exception, and exigency, and as specified in the country's contemporary socioeconomic and political history. The project aims to situate the term “Greek Crisis” in an unprecedented discursive environment, to reveal its manifestations and complexity against the grain of its popularization as a media event. Often framed as a discipline in crisis, characterized by the persistent reiterations of the “death of cinema” (Cherchi Usai), film heritage presents a conundrum of institutional predicaments, as the global alliance between film archives and other entities reveals the imbalance between practices in the global centers

and peripheries (Fossati). This (theoretical) paper attempts to frame the different materialities of marble(s) as a pivotal metaphor for our understanding of the binaries that inhabit dominant narratives of division, custodianship, and authorization in this context (past and present, matter and memory, analog and digital, black box and white cube, East and West). By fleshing out this methodological tool, I wish to frame the fragile space of the film archive as an exemplary laboratory of crisis (Ernst, Derrida) where different states of emergency come at play, a critical field of negotiation between different practices, interests and manifestations of power (Stoler, Azoulay), and eventually an interface of pluralization, one that fractures the master narrative of a singular crisis (Koselleck) and refracts crises modules (the national, European, refugee, financial, and sovereign crises) fostering experimentation and emancipation.

Bio:

*Geli Mademli studied journalism (BA, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), film studies (MA, University of Amsterdam), and cultural studies (MA, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) and is currently completing her doctoral dissertation on discourses of crisis in different manifestations of Greek film heritage (Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis). She is the Publications Coordinator of the Thessaloniki Film Festival (filmfestival.gr), where she also works as a programmer. She has taught courses on film history, academic writing and Digital Memory and Sovereignty at the Amsterdam University College and the University of Amsterdam respectively. She was a workshop leader at HKW's research program The Whole Life Academy, and she currently teaches a course on special issues of Film Production at the Department of Cultural Technology and Communication of the University of the Aegean. She has curated film programs for venues and institutions like LIMA (lima.nl) and OT301 (ot301.nl) in the Netherlands, and the Cinemateca Brasileira in Brazil. Articles of hers have been published in international journals and collective volumes. She is an editorial board member of the open-access, peer-reviewed journal Filmicon: Journal of Greek Film Studies. She recently co-edited the special issue "Going Viral: Chronotopes of Disaster in Film and Visual Media" for the European Journal of English Studies (EJES, Routledge, 2022).*