

Changing the Climate: Utopia, Dystopia and Catastrophe

This special section of *Colloquy* contains papers presented at the conference *Changing the Climate: Utopia, Dystopia and Catastrophe*, held by the Centre for Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies at Monash University in Melbourne from the 30th of August until the 1st of September, 2010. Approximately sixty papers were given at the conference, six of which are collected here. A companion volume has been published by *Arena Journal* no. 35/36, which also contains proceedings from the conference.

Zachary Kendal discusses the different treatments of science and religion in Australian utopian literature between 1870 and 1900, contesting the science-versus-religion dichotomy that has been used to characterise the Victorian “crisis of faith.” Lindy A. Orthia examines the representation of environmental problems in Doctor Who from 1963 until 2010. She argues that over the decades, the programme has displayed increasing resignation towards chronic environmental issues and disillusionment with the ability of Western science to deal with these problems. The article asks why it is that these literary texts rarely extend their critique to an examination of the impact of resource exploitation on the colonies. Geoff Berry undertakes a mythopoetic reading of two modernist texts, Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and T. S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land.” They provide instances of Berry’s wider thesis, which contends that modern Western civilisation continues to be driven by a desire to attain mastery over its Others, whether they are non-Western cultures or the non-human natural world. This is symbolised potently by the West’s privileging of the figure of Light, which shines out from the city (or the shopping mall), banishing the feared Darkness that lies beyond. Brad-

ley Wells discusses a wide range of Charles Williams's novels, plays and critical writings, arguing that unlike his contemporaries C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, Williams sees the possibility of utopia in everyday urban existence rather than in any nostalgic return to nature. Robyn Walton's piece explores the critique of materialistic culture carried out in British and Northern European literary fiction between 1908 and 1910. Tyson Namow analyses German director Werner Herzog's films *Fata Morgana* (1970), *Lessons of Darkness* (*Lektionen in Finsternis*) (1992) and *The Wild Blue Yonder* (2005), treating the three as a loose trilogy within the filmmaker's oeuvre. There is an investigation of the estranging effects of Herzog's alien's eye view of Earth, and his concomitant beliefs in the inevitability of human catastrophe and the indifference of the universe to humanity's plight.

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THE EDITORS