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Abstracts from the panel

Post-apocalyptic dystopias and disaster studies:  
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# Displacement: uprooting, survival and perspectives

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According to the International Organization for Migration, more than 200 million people were environmentally displaced in the last decade, becoming one of the visible consequences of disasters and climate change. Displaced people may experience two processes: on one hand, *the uprooting* linked to different losses including daily life, the identity and the memories; on the other hand, they will often be confronted with different people, other languages and diverse habits during the journey or at destination, creating a *potential cultural shock*.

Likewise, "*Mara and Dann: an adventure*" by Doris Lessing and "*Three hundred years hence; or a voice from prosperity*" by William Hay are two examples of post-apocalyptic and dystopic literature that introduced the issue of displacement. The authors proposed future scenarios contextualized by a degraded environment as a consequence of the climate change or a catastrophic situation. Along the stories, they write about survival strategies, cultural changes and the role of memory, topics that allow us to reflect on contemporary issues.

The design of policies to prevent and mitigate displacement requires a deep understanding of socio-cultural processes associated to it. Therefore, this paper aims at analyzing the contributions of Doris Lessing and William Hay's post-apocalyptic narratives to approach socio-cultural variables related to contemporary studies about environmental displacement. The comparative analysis attempts to reveal the critiques to society introduced by both authors and contrast them to the philosophical debates on the field of displacement policies.

# Cannibalizing Utopia: Suzanne Césaire's Ecofeminist critique of Colonial Discourse of the Tropics

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This paper considers the ecofeminist geopoetics of Suzanne Césaire, developed over the course of seven essays that appeared in Martinican literary journal, *Tropiques*. Although her work has to date received far less critical attention than that of her husband, Aimé Césaire, I suggest that her essays offer a incisive critique of colonialist travel narratives that reify tropical space according to the categories of utopia/dystopia. I suggest that Césaire's imagery of an incendiary, unstable, disorderly nature represented through natural hazard explodes gendered narratives of the islands in the French colonial imaginary. In travel narratives, Guadeloupe and Martinique, France's "twin sister islands", are frequently described in terms of their fertility and submissiveness, which help to justify their perceived need for colonial control. On the other hand, Césaire also contests the dystopian version of the islands, a rendering frequently deployed by French policy-makers during the twentieth century in an effort to characterize the Antilles as geographically different, and fundamentally not French, thus not entitled of the same rights as European French citizens.

I argue that Césaire enlists the chaotic, often destructive forces of Caribbean climate to create a resistant geopoetics that opposes both paradisaical and sexualized visions of the tropics in French discourse. Yet, rather than simply activating the dystopian and disastrous antipode of Edenic paradise, Césaire diffuses the dialectical tension between utopia/dystopia, instead grounding the emergence of an unassimilated identity in the region's geo-climatic dynamism. I argue that Césaire's valorization of instability as a defining feature of Caribbean culture and geography impedes the reification of islands as either utopic paradises ripe for consumption or as dystopian hotspots in need of technological rationalization. While Césaire's work has been largely left out of studies on postcolonial theory, ecocriticism, and Caribbean women's writing, I suggest her essays demonstrate a latent ecofeminism, allowing her to subvert gendered, exoticized representations of Caribbean islands used to justify continued environmental exploitation, development, and neocolonial control.

# The “Environmentalism” WALL-E – and its Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Consumer Culture

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The animated film *WALL-E* (2008) offers a post-apocalyptic scenario in which the earth is no longer inhabitable because humanity’s consumerist mode of living has caused large-scale environmental destruction. For this theme, the film has been celebrated as “the most powerful environmental statement made by either Disney or Pixar studios” (Murray and Heumann) and as a strong critique of the way of life in the Anthropocene. However, other scholars have criticized its green, anti-consumerist message as underlyingly perpetuating consumer-capitalist structures and as an example of Hollywood greenwashing. The urgency of the issues dealt with in the film, environmental concerns and consumerism, has increased in the past decade – as has the awareness of popular films’ profound influence on our education, values, and lifestyle choices. Thus, especially in light of the diverging appraisals of its environmentalist position, a critical analysis of *WALL-E* continues to be relevant.

In this paper, I will attempt to make sense of the perceived ambiguity of *WALL-E*’s environmentalist theme by focusing on its anthropogenic dimension – the representation of consumerism as responsible for the environmental Armageddon – and by placing the film within the framework of the post-apocalyptic genre. Building on theories that conceptualize Fordist and post-Fordist forms of consumer culture, I will argue that, on the one hand, *WALL-E* convincingly presents a human-made ecological destruction, framing Fordist consumer culture as the cause of the apocalypse. This environmentalist critique of consumerism is, as I will demonstrate, undermined by making the protagonist WALL-E a classic male hero of the post-apocalypse who saves the remnants of humanity and by characterizing him as a heroic post-Fordist consumer. Ultimately, the film falls short of being a consequent green statement. Instead, it presents post-Fordist consumer culture as the remedy of eco-catastrophe in a post-apocalyptic world.

## References

Murray, Robin L., and Joseph K. Heumann. “WALL-E: From Environmental Adaptation to Sentimental Nostalgia.” *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, vol. 51, 2009, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc51.2009/WallE/text.html>. Accessed 8 June 2021.