

Feminist Utopias: Past, Present and Imagined- Final Program

All sessions in Great Hall, University House-ANU, 8 Sept. 2017

REGISTER: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/feminist-utopias-tickets-36914603573>

Time	Activity	Presenters
8:15-8:45	Registration-Great Hall anteroom	
8:45-9:00	Acknowledgement of Country; the ANU Gender Institute and Feminist Utopias	Makayla-May Brinckley; Margaret Jolly
9:00-9:45	Emma Goldman's Struggles for Utopia: Feminism and Ambivalence	Clare Hemmings
9:45-10:00	Coffee Break	Registrants
10:00-10:45	Feminist Utopian Thought Shifting-Roundtable	Jane Alver; Teresa Jopson; Hannah McCann
10:45-11:00	Relaxation Break	
11:00-12:15	Utopian Community Building in the Feminist Past and Present	Elizabeth Reid; Gabrielle Journey Jones; Sophie Robinson; Catherine Dwyer
12:15-12:45	Lunch	Registrants
12:45-2:00	Composing Feminist Pasts and Utopian Futures	Jennifer Gall; Glenda Cloughley and Chorus of Women
2:00-2:15	Relaxation Break	
2:15-3:30	Addressing and Refashioning the Feminist Future-Roundtable	Morgan Burgess; Julie Monro-Allison; Maja Milatovic; Kerry Price
3:30-3:45	Coffee Break	Registrants
3:45-4:15	'Sisters in Sedition' – Dramatising the Past	Tyrell Haberkorn and players
4:15-4:30	Relaxation break	
4:30-5:15	Rhythms of the Feminist Future	Catherine Russell and Heidi Zajac; Yolande Norris
5:15-5:30	From Yesterday to Tomorrow? Feminist Reflections	Carolyn Strange and Fiona Jenkins
5:30-6:30	Sounds like Utopian Imagination	Sally Greenaway and Barbara Jane Gilby

PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

Emma Goldman's Struggles for Utopia: Feminism and Ambivalence

Clare Hemmings, Keynote Presenter; Director of the Gender Institute, London School of Economics

Emma Goldman was a life-long believer in anarchist revolution and the importance of prefigurative engagement with utopian ways of living that such revolution would surely inaugurate. Yet for all her fervent certainties, Goldman's articulation of the means to bring about anarchist utopia was shot through with political ambivalence: about gender, race and sexuality. Rather than dismissing or seeking to resolve these ambivalences, I suggest that they offer a useful way of bringing forward past uncertainties as a way of illuminating present difficulties about precisely the same 'objects'. Lastly, I suggest 'panache' as a useful way of holding these ambivalences in tension for a queer feminist politics that resists identification in favour of wonder.

My feminist utopia; Paradise found in the Pacific?

Jane Alver, PhD Candidate, University of Canberra

My feminist utopia is where the project of feminism encompasses a diversity of feminisms (plural) –women of colour, disabled women, Trans women, old, young, indigenous, women of all faiths and none. Currently feminism has been criticised as a white, middle class, ableist project. To ensure its strength and sustainability it needs to be open to intersectional experience and accommodate diversity. My research suggests that Pacific feminisms are creating new spaces for talk and shared action across diversity.

We must ensure the feminist advocacy platform is speaking for more, especially in face of the backlash against women's rights – feminism should be an inclusive and broad church not just a movement for the few, or an unaffiliated collection of splinter groups all calling for different things. We need greater numbers and collectivity and unity across diversity. I develop this utopia drawing on my broader research project on Pacific feminist civil society.

There are contested notions of feminism in the Pacific and civil society is working across diversity to generate a shared vision. We need to continually encourage 'western' feminists to engage with 'non-western' feminisms to see evidence of the practical application of unity in diversity and intersectional feminism in practice where identity is fluid and constructed and reconstructed through dialogue. My paper will provide empirical evidence of such dialogue taking place within the Pacific feminist movement and redefining feminism to be inclusive and embrace its diversity. I will focus on fieldwork findings from participant observation of the Inaugural Pacific Feminist Forum in Fiji in late 2016.

The academic as artist and activist

Teresa Jopson, PhD Candidate, Dept. of Political and Social Change, ANU

Amidst the dystopic climate in neoliberal academia (Raaper 2016, Gill 2009), scholars in various parts of the world have resisted through artistic and activist engagements. In this presentation, I explore how academics as artists and activists are effective public intellectuals, and consider the public intellectual's individual and collective tasks. I ask, what kind of knowledge do cultural productions and collaborations with the public create? What does this mean in terms of form and authorship?

To address these questions, I survey exciting examples of individual insurgent scholarship in Africa and Southeast Asia that generate and disseminate knowledge through artistic public engagement. The examples include work of academic-artist-activists in anthropology, psychology, comparative literature, and urban planning that explore diaspora and violence using the internet, photos, letters, and a card game, respectively. In my assessment, knowledge created through cultural productions and collaborations result in more authentic forms and authorship. I argue, however, that these exciting individual projects are not enough. As neoliberal capitalist production poses complex challenges, public intellectuals need to step up their game and contribute to realising utopias through collaborative productions.

This presentation therefore suggests that feminist visions of transforming society include transforming the ways academics create and share knowledge, and imagines a utopic world of academics as artists and activists organised in collectives to effectively address inequalities and social injustice.

Another World is Possible: Hope and Glimpsing the Future

Hannah McCann, Gender Studies, University of Melbourne

This presentation considers the Marxist strands currently re-emerging in some areas of gender theory, and the implications of these for thinking through questions of hope and the future. Connecting with earlier discussion on whether we should reject mainstream, as well as feminist discussions on questioning happiness, this presentation asks: should we be hopeful? And, if so, what *kind* of hope should we hope to have? To answer these questions this presentation draws particularly on work examining the cruelty of encouraging dreams for a better future when the present offers very little to be hopeful about. It also draws on engagement with how we might see glimmers of a different possible future, and discussion of how Marxism might help us in gender theory. While some warn of the dangers of investing in promises for the future that lock us into a toxic present, others help us address this by offering a glimpse of another world toward which we might strive.

The struggle for change: feminism, consciousness-raising and the 1975 International Women's Year Conference.

Elizabeth Reid, AO

This paper will enter into dialogue with the plenary speech of the Australian Delegation to the World Conference of the International Women's year, held at Mexico City, June – July 1975. It hopes to discover to what extent the speech reflected a Utopian Feminist vision and to delineate and interrogate the vision. It will raise the question of the relevance of the vision to our troubled times.

Creative Womyn Down Under – 10 Years On: A Case Study in Resilience

Gabrielle Journey Jones, co-founder of Creative Womyn Down Under

I will present the history and work of the grassroots collective CWDU, and demonstrate that feminist resistance and solidarity building can take forms which exist almost entirely outside regulation, or donor funding frameworks. I explore what a grass-roots, unfunded, unincorporated, feminist, womyn-centric/womyn-positive model of building and supporting creative communities for womyn can look like, and share the lessons and challenges of building our own creative feminist utopian community. This journey will explore core elements of our feminist creative community, including trust, inclusion and belonging; building common values and goals; and processes for growth, problem-solving and change.

“Creative Womyn Down Under (CWDU) develops and supports opportunities for womyn to participate in creative experiences. Our vision "Connecting Womyn & Creative Expression" is about developing networks and friendships amongst creative womyn in Australia and beyond via our own events, and the provision of great links to online creativity and womyn's resources. All who identify as womyn are welcome to participate in CWDU organised events, which we always aim to make both physically and financially accessible.”

Eggs, O'Wheels, Radicalesbians, and Amazons. Remembering lesbian feminist utopias in Australia during the 1970s and beyond.

Sophie Robinson, PhD candidate, Women's and Gender Studies, UNSW and Sydney's Pride History Group Committee member

In Tasmania during the 1970s, a few bicycle-riding female friends decided that they wanted to be family, all changed their names to 'O'Wheel', bought land together, and lived communally. In Sydney's Inner West during the early 1970s, two houses known as Canterbury Castle and Crystal Palace became havens for politically engaged lesbians and lesbian separatism. In Wauchope, NSW, in 1975, one lesbian, followed by many more over the years (and still today), set out to finding a remote place where she and others could live 'a simple self-

sufficient life' that could also be a 'refuge and retreat for women', not just lesbians. Not all of these experiments in lesbian, feminist and sustainable living are still practiced today, but the memories and meaning they accrued for the women who participated in them are still acutely felt, and are starting to be documented and historicised amidst criticisms of the lesbian feminist project of the 1970s and 1980s. This paper will draw on my PhD research into the history of lesbian feminist activism in Australia. Using oral histories with lesbian activists who pursued their women's and gay liberationist, and counter-cultural ideals, across a range of contexts (from living arrangements through to new forms of kinship) I explore the past and present of these feminist utopias.

Kick-starting a Feminist Revolution: Empowering the Feminist Future through Film

Catherine Dwyer, Independent Film Documentarian and Director

This presentation will recount my effort to tell the story of the bold women of the Women's Liberation Movement who kick-started a feminist revolution in Australia.

Until the diversity of human experiences is better reflected in the stories we tell and consume, then we will never know true equality. My aim with this project is to put the women from this incredible era back into the story Australia tells about itself. In doing so I hope to debunk the negative misconceptions that surround feminism these days, and add an often marginalized, yet vital side to the story of contemporary Australian life. Understanding our history can tell us something about the present and inform the future. I want to empower women and girls to reach their full potential as members of Australian society, and to continue the fight for gender equality. And yet right now this history is in danger of being lost. There has never been a comprehensive film that investigates this complex, important and unique time in Australian history. Many of the women who were active in the movement of the 1960s and 1970s are getting on in years and it is important to record their stories urgently.

From Convent to Music Hall: Utopian Reinvention in a Time of War

Jennifer Gall, National Film and Sound Archive

This presentation will be delivered in a semi-dramatised mode, interspersed with short musical items and recordings.

On March 25th 1914 two gifted young musicians left Australia for England on the S.S. *Orama* to take up scholarships at the Royal College of Music in London. They were sisters: Maggie Chisholm, age 21, a pianist and Helena Chisholm, known as Lena, aged 16, a violinist; born in Brushgrove, Northern NSW and educated by the Presentation sisters at St Mary's convent, Lismore. On their quest for musical careers, they were to navigate many potentially treacherous currents as the 19th century transformed into the 20th – an adventure signposted by religious allegiance, competition for scholarships, the social disruption of war and continual reinvention to make their way as professional musicians.

Through a series of re-imaginings in the form of 'letters', re-enactment and musical performances based on extensive research, this presentation will examine the Presentation convent as a feminist utopia that equipped the Chisholm sisters to radically transform their education into careers as independent musicians. At this time wartime enlistment for men produced unprecedented employment opportunities for women musicians and created a feminist performance utopia within the climate of wartime destruction.

Resounding Harmony: The Utopian Impulse

Glenda Cloughley and A Chorus of Women (musical direction by Johanna McBride)

This presentation is a 'singing paper' in which women of the Canberra Chorus show some unbroken threads of regenerative philosophy and song we have been weaving into the public life of our city for 14+ years.

With live original music and performance video clips from major productions, Jungian psychoanalyst and Chorus composer Dr Glenda Cloughley demonstrates that emergent utopias are always implicate in the

'generative substratum' of culture, where harmonious families and communities continuously renew the cycles of life.

Our focus is the global story of utopian impulses that drew 1300 women from warring and neutral countries together in the only international peace conference of the First World War. The music includes 'law chorales' which sing the guiding precepts of that 1915 International Congress of Women. These inspired our centennial community oratorio *A Passion for Peace* and manifest globally again in the Women's Marches of January 2017.

Listening for wisdom that always tries to come into being is the key to our Chorus arts practice. We show how this demanding creative discipline guides music-making, conversation, relationships and organisational processes within Chorus as it motivates a diverse range and scale of public actions and events that would be impossible for a command-and-control hierarchy.

Woman's Destiny: New Zealand Suffrage Politics and Utopian Fiction

Morgan Burgess, PhD candidate, UNSW Canberra

The late nineteenth century in New Zealand was characterised by the fight for women's enfranchisement. The first Bill to Parliament for women's suffrage in that country was presented by statesman, sometime Premier, and feminist ally Julius Vogel in 1887. Vogel's Bill was defeated but his belief in women's capacity for politics was not. In 1889 he published a speculative fiction titled *Anno Domini 2000, or, Woman's Destiny*. In the novel he envisages a future where women and men enjoy identical political rights, women hold positions of power unchallenged, and the novel's protagonist, a woman named Hilda, fulfils the role of Imperial Prime Minister.

Touted in New Zealand as the country's first science fiction novel, many aspects of the feminist politics espoused in *Anno Domini*, radical as they were for the 1880s, remain elusive over 120 years after its initial publication. Fredric Jameson argues that utopias, while projecting into the future, are always rooted in their moment of production. Drawing on Jameson's argument and third wave feminist methodologies this paper will investigate the ways in which Vogel's utopian dream is representative of late 1880s aspirations and how these hopes for the future map onto modern feminist agendas.

Creative investigations of maternal experience

Julie Monro-Allison, PhD candidate, Textile Workshop, ANU School of Art and Design

Creative art practice provides unique strategies for contemplating feminist utopias. Perhaps most notable is the particular imaginative space occupied by the artist; a space characterised by the fluid interplay of imagination and lived experience. Working with textiles, sculpture and drawing, my research investigates maternal experience, particularly the transitional spaces of reproduction, nurture and growth. In her 1983 essay, feminist philosopher Iris Marion Young described how subjectivity and accounts of lived body experiences were ignored in contemporary discourse on pregnancy. Twenty-two years later she republished the essay in its original form, noting in a postscript that her observations on pregnant embodiment and the alienation of the pregnant subject were still pertinent. Following Young's desire for women to speak of their own maternal experiences, I share the studio explorations I have made over these first six months of my research. I outline some of the problems I have encountered in attempting to evoke maternal experience in the visual arts, as well as the exploratory work I feel may be promising. I also describe some of the new work addressing maternal experience being made by other contemporary artists.

Women warriors, embodiment and feminist utopia: Representing the Amazons in *Wonder Woman*

Maja Milatovic, ANU College

Featuring an impressive society of women warriors, the critically acclaimed film *Wonder Woman* (2017) offers its viewers a compelling representation of feminist utopia along with a strong and capable female protagonist. *Wonder Woman* or Diana grows up on an isolated island as the daughter of the Amazon Queen Hippolyta.

Providing Diana's background story, the film features portrayals of the Amazons, an all-female society of women warriors seen training and living in harmony. The Amazons represent a feminist utopia of independence and prosperity outside of male control and presence. Appearing in Greek mythology, folktales, historical accounts and artwork, the Amazons have captured Western imagination for centuries. Frequently seen as muscular, powerful women rejecting male dominance, the Amazons' on-going appeal lies in their self-sufficiency, fearlessness and skills in warfare. They challenge ideas on masculinity and femininity, or what it means to be a 'man' or a 'woman' in a traditional sense. In *Wonder Woman*, these ideas are frequently expressed by Diana, who comments on women's competence, sexuality and social norms as she leaves the island and engages with wider society. Despite the film's transformative potential, I argue that *Wonder Woman* also remains limited by traditional representations of gender, problematic articulations of violence, lack of diversity and a focus on heterosexual romance. Taking these critiques into account, I also consider how the feminist utopia featured in *Wonder Woman* may challenge social inequalities and still offer affirming portrayals of women's empowerment.

Dragging the Present

Kerry Price, PhD candidate, School of Sociology, ANU

My paper will discuss the social and political potential of camp found in drag, as well as the moments these performances produce as 'theory in action'. Drag's utopianism is often fuelled by narratives of the past that expose the prison-houses of the every-day, the *here and now* of 'straight time'. This backward glance offers the horizon of a *then and there*, producing in the imagination blueprints of another time and place; a conjuring of both a queer future and past as a critique of the present. Not a dewy-eyed hope for a future to come, founded on the complacency of our brutal present, but an embrace of a politic of the here and now, with an image of what could be in our potential futures. Drag and the sites it produces and is produced by are utopian rehearsal rooms, where one works on a self by refusing to identify with the mandates of a dominant system, such as toxic hetero-masculine-normativity. Instead using the mechanisms of those same systems to provide a glimpse of a queer future, by being queer in straight time.

Sisters in Sedition: A Play about Solidarity and Utopian Struggle

Tyrell Haberkorn, College of Asia and Pacific, ANU and playwright

What are the individual costs posed by those who sacrifice in the service of universal freedom? What are the individual and social costs of *not* acting in the service of freedom?

'Sisters in Sedition' is a dramatic response to these questions through a play about the lives and struggles of Ethel Rosenberg, Ruth First, and Lek (family name withheld). Ethel Rosenberg was convicted of alleged conspiracy to sell atomic secrets to the Soviet Union and commit espionage against the United States on 5 April 1951. She was executed on 19 June 1953, despite her claim of innocence and the U.S. government's secret knowledge that this claim was true. Ruth First was detained in 1963 for 117 days under the 90-day detention law in South Africa, which permitted the arbitrary, potentially infinite detention of anyone who had committed, or might commit, an act dangerous to the state. She was killed in exile in Mozambique on 17 August 1982, when she opened a letter bomb sent to her by the South African Security Branch Police. Lek (family name withheld) was convicted of defaming the Thai monarchy after the 22 May 2014 coup for painting anti-monarchy poems on bridges and sentenced to fifty years in prison. She pled innocent, claiming that although she carried out the actions as accused, this was not evidence of disloyalty to the monarchy. The increase in prosecutions and lengthening of sentences, with a record sixty years being meted out for six Facebook posts in a recent case, means that utopia is needed more than ever.

A short introduction to *Sisters in Sedition* will be offered and then a portion of the play will be presented as a dramatic reading.

All things women, gender equality and feminism: Canberra's OverHerD

Catherine Russell and Heidi Zajac, Podcast Producers and Presenters

At a time when Feminism is hotly debated and is strongly identified with or positioned against, Catherine Russell and Heidi Zajac decided to launch a podcast to discuss all things Feminism. OverHERd, launched in early 2017 by the 2 Canberrans, is a monthly podcast aiming to explore, expose and elevate Feminism and the many elements and stories of gender inequality and equality.

Presenting at Feminist Utopias, Catherine and Heidi will speak on the importance of making Feminism an accessible and relevant movement. The complexity of such a feat is not lost and will explore, how does Feminism relate across generations, to women of diverse cultural and economic lives, across the gender spectrum, and to men?

The accessibility of Feminism is essential if there is to be a ground swell of communities and populations who wish to see and live in a gender equal society.

Girls Rock! Canberra

Yolande Norris, Independent Writer and Producer

Girls Rock 'Camps' are a growing worldwide network of music education and mentorship programs aiming to address the lack of representation of women in the music industry. They are, however, much more than that.

Girls Rock! Canberra was the first program of this kind in Australia, and this July ran its second-ever camp for 47 girls, trans and non-binary young people.

It's obvious why Girls Rock! Canberra and its sister camps all over the world are so important for participants. What is less obvious is what they can be for the associated adults. From instrument instructors, sound engineers, band coaches, workshop facilitators to coordinators and caterers, all involved identify as female or non-binary. For many participants it will be the first time they will have experienced an environment like this.

For writer and arts producer Yolande Norris this year's Canberra camp was her first experience of the unique space created by such a project. What did she learn from this dynamic? How can the successes of Girls Rock be transposed to other areas of society and our lives? In her presentation Norris will explore whether Girls Rock is a near-perfect embodiment of the feminist ethos and means by which to share feminist principles among the younger generation and those who missed out the first time around.

Sounds like Utopian Imagination: Performance and Exegesis

Sally Greenaway (composer and pianist) and Barbara Jane Gilby (violinist and music educator)

Performance Repertoire

- Summer Beckons
- Poems [I, II, III]
- Look to This Day
- Postlude: Hymn to Freedom (excerpt from *The 7 Great Inventions of the Modern Industrial Age*)
- Encore de Lirico