

Programme

Apocalyptic Times: Spirituality in Global Revolt
7-8th September 2023, University of Exeter and Online

Thursday 7th September

9.00-9.30: Registration and refreshments

9.30-10.30: Keynote

Susannah Crockford (University of Exeter), 'Country Holds Everything: Spirituality in New Climate Activism'

10.30-10.50: Break

10.50-12.20: Panels 1 & 2

Panel 1: Environmentalism and Spirituality (Digital Humanities Lab)

Chair: Shehana Gomez

- Rosemary Hancock (University of Notre Dame Australia), 'Lived Environmentalism: Lifestyle Politics or Nonreligious Worldview?'
- Alan Helberg (Jagiellonian University), 'Healing the body, healing the Earth – visions of the future in Sūkyō Mahikari, a Japanese NRM'
- Holden Rasmussen (Newcastle University), 'The Killing Word: Anthropogenesis, the Social Bond, and the Problem of Meaning and Truth in Bataille'

Panel 2: Spirituality as Critique in the Modern World (Old Library 137)

Chair: Abbie Pink

- Joshua Whitaker (Central St Martins College, UAL), 'Acid History; "Critical Spirituality" in St Paul and the Delphic Oracle'
- Arne Beswick (Newcastle University), 'The neo-liberal reification of human wrong into the primal'
- Thom Hamer (Cardiff University), 'Metamodern Artefacts in the Sacred Return of Lost Things'

12.20-13.20: Lunch

13.20-14.50: Panel 3: Spirituality, Nationalism and Geopolitics

Chair: Anna Maslenova

- Dustin Byrd (University of Olivet), ‘The Russian Restrainer of the Apocalypse: Alexander Dugin’s *Katechon* as a Political Category in Empire Building’
- Andree Lee (University of Chichester), ‘Druidry and Eco-Fascism: Apocryphal Aftermaths’
- Peter Buda (University of Bristol), ‘Out of Collapse an “Eternal Empire”? The Historical Prospects for a Disaster-Induced Paradigm Shift in International Relations’

14.50-15.00: Break

15.00-16.30: Panel 4: *Spirituality and Healthcare*

Chair: Ramona Nash

- Maria-Teresa Marangoni (University of Exeter), ‘The Body and the Divine: Catholicism and ‘New Age’ Spirituality in Personal Health Management Practice in Vaccine-hesitant Parents in Italy’
- Sarah Scaife (University of Exeter), ‘Uncertain Health, the Sacred and the Capitalocene: a case study from lived experience’
- Rachel Cummings (Goldsmiths, University of London), ‘Caring at the edge of knowledge: The problems and possibilities of deathbed phenomena’

16.30-17:00: Closing discussion for day 1

Chair: Anna Maslenova

19.30: Dinner for presenters (Mill on the Exe)

Friday 8th September

9:00-9.30: Refreshments

9.30-11.00: *Roundtable: Dartmoor, Spirituality and Land Activism*

Chair: Shehana Gomez

- Andy Letcher (Lecturer, Schumacher College)
- Rachel Fleming (Director, Embercombe)
- Carolyn Hillyer (Artist, musician, land custodian)

11.00-11.20: Break

11.20-12.20: Panels 5 & 6

Panel 5: International Frameworks of Spirituality (Old Library 137)

Chair: Andrew Lee

- Ramona Nash (University of Exeter), ‘To what extent is the Charter for Compassion an effective spiritual and/or political/cultural tool for better interfaith engagement?’
- Sumaiyah Kholwadia (University of Birmingham), ‘Legal Regulation of Spirituality in the International Human Rights Domain: The Case of Muslim Women’s Veiling’

Panel 6: Socialism and Spirituality (Digital Humanities Lab)

Chair: Iona Ramsay

- Detlev Quintern (Turkish German University), ‘Marxism and the De-Spiritualizing of Resistance: Justice Movements before the Manifest of the Communist Party’
- Jenny Harper (University of Reading), ‘“The True Comradship of the Natural Life”: Utopic Spirituality in the Face of an Apocalypse’

12.20-13.15: Lunch

13.15-14.45: *Panel 7: Indigenous Spiritualities and Paradigms of Knowledge*

Chair: Anna Maslenova

- Yin Paradies (Deakin University) and Cullan Joyce (University of Melbourne), ‘Sacredness of Country as First Nation’s Honouring of Climate Apocalypses’
- Shehana Gomez (Cardiff University), ‘Indigenous Peoples and the Challenges they Bring to International Law’
- Mark Juhan Schunemann (University of Exeter), ‘Inter-paradigmatic syncretism in psychedelia’

14.45-15.00: Break

15.00-16.30: *Panel 8: Spirituality, Art and the End Times*

Chair: Thom Hamer

- John-Robin Bold, ‘Apocalyptic Sound’
- Kennedy Dragt (Université Catholique de Louvain), ‘Cross-temporal Spirituality: Writing with Saints and Ancestors in the Anthropocene’
- Lisa Clark (University of Bristol), ‘Heaven and Nature Sing: Eschatology in Christian Hymnody’

16.30-17.00: Final discussion, next steps, and workshop close

Chair: Iona Ramsay

17:00-18:00: Drinks reception

ABSTRACTS & BIOS

Susannah Crockford (University of Exeter), ‘Country Holds Everything: Spirituality in New Climate Activism’

New climate activism refers to the movements that have emerged in the late 2010s in response to the rapidly worsening climate crisis. Extinction Rebellion (XR), the School Strikes, and Dark Mountain are all movements that engage with the likelihood that the current social order may collapse, and that drastic action is required immediately to salvage the liveability of the planet for both humans and more-than-human nature. This paper examines Dark Mountain, a writer, artist, and activist collective explicitly premised on giving up on notions of civilisation, progress, and modernity. Exploring how spirituality influenced both texts and gatherings, this paper methodologically employs ethnography and discourse analysis. Comparing Dark Mountain to the more well known manifestations of new climate activism, XR and the School Strikes, this paper argues for understanding these ecological activists as primarily motivated by spirituality, rather than politics. They seek to reimagine the world.

Dr Susannah Crockford is a lecturer in anthropology, specialising in environmental and medical anthropology and the anthropology of religion. She is an affiliate of the Wellcome Centre for Cultures and Environments of Health. Her first book, [Ripples of the Universe: Spirituality in Sedona, Arizona](#), was published in May 2021 by the University of Chicago Press. She is currently working on a second book, an ethnography of climate change. Her next research project will examine the ethics and politics of conspiracy theories.

Rosemary Hancock (University of Notre Dame Australia), ‘Lived Environmentalism: Lifestyle Politics or Nonreligious Worldview?’

In this paper, I synthesise three literatures that – whilst having significant overlap, are largely not in conversation with one-another: social movement theory on the “religion-like” characteristics of social movements (particularly environmentalism); work by scholars in religious studies tracing the religious roots and contemporary spiritual aspects of environmental movements; and the emerging literature on the contours of nonreligious belief and practice in contemporary societies – especially as they relate to nature. Using these literatures, I show how environmentalisms articulate a ‘cosmology’ or worldview that gives meaning to the world, imbues ethical meaning to material objects like single-use plastics and their reusable alternatives, and is translated into everyday practices that attempt to remoralise activists’ relationship with the natural world. The article responds to a call by scholars of nonreligion to pay greater attention to ‘lived’ nonreligion (Salonen 2019), and in particular, how nonreligious worldviews translate into ‘world-repairing’ (Beaman 2017) forms of social and political action. I argue that social movements are rich sites for the study of lived nonreligion, as they offer their participants space for the cultivation, expression, and embodiment of ‘moral visions’ (Jasper 1997).

Dr Rosemary Hancock is a sociologist of religion. Her research explores the blurred conceptual boundaries between and overlap of religious, spiritual, and nonreligious worldviews with social and political action. She has published widely on Islamic environmentalism, and her current research uses the conceptual tools from religious studies to analyse contemporary (nonreligious) environmental movements and practice. She is a Senior Lecturer in the Religion, Culture and Society research focus area and Assistant Director of the Institute for Ethics and Society, University of Notre Dame Australia.

Alan Helberg (Jagiellonian University), ‘Healing the body, healing the Earth – visions of the future in Sūkyō Mahikari, a Japanese NRM’

Sūkyō Mahikari is a Japanese New Religious Movement which couples the notion of purifying the soul and body with the healing of the environment, mobilizing adherents to engage in recycling campaigns, street cleaning and organic farming. The movement’s vision of the future is that of avertive millenarianism. Their charismatic leader prophesied an “Age of Baptism by Fire”, foretelling catastrophic natural disasters which would cleanse the Earth. Data concerning global warming from IPCC reports is taken as proof of this religious prophecy. However the extent of the damage depends on people’s actions – whether or not they succeed in organizing society in accordance to God’s will. Using the Anthropology of the Future paradigm, the hopes and anxieties expressed by this movement can be investigated as a reflection of the fears and desires latent – and sometimes unconscious – in the wider society, as religious language can express emotions suppressed in secular society.

Alan Helberg has a Master’s degree in Religious Studies from Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland. He is currently pursuing a second degree in Asian studies. His research interests focus on Buddhism, Japanese New Religious Movements and millenarianism.

Holden Rasmussen (Newcastle University), ‘The Killing Word: Anthropogenesis, the Social Bond, and the Problem of Meaning and Truth in Bataille’

At the expense of his speculative theory of human subjectivity, sociality, and spirituality, commentators on the work of Georges Bataille often exaggerate the explosive and dramatic narrative about animal immanence and the revolutionary potential a return to such immanence that Bataille, at first glance, seems to endorse. I offer a corrective reading of Bataille’s account of animality and anthropogenesis, thereby elucidating his critique of spiritual accounts of these concepts. This, by extension, offers a problematisation of contemporary narratives calling for a ‘return to nature’ in response to the ongoing ecological catastrophe. Running from Bataille’s *La somme athéologique* through his political economic writings, are the theoretical tools to critique beliefs in spiritual and animal origins, since they potentially reinforce the patterns of thought that undergird ecological catastrophe. This suggests that critique à la spirituality risks inefficacy by attributing the causes of and remedies to human action to a mythical origin story.

*Holden M. Rasmussen is an early career researcher based at Newcastle University. He is currently writing a PhD thesis on the distinct yet compatible accounts of the ontological category of the limit offered by Georges Bataille and Jacques Lacan under the supervision of Lorenzo Chiesa and Adam Potts and funded by the Northern Bridge Doctoral Training Programme. His research interests include psychoanalysis, aesthetics, post-Kantian idealism and materialism, and queer theory. He has an emerging research profile containing recent and upcoming publications in the *European Journal of Psychoanalysis and Radical Philosophy*. He can be heard speaking on similar topics in the autumn at conferences and workshops at the University of Ljubljana, where he will be continuing his investigation of the ontological dimensions of Lacanian and Bataillean thought as a visiting scholar. He is an experienced pedagogue, holding teaching positions at Westminster University (Salt Lake City) and Newcastle University, teaching modules on contemporary aesthetics, phenomenology, and new materialisms. You can follow him on Twitter @HMRasmussen_.*

Joshua Whitaker (Central St Martins College, UAL), ‘Acid History; “Critical Spirituality” in St Paul and the Delphic Oracle’

‘Acid History’ is neither a record of psychedelic culture nor a catalogue of LSD experience. ‘Acid’ is deployed within the paper, as Jeremy Gilbert has theorised it, as an adjective— a term that is both mystical in its practice and adamant in its materialism. It suggests a methodology of history which employs ‘weirdness’ (in its oldest sense, of controlling fate, becoming, and bending) to radically rethink the conditions of the past, and produce a future which escapes neoliberal politics. The paper will present the ways an ‘acid’ understanding of time can be seen in Pier Paolo Pasolini’s script for St Paul, and the parallel ideation of ‘the spirit of place’ which can be seen in Delphi. The paper will present some of the film and research I have developed on the Delphic Oracle during my time at the British School at Athens.

Joshua Whitaker is an AHRC Technē funded PhD researcher based at Central St Martins College, UAL, where he also teaches MA Culture, Criticism, and Curation. He is currently ‘Arts Researcher in Residence’ at the British School at Athens. His thesis engages the dichotomy of a sacred-profane divide in the work of Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben to investigate Pier Paolo Pasolini’s un-filmed script on the life of St Paul. He is interested in the ideation of apocalypse as read from its Greek origin— as relating to an act of revealing, uncovering, disclosing—within Benjamin’s concept of ‘Messianic Time’; a theory which engages both the materialist notion of history and Gnostic spirituality to re-think preconceived ideas of how time and history function.

Arne Beswick (Newcastle University), ‘The neo-liberal reification of human wrong into the primal’

Spirituality as critique has a dialectical obverse where the challenge is to identify what it is that is being critiqued. Take for granted the powerful unity of the spiritual and its incommensurable challenge to the instrumentally rational and take seriously the mystically primal counterpoint to the human separation between subject and object. There is revolutionary energy here against structures of orthodox hierarchy. However, this critical force evaporates when the object of critique transfigures itself into a primal phantasm. Spiritual critique is rendered inoperable because the human evils that derive from human action are alienated into the realm of the spiritual. ‘Market forces’, ‘inflationary pressures’, the ‘circumstances of nature’, ‘global complexity’, and so on, are an obfuscating cloak. The language of neo-liberalism absolves the powerful from responsibility by reifying human action as spiritual – natural, elemental, and given. Through Hegel, Kojève, and Bataille, spirituality can be unfolded to elucidate this sleight of hand.

I’m Arne Beswick, a PhD student in political philosophy at Newcastle University. My PhD concerns Rawls and Hegel on freedom. While this paper is not directly linked to my research I am interested in the intersection between liberalism and critical theory. It also builds on ideas and discussion with other PhD students within the philosophy department at Newcastle.

Thom Hamer (Cardiff University), ‘Metamodern Artefacts in the Sacred Return of Lost Things’

A renewed sense of spirituality is one of the key characteristics of metamodern culture (Vermeulen, Gibbons & Van den Akker 2017), speaking to the postironic migration away from the detached cynicism of much of postmodern discourse, towards a disarming yet critical embrace of a spiritual journey. This tension seems to be at the heart of the Liverpool Biennial 2023, themed ‘uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things’. The contemporary art festival brings together artworks that aim to empower, celebrate the joy of Being, all the while deconstructing the oppressive and destructive structures of today. As such, this festival is bound to be metamodern, insofar as it oscillates between ironizing the colonial logic of systemization and the creation of spiritual systems in spite of this. In this talk, Thom Hamer (Cardiff University) offers a series of insights into the metamodern senses of spirituality found at the Liverpool Biennial 2023.

Working along the intersections of existential philosophy, literary studies, linguistics and psychology, Thom Hamer’s research interrogates to what extent it is healthy to live life ironically in the face of life’s absurdities. They work at Cardiff University and University of Southampton and are being funded by the AHRC’s South, West & Wales Doctoral Training Partnership. They love it.

Dustin Byrd (University of Olivet), ‘The Russian Restrainer of the Apocalypse: Alexander Dugin’s *Katechon* as a Political Category in Empire Building’

In his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, St. Paul spoke of a “restrainer” of the Antichrist, one who holds back the coming of the apocalypse. This “restrainer,” or “Katechon,” was later secularized and brought into the 20th century political realm by the Nazi jurist, Carl Schmitt, who saw empires as “restrainers” of chaos and disorder. In 2022, with the invasion of Ukraine by Putin’s Russia, the concept of the Katechon came to the fore again. This time by the Russian philosopher, Alexander Dugin, who merged St. Paul’s anonymous restraining force with Schmitt’s political force, claiming that the Russian Federation, and its war on its neighboring ex-Soviet state, Ukraine, was the task of the Katechon – the emerging Russian Empire – holding back the advance of the Antichrist: the West, especially America. In this essay, the author explores the development of the concept of the Katechon through St. Paul, Carl Schmitt, and Alexander Dugin, demonstrating the eschatological and apocalyptic legitimization it attempts to bestow on Putin’s dream of a new Holy Russian Empire based on the geo-political religious concept of the *Ruskii Mir* (Russian World).

Dustin J. Byrd is a full Professor at The University of Olivet in Michigan, USA. He is also a Visiting Professor of Religious Studies at Michigan State University. A specialist in the Critical Theory of Religion, Psychoanalytic Political Theory, and Contemporary Islamic and Russian political thought, he is the Founder and Co-Director of the Institute for Critical Social Theory. He has published numerous books and articles on political religion and political philosophy. With Seyed Javad Miri, he is currently co-editing a critical book on the work of the Russian philosopher, Alexander Dugin, and his influence in Russian society and Russian polity.

Andree Lee (University of Chichester), ‘Druidry and Eco-Fascism: Apocryphal Aftermaths’

The history of British Druidry exists as one of the largest acts of Mythohistorical Narrative Production to ever take place, and now, as the world desperately seeks solutions for the climate emergency, the story of nature venerating druids has become almost utopian. Yet, to

what degree is British Druidry just a foundation for Eco Fascist narratives epitomized by the nationalistic slogan ‘Blut und Boden’ (Blood and Soil)? This performative presentation, framed within the field of Theatre Performance and Live Art, seeks to examine the performance of eco-fascist narratives endemic in the culture and history of British Druidry, from their foundation as evil other in the propaganda of Julius Ceaser through the Brexit referendum and its notions of a nostalgic return to a lost Albion, and finally, in its prophetic attempts at establishing a culture that exists in the aftermath of both *apokálupsis* (revelation) and what Andres terms “naked apocalypse”.

Andrew Lee is a Lecturer at the University of East London in Contemporary Performance Practice, and associate Lecturer at Chichester University in Romanticism. His ongoing Practice-as-research PhD entitled On Art/Magic: Socio-Ecological Interventions Within The Culture of Steam investigates the role of “Magic” in forging a new ‘time segment’ (Campagna, 2018). Andrew is also the Artistic Director of the Midnight Florist Collective.

Peter Buda (University of Bristol), ‘Out of Collapse an “Eternal Empire”? The Historical Prospects for a Disaster-Induced Paradigm Shift in International Relations’

A global humanitarian emergency could become a more common paradigm in the near future, providing fertile ground for “invocations of the sacred” and, as a consequence, for ideas of utopian internationalism. Utopian internationalism allows particular interests of power to be cloaked in the guise of universality, with all the inevitable consequences for the current secular – some call it “Westphalian” – paradigm of international relations. The historical analogy is the period of the First World War, when the cataclysm of war and pandemic triggered a spiritual revival which, heralding the arrival of a new epoch that seemed to overcome the destructive forces of religious nationalism, contributed in turn to the birth of the idea of a world organisation whose eventually unsuccessful *original* purpose was, in the words of President Wilson, to provide “a practical scheme for carrying out His [Christ’s] purposes” or, in the words of Pope Benedict XV, to unite states “under the law of Christ”.

Maria-Teresa Marangoni (University of Exeter), ‘The Body and the Divine: Catholicism and ‘New Age’ Spirituality in Personal Health Management Practice in Vaccine-hesitant Parents in Italy’

After the Italian Health Minister decided to mandate vaccinations against ten childhood diseases in 2017 with an ‘emergency decree’, a robust protest and resistance movement tried to stop the decree from being converted into law and, when their efforts failed, organised to counter its effects on their families’ lives. A series of interviews, collected in the Vicenza province between 2018 and early 2019, to answer the hypothesis that there might be certain cultural trends underlying the motivations of those that had become part of the resistance movement in the Veneto region, showed that there were indeed two major themes emerging from the majority of interviewees’ stories having to do with their deeply felt connection to the spiritual dimension in their day-to-day living and in their understanding of human life in the world. By presenting an analysis of a representative sample of interviews, this paper will illustrate how the spiritual dimension that is appearing to be having less influence on an almost fully secularised society in the West, can and does still play an important role in shaping people’s agency and their position vis-à-vis the State and other regulating institutions, including Medicine and Public Health.

Maria Teresa Marangoni is a PhD Candidate in History at the University of Exeter. Her research is looking at the intersections between the global dimension of health policy as devised supra-nationally at the 'meta-institutional' level and local health governance, both in terms of local governmental institutions and of people's agency. Her background is in Social and Environmental Studies, International Studies, and more recently, Social and Cultural History, and Cultural and Medical Anthropology.

Sarah Scaife (University of Exeter), 'Uncertain Health, the Sacred and the Capitalocene: a case study from lived experience'

This proposal raises questions related to the place of an eco-spirituality in reconceptualisations of health, through a case study of particular lived experience. In adult life I turned away from my Catholic religious upbringing but rediscovered a sense of the sacred. Put briefly, my personal ethics and code for action is a practice of "trust, participation and gratitude" (Kumar, 2002). This is in contrast to the worry, consumption and desire ever present within the Capitalocene. A diagnosis of breast cancer was an unexpected opportunity to test my faith in this imminent, relational view of the sacred. I found it is also at odds with a Western biomedical focus on knowing or, at least, predicting. This reflective year of cancer treatment underpins my PhD enquiry into a radical notion of medicines of uncertainty in a more-than-human world. The presentation will draw on scholarship including David Abram [more-than-human]; Merel Visser et al [apophatic inquiry] and William Kentridge ['Art must defend the uncertain'].

Sarah Scaife (she/her) is a visual and sound artist, in the middle phase of her practice-based PhD at University of Exeter, Department of Communications, Drama and Film. Her research is supported by the South, West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership.

Rachel Cummings (Goldsmiths, University of London), 'Caring at the edge of knowledge: The problems and possibilities of deathbed phenomena'

Deathbed phenomena are spiritual experiences in the last days of life, described by the dying and those around them. Reports include seeing a deceased relative, bright lights or angels as well as meaningful coincidences like clocks stopping at the moment of death. While regularly discussed within palliative care circles they are little known beyond. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork on a hospice in-patient unit, this talk will explore the political salience of such events. When managed medically they risk the homogenising knowledge politics of modern biomedicalism. Yet the more common response from health workers – a covert engagement – speaks to the possibility of care that could be otherwise. By paying particular attention to the formal hierarchies of clinical practice and the demographics of those doing hands-on care of the dying, I will argue that these moments highlight the profound possibilities of what Marika Rose calls 'postsecular labour'.

Rachel is a Wellcome Trust-funded PhD student in the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her research focuses on spiritual experiences at the end of life and their consequences for medical knowledge and care. The work emerged from experience as a nurse working in palliative settings.

Andy Letcher is a Senior Lecturer at Schumacher College, Devon UK, where he is the Programme Lead for the MA Engaged Ecology, a practice-led degree in the Environmental Humanities. He is the author of *Shroom: A Cultural History of the Magic Mushroom*, and

numerous papers on psychedelics, ecology, animism and paganism. Andy has doctorates in Ecology (from the University of Oxford) and the Study of Religion (King Alfred's College, Winchester). His research interests focus on the contemporary use of psychedelics with a particular interest in the discourses by which people frame their experiences and by which those experiences become meaningful. He is currently researching ritual and animistic usage of psychedelics by contemporary British Druids, and the contemporary use of the Fly Agaric mushroom. An engaging speaker, he has been a guest on the Green Dreamer, Hive, Living Mirrors and Mushroom Hour podcasts. He has appeared at Glastonbury, Shambhala, Green Man and Medicine festivals. And he has given presentations at the University of Exeter Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Psychedelics, Horizons NYC, The Psilocybin Summit, the Last Tuesday Society, Breaking Convention, The Nature Talks, and the Chacruna Religions and Psychedelics forum. A folk musician, he plays English bagpipes, low whistle, and Dark Age lyre.

Carolyn Hillyer is a renowned writer, artist, musician, traditional drum-maker and workshop teacher who lives on an ancient Dartmoor farmstead that has been transformed into a place of wild sanctuary for the thousands of people who have visited there during the last 30 years. Her work is woven around ancient spirit, untamed land and hidden memory; the deep ancestral roots of the British Isles and the anchoring of courageous life paths. While she has travelled widely around the world with her work Dartmoor remains her profound creative and spiritual inspiration.

Dr Rachel Fleming originally worked as an ecologist, research planner and climate change policy advisor for the England & Wales Environment Agency and DEFRA. Moving through journalism and environmental activism she became a programme director at Schumacher College, founding MA programmes in Ecology & Spirituality and Mythology & Ecology, then latterly the Director of Embercombe, bringing together threads of 'indigenous practice and knowledge' with land stewardship and ecological restoration on a Dartmoor land base. She is now the co-founder of Animate Earth, an educational organisation working to contemporise our understanding of relationship, responsibility and reciprocity with the land.

Ramona Nash (University of Exeter), 'To what extent is the Charter for Compassion an effective spiritual and/or political/cultural tool for better interfaith engagement?'

The Charter for Compassion was established following Karen Armstrong's TED Prize win in 2008. Promoting compassion as the "heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions", the text of the Charter outlines a view of compassion that all people are called to affirm, regardless of belief or worldview, above all religious or non-religious doctrine. High-profile signatories include the Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, and writers, philosophers, royalty and religious leaders from across traditions. Whilst the promotion of compassion as an ethical framework is certainly laudable, does the language, content and framing of the Charter stand up to scrutiny as a truly interreligious (and non-religious) apolitical universal statement? Or are there cultural and political assumptions built into the document to such an extent that meaningful grassroots engagement is jeopardised?

Ramona Nash is a PhD researcher in Theology and Religion at the University of Exeter. Her field is Practical Contextual Theology, with a thesis topic relating to compassion in Christian theology, its relationship to the contemplative mindset, and its potential applications in the field of interfaith (and non-faith) encounters, particularly in relation to Chaplaincy. Her other fields of theological interest include mystical traditions of Christianity and other faiths,

religious pluralism and perennialism, and decolonisation (of theology and beyond). Ramona is also the Multifaith Chaplaincy Coordinator at the University of Exeter. Her previous roles have included various community development roles, Emergency Department nursing, and working with rural and marginalised youth.

Sumaiyah Kholwadia (University of Birmingham), ‘Legal Regulation of Spirituality in the International Human Rights Domain: The Case of Muslim Women’s Veiling’

My research concerns law’s regulation of spirituality, using the case study of Muslim women’s veiling bans in order to draw out how human rights law falls short of recognising the lived experiences of spirituality. I take a critical feminist and postcolonial approach to unpacking the architecture of the right to freedom of religion which is premised on the notions of the *forum internum* (inner conviction) and *forum externum* (outward manifestation). The former is inviolable whereas the latter can be limited in certain justified circumstances. Inherent in the architecture of the right is the hierarchical, binary splitting of spirituality into two distinct categories deserving of different levels of protection and regulation. I suggest this produces a hierarchy of manifestations of spirituality, by affording differing levels of protection to different lived experiences. Those which do not align with the Protestant-centric model are more susceptible to interference as a result.

Sumaiyah Kholwadia is a third year PhD researcher and Teaching Associate at Birmingham Law School. Her research conceptualises a new theory of ‘spiritual equality’ by evaluating how the law regulates Muslim women’s spirituality through bans on dress, giving rise to equality considerations in this realm of life, that have not yet been scrutinised. Sumaiyah is passionate about centring Muslim women’s voices in discourses on veiling and utilises spirituality as one way of doing so. She has previously spoken about representations of Muslim women, veiling and the law at the UN Foundation, the Melbourne Doctoral Forum on Legal Theory and the Socio-Legal Studies Association. She has written on women’s rights and veiling bans for the Oxford Human Rights Hub. Sumaiyah can be contacted at s.kholwadia@bham.ac.uk.

Detlev Quintern (Turkish German University), ‘Marxism and the De-Spiritualizing of Resistance: Justice Movements before the Manifest of the Communist Party’

In „Socialism. Utopian and Scientific” (Zürich 1882) Friedrich Engels confronts Wilhelm Weitling (1808-1871) with the scientific derivation of socialism. The Marxian doctrine *Scientific Socialism* was formed not least in the theoretical confrontation with spiritual ethics of justice. Wilhelm Weitling was a significant voice in the *League of the Just* (London, 1840-1847) to which Marx and Engels also belonged before establishing the Communist Party. The heritage of spiritual resistance goes back to the justice movements in the peasants’ wars of liberation. We find traces in the early *Carmina Burana* (11th-14th AC), in the writings of the mystic *Meister Eckart* or in insurgent leaflets of the 16th century. Wilhelm Weitling and his writings were in line with the long wave of justice from below. As a result of the founding *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) and the development of Marxism, a Hegelian understanding of religion gained more and more ground in the new established European social democratic parties. Hegel had already stereotyped religion as *opium for the people* with reference to India. De-spiritualizing and Eurocentrism went hand in hand with de-solidarization of Antiimperialist resistances in Asia, Africa and the Americas from the mid of the 1850s onwards, paving the way for the commingling of social democratism and fascist movements in the 1920s.

Detlev Quintern is teaching and researching at Turkish German University in Istanbul. He is associated with the Institute of Postcolonial and Transcultural Studies at Bremen University and with Africa Multiple at Bayreuth University. A research focus is on From Marx to Global Marxism: Eurocentrism, Resistance, Postcolonial Criticism which is also the title of book he (co-) edited in 2020. Currently he is (co-)editing a volume on Antiimperial Rosa Luxemburg.

Jenny Harper (University of Reading), “The True Comradeship of the Natural Life”: Utopian Spirituality in the Face of an Apocalypse’

During the heady fin de siècle era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a group of Bolton-based ethical socialists envisaged a wholesale cultural revolution that would upend the dominant western capitalist model of society. Channelling the ethos of their ‘prophet’ Walt Whitman, they expected to usher in a new order of humanity, premised upon a spiritual sense of ‘back to earth’ kinship between the human and the natural world. Whitman’s pantheistic verse foresaw a new model of society which seemed inherently socialist-democratic and egalitarian.

A century later, many environmental activists view the battle to avert environmental apocalypse as at heart, a struggle between ‘democracy and plutocracy,’ as the ultra-rich continue to exert power over a free-market economy which still puts profits before planet and people. At such an ecological tipping point then, a critical analysis of the visionary spiritual ideals of the new life socialist movement cannot be more timely.

I am a SWW DTP funded PhD student based within the Department of English Literature at the University of Reading. I am engaged in a collaborative doctoral award alongside Lancashire based Mid Pennine Arts and I am investigating the life and work of Ethel Carnie Holdsworth, a rare example of an early twentieth century published female working class novelist. My research employs an ecocritical methodology and I trace the influence of Walt Whitman and the British ethical socialists upon both her socialist beliefs and her powerful texts on the natural world.

Yin Paradies (Deakin University) and Cullan Joyce (University of Melbourne), ‘Sacredness of Country as First Nation’s Honouring of Climate Apocalypses’

First Nations Cultures in Australia have experienced and responded to multiple apocalypses in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial ages. Many aspects of spirituality in contemporary Australia are emerging as a response to ecological crises and are consciously or unconsciously emulating First Nations connection with Country. A contemporary spirituality that dialogues with First Nation’s can identify the more-than-human as animating Country, see sacred connection as emerging from practical care of, and kinship with, the land, and see spirituality as concerned with the ongoing transformation of culture. The authors reflect on how Extinction Rebellion crew in Australia interpreted Regenerative Culture, what aspects of Regen were prioritised or downplayed, and why. How did the process interact with, or ignore, First Nation’s wisdom? The paper concludes by proposing that an Australian Regenerative culture can engage Australian First Nations via SACRED values (e.g.: it is a form of Safe, Anarchist, Country-Centred, Restful, Experiential, Dreaming).

Professor Yin Paradies is an Aboriginal-Asian-Anglo Australian of the Wakaya people from the Gulf of Carpentaria. He is an anarchist radical scholar and ecological activist who is committed to understanding and interrupting the devastating impacts of modern societies. He

seeks meaningful mutuality of becoming and embodied kinship with all life through transformed ways of knowing, being and doing. Yin is Chair in Race Relations at Deakin University where he conducts research on the effects of racism and antiracism theories. He also teaches and undertakes research in Indigenous knowledges and decolonisation.

Dr Cullan Joyce is an Insight Fellow at the Contemplative Studies Centre at the University of Melbourne. He has a background in researching and teaching religious contemplative traditions. He has a long-term involvement with First Nation's spiritual practitioners and scholars as well as Environmental Activist groups in Victoria, including Extinction Rebellion. He is interested in how traditions of spiritual practice will evolve to respond to the Anthropocene.

Shehana Gomez (Cardiff University), 'Indigenous Peoples and the Challenges they Bring to International Law'

The traditional cultures of Indigenous Peoples often include a spiritual relationship with the natural environment they live in. An Indigenous Peoples' movement formed at an international level in the 20th century, which sought recognition of their rights distinct from the universalism and individualism of international human rights law. This culminated in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007, which includes a right to develop their spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned lands and territories. Similar rights have developed in other international human rights fora. In addition, Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge relating to the environment has been recognised in international environmental law, starting with the Convention on Biological Diversity 1992. I argue that these developments, however incomplete they may be, have begun to challenge the western paradigms both of international law and of scientific thought as our dominant form of knowledge.

Shehana Gomez was a solicitor in local government before returning to university to complete a LLM in Environmental Law and Sustainable Development. She is currently a PhD candidate at Cardiff University where her research is mainly focused on Indigenous Peoples and the development of their rights in the Convention on Biological Diversity 1992. She has also been a tutor at the Open University and a PGR tutor at Cardiff University.

Mark Juhan Schunemann (University of Exeter), 'Inter-paradigmatic syncretism in psychedelia'

There are many examples of entheogenic (and/or psychedelic) religions which have syncretised various forms of religious feeling and thought through the use of palimpsest, ritual borrowing, and myth-mixing – The Native American Church, Santo Daime, and Bwiti, to name but a few. These can be seen to be syncretisms within a broader paradigm of theological systematisation: la Rainha da Floresta (Queen of the Forest) for Daimistas *is* the Virgin Mary, Peyote *is* Christ's body, and so on. In the contemporary sphere, the rise of the 'psychedelic retreat' has led to a mixing across paradigms, namely, of scientific epistemologies associated with falsifiability and controlled experimentation, and visionary modes associated with occultism and mysticism: the psychonauts of occult practice. This paper examines how these seemingly incommensurable paradigms exhibit a pragmatic translatability through an examination of terms which have either irrupted or changed as a result of the psychedelic cultures of the seventy: 'party hygiene', 'cognitive liberty', and 'medicine-sacramentality'.

Mark has a background in Theology (1st Class, Oxford) and is now engaged in a comparative anthropology and critical theory PhD at the University of Exeter, ethnographing and comparing three paradigms of psychedelic praxis: the clinical, the recreational, and the ceremonial. Mark has always been interested in religious intersectionality and syncretism, being the priest of a witch and a priest and having worked in chaplaincy and humanitarian aid. His poetry is published in the Psychedelic Press Journal.

John-Robin Bold, ‘Apocalyptic Sound’

In my paper, I will discuss common aesthetic tendencies in electronic sound and music that strongly point towards apocalyptic sensitivities. Since its inception, electronic sound has been closely linked to the idea of futurity and today, and through its massive dissemination by digital media (including film, advertising, video etc), we can understand it more than ever as a cultural perspective on our future and present. Increasingly often we hear sound effects evoking disaster and proto-sacred choral voices alluding to Neo-Medieval tropes as a reference of what appears to many as a new, technologically-infused dark age. Artists actively relate their music to apocalyptic discourses on climate change, Artificial Intelligence or future pandemics, while audio-visual meme phenomena like corecore appear as self-reflections of a content-saturated end time in which all narratives have collapsed. Which societal implications would these apocalyptic undertones have if taken seriously and are there different possibilities of using apocalypticism as a critical artistic tool?

*John-Robin Bold (*1995, Hamburg) is a composer of electronic music and digital media artist. His works were exhibited and performed internationally and released on music labels like Mille Plateaux and mappa. As a writer, he is published in the online magazine NON and has contributed liner notes to several music releases. After graduating in Computer Music from the University of Music Graz, John-Robin Bold lives in Manchester as an artist and educator.*

Kennedy Dragt (Université Catholique de Louvain), ‘Cross-temporal Spirituality: Writing with Saints and Ancestors in the Anthropocene’

This uses the case study of two speculative post-apocalyptic literary texts in order to investigate the idea of a cross-temporal spiritual collective, and how such a collective might inform our current relationships to the other-and-more-than-human. I develop my concept of the spiritual collective from the discussion of Ancestors in *M Archive* by Alexis Pauline Gumbs and the collective writing with saints in *Unknown Language*. Both books are co-written across time. In *Unknown Language*, the 12-century mystic-poet St. Hildegard of Bingen is credited as a co-author alongside of Huw Lemmey, Bhanu Kapil and Alice Spawls. In *M Archive*, Gumbs describes her work as “ancestrally co-written” as it engages directly with the writings of M. Jacqui Alexander. Thus, using these texts, I suggest that this type of collective writing across time challenges common ways of relating to spirituality amidst the climate crisis, allowing for a rediscovery of ecological wisdom and spiritual reification.

Kennedy (she/her) is PhD student in English Literature at Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium, where she is part of the Centre for Writing, Creation, and Representation (ECR) and the Human, Animal, Planet research cluster (HAP). She was the primary organizer for the recent international conference titled “Eco-anxiety and Spirituality in Literature.” Her research focuses on spiritual and religious forms in contemporary climate writing with a particular focus on poetry and climate fiction.

Lisa Clark (University of Bristol), ‘Heaven and Nature Sing: Eschatology in Christian Hymnody’

Christian hymnody has played an important role in how Christians understand spirituality, the world, and how those two relate. Eschatology, the study of the end times, is key to understanding how different approaches within Christianity see their role in the world now and into the future. This paper labels three different approaches to Christian eschatological ethic (‘heaven on earth’, ‘heaven is my home’, and ‘new heaven and earth’) and discusses how these different approaches can play out in the various ways that Christians engage current global situations in light of apocalyptic understanding. Further, it concludes that hymns are an integral factor in influencing singers toward one eschatological ethic or another. For example, hymns that include eschatological themes of restoration, reconciliation, and new creation can prompt an eschatological ethic that promotes care for the oppressed, for the other, and for the environment.

Lisa M. Clark has written hundreds of hymns, many of which have been published in hymnals, as choral anthems, and with digital resources. In 2022, she was named a Schalk Scholar by the Center for Church Music (based in Chicago) as well as a Lovelace Scholar and Emerging Scholar by The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada. She is a Post-Graduate Researcher in the PhD program for Creative Writing at the University of Bristol with interdisciplinary work in creative writing, theology, and English.