

## **"Tales of the Late Human: Extinction as Business Model and the Autocolonial Logic of Ecological Collapse"**

**Amit Ray, Associate Professor of English, Rochester Institute of Technology**

If capitalism has always required a frontier, extinction has become its final one. In this talk, I argue that ecological collapse does not interrupt late-stage economic logic—it intensifies it. *Autocolonialism*—the process by which populations internalize and voluntarily reproduce the extractive structures that dispossess them—becomes the governing mechanism of ecological crisis. Drawing on the concepts of “Disaster Capitalism” and the “Capitalocene,” I map the *extinction economy*: a self-accelerating circuit in which platform capitalism hastens ecological breakdown, which legitimizes unprecedented technological intervention, which deepens the conditions requiring rescue. CRISPR-driven de-extinction ventures like Colossal Biosciences crystallize this logic—biodiversity loss generates the market, venture capital funds the genetic fix, and the structural drivers of extinction remain untouched and profitable. As Michel Nieva's *Technology and Barbarism* illuminates, this is barbarism wearing the face of innovation—techno-solutionism as civilizational alibi for annihilation. Populations consent to extractive fixes that reproduce the crises they claim to resolve. Silicon Valley's Mars colonization fantasies represent the logical endpoint: capital exporting terrestrial collapse rather than confronting it. Engaging biopolitical abandonment, end-times subjectivity, and the racialized distribution of survivability, this presentation contends that extinction has ceased to be capitalism's failure. It has become its ultimate product.

Bio: Dr. Amit Ray is an Associate Professor of English at Rochester Institute of Technology. Trained as a postcolonialist, his recent research focuses on issues of secrecy and agnotology (or the cultural production of ignorance) within contemporary information systems. He is currently working on a book entitled, *Tales of the Late Human: Autocolonialism and Extinction*, where he develops the concept of *autocolonialism* to describe how digital platforms represent a fundamental shift in colonial extraction—one where individuals voluntarily participate in their own surveillance and data colonization by uploading intimate details to corporate platforms like Google, Facebook, and Amazon.

## **"You Are No Longer Wild: Urban Ecology as Framework for Late-Human Disposability"**

**Sean T. Hammond, Associate Professor of Earth System Science & Policy, University of North Dakota**

This paper proposes a framework for understanding late-stage capitalism's labor logic through the lens of synanthropic domestication — the process by which urban environments select for behavioral and morphological traits enabling proximity to, and dependence on, human economic systems. Drawing on Dmitry Belyayev's silver fox experiments, comparative urban ecology, and the earliest literary meditation on civilization's transformative violence — the *Epic of Gilgamesh* — I argue that cities function as domestication machines: environments that do not consciously breed for compliance but structurally select for it across generations, producing populations increasingly suited to conditions their ancestors would have found unlivable.

The raccoon serves as my central figure — not as metaphor but as literal case study and indexical mirror. Urban *Procyon lotor* populations exhibit measurable morphological shifts consistent with early domestication: reduced cranial dimensions, depigmentation, attenuated stress responses. They have self-selected into the trash economy, discovering that human waste is a more reliable caloric source than any wild habitat. In doing so, they have begun the same one-way transformation the *Gilgamesh* narrative recognized 4,000 years ago: eat the bread, drink the beer, wear the clothes. You are no longer wild.

I extend this framework to the human condition under late capitalism, where 10,000 years of selection pressure have produced human populations adapted to density, institutional abstraction, and the suppression of reactive aggression — traits useful to capital, selected for by the machine (the city) we built to domesticate ourselves. The paper concludes by tracing the raccoon's ongoing domestication as an index of what capitalism's logic, followed to its endpoint, demands of any species that wants in — and what it has always extracted from those it welcomes.

Bio: Dr. Sean T. Hammond holds two Master's degrees in molecular biology and obtained their PhD from Cornell University, where they developed an allometric tree growth model. Hammond has published on allometric theory, forest ecology, and human macroecology with a particular emphasis on human rate-of-travel and food security. Dr. Hammond is currently an associate professor in the Earth System Science & Policy department at the University of North Dakota.

### **“Slow Death and the Aesthetics of Abandonment: Narrating Extinction under Late Capitalism”**

**Christene d’Anca, University of California, Santa Barbara**

Abstract:

In an era increasingly defined by ecological precarity, mass displacement, and the quiet normalization of crisis, the question is no longer whether the world is ending, but how that ending is being lived, narrated, and unevenly distributed. Contemporary discourse surrounding climate catastrophe and economic instability often gestures toward apocalypse as a singular, future event. Yet, as both critical theory and literature suggest, extinction is already unfolding as a slow, stratified process embedded within the structures of late capitalism. This paper examines how contemporary literature renders capitalism as an economic system and simultaneously an extinction-producing apparatus that reorganizes both ecological life and human subjectivity. Drawing on Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* and Octavia E. Butler’s *Parable of the Sower*, I argue that late capitalism produces what Lauren Berlant terms “slow death”, a condition in which survival itself becomes a prolonged form of attrition rather than resistance.

Moreover, I situate these literary imaginaries within a broader theoretical framework that includes Achille Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics and Karl Marx’s notion of metabolic rift, arguing that ecological devastation and biopolitical abandonment are co-constitutive under late capitalism. In *The Road*, the stripped, ashen landscape reflects an absolute foreclosure of futurity, while Butler’s

speculative vision foregrounds adaptive subjectivities that emerge within, rather than outside, systemic collapse. Together, these works illuminate what I term an “aesthetics of abandonment,” in which narrative form itself registers the exhaustion of humanist assumptions about agency, progress, and survival. Essentially, I contend that instead of depicting the end, these texts expose the ongoing normalization of extinction as a lived condition.

Bio: Christene d’Anca has a PhD in Comparative Literature and teaches a variety of literature and writing courses at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Following her presentation on “What is a Life Worth Living? Transhumanism and Individuality in the Age of Technology” at the 2024 MLA Convention, and “‘We can’t live this way!’: Los Angeles Burning and Octavia Butler’s 30 Year Warning” at the International Conference of the English Department at the University of Bucharest in 2025, she co-edited the collection, *Intersectional Singularity: New Essays on Speculative Fiction’s Engagement with Multidimensional Identity*, forthcoming from the University of Toronto Press.