

Session 1

(122) Narrative in the longue durée of capitalism (ECARE 22)

Time:

Location: KINTEX 2 305B

Wednesday, 30/July/2025:

9:00am - 10:30am

40 people KINTEX Building 2 Room number 305B

Session Chair: **Karsten Klein**, Saarland University; karsten.klein@uni-saarland.de

Presentations

ID: 975 / 122: 1

ECARE/NEXT GEN Individual Submissions

Keywords: The Jew of Malta; Overseas Trade; Jews; Imperial Imagination

Overseas Trade, Jews and the Imperial Imagination in The Jew of Malta

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The Jew of Malta was composed by Christopher Marlowe in 1589 or 1590, in the aftermath of England's triumph over the Spanish Armada in 1588, when England's overseas trade was thriving, albeit with unsatisfactory outcomes. It is a common view among critics that the depictions of the Jew in The Jew of Malta and The Merchant of Venice are in fact a reflection of the authors' profound writing on the anti-Semitism in society at that time. These works serve as a mirror mapping the prejudices of the times. However, these racist studies fail to recognize the important role of Jews in the development of capitalism and in the empire building of the modern state. The very title of the play, The Jew of Malta, contains two crucial information: the geographical space of Malta and the protagonist of the Jew. Marlowe placed the Jew in Malta, the centre of the eastern Mediterranean, to engage in commercial activity. Overseas trade was the source and driving force of early capitalism. The trade of Barabbas, for instance, was emblematic of the prevailing capitalism, chiefly in the form of luxury goods such as precious stones and gold. The overseas trade, both military and political in nature, played a pivotal role in the accumulation of wealth for the British empire. Notably, the slave trade contributed to this process, underlining the multifaceted nature of capitalism. The role of the Jews in the development of capitalism cannot be overstated. Not only did they contribute to the external expansion of capitalism, but they also played a significant internal role, shaping its ideology. The external form manifested as international trade and credit bonds of Barabbas, while the Jews' promotion of greed for profit and free trade became the embodiment of the commercial spirit of capitalism. The history of the British Empire was closely intertwined with the development of British capitalism. The geographical expansion of trade of Barabbas reflected the shift of Europe's economic centre beyond the Mediterranean and the change in the form of trade from export to import-export, alluding to the British construction of a world economic centre and imperial imagination.

ID: 941 / 122: 2

ECARE/NEXT GEN Individual Submissions

Keywords: Modernity, Identity Crisis, Existentialism, Other

Parallax and Existence: An Interpretation of Ae-ran Kim's "There Is Night There, and Songs Here" from the Perspective of Existentialism

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Ae-ran Kim is a well-known South Korean writer, but her work has rarely been studied in Chinese academia. Her short story collection, How Was Your Summer? focuses on depicting the life experiences of urban marginal groups in the context of consumerism and liquid modernity. It is a reflection of the individual identity anxiety of the South Korean "post-80s" generation in the wave of compressed modernity. In the story "There Is Night There, and Songs Here," Long Da, the protagonist, due to the dual constraints of family and social relationships, chooses to exile himself and run away to rebuild his subjectivity. This paper, attempting to interpret the work from the perspective of existentialism, will approach from three subject-object interaction forms: "gaze," "disregard," and "mutual gaze," to explore the realistic connotations of the work and investigate the possibility of creating spaces for individuals to converse with others in the complex modern society.

ID: 1046 / 122: 3

ECARE/NEXT GEN Individual Submissions

Keywords: money, speculation, artificial intelligence, stock market, trading

Dematerialized Money and Technological Change: (Economic) Speculation in the AI Age in Cosmopolis and Fear Index

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In the course of the dematerialization of money, cash in the form of coins and banknotes has transformed into scriptural money, now represented as electronic currency stored on server hard drives. This form of money, often referred to as fiat money—drawing an analogy to fiat lux (the creation of light)—can be generated without any material basis. This evolution carries profound implications for society, politics, and the economy, which are further compounded by an additional technological change with similarly far-reaching consequences: the rise of artificial intelligence.

The combination of dematerialized money and technological advancement enables a remarkable paradigm shift in the realm of speculative stock trading, as vividly demonstrated in the novels *Cosmopolis* by Don DeLillo and *The Fear Index* by Robert Harris. At the core of both texts are successful financial masterminds who rely on an array of technological tools to conduct their business operations. The reader follows each protagonist over the course of a single day, during which their speculative endeavors are portrayed—ultimately leading to their downfall in both novels.

The respective forms of speculation, however, differ fundamentally: While DeLillo's 28-year-old stock market prodigy, Eric Packer, wagers against the yen from his highly advanced limousine and loses "money by the ton," Dr. Alexander Hoffmann from *The Fear Index* is a scientist who is "not actually interested in making money." For him, the stock market merely serves as a testing ground for a self-developed AI that governs the trading of his hedge fund. While Packer's hubris causes his wealth to nearly disappear entirely over the course of the day, Hoffmann's AI proves extremely successful, having learned to generate profit by exploiting the emotion of fear in the market. However, this insight leads the AI toward autonomy, ultimately allowing it to overpower its creator and subjugate all other employees.

Both texts pose fundamental questions about technological progress and its impact on the modern economic system, inviting comparison. Through the analysis of structure, narrative techniques, and characterizations, not only can the critical potential of the inherent critique of capitalism be revealed, but also how the speculative nature of literary fiction intersects with economic speculation.

Focusing on economic speculation is essential in order to fully decipher the literary space for reflection on this phenomenon as a whole. While Packer seeks to minimize uncertainty in his decisions by relying on a constant stream of information displayed across countless screens, Hoffmann's profits appear certain, as they are calculated through an algorithm. This effectively removes the previously foundational element of uncertainty from the concept of speculation, ultimately raising a pivotal question: Is speculation even necessary (or possible) in the age of artificial intelligence?

ID: 1647 / 122: 4

ECARE/NEXT GEN Individual Submissions

Keywords: Ragtime, Montage, Characterization, Mental Crisis, Mainstream Group

Expressive Montage in Ragtime: Characterization of the Confused Mainstream Group

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Ragtime written by E.L. Doctorow was a classic of postmodern novels, in which the author employed montage technique in film production to shape typical characters like the three white male figures. Doctorow mainly adopted psychological montage, lyrical montage and metaphorical montage methods to show the mental crisis of the middle-class white men under the tremendous social change including immigrants influx and labor capital conflict, who were usually assumed the most privileged group in the United States. This paper used Eisenstein's montage theory to analyze the promotion of character portrayal through the use of montage techniques and the confusion, struggle or lost state of the mainstream group in the United States in the early 20th century, which worth people's reflection as the problems still exists in the current American society.