

## Writing in the Ruins of Neoliberalism: Nathan Hill and the Social Space of the Novel

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This talk asks how the novel may be reconceptualised, or recuperated, as a “social space” that is animated by democratic relations. It recuperates Wendy Brown’s argument that neoliberalism is not merely an economic project, but also a moral one that directly and consistently works to undermine the very notion of the social. In a word, it asks how Hill recovers the novel as a site for political critique while negotiating its necessary complicity with neoliberalism. To answer this question, I first examine how Hill explicitly represents the rampant nihilism within the culture industry by figuring pop singers and novelists as complicit with the political and economic system. Second, it examines how Hill enlists a maximalist style to counter the “massive, unprecedented global contraction” (611) that is neoliberalism, reducing every relation to economic principles. Maximalism explodes this contraction and places relational dependencies at the centre of the novel’s character structure. Third, the talk explores the novel’s self-conscious, almost metafictional dimension, highlighting the suspicious attitude that Hill deploys vis-à-vis the totalizing tendencies of maximalism. Drawing from political theory, queer theory, and new formalism, I conclude that Hill’s novel works against the neoliberal logic of “commensuration” by reckoning with the incommensurability of the social space, while reinstating it as a fundamentally democratic feature.

**Bio** · Ugo Grimard (he/him) is a PhD candidate in English literature at UCLouvain, Belgium, and a member of the research centre L/T. His doctoral project, *Post-Masculinities: Gendered Fictions in Polarised Societies*, examines the gender anxieties that challenge democratic debates in post-2016 novels, contributing to a scholarship dedicated to a more inclusive society. His research interests include new formalism, gender studies, literary theory, 21<sup>st</sup>-century Anglophone fiction, and the intersection between politics and literature.