

# MATTER

journal of new materialist research

Universitat de Barcelona

ALMANAC ENTRY  
ISSUE 10

Hopepunk

Esperanzapunky

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Date of submission: April 2025  
Accepted in: May 2025  
Published in: May 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1344/jnmr.v10i.50501>

**Recommended citation:**

Pascoe, Joanna (2025). Hopepunk. *Matter: Journal of New Materialist Research*. 10, 1–4. University of Barcelona. [Accessed: dd/mm/yy]. <https://doi.org/10.1344/jnmr.v10i.50501>



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## Hopepunk

Hopepunk offers an antidote to the uncertainty and despair we are navigating, as we live into the era of the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene being, “when the Human has become a geological force capable of affecting all life on this planet” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 5). Thus, despite dire difficulties such as the climate emergency, species decline, the pandemic, war and displacement, a hopepunk approach may inspire a way forward. Hopepunk, a term coined by fantasy and science-fiction writer Alexandra Rowland, was announced on the Tumblr platform (2017) to describe a subgenre of speculative fiction where everyday people do micro-acts of kindness, for example, growing food by planting tomato seeds, or checking in on their neighbour during difficult times.

Hopepunk does not question whether the glass is half-empty or half-full, rather, a hopepunk approach notices that there is some water in the glass and poses the question: what are we going to do with it? Acknowledging the continuum of good and bad within all, Hopepunk is a strengths-based approach that believes communities have the capacity to take care of each other. Hope expresses the belief in the possibility of a desired positive encounter or event. Rowland explains that punk is an operative word of action. Thus, the kinning of hope with punk, and the creation of the portmanteau hopepunk renders these terms in dialogue with, and mutual support of, one another, adding agency to belief. Hopepunk is acting through radical kindness, by standing up for the marginalized, and choosing to be kind (Hopkins, 2019). This way of thinking does not expect individuals to work through a checklist of performance indicators, rather to act in support of one another. Hopepunk encourages small acts of collective kindness

despite the times, and an acceptance of imperfection with the message to forgive yourself if you are not your best self yet. Accepting that we make mistakes ourselves means we can address them in the hope that we can improve and allows us to have compassion for others when they make mistakes, as mistakes offer opportunities to learn.

Hopepunk is not Noblebright, a term used to describe the stories of Arthurian legends, where there is good, and evil is the outlier. In Noblebright fantasies, the hero, a noble knight, slays the dragon and returns the world to goodness; or the benign King saves the kingdom through his own goodness. In the face of everyday uncertainty and adversity Noblebright is out of reach (Hopkins, 2019), whereas Hopepunk is something we can aspire towards by taking small actions to support the community to continue.

Embracing a hopepunk approach we may ask, what small acts of hope shall we perform today? Engaging in hopepunk acts as a community means that despite anxiety and despair we can take steps towards affirmative action, taking micro-actions towards transformation. These micro-actions may provide purpose and meaning in our lives via a minoritarian key (nikolić, 2018). The desire to sustain life or *conatus* links to the Hopepunk notion to keep going through small acts of resilient courage, despite the difficulty of a situation. The philosopher, Spinoza notes that the body is a mix of kinetic and dynamic relationality, and we do not yet know the limits of “what a body or mind can do, in a given encounter, a given arrangement, a given combination” (Deleuze, 1988, p. 125). Thus, drawing on our *potentia* we can form a community that breaks with the constraints of the present. By mapping a cartography that notices the conditions of bondage we can ask where is the *potestas*, the entrapment and

pain? By identifying blockages that prevent relating to others, both human and nonhuman, the negative event may be de-personalized, neutralized and transformed through a shift in perspective towards taking hopeful hopepunk action.

Despite the despair, perhaps we can remain hopeful through the words of fantasy author, Alexandra Rowland that, “the opposite of Grimdark is Hopepunk. Pass it on” (2017, Tumblr). Grimdark holds a dystopian vision, whereas Hopepunk is a genre that encourages small acts of kindness or positive action, *potentia* that may lead to transformation. Transformation is also held in the Affirmative

Ethics of Joy (Braidotti, 2018), where mapping our cartography to identify points of resistance, challenge or *potestas* and taking a hopepunk approach with the collective support of community means we may begin to defamiliarize a difficult situation to enable a shift, making a small change, towards *potentia*. The Affirmative Ethics of Joy encourages an openness to life, inclusive of the transversal alliance and vital interconnections between the human and nonhuman (Braidotti, 2013). Hopepunk acts enable the possibility of change, even micro-change, through a hopeful process of becoming, and collective re-worlding.

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