



KÄTE HAMBURGER CENTRE
FOR APOCALYPTIC AND
POST-APOCALYPTIC STUDIES

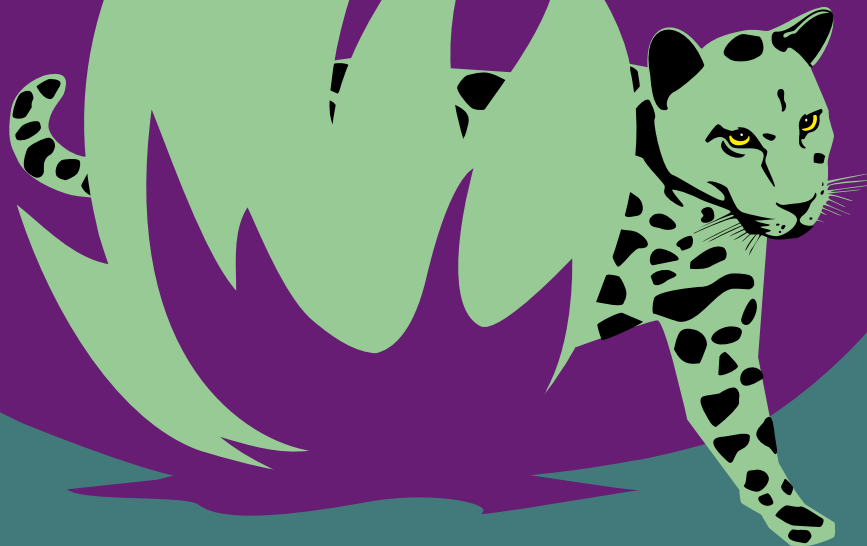


UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

APOCALYPSE
QUARTERLY

1/24

APOCALYPTIC VOICES



DEAR READERS,

Every year, approximately ten international fellows from diverse scientific domains collaborate on research projects at CAPAS. The Centre thrives on the vibrant exchange fostered between these fellows and the CAPAS team. To preserve the progress and insights, specialized working groups convene regularly. Their findings are presented in a comprehensive report at the close of each semester. Intrigued to explore the methodologies and concepts examined by the latest working groups—“Apocalyptic Encounters,” “Feeling the Apocalypse,” and “Apocalyptic Voice”?

Dive deeper into their observations and discoveries in the lead article of this edition on pages 3-7.

Also, we are delighted to present the freshly published special issue of our *Apocalyptica*, titled “Nuclear Ghosts”, which covers a wide range of aspects reflecting the complexity of nuclear entanglements (pp. 10/11).

Enjoy the captivating array of “Apocalyptic Voices” curated by the CAPAS team in this issue, promising an engaging and enlightening reading experience!

If you have feedback concerning the newsletter, please let us know: capas@uni-heidelberg.de

APOCALYPTIC VOICES

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN FORMER AND FUTURE FELLOWS

The fellows and their academic work are the heart and core of CAPAS. Each semester, around ten scientists from a wide range of disciplines conduct research at CAPAS and the centre offers them a unique opportunity to engage in interdisciplinary exchange. Specifically, said exchange happens in the form of working groups that come together at the beginning of each term. On a weekly basis, the fellows come together to work on a common topic and theme that aligns with their individual research interests.

It is important that the research developed and deepened at the centre has a platform. On our open-access, open-source, and open-science platform PubPuB we have created a space in which said research has a voice; bridging the gap between the work of former and future fellows and offering a broader, interested public a unique

level of transparency into the lively discussions, research, and debates that happen here at CAPAS.

In the winter semester of 2023/24, three groups formed around specific aspects of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic studies: Apocalyptic Encounters, Apocalyptic Voice, and Feeling the Apocalypse. Based

on joint readings, discussions, pop-culture relics, and media artifacts each group wrote a report on their work. In the following, you will find a brief overview of the topics

that were at the centre of the discussions of the latest fellow cohort. If your curiosity is piqued, you can delve deeper into the topics via the “read-more” link.

APOCALYPTIC ENCOUNTERS

by Pamela Karimi,
Rolf Scheuermann,
Susan Watkins,
David Wilson

The group “Apocalyptic Encounters” was formed with two aspirations. The first was to focus on the relationship between colonialism and the apocalypse; examining how central a language of apocalypticism was and is to particular instances of colonial encounters in history and how colonial “encounters” can be framed in apocalyptic terms. The second was to examine how Indigenous, First Nations, and Fourth World cultures and contexts that have their own apocalyptic traditions might adapt and

rework or repurpose colonial apocalyptic beliefs, or might produce syncretic hybrids. Thinking in terms of ‘Decolonising or provincialising the Apocalypse’ can be useful; however, in order for this to attempt to be authentic, merely ‘additive’ or dilettante gestures have to be avoided, particularly from the perspective of a majority white cosmopolitan elite.

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FEELING THE APOCALYPSE

by Katie Barclay,
Vincent Bruyère,
Jana Cattien
Jenny Stümer

When we think about what it might mean to experience an apocalypse, we immediately think of heightened emotional states. Rather than following this intuition, our working group was interested in apocalyptic feelings that are associated with ordinary living and 'mundane' questions of survival, both in the face of the apocalypse and as a matter of navigating it in the everyday. In the texts we've read and discussions we've had, the emphasis was, on the one hand, on the emotional regimes that might allow people to cope with

August Natterer:
Hexenkopf, Samml-
ung Prinzhorn

the apocalypse and, on the other hand, on the shifts in emotional regimes that might themselves be considered apocalyptic in their impact and scope. Both these dimensions showed us that affects and emotions are no mere epiphenomena of more fundamental political and social states of affairs, but themselves capable of making and un-making worlds.

●●● [read more on PubPub](https://pubpub.org)
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APOCALYPTIC VOICE



by William Sherman,
Katie Barclay,
Robert Folger,
Marcus Quent,
Timo Storck

What does the apocalypse sound like? So many cultural explorations of the apocalypse are gauged to images, visions, events, “content,” and to *stuff*. We find the apocalypse as a *what*: as this or that prophecy of catastrophe, as this or that cosmic courtroom of judgment, and so forth. Taking a cue from Jacques Derrida’s wry commentary on the “apocalyptic tone,” however, this group gathered to read and discuss the apocalypse as *voice* and *tone*: as a *how* rather than a *what* and as the voice that can (or cannot?) be teased out from the prophecies and judgments days it may describe.

Once we pose the question of *apocalyptic voice*, what other questions can we ask? Following Derrida’s lead again, we might wonder whether we would like to cultivate

an apocalyptic tone in our own writing and thinking or whether we’d rather exorcise the apocalypse from our voice (even if such a task is impossible, per Derrida). Once disconnected from, say, a particular vision of catastrophic finality, does the apocalypse—as tone, as voice—open up new methods? Does *apocalypse as voice* open new ways to think through relationships between temporality, subjectivity, and language?

As we quickly learned, however, there is not a single *apocalyptic voice*. An unsurprising revelation, perhaps, but one that nevertheless altered (as an *après-coup* perhaps) how we understood our research together. We began to tease out particular types of apocalyptic voices, sorting the varieties of apocalyptic voice



based primarily on how temporality and language intersected. Typologies are never as precise as they seem, but a typology can be a critical first step for it allows us to understand the stakes of our inquiry. For instance, does the apocalyptic voice speak within or outside of history? As our work suggests, it depends on which apocalyptic voice is considered—but we can then trace the implications for a host of other themes (such as subjectivity, scripture vs. orality, and so forth) by appealing to our typology. This short report, therefore, is an introduction to the apocalyptic voices we identified over the course of a semester: the prophetic, the messianic, the apostolic, the mystic, the mystagogic, and the psychoanalytic.

And the end? The end of this experiment gives up the illusion of a coherent,

authoritative voice and devolves into the (hopefully not cacophonous) chorus that participated in this research endeavor. There is no single conclusion, just as the voice—whatever it might be—cannot be reduced to the message it conveyed. And, indeed, if we were to attempt the impossible by offering a single conclusion about the apocalyptic voice, it would be a self-denying, apophatic conclusion: the apocalyptic voice is one that ruptures meaning and sense through the way it forces time upon us through tone, style, and repetition.

So, did you hear about the apocalypse? And, if so, from whom...?

●●● **read more on PubPub**
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IN THE SPOTLIGHT PAMELA KARIMI

What were your first thoughts when you saw the call for applications for the fellowship?

Pamela Karimi: I was intrigued by the work of one of my colleagues, Dr. Daniel Barber, who had previously received this research fellowship. In particular, I was captivated by how he articulated his arguments concerning architecture and the climate crisis within the framework of the

apocalypse. His perspectives sparked my interest.

As an architectural historian, my interest lies in the ways our built environment can protect us in case of an environmental disaster. I am also interested in how lesser-known modern and contemporary architects have drawn from traditional building

methods to reduce fossil fuel consumption.

In my native Iran, the term “apocalypse” is commonly invoked in the context of environmental catastrophes, such as earthquakes, whether they occur or are anticipated. Thus, my focus shifts from the term’s traditional religious connotations to an exploration of environmental disasters, encompassing both natural and human-induced catastrophic events.

What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?

Having experienced the eight-year-long Iran-Iraq War from 1980 to 1988 as a

child, the concept of the apocalypse doesn’t seem far-fetched to me. Additionally, the current and ongoing trauma inflicted by poor leadership in some parts of the Middle East serves as a stark reminder of how fragile our civilization is, and how easily our achievements can vanish.

What would be the three things you would need in a post-apocalyptic world?

To be honest, there isn’t a list of three things on my mind. There’s really just one thing that stands out as most important to me. Those among us who have navigated the aftermath of wars and the challenges of forced immigration understand that survival hinges not just on physical tools or resources, but on a mindset that fosters hope and resilience. While my research focuses on the tangible aspects of survival through design—practical means and tools—I also believe that the essence of our humanity plays a crucial role in our survival. I would prefer to face the end as a knowledgeable individual rather than as a merely well-nourished and comfortable one.

This is a concept that is vividly illustrated in the realm of science fiction, notably in *Lucifer’s Hammer*, a novel by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, published in 1977. This narrative reveals the terrible consequences of a comet’s collision with Earth, triggering global devastation, including tsunamis and earthquakes. A key theme of *Lucifer’s Hammer* is preserving human civilization’s legacy, highlighted by the symbolic gesture of burying books. This underscores the vital importance of intellectual heritage in rebuilding society.



Architect and art historian **Pamela Karimi** currently holds a professorship at UMass Dartmouth. Her primary field of specialization is art, architecture, and visual culture of the modern Middle East.

#FELLOW
APOCALYPSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT WILLIAM SHERMAN

What were your first thoughts when you saw the call for the fellowship?

William Sherman: Do I have my hands on the Lathe of Heaven somehow? This seemed like a fellowship and an intellectual community that manifested out of my own dreams. The call for applications was, as it were, my first introduction to CAPAS. Even before receiving news that I would be fellow, therefore, I was grateful to the call for

applications for alerting me to this vibrant, curious, and strange intellectual community.

What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?

I work primarily with Persian and Pashto religious texts written by early modern Muslims in the regions that would become Afghanistan

and Pakistan. In the imaginations of these communities, the apocalypse is both an immanent—even visceral—aspect of daily life and a cosmic principle of radical contingency. As Sura 75 of the Qur'an declares, God can just as easily gather our bones as God can fashion us with fingertips in the first place. In other words, for the sources in which I immerse myself, the apocalypse is first and foremost the insistence that what seems stable and concrete—the mountains, our particular senses of self and subjectivity, our particular ideologies of reality, temporality, and the past—can turn to dust at any moment. The tricky question for me, therefore, is how do I begin to lend my own temporal and apocalyptic imagination

to the ends envisioned in these sources? How do I stop treating “their” apocalypse as an object of study and instead let the dead become a community of my interlocutors where “their” apocalypse comes to shape my own practice as both a historian and someone living in this time? I don't know!

What was particularly valuable for you at CAPAS?

Between the working groups and my fellow fellows' lectures, I have been thrilled to be thoroughly challenged to keep pace. Without fully realizing it in the process, I now understand how intellectually comfortable I have made myself over the past years of my career. New works are published in my field and they may be brilliant or provocative, but none have truly stretched me as my exchanges at CAPAS have. These forays into other perspectives—Lacanian, philosophical, art historical, etc.—have cracked me open in unexpected ways. The result is, I hope, that I am ready to attempt bolder and more expansive approaches to my own materials and sources.

To get some practical advice: What would be the three things you would definitely need in a post-apocalyptic world?

Yikes. I suppose “resignation to my impending doom,” “friends,” and “good cheer and equanimity” don't count as “things,” do they? In that case, please equip me with a very durable pair of glasses (as I can't see a thing without them), a nice bottle of whiskey, and a copy of *Finnegans Wake* so I can finally finish it.



William Sherman is Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies at UNC Charlotte since 2017. His research approaches the history and literature of Muslim societies with a particular focus upon premodern South and Central Asia.

●●● read more online

capas.uni-heidelberg.de



#SCIENCE
APOCALYPSE

NUCLEAR GHOSTS

A VERY SPECIAL ISSUE OF *APOCALYPTICA*

by Michael Dunn

Nuclear threats are a topic of extenuating anxiety that have come and gone repeatedly and yet, like the radioactive materials found under a crypt on the island of Runit of Jessica Hurley's article *The Pikinni Ghost: Nuclear Hauntings and Spectral Decolonizations in the Pacific*—which, she suggests, are “uncannily animate” (2023, 86)—radioactivity never really goes away. And while Russia's war on Ukraine has once again, editor Jenny Stümer suggests, aptly drawn attention to nuclear apocalypse in the broad cultural imaginary it bears reminding ourselves that the ghosts “begin by coming back” (Stümer 2023, 9). The nuclear post-apocalypse, suggests Stümer, “must be grasped as a form of accumulative, slow violence and enduring coloniality that divides, occupies, and ultimately structures entire worlds, specific communities, and ordinary subjectivities” (2023, 11). From Australian nuclear settler colonialism, autobiographical ghosts, and nuclear temporalities to the everyday haunting of ordinary aestheticization of disaster itself, the destabilizing yet destructive power of anthropogenic radioisotopes, and the return of the French imperial repressed, the freshly published special issue **NUCLEAR GHOSTS** covers a heady, hefty, and anything but homogenous number of aspects that reflect the extensity of nuclear entanglements.

First off, it falls to Karan Barad the truly transdisciplinary scholar of both feminist theory and physics to appropriately complicate the often sublime over simplification of nuclearity. They trace haunting as a deconstructive force, “not a destructive force that blows itself apart” (2023, 37) that, as such, troubles time and reads time-beings as a “dynamism of differentiating entangling” (2023, 28). Haunting, in Barad's work, is hence an activity of the world, a form of ongoing worlding, or “spacetime mattering,” with vast consequences for our perception, memory, nuclearity, the “violence of calculations of lives that matter” (27), and, perhaps, most importantly, the “material force of justice, and the possibilities for living and dying otherwise” (2023, 38).

Following on from Barad's bold yet refreshing reworking of materiality, Gabriele Schwab's continuing contribution to the posthumanities and her work on en-

vironment and radioactivity is explored in her article on *Nuclear Temporalities*. Tracing the entanglements of nuclear temporalities and nuclear subjectivities, Schwab argues that the knowledge of the all-encompassing destructive power of nuclear weapons induced a fundamental fracture in the varied senses of temporality: a haunting that comes at ‘us’ from the past and extends into the future. Not only is the “irresolvable problem of toxic waste” an issue of hauntology but, argues Schwab, so is the “temporal scale itself” that haunts various media artifacts that deal with said planetary and scalar toxicity (Schwab, 2023, 51).

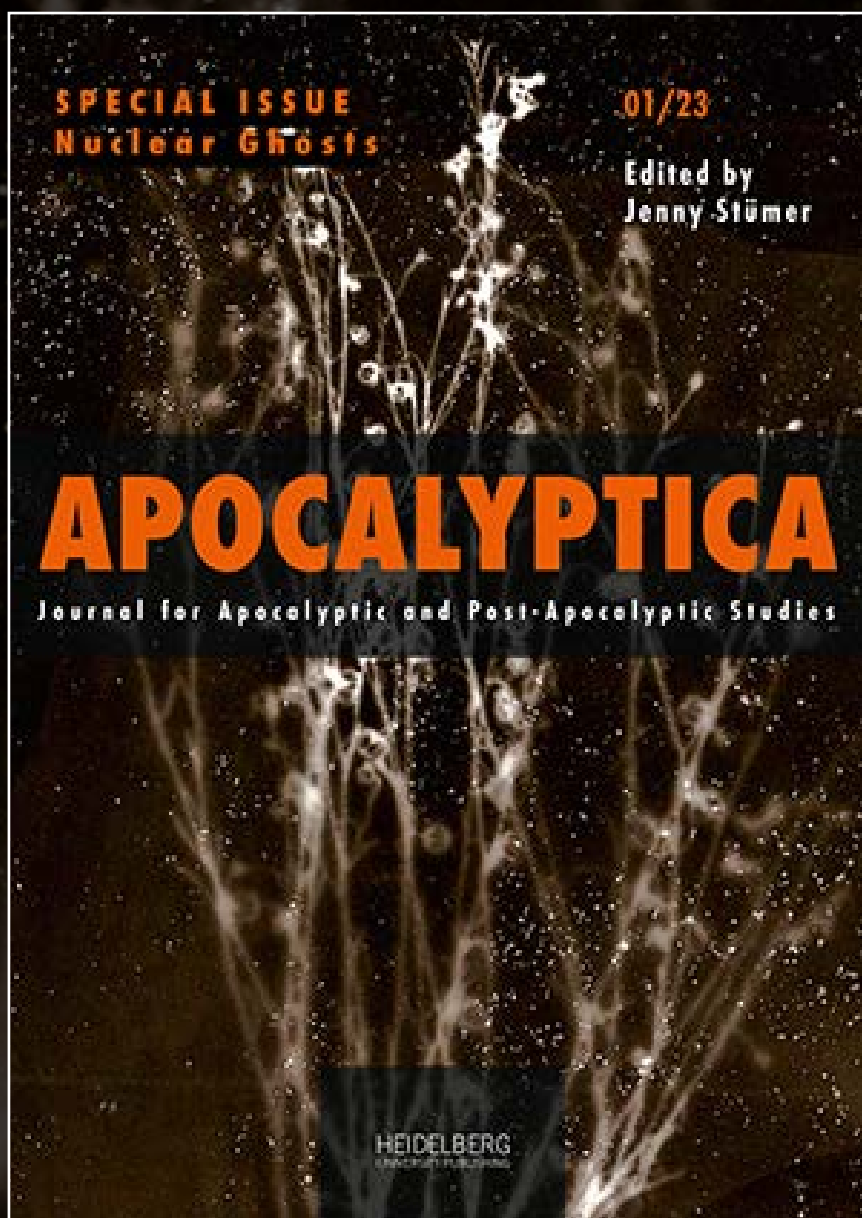
Similarly, yet entirely distinctly, to Schwab—and following a method of multiplicity that interrogates the operative basis and function of dualist and monist conceptions of nuclear violence—Lisa Yoneyama establishes the intricate entanglements of seemingly distinct nuclear catastrophes.

As such, Yoneyama paints a picture for the possibility of polyvalent, multi-varied, and intersectional practice of relational justice across time and spaces. While also looking at various culture productions such as films, plays, and stories etc. *Co-Conjuration: Practicing Decolonial Nuclear Criticisms* offers the readers an enlightening sense of “connectivity among different times and spaces,” (Yoneyama 2023, 69) and not merely thinking of catastrophe as out or over ‘there’ with a perceived and predestined threat to ‘here’ and ‘now’ whatever those things might actually means. Despite this, Yoneyama strictly states that, “[a]ppreciating relational connectivity, however, cannot be confused with building another version of humanistic, universal

knowledge based on putative sameness and surface commonality at the expense of the geohistorical specificities of radion-tology” (2023, 81).

From the transpacific to the pacific islands, Jessica Hurley, whose previous work on *Infrastructures of Apocalypse: American Literature and the Nuclear Complex* (2020) is a fundamental exploration of how apocalypse can work as overarching and all evasive (and even invasive) genre; reading nuclear waste as a colonial weapon, sets out to ‘unexorcise’ the return of the nuclear past in her article *The Pikinni Ghost: Nuclear Hauntings and Spectral Decolonizations in the Pacific*. By insisting that readers look long beyond the Western models of haunting, Hurley offers up instances of ‘living with ghosts;’ that is, “cultural practice that has become inhabited by the nuclear ghost” (2023, 94). And while Hurley asserts an intrinsically distinctive ontology of care, she still suggests that the Marshallese “are forced to live in highly radiotoxic environments in order to sustain the denial and splitting of those who irradiated them” (2023, 95).

While both U. S. bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, remain painfully, violently vivid in various aspects of Japanese cultural memory, the British nuclear testing in South Australia in the 1950s and 60s, offer an often overlooked but incredibly important aspect of the crass logic of settler colonialism. “[T]he existential anxieties of the nuclear age meet the unconfroanted violence and dispossession of colonialism,” and, as such, suggests Annelise Roberts in her Article *Atomic Totem*, that “confused and uncanny visions arise” (2023, 107) of morbid reconciliation.





#CALL FOR
PAPERS

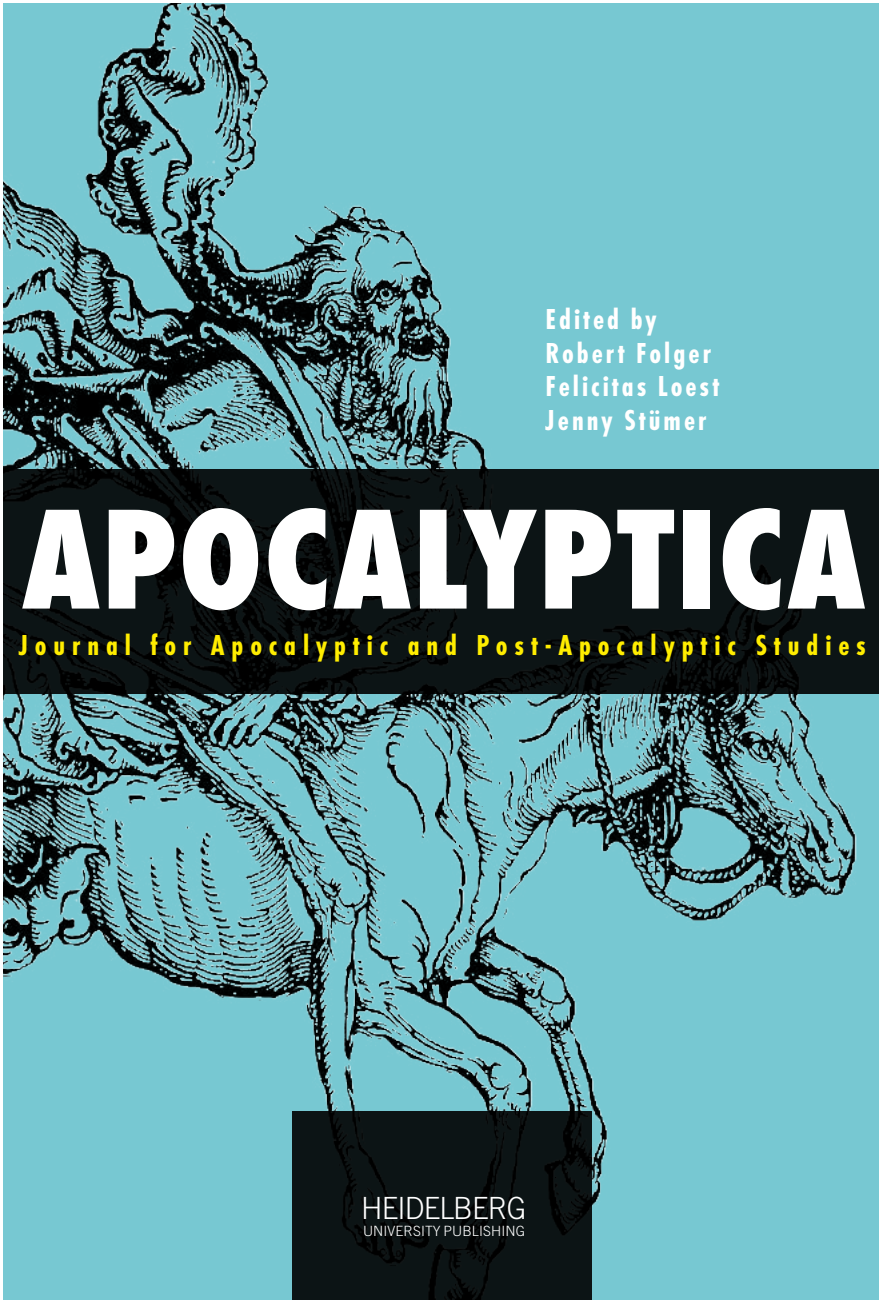
CALL FOR PAPERS *APOCALYPTICA*

APOCALYPTIC THINKING IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

Apocalyptic is an international, interdisciplinary, open-access, double-blind peer-reviewed academic journal published by CAPAS. The journal uncovers the apocalypse as a figure of thought (a practice, relationship, form, experience, aesthetic, or theme) in order to grapple with the cultural politics of disaster, catastrophe, and the (up)ending of worlds.

As anthropogenic violence tightens its grip on the world, the notion of apocalypse is gaining traction for a range of cultural and political imaginaries that grapple with the potential and actual upending of worlds in the context of escalating climate emergency, looming nuclear threat, and the ongoing repercussions of colonization, militarization, and racial capitalism. In this context, apocalypse emerges at the fissures between planetary doom and the un/making of specific worlds in such a way that the scales of different catastrophes, ruptures, and their associated revelations can be thought within a common (if assorted) fold of distinct end-time scenarios.

We seek contributions that critically explore the many layers of ‘apocalyptic thinking’ and those that broaden conceptualizations of apocalypse as a lens and framework in the humanities and beyond. We also encourage authors to reflect on the implications of such ‘apocalyptic thinking’ for understandings of methodology, knowledge, and scholarship more broadly. ●



Edited by
Robert Folger
Felicitas Loest
Jenny Stümer

APOCALYPTICA

Journal for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies

HEIDELBERG
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SUBMISSIONS

Please submit your article (8,000-9,000 words, including an abstract of 250 words and bibliography) as well as a short bio (50 words) by **1 September 2024** to publications@capas.uni-heidelberg.de

- > [About *Apocalyptic*](#)
- > [Call for Papers online](#)



#CALL FOR
SUBMISSIONS

PRECARIOUS WATER FUTURES

CfS FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY SYMPOSIUM

We are pleased to announce a call for individual paper and panel proposals to be included in our international interdisciplinary symposium on “Precarious Water Futures and the End(s) of World(s) – an Integrative Dialogue Across Disciplines and Societies”, 13–16 November 2024, at the India International Centre, New Delhi, India. Our call for submissions aims at scholars from all disciplines in the humanities, social and natural sciences, and engineering.

Water is essential for life on our planet and has played a key role in society and culture throughout history. An end to available water would mean an end to the world as we know it. The dangers of precarious water futures are currently debated in many conferences – but mostly separated by disciplines and methodologies, which poses problems to integrative solutions. In this international symposium, we would like to explore how the expertise

from a wide range of academic disciplines can fruitfully interact to study the complex and intertwined interrelationships of water emergencies in times of climate crisis and the related looming end(s) of world(s). We particularly endorse multiperspectivity and plurality of approaches in considering the increased complexity of this existential risk to humanity.

●●● [read more online](https://capas.uni-heidelberg.de)
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INTERDISCIPLINARY SYMPOSIUM

PRECARIOUS
WATER FUTURES
AND THE
END(S) OF
WORLD(S)

13–16
NOVEMBER
2024



Nadia Osornio. From the series *Seismic State*, 2017.

#ART
APOCALYPSE

IMAGINING THE END OF TIMES

APOCALYPSE, UTOPIA, AND CONTEMPORARY ART by Nadia Osornio

In December 2023, the exhibition “Imagining the End of Time: Stories of Annihilation, Apocalypse, and Extinction” opened at the National Museum of Anthropology and History in Mexico City. Curated by the Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-apocalyptic Studies at the University of Heidelberg and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, the exhibition showcases stories and images depicting scenarios of annihilation, apocalypse, or extinction. To commemorate the opening, an accompanying academic conference was held on December 15th, featuring lectures by CAPAS Director Robert Folger and several former CAPAS Fellows. Nadia Osornio, a visual artist from Mexico City whose work explores the current climate crisis, shares her perspective on the event.

The academic event on December 15, 2023, as part of the exhibition, garnered considerable interest. Undoubtedly, all the presentations were very insightful and resonated with my artistic standpoint, which has focused on imaginaries and alternatives surrounding the current climate crisis for some years.

Adolfo Mantilla, the exhibition’s curator and former CAPAS fellow, delivered a lecture titled “Imagining the End of Time,” offering powerful insights into the distinction between the *cosmophanic* (experience of the cosmos), the *cosmopoetic* (creation of the cosmos), and the cosmopolitical (organization of the cosmos and reunion with the cosmophanic) and their correlation with art.

Perspectives such as those of J. O’Gorman on human alteration of the ecosystem or the Tlaxcaltecan canvas recreated by E. Abaroa and M. Castillo Deball on the fading of Mexican hegemony were explored.

The forthcoming monography ‘**Imaginar el Fin de los Tiempos**’ by fellow Adolfo Mantilla Osornio accompanies the exhibition (please see pp. 16/17).

Robert Kirsch and Emily Ray, also former CAPAS fellows, cautioned against the dangers of *bunkerization* in pursuit of self-preservation within the American context, highlighting political implications and the incorporation of the apocalypse into the logic of consumption and spectacle.

Of particular significance to me was Dr. Robert Folger’s presentation *Images of a Paleontology and Narratives of the End of Times* which emphasized inter-species thinking and alerted to social injustices perpetuated for the benefit of business and government interests—a core issue in the climate crisis. His insights resonated deeply with my photographic series *Beyond the Apocalyptic Chant* which already addresses the devastation we cause daily on the planet, contextualized within my life in CDMX.

My approach from art history had already acquainted me with authors like Dipesh Chakrabarty and his call to reformulate humanities with a focus that recognizes diverse beings, not just humans. Dr. Folger’s presentation rekindled this line of thought, along with his proposal of a post-extractivist world, as analyzed in works such as *Scene of the Quaternary Period* by J. Ma. Velasco, *Humanity: Cancer of the Organic World* by Juan O’Gorman, and my own work depicting a dystopian Zócalo, all included in the exhibition.

The notion of the apocalypse as a process of world-making, rather than merely its end, is another idea from Dr. Folger that deeply resonated with me. I related this concept to my photographic series “Seismic State,” which portrays Mexico City enduring the aftermath of the 1985 earthquake yet remaining resilient.

From its inception, *Beyond the Apocalyptic Chant* aimed to distance itself from apocalyptic logic as mere catastrophe, often exploited by the cultural industry for economic gain, losing sight of the vulnerability of cultures and the possibility of reversing climate change through civil and political will. Therefore, I believe the utopian path holds the potential to redirect our actions, framing the apocalypse as a revelation—an aspect I incorporate into my art and embody as a global citizen. ●

Nadia Osornio

is a visual artist from Mexico City. She obtained her PhD in Art from UNAM in 2021. In 2022, she won first place in the Professional Alternative Techniques category at the International Image Festival (FINI). Her individual exhibitions include “Conquista Visual” (José Clemente Orozco Gallery, 2019) and “Visicitudes del ver” (San Carlos Academy, 2014). She has participated in group exhibitions such as “Imaginar el fin de los tiempos” (Museo Nacional de Antropología, CDMX, 2023), “8vo. Festival de Fotografía Impresa” (Córdoba, Argentina, 2023), “Surveillance Society” (Rome, Italy, 2022), “4th Chania International Photo Festival” (Chania, Greece, 2021), “Empty Streets” (England, 2021), and “Nasty Women Mexico” (Mexico City, 2017), among others. Her work has been selected in several contests in Mexico and abroad and has been published by the Magazine of the University of Mexico in three of its issues. Since 2013, she has taught at UNAM and other art education institutions.





IMAGINAR **EL FIN** DE LOS **TIEMPOS**

HISTORIAS DE ANIQUILACIÓN, APOCALIPSIS Y EXTINCIÓN



#BOOK
APOCALYPSE

IMAGINAR EL FIN DE LOS TIEMPOS

NEW BOOK PUBLICATION

'Imagining the End of Time: Stories of Annihilation, Apocalypse and Extinction' is the edited collection accompanying the exhibition showcased at the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City. This collaboration between the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) and CAPAS, curated by former CAPAS fellow Adolfo Mantilla Osornio, delves into nearly 160 expressions spanning diverse temporal contexts. The exhibition, along with the corresponding publication, contemplates varied perspectives on envisioning conceptions, emphasizing the cultural and axiological dimensions embedded in eschatological narratives and their imagery.

Taking as its starting point the fact that over the centuries, societies have imagined the end of the world in the most heterogeneous ways, the project provides a searching view of the symbolism implicit in the eschatological narratives referenced by artistic and cultural production. It furthermore offers the possibility of encountering a variety of perspectives on eschatological systems, in an attempt to understand the many ways in which images reflect cultural universes.

'Imagining the end of time: stories of annihilation, apocalypse and extinction' explores discourses that center around referents the alleged effects of the so-called Great Acceleration in the Earth System, the advent of the sixth mass extinction, from different anthropological approaches. Additionally, it examines their interplay with apocalyptic figurations within modern cosmologies, which are linked to Judeo-Christian eschatological traditions. In the Mexican context, those discourses functioned as a tool to shape Mesoamerican categorization mechanisms, aligning cosmologies and visions of human groups in Mexican territory regarding events that could bring about the world's end.

After a thematic introduction by Adolfo F. Mantilla Osorio, Luis Mores Alatorre, Joaquín Arroyo-Cabrales, and César A. Ríos Muñoz delve into the question of whether we should speak of "procesos de cambio" (processes of change) or species extinction. In the following chapter, Patricia Ledesma Bouchan explores narrations, mitosis, and rituals of beginnings and endings of cycles among pre-Hispanic Nahuas. Miriam Judith Gallegos Gómora investigates the Mayan narrative about the apocalypse occurring in the year 2012. Subsequently, Alejandra Cordes Guzmán examines the origins of apocalyptic narratives, analyzing the colonial history and associated apocalypses of the Americas. Luis Eduardo Darío Gotés Martínez, in his article "Suwabáma. Mapuarí Guwanibe Wichimoba," focuses on the languages and ways of life of Mesoamerican populations. In "Los fines del mundo y la antropología" (The Ends of the World and Anthropology), Johannes Neurath provides readers with insight into anthropological perspectives on apocalypses. Lourdes Báez Cubero delves into the stories of the Nahuas, their world endings, and other tales. José Carlos Melesio Nolasco concludes the volume with apocalyptic visions in the chronicles of Carlos Monsiváis. ●

CAPAS EVENTS

FRIDAY

19
04

🕒 6.00 PM 📍 Weinrefugium Heidelberg

Apocalyptic Wine Tasting

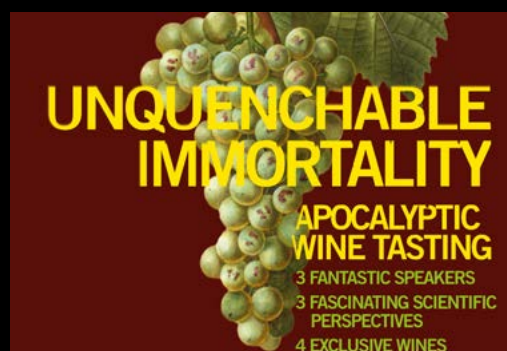
UNQUENCHABLE IMMORTALITY

On 19th of April we will be running an interactive, apocalyptic wine tasting event. With “Unquenchable Immortality” we will be sharpening our focus on “making purity a thing of the past,” questioning not only the widespread entanglements and toxicity of pesticides in wine-making but also the Eco-fascism

that props up aspects of nature as pure and untouched and the colonial logic that informs said establishment.

Info & Tickets:

<https://www.capas.uni-heidelberg.de/en/apocalyptic-wine-tasting>



THURSDAY

25
04

🕒 8.00 PM 📍 CATS Auditorium, Heidelberg

Multilingual Poetry Reading by Yoko Tawada

GAMES AND DISASTERS

Skyscrapers crashing, large forests burning, a Tsunami sweeping houses and cars to the bottom of the sea: images of disaster activate fear. At the same time, they play with the desires and fascination of humans—always hoping for a new and (better) future after every destruction. As one catastrophe has just passed, another is lingering just around the corner—this feeling has long become part of our normality. How to cope? Art sometimes offers to approach even grim situations in a “playful” manner. For this purpose, extant imagery and specific patterns of thought or language need not be destroyed, but are dis- and reassembled in new ways.

This event with the famous German/Japanese author Yoko Tawada is not a lecture, but a literary reading with discussion.

Info: <https://www.capas.uni-heidelberg.de/en/games-and-disasters>

MONDAY

29
04

🕒 6.00 PM 📍 IAS Common Ground, UCL London

Annual Tagore Lecture in Comparative Literature

MEXICAN APOCALYPSES: 2023 | 1521 | 14,000 BC

Mexico with its cataclysmic colonial past and today's endemic violence as well as environmental challenges evokes apocalyptic narratives and images, both in the distorted Eurocentric perspective, and in Mexican reflections on its past, present and future. In his talk, CAPAS director Robert Folger uses Mexican art work from different time periods to tease out the particular temporality of *Apocalypse* in which the present folds back onto the past.



The Rabindranath Tagore Lecture in Comparative Literature is delivered annually by a scholar of international distinction. It is jointly hosted by the UCL Institute of Advanced Studies and the School of European, Languages, Culture and Society (SELCS).

Info: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/institute-of-advanced-studies/events/2024/apr/annual-tagore-lecture-comparative-literature-mexican-apocalypses-2023-1521-14000-bc>

TUE-THU

18-20
06

📍 Rome

Multidisciplinary Conference

LANGUAGES OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

The environmental crisis is a planetary problem, but the ways in which the climate catastrophe is experienced and spoken and written about are far from universal. The choice of what language to use risks marginalizing or silencing the world's most vulnerable communities. How can we strive for a plurality of languages that expresses and seeks to overcome these tensions?

Launched in 2023, this annual conference offers a comparative analysis and collective rethinking of the role of language(s) in the personal, communal, transnational and planetary confrontation with environmental catastrophe.

Info: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropocene/projects-and-seminars/languages-anthropocene>

SATURDAY

29
06

🕒 tba 📍 Karlstorbahnhof Heidelberg

Participatory Research Workshop

COPING WITH MULTIPLE CRISES

How can citizens of democratic societies understand and cope with multiple crises such as climate change, social issues, pandemics and conflicts? Together with citizens and researchers from CAPAS and other universities, we aim to explore this question. Collaboratively, we will analyze the interconnections between current global crises and local action strategies. The project's goal is to collectively grasp crises and develop participatory research approaches to action strategies.

SAVE THE
DATE

🕒 SAFE THE DATE 📍 Mathematikon und Karlstorkino Heidelberg

APOCALYPTIC CINEMA OPEN-AIR



This summer, the CAPAS Apocalyptic Cinema Open-Air presents five films focussing on individual (post-)apocalypses. The precise lineup of films has yet to be finalized at the time of this publication. However, kindly take note of the following dates: 21.6., 24.6., 28.6., 12.7., 19.7.!

All CAPAS events at www.capas.uni-heidelberg.de/events.html



#CALL FOR FELLOWSHIP

FOCUS BIOPOLITICS

CALL FOR FELLOWSHIP APPLICATIONS

Our mission at CAPAS is to make space for a diverse knowledge collective, enriching exchanges in the humanities with insights from relevant perspectives from the social, life, and natural sciences and integrating non-academic forms of knowledge production in the arts and beyond. Therefore, we would like to extend an invitation to scholars and researchers from various disciplines, as well as to activists and artists with substantial experience collaborating with academia to apply to our fellowship programme.

In the 2025-2026 academic year, we zoom in on the role of biopolitics in the construction, classification, and contention of specific spatialities, temporalities, and affects, constitutive of apocalyptic experiences. We seek proposals that apply the concept of apocalypse to the paradoxical relationship between ambitions to create, foster, augment, and optimize life and various forms of exclusion, erasure, annihilation, and death. Building on common conceptions of biopolitics in political theory, international relations, cultural studies, critical sociology and the humanities more broadly, we welcome projects on disciplining individual and collective bodies through regimes of regulatory

power. We further welcome approaches that bring these discussions into novel and productive exchanges with inter- and transdisciplinary efforts in the natural, social, and life sciences, exploring notions of bios, politics, and ultimately (post-) apocalypse. The biopolitics of apocalypse may function as an intellectual catalyst for creative engagements within and between diverse communities of knowledge. This includes lived experiences of activists, artists, writers, filmmakers, etc., who seek to untangle the problem of living and dying at the end of world.

●●● **read more online**

capas.uni-heidelberg.de

Photo: Chenspec on Pixapay





#ART
APOCALYPSE

AFTER MATH

RESIDENCY AT
FLEETSTREET
THEATER
HAMBURG

Exposure to catastrophes or cataclysms is universal, yet they are experienced by and large individually and highly subjectively. Since the start of the pandemic and during the course of the following years, and in the face of human-made ecological catastrophes, the feeling of living in a permanent “aftermath” is something we have collectively come to live with. The notion that successive catastrophes and cataclysms keep accumulating inspired our concept of living in a permanent aftermath as a *modus operandi*.

A team of artists explored this topic during a residency at Fleetstreet Theater Hamburg in February 2024. The project created a space in which the audience is invited to confront some of the existential questions related to this feeling of standing amidst the ruins and the rubble of a bygone disaster and surrender to something new—in all its beauty and all its darkness. The project team consist of Edyta Jarzab, sound artist, Martha Szymkowiak, stage designer, Lukas Is-har, video artist and Josefine Simonsen, dancer and Alina Sobotta, performer/director, whom we interviewed on their approach.

What did you do during your Residency at the Fleetstreet Theater in Hamburg?

We transformed Fleetstreet into a hybrid rehearsal studio: Air travel and a plane-crash were a point of departure for a guided journey with ambiguous destinations: death and the question of what lies beyond what we can rationally grasp. So the room featured a swing made from airplane seats, tacky paradise-posters and lots of clouds/fog. We heavily worked with projections and soundscapes in order to evoke a floaty atmosphere of timelessness and disorientation.

Your aim was to create a collective realm in which thoughts about a permanent aftermath can be confronted and feelings embraced. What were your experiences with the audience and the reactions?

We worked on the project in three sessions over two years – during our first showing in Hamburg, we were surprised at how much information our dense atmosphere conveyed. Some audience members were entirely new to the concept and “intuitively” understood our story-arch: that you are a passenger on a plane which crashed, and memories of the airport and flight keep bubbling up, together with disturbances, irritations, blood and finally dissolution into light. Their feelings were melancholy, gory, but also excitement for the form we started developing.

You were in exchange with several CAPAS fellows and other researchers about their work and their perspectives on aftermaths and apocalypses. What did you take away from that?

First of all: many thanks go out to Alexander-Kenneth Nagel (University of Göttingen), Gerriet Schwen (University of Hannover) and Katie Barclay (University of Adelaide). From these conversations, we took away new, academically grounded perspectives

and also a more fitting vocabulary on our subject – including the tradition of apocalyptic writings, metaphysical discourse on apocalypse/end/transformation, as well as current crises. We are grateful to our conversation-partners for taking the time to share their work and also to shed some light on what we were actually working on.

What differences and what similarities, what mutual benefits did you experience in the project combining artistic and scientific perspectives?

We noticed that we had started our artistic research heavily based on creative intuition—we started creating atmospheres with our means: beamers, fog machines, synthesizers, choreography. We searched to evoke this “flow” where our impulses are in sync and take us somewhere new. Talking to academics working on the subject of apocalypse/post-catastrophe/multiple crisis-scenarios was immensely enlightening. Their thoughts and perspectives helped structure and rationalize our more diffuse artistic approach. Thank you! ●



#PUBLIC
APOCALYPSE

NOT ALONE IN CRISES AND DISASTERS

In October 2023, the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), the German Federal Office for Civil Protection (BBK) and the German Committee for Disaster Risk Reduction hosted a parliamentary evening on successful risk communication “Not alone in crises and disasters” in Berlin. The format aims at informing and connecting elected officials with experts from administration and research. Philipp Schrögel from CAPAS moderated the event. We interviewed Annett Schulze, co-head of project MIRK-KOMM (Optimisation of Risk and Crisis Communication by Governments, Authorities and Health Security Organisations) at BfR and one of the organizers of the event.

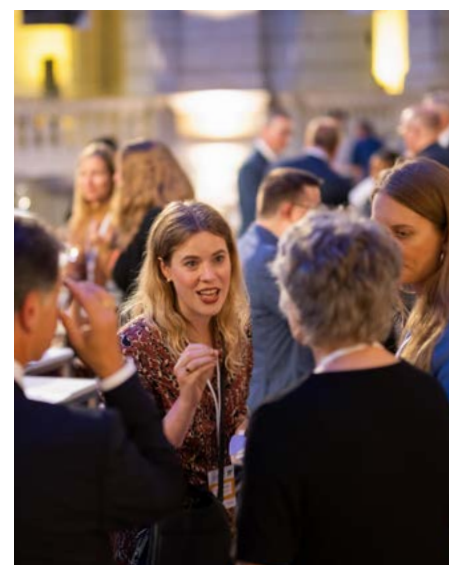
You investigated risk and crisis communication on the Covid-19 pandemic— would you say that the pandemic was an apocalypse, or was it perceived as such?

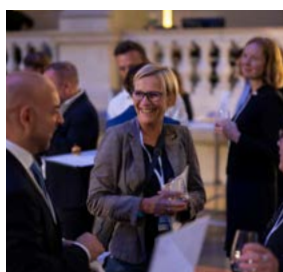
The apocalypse as a narrative of a catastrophe with existential risks and the threat of an end to the world as we know it were particularly relevant at the beginning of the pandemic, when there was great uncertainty, e. g. about the consequences of an infection, the high death rates in certain countries and the risks for vulnerable groups in particular.

Such scenarios were particularly discussed on social media, where specific hashtags such as #coronapocalypse were created.

Interestingly, there are not only comments that describe doomsday scenarios, but also those that react with humour to the challenges of the pandemic and the modified practices of social interaction.

Let me briefly point out another phenomenon relevant to the crisis in this context: The COVID-19 pandemic coincided with high social media usage. This meant: 1) communication not only from state institutions to the population, but also from the people themselves; 2) the lack of a gatekeeper function with all its advantages and disadvantages; and 3) a widespread shortage of content moderation on social media channels of state institutions. The platforms’ logic and their





modes of use led, among other things, to an overabundance of information. The World Health Organization (WHO) had already noted an infodemic as a relevant challenge in the global health crisis in the first year of the pandemic. The spread of false information weakened public health protection services and thus increased the risk of infection and potential multi-organ disease with different disease progressions. Disinformation and a lack of health literacy promote polarisation in the public debate on the sense or nonsense of health policy measures. Health literacy encompasses the handling of health information as a basis for health-related decisions.

Against this background, the question of how public health messages and information are organised is one side of the coin. The other includes organisational structures and resources. The German Network for Health Literacy stated that achieving health literacy is not just the responsibility of the individual, but must

also be seen as a task for society as a whole. Public health organisations in particular have a special responsibility here. Their task is to enable all people to make appropriate health decisions according to their needs, to support them and to create the respective framework conditions.

Communicating about the pandemic seems to mean finding a balance between addressing urgency and threats while avoiding the creation of additional fears or panic. If you look at your results, was that balance met?

We have a slightly different focus when it comes to our research design referring to the digitally communicated content. We wanted to know how multimodal arrangements – i. e. the combination of text, graphics, icons, images, animations and sound – are used in social media by different public health organisations, how users of these platform channels react in the comments, how comprehensible these multimodal products are and how users perceive the value- or science-based advice that these posts often also provide. Again, literacies play an important role here, as do the organisational structures and the resources provided by the health authorities for employees inside and recipients outside the institutions. We will probably be able to answer whether this balance has been achieved at the communication product level in terms of the content of the message in the course of summer 2024.

The team at the Technical University of Ilmenau, led by Prof. Martin Löffelholz, (https://mirkkomm.de/wordpress/?page_id=107) focusses on the institutional challenges of communicating during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.



Dr. Annett Schulze is head of the Social Science Risk Communication Research Study Centre within the Risk Communication Division at the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR)—together

with Dr. Severine Koch. As a communication scientist, she researches health communication with a focus on risk and crisis communication, digitality and public health. At the Weizenbaum Institute, she will work on questions of literacies and mobile health in security research.


 #PUBLIC
APOCALYPSE

AFRICAN APOCALYPSE

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR ROB LEMKIN &
ACTIVIST FEMI NYLANDER

Photo: LemKino Pictures

In February 2024, our film series *Apocalyptic Cinema* tackled the topic of colonialism. The double feature showcased the cinematic adaptation of the literary classic *Heart of Darkness* (1993), directed by Nicolas Roeg, alongside the documentary *African Apocalypse* (2020), a brutal, contemporary indictment of colonialism directed by Rob Lemkin. We were privileged to conduct two interviews with both director Rob Lemkin and activist Femi Nylander, a central figure in the documentary. Explore their perspectives on profound revelations, the power of testimony as a form of resistance, and more in our interview.

In your documentary about violent colonial traces in Niger, *African Apocalypse*, there are some interesting connections between the classical novel *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad and your documentary. Can you elaborate on the connection you sought in your documentary?

Femi: Well, of course, there are two parallels with the *Heart of Darkness*. One is the story itself and one is the timescale. Conrad was writing this novel at the same time as Voulet was undertaking his massacres, and the reality is that the charac-

ter of Kurtz in the novel, a white man who goes to conquer but ends up in some ways being overcome by his own hubris, is replicated in real life with Voulet. The colonial violence as well in the novel is replicated in real life with Voulet. Of course, *Heart of Darkness* has had valid criticisms leveled against it by Achebe, and this is something which came up a lot in discussions about the film. However, the parallels are clear and present a compelling narrative that helps, in true docu-drama style, to aptly sit between the line of fiction and reality, which is all too often stranger than fiction.

Rob: Yes, the remarkable co-incidence of Conrad's novel being written and Voulet's expedition leading to the Mr. Kurtz-like behavior of its leader is profound. They are the Truth and Art of the psychology of the will to dominate in a colonial way—that is racially, economically and politically. Both Joseph Conrad and Paul Voulet were profoundly in tune with the zeitgeist of 1899 and late European imperialism. Our connection of the two in our film enables viewers to see an epic and tragic dimension to Voulet's rampage that brought so much harm to communities in Niger. It also implicitly invites us to wonder how *Heart of Darkness*, the novel, might have

been had it been told from an African point of view.

Heart of Darkness can be seen as an archetype of colonial narrative. Why does

it become relevant to African Apocalypse?

Femi: *Heart of Darkness* is, in many ways, a colonial narrative because it is written from the perspective of a white man observing in the Congo; Joseph Conrad was Polish. So, the main character Marlow is a white man's perspective. In the novel, as we mentioned in the film, the Africans barely get a chance to speak.

Rob: This is why it's not only an archetype of colonial narrative, it is one of the very few works of European literature that shows how, as Aimé Césaire terms it, colonialism 'decivilizes' and 'brutalizes' the colonizer. As long as this is not clearly recognized, white supremacist thinking will go unchecked. It is a necessary work for all of us. This is the idea behind *African Apocalypse*.

Femi: *Heart of Darkness* is presented through the European gaze; it's undeniable. This is something that we tried to avoid in *African Apocalypse* by giving a voice to the people who have been voiceless, by plat-

The Double Feature was part of the collaborative, transdisciplinary project '**Decolonising Public Engagement**'. Launched in 2023 in partnership with the Institute for Advanced Studies at University College London, this project aims to cultivate innovative and critically self-reflective approaches to university research and science communication.





Photo: LemKino Pictures

forming the Nigeriens, the descendants of the victims, and allowing them to tell their story properly to the world for the first time.

Rob, you said, “For over 20 years I have made films about empire and colonialism (specifically British). In the past, it was important to reveal the workings of im-

Rob Lemkin has produced and directed over 50 documentaries for BBC, C4 and other broadcasters in the UK and the US. Feature length documentary films include: *Hospital in the Mind* (2024 forthcoming), *From Babel to Abstraction* (2024 forthcoming), and *African Apocalypse* (2020). His writing has appeared in TAZ, The Guardian, The Independent, The Observer, Politis, Mediapart, Morning Star, among others.

Femi Nylander is an activist, poet, actor and author of African descent hailing from Manchester in the UK. He graduated from the University of Oxford in 2016. He wrote and performed two critically-acclaimed TED talk poems on migration and decolonial public health. He joined the Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford movement and appeared on the BBC’s Big Questions, Daily Politics, Good Morning Britain and The One Show to discuss decolonial history. He is the author of *Seeking Refuge 2060*.

perialism to understand how we reached the present. But although these films had impact, I never really felt like I put my finger on the problem. Now a younger generation is maturing which sees colonialism anew—as an insidious and pervasive presence in our world, both within European societies and globally. History is important, but the future is even more.” As you told us, you tried to give a voice to Nigeriens. What else is different regarding your approach in *African Apocalypse* to the former films you made?

Rob: *African Apocalypse* deals with history in terms of current community experience—in this case, it relates to the community that participated in making the film and also, no less, the community that watches the film. This also happened on *Enemies of the People*, my film on the Killing Fields of Cambodia. The earlier BBC films I made on British colonialism—in the 1990s—were made more directly to detail a history that had not previously been told.

●●● **read more online**

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#FELLOW
APOCALYPSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT JANA CATTIEN

What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?

Jana Cattien: I'm not sure I have a succinct answer to that question! I've been here for a few months and have already heard so many different ways of understanding the apocalypse. In my own work, I'm interested

in how the apocalypse is ascribed to people and places—China and Chinese people, in particular. In the way that I use the term, apocalypse is definitely an Othering strategy: we project the end of the world onto other people, in order to continue being

able to think of 'us' as being in charge of the continuity of the world.

What is your fellowship trying to achieve?

For my CAPAS research project, I critically analyse how the end of the West is imagined through the trope of what I call 'apocalyptic China'. Pandemics are definitely part of this trope (just think of the rise of anti-Chinese racism and Sinophobia we saw during the Covid pandemic), but there are also other discourses and narratives that I'm interested in: the notion of 'the China syndrome', for example, which describes an apocalyptic event in which nuclear fuel is imagined to burn its way through the center of the earth—theoretically, all the way to China. But why China? This is one of the questions I want to address.

How does the fellowship project connect to your previous career or biography?

I completed my PhD in 2020. During the pandemic, I wrote a short piece on anti-Chinese racism and the resistance to mask wearing in some Western countries. Although my idea for the CAPAS project grew out of that piece, I also wanted to move away from centering my analysis on the Covid-19 pandemic. More generally, my CAPAS project sits very squarely within my current academic discipline—postcolonial theory and political philosophy.

What are the aspects from which you have benefited most at CAPAS?

The exchange with the other fellows and staff at CAPAS has been really fruitful and inspiring so far. I particularly enjoy the intimacy of the working group format—it's been nice reading outside of my disciplinary comfort zone, even if also challenging at times. I'm very lucky to be one of the fellows who gets to welcome a second cohort of fellows in the summer semester, and I'm looking forward to building on conversations from previous semesters while also receiving input from new colleagues!

What are some of your favourite pop culture references to the (post)apocalypse?

I loved the novel *Severance* by Ling Ma—we read an excerpt from it during one of our working group sessions at CAPAS. I also loved *The Last of Us*, even though it really freaked me out! *Carol & The End of the World* made me feel weird, but in a good way.



Jana Cattien is Assistant Professor in Social and Political Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam, in the capacity group Philosophy and Public Affairs. Her research and teaching is situated in continental philosophy (phenomenology, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism), feminist theory, critical race theory and postcolonial theory.

#ART
APOCALYPSE

„PRIVILEGION“

A DANCE PIECE ABOUT F*CKED UP BELIEFS! THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OF ART AND SCIENCE

In 2022, the DAGADA dance company embarked on a collaborative venture with CAPAS for their production “HOW SOON IS NOW?": a participatory dance performance engaging citizens. Over the course of a multi-year research cycle, choreographer Karolin Stächele and dramaturge Sabine Noll delved into the intricate ways individuals

Within the performance, five dancers intricately weave together a tapestry of perspectives, exploring themes of privilege, environmental concerns, societal boundaries, the interplay between collective and individual agency, the youthful experience amidst global upheavals, and the

navigate the multitude of global crises and societal challenges. Their most recent dance creation, “Privilegion,” was premiered on February 9, 2024, at the E-Werk in Freiburg i. Breisgau in collaboration with CAPAS.

evolving role of artists within a neo-liberal paradigm. It's a dance piece “about f*cked up beliefs” and stands as “a performative statement about an imperial lifestyle, about us!”

Photos: MINZ&KUNST PHOTOGRAPHY



We had the opportunity to facilitate a conversation between DAGADA dance's dramaturge, Sabine Noll, and researcher Sara Ibáñez O'Donnell. Throughout our exchange, we explored a range of topics, including the convergence of art and activism in generating novel insights and evoking impactful experiential realms as well as crafting fresh perspectives on modern apocalyptic crises. The dialogue delved into the entanglement of art, activism and their public engagement.

Sabine, the dance piece begins with a young dancer sitting in front of the public and talking about anger and guilt. Could you provide insights into why you chose this opening for the dance piece?

Sabine: Establishing a prologue was crucial to hint the underlying theme and propose an interpretation for the subsequent dance creation. "Privilegion" embodies the dilemma of being a "privileged" individual from the global North, actively involved in colonial and post-colonial exploitation, climate change causation, geostrategic politics, power preservation, and other glob-

al issues due to the capitalist way of life. But the so-called independent art scene, especially dance, is consistently underfunded, leading to precarious living conditions and insecurity. Many young international dancers have no permanent residence but are compelled to travel from casting to casting, production to production, becoming commodities in the art industry supply chain. The piece grapples with the complexities of interpreting privilege and exclusion, urging reflection on how young artists can rebel in this dilemma. The title itself, "Privilegion", a neologism which signifies the fusion of "Privilege" and "Religion," emphasizing the deeply ingrained belief in white (and/or capitalist) dominance.

Sara, you are researching on questions related to privileges and positionality. How does the dance piece "Privilegion" intersect with your research?

Sara Ibáñez O'Donnell works as a public-engaged researcher at the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (University of Heidelberg) within a cultural studies framework with post/decolonial theory across interdisciplinary fields of border studies, diasporic visual cultures, migration & transculturality. Her research interests include affective networks & placemaking, belonging, (trans)local collective art/activism and feminist geographies.

Sabine Noll is a dramaturge at DAGADA dance company and worked formerly with groups like TDT-Tanztheater, La Fura del Baus (ES), Theater Freiburg, Aktionstheater PAN.OPTIKUM and was a co-founder of the koreografenkollektiv Freiburg.



Sara: In “Privilegion” the artists appeal to the audience by turning their anger (which the piece lays naked at the very beginning) into creative practice. I see this as a form of activist knowledge which is a key focus of my work, mainly through Latinx/Latina activist practices in diasporic context. Each of the characters dance in their own spaces on stage, which contain separation lines that delineate the space of the self and other. These spaces can of course perform as mechanisms of exclusion. But they can also generate new forms of understanding from the margins that turn into places of resistance, creating in turn new spaces of belonging for practices to flourish. The idea of creative forms of activism as a form of collective and meaning-making and belonging, like the dance movements performed by the characters in the piece, is central in my research. Positionality has to do with the experience that shapes the place from which we speak. As Djamila Ribeiro calls it, our ‘lugar de fala’. This, contrary to what some discourses focused on identity politics argue, does not mean that people should restrict themselves to speak only about their own lived experiences. Rather, it places importance of acknowledging when a lived experience

can inform situated types of knowledge and of situating oneself when occupying a privileged space in knowledge-making. Positionalities rooted in certain experience of place or place-based positionalities at the intersection of class, gender, age, ability, etc, shape specific forms of activist and artistic knowledge.

Sabine, could you tell us more about the creative process of this knowledge-making behind the performance “Privilegion”? What kind of resources of inspiration did you use to create this performance?

Sabine: First, Karolin Stächele and me went through an intense research phase, exploring initial ideas. Then, the ensemble enters the first rehearsal phase. They are engaging in discussions, biographical exploration, instant writing, and group/solo improvisations. For example, “An Ode to Capitalism!” involves dancing the embodiment and greed. Daily video analysis reveals interesting aspects in choreography, movement quality, text, and a thematically engaging dramaturgy. The decision on the performance space also emerges during this phase. The dancers’ vibrant and playful interactions led us to focus on real characters who repeatedly maneuver into situations, experiment, and then fail. Decisions on compact choreography, such as a protest or a dance quality depicting the struggle for everything, are made at this stage. Between the first and second rehearsal phases, choreography and dramaturgy reflect on the material, determining what requires more significant development and what becomes a scene, forming a rough structure. The second rehearsal process involves adjustments, new elements are created, and evolving the piece further.



Photo: MINZ&KUNST PHOTOGRAPHY

#PEOPLE
APOCALYPSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT PRABHAT KUMAR

What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?

Prabhat Kumar: I disentangle apocalypse and post-apocalypse from its Judaic-Christian origins, and understand it as a temporal conceptual schema thematising imminent end of the present

and the emergence of the better and just future. It provides a conceptual window to understand the historical connection between real or imagined catastrophes and futuristic imaginaries, which often enable living

and transforming the present for a better political future.

What is your fellowship trying to achieve, which questions is it addressing, and with which methods?

My historical research tries to demonstrate that the apocalyptic mode of thinking has been conspicuously present in South Asia's vernacular public sphere. The historical actors were not only aware of cross-cultural parallels between Christian-European and Hindu/Indian apocalyptic thinking, they often actively mobilized a commensuration between the two. The totalizing and flexible apocalyptic frame enabled its deployment in different historical moments by various historical actors

for divergent political ends. During the tumultuous and globalized interwar period, apocalyptic framing of the turbulent present was deployed to serve and make sense of contemporary anti-colonial politics at global scale. In this rendition the crisis and signs of catastrophe for end time was either interpreted as the consequence of the evil deeds on the part of the powerful, or it was celebrated as indicative of the rise of the oppressed. Historical actors inspired by socialist political imaginary interpreted the crisis-ridden present as full of potentialities of radical intervention and willful transformation. The imminent end of the present world order was not only made legible in anti-imperialist terms, but also as an opportune moment to re-shape and re-make the world as such. The apocalyptic frame and forms of thinking, which could free-float between the traditional and modern, local and international political world, appeared to have carried special affective power in visualizing egalitarian decolonized world order.

To get some practical advice: What would be the three things you would definitely need in a post-apocalyptic world?

Good academic institutions to reflect on the post-apocalyptic world. Convivial people. Film and music.

What are some of your favourite pop culture references to the (post)apocalypse?

I shall recommend a couple of (Netflix) web series from India: *Leila* and *Sacred Games*.



Prabhat Kumar taught history at Presidency University, Kolkata before joining the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi.

Broadly invested in the north Indian cultural history, he works on Hindi print media, both literary and visual in its myriad forms.

●●● **read more online**

capas.uni-heidelberg.de

#SCIENCE
APOCALYPSE

BUDDHIST (POST-)APOCALYPTIC STUDIES BEING AT HOME ANYWHERE

by Rolf Scheuermann

A Buddhist take on (Post)apocalyptic phenomena, particularly the current climate crisis, was the subject of a talk and a conversation titled “Buddhist (post-)apocalyptic studies – being at home anywhere” (Buddhistische Postapokalyptische Studien – überall zu Hause sein?) by Rolf Scheuermann (CAPAS) and Milena Reinecke (Deutschlandfunk Kultur) on March 7, 2024. The online event was organized by the Deutsche Buddhistische Union (German Buddhist Union, DBU), a national umbrella organisation of German Buddhist associations which comprises more than 60 member organisations. The talk was organised in the framework of DBU’s educational program *bhavana*, and was attended by 30 participants with diverse backgrounds.

After a short welcome and introductions by Hanna Ebinger, Co-Coordinator of the DBU study program and Milena Reinecke, Rolf Scheuermann started with a brief presentation. First, the subject of (Post-)Apocalyptic Studies was introduced alongside related Buddhist Eschatological narratives. The central part of the talk then centred on Buddhist approaches to dealing with the current climate crisis. From a traditional Buddhist perspective, the end of the world is not an unimaginable catastrophic anomaly but is cosmically seen as a relatively normal and natural process. In this sense, it is comparable to the death of an individual, and the fear of a climate apocalypse may resound with the fear of one’s own future death. Buddhist guidance for preparing for or dealing with death is of interest in this respect. The roles of the individual and concepts of hope were further discussed in the context of actions aimed

at addressing climate change. Since apocalyptic events may lead to new circumstances, the presentation’s final part focused on utopian visions, associated Buddhist practices, and the significance of the Buddhist middle way approach in the context of climate change and transformation.

Milena Reinecke skilfully led the subsequent exchange with in-depth follow-up questions inspired by the lively Zoom chat. Overall, it became clear that there is a potential tension between a more traditionally oriented Buddhist approach and a modern eco-Buddhist one. While eco-Buddhist movements often heavily focus on the world, i.e., saving the world, Buddhism fundamentally aims for liberation from an ever-changing life world (*Lebenswelt*) characterized by various forms of suffering. The entire program will soon be published on the DBU’s YouTube channel. ●

#BOOK
APOCALYPSE

TOLKIEN AND THE GOTHIC

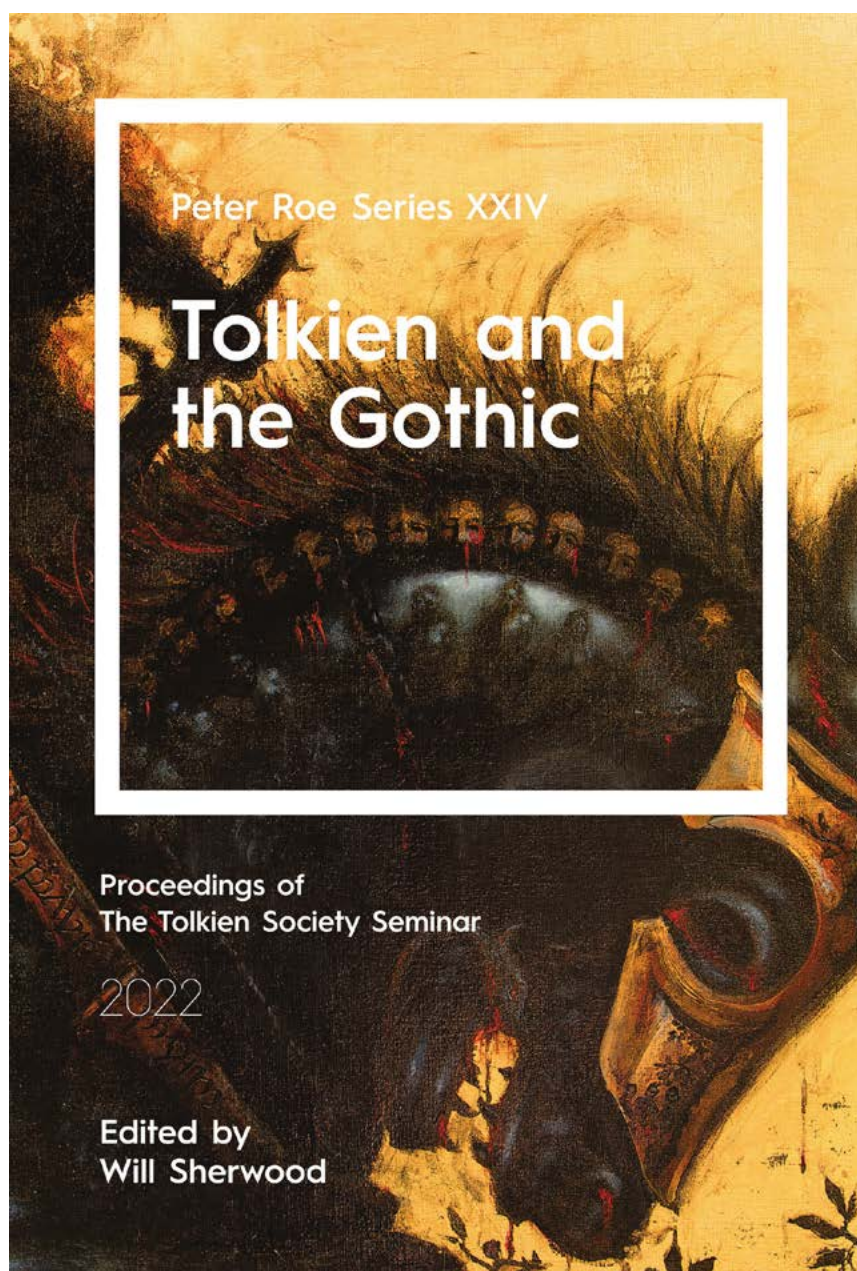
READING TOLKIEN'S WORK ANEW

Hot off the presses, the volume of proceedings “Tolkien and the Gothic” contains papers from the Tolkien Society Hybrid Seminar 2022, including an article by CAPAS member Michael Dunn. The volume seeks to shed light on what the words ‘Goth’ and ‘Gothic’ meant to J.R.R. Tolkien and the ways in which the various traditions associated with them proliferate his writing. From the linguistic to the literary, religious to the ecocritical, the proceedings explores how traditional and new theories in Gothic scholarship can help us read Tolkien’s work anew.

Dunn’s chapter “*Tolkien’s Triptych: Ecological Uncanny, Double Dualism*”

Personified, and the Language of the Literary Gothic” explores the extreme ambiguities of the various and varying ecological uncanny expanses in Tolkien’s work and suggests that Middle-earth establishes an ontology of Gothic which serves as inspiration for our current climate *Zeitgeist*. Tolkien’s ecological uncanny as well as extensive ambiguity towards mortality, immortality, peoples, places, and even language of Middle-earth, which itself is a cosmology of myth for our own distant past, are all the more important today than they ever have been as our interconnected and toxic planetary situation accelerates and at many forefronts of climate change, entanglements to both landscape and environment become ever more inter-dependent.

The volume is edited by Will Sherwood, and published under the auspices of the Peter Roe Memorial Fund. ●



TOLKIEN AND THE GOTHIC

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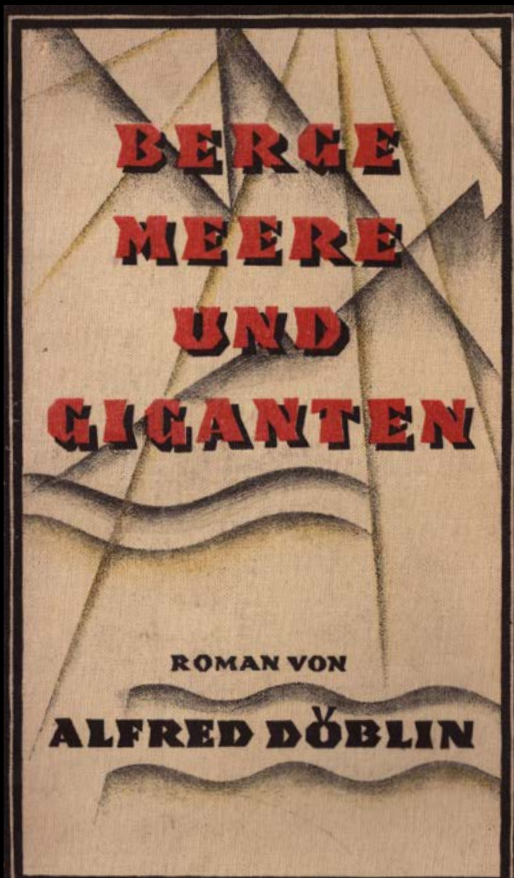
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#BOOK
APOCALYPSE

AN APOCALYPTIC VISION

100 YEARS OF ALFRED DÖBLIN'S "BERGE MEERE UND GIGANTEN" by Alexander Pawlak (Editor of "Physik Journal")

In January 1924, German psychiatrist and writer Alfred Döblin (1878 – 1957) published the novel "Berge Meere und Giganten" (Mountains Seas and Giants), preceding his later acclaimed work "Berlin Alexanderplatz" by five years. However, despite his subsequent success, Döblin's remarkably unusual vision of the future from 1924 has largely remained obscure. While Franz Biberkopf's story is rooted in Berlin of the time, "Mountains Seas and Giants" presents a narrative spanning humanity's journey up to the 27th century. This panoramic view of the future unfolds with astonishing narrative force but demands much from its readers.



Döblin's work, characterized by unconventional language and narrative style, often devoid of recognizable characters, delves into major upheavals in the future history of mankind. It explores humanity's struggle with itself and with nature, touching on themes that resonate with contemporary issues: from the proliferation of mega-weapons to the production of artificial food in factories, and even the melting of Greenland as a colossal geoengineering project reminiscent of today's climate change crisis. Eventually,

the pursuit of scientific and technological advancements leads to the emergence of enormous monsters, countered by artificially created "giants" wielded by humanity.

One challenge for readers lies in the absence of a familiar narrative perspective. There is no clear authorial narrator, and the settings and dimensions of the narrative constantly shift: at times focusing on a trian-

gular relationship involving the consul Marduk, his comrade-in-arms turned enemy Jonathan, and "the balladeuse," while at others, it explores the activation of gigantic machinery triggering geological upheavals.

Döblin doesn't shy away from presenting drastic episodes, such as Marduk orchestrating the consumption of his enemies by a mutated forest—a scene not for the faint-hearted and a test even for aficionados of Döblin's uncompromising epic prose.

Deciphering what aspects of the novel reflect Döblin's idiosyncratic natural philosophy, developed further in his later work "Das Ich über der Natur" (1928), and what can be related to contemporary concerns, poses a challenge. Nevertheless, Döblin's central question—"What will become of man if he continues to live like this?"—resonates profoundly in our time, rendering the novel a captivating read.

The current edition published by Fischer-Verlag contains the revised text of the out-of-print annotated critical edition from 2006 and is preferable to older editions. An English translation has recently become available (Alfred Döblin, Mountains Oceans Giants, translated by Chris Godwin, Galileo Publisher, Cambridge 2021). ●

A German version of this text, which contains further links, is available online: <https://pro-physik.de/buecher/100-jahre-berge-meere-und-giganten>



IN THE SPOTLIGHT **MARCUS QUENT**

What does the apocalypse and/or post-apocalypse mean for you?

Marcus Quent: Apart from the general question of modernity's relation to eschatological thinking, I am starting from the observation that today, our present seems challenged by an existentially menacing and at once plain version of the end – a



“naked apocalypse,” to use Günther Anders's term. With the nuclear threat and the ecological transformation, it seems we are now confronted with two versions of this “naked apocalypse” simultaneously. Therefore, I analyze both events considering the specific temporalities they imply. I am interested in how the status of

the so far dominant configurations of the “contemporary” or the “absolute present” change when confronted with apocalyptic temporalities.

What is your fellowship trying to achieve?

With my research project I aim to address what we could describe as a mutual stabilization of catastrophism and presentism in our construction of time: On the one hand, the so called “endless” or “absolute” present produces catastrophic consequences; on the other hand, an impending event of catastrophe retroactively sets the endless time-space of the present absolute. My project explores how the construction of time

could be conceptualized differently to avoid being trapped in the political impasse of this mutual stabilization.

How does the fellowship project build on or connect to your previous career or biography?

Temporality, particularly the notion of the present, is a key aspect of my research. This doesn't just mean the history of the philosophy of time. I understand it in a broader sense. For me, it is crucial that the problems of our present manifest themselves primarily as problems of time, as problems of temporality. Understanding the (historical) present then entails a twofold question: What are the spatio-temporal specifics of “our” present – but also: How is the constitution of the present as such to be conceived, which enables us to speak of “our” present at all? The apocalypse is an element of the investigation of “the present” in that sense. Because the construction of the apocalypse emphasizes the temporality of the present as well as our present is one that recognizes itself as apocalyptic, becoming intelligible through this lens.

What are some of your favourite pop culture references to the/an (post-) apocalypse?

When it comes to popular music, for me the apocalypse is situated probably somewhere in-between Swans's „It's Coming It's Real” and Claudine Longet's “The End Of The World”.

Marcus Quent is a research associate at the Department of Art History, Art Theory and Aesthetics at the Berlin University of the Arts. His research focuses on philosophical aesthetics and aesthetic theory, the philosophy of time and the history and topicality of critical theory.

2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

VOICES

RUPTURES: APPROACHES FROM/ABOUT LATIN AMERICA

#PUBLIC
APOCALYPSE

VIDEO
RELEASE
OF THE
CAPAS
ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
2023

The 2023 Annual Conference of CAPAS, in collaboration with the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities at the University of Chile, took place in Santiago de Chile a year ago. Themed ‘Ruptures: Approaches from/about Latin America,’ the conference delved into the concept of ‘rupture’ as a radical form of discontinuity, exploring its potential transformative effects amidst pressing social, political, and ecological challenges.

The video encapsulates the essence of the conference, featuring interviews with keynote speakers, fellows and participants from diverse disciplines such as Alejandra Bottinelli Wolleter (Literary Studies, CAPAS Fellow 2021-22), Sergio Rojas (Philosophy, University of Chile), Natalia López (History, Cultural Studies, independent researcher), Gastón Gordillo (Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Canada), Bruna Della Torre (Sociology, CAPAS

fellow 2022-23, Universidad Campinas, Brazil), and Eduardo Russo (Social Psychology, Universidad Nacional de la Plata, Argentina).

To provide a multifocal perspective on ruptures, we addressed the following key questions: When and how can we talk about ruptures? How and where are ruptures experienced and represented? How can the temporality of rupture be conceptualized? What is the impact of historical traumas and crises on the Latin American vision of the past and the future? And, how does an apocalyptic rupture contribute to the transformative creation of worlds?

Embark on this exciting journey with us as we unravel these questions and more, gaining insights into the transformative power of ruptures in the Latin American context.

●●● watch the video
youtube.com/@CAPASHeidelberg

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