CAPAS

KÄTE HAMBURGER CENTRE
FOR APOCALYPTIC AND
POST-APOCALYPTIC STUDIES

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SEIT 1386

APOCALYPSE
QUARTERLY
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A JOYFUL EXTINCTION?

DEAR READERS,

In the midst of numerous crises—ecological, political, economic and often also personal—the concept of extinction takes on a complex and threatening meaning. The work of CAPAS fellow Christine Daigle, described in the first article of this issue, introduces a provocative idea: 'joyful extinction.' Christine argues that our current way of life, characterized by extractivist and oppressive relationships with non-human beings, is inherently unsustainable. She proposes a theory of joyful extinction built on critical posthumanist and material feminist principles that rejects human exceptionalism and advocates for the interconnectedness of all beings in order to promote the flourishing of all beings—human and non-human—rather than mere survival.

The magazine also delves into a range of other thought-provoking topics, including Jayne Svenungsson's exploration of philosophical responses to the current state of the world (pp. 10-13). In addition, this issue looks at the importance of the *blue humanities* as represented by Friederike Reents at the international CAPAS symposium "Precarious Water Futures and the End of the World(s)" (pp. 18-21). These diverse perspectives are crucial as we grapple with existential challenges and envision a more just future.

The CAPAS team wishes you an interesting and stimulating read, a Merry Christmas to those who celebrate and a Happy New Year!

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

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A JOYFULL EXTINCTION?

ON KEEPING FUTURES OPEN FOR HUMANS AND NONHUMANS

by CAPAS-Fellow Christine Daigle

What futures await us? Must we undergo extinction for these to be possible? Are there extinctions that are desirable—necessary even? Can extinction be joyful? My project answers "yes" to the latter questions and, to support this answer, I am developing a theory of joyful extinction built upon critical posthumanist material feminist principles that reject human exceptionalism, champion entanglements of all beings, and seek the thriving of all—human and nonhuman alike—instead of mere survival.

There is no denying that we live in a moment of multiple crises—environmental, political, medical, ethical, and economic—that coalesce to confront us with ongoing and possible extinctions: our own as well as that of other species. Naming the Anthropocene intended to mark the extent of the environmental crisis and identified the culprit: the human and its reckless ever-increasing exploitation of natural resources. Additionally, the unfolding of the 6th mass extinction further reinforces the notion that our way of life is enjoyed at the expense of the many nonhuman beings whose life is rendered impossible by our ambitions for ongoing growth. Moreover, the wasteful Western humanist way of life is not enjoyed by most humans, since many suffer conditions of poverty, hunger, and violence to support that way of life.

“There is no denying that we live in a moment of multiple crises that coalesce to confront us with ongoing and possible extinctions: our own as well as that of other species. ”

The crisis conjunction in which we live provides for bleak futures for humans and nonhumans alike. This is because we are already living through extinction. Extinction is not an event compressed

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Created with the AI image generator Freepik. The prompt read “The prompt read “vulnerable posthuman who cares for other beings”.

in time with the death of an endling, the last individual of a species. Rather, it is the long, protracted unravelling of a species' way of life and its relations to other species and its environment. Thus, we must recognize that for some human populations the world has already ended and that they have indeed experienced "extinction", perhaps more than once. One only needs to think of the fate of Indigenous peoples and Black Africans through European colonialism. And we can question whether the way of life of the human species as a whole is going extinct.

Given that we find ourselves in a time of multiple crises and our human and nonhuman worlds are increasingly unravelling, we can state that the apocalypse is now. However, my project rejects "doom and gloom" as a paralyzing attitude leading to inaction and despair. Instead, I seek to develop a generative attitude that can motivate action and upon which futures can be built. If worlds are ending, it is due to the extractivist and oppressive relations we put in place towards nonhuman others—animals, plants, minerals, ecosystems, earth system. At the same time, these exploitative practices deprive many people of a liveable future. The Colombian American anthropologist Arturo Escobar suggests that we need to develop practices of reworlding that make better futures possible. At the heart of his proposal is the need to rebuild connections among beings.

The Anthropocene teaches us an important lesson: we have come to a point of no return. Extinctions are inevitable—such as the extinction of our current way of life, of the human as we have known it, and of nonhuman species. But extinctions are also positive as they open up space for the emergence of new lives and new ways of living. My project aims to demonstrate that we need to embrace extinction as a mul-

Christine Daigle is a fellow at CAPAS and Professor of Philosophy at Brock University in St. Catharines, Canada. She explores material feminism and posthumanism, driven by her interest in the body and vulnerability. At the heart of her research are fundamental questions like: What is the human? How should humans coexist with others? Can we envision a world where all beings thrive rather than merely survive? Also see p. 9.

CRITICAL POSTHUMANISM

"Critical posthumanism," as a transdisciplinary concept and field, is now a key part of contemporary critical academic thinking and finds various applications in artistic and cultural contexts. It is not to be conflated with the techno-optimistic transhumanist views advanced by thinkers like Ray Kurzweil and Stefan Sorgner and billionaire entrepreneurs. These seek the enhancement of the human and embrace a hyper-humanism. In contrast, critical posthumanists are concerned with the limits of humanist philosophy, aesthetics, politics, and culture. Critical posthumanist thinkers—such as Rosi Braidotti, Stefan Herbrechter, and Patricia MacCormack—challenge the past humanist emphasis on Eurocentric human subjectivity and experience and consider it detrimental to life because it supports oppressive, extractive, violent practices—sexism, racism, xenophobia, speciesism, etc. They consider that anthropocentric positions have failed to solve many urgent social, environmental, ethical, and political problems, instead exacerbating them and extending them into the 21st century.

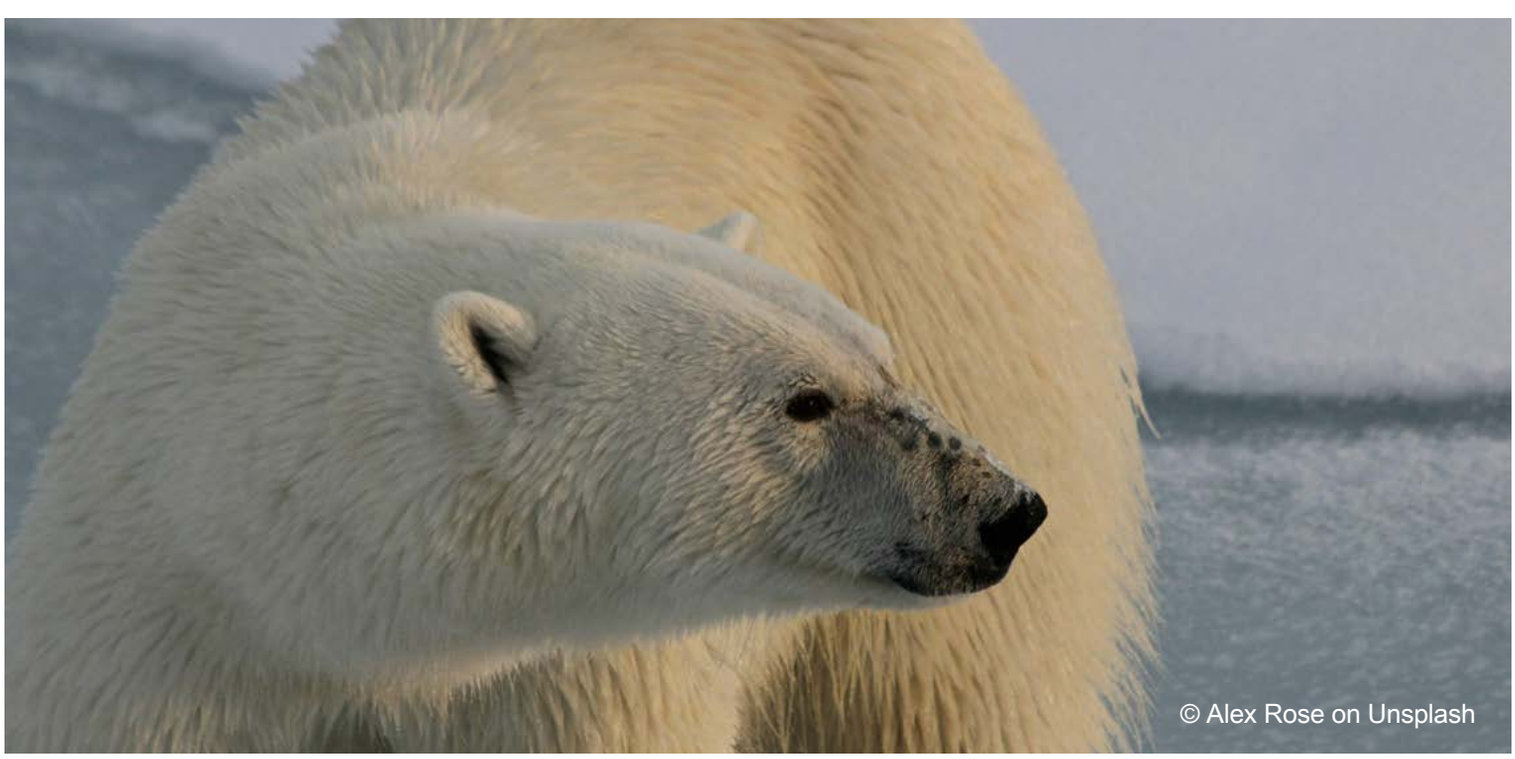
No other animal is as symbolic of species extinction as the polar bear. Due to rising temperatures and the melting of the ice, its habitat is becoming increasingly restricted.

tivalent and generative fact that opens up these possibilities. Extinction can only be joyful if we take it as an opportunity to leave our humanist ways of living behind and explore living differently.

Extinction and the future it opens will be joyful only if animated by posthumanist principles. While the posthumanist critique of the humanist worldview is essential, constructive proposals to effect a shift in worldview are equally crucial. Posthumanist methodologies provide new tools that redefine humans, nonhumans, and reality itself especially as we live in a context of environmental uncertainty and technological expansion. The driving conviction is that we need to design new thoughts using new methods to find new solutions to the manifold problems with which we are faced.

"Extinction and the future it opens will be joyful only if animated by posthumanist principles.

Embracing critical posthumanist material feminist core principles and concepts—such as vitalism, the impossibility of separating the human from nature, interconnectivity, and agentic capacity distributed among all living beings—and building upon my ontological model of transjectivity—all living



Heat records worldwide. New records are set every year. We are driving our planet to the edge.

beings are constituted through their subjective and material relations—I propose an ethos of care as the necessary backbone of the futures we need to build. Basically, we need to embrace humility and care as an ethos, one that recognises the web of relations and its various asymmetries, its thriving, its timescales, and its eco-temporalities. Embracing an attitude of humility is part of the ethos that will allow the transjective human to pursue its own flourishing while acknowledging that it is intertwined with the thriving, and sometimes demise, of others and perhaps itself. This humility should permeate the work needed to address social, environmental, knowledge production, urban, and technoscientific issues, issues that need to be tackled to construct the futures in which we can thrive.

“I propose an ethos of care as the necessary backbone of the futures we need to build.”

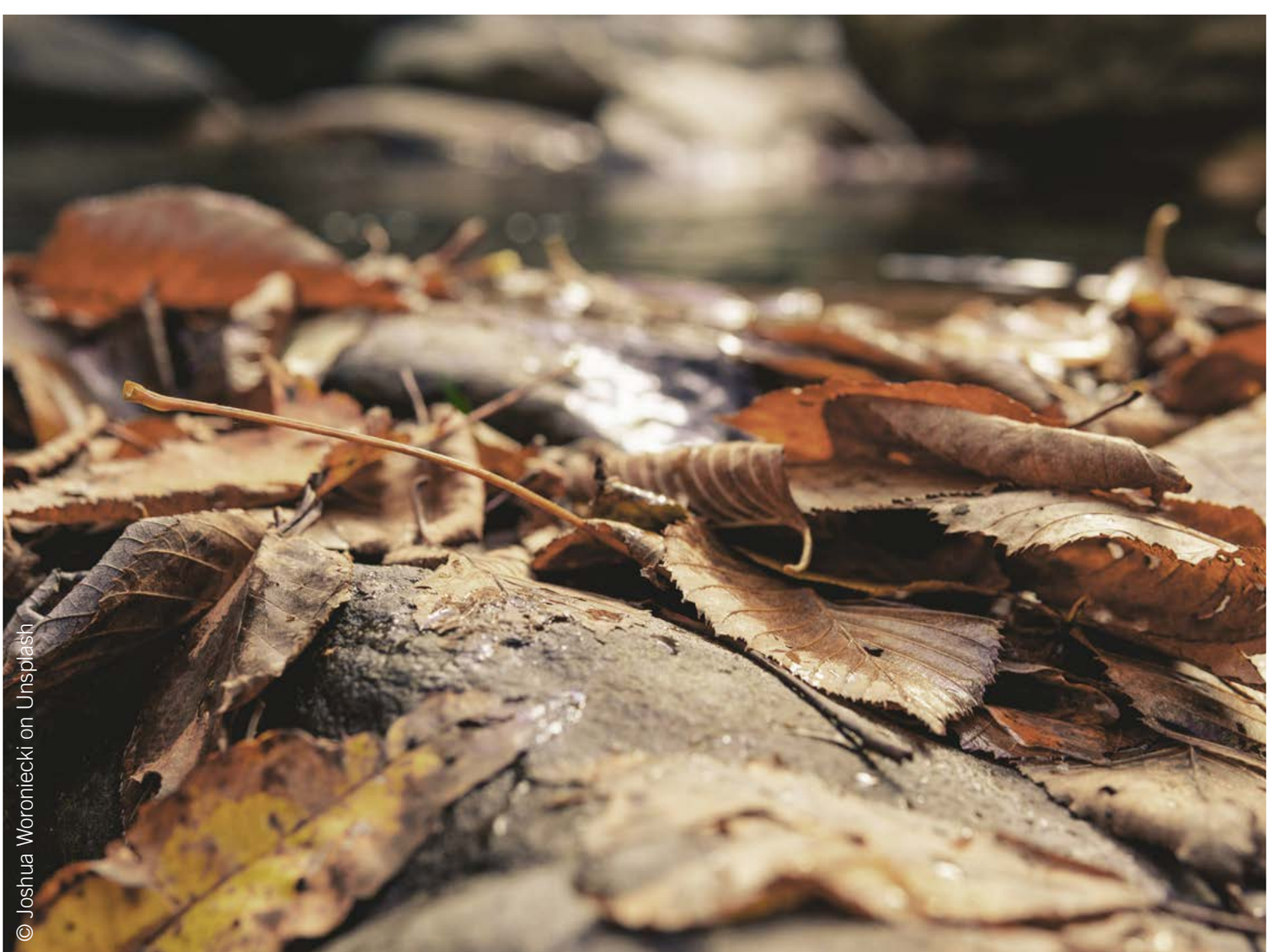
To give a very concrete example: in Canada where I live, folks tend to their lawn in a sometimes obsessive manner. The lawn is cut short through the summer and leaves are picked to the last piece in the fall. This is all driven by human-centered aesthetic preferences. But what if we were to think of all the beings entangled in this space? What if we took in consideration the concerns of bugs and bees who need longer grass to protect themselves from the heat in summer

and a dead leaves cover to make it through winter? Shifting our perspective on such an everyday matter and changing our action may have really important impact for the thriving of these nonhumans. Imagine what this shift in perspective might do in other matters such as, for example, urban development, environmental policies!

“Imagine what this shift in perspective might do!”

It may not look pretty, but dead leaves are an important habitat for beetles and bees. What if we took their needs into consideration and left the leaves lying around?

Does our horizon of extinction lead to impoverished or enriched futures? Whereas humanist imaginaries have failed us and closed futures for humans and nonhumans alike, critical posthumanist imaginaries are capable of opening up the vision of a better future. Examining the productive potential of extinction is at the heart of this endeavour and key to my work. The process of extinction can be a joyful one only if it opens up futures for humans ***and*** nonhumans alike. It has the potential to be a joyful one if humans reject a damaging worldview and way of existing while embracing a relational ethos of care and humility that fosters the thriving of all entangled beings. To arrive at this, it is necessary to investigate the Anthropocene and extinction, how they feed one another, how we conceive and represent them in our imaginaries and cultural discourses, and how they thereby impact the futures that are being made as we live through them. ●



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#FELLOW APOCALYPSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

CHRISTINE DAIGLE

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

Christine Daigle: The (post-)apocalypse comes with a necessary inquiry into the nature of the human, the nonhuman, the world, and their interrelations. What does it mean for ***a*** world to end? Is it the same as to say ***the*** world is ending? For whom is it ending and does this ending offer opportunities for new beginnings? And if we are going to recognize that the world has already ended for some humans—humans whose worlds were taken away by European settler colonialism for example—and for many nonhuman species—species we have driven to extinction in the ongoing 6th mass extinction event—what do we think is so special about our own extinction, Western humans who tend to be the most privileged globally?

Christine Daigle is Professor of Philosophy at Brock University in St. Catharines, Canada. Her fellowship at CAPAS runs from September to December 2024.

What is your fellowship trying to achieve?

I am working specifically on the notion of joyful extinction. My work explores questions about the end of the world and how to live through it and after (if at all). This presupposes thinking about a post-apocalypse and what it may look like and how transformative it should and would be. Living in the 6th mass extinction, we are surrounded by a lot of pain and suffering and the depletion of the world as a tremendous number of nonhuman species disappear daily. Can we think of ways to operate a severe correction to our course as humans in order to make it through and limit the amount of suffering? Since it is the most damaging way of existing on earth, can we make our Western humanist way of living extinct? Abandoning our position of mastery posited by humanist exceptionalism, we would be operating a joyful extinction: we would make the future a time and place in which all beings can thrive.

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

My academic pathway took me from the existentialist and phenomenological philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir to critical posthumanism and material feminism.
I grew increasingly dissatisfied with philosophies that posited a sharp distinction between humans and nonhumans and between humans and nature. I was also unhappy with the view that the human is exceptional and has a right to help itself to natural resources and the lives of nonhumans as it pleases. Critical posthumanism, which rethinks the human from a non-anthropocentrist perspective, provides great tools. Material feminism, with its further emphasis on material entanglements and relations among all beings, allows us to better understand how we are always interconnected both subjectively and materially.
I am currently leading the project “Bomb Pulse: Cultural and Philosophical Meaning of Time Signatures in the Anthropocene.” Thinking about temporality and the Anthropocene naturally led me to an in-depth reflection onthe ongoing 6th mass extinction: the only mass extinction event caused by one species, the human.

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RETHINKING RADICALITY

POLITICAL THEOLOGIES IN AN AGE OF CRISIS

On October 22, Jayne Svenungsson delivered a thought-provoking lecture titled "Political Theologies at the End of the World" at CAPAS in Heidelberg. The distinguished Swedish researcher explored philosophical responses to our current era of overlapping global crises, often described as a "polycrisis". Throughout her lecture, she provided a comprehensive overview of how philosophers have engaged with apocalyptic themes in light of specific geopolitical contexts, and raised crucial questions about how we conceptualize and respond to the seemingly insurmountable global challenges that we face today.

Jayne Svenungsson's lecture focused on the work of Thomas Lynch, a former CAPAS fellow and Svenungsson's long-time collaborator. She outlined two primary philosophical responses to the world's current predicament, as identified by Lynch in his book "Apocalyptic Political Theology. Hegel, Taubes and Malabou" (2019). The first approach focuses on reforming and transforming the world through sustainable practices and social justice efforts. However, this method is criticized for potentially reinforcing existing structures. The second, more radical "apocalyptic" response, advocated by Lynch, acknowledges the world's inherent injustices and calls for its end. Prof. Svenungsson emphasized that Lynch's apocalyptic approach is not rooted in traditional theological

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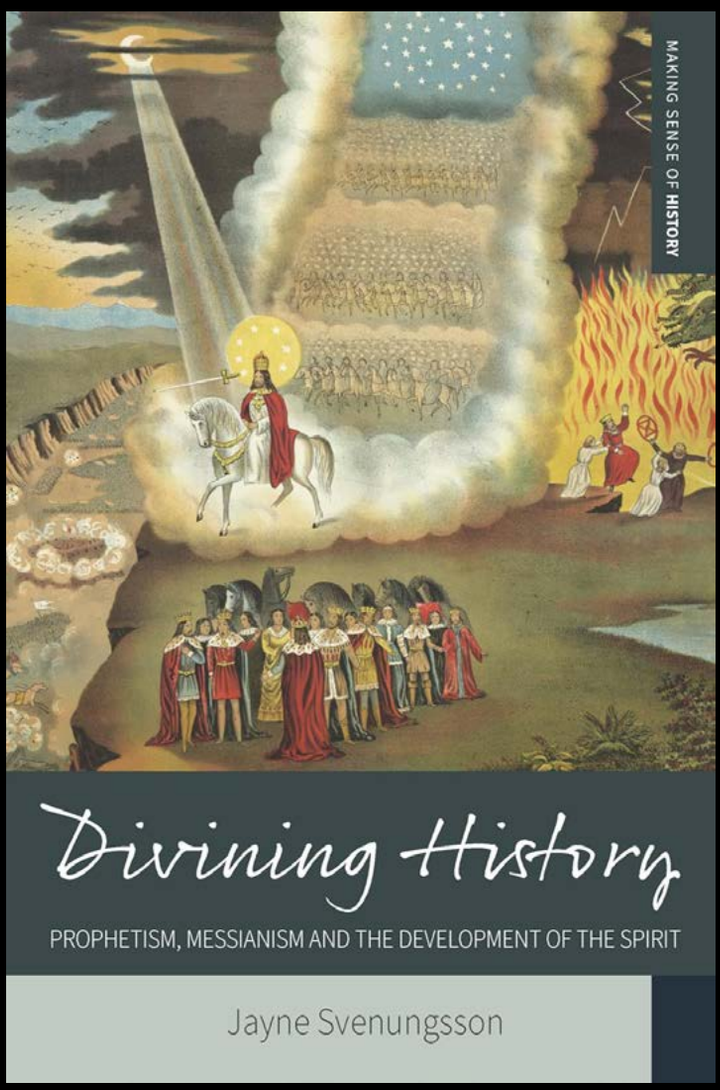
ideas of rejecting this world for another, but rather in an immanent rejection of the world itself. This "plastic apocalypticism," as Thomas Lynch terms it, focuses on the negative essence of apocalyptic thought without proposing new beginnings.



"Divining History—Prophetism, Messianism and the Development of the Spirit" (2016): Jayne Svenungssons response to the current state of the world and her critique of apocalyptic tendencies within contemporary political philosophies.

While sharing Lynch's concerns about the state of the world as well as his diagnosis "that violence and tragedy is inherent to the world and not anything that will be overcome if we only trust in democratic processes and new forms of technology", Jayne Svenungsson highlighted differences between their approaches. Referring to her 2016 book "Divining History," she drew on Gershom Scholem's distinction between "restorative" and "apocalyptic" tendencies in messianic thinking. Restorative messianism emphasizes continuity and gradual transformation, while apocalyptic messianism envisions a cataclysmic rupture in history.

"At a moment in history when there are crucial measures still to be taken to prevent bad to get worse, we no longer have the luxury of indulging in the rhetoric of disinvestment and refusal."

Prof. Svenungsson traced these tendencies through Jewish and Christian traditions, before applying them to contemporary political philosophy. She identified a shift from more moderate, "restorative" approaches in the late 20th century to more radical, "apocalyptic" ones in the early 21st century. As examples of the apocalyptic turn, she examined the work of philosophers Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, and Slavoj Žižek, who share a belief that the current world order must be entirely overturned. However, Jayne Svenungsson critiqued these approaches for lacking plausible alternatives to parliamentary democracy and failing to address questions of authority and legitimacy in a post-judicial society: "My fear is that such a posture, in its unwillingness to engage with concrete political options and alternatives, risks playing the most dangerous authoritarian forces into their hands. Also, in relation to climate emergency, I find disinvestment wanting. At a moment in history when there are crucial measures

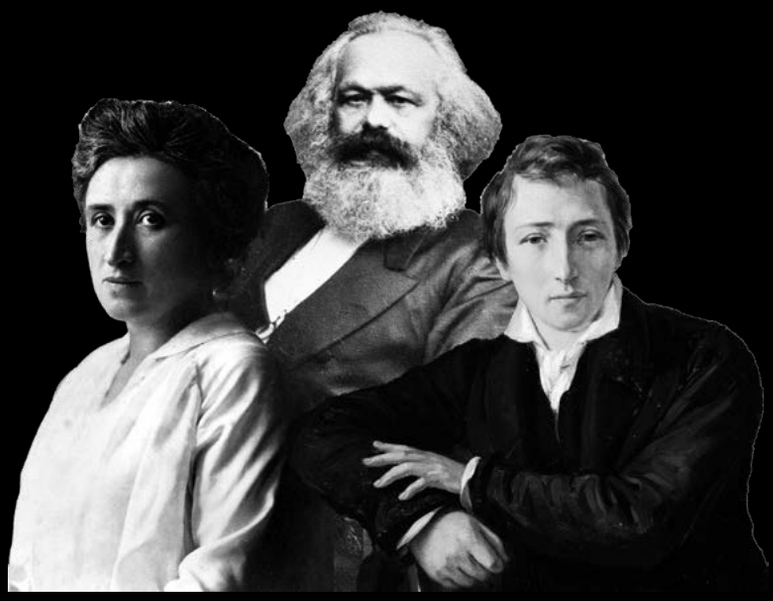
"Marked by the aftermath of 9/11, the early years of the 2000s saw a fundamental shift in tone with-in academic political philosophy. Perhaps most aptly captured by Žižek's provocative formulation, 'democracy is not to come, but to go'."

still to be taken to prevent bad to get worse, we no longer have the luxury of indulging in the rhetoric of disinvestment and refusal characteristic of the radical philosophies that set the tone in the wake of 9/11."

In contrast—and contradicting Thomas Lynch's position—Jayne Svenungsson advocated for more "restorative" forms of political messianism, as proposed by Jacques Derrida. In her view, these approaches are better suited to address today's complex political realities. While no less radical in their critique, they recognize that real change requires time and continuity. However, given the challenges humanity is facing at this moment in history, Prof. Svenungsson acknowledged in her lecture that there are limits to believing in piecemeal adjustments to the existing order. And she asked: "If it's true that we are facing challenges of apocalyptic proportions, challenges that call for more radical responses, this also raises the question of what *radicality* means in terms of a thinking that is able to generate effective change. Are the only options at hand *disinvestment* versus *endless deferral*, or is this a dichotomy that precludes other ways of thinking what radical commitment could entail?"

Radicality at the End of the World

Subsequently, Jayne Svenungsson presented a compelling argument for a new approach to radical thinking in the face of global crises. She urged listeners to move beyond the dichotomy of endless deferral and disinvestment, proposing instead a return to historical traditions of radicality. Hence, she



called for a rediscovery of radicality's roots, tracing a lineage through thinkers such as Heine, Marx, and Luxemburg, and argued that true radicality is not mere disruption but "it has a social goal with an *inclusive* plan and is tightly connected to discourses of *justice*". Svenungsson drew connections between this radical tradition and biblical prophetism, suggesting that modern radicalism could be seen as a secularization of prophetic ideals with their commitment to the weak and the vulnerable.

"I want to suggest that it's possible to reconstruct traditions of radicality that run through modernity that would include figures like Heine, Marx, Luxemburg."

In proposing a fresh approach to political theology, Prof. Svenungsson highlighted the work of Daniel Bensaïd, a Jewish Marxist thinker. Bensaïd's ideas, she argued, offer a way to transcend the divide between deferral and disinvestment, emphasizing persistence and hope in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges. Rather than pure negation or disruption, radicality becomes a matter of endurance and perseverance. Jayne Svenungsson cited examples of this "slow revolutionary practice," including local political engagement, using art to raise awareness about ecological crises, and legal strategies to address urgent global issues.

In conclusion, Jayne Svenungsson distinguished her "prophetic" concept of the world from apocalyptic thinking. While acknowledging the inherent violence and tragedy in the current political order, she rejected the notion of a perfect world beyond our own. Instead, she advocated for a view of redemption as an ever-present "possibility and a calling in every moment to make this only world a little less tragic, a little less violent". ●

Jayne Svenungsson is Professor of Systematic Theology at Lund University, Sweden. Her research focuses on philosophy of history and political theology, including the ways in which apocalyptic and messianic motifs play a role in modern Western philosophy and political thought. She is currently principal investigator of the research program "At the End of the World: A Transdisciplinary Approach to the Apocalyptic Imaginary in the Present and Past".

●●● Watch the lecture
www.youtube.com/@CAPASHeidelberg

#FELLOW APOCALYPSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
STEPHEN BARBER

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

Stephen Barber: From an art historical perspective, I've long engaged with the imageries and imaginings of apocalypse in art movements such as 1920s-30s French Surrealism, as well as 1960s Japanese art, photography and dance. I was especially intrigued by two journeys which the Surrealist artist Antonin Artaud made in 1936-37, first to Mexico and then to a remote island off the western coast of Ireland. Before leaving Paris, Artaud published an apocalyptic manifesto and seemed convinced he would witness the apocalypse on that island. I translated his letters from that journey in a book titled *Artaud 1937 Apocalypse*. Artists' approaches to the apocalyptic or postapocalyptic range from extravagant, delusional, hallucinatory, prophetic, to detailed and tangible.

Stephen Barber is Professor in Art History and the Co-Director of the Visual and Material Culture Centre at Kingston University's School of Art since 2012. His research focusses on urban cultures and their intersection with art and moving-image forms.

Personally, I grew up in the 1980s—a now-vanished era characterized by fear of an imminent USA/USSR nuclear apocalypse, which must have marked many children's experiences worldwide in that era (perhaps still haunting them today), and formed a dynamic of apocalypse very different to the current preoccupations with global warming, pandemics, digital-media/data turmoil, and other global threats.

What is your fellowship trying to achieve?

I'm aiming to complete my book on imaginaries of apocalyptic cityscapes in art and film by the end of my fellowship, set for publication in English and German by the Swiss arts publisher Diaphanes. Besides exploring art and film imaginaries of apocalyptic wastelands, the book includes several case-studies of on-site topographical explorations of wastelands in a range across the globe. It speculates on how contemporary cities have been transformed by digital culture in ways that introduce a sense of acute fragility or volatility that has been perceived as 'apocalyptic' by numerous theorists, artists and activists, such as Joanna Zylinska, T.J. Demos and Matthew Gandy. This project's methods are transdisciplinary, combining art history, urban topography and the analysis of contemporary theoretical perspectives on the apocalypse, particularly in the context of digital media's impact.

What are the aspects you are looking forward to at CAPAS?

CAPAS brings together a community of researchers and artists from many disciplines, all focused on the compelling questions, mysteries and illuminations of the apocalyptic. Unlike institutes of advanced study, Käte Hamburger centers generate a concentrated focus on a specific topic rather than an environment in which everyone is working on different areas or 'knowledge-silos' with diffused approaches. So, being at CAPAS requires a deep sense of openness to unfamiliar perspectives, since, once reflected upon, they will certainly eventually connect to your own research…

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT
CYNTHIA FRANCICA

Cynthia Francica is Associate Professor in the Literature Department at Adolfo Ibáñez University in Santiago, Chile. Her main research fields are gender and sexuality studies, feminist theory, affect studies, new materialisms, climate crisis and the post-human in contemporary literature and visual arts.

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

Cynthia Francica: I was very intrigued by CAPAS's research focus on post/apocalyptic studies when I first learnt of it. The notion of (post)apocalypse is very much in line with my current research, though coming from the Southern Cone we generally work with a different, situated conceptual framework. I was very interested in learning how problems connected to the climate crisis and its socio-environmental consequences, extractivism, wars and humanitarian emergencies, among other contemporary catastrophes, are currently being discussed and addressed in European academia.

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

Having grown up in Argentina, a country which has historically undergone a relentless succession of devastating political, economic and social crises, I have experienced first-hand what it means to mourn lost worlds, and to then have to start over and re-build yourself and your community from scratch over and over again. The felt, lived experience of worlds ending is an everyday struggle we learn to wade through. Paradoxically, that continuous state of (post)apocalyptic anxiety and grief can, as in the case of the 2001 crisis, open space for other forms of creative and social assemblages that offer alternatives to the dynamics of capitalism. In my research, which focuses on Southern Cone literature and visual arts, my goal is, precisely, to think through those notions and practices which, emerging from contexts of ongoing precarity and dispossession, become tools for survival, resilience, and community building.

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

From my perspective, we already live in a post-apocalyptic world in Latin America. In my experience, what we really need to wade through the end of worlds, more than a specific object, are other beings, both human and more than human. We depend on others, both on the basis of our material and physical needs, and of our affective life—we cannot survive, much less thrive, without others. To me, the most important thing we need to foster is the conscious awareness of the inevitability, the wonder, and the pain of our co-existence. There can be no (inhabitable, livable) future without cooperation.

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

I definitely recommend the experience of reading *The Falling Sky* (2013), by Davi Kopenawa. This incredible book includes drawings, personal narratives and historical accounts, and dwells into the Yanomami peoples of the Brazilian Amazon, their shamanic philosophy, and their political struggle for recognition of native rights.

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POSTLAPSARIAN PLANETARY PHENOMENA AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

A review of the 2nd "Languages of the Anthropocene" conference
by Michael Dunn

Daniel Finch-Race isn't only one of the nicest academics you'll have the pleasure of meeting, a characteristic which is all too often unfortunately overlooked and/or taken as unimportant in academia at large, he is also a truly transdisciplinary scholar straddling the spheres between literary studies, environmental humanities, and geography. More than a nice guy and an interesting academic—one whose work wanders in the realm of experimentation applying ecocriticism, a historically European, Western, and white tradition, to non-anglophone spaces and contexts—he is also one of the many minds behind Languages of the Anthropocene.

The now annual conference is convened between a broad range of cooperation partners including and hosted by the British School at Rome, Università degli Studi Roma Tre, and Sapienza Università di Roma, with financial support from University College London and the University of Heidelberg's CAPAS. Spearheaded by former CAPAS fellow Florian Mussgnug (UCL), Simona Corso (Roma Tre), and Iolanda Plescia (Sapienza) the second installment saw the conference grow in plurality of topics and themes, all reflecting the severity and necessity for new ontological and psychological understandings of the world at a time of uncountable fractures to and from the natural non-human world. This time around, though, additional collaboration with Regione Lazio, Centro Culturale Moby Dick, and PRIN Applied Shakespeare saw the Languages of the Anthropocene, which was formed in 2023, pick up the pace as a creative, critical conference.

Coming out of the second installment of Languages of the Anthropocene, we not only came to the conclusion that how we talk, feel, and live with (and in) times of the more-than-human and overwhelming impacts of climate catastrophe are clearly currently crossing boundaries and borders, but that creative critical practices can and often do counteract the overwhelming anxiety that the Anthropocene ever more offers up. Current CAPAS fellow Anaïs Maurer gave the opening keynote *Fighting Nuclear Colonialism and Climate Imperialism from the Empire's Edge* setting the tone and trajectory for the following few days, while CAPAS team member Michael Dunn and director Robert Folger gave talks that centered various and varying voices in the Anthropocene as well as narratives of diversity and dissent. Michael Dunn spoke about "Singing Through the Slothocene: The Voice(s) of Apocalyptic Prophecy" while Robert Folger focused on "Cannibals: Indigenous Apocalypse and Colonialism".

Most, if not all, of the talks at the conference touched precisely on the importance of the power of creativity, and

TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE WITH DANIEL FINCH-RACE

creation, in the face of incessant male dominance and extractivism. Timely then, that out of said conference Daniel Finch-Race's presentation found form in the Thinking Space section of the latest issue of open-access and peer-reviewed journal *Literary Geographies*. "Climate-Talk in and around Geissler/Sann's How Does the World End (for Others)?" is a short yet meaningful meander into Beate Geissler and Oliver Sann's photographic and textual art installation which was housed at the Prada Foundation in Venice in 2022. Yet, the article, perhaps more importantly, charts how creative critical co-thinking has the power to reassess the "authoritativeness of any statement". In that sense, Finch-Race, with this article, gives his thanks to the various conversations, conferences, and convenings that he was not only involved in but also helped organize: "deconstructing […] the oh-so familiar conversational gambit of climate-talk."

The conversations we have at conferences, often "Between the Bars" (1997) as Elliott Smith sadly sung, coin our course. Trajectories taken are often influenced by the shared musings of fellow academics, artists, friends, and colleagues. And although citing like-minded people becomes muscle memory to us in the academic sphere, actually taking part and taking to heart the community project of thinking through the ends of worlds (for others) and beyond is an affectual and empathetic act that can create challenges for a series of structural injustices. While bonds that prop up "systematic violations" (Finch-Race) be they excessive wealth accumulation, extractivism, or racial and gendered suffrage (all of which go hand in hand) continue unimpeded, bonds that break them apart are as important as ever. ●

Beate Geissler and Oliver Sann, Untitled, 2013. Photograph accompanying the score and the installation "How Does the World End (for Others)?". Courtesy Geissler & Sann.

#SCIENCE APOCALYPSE

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

EXPERTS FROM FIVE CONTINENTS DISCUSS WATER FUTURES

Water is essential for life on earth and has profoundly shaped societies and cultures throughout history. Issues such as flooding, drought, rising sea levels, pollution, and limited access to drinking water were key topics addressed at the International Symposium "Precarious Water Futures and the End(s) of World(s)—an Integrative Dialogue Across Disciplines and Societies." Held at the India International Centre in New Delhi, the symposium brought together more than thirty scholars from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, representing Asia, Europe, the Americas, Africa and Australia. These researchers examined the complex and interconnected challenges of water crises in the context of the climate emergency and the potential "end(s) of world(s)" that such crises may entail.

The Symposium opened on November 13, 2024, with a public fireside chat featuring five experts discussing the Aquatic Polycrisis. The session drew an engaged audience of over 200 participants from different walks of life. From November 14-16, the symposium continued with nine thematic panels, three discussion rounds, and a special lecture, all of which explored water futures. Topics ranged from the 2013 floods in Uttarakhand and the everyday apocalypse caused by water tank economies to the life of sex workers of the Sundarbans coastline.

CAPAS organized the Symposium in collaboration with the M.S. Merian—R. Tagore International Centre of Advanced Studies 'Metamorphoses of the Political' (ICAS:MP), New Delhi, India; the School of Environmental Sciences (SES) at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India; the Rachel Carson Center (RCC), Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany; and the South Asia Institute (SAI), Heidelberg University, Germany.

The following article, written by the German literature researcher Friederike Reents, summarizes her special lecture—one of the symposium's highlights—in which she advocates for the importance of "blue humanities."

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KNOWING, THINKING AND WRITING WATER

ON THE NECESSITY OF BLUE HUMANITIES

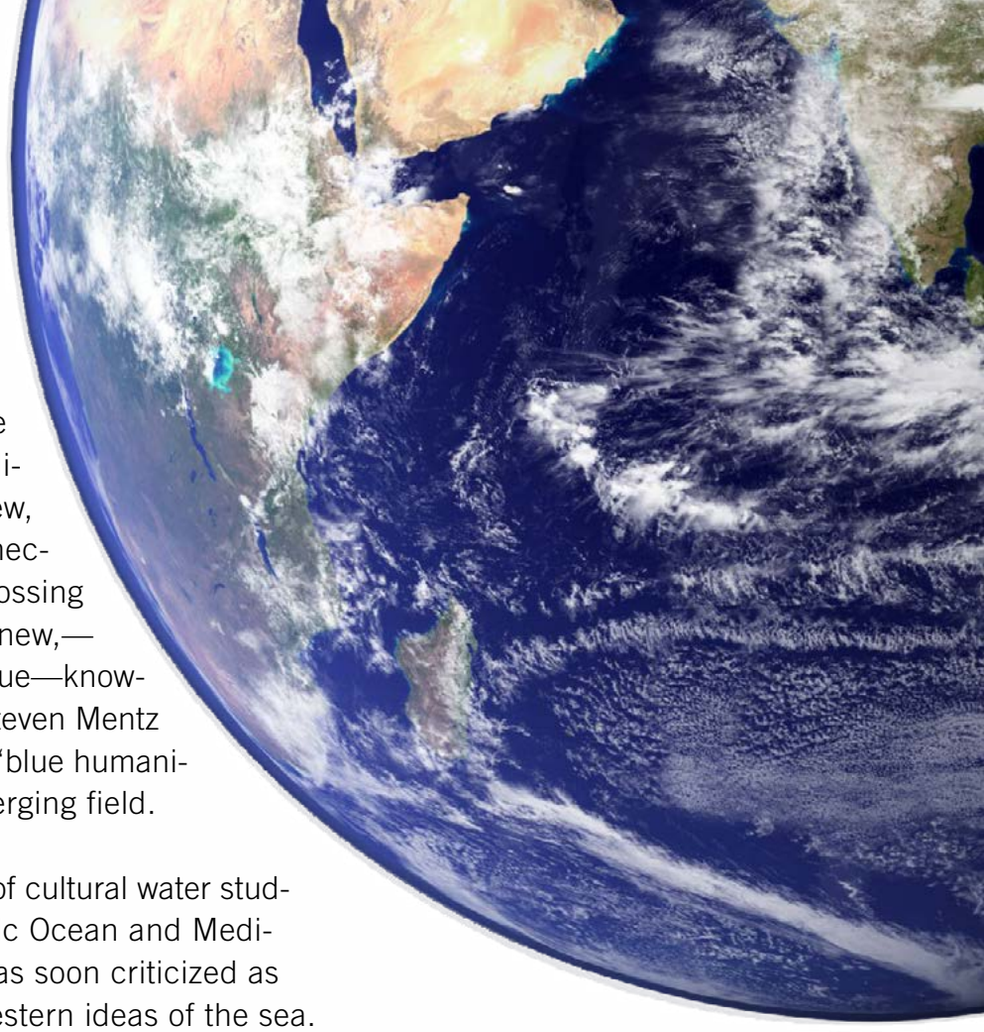
by Friederike Reents

Even though oceans cover two thirds of earth's surface, more than half of the world's population lives near the coast, and humans are made up of around 60% water, our knowledge about water still is limited. Although there is a great deal of culturally passed-down wisdom, it is often treated separately from scientific knowledge and technical innovations. This gap affects not only the saltwater of the oceans, but also the much smaller quantities of freshwater and drinking water. Due to increasing scarcity and attempts at privatization, water is threatened to become "the 'oil' of the 21st century", as Axel Goodbody predicted in 2008.

The understanding of water has deep roots in ancient and biblical traditions and myths. In addition, water has always inspired the visual arts and literature, which in turn has given the public more knowledge about water. Water is portrayed as a symbol of life, but also of death and danger, transformation, purification, renewal, and, repeatedly, as a force of destiny and nature. The variety of representations of water in art shows that socio-historical classifications into a "cosmological", a "Christian" and a "scientific" age, fall far too short to grasp this phenomenon. In order to understand water as comprehensively as possible, (scientific and technical) measuring and testing is not enough. Rather, the ways in which we think and write about water need

© Tobias Schwerdt

Friederike Reents is Full Professor in German Literature at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. Her research interests include literature from the 17th to the 21st century, environmental humanities and cultural sustainability as well as atmospheric aesthetics and the politics of works.



to be reconsidered. This is the goal of transdisciplinary and transcultural water studies: to create a dialogue between the traditional and the new, to establish connections, and, by crossing borders, to gain new,—one might say, blue—knowledge. This led Steven Mentz to coin the term "blue humanities" for this emerging field.

The initial focus of cultural water studies on the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea was soon criticized as deriving from Western ideas of the sea. As the reference areas were widened, the theoretical approaches also had to be revised and viewed critically in postcolonial terms, for example by comparing Carribean works to European or North-American ones. The Caribbean poet and literary theorist Édouard Glissant, for instance, pointed out that the "other" is not necessarily comprehensible and should be left in this opacity, as otherwise it threatens to be subject to hegemonic attempts at categorization once again.

Beyond the ocean fixation, the "blue humanities" nowadays also understand smaller (inland) seas containing salt water, freshwater resources, ice formations and water vapor under the concept of planetary water; water is thus considered in its various temperature-dependent aggregate states and no longer just in a specific geographical area. Beyond its geographical and material occurrence, the interplay of water and space and water and gender also brings up new discussions.

Literary texts, works of art, films, and epistemic practices can reveal new ways of thinking and writing about water. Increasingly, the "terrestrial bias"—the traditional land-based ontologies and classifications of the humanities—is being questioned. The environmental, and often (eco)activist, impetus of global climate change plays a major role in this shift. The question arises: to what extent can science be politically or even activist-driven? It remains to be seen how literary and cultural theory can make the threats to the "blue planet" comprehensible and contribute meaningfully to protecting water resources for the future. To what extent this also requires a "blue humanity"— for example, a sense of connectedness conveyed by artists— is one of the key areas of inquiry in the *Blue Humanities*. ●

●●● Watch the lecture
www.youtube.com/@CAPASHeidelberg

The symposium “Precarious Water Futures and the End(s) of World(s)” brought together more than thirty scholars from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

#SCIENCE APOCALYPSE

DONALD TRUMP

POLITICAL DISRUPTOR, APOCALYPTIC HERO

by Aaron James Goldman

You may have heard the news: Donald Trump won the 2024 US presidential election—handily. The day after, a colleague wrote to one of my research groups, "Good morning! Overnight the apocalypse nudged closer." Perhaps it has. But the looming (global) consequences of the pettiness and cruelty emblematic of right-wing governance in the United States are not the only Trump-related apocalyptic scenarios. Indeed, in the preceding years, Trump became a central figure in myths formulated at the intersection of American evangelical Christianity, New Age thinking, and right-wing conspiracist movements. In some cases, such as QAnon and adjacent conspiracy theories, Trump took on the role of a religious hero or even messianic figure in the context of a major political upheaval structured much like Christian end-time narratives. What is it about Trump and the context of US electoral politics that enabled such an interpretation? My ongoing work poses possible explanations for this phenomenon, and why it has contributed to Trump's recent electoral victory.

Apocalyptic conspiracist narratives involving Trump are varied and difficult to pin down, often mutating rapidly as they are disseminated via social media. Most QAnon conspiracy theories have predicted that Trump would root out preexisting corruption among elite networks, specifically a conspiracy of child-abusing Satanists who comprising Hollywood celebrities and US Democratic Party figures. Even among non-supernatural QAnon accounts, Trump's activities would trigger events that parallel interpretations of the Book of Revelation, including "the Storm," a tumultuous period during which perpetrators would be brought to justice, followed by the "Great Awakening," a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period of renewed social and political life in the United States that resembles the millenarian reign of Christ on earth. Other more fringe QAnon beliefs feature esoteric, science-fiction, or supernatural narratives, including clones, demonic presences, and the resurrection of deceased celebrities who would side with Trump in his quest. Among some portion of the electorate—particularly those already invested in American evangelicalism or forms of conspiracism—political support of Trump took on a religious fervor.

"Among some portion of the electorate political support of Trump took on a religious fervor."

To understand Trump's appeal to these communities, one must turn to the history of entanglement between Protestant Christianity and right-wing politics in the United States during the 20th Century. Scholars such as George Nash and Keri Ladner have narrated how libertarianism, traditional values, and the social reaction to communism were brought together into movement conservatism. Ladner attends specifically to Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, which further consolidated these elements of the American right under an evangelical Christian banner. Just as much as these were efforts to theologize politics for a segment of the American population, equally—I would argue—did they transform the theology of evangelicalism in North America. By the post-Reagan era, the Christian right had embraced, whether advertently or not, the significant overlap of their moral cosmology and the American electoral-political landscape, culminating in popular conspiracy theories such as the Satanic Panic, birtherism (pushed by Trump himself), and eventually QAnon, in which the right wing's political rivals

Aaron James Goldman has been a Research Fellow in Philosophy of Religion at the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies at Lund University since 2021. He received his PhD in Religious Studies—specializing in Philosophy of Religion—from Harvard University (2021), his MA from the University of Virginia (2010), and his BA and BS from Indiana University, Bloomington (2008). He specializes in applications of the philosophical and religious thought of the modern West to contemporary questions about ethics, politics, and culture.

were understood as metaphysical forces of evil hindering the utopian plans of their political leaders. As both left- and right-leaning voters' trust in American government has waned since the 1990s, the back-and-forth stagnancy of the political landscape called out for a massive change, a figure to break open the existing political, indeed (for the American Christian right) *cosmic* order.

Trump, with his utter indifference to the norms of American electoral democracy, entered the stage in precisely this context. What we see in Trump is a disruption of the electoral political order, and a simultaneous unmasking of American electoral politics: Trump's message—by barely concealing that he cares little for the well-being of his supporters—is a form of public vandalism that gestures to the inauthenticity of his political rivals (and the structure that supports them), who, on his narrative, merely *pretend* to care about their supporters' well-being. To right-wing or right-leaning US voters who perceive themselves as under the boot of political forces beyond their control, Trump's populist rhetorics and style function as a type of revelatory intrusion, an apocalypse into the cosmos of American electoral politics. For those Christians in the United States to whom the political and the theological are so thoroughly intertwined as to be virtually indistinguishable, Trump appears as a force prepared to do spiritual battle against evil presences. QAnon is an epiphenomenon of this zeal, but develops into its own set of allusions, symbols, and collective interpretive praxes such that it enables a form of community among the American right-wing to participate (or at least pretend to participate) in politics beyond the voting booth.

Interpretations of Trump as a religious hero are the result of the structure of biblical apocalypse overlaying the polarized electoral landscape in the United States, with Trump functioning as a disruptive force prepared to open the cosmology of establishment electoral politics. To some of his supporters, Democrats and their allies are forces of evil, with Trump joining the Republicans to usher in a new era after a period of intense unrest. QAnon and related conspiracy theories—blending pop culture references, entire medicine cabinets of conspiracy theories, and a menagerie of other fringe beliefs—reflect popular engagement with this apocalyptic imaginary.

TOWARD APOCALYPTIC EXPERIENCE: IMAGES AND NARRATIVES OF THE END

Aaron Goldman's article is based on a talk he recently presented at a two-day workshop titled "Toward Apocalyptic Experience: Images and Narratives of the End". This event, jointly organized by CAPAS and Lund University, brought together scholars from various disciplines to explore how the apocalyptic imaginary shapes our understanding and experience of radical change. Participants delved into the ways in which apocalyptic narratives and images provide frameworks for interpreting historical events, assessing the present, and anticipating the future.

A key focus of the workshop was the dual role of apocalyptic thinking in both generating and managing fear. In Western intellectual tradition, the notion of the apocalypse has been used to make sense of catastrophic and incomprehensible events. Simultaneously, apocalyptic narratives and imagery help channel the emotions arising from such events, using the idea of the world's end as a central reference point. Thus, the apocalyptic imaginary can refer to real existential risks and scenarios as well as cataclysmic change, motivate counteractions, but also contribute to resignation or 'disappointment'.

#PEOPLE APOCALYPSE

NEW AT CAPAS

BRUNA DELLA TORRE & ALEJANDRA ROJAS

Life is full of changes—colleagues leave, and new colleagues join. While we bid a heartfelt farewell to long-time coworkers, we are also delighted to welcome our new team members Bruna della Torre and Alejandra Rojas to CAPAS!

Bruna joins the Publication Management team as the new editor of Apocalyptica, taking over for Jenny Stümer, who is currently on parental leave. Bruna is no stranger to CAPAS, having been a fellow here in 2021/22. She earned her Ph.D. in Sociology from the Universidade de São Paulo, where she also served as a post-doctoral fellow in the Department of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature. Her research delves into topics such as the Frankfurt School, Marxist theory, feminist studies, fascism studies, literary criticism and comparative literature, and Latin American critical theory.

Alejandra has stepped into the role of Administrative and Finance Associate, succeeding Max Sieckmeyer, who took up a new position at the University of Heidelberg earlier this year. As the backbone of CAPAS's administrative operations, Alejandra ensures the smooth running of our center. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Philology and Educational Sciences from the University of Heidelberg and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Ibero-American Studies at the university's Department of Romance Studies. For her, redemption in the apocalypse lies in discovering peace and harmony within the complexities of German bureaucracy.

CAPAS EVENTS

THURSDAY
09
01

14.30 PM **CATS I Heidelberg (Germany)**

Lecture Series "Apocalypse now. Time, Historicity & Worlds After"

ETHNOFICTION: A REBIRTH SCENARIO FOR THE COLLAPSE OF THE MAR MENOR, SPAIN

This talk by Dr. Mafe Moscoso, currently a fellow at CAPAS, explores the intersection of two distinct cosmo-ontologies through the lens of ethnofiction: one rooted in her maternal lineage from Ecuador's Cotopaxi province, and another from Spanish scientists, both examining the concept of life's end. In the wake of the Mar Menor's collapse, she proposes to investigate an experimental research methodology called cuyr Andean ethnofiction.

The lecture series is organized by Worldmaking/CATS and CAPAS.

More Info: https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/de/veranstaltungen/ethnofiction-a-rebirth-scenario-for-the-collapse-of-the-mar-menor-spain-2025-01-09

17.01.-
26.04.

Galeria Metropolitana I Mexico City (Mexico)

Exhibition

POETICS OF THE FUTURE: ANTICIPATIONS, SPECULATIONS, TEMPORALITIES

With the objective of exploring the diverse ways in which figurations of the future are expressed poetically in different political orders and temporalities, the UNESCO Chair for Future Studies at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Cuajimalpa) and the Galería

Federico Cuatlacuatl, Timekeepers of the Anthropocene: TEWAME TIYOLICHA KAWITL, still from the Video/projection, 2024, artist collection.

Metropolitana, together with the Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies (CAPAS) at Heidelberg University, present the exhibit Poetics of the future: anticipations, speculations, temporalities. Taking as a starting point the idea that the future is imagined in the present as a form of anticipation—and, at the same time, as an act of memory making—, this space proposes a trans-historical approach to examine the mechanisms, poetic variables, and artistic practices that refer these experiences.

The exhibition will be on show from January 17th until April 26th 2025 at Galeria Metropolitana (Metropolitan Gallery) in Mexico City.

More Info: https://mexicocity.cdmx.gob.mx/venues/galeria-metropolitana/

TUESDAY
21
01

7.00 PM **Karlstorkino | Heidelberg (Germany)**

Apocalyptic Cinema | Short Film Special

THE TIME THAT REMAINS: APOCALYPSE, AND AGING

Panel discussion in German/English with Robert Folger (CAPAS director) and Timo Storck (Psychoanalyst, Psychologische Hochschule Berlin, former CAPAS fellow).

In cooperation with Segundo Festival Internacional de Cine sobre Envejecimiento: *Miradas a través del tiempo.*

THURSDAY
23
01

14.30 PM **CATS | Heidelberg (Germany)**

Lecture Series "Apocalypse now. Time, Historicity & Worlds After"

THE SUN THAT NEVER SETS? RE-THINKING THE END OF TIME IN NATURAL, RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL SCENARIOS/METAPHORS

The lecture series "Apocalypse now. Time, Historicity and Worlds After" by Worldmaking/CATS and CAPAS concludes with a summarizing lecture by Prof. Dr. Barbara Mittler, University of Heidelberg | CATS, as well as Prof. Dr. Alessandro Stanziani and Dr. Pablo Blitstein (both from École des hautes études en sciences sociales, France).

The lecture series is organized by Worldmaking/CATS and CAPAS.

More Info: https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/de/veranstaltungen/the-sun-that-never-sets-rethinking-the-end-of-time-in-natural-religious-political-scenariosmetaphors-2025-01-23

WED-FRI
29-31
01

All-day **CAPAS | Heidelberg (Germany)**

CAPAS Alumni Conference

SUSTAINABILITY & APOCALYPSE

The aim of the first CAPAS Alumni Conference is to meet old and new friends, engage with each other's work and address important issues in order to discuss current impulses on apocalypse, end-time scenarios and their various consequences. The central theme of the conference will be "Sustainability & Apocalypse". Sustainability is a key word in debates about the imminence and immanence of apocalypse and a major point of apprehension in the nuanced discussions about temporalities, spatialities, and materialities. The concept of sustainability thus offers the possibility of discussing various forms of cultural, political, and academic reorientations in a damaged world that may aim to consolidate and/or uproot a problematic status quo. Furthermore, sustainability highlights the many prospects of apocalypse as a tool for philosophical and empirical analysis. As such, it also opens up a chance to question taken-for-granted practices of capturing, preserving, and mastering different forms of knowledge within and beyond the field of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic studies.

06.02-
21.09.

Olivier Debré Contemporary Art Centre | Tours (France)

Exhibition

KOEN TASELAAR: *END AND*

At the heart of the exhibition End And by Dutch artist Koen Taselaar is a monumental 19-meter-long tapestry, designed specifically for the monumental nave of the art centre. The work is a homage to the Apocalypse Tapestry in Angers, one of the great masterpieces of medieval art. Taselaar was invited to create a contemporary response to this iconic work, using its themes of apocalyptic imagination as a springboard for his own exploration of humanity's enduring fascination with the end of the world. In his tapestry, Taselaar takes an encyclopedic approach to apocalyptic narratives, which have appeared throughout history, weaving them together with his signature humorous and inventive style.

© Koen Taselaar AndEnd, detail from the tapestry

The exhibition also features sculptures, drawings, furniture and small tapestries. Together, these works create an immersive and dynamic environment, inviting visitors to reflect, rest, and engage with Taselaar's distinctive and colorful visual world.

The exhibition was created in partnership with CAPAS, facilitating a collaborative exchange among CAPAS fellows, the team, and the artist. This interaction, which inspired the artistic process, was driven by a comprehensive and thoughtful questionnaire.

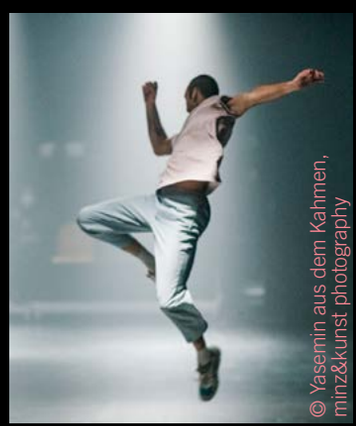
More Info: https://cccod.fr/exposition/end-and

SATURDAY
22
02

tba **KARLSTORBAHNHOF | Heidelberg (Germany)**

Dance Performance

HOW SOON IN NOW? PERFORMING CITIES


© Yasemin aus dem Kahmen, minz&kunst photography

'How Soon Is Now?' is the first dance production in a multi-year research cycle that takes a perspective on us individuals in the face of global problems. The transition to the unknown is unsettling and frightening. Hesitation is the pace at the threshold. Paradoxical thoughts, a guilty conscience or a 'Now more than ever!' alternate. With 'How Soon Is Now? performing cities', DAGADA dance is now travelling through other cities and reworking this sensually tangible dance piece with interested citizens.

The production is linked to a citizens' project and will culminate in a moderated audience discussion with all participants and academic guests from CAPAS.

More Info: https://www.dagada.dance

SUNDAY
23
02

tba **KARLSTORBAHNHOF | Heidelberg (Germany)**

Transdisciplinary Workshop

HOW SOON IN NOW? PERFORMING CITIES

DAGADA dance and CAPAS cordially invite you to a workshop day for all interested citizens aged 12 and over at the Karlstorbahnhof. We would like to work with you in a variety of ways, with mind and body, on topics such as fears, excessive demands, repression or resignation in the context of the global challenges we face. How does that feel, where is the next step? After warming up together, you can meet for specific workshops on contemporary dance, a creative writing workshop or an 'world café', a discussion with various CAPAS researchers. Participation is free of charge, small snack included!

More Info: https://www.dagada.dance

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

#FELLOW APOCALYPSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
LUIS PÉREZ-AMEZCUA

Luis Pérez-Amezcua is Professor-Researcher at the Department of Arts and Humanities of the University of Guadalajara. His lines of research are the intermedia study of myth (myth criticism) in pop culture, Mexican literature, and academic literacy. From March to August 2024, he conducted research as a fellow at CAPAS.

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

Luis Pérez-Amezcua: For me, apocalypse in literature and culture is a mode of reflection and redemption. Reflection on the possibilities of the future from the analysis and intuition of the present, and redemption from the mistakes we make as a species; altering and exploiting the world, killing it slowly because of economic ambitions.

What was your fellowship trying to achieve?

I started with a premise: "In literature, when one talks about 'apocalypse', in reality, or simultaneously, one is also talking about something else". In consequence, one big question is: What are we talking about when we read Latin American novels about the apocalypse? Here, I was looking for:

— a neuroscientific update of the physiology of the imagination (because the body never lies).
— a philosophical background (to shut detractors up), and
— time to read (goddamn it!).

What do you take with you from the project and its results?

I want to go personal in answering this, because the research is still ongoing (and, as you know, it never ends). Living and working in Europe has been a dream of mine since I was a bachelor's student, so this project gave me the opportunity to make my dream come true. And to get to know world class colleagues from different disciplines and countries, to work for a very prestigious university as Heidelberg University, and especially in such a rich, *sui generis* research centre as CAPAS, was absolutely the best way to do it.

What was particularly valuable for you at CAPAS?

I was particularly attracted to the work of my colleague (and now friend) Anaïs Maurer: the stories of nuclear survivors and climate activists on Pacific islands. I did not know the indigenous peoples who live there are experiencing these post-apocalyptic traumas and problems due to the governments that have been conducting nuclear tests there. And, of course, because I live in Mexico very near the Pacific Ocean, these peoples are my neighbors, and it hurts.

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

The film *The Matrix* was a very special one for me, since it combines deep philosophical ideas with a coherent techno-biological possibility: brains and nervous systems as controllable machines It also has amazing characters, visuals, and references to classical mythological sources. I would also recommend, in a Mexican context, the TV show *Diablero* (available in Netflix): this one depicts the possibility of an apocalypse starting in Mexico City, including some representative figures of Mexican mystic culture.

●●● **read more online**
capas.uni-heidelberg.de

#SCIENCE APOCALYPSE

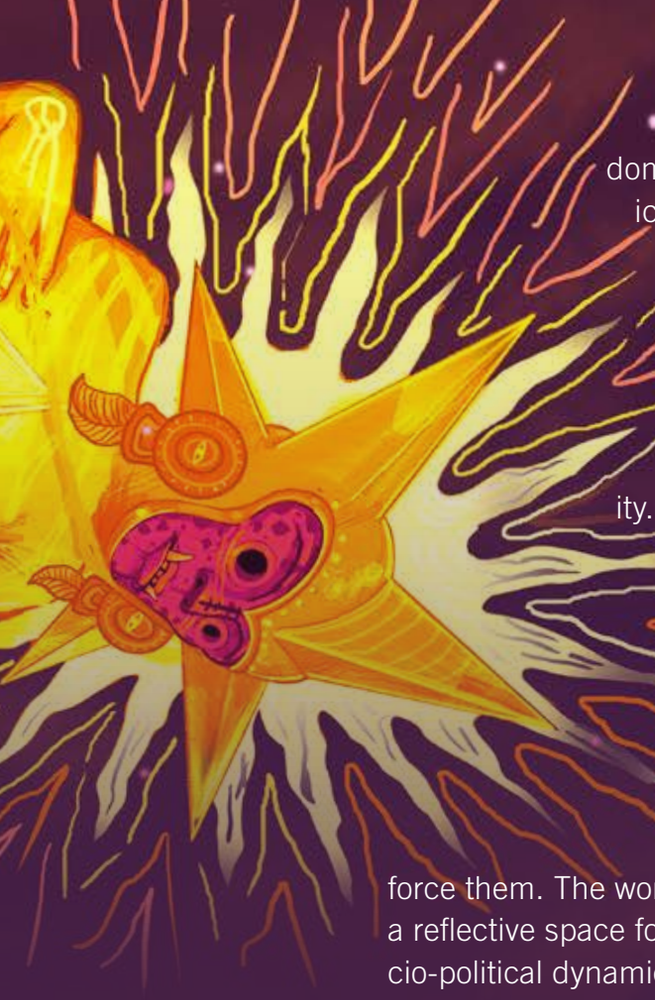
UNA JORNADA APOCALÍPTICA

On 18 September in Bogotá, Colombia, the History Department of Universidad Nacional de Colombia (UNAL) hosted "Una Jornada Apocalípti ca," a day-long academic event that convened students, faculty, artists, and scholars from various institutions to explore apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic imaginaries as historical narratives. The initiative, led by Prof. Paolo Vignolo—professor at the History Department, former CAPAS fellow and current director of the Laboratorio de Cartografía Histórica e Historia Digital (CaHID)— included the visit of CAPAS director Prof. Robert Folger as key note speaker and Fellowship Manager Laura Mendoza as moderator.

The event opened with two interactive workshops, mostly attended by undergraduate and graduate students from the history department. Drawing on Fredric Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (2005), the workshop "Arqueologías del Futuro" examined Utopia and Dystopia as fundamental concepts shaping the way societies construct and envision narratives about the end(s) of world(s) and their aftermath(s). Focusing on the Latin American context and incorporating student contributions on Colombian realities, the workshop evolved into a critical discussion. Students analyzed utopian scenarios as a framework to examine and question existing socio-economic structures, emphasizing the dual role of Latin American history as both a record of persistent structural challenges and a repository of critical insights for envisioning futures beyond the limitations of the contemporary reality (alternative futures).

A particularly inspiring aspect of the workshop was the exploration of how Western-style utopias—historically

© Edgar Flores (SANER), Fragment of the Artwork 'First Omen': Post-Apocalyptic Visions of the 12th Book (2022), an artist's collection.

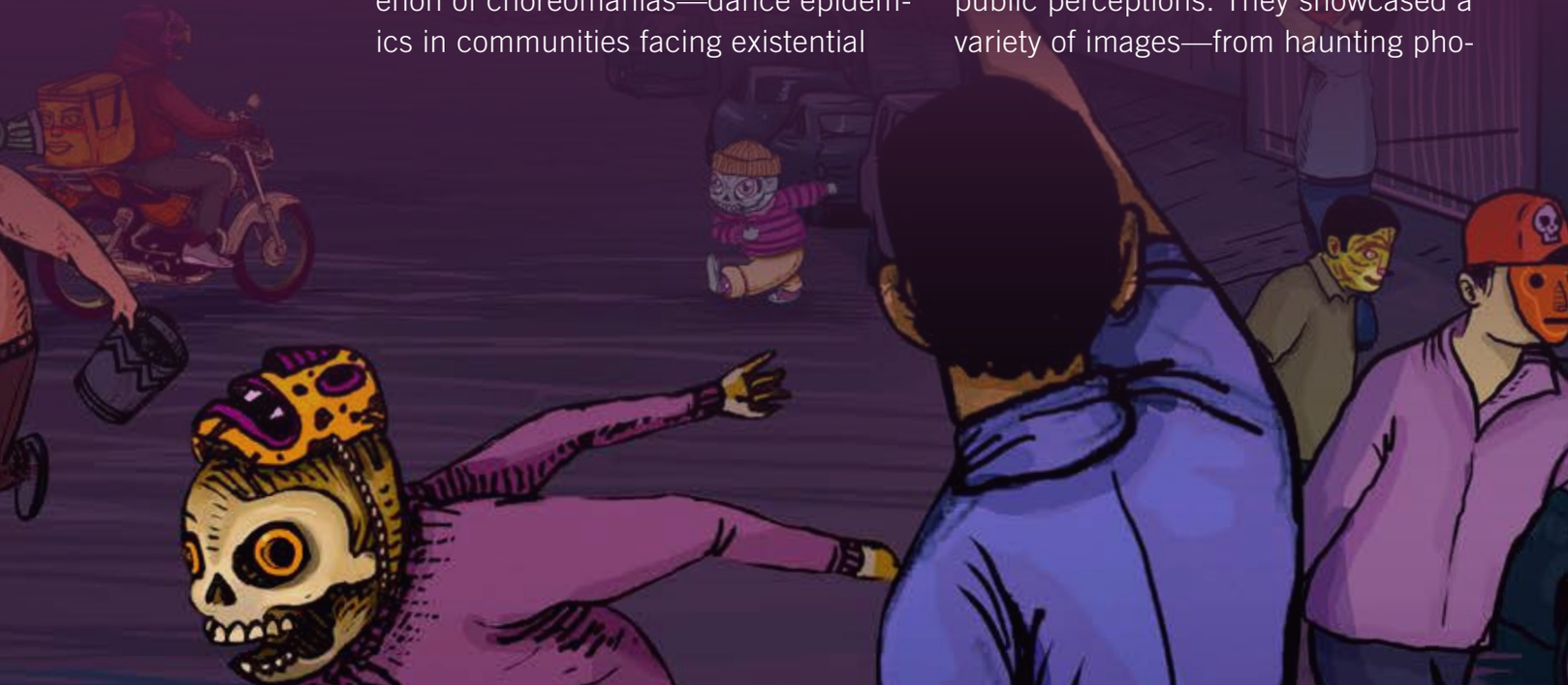


dominant in Latin America—have validated neoliberal and modern political agendas while clashing with the lived realities of inequality. These discussions underscored how such ideals, rather than alleviating systemic injustices, often reinforce them. The workshop thus became a reflective space for questioning the socio-political dynamics of the region and the historian's role in addressing them.

The day continued with the afternoon panel on "Apocalyptic Imaginaries as Historical Narratives." The first speaker, Professor Carlos Guillermo Páramo—a historian, anthropologist and Dean of the Faculty of Human Sciences at UNAL—presented "los bailes del fin del mundo: Coreomanías y el poder Waka(n) en los Andes centrales y las grandes planicies estadounidenses". His presentation explored the phenomenon of choreomanias—dance epidemics in communities facing existential threats or profound spiritual crises. Using the indigenous concept of *Pachacuti*, an Andean term signifying a world turned upside down, leading to renewal and transformation, he emphasized how dances and songs were instrumental for expressing collective fear, hope, and the desire for renewal. Prof. Páramo pointed to the idea that the apocalypse could be both an end and a beginning, in order to prompt attendees to consider how modern societies might also seek renewal in times of upheaval.

Imagery does not only chronicle crises but actively influences societal understandings of them.

The second presentation, an interdisciplinary collaboration between Professor Patricia Zalamea, an art historian and former Dean at the Universidad de Los Andes, and Dr. Martha Vives, a biologist from the same institution, was titled *Iconografías de la pandemia: Imágenes apocalípticas en la era del COVID*. They examined how visual representations during the COVID-19 pandemic shaped public perceptions. They showcased a variety of images—from haunting pho-



tographs of empty streets to memes that circulated globally. By juxtaposing haunting images of empty streets with widely shared memes, and highlighting similarities with visual documentation of earlier pandemics, they argued that imagery not only chronicles crises but actively influences societal understandings of them.

The final talk of the afternoon panel was delivered by the organizer: Prof. Paolo Vignolo. In his presentation, "El fin de la historia a través de la Conquista del mundo: Paradojas de una obsesión occidental," he argued that the Western fixation on linear progress culminating in an ultimate end, i.e. Western narratives of the apocalypse, has paradoxically fueled both colonial expansion and a perpetual sense of incompletion. He challenged the audience to consider how these narratives have marginalized other cultures' cyclical or regenerative understandings of time. He argues that the conquest of the "New World" was not only a geographical endeavor, but also an imposition of a particular historical narrative—one that envisions history as finite and terminal rather than ongoing and cyclical.

The panel concluded with a brief exchange with a Q&A session. Highlighting CAPAS's work on how apocalyptic experiences manifest across different scales, the moderator referred to the previous talks in order to exemplify the different levels of experiencing an apocalypse: personal fears as drivers of perception during a crisis such as a pandemic; the shared experiences of a community which embraces the ritual of dancing as cyclical renewal; and the colonization project as the cause of larger crises at a global scale.

As theevening approached, attendees reconvened in the Oval Hall for a special

The "Jornada Apocalíptica" offered valuable insights into the interdisciplinary approach and perspectives that UNAL's Department of History is pursuing in response to the needs of Colombia's particular history.

© Nicol Torres, Unimedios | Universidad Nacional de Colombia


© Nicol Torres, Unimedios | Universidad Nacional de Colombia

Prof. Paolo Vignolo (right), a former CAPAS fellow, organized the scientific event. The keynote speech was given by CAPAS Director Prof. Robert Folger (left), while Fellowship Manager Laura Mendoza moderated the day.

screening of the CAPAS documentary: "Imagining the End of Times: Mexican Apocalypses". The screening was introduced by Dr. Adolfo Mantilla Osornio, former CAPAS fellow and curator of the exhibition presented in the documentary. The film bridged academic discussions with artistic and cultural narratives. It showcased how the intersection of history and art deepens our understanding of apocalyptic imaginaries within the Mexican context, offering powerful insights into how cultural artifacts reflect societal anxieties about endings.

"Post-apocalyptic narratives are not merely speculative fiction, but vital frameworks through which societies process trauma and envision pathways forward."

The day's formal proceedings culminated with an evening lecture by Professor Robert Folger, titled "Post-Apocalipsis." Shifting the focus from endings to their aftermaths, Prof. Folger explored how societies reconstruct their identities and narratives after catastrophic events, and emphasized the role of storytelling in redefining communities. He posited that post-apocalyptic narratives are not merely speculative fiction, but vital frameworks through which societies process trauma and envision pathways forward. The talk reminded the audience that with every ending comes the potential for rebirth.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Prof. Vignolo, his team, the speakers, and all participants who contributed to the success of the "Jornada Apocalíptica." CAPAS' participation in these events is vital to reinforcing the transdisciplinary and international ethos central to CAPAS' research agenda. On the one hand, this collaboration provided valuable insights into the interdisciplinary approach and perspectives adopted by the History Department of the UNAL in response to the needs of the particular Colombian History. On the other hand, CAPAS' efforts to examine apocalyptic narratives in all world(s) will continue to be enriched through engagement with the valuable scholarly work from the Global South. The pragmatic, experience-based approach inherent in Latin American and Global South scholarship is indespensablefor advancing research at a meaningful level—one that aligns with CAPAS' commitment to fostering a global and inclusive understanding of the Apocalypse and Post-Apocalypse.

The opening film in this semester's Apocalyptic Cinema Series in the old stomping ground Karlstorbahnhof, who have generously hosted the CAPAS cinema series when and if the open air cinema is constricted by the weather, was the brilliant Brazilian movie Bacurau (2019). Former fellow and current research area coordinator and publications manager Bruna Della Torre gave a powerful commentary on the film's relationship with Brazilian literature, genre, the forgotten mass death's during COVID under Bolsonaro , as well as a different kind of apocalypse that attends to the problematic utopian tradition.

REFLECTIONS ON BACURAU (2019)

Bacurau, directed by Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles, emerged in 2019 as a pivotal work that brought Brazilian cinema back to global attention. The film, with its pronounced apocalyptic overtones, unfolds in the near future in a small, fictional community in Brazil's northeastern backlands called Bacurau. The title refers to the nickname of the last late-night bus in the city of Recife and to a nocturnal bird common in the Brazilian sertão, the *bacurau* (Nyctidromus albicollis), whose scientific name means "white-throated night runner." The bird was known to the Tupi people as *wakura'wa*. According to caboclo folklore, there's a tale that says the *bacurau* borrowed feathers from various birds to attend a party in the sky. However, it didn't return them the next day and was punished by Saint Peter, who, in revenge, turned it into a nocturnal bird that cries, '[tomorrow I will,' referring to the promise to return the feathers. It's a ground-dwelling bird that blends in with leaves. The title can, therefore, be read as the totem of the community living in the place of the same name: a totem that, as French anthropologist Lévi-Strauss (1963, 89) put it, isn't there because it's "good to eat," but because it's "good to think with." Perhaps, we could say it stands as an allegory of the *sertanejo* people. The film was shot in Rio Grande do Norte, in the northeast, in a community called 'Barra' (which

has 80 inhabitants), and many of the locals worked on the film. In the movie, Bacurau is portrayed as a *quilombo*, a term for hidden places in the forest or in the backlands where runaway enslaved people found refuge during slavery.

The film begins with the death of the village matriarch, Carmelita, and evolves as the residents face a series of unsettling events, including Bacurau's disappearance from maps and loss of communication with the outside world. The plot thickens when the community discovers it is being targeted by an armed group who, for initially unclear reasons, decide to hunt them as part of a game, pushing the narrative toward a bloody climax.

Bacurau is notable for its genre-blending, with the Western serving as its primary reference point, albeit critically inverted. Its primary reference is the American Western, but flipped on its head. In Bacurau, the armed cowboys or outlaws who confront the locals on horseback with revolvers and rifles switch roles. The bandits and heroes swap places, and the perspective from which the story is told makes us identify with an unexpected side. Like in Brecht's *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny,* the Western genre is reshaped to challenge the political and colonialist perspective it traditionally represents. By turning the genre upside down, Mendonça and Dornneles critically reveal the colonialist background of said genre. Bacurau also features a desert, a lawless town in the middle of nowhere, entertainment (there's a mysterious drug involved), and a threat from outside. But the ending isn't the same as Brecht's. As in the Western genre, the landscape is central. The film takes place in the *sertão*, which takes many forms, marked by water scarcity and the poverty that comes with it. Though extremely arid, it is one of the most fertile (apocalyptic) landscapes in Brazilian literature, as a region that has no defined borders. Nobody can draw the borders of Sertão on a map.

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© Bacurau, Victor Jucá

#PUBLIC APOCALYPSE

FRAGMENTS FOR FUTURE INTELLIGENCES

GOLDEN RECORD STUDIOS AS AN EPILOGUE OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

From October 12th to 14th, CAPAS participated in the performances of the artistic project GOLDEN RECORD STUDIOS by matthaei&konsorten at the Nationaltheater Mannheim. The origins of this project go back to 1977, when NASA launched its "Golden Records" aboard the Voyager probes to preserve a snapshot of life on Earth for 500 million years. Curated by a small team, this "world self-portrait" featured retro-style photographs, classical music, and nature sounds, offering potential alien listeners a peculiar impression of humanity. The travelling GOLDEN RECORD STUDIOS invites people around the world to rethink this message by asking: What should a new world portrait include, who should decide, and how do we want future intelligences to remember us?

Together with CAPAS Fellows Bruna Della Torre, Eduardo Altheman C. Santos, CAPAS Director Robert Folger, and team members Michael Dunn and Melanie Le Touze, the audience explored which scientific and apocalyptic insights might be remembered in the future. The project raises epistemic questions, examining what we know, how we know it, and who determines this knowledge. CAPAS also had the opportunity to interview Lukas Matthaei from matthaei&konsorten to learn more about the artistic vision behind this endeavor.

The GOLDEN RECORD STUDIOS project engages with themes like memory, the future, and perhaps even survival. What inspired you to create this project?

Lukas Matthaei: The GOLDEN RECORD STUDIOS began for me personally a few years ago, when I started to look deeper into NASA's Voyager project

from the late 1970s. I was teaching at the University of Arizona in Tucson at that time, near the border with Mexico. There, under an astonishingly vast sky, you encounter a mix of cultures: remnants of societies that flourished for millenia before being fought by European colonialists; industries focused on space tourism; and private militias hunting illegalized migrants. All of this likely shaped my perspective.

Looking at the contents of the "Golden Records" NASA sent into space, I was captivated by blend of scientific rigor, cutting-edge engineering, and the overtly political or ideological undertones woven into it. Then there's the slightly goofy notion of communicating with aliens—using Bach, Gamelan music, the voice of former SA member Kurt Waldheim, whale songs, and images ranging from an embryo in the second of being born to diagrams of our place in the universe, so alien recipients might locate us.

This mind-boggling collage takes you into so many avenues for thought: You can see its Cold War ideologies, particularly in the "global north"; how our longing for "aliens" out there speaks to our fear of truly being alone in a vast, indifferent universe; or the chutzpah these seven US-Americans had back then: taking it upon themselves to decide how to represent "life on earth" for the next 500 million years on behalf of humanity.

What questions or issues are you exploring artistically through this project?

As an artist working in research-based projects that often involve diverse participants and communities, I started thinking: What if we produced new Golden Records, but this time based upon input from as many people as possible? What if we directed the message to aliens back at ourselves?

Taking NASA's metaphorical message—a stroke of marketing genius—into our own hands, we can democratize the decisions of what to include, giving representation to many communities and stakeholders. In short: Creating an image of life on earth in an ever-evolving endeavor, which is potentially endless. To be honest, I have a strong affiliation with "Projektemacherei" from baroque times—with their impossible projects, diligent hard work going into it, sometimes producing practical outcomes, while searching for means to turn sand into gold.

Instead of producing yet another fixed "selfie" of humanity that may soon feel outdated, we invite audiences into artistic spaces, dynamic and evolving RECORDING STUDIOS. Which are less about creating a fixed product, instead hosting live assemblies that foster discourse around questions like "How do we want to be remembered?" and "Who gets to decide?"

Lukas Matthaei has realized over 50 performative projects with collaborators & actors in Europe, Middle East, North Africa, India, USA since 2000. He works in diverse formats, based on longer research phases in specific communities & diverse realities. The focus is on participatory productions for urban landscapes, alongside works for the stage, installations & radio.
www.matthaei-und-konsorten.de

●●● read more online
capas.uni-heidelberg.de

#PUBLIC APOCALYPSE

THE TERMINATOR

A GENDER STUDIES INTRODUCTION

by CAPAS fellow Verita Sriratana

The start of a new semester at CAPAS means, as always, a new series of films in our Apocalyptic Cinema Series. As a special collaboration as part of the International Film Festival between various cinemas in Mannheim and Heidelberg, CAPAS screened the second installation of James Cameron's six film installment Terminator franchise: *Judgement Day* (1991). Although a series of significant longevity (Arnold Schwarzenegger certainly was back quite a few times wasn't he), CAPAS fellow Verita Sriratana talks us through the often misread implications that a multitude of masculinties has on the constructedness of gender (and cyborgs).

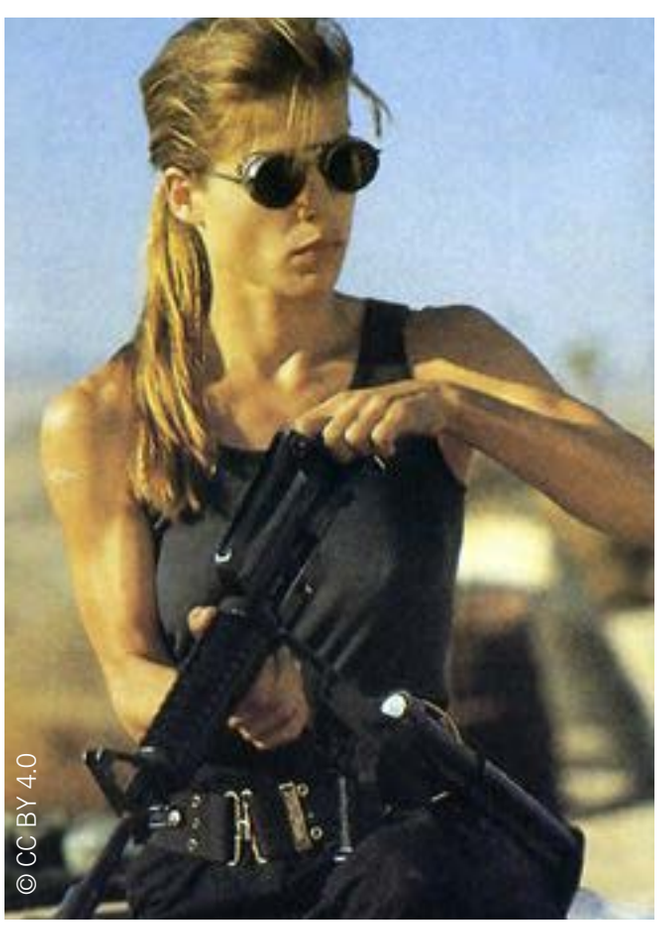
THE CONSTRUCTEDNESS OF CYBORGS AS AN ANALOGY OF THE CONSTRUCTEDNESS OF GENDER

Today's film in question was screened as part of the Apocalyptic Cinema and *film retrospective series* by the CAPAS, in collaboration with the 73rd International Film Festival Mannheim Heidelberg (IFFMH). My name is Verita. I am a research fellow at CAPAS, where I am currently working on a book, one chapter of which analyses the notion of 'the end of the world' from the perspectives of feminist and queer theories (here, whenever we talk about 'the end of the world,' my question is 'whose world exactly?' as, for some racial and gender groups, their worlds–within our world of inequality and injustices–ended long ago). My research is based on close-reading and critical analysis of selected Thai, Philippine, and South Korean apocalyptic films, literature, laws, and socio-political realities. It was my utmost pleasure, as a child of the 90s, to give the audience a brief introduction to the 1991 blockbuster *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* through the theoretical lens of gender studies.

The series of questions we may ask upon seeing the pumped-up, hypermasculine body of the cybernetic organism (cyborg) known as the Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger) at the beginning of the film are as follows: Do cyborgs need

gender? Do machines and artificial intelligence (AI) have specific gender? Why is gender allocated to technology? Why is the default voice of virtual assistant software such as Amazon's Alexa, Microsoft's Cortana, and Apple's Siri compliantly and soothingly *feminine*, for instance? Does this mean that we tend to associate services and subservience with the feminine as we tend to associate robots and powerful machines with the masculine? And, if so, why?

The Cyberdyne Systems Model 101 Series 800 Version 2.4 Terminator, a reprogrammed doppelgänger from *Terminator 1* (1984) comically and affectionately referred to in *Terminator 2* as "Uncle Bob;" which is sent from the future to protect young John Connor, is essentially a metal endoskeleton (mechanical inner structure) covered with living tissue. The Terminator's mechanical strength does not depend upon muscles or other physical features. It might even be easier and more subtle for the Terminator to infiltrate the world of the humans by walking among us as an ordinary, inconspicuous individual who may choose to go to the gym from time to time, like many of us.



How the cyborg in question, represented as male in physique and appearance, overrepresents his strength and virility is part of an attempt to 'perform gender.' Here, I refer to philosopher Judith Butler's theory of *gender performativity*, which posits that gender, far from being fixed and rigid, is continuously created and repeatedly propagated. Why does a sexless, genderless cyborg need to 'perform hypermasculinity'? The answer lies in how we humans cannot escape the heteronormative gender binary, even when we try to envision technology at 'the end of the world' or the world after the nuclear apocalypse in the *Terminator* franchise. Contrary to the prominent scholar Donna Haraway's conceptualisation of the cyborg, where she views and thinks through the cyborg as a liberating metaphor for gender obsolescence and for overcoming conflicting essentialism even within the feminist movement of her time, the *Terminator* is the kind of cyborg that, ironically, reinforces rigid gender roles and stereotypes.

Apart from the cyborg, *Terminator 2* gives us one of the most iconic female sci-fi action heroes since Ellen Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) in the 1979 film Alien: Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton). Sarah evolves from a timid and frightened young waitress in *Terminator 1*, who is hunted by a deadly Terminator from the year 2029 (only 5 years from now!), to a tough warrior ready and willing to engage in violent terrorist acts to protect her son, the future leader of the resistance. The series of questions we may ask upon seeing Sarah Connor's Terminator-like pumped up body and performance of hypermasculinity–especially in the scene where we see her as a tough and defiant psychiatric inmate who uses her bed to work out–are as follows: Why is Sarah highly masculinised (and, at the same time, sexualised)? What are the implications of such visual presentation of her female body?

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#SCIENCE APOCALYPSE

THE WORLD'S FIRST EVER ACADEMIC WARHAMMER CONFERENCE A RETROSPECTIVE

Warhammer, a tabletop miniature game born back in 1983, has reached a new level of popularity. Not only has the game, and the franchise built around it, seen interest from the likes of actor and Hollywood's number one nerd Henry Cavill who is set to guide the franchise into its first outing in to film, but it has become a backbone of the British economy (especially amongst the backdrop of a post-COVID and post-Brexit landscape). Games Workshop, the British manufacturer of Warhammer, is set to be promoted to the FTSE 100 (the UKs best known stock market). Now the game has also caught the attention of academics on a larger scale. At the end of September, the first Warhammer Conference was held in Heidelberg with the participation of CAPAS.

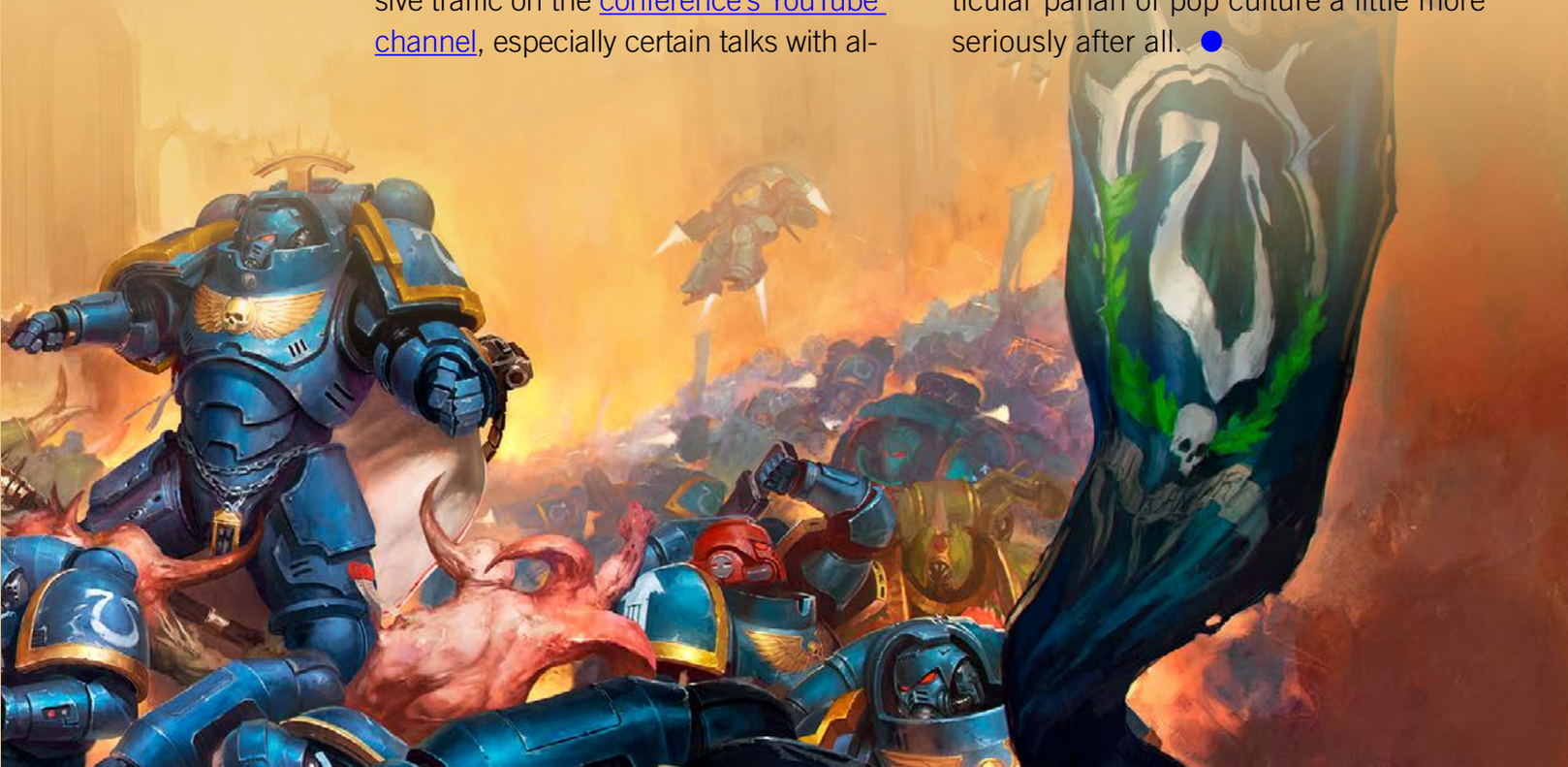
It's safe to say that no longer are Warhammer Age of Sigmar and its sci-fi equivalent Warhammer 40,000 underground hobbies for fanboys who enjoy the aspects that made the game so popular: crafting, hobbying, painting, building, strategizing, and, most importantly perhaps, playing beyond the confines of childhood. Now, on the other hand, the hobby enjoys multiple modalities and formats such as videos and short films, games, anime, comics, and books that truly make it the pop culture relic and wide-reaching franchise it has become, not to mention its darkly dystopian themes of techno theocracy and necropolitics—a term introduced by the South African historian and political scientist Joseph-Achille Mbembe—speaking to the apocalyptic tone of the time. Despite said popularity, economic impact, and thematic relevance, Warhammer has more often than not fallen prey to a kind of academic classism that

decides what and what is not to be studied on a “serious” level.

Warhammer Conference, organized by Mike Ryder (Lancaster University), Thomas Arnold (Heidelberg University), Michael Dunn (CAPAS, Heidelberg University), and Philipp Schrögel (CAPAS, Heidelberg University), aimed to contend with said classism and hoped to change it too. On Friday 27th and Saturday 28th September 2024 Warhammer Conference took place at Heidelberg University, and the reception went beyond what any of the organizing committee could imagine. Academic conferences aren’t always very well attended, especially in the humanities, but the large number of talks (upwards of sixty talks over two days) as well as attendees—and additionally submissions which were upwards of eighty—was staggering. Reappraisals of the reception around a multitude of what were once considered fringe formats such as comics, graphic novels, and gaming have led the way for tabletop, RPGs, and board gaming—as well as the imaginary universes upon which they are based—to begin a similar sojourn into critical acclaim.

The presentations were particularly varied, all of which have received equally impressive traffic on the conference’s YouTube channel, especially certain talks with almost 3,000 views and the Keynotes with John Blanche, one of the original concept artists behind the now nearly household subgenre of Grimdark, and Games Workshop Black Library author Victoria Hayward. Approaching the subject with a transdisciplinary lens made sure that although the overarching theme of the conference was focused around a single franchise, the individual topics were deeply diverse. From the obsession with fascistic tropes and so-called “bolter porn,” the classic Tarantino argument of the necessity of violence or the fetishism of gratuitous violence, to the impact of medievalism, and gaming as a safe space for the queer and LGBTQIA+ community (albeit one that is ultimately also riddles with problematic gatekeeping), Warhammer Conference attempted to contend with this tension and cover gargantuan ground.

Appearing in news outlets both in and beyond the hobby space such as Polygon, PC Gamer, The Conversation, Goonhammer, and even German national radio and various podcasts alike, it’s a suggestion that the conference also garnered significant attention outside the immediate realm of academia as well. Maybe it’s time to start taking this particular pariah of pop culture a little more seriously after all. ●



#ART APOCALYPSE

TOXIC BEAUTIES

Earth observation offer us an extraordinary view of our planet. They capture the slow transformation of geological structures, dynamic ocean processes, and the rapid changes of the Anthropocene. German artist Udo Vieth draws inspiration from digital satellite data, using algorithms to develop new, evocative images. His works depict butterflies—a symbol of both vulnerability and threat, and a mythological representation of metamorphosis in many cultures. The result is a series of images that display an absurd, destructive beauty, some carrying a subversive message: true *Toxic Beauties*.

Mare Plastico
Southern Spain
"Sea of plastic" is the term for the world's largest vegetable cultivation area, blanketed by plastic sheeting in the coastal plain near El Ejido in Almeria.

Wheat-Belt-Psychodelics I Australia
A 150,000 km² region transformed into agricultural land, under severe threat from large-scale deforestation and gradual environmental changes. (Composite of three photos from 2019, reflecting plant growth stages.)

A COMMENTARY BY THE ARTIST

The apocalypse is an old acquaintance of humanity. However, the climate catastrophe we are experiencing today presents a unique form of existential threat. Our technological hubris has led us to the brink—and we are watching it unfold live. Sigmund Freud once referred to humanity as a "prosthetic god"—a being who, through technological extensions, strives to dominate nature. A century later, we now understand that at best, we are demigods, doubtful and completely overwhelmed by our responsibility, poised to destroy our own playground, also known as planet Earth.

Observing from a distance allows us to grasp the full scope of this drama. Earth observation satellites offer a powerful vantage point, providing an unprecedented perspective on the rapid, radical changes occurring on our planet. These technological "eyes" reveal the extent to which human activity has reshaped the natural world into utilitarian spaces, driven by profit and excess.

DRAMA IN FULL HD

CORDILLERA “BLANCA” | Peru
Glaciers in the Andes are melting, and the once-white Cordillera Blanca is turning brown.

The data from these satellites forms the basis of the project Toxic Beauties—Satellite Data Meets Art. Paradoxically, humanity’s reshaping of Earth also creates images of absurd and unsettling beauty. Parts of nature give the impression of a dystopian art installation. Hence, the destruction of our environment also has an aesthetic side. After all, what would a modern apocalypse be without the appropriate images? ●

Death-lines Caspian sea
The seabed is scarred by bottom trawling, leaving marks of destruction.

NEXT DISPLAYS

13.02.–15.06.2025
Potsdam, Biosphäre Germany

9.05.–30.05.2025
Asheville (exact location tba, National Climatic Data Center, North Carolina, USA)

Waterlines | Floods and Wetlands in Queensland, Australia
Drought and flooding cycles are now the “new “normal” in western Queensland.

#FELLOW APOCALYPSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
ALYS MOODY

Alys Moody is Associate Professor of Literature at Bard College, where she teaches modernism, world literature, the literature and theory of decolonization, and feminist theory.

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

Alys Moody: As a literary studies scholar, I think about the apocalypse as both a way of thinking about or orienting oneself to future and present worlds, but also as a literary genre with a specific history. I'm interested in the etymology of the term "apocalypse" as "revelation," as well as its association with the "end of the world," but I'm also interested in the ways that contemporary apocalyptic thought continues to bear the traces of the (pretty wild) early Jewish and Christian writings that gave us this term.

What is your fellowship trying to achieve?

My work at CAPAS is nestled within a larger project about the development of the ideas of world hunger and world literature in the period of historical decolonization, from roughly 1945 to 1990. The project as a whole is interested in how this period changed how we thought about what "the world" was, and what kind of shared political space that opens up. So at CAPAS, I'm exploring where and when the apocalypse features within that. When and why do people start thinking of world hunger as a harbinger of apocalypse, and what does that do to the political ideas of the world that these theories of world hunger entail?

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

My first book was also about hunger, but of a much more individual, isolated kind: the way a certain kind of artist, writing in the aftermath of modernism and in contexts of great political tumult, used hunger to talk about the impossibility of aesthetic autonomy—that is, the idea art and literature should be free from political or market considerations. My current work carries forward my interest in hunger as a theme, of course, but also my broader interest in what literature's social role is in the aftermath of modernism, and how politics and aesthetics do and don't articulate with each other.

What are the aspects you are looking forward to with respect to input from other disciplines, other perspectives, and the exchange with the fellows and people at CAPAS?

The group of people at CAPAS—fellows and more permanent center staff and faculty—is really impressive, and having the opportunity to think with them is such a privilege. I love that it's such an international group of people, in terms of both where they're coming from and what they're working on, and the breadth of disciplinary backgrounds is likewise amazing. I'm learning so much about how and where the apocalypse appears as a figure of thought, and the conversations we are having are helping me to think more carefully and deeply about our contemporary historical conjuncture.

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