CAPAS
KÄTE HAMBURGER CENTRE
FOR APOCALYPTIC AND
POST-APOCALYPTIC STUDIES

UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
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APOCALYPSE
QUARTERLY
1/23

WE SURVIVED THE NIGHT

DEAR READERS,

In large parts, academia is shaped by the Western male worldview. This also applies to research on the ends of the world. Here at CAPAS, we're seeking to bring other perspectives into focus. In this issue's lead article, Julian Brave NoiseCat, a journalist and advocate for Native peoples, provides valuable insights into the Indigenous experience of (post-)apocalypses. We introduce Iranian archaeologist Maryam Dezhamkhooy, who researches waste and garbage communities as well as women's resistance to imported consumer goods in Iran (pp. 9-11). And in *Kings of Dreams*, we talk about the film REY – an indictment of the horrific genocide committed by Spanish colonialists against the indigenous peoples of South America (pp. 30-31).

Furthermore, we introduce five of our CAPAS fellows and their perspectives on possible world endings. We'd also like to share some of the many activities at CAPAS: On pages 15-16 you can read an interview with the organizers of a recent workshop on *Navigating Interdisciplinarity*; An article on the famous *Bamberg Apokalypse* manuscript asks: "what relevance do medieval ideas of the end of the world have for us today?" (pp. 22-23); and in *Death and Apocalypse in the Digital Megamachine* CAPAS members explore the historical and contemporary relevance of ideas about death and technology (p. 28).

The CAPAS team wishes you an interesting and inspiring read!

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

"WE SURVIVED THE NIGHT"

INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES ON APOCALYPSES

The world has ended several times already in several ways – just not for everyone equally. Indigenous peoples around the globe have been no strangers to apocalypses throughout history. From colonization and genocide to the effects of current threats like the climate crisis or the Covid-19 pandemic, such apocalyptic events are often exacerbated towards Indigenous peoples through persisting inequalities and discrimination. Yet, they have lived through these experiences and can offer valuable perspectives on global challenges. We spoke with Julian Brave NoiseCat, a journalist, an advocate for Indigenous peoples, and a writer.

In your role as a writer, you are currently working on your first book, "We Survived the Night", which is a reference to a saying in your language, Secwepemcstin. What does it mean?

Julian Brave NoiseCat: The title of my book is derived from the traditional way to give the morning greeting in Secwepemcstin, that's the Secwepemc language. It's the language of my grandmother, a language that I've had the privilege to learn to speak from her, although there are only less than 200 remaining fluent speakers of Secwepemcstin. The way that you say good morning, or actually "you survived the night" is tsecwínucw-k.

That's the way you would have traditionally greeted other Secwepemc people and the day, by acknowledging that we survived the night. What really drew me to that was thinking through the experiences that my people have had and continue to have with colonization, and what it would have meant (or still means) to say "you survived the night" after, for example, evenings where our people died in mass from smallpox, or the day after children were taken away to residential schools, or even today, when so many young people are dying far before their time.

You mentioned smallpox. At CAPAS we often had discussions about whether the current Covid-19 pandemic was (or is) an apocalypse – a question that is likely answered very differently for different groups. As a reporter who wrote about the pandemic in Indigenous communities, how would you answer this question?

Covid-19 disproportionately impacted communities that were already struggling with the impacts of other things disproportionately, and that is certainly true of Native people. Living in Washington state, I've seen how a number of the tribes here set up their own Covid-19 response public health measures. They were very quick in getting a large percentage of people vaccinated on their reservations – often a larger percentage than the broader public. That obviously comes from a very deep and painful history of epidemics that in some instances destroyed entire nations and communities. For example, the Secwepemc Nation, my nation, used to have an entire division that lived on the Chilcotin River before the smallpox epidemics of 1862 and 1863. The few survivors from those communities moved into neighbouring communities, and now there are no Secwepemc people and no Secwepemc villages on the Chilcotin River. There was a literal elimination of an entire division of our nation through epidemics. That sort of history and worse exists in first peoples' histories across North America and around the world. We have no choice but to take this pandemic very seriously. This cuts against the very rudimentary notion that Indigenous peoples are "primitive" or "backwards". When it came to how we responded to this pandemic, we were ahead of the societal curve. That's just an objective fact.

David Stanley from Nanaimo, Canada, Chilcotin River (51517781350), CC BY 2.0

The Chilcotin River winds through Farwell Canyon in the Cariboo Chilcotin region of British Columbia, Canada. Here, the Secwepemc Nation used to have an entire division before the smallpox epidemics of 1862 and 1863.

In the article you wrote about that, you recalled that: "In the first weeks of the pandemic, I noticed Native people posting videos of themselves dancing and praying for a sick world. The last time Native life seemed on the brink of apocalypse, at the end of the 19th century, the Indians were also dancing. They called it the Ghost Dance." What were you referring to, and what does this mean for the current world?

The Ghost Dance stands as an example of a prophetic movement which expressed an enduring desire among many Indigenous peoples to see the ways, the land, and sometimes the literal lives of our ancestors, returned to this world. The Ghost Dance is just one example of religious, political and social movements that were common throughout Indigenous communities in the 18th,19th, and 20th centuries. What I find very compelling about the ideas behind the Ghost Dance is that, even in our darkest moments, the Ghost Dance arose in an apocalyptic era for Native populations across North America. It arose in a moment where the Native population of the continent was at its lowest point. Where the "frontier" was supposed to have closed. The end of the Ghost Dance story is often said to have happened at Wounded Knee in South Dakota where there was a massacre of over 150 followers of the Ghost Dance religion. To me, one of the remarkable things about the Ghost Dance is that desire to return to and hold on to what we know and felt was a good life in a moment of apocalypse. A moment where our world was being destroyed and very nearly collapsing around us. Our lands were being taken. Our culture was being put through a meat grinder of schools, assimilationist policies, and churches. Our languages were being quite literally taken from our Children's mouths. Amidst all of that, this desire to return to the old and good way of life emerges. That's a very powerful thing for us to study in the world of humanities, what motivates and drives people.

Another contemporary apocalyptic dimension can surely be seen also in the threat of global climate change, which drastically affects Indigenous communities worldwide, including North America. What is your observation on this?

Firstly we have to expand the crisis that we're talking about. It's not just a crisis of the climate, but it's also a crisis of biodiversity, and it's multiple ecological crises. The climate crisis is obviously a very chief concern, but we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that we are losing a very significant portion of the world's biodiversity. We're also approaching other types of ecological limits that are not just tied to the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, although those

The Ghost Dance of 1889–1891 by the Oglala Lakota at Pine Ridge. Illustration by western artist Frederic Remington, 1890.

One of the many apocalyptic events suffered by indigenous peoples: Big Foot's camp three weeks after Wounded Knee Massacre; with bodies of four Lakota Sioux wrapped in blankets in the foreground; U.S. soldiers amid scattered debris of camp.

things are obviously connected. Indigenous peoples represent less than 5% of the world's population, yet our homelands contain about 80% of the world's biodiversity. In much of the world, Indigenous peoples are living on lands that play a very important natural role in the climate system as carbon sinks. I've had the opportunity to travel to the Great Bear Rainforest on the west coast of Canada, a natural landscape that sequesters billions of tons of carbon dioxide through the massive rainforest that exists there on that coast. There has been a conscious political and policy effort by First Nations to protect that land and to turn it into a system of carbon credits to support themselves, and to help them reclaim stewardship and ultimately sovereignty over those lands. Indigenous peoples, though we are a minority of the world's population, are already playing a disproportionate role in the fight against climate change and other ecological crises. This often goes unrecognized, but the more we recognize it, the more we can continue to affirm the very essential role that Indigenous peoples play in the shared human fight to make sure that our children and children's children have a liveable future.

How do you think this contribution to actually addressing these challenges through Indigenous communities can be expanded?

One of the things that I've had the opportunity to contribute to that I'm most proud of in my career as a writer and as someone who has been politically active, especially in the United States, was the appointment of Madam Secretary Deb Haaland as Interior Secretary of the United States. The Interior Secretary plays a very important role in the management of vast lands. About 1/5 of the United States land mass is managed by the Interior Department, as well as massive stores of natural resources, and the nation-to-nation relationship with more than 570 federally recognized tribal communities across the United States. We have never before had an Indigenous Interior Secretary. We've never even actually had a Native Cabinet Secretary despite the significance of the Interior Secretary's role to Native communities. I actually have the distinction of having originated the idea that Deb Haaland would be an incredible Interior Secretary. In my role as an advocate and a writer, I was able to help build the case for her to get that job in the Interior Department. She's already done many things to help support the leadership of Indigenous communities on environmental challenges and issues. That is definitely one way that political representation of Indigenous peoples is already helping address environmental challenges and concerns.

You cited Blackfoot filmmaker Cowboy Smith X saying that "us Natives are a post-apocalyptic people". Considering the variety of heterogeneous communities, does this perspective sometimes come up in debates?

Photo: Julian Brave Noisecat

Julian Brave NoiseCat is a writer, filmmaker and aspiring oral historian. A fellow of the Center for Racial Justice at the University of Michigan's Ford School of Public Policy as well as the Type Media Center, he is currently writing his first book, We Survived the Night. Alongside Emily Kassie, he is concurrently co-directing his first documentary, SUGARCANE. He has been recognized with many awards including the 2022 American Mosaic Journalism Prize and was named to the TIME100 Next list of emerging leaders in 2021. Raised in a single-mother household in Oakland, California, Julian is a proud member of the Canim Lake Band Tsq'escen and a descendant of the Lil'Wat Nation of Mount Currie.

Just as Indigenous peoples have various cultural traditions and obviously speak different languages and come from different environments etc., one of the observations that I've had from traveling to many different Native communities across the United States, Canada, and beyond is that there are also distinct political traditions. These traditions include how societies were organized through political institutions, and how various peoples have and continue to respond to colonialism. For example, my people, the Secwepemc people, live on the east side of the Fraser River, and our traditional enemies, the Tŝilhqot'in, live on the west side of the Fraser River. Our two peoples have had, over the last 200 years, quite different responses to colonization. The Secwepemc, generally speaking, are known for having accepted Catholicism a little bit more. We didn't have any armed resistance. Rather than fighting the colonists, we tried to find allies among them to advance our cause through some of the political institutions of colonialism, including the church. This is quite distinct from the response that our ancestral enemies, the Tŝilhqot'in, had across the Fraser River. In 1864, just after that smallpox epidemic I mentioned, the Tŝilhqot'in actually had an armed resistance against colonial incursions—particularly a road that was going to be built through their territory. They have maintained a much more militant posture towards colonization throughout their history. This led to a great deal more discrimination, but has also proven in the long run to be a very effective strategy. In 2014, the Tŝilhqot'in won one of the most significant, if not the most significant land rights case in the history of the Canadian Supreme Court. The case affirmed that they still hold what's called aboriginal rights and title to over 80 percent of their traditional territory on the Chilcotin plateau, to the west of the Fraser River. In addition to that, they remain by far the majority population in their ancestral homelands. My people have had a very different response to colonization than our ancestral enemies,

Photo: Julian Brave Noisecat

Students at the St. Joseph's Mission Indian Residential School, a part of the Canadian Indian residential school system at the late 19th century or early 20th century. The photo is part of the report *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation* by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

who handled colonization very effectively. I have to give them praise for that. There are other examples of those disparate political traditions, some of which are still very much alive and effective. One last little anecdote that I would add here is that Deb Haaland, en route to becoming the Secretary of Interior, needed the vote of Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski, who in turn needed the votes of Alaska Natives who comprise about 20% of the electorate in Alaska. If you trace the history back, the roots of Alaska Native political power lie in organizations like the Alaska Native Brotherhood and the Alaska Native Sisterhood, which in turn were built on their clan system and their potlatch protocols in Southeast Alaska—particularly among the Tlingit and Haida people as well as the Tsimshian. If you are aware of these political traditions, you can see that some of them still to this day have influence on American political institutions, although very few political scientists would see and tell the story that way.

What important things should policy-makers and people around the world consider in order to embrace Indigenous perspectives, especially on global challenges?

Broadly speaking there are two conceptual frameworks. Something I've alluded to in the prior response is simply having Indigenous representation. Getting the first Native American Cabinet Secretary in United States history appointed is a significant achievement that is already having an impact on policy making. The other is institutional transformation. One of the ways that Indigenous peoples challenge the model of the nation state is by saying that the state contains not one single nation or nationality, but many and multiple and plural nationalities and even sovereignties. There are prior governing entities with claims to territory and claims to governance over people that need to be recognized and respected through the institutions and organs of the state. Sometimes that means that the institutions and organs of the state need to cede ground to Indigenous polities. We've seen this happen already in places like Canada, places like Aotearoa (New Zealand), and to a lesser extent in the United States. There are some places that are ahead of the curve like Bolivia, which has a plurinational constitution.

Switching from a wider political perspective to a personal one: You are also working on a film project at the moment, what is it about? Could this be seen as a post-apocalyptic perspective?

I'm co-directing a documentary called SUGARCANE with my good friend and

colleague Emily Kassie. SUGARCANE follows the search and excavation of unmarked graves at St. Joseph's Mission in Williams Lake, British Columbia, which is also the residential school that my family was sent to in Canada. It's a very personal story about both the literal excavation and investigation of the truth in the ground, as well as the truth in our lives and families in a way that still haunts us in the present.

For those not familiar with the issue, could you briefly describe the situation of Indigenous children at these schools?

For those who are not aware, there was a system of 139 church-run government funded schools that were purpose-built to assimilate Native children by taking them away from their families. The idea was that Native children would be integrated into broader white Canadian society. Throughout the history of the residential schools, there were, I believe over 150,000 Children who were taken away from their families. Over the last few years, many unmarked graves have been identified at former residential schools across Canada, including over 200 at the site of the Kamloops residential school, and about 150 at the St. Joseph's Mission in Williams Lake.

One last personal question, if I may: Looking to the future, do you have positive hopes, or a bleak outlook?

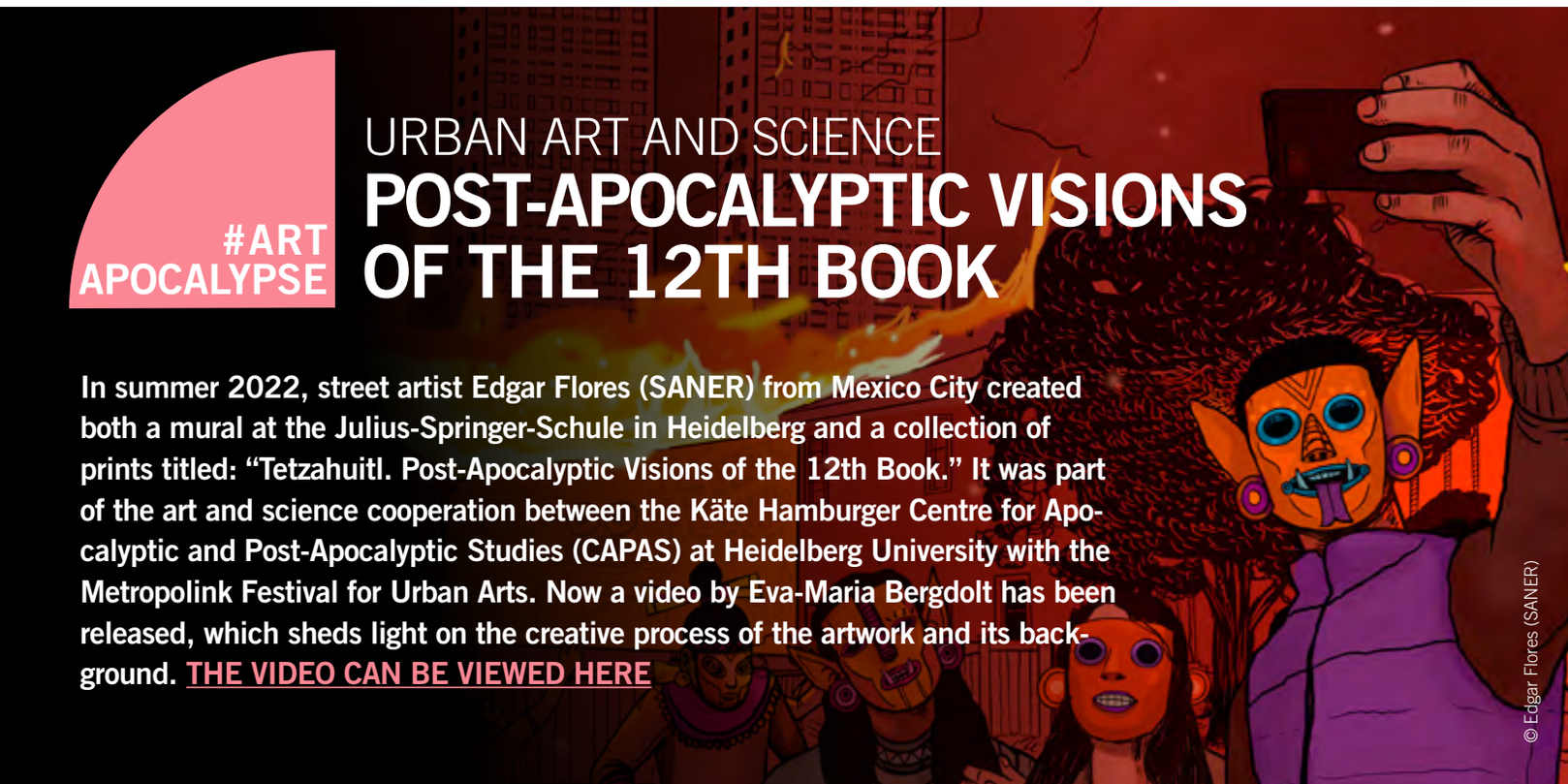
Indigenous peoples have survived apocalypses before. Our experience shows that there can be beauty and community and love in the wake of incredible devastation. It's a real testament to the power and resilience of the human spirit. I see very troubling times ahead with the climate crisis, the pandemic, the seeming return of great power conflict in the world, the rise of authoritarianism, and increasingly intense cultural conflicts. I think that we are in for a rough ride in the 21st century, and moving forward. Yet I also know that people can live through far worse and come out the other side, and still have a good way of life. That's what I see in Indigenous communities all across north America and beyond, and that gives me hope. ●

#ART APOCALYPSE

URBAN ART AND SCIENCE

POST-APOCALYPTIC VISIONS OF THE 12TH BOOK

In summer 2022, street artist Edgar Flores (SANER) from Mexico City created both a mural at the Julius-Springer-Schule in Heidelberg and a collection of prints titled: "Tetzahuitl. Post-Apocalyptic Visions of the 12th Book." It was part of the art and science cooperation between the Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies (CAPAS) at Heidelberg University with the Metropolink Festival for Urban Arts. Now a video by Eva-Maria Bergdolt has been released, which sheds light on the creative process of the artwork and its background. THE VIDEO CAN BE VIEWED HERE



#PEOPLE APOCALYPSE

MARYAM DEZHAMKHOOY

MODERNIST ARCHAEOLOGIST

by Mirjam Mohr

The Nebra sky disk, Egyptian pharaonic tombs, or the ruins of Pompeii – many people think of such millennia-old finds when they hear the term "archaeology". Though literally translated as the "study of ancient things," this science deals with material legacies of cultural-historical development both distant and contemporary. Iranian archaeologist Dr. Maryam Dezhamkhooy devotes her research to the archaeology of the contemporary past and modern material culture. She is particularly interested in two still rather unknown fields of research whose origins date back to the 1970s: Gender archaeology and so-called garbology – the archaeology of garbage.

"Archaeologists interested in the present are often interested in the dark side of modernity, such as conflict, climate change, waste, or political tensions," explains Maryam Dezhamkhooy. This forms the common theme of the two research projects that the 40-year-old is currently pursuing as an affiliated researcher at the Käte Hamburger Center for Apocalyptic and Postapocalyptic Studies (CAPAS) at Heidelberg University: She is researching waste and garbage communities as well as women's resistance to imported consumer goods in early 20th century Iran.

"In my research on garbage, I want to analyze how the politics of consumption and waste change the economy, create poverty, and increase inequality in the world," she explains. In the 1970s, U.S. archaeologist

Maryam Dezhamkhooy devotes her research to the archaeology of the contemporary past and modern material culture. She is particularly interested in two still rather unknown fields of research: Gender archaeology and so-called garbology – the archaeology of garbage.


Photo: Maryam Dezhamkhooy

and founder of garbology, William Rathje, compared waste with census data and concluded that techniques from classical archaeology could be used to draw insightful social conclusions when examining contemporary trash. “Garbage is currently a big problem, not only of poor countries, as many in Europe think, but worldwide,” Maryam Dezhamkhooy points out. She says there are ever-larger piles of trash and growing garbage in the sea, as well as more and more people settling in landfills - she now wants to look at these communities from an archaeological perspective and examine, for example, how climate change affects them or what forms of marginalization they experience. She sees garbology as one of the emerging interdisciplinary fields that can play a leading role in research for sustainability, and can make archaeology “more practical and useful.”

She also sees much potential in gender archaeology, which is rooted in the social developments of the 1970s and is more established in Scandinavia and the USA than in Germany. This archaeological research direction deals with the distribution of roles between the sexes in a given society, starting from the basic assumption that such roles are not biological, but socially determined and learned. “The topic is of particular interest to women, but if we want to change society, we all have to deal with it,” the scientist emphasizes. In order to make gender archaeology known in her home country, she has already written her doctoral thesis on men in the Sassanid Empire of Persian antiquity.

“In my research on garbage, I want to analyze how the politics of consumption and waste change the economy, create poverty, and increase inequality in the world.”

In her current gender archaeological research, Maryam Dezhamkhooy is interes-

Maryam Dezhamkhooy is former assistant professor for archaeology and Alexander von Humboldt fellow. She is specialist in the archaeology of contemporary past. Gender, conflict, colonialism, nationalism, and environmental issues are her main research interests.

ted in the women's movement in Iran at the beginning of the 20th century, especially its economic significance. After the national revolution, in which women also participated, the Pahlavi regime became Persia's first modern government. At the time, however, it favored state women's organizations and suppressed independent women's movements. From an economic perspective, these women organized against the importation of European products, which nearly destroyed traditional Persian industry at the time. Maryam Dezhamkhooy also considers this research important because the Western world has a false image of women in Islamic countries: they are usually perceived only as oppressed beings. "Women in Iran play not just a leading role in the current protests, they were also very socially active at the beginning of the 20th century and moved a lot," she emphasizes. "In the meantime, society has changed positively, as shown by the broad support for protests in the name of women's and human rights – a valuable achievement that took more than 100 years."

Maryam Dezhamkhooy hails from Iran's cultural capital of Shiraz - home of the important Persian poet Hafis, who greatly influenced Goethe. She later worked as an archaeology professor at Birjand University after becoming an assistant professor at the age of 27 following her doctorate.

"Society has changed positively, as shown by the broad support for protests in the name of women's and human rights."

In Heidelberg, Maryam Dezhamkhooy sees the appropriate "avant-garde academic atmosphere" for her research, "where creativity and the exploration of new territories are valued", which is not usually the case in conservative archaeology. She first came to the Institute of Prehistory and Near Eastern Archaeology in 2016 as a Humboldt Visiting Scholar after meeting Prof. Dr. Thomas Meier, who holds a professorship there and is one of the two directors of the newly founded CAPAS. Whether she will continue to stay in Germany or return to Iran is still an open question. Although she would like to do research in Iran again, she would not like to do it at a university under the current government. "Fortunately, however, there are many libraries and archives where I can continue to do independent research. But as a 'Humboldtian' I can also return to Germany regularly for research stays. This is very important, because I need both scientific and financial support for my research - and I don't want to get it from the current Iranian government." ●

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#FELLOWS APOCALYPSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
AMIN SAMMAN

Amin Samman is Senior Lecturer in International Political Economy at City, University of London and co-Director of the City Political Economy Research Centre. His research explores the temporal, historical, and existential aspects of contemporary capitalism, with a particular emphasis on the workings of money, debt, and finance.

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

Amin Samman: That it was great to see a project that wasn't promising to heal the world. These days funded research is all about solving problems, finding solutions, and creating world peace. Meanwhile, the world is going to hell in a handbasket. So it was refreshing to see a call to confront the apocalyptic mood head on. Our demise depends on it!

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

To me the apocalypse is a narrative archetype. That means it's a way of giving shape to time and history that has captured the human imagination for millennia. And it persists because it provides a sense of order, purpose, and meaning that is ultimately irresistible. Who can resist the idea that one day things will end, that after that everything will be different, perhaps better, and that maybe we humans have a crucial role to play in bringing about such a transformation? Not many of us, it would seem.

What is your fellowship trying to achieve?

The aim of my fellowship is to better understand the links between apocalypse, nihilism, and finance. My suspicion is that nihilism is being financialised, and that this has important implications for the status of apocalyptic thinking today. I have a set of questions about nihilism and apocalypse (How does nihilism relate to the end of worlds? Which sorts of world does nihilism pertain to? What kinds of ending does it enact?). I also have a set of questions about how all this relates to financial capitalism (How do endings and endlessness figure within the operations of finance? In what ways does this register in everyday attitudes towards meaning, value, truth, and purpose?). My approach is interdisciplinary, but my methods are ruthlessly traditional: reading, thinking, writing.

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

In my previous research, I explored the significance of crisis and apocalypse within the construction of financial history. That meant understanding the way these concepts work behind-the-scenes in financial journalism, policymaking, and popular culture, shaping the way we imagine and produce history. My project at CAPAS aims to locate nihilism within contemporary financial capitalism, so in a way it is a logical next step for me. It continues my focus on finance but replaces crisis with nihilism. Both of these terms (crisis and nihilism) are loaded with ambiguity. Both can also be understood as modern reworkings of apocalypse.

●●● **read more online**
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ENFOQUES DESDE/ SOBRE AMÉRICA LATINA

¿CÓMO AFECTAN LOS TRAUMAS Y CRISIS HISTÓRICAS LA VISIÓN DE LOS PUEBLOS LATINOAMERICANOS SOBRE EL PASADO Y EL FUTURO?

¿QUÉ SON LAS FRAC-TURAS Y CÓMO PUEDEN IDENTI-FICAR-SE?

¿CÓMO SE PUEDE CONCEPTUALIZAR LA TEMPORALIDAD DE LA RUPTURA?

¿CÓMO Y DÓNDE SE EXPERIMENTAN Y REPRESENTAN LAS RUPTURAS?

¿CÓMO CONTRIBUYE UNA RUPTURA APOCALÍPTICA A LA CREACIÓN (TRANSFORMADORA) DE MUNDOS?"

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#FELLOWS APOCALYPSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
EMILY RAY

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

Emily Ray: My perspective comes out of environmental political theory and political science, so I think about apocalypse as a rupture with the present and life as it is presently lived, and as the start of something entirely new. I think of apocalypse as perhaps an event that unfolds over the course of many sub-events. I think of climate change in similar terms, which is to say, there is not going to be one moment of climate change but rather several events, crises, breakdowns, and system failures that coalesce as climate change. The apocalypse would overwhelm the ability of the state to respond and manage it – ultimately it exceeds the capacity of states.

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

I am working with my co-author and current fellow, Robert Kirsch, on a manuscript about the political history of doomsday prepping in the United States. My particular focus is on the transition from preparing for end times during the nuclear age in the US to preparing for climate change, which is frequently understood as apocalyptic in scale and as a secular promise of radical destruction that creates a new planetary biophysical and social existence. One of the responses to fears about climate change is a renewed urgency by state and private actors to turn humans into a space faring and multi-planetary species, which would safeguard, stockpile, or preserve humankind off the planet if it becomes unliveable for our species. How do the mid-century approaches to anticipating nuclear apocalypse make their way into the new space race?

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

I hope to take with me a theory of bunkerization. Why do we create bunkered ways of living in the face of catastrophe like climate change? A theory of bunkerization will enrich ongoing discussions about the politics of climate change as well as encouraging thinking and political action that opens new possibilities, and, to borrow from Marcuse, thinking about a qualitatively different way of life.

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

Human and more-than-human animal companionship, hope, and a good sense of humour.

Emily Ray is Associate Professor in the Political Science department at Sonoma State University. Her research lies in the area of political environmental theory, with particular interest in the social and political responses to climate change, extractivism, and the new space race.

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

#SCIENCE APOCALYPSE

BRIDGING DISCIPLINES

NAVIGATING INTERDISCIPLINARITY

In January 2022, CAPAS jointly organized the workshop "Navigating Interdisciplinarity" with Käte Hamburger Kolleg: Cultures of Research (c:o/re) in Aachen and Marsilius Kolleg at Heidelberg University. The questions this workshop sought to address include: "Where is interdisciplinarity warranted; where may a disciplinary approach be preferable? What makes interdisciplinary work succeed or fail? How do we negotiate diverging criteria of validity of knowledge?" Philipp Schrögel, head of the CAPAS Science Communication team, spoke with the organizers of the workshop in the aftermath and asked, if and how these questions were answered and if their expectations have been met.

The organizers of the workshop "Navigating Interdisciplinarity" (from left to right): Stefan Böschen (co:re), Thomas Meier (CAPAS), Nina Boy (CAPAS) and Tobias Just (Marsilius Kolleg).

To begin with: What was the motivation, the idea for the workshop? And what is the relevance of the topic from your perspective, or the perspective of the organizations you are representing?

Thomas Meier (CAPAS): I think interdisciplinarity is an important topic in all three institutions, they have interdisciplinary at their core. And all of the three institutions are engaged in what I would call grand interdisciplinarity, or big interdisciplinarity, meaning to bridge all disciplines of the university from the humanities and social sciences to the natural sciences and life sciences. This is much more complicated than just two more or less epistemologically neighboring disciplines. That was the idea for the workshop — to talk to people who also have these problems: What are their ideas and their experiences?

Stefan Böschen (co:re): To add to this thought about grand or big interdisciplinary, I found it interesting that, although my Co-Director at co:re, Gabriele Grammelsberger, and I are really close together, as she is a philosopher of science and I'm a sociologist of science, what seemed to be near could actually be far away. I was astonished, and thought it would be really good to focus more on interdisciplinarity within Science and Technology Studies itself. It's not only about this co-work between humanities and sciences, as we typically say it. But, of course, this is also an important aspect, since the funding line for co:re and CAPAS also includes the co-work between sciences and humanities.

Speaking of the organizations, the Marsilius Kolleg basically is built around the core mission to enable interdisciplinarity. How do you go about that?

Tobias Just (Marsilius Kolleg): Because it was our mission from the very beginning,

the motivation to join forces for this workshop was to share experiences with others, learning how to improve. We always see that interdisciplinary is an ongoing process of learning, this workshop wonderfully adds to that.

We are in the midst of talking about interdisciplinarity, but perhaps it is time to take one step back. What was the concept for "interdisciplinarity" you started with when you were thinking about the workshop? How are you thinking about interdisciplinary now – what constitutes it?

Nina Boy (CAPAS): I think that was the question at the heart of the workshop. My motivation to get involved was that I've worked in lots of interdisciplinary settings, and I feel like often there's no room to actually reflect on the process of what happens. This is what we wanted to do here. To build that room and make that opportunity for reflection available. From the attention that you could feel from everyone in the room you could tell that everyone is interested in these questions. It's somehow the call of our time, a call we need to respond to. We need to build more of these spaces, especially more continuous spaces.

The participants of the workshops discussed in plenary and in small groups questions such as "Where is interdisciplinarity justified; where is a disciplinary approach preferable? What makes interdisciplinary work succeed or fail? How do we negotiate divergent criteria for the validity of knowledge?"

Were there answers you have found during the workshop? What was one example of an important takeaway for you from a theoretical perspective? Or a more practical concept or idea you took away from these days?

Nina Boy: I really like Stefan's formulation of the epistemic quality of interdisciplinarity. To me, that sums up this whole problematic of: "How do we make the various criteria of validity of different disciplines compatible?" That is something I'm definitely taking away.

Stefan Böschen: For me it was about this really tricky relation between the complexity of real-world problems and how we translate these into scientific problems. This includes a lot of difficult questions, like the validity of evidence and the question of justification, which bring all the complexity of socio-epistemic orders to the fore. And what really struck me is that, although I've been a sociologist of science for years, I do not have a good answer to this question.

Thomas Meier: I find it interesting, Stefan, that you're starting from real world problems and translating them into academic problems. I had the impression that, not only in this workshop, but in most of the literature, people often start from academic ideas or theories and then at some point realize that they should somehow relate it to real world problems. My impression is that the starting point for interdisciplinarity often comes not from the problem, but from a theory, then trying to arrive at a problem.

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

#FELLOWS APOCALYPSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
DUANE HAMACHER

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

Duane Hamacher: Surviving "death from the skies" is a common trope in literature and cinema. It is also a reality that we face. Cultural traditions across the globe from the earliest times link the appearance of comets as portents of doom and the fall of meteorites as signs of divine punishment. The impact of an asteroid could snuff-out our very existence, just as it did with the dinosaurs. But it is also something we can actively prevent if we focus our attention on surveying the solar system for potentially hazardous objects and finding ways to deflect them. My work examines the relationship between comets/asteroids and their influence on society, religion, Indigenous cosmology, and modern science. What can our interactions with these celestial objects tell us about our connection to the cosmos? What can we learn by studying the cultural and scientific history of these objects and their cataclysmic impacts with Earth? How can we use these lessons to teach the public about the exciting crossroads of science and culture?

Duane Hamacher is Associate Professor of Cultural Astronomy in the School of Physics at the University of Melbourne, Australia. His research focuses on the intersection of science and culture, specifically Indigenous astronomical and geological knowledges in Australia and around the world.

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

I have been gifted with a lifelong passion for astronomy since childhood. My university education focused on astrophysics, and I have always maintained an interest in comets and asteroids. For the last 15 years, I have been exploring the connection between humans and the stars, primarily through collaborations with Indigenous elders across Australia (see p. 33). My research revealed that humans have long witnessed and lived through catastrophic natural events, almost all of which have had special significance and meaning attributed to them. By learning about these experiences, we can better understand how to evade, avert, or survive natural disasters, such as meteorite impacts. We can also use this information to guide scientific research and provide a framework for public education through science communication. The CAPAS fellowship perfectly aligns to that in every way.

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

Working with a diverse team of scholars from a wide range of disciplines opens all sorts of new avenues for discussing and debating new ideas. Blossoming in a trans-disciplinary environment like CAPAS enables us to tackle new and challenging ways of approaching our research that we might never consider on our own. It provides us with a golden opportunity to broaden our horizons, deepen our knowledge base, strengthen our skillset, and grapple with some of the most challenging questions humanity faces today. This drives us to produce innovative scholarship that changes the very way we think about our place in the world. As a CAPAS Fellow, this experience will push me to grow as a scholar. More importantly, it encourages me to re-evaluate my own place in the universe.

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

CAPAS EVENTS

WEDNESDAY
22
03

National Autonomous University of Mexico
Colloquium

CRISIS, CATÁSTROFE Y APOCALIPSIS

(in Spanish)

Artist: José Guadalupe Posado

The colloquium's theme is an archaeology of the end of the world and its narratives. Aspects that will be explored include the apocalypse and its civilizational limit and the apocalyptic in Mexican literature and art.

The colloquium is organized jointly by the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Sciences and Humanities and the Coordinación de Humanidades of UNAM, the seminario de estudios sobre el tiempe and CAPAS Heidelberg.

More information: http://www.capas.uni-heidelberg.de/md/capas/capas_konferenz_mexiko_flyer-4.pdf

MON-THUR
27–30
03

University of Chile
CAPAS Annual Conference

RUPTURAS: ENFOQUES DESDE/SOBRE AMÉRICA LATINA (in Spanish)

The annual conference of CAPAS Heidelberg aims to explore the concept of "rupture" in order to capture radical forms of discontinuity and their potentials. Contributors will address real and imagined systemic change in the context of pressing social, political, and environmental challenges, and explore the immense diversity of ruptures in time and space in order to assess and respond to the radical transformative effects they produce.

The conference is organized in collaboration with the University of Chile.

More information: http://www.capas.uni-heidelberg.de/conferencia_anual_2023.html

WEDNESDAY
12
04

06.30 PM – 08.00 PM **Lecture Hall P 18, Universitätsplatz 14, Heidelberg**

Keynote Lecture

"WHEN RECONSTRUCTION IS NOT ENOUGH – THE RECONSTRUCTION OF SOCIETY AFTER VIOLENT CONFLICT"

Keynote Lecture by Marie Louise Stig Sørensen (Cambridge University) as part of the CAPAS research project "Devastation and resettlement of landscapes" at Heidelberg University.

FRIDAY
21
04

04.15 PM – 05.45 PM **ERC-Hall, Seminar for Romance Studies, Heidelberg**

Public Talk

"THE THINGS THAT DISAPPEAR – NON-SENSICAL PICTORICAL MEANINGS OF THE ABSTRACT BODY"

Public Talk by artist Chantal Meza on the Abstract in Art and its connections to the body.

Artist: Chantal Meza

TUESDAY
02
05

4.15 PM – 5.45 PM **Neue Universität, Lecture Hall 14, Heidelberg**

CAPAS Lecture Series

"THE CHILD AND THE BIODOME: VITALISM IN RADICAL CLIMATE FICTION"

Public Lecture by Florian Mussgnug (University College London.

Digital stream available

TUESDAY
09
05

4.15 PM – 5.45 PM Neue Universität, Lecture Hall 14, Heidelberg

CAPAS Lecture Series

“A CONTEMPORARY BUDDHIST RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE CATASTROPHE”

Public Lecture by Rolf Scheuermann (Heidelberg University, CAPAS).

Digital stream available

TUESDAY
16
05

4.15 PM – 5.45 PM Neue Universität, Lecture Hall 14, Heidelberg

CAPAS Lecture Series

“DRAWING A LINE IN THE SAND: BIO-ENGINEERING AS CONSERVATION IN THE FACE OF EXTINCTION DEBT”

Public Lecture by Josh Wodak (Western Sydney University).

Digital stream available

TUESDAY
23
05

4.15 PM – 5.45 PM Neue Universität, Lecture Hall 14, Heidelberg

CAPAS Lecture Series

“GEOPOLITICS OF APOCALYPSE – MAPPING THE END OF HISTORY”

Public Lecture by Paolo Vignolo (National University of Colombia).

Digital stream available

TUESDAY
30
05

4.15 PM – 5.45 PM Neue Universität, Lecture Hall 14, Heidelberg

CAPAS Lecture Series

“DESTROYER OF WORLDS? SATELLI-TES, SALVATION, AND DAMNATION”

Public Lecture by Mia Bennet (University of Washington).
Digital stream available

TUESDAY
06
06

4.15 PM – 5.45 PM **Neue Universität, Lecture Hall 14, Heidelberg**

CAPAS Lecture Series

"ABERFAN: PURGATORIO"

Public Lecture by Brad Evans (University of Bath, UK).
Digital stream available

TUESDAY
13
06

4.15 PM – 5.45 PM **Neue Universität, Lecture Hall 14, Heidelberg**

CAPAS Lecture Series

"OF TIME TRAVEL AND STORY CAPITAL: RE-THINKING EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCALYPTIC DISCOURSE"

Public Lecture by Kate Cooper (Royal Holloway, University of London).
Digital stream available

TUESDAY
20
06

4.15 PM – 5.45 PM **Neue Universität, Lecture Hall 14, Heidelberg**

CAPAS Lecture Series

"APOCALYPTIC COSMIC THREATS AND OUR POST-APOCALYPTIC FUTURE IN SPACE"

Public Lecture by Richard Wilman (Durham University, UK).
Digital stream available

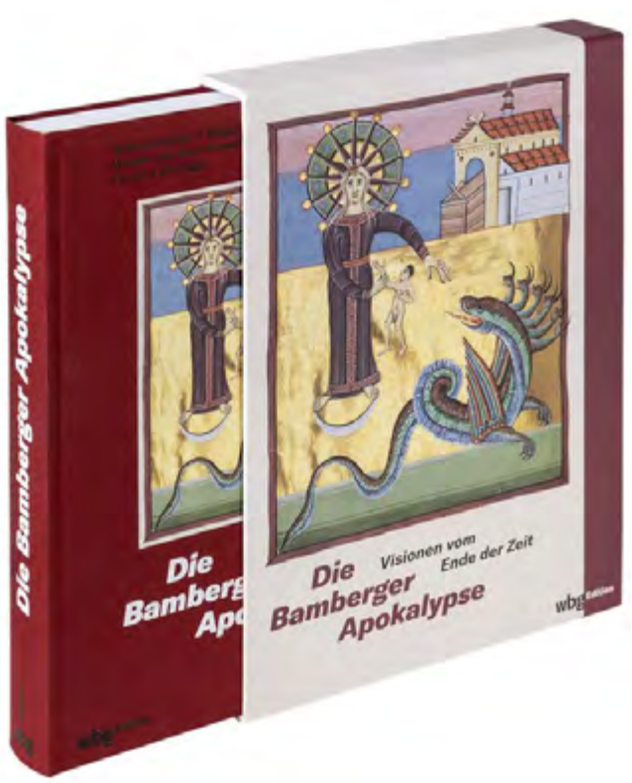
All CAPAS events at www.capas.uni-heidelberg.de/events.html

#SCIENCE APOCALYPSE

THE BAMBERG APOCALYPSE
MEDIEVAL IDEAS OF THE END

by Thomas Meier

About one thousand years ago, just at the beginning of the new millennium during the Middle Ages, German emperor Heinrich II commissioned the monks at the monastery of Reichenau in Lake Constance to render him a service. At the time, the monastery of Reichenau housed one of the best writing schools in Europe. Emperor Heinrich II's task for the monks was this: to produce a unique and magnificent manuscript – known today as the Bamberg Apocalypse.



The Bamberg Apocalypse is one of the most famous manuscripts of the Middle Ages. It has now been republished by Heidelberg historian Bernd Schneidmüller et al.

The first part of this manuscript contains the text of the Apocalypse of John of Patmos, while the second part is a collection of selected Gospel texts for liturgical use on high feast days. The text is accompanied by extensive decoration, including 50 miniatures of extremely high artistic quality executed with precious materials, most of them illustrating the text of the Apocalypse. This magnificent volume has now been republished by Heidelberg historian and President of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences, Bernd Schneidmüller, together with four of his colleagues. The volume is set as a facsimile to the original, along with extensive historical, art, and material science analyses. The extra content and analyses help to place the book in the context of its time and trace its later reception.

On March 1st, Frieder Hepp, director of Kurpfälzisches Museum in Heidelberg welcomed 70 interested audience members into the Grand Salon of the museum. In a joint event by CAPAS and the museum, Bernd Schneidmüller presented his new research on the Bamberg Apocalypse and the publication itself to a wider audience. The introduction was followed by a discussion with Heidelberg colleagues Christoph Strohm of the Research Center for International and Interdisciplinary Theology (FIIT), Tobias Frese of the Institute for European Art History, and Romedio Schmitz-Esser of the Department of History, moderated by CAPAS Director Thomas Meier.

Right at the beginning of his lecture, Bernd Schneidmüller elaborated on the differences between the Christian apocalypse of the Middle Ages and today's use of the word apocalypse. Essential, he emphasized, was a change of agency: while time and outcome of the apocalypse of the Middle Ages were entirely in God's hands, the end of the world in the present is solely humans' work. From this perspective, one can derive not only exuberant human responsibility, but also encouraging human possibilities for shaping it. In general, both the speaker and the discussants kept coming back to this question: What relevance does the Bamberg Apocalypse – or the overall medieval ideas of the end of the world – still have for us today?

When apocalypse is mentioned today, most people think of American blockbusters, of the climate crisis, or of a nuclear Armageddon. But does this Christian certainty – that at the end of time the faithful will be saved in a divine judgment and all others will be damned to hell – still have a place in the world of today? The unanimous opinion of the evening was "yes". But the perspectives and reasonings for that differed. Some claimed that the promise of salvation of the Christian God is still valid for today's mankind. Others proposed that the topical images with which apocalyptic events are visualized, partly verifiable for the first time in the Bamberg Apocalypse, continue to have an effect (consciously or unconsciously) on the cultural memory of the present. One idea suggested that medieval images of apocalypse mirror our current thinking, from the question of agency to the expectation of a dystopian rather than utopian post-apocalypse. These are all common reasons why the Middle Ages are still relevant today, but they are also offering consolation in a present that is frequently described in apocalyptic tones. Our expectation of the end of our world is by no means new from a historical point of view, but it has its specific cultural manifestations, which warn against taking it too lightly.

Bamberger Apokalypse - Staatsbibliothek Bamberg Msc.Bibl.140, 14r

One of the artistically designed pages of the original Bamberg Apocalypse: the First Horseman of the Apocalypse.

Whose world and whose end are we actually talking about? The audience at the event in the museum could certainly be described as well-educated and well-situated middle-class. At first glance, this seems to be fitting for the baroque venue. But climate protesters from *Fridays for Future* or *Extinction Rebellion* also come predominantly from educated middle-class households. And, as it emerged in the discussion, even a good thousand years ago the magnificent manuscript was only accessible to an elite. Basically, all other sources around that time only report apocalyptic fears from the perspective of nobility and clergy. Were these grand apocalyptic fears shared by the peasants? Or did the lower classes have more concrete concerns of everyday survival? Is fear of the apocalypse an elite project? All the while, the multitude of historical apocalypses rarely hit those elites as hard as they do the broad masses of people. ●

#PUBLIC APOCALYPSE

LIGHTS, CAMERA, APOCALYPSE

VAMPIRES AND ZOMBIES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

by Michael Dunn

On the 7th of December 2022, Stacey Abbott paid a virtual visit to the CAPAS conference room, leading an internal audience of staff and fellows alike through the metaphysical metamorphosis of vampires and zombies in contemporary pop culture. From out of the ecologically uncanny depths of dark and dank woodlands of Coleridge's opium addled mind, to the Gothic, othered expanse of Transylvania, and stepping out onto the big screen, Vampires – and subsequently zombies – have long become staples of (post-)apocalyptic fictions in many forms but film and television is, certainly, the one in which they burn (pun intended) the brightest.

While many of the ways in which these apocalyptic creatures have dominated literature and film for centuries under the guise of the Gothic has already been explored by numerous scholars such as David Punter, Robert Mighall, Tabish Khair, and Johan Höglund, Abbott is aptly aware of the (post-)apocalyptic *Mise-en-scène* that envelops these popular fictions, as well as the cultural imaginary of apocalypticism which creates such creatures. The book's predominant focus sets its scope to tackle the trope of the scientific gaze in a huge host of blockbusters and series such as *Daybreakers* (2009), *I am Legend* (2007), *28 Days Later* (2002), *The Walking Dead* (2010-202), and even *Angel* (1999-2004). Vampires and their less lavish cousins, zombies, says Abbott, "are presented both as the victims of a medical gaze and the perpetrators, embodying neo-liberal capitalist discourses, spreading the infection globally and feeding off itself until nothing remains" (2016: 61); while the "imagery of the vampire under forced scientific observation is pervasive across the genre" (2016: 59) reflecting themes of both biopolitics and necropolitics. With the move from folklore to the dogmatic aspects of religion, the medical gaze scenes in many of these films acts to remythify science as a genre of its own. In this way, not only does Abbott argue for the mainstream popularity of the undead and the grey area of liminality as an academic pursuit but she also reclaims the popular, industrial discussion of genre as a concept with which to negotiate complex ideas.

When asked where the genre was heading now, six years after being published, in a 'post' pandemic society, Abbott answered that, amongst the self referentiality of reinvention and renegotiating tropes so present in frightful fiction, that we are witnessing a shift toward environmentalism (a shift which has also been witnessed and explored in Lars Schmeink's film commentary over on our PubPub). No longer allegorical, she added, it is precisely what is being faced right now by many people who live at the forefront of climate change. ●

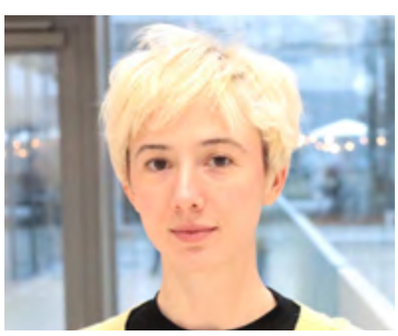
#PEOPLE APOCALYPSE

INTRODUCING CAPAS

NEW PEOPLE AT CAPAS

Who are the people working at CAPAS? At the beginning of 2023, we welcomed three new colleagues.

Ganna Krapivnyk joined CAPAS in January and February for a short-term fellowship with Heidelberg University. Krapivnyk originally comes from Kharkiv, Ukraine. She studied at H.S.Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University (PhD in Philology and DSc in Philosophy), and is now an associate professor in the English Philology Department. Her research looks at how apocalyptic references and aspects surface in media texts about the ongoing war in Ukraine. The focus lies on Ukrainian and British newspapers with different audience segments. In light of the extensive stream of news about this war, her research aims to investigate how the basic cultural principles and values of those describing the events find their representation in language. Her research also identifies essential precedent phenomena involved in the war-apocalypse-discourse, and specifies their explicit and implicit manifestations.



New at CAPAS: **Ganna Krapivnyk, Ekaterina Loginova** and **Marina Rusakova**

Ekaterina Loginova is a science communication researcher. In her studies, she examines public trust in science and the social integration or exclusion of the general population regarding science and science communication. Loginova supervises master's students in various research-based and practical projects at the Center for Science Communication of ITMO University – the former State University for Information Technologies, Mechanics and Optics – in Saint Petersburg (Russia). She is a visiting scholar with a one-year special fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at Heidelberg University's CAPAS. In a project initiated jointly with her host Philipp Schrögel, Loginova studies the Russian-speaking population living in Germany and their attitudes towards science, as well as their level of trust in science. The project particularly focuses on Russian speakers' attitudes towards current challenges and (apocalyptic) threats, such as the Covid pandemic, the climate crisis, and security policy.

In January 2023, **Marina Rusakova** started working for the science communication project *Heimspiel Wissenschaft* attached to the CAPAS #WisskommLab. Rusakova holds a diploma in linguistics and translation and a M.Sc. degree in science management and science communication. For the past seven years, she has been working in international science management with a focus on strategic science communication, all the while bringing strategic partners together and organizing scientific events. She has supported international projects in science communication and science diplomacy initiated by the BMBF and the German Federal Foreign Office. ●

#ART APOCALYPSE

THE DUSTY RAINBOW

A DRAMA ABOUT HUMANITY'S LOST CONNECTION TO NATURE AT STAATSTHEATER MAINZ

© Andreas Etter

***The Dusty Rainbow* (*Der staubige Regenbogen*) is currently in production by Rieke Süßkow at the Staatstheater Mainz. Written by Hans Henny Jahnn, this drama criticizes humanity's lost connection to nature and respect for life. Also published under the name *The Debris of Conscience* (*Die Trümmer des Gewissens*), the basic message is that technology itself is not the danger, but rather the scientific pursuit of pure research without regard for possible destructive consequences is.**

The themes of Hans Henny Jahnn's play are of stunning relevance: the threat to humanity posed by nuclear power plants; the surveillance of science by state security services; the alliance of the aggrieved in a league of the weak from the younger generation. In his work, the author warns of the manifold causes that may lead to the destruction of humanity. This play is not just about a nuclear catastrophe. It is also about bacteriological warfare, overpopulation, and the persistence of racism, as well as exploitation and the misuse of technologies.

© Andreas Etter

In the main storyline of the piece, the character Jakob Chervat becomes disillusioned with his work as a nuclear scientist. Chervat conducts 'pure research' with an idealistic attitude for a government corporation controlled by the power-hungry bureaucrat Sarkis. In order to gain an advantage in the arms race, the corporation concealed from Chervat a nuclear accident that resulted from his work. When it is revealed to Chervat that his work cost 8000 lives in a nuclear accident, he does not want to believe it. But he is forced to

face reality when his son Elia suffers from hair loss due to the accident.

The subplot tells of biologist Dr. Lambacher, a man who stops at nothing. He uses radioactivity to produce gigantic larvae, and experiments with an indigenous boy named Tiripa. Just like Chervat's son Elia, Tiripa belongs to the younger generation. Together with other young people, they formed the 'League of the Weak', a utopian resistance movement. Chervat says of this generation: "They are wise in that they respect animals and plants as their equals. They do not wish for their destruction; they welcome their disorderly state of being."

Questioning the nature-human relationship, breaking down gender roles; abstract, spot on, and socially critical. The play is well worth a visit! ●

Further dates are:

— 23.03.2023
— 4.04.2023
— 24.04.2023

More information can be found here: https://www.staatstheater-mainz.com/web/veranstaltungen/schauspiel-22-23/der-staubige-regenbogen

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#SCIENCE APOCALYPSE

DEATH AND APOCALYPSE IN THE DIGITAL MEGAMACHINE

The concept of apocalypse is intimately related to ideas about death and politics. Foregrounding death therefore opens a specific conceptual vantage point on apocalyptic discourse and imaginaries.

Let's jump in with an example: Religious apocalypse in the earlier Judaeo-Christian conception, for example, suggests possible cataclysm and therefore physical death and destruction, but the post-apocalyptic in this context also suggests a kind of eternal life free from the rule of time, the body, and mortality; typically conceived as an immortality of the soul in union with God. This state of immortality can only be achieved through death (Wolfe 2019). In contrast, the modern techno-apocalypse posits immortality in more literal terms, as an immortality of the material body in which physical death is sought to be averted altogether.

Immortality is therefore integral to the notion of apocalypse, which, in turn, can be thought in terms of a quest to overcome various limits associated with life. Twentieth-century Western thought provides one way of tracking this shift from immortality of the soul to material immortality, through various recurring tropes about life, about death, about life after death, and about life without death. Indeed, this literature can even be understood as a neglected entry in the apocalyptic archive of the West. Psychoanalytical concepts of the death-drive and later attempts to read social formations, such as industrial capitalism, as forms of institutionalised death-denial are not normally thought to be part of this archive, but they nonetheless give us a glimpse into the immortality projects that characterise the contemporary technological condition and the forms of apocalypse attached to it.

Contemporary technological ambitions like Transhumanism are an attempt to sustain individual life that eradicates life's very source of uniqueness. Similarly, other Silicon Valley ideologies, such as Longtermism, eclipse the present through an abstract form of perpetual deferral. Meanwhile, contemporary streaming media and their mode of algorithm-enabled entertainment enact a form of total capture that produces living deadness. All represent ongoing forms of apocalypse with whose politics we must now come to terms.

This article reflects a series of discussions held over the course of three months under the aegis of a working group on death and politics at CAPAS. It explores the historical and contemporary relevance of ideas about death in the work of Lewis Mumford, Norman Brown, and Jacques Derrida, as well as related secondary literature dealing with death and technology.

The article is the result of a working group of the current CAPAS colloquium around the theme of death. It is written by Amin Samman, Elke Schwarz, Christine Cornea, Michael Dunn, Teresa Heffernan, Robert Kirsch, and Laura Mendoza.

●●● read more on PubPub
capas.pubpub.org

#FELLOWS APOCALYPSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
CHRISTINE CORNEA

Christine Cornea is an Associate Professor with the Department of Film, Television, Media (FTM) at the University of East Anglia (Norwich, UK). Current research interests are focused upon the uses of the apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic narrative, environmental fiction and documentary in film and television and the development of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methods.

What is your fellowship trying to achieve?

Christine Cornea: My interest in the post-apocalyptic has been ongoing for the past few years. This fellowship offers me a sustained period of research/writing time to expand upon this work and to further develop my transdisciplinary approach.

This project is organised around several overarching questions:

— Why is the post-apocalyptic so eagerly adopted in television in the 1970s and how has it developed up to the present?
— How has the post-apocalyptic been represented in television in different national contexts (specifically in UK and US productions)?
— How do these dramas and documentaries engage with and work through important socio-scientific issues?

In answering these questions my research crosses disciplinary boundaries, drawing upon political, economic, environmental, and social science studies in tracing the development and significance of this sub-genre in television. For example, my analysis considers the interplay between scientific and socio-scientific concepts and debates and the post-apocalyptic as a narrative within which to explore possible future scenarios beyond the boundaries prescribed by empirical investigation. My approach also enables a consideration of how ethical questions raised in post-apocalyptic television represent an intervention in contemporary socio-scientific debate and how the post-apocalyptic operates as a form of popular science communication.

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

I have already benefitted from exchanges and discussion with other CAPAS fellows over the past few months. These exchanges have certainly given me a broader perspective and have fed into my own research. Over the next few months of my fellowship, I am especially looking forward to speaking with fellows from more scientific backgrounds, particularly from environmental studies.

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

I'm tempted to say, health, hope, and the motivation to adapt to changing circumstances. However, I think you probably have in mind more material things, to ensure survival. So, on a more practical level, I guess these three things would have to be clean water, shelter and food.

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

KING OF DREAMS

What did we actually just see there? What were those bizarre footage shots that seemed like they come from another century? Why are the actors in some scenes wearing strange crude papier-mâché masks modelled after their own faces? And what's up with this crazy story that is supposedly based on true events? The film "Rey" by author and director Niles Atallah leaves the audience with more questions than answers after its 90-minute screening. As part of the "Apocalyptic Cinema" film series from CAPAS, "Rey" was screened at the Karlstorkino Heidelberg, followed by a scientific commentary from CAPAS director Robert Folger.

"Rey is a weird and sometimes wonderful film, featuring moments of piercing, memorable strangeness [...]; it could as easily be screened in a gallery."
The Guardian

"Rey" tells the story of the eccentric French lawyer and adventurer Orélie-Antoine de Tounens. In the year 1860, armed with a new flag and a constitution penned by himself, de Tounens fought his way through the rugged wilderness of southern Chile and Argentina to an area called the Araucanía – a territory that the Spanish were never able to conquer. His purpose was to unite the indigenous Mapuche people and have their chiefs elect him king ("rey" in Spanish). He was accompanied only by his Chilean guide and translator Rosales. At first, de Tounens indeed managed to pursue his dream. But after becoming the ruler, he was betrayed by Rosales and thrown into prison by the Chilean government, which saw its colonial interests threatened. De Tounens ended up lonely and impoverished in exile.

The facts, according to Robert Folger in his subsequent commentary, can be verified with historical documents. But the record of these almost unbelievable events is patchy, with many details still unknown. What spurred de Tounens to sail halfway around the world in the insane pursuit of his dream? Was he a narcissist with a messiah complex? Did he set out to exploit the Mapuche? In "Rey", director Niles Atallah emphasises the problems of history and memory by the degradation of image and sound. He wor-

ked for seven years on the film and shot some segments of the film in 2011, then buried the 35mm, 16mm and Super-8 film in his back garden. What does time do to a story? The results of these burials – different traces of aging and decay on the material, some of which was subsequently scratched and dyed – recur throughout the film.

In addition to the disturbing effects of the edited footage, the actors often wear papier-mâché masks, as if to show the unknowability of what actually happened. As Robert Folger points out, however, the scenes in which indigenous peoples are involved are excluded from this. These are given a special authenticity in the otherwise often bizarre events. Indeed, according to the Guardian the effect of Atallah's cinematographic style is "like a dream painted by Lucian Freud. Rey is a weird and sometimes wonderful film, featuring moments of piercing, memorable strangeness like this; it could as easily be screened in a gallery." And the German newspaper taz judges "Rey" to be a "highly artificial collage" and a "clever reflection on history and historicity".

The film, told in chapters, ends with "the apocalypse": scenes of war, destruction, rain of ashes, fleeing people, and a desperate de Tounens who keeps asking, "Where is my kingdom?" Ultimately, "Rey" is less a portrait of an ambivalent protagonist, comical in his madness and megalomania, than an indictment of the horrific genocide committed by the Spanish colonialists against the indigenous population of South America – an apocalypse that has already taken place and, as Robert Folger emphasizes, continues to this day.

"Rey" was awarded, among other things, the Special Jury Prize at the 2017 Rotterdam Film Festival, the Audience Award at the 2017 FICUNAM Film Festival in Mexico, and the French Film Critics' Prize at the 29th Cinelatino Film Festival in Toulouse, France. ●

REY

Chile/F 2017 - 90 min.

Director:	Niles Atallah
Screenplay:	Niles Atallah
Cast:	Rodrigo Lisboa, Claudio Riveros a.o.

"Rey" is less a portrait of an ambivalent protagonist, comical in his madness and megalomania, than an indictment of the horrific genocide committed by the Spanish colonialists against the indigenous population of South America.

#FELLOWS APOCALYPSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
CHRISTIAN WEHR

Christian Wehr is Professor of Romance Literatures at the University of Würzburg. His research focuses on Latin American literature and film of the 19th and 20th centuries, with an emphasis on literature & psychoanalysis and literature & meditation.

What is your fellowship trying to achieve?

Christian Wehr: From the early modern period to the present day, key phases of Latin American history have been repeatedly mediated through apocalyptic images and narrative patterns. The representations of the Conquista as the biblical end of the world have established a model of historical interpretation and construction that has varied countless times over the course of half a millennium. Ultimately, this striking persistence of imagining the end of the world suggests that the perception of historical processes in Latin America has never been able to completely detach itself from its original trauma; the foundation of post-Columbian history cannot be separated from the extinction of a formerly existing world and its cultures. In this perspective, I examine various apocalyptic constructions of history in Latin American literature and essay writing, as well as in film from Columbus to the present.

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

I had already prepared my project in detail before the stay and then worked it out in Heidelberg; the basic outlines did not change much. However, the further perspectives that emerged from the discussions and encounters in Heidelberg were tremendously beneficial: I am returning to my university with new ideas, project plans, new contacts and friendships. In the best case, long-term academic relationships and larger academic projects will develop from this.

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

My external hard drives with Latin American, Spanish and French movies, the music collection on my iPod and my family.

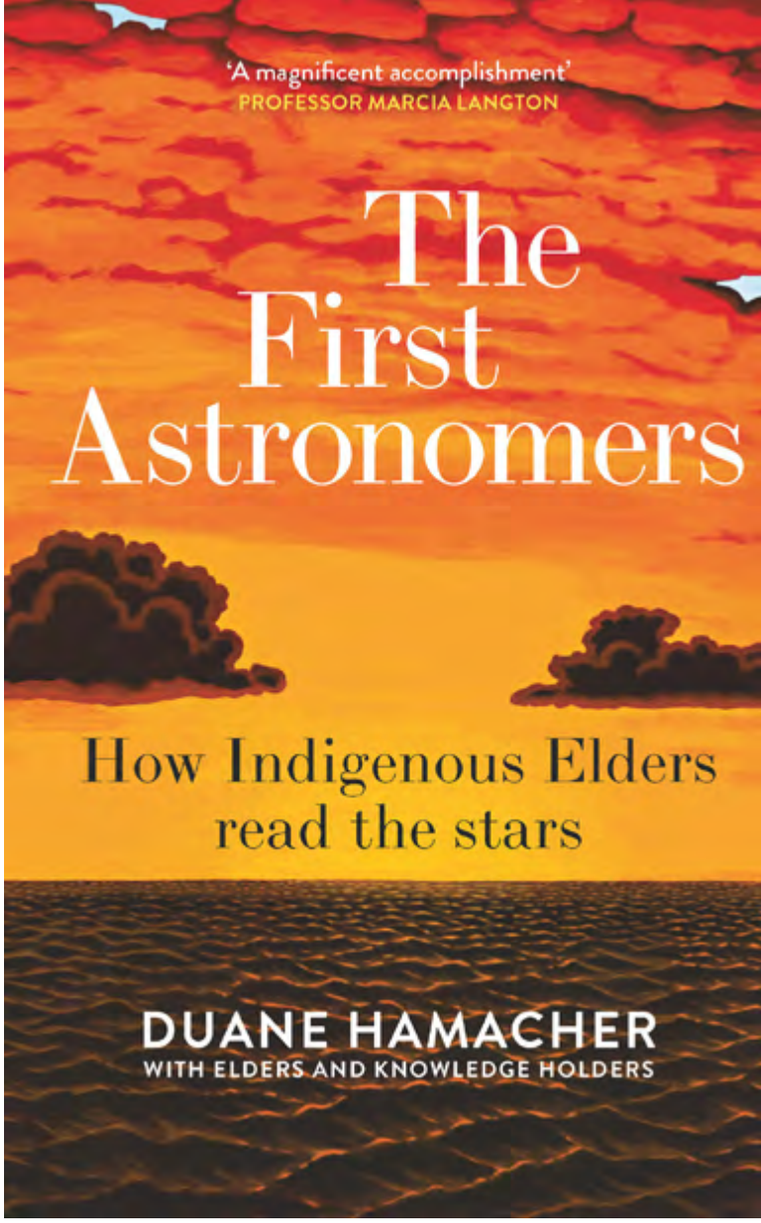
What are some of your favourite pop culture references to the/an (post)apocalypse?

I do a lot of work on Latin American literature and film, and I believe that no culture has formulated apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic experiences more intensely and with more powerful imagery. Even if these directors are not among the very commercial ones, I simply have to mention them as my personal favorites: Carlos Reygadas, Lisandro Alonso, Lucrecia Martel and Glauber Rocha.

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

#SCIENCE APOCALYPSE

WISDOM OF STARS
INDIGENOUS SCIENCE



Our eyes have been drawn away from the skies to our screens. We no longer look to the stars to forecast the weather, predict the seasons or plant our gardens. Most of us cannot even see the Milky Way. But First Nations Elders around the world still maintain this knowledge, and there is much we can learn from them. Indigenous science is dynamic, adapting to changes in the skies and on Earth, pointing the way for a world facing the profound disruptions of climate change.

For his book "The First Astronomers: How Indigenous Elders Read the Stars" astronomer Duane Hamacher worked together with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who maintain ancient systems of knowledge about the sun, moon and stars that stretch back well over tens of millennia. This knowledge contains a wealth of empirical science and information about natural events and hazards, sometimes describing apocalyptic events that significantly altered the landscape and environment, which has been passed down through oral tradition. The Indigenous teach that everything on the land is reflected in the sky, and everything in the sky is reflected on the land.

Guided by six First Nations Elders, Duane Hamacher takes the reader on a journey across space and time to reveal the wisdom of the first astronomers. He examines the ways Indigenous astronomy is challenging the history and philosophy of science, how it is leading to new advances in astrophysics, how it is helping to better understand natural hazards and climate change, and how we can move forward through collaborations between Elders and scientists and those who walk in both worlds.

Duane Hamacher is Associate Professor of Cultural Astronomy in the School of Physics at the University of Melbourne, Australia. He is currently a fellow at CAPAS. ●

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