

Jenny Stümer
and Felicitas Loest

The Apocalyptic Word

**Why begin with the
end of the world?**

As we move forward with *Apocalyptica*'s first issue, the world is looking dire: Anthropogenic climate change is accelerating, the petrochemical experiment is in full force, resources are depleting, species are vanishing, climate refugees are met with increasingly militarized borders, forests are burning, oceans are dying, we all have plastics in our blood and the COVID-19 pandemic still holds a strong grip on the world. Meanwhile Vladimir Putin has raised the stakes of nuclear threat once more as millions are fleeing a war-torn Ukraine. In Yemen Children are starving. Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos are colonizing space. The Far right is on the rise around the globe and disaster capitalism is feeding off the poor. People are tearing each other apart on social media. Oil spills, earthquakes, hurricanes and school shootings are common news events. Homelessness is endemic. The necropolitical war machine is tearing through the Middle East. Algorithmic governance has put us under constant surveillance. Scientists have glued their hands in protest to the UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy while *Don't Look Up* is the second most watched film on Netflix. Kentanji Brown Jackson is being badgered at her confirmation hearing and the Dakota Access Pipeline is still transporting toxic crude oil to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe reservation. Slow violence has gained traction; the Hyperobject is disintegrating.

We are faced with a plethora of catastrophes; a cataclysm of apocalyptic scenarios all of which propose the unravelling of a destructive way of inhabiting the Earth, or an anti-relational refusal of the (common) world, while constantly doubling down on the gendered, raced, colonial, and environmental violence that have impelled these devastating patterns in the first place. The simultaneity of apocalyptic upheaval, in other words, provokes a peculiar convergence of premonitions, experiences, and time-

lines, where one end is haunted by an/other, giving rise to new challenges that demand our questioning of what it meant, means, and will mean to live through the end times. Following Karan Barad, it is obvious that these different apocalypses do not merely exist side by side but that they can live “inside” each other (2018, 57), uprooting the past and throwing us back to the future as the present slips away. In other words, there are many endings and many worlds, but it is through the philosophical trope of the pluralist apocalypse that we can come to approach the interconnectedness and intersectionality of these various (up)endings. Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the colonial assault on the Americas, Africa, and Australasia, two World Wars, slave ships, famines, genocides, invasions, disposessions, storms, floods, diseases, and the coming bee extinction; these earth/world-shattering events can (and should) not be equated, of course, but they interlace and blend in ways the apocalypse as a figure of thought can make tangible and therefore, thinkable. In this sense, apocalypse as an intellectual project reminds us that death and catastrophe cannot be simply relegated to what Malcom Ferdinand describes as “off-world spaces, far removed from European Centers” (2021, 65)—if not for lack of trying—and that the disasters of past and present are neither neutral nor natural but subject to political and cultural forces that we can and must interrogate.

At the Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-apocalyptic Studies (CAPAS) we work with the premise that the apocalypse provides a way into thinking through these complex and urgent entanglements. We propose that apocalypses are productive, that they are more than theological abstractions and that the world(s) they are upending are not a given. We assume that apocalypses have happened and that they prompt us to question how we make sense of/in a disaster-ridden world. Optimistically speaking, apocalypses are transformative: They are about the creation of novel and emancipatory collective imaginaries that undo pervasive conceptions of the world and trouble established ontological and epistemological promises of the ways we may inhabit this planet. As NK Jemisin puts it, “the end of the world is happening as we speak. The question becomes whether it’s the kind of world that needs to go.” (Jemisin 2018, 477). In this vein, we want to broaden the notion of the apocalypse beyond ideas of disaster projected onto a future that ideally requires no change from us. Instead, apocalypses and post-apocalypses invoke a possibility of constructive upheaval, revolutionary energy, and radical difference.

Jemisin’s provocative evocation of what John Drabinski, with reference to Aimé Césaire might call “the apocalyptic word” reminds us that

“out of the end of the world, beginning is possible” (572) and that the end of history has not actually happened. As Oxana Timofeeva puts it, “the end of the world is a permanent reality. History doesn’t have an end” (2014). Rather, “the end of the end of history” (Timofeeva 2014) can free us to reshape our world(s), in so far as its inscribed futurelessness marks a “starting point for thought” (2020, 4) in Jessica Hurley’s words. The end thus produces “a place for struggle and resistance and somehow, impossibly, for hope” (Hurley 2020, 4). In this sense, living and thinking with apocalypses changes the horizon of how we orient the present and deal with the environmental and human consequences of Western chronopolitics. As Drabinski has further explained, “without apocalypse, there is always and only the despair of the past dragged into a melancholic present and future” (2016, 567). Our approach to the end of the world then is respectful to the destructions of past, present, and future, but, at the same time, it is defiantly enthusiastic, refusing the apocalypse as a bad object per se. Instead, we utilize the end as an opening, as Césaire would insist: Apocalypse, in this sense, unlocks new ways of thinking and being in and with the world.

In line with these bearings, we treat the apocalypses as end and beginning. Apocalypse as a mode of thinking, writing and working together teaches us about the limits and potentialities of ‘world’, ‘worlds’, and ‘worlding’; raising questions about what it means to think with, against and beyond the end today. What movements, politics, ideas, geographies, sensibilities, stories, and images might be considered (post)apocalyptic or invoke debates and feelings about the end of the/a world? How do apocalypses entangle temporalities of past, present, and future? How do crisis and catastrophe shape human and non-human actors and their interconnections? And, how does the apocalypse as an idea help us to address escalating global as well as local challenges in ways that may articulate the promise of more just political futures and fuller relationships with each other and the world?

Apocalyptic makes room for exploring these questions, utilizing the apocalypse as a point of uncovering and connection. Of course, etymologically the word apocalypse refers to a revelation; it marks an unveiling or disclosure, elucidating something that is hidden or less obvious. At the same time (and perhaps more commonly) we tend to think of apocalypses as catastrophic events that are shocking, crushing, and overthrow the status quo. We hope that this journal can be a venue for both of these nuances: presenting, discovering and illuminating novel approaches and ideas about the end of the world that in some sense mark a form of obliteration, a shattering of established worlds and ways of being and thinking.

This includes a commitment to our transdisciplinary mission—an effort to encourage the possibility of open-access dialogue between different fields as well as with and between diverse epistemologies and cosmologies, toppling the boundaries that keep us apart. The apocalypse as an academic venture requires the exploration of a variety of theoretical and methodological consideration as it invites a broad range of experiential and experimental case studies. We maintain that where apocalypses and their envisioned aftermaths produce a series of practical, intellectual, and creative opportunities that engage with the possibility of plural worlds, embodied futurities, or non-linear temporalities, they can reflect on the cultural or lived experiences, haunting sensibilities, and productive fantasies that employ the un/making of worlds. If, as Jacques Derrida puts it in his musings on the apocalyptic tone in philosophy, “disclosure not only opens to vision or contemplation, not only affords seeing but also affords hearing/ understanding,” (1984, 5) then we need to explore each other’s way of relating to the world (or refusing it) in order to fully appreciate and endorse the emancipatory potentials of apocalyptic thinking and writing.

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The cultural politics of the apocalypse recognize that the end of the world and the impact of apocalyptic thinking reproduce our experiences and our reactions to radical, catastrophic change in the public debate. What we are asking then is, in Donna Haraway’s (2016) words, to “stay with the trouble,” and to sit with the revelatory politics of the apocalypse. We suggest that the apocalypse as an experience and narrative illuminates historic events and contemporary discourses, often questioning the world as a socio-political phenomenon or infinite horizon of human and non-human relationships and thereby plays with perspectives on what past, present, and future mean or can mean. For example, colonial experiences can be viewed as apocalyptic injuries or a catastrophic loss of cosmology; upending futurity. At the same time, we find in the works of Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin or W.E.B. Du Bois a yearning for apocalypse, a deep wish for an end of the world as the only path towards decolonization and racial justice (Fanon 1952, Baldwin 1963, Du Bois 1920). In a similar vein, Joana Zylin-ska insists on the “feminist counter-apocalypse” which opposes “the masculinist and technicist solutions” relieving Western elites from a fear about the end of *their* world (2018, 3). While Fanon, Baldwin and Du Bois imagine a radical ending to ontological racism and human subjugation, Zylin-ska advocates a shared condition of precarity in the post-industrial (read: post-apocalyptic) world. In each case, apocalypse reveals the uneven dis-

tribution of suffering, trauma, and extinction; and presents itself as highly politicized catalysts by which a new politics might emerge, precisely when and where the end is severed from the technocratic ecology of fear and the managerial fixes that promise to secure Western futures. The end as a beginning, in other words, allows us to consider the possibility that we are not (just) living in the present, that the world is not inevitable, that the future might have already passed, and that the past can be changed.

Effectively the apocalypse asks for trouble. It demands that we trouble temporalities, narratives and long held understandings of the present (and how they came to be) in an effort to rethink our outlooks. As Franklin Ginn puts it, “the political charge of the apocalypse is that it destroys the future,” (2015, 357) a concern that is otherwise most often rehearsed in relation to what Paul Crutzen has popularized as the Anthropocene and which marks a key anxiety of end time moods today. Of course, from the point of view of apocalyptic actualities the Anthropocene remains inadequate to fully describe the current moment. In fact, more often than not, it proliferates, as Kathryn Yusoff has pointed out, “a sudden concern with the exposures of environmental harm to white liberal communities” and “it does so in the wake of histories in which these harms have been knowingly exported to black and brown communities under the rubric of civilization, progress, modernization and capitalism” (2018, xiii). In other words, the Anthropocene erases the fact that apocalypses have been part and parcel of creating the very world whose end is now repeatedly lamented; a world which, it seems, “is just now noticing the extinction it has chosen to continually overlook in the making of modernity and freedom” (Yusoff 2018, xiii). In this sense, the Anthropocene as a crisis-laden present is itself a postapocalyptic scenario that requires us to problematize and reinvent established narratives, imaginaries, and mythologies.

The means by which we articulate the destruction of our world(s) matter. The end of the world is increasingly featured in fiction films, TV series, music, art, video games, comics, literature, theatre and photography. We are particularly interested in how these depictions of apocalypse articulate the cultural politics of past and present while imagining devastating or liberatory futures. However, as Ginn further elaborates, “fantasies of apocalypse are both a product and a producer of the Anthropocene” (2015, 351). As such popular culture, literature and art can work as regressive spectacles of future ruin, erasing the uneven distribution of environmental damage and human suffering, or they can propose “a form of social dreaming,” (Gergan, Smith and Vasudevan 2020, 94) utilizing apocalypse as transgressive tool of the imagination. Of course, Christopher Palmer explains that “[a]ll catastrophes in apocalyptic fiction are fictional, (...) and

figure as challenges to the author's imaginative powers" (2021, 262). However, he also suggests that "[t]he challenge with reimagining apocalypse is often taken up, and then a great deal is revealed about views of society and the individual, views or what in society, or indeed in civilisation, might survive, and what might mutate, and what might disappear, under extreme stress (2021, 21)." Apocalyptic imaginaries, in other words, provide a blueprint of the particular anxieties, impulses and creativities that colour the political possibilities of specific contexts.

Crucially, not all apocalypses are epic, spectacular, or cinematic. Apocalypses differ in scale and pace. Timothy Morton (2013) uses the notion of the hyperobject to describe phenomena that are "so huge and so lasting, compared with humans that they obviously seem vivid and slightly unreal" (129). Hyperobjects such as global warming or nuclear radiation exceed human conceptions of space time distribution and, in Morton's view, are "directly responsible for (...) the end of the world" (2). At the same time, hyperobjects "haunt social and psychic space with an always already," (29) firmly tethering the end to the personal and the "figments of human imagination" (2). Thinking the apocalypse alongside Morton then requires layered considerations of the representational possibilities of 'the end' and compels us to reflect on what Rob Nixon (2013) calls a "delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space" (2). Alongside Nixon we acknowledge that "politically and emotionally, different kinds of disasters possess unequal heft. Falling bodies, burning towers, exploding heads, avalanches, volcanoes, and tsunamis have a visceral, eye catching and page turning power that tales of slow violence, unfolding over years, decades, even centuries cannot match" (2). The question is then: how do we convert different scales of apocalypses into images, narratives, architecture, landscapes and other forms of artistic and aesthetic endeavours? How do we account for disasters "that are slow moving and long in the making" (Nixon 2013, 2) and those that are too vast or too intimate to warrant straight forward dramatizations? Exploring stories that stimulate a desire for political intervention and radical change, apocalypse as cultural imagination moves beyond the notion of fiction as something that is 'unreal', but reminds us that our realities are structured, maintained (and sometimes upended) precisely by the individual and collective fantasies that underwrite end time scenarios in the first place and which in turn have 'real' material effects.

All too often debates about consequences and solutions to contemporary and impending catastrophe reflect a semi-religious belief in the techno-managerial fixes promised by the entrepreneurial, digital revolution. In April 2022 Elon Musk told us that "as long as we push hard and are

not complacent, the future is going to be great.” “Don’t worry about it,” he said cheerfully, sending waves of relief through his legions of followers (Musk and Anderson 2022). Yet, in drawing attention to the convolution between apocalypse and technology we see a more urgent opportunity to seriously reflect on the technocratic problems inhibiting collective efforts to remake the world, not least because destructive hierarchies and power relations are ostensibly replicated in industrial and digital spheres, subverting technology’s many promises for a bigger, better, brighter future. Instead, we see increasing pressure put on our relationships with the very fabric of a fact-based reality. As Cathy O’Neil (2016) details in *Weapons of Math Destruction*, data economies are driven by human prejudices, biases, and agendas hidden from public view while “many poisonous assumptions are camouflaged by math and go largely untested and unquestioned” (25–26). Similarly, Safiya Noble (2018) cautions that marginalized people are exponentially harmed by commercialized search engines and that “algorithms of oppression” mark yet another set of violent tools that project and accelerate the unfolding crises. Her findings unnervingly resonate with Shoshana Zuboff’s (2019) warning about a surveillance capitalism gone “rogue” to describe the harvesting of big data as a “force driven by novel economic imperatives that disregard social norms and nullify the elemental rights associated with individual autonomy that are essential to the very possibility of a democratic society” (6) with the explicit aim “to automate us” (4). Collectively these observations invoke the spectre of an emerging authoritarian techno-imperialism that recalls the logic of prior apocalypse(s), urging us to carefully examine a depoliticized ecology of Western progress and technophilia. They also invoke a crucial trope of disaster culture by proposing an apocalyptic zombification of society and governance.

Of course, the zombie is a central figure of post-human end times scenarios and no introduction to the apocalypse would be quite complete without mentioning these munchy, scrambling, half-dead ghouls. While zombies can be traced back to West African and Caribbean Vodou traditions, invoking the necropolitical structure of colonialism’s undead slave politics, in its pop-cultural reincarnation the zombie often appears as a post-racial crisis figure against which a group of usually white protagonists can face off extinction, often by ignoring the racialized apocalypses that have already been carried out on the very same planes. More productively, Mel Chen (2015) describes the zombie as a “complexly racialized, eternally laboring figure” (25) that maps posthuman biopolitics on anything from economic zombification to rapidly communicable viral pandemics to fears about hordes of migrants bent on crashing the gates of Eurocentric pat-

rimonies, collapsing “borders of nation, geography, natural barriers, class, gender, age, race, ability, and health” (26). Add in the notion of terrorist assemblages swallowing up the world, and those undead politics unwittingly establish the various coordinates of contemporary apocalypse.

Crucially, Chen is interested in the articulation of disability, debility and debt invoked by the zombie, paying attention to the zombie’s “queer reproduction” and “strange temporality” (2015, 25–26). Her account thereby also works as yet another reminder that thinking with the apocalypse initiates intersectional analyses of violence and politicized debates that reconsider the role of human/inhuman imaginaries through the projection of a posthuman world and the transformative capacities of Lee Edelman’s (2004) “no future.” In fact, Jack Halberstam points out that “every zombie represents a critique of the human” (2020, 166) invoking a central predicament of ending the world and apocalypse’s most contentious claim: The zombie imagines the end of the human as such—but, like the apocalypse as a scenario against which the zombie emerges, this annihilation of the human bespeaks the abolishment of a category that depends on “white racial fantasies of longevity (even in the face of diminished environmental capacity), technologically enhanced futurity, and a maximized relation to survival” (Halberstam 2020, 166). The Apocalypse, hence, also emerges as a form of posthuman world-making; a poignant rejection of the human that can be read as afro-pessimistic refusal of the gendered, racialized and ableist structures that have brought about our current crises.

Activists have taken up the challenges of the apocalyptic world in inspiring ways, debating, deconstructing, reimagining, organizing and acting on the vanishing of worlds and the inauguration of new ones. Black Lives Matter, Indigenous Lives Matter, the protest on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, the Zapatistas, but also Fridays for Future alongside Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion have changed the coordinates of what the end could (and should) mean. Engaging in a broad range of justice-based world-making practices, activists from around the globe have long understood that a world seeped in racism, heteropatriarchy, imperialism, poverty, inequality, settler colonial violence and environmental destruction requires radical grassroots upheaval. As Angela Davis puts it, “in order to make real, lasting change, we have to do the work of building movements” (2021). Crucially, the apocalypse as political composite requires dialogue about how different injustices fold into each other in order to generate a vigorous interrogation of the ways in which their associated struggles might fall trap to reproducing well established power dynamics. As Davis further explains, “we cannot retain whiteness and maleness as measures for liberatory futures, even when the presence of such mea-

asures is deeply hidden beneath such seductive universalisms as freedom, equality and fraternity” (Davis 201b, xvii). Instead, apocalyptic activism requires a holistic approach producing much needed alliances between anti-racist, anti-sexist, and environmental struggles (Ferdinand 2021) and acknowledges that the colonial condition of upending worlds cannot be disentangled from the production of technology, climate disaster, nuclear threat, border militarization, petro-capitalism, etc. It is important to consider what apocalypse can do for the people whose worlds have ended and whose relationships with the world have already been foreclosed in the most violent ways. Admitting these interconnections reimagines the apocalypse as a common project: a sight for struggle, resistance, and hope.

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The Apocalyptic Word

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Apocalyptica explores the many sides of apocalyptic thinking in order to investigate an archive of the apocalyptic imaginary and to explore experiences of apocalypse and post-apocalypse from a broad range of fields. We understand the apocalypse “as a theme, a concern, a fascination, an explicit reference and the horizon ... of a work or a task,” to borrow Derrida’s infamous tribute to the end of the world (1984, 30). But we also see an opening, a rupture, a fantasy with consequences, a call for action, an aesthetic, a form, a narrative, a chance! In other words, we want to highlight the apocalypse as a productive intellectual confrontation in order to grapple with the cultural politics of disaster, catastrophe, and the (up) ending of worlds. With this first issue we hope to set the tone for a far-reaching encounter with apocalypse and its varied possibilities.

Prefacing the first issue, CAPAS director Robert Folger (with a nod to Frederic Jameson) proposes an archaeology of apocalypse which positions ‘the end’ (and *Apocalyptica*) in its dialectical orientation toward both prophecy and *Nachträglichkeit*. Apocalyptic ideas then serve as the horizon for experiencing the present, suggesting an exploration of the apocalyptic impulse in daily life. The aim here is to overcome outdated and vague notions of apocalypse as aesthetic escapism (as fiction without consequence). Instead, critical investigations of the apocalypse hinge on the question of its reality: a philosophical endeavour which Folger initiates by assembling eleven theses or reflections that attend to the theorization of apocalypse as a complex and politically relevant figure of thought.

We are proud of the works we were able to select and impressed with the variety of engagement with the end of the world they showcase. These articles, at the beginning of the end, fittingly explore the apocalypse through different modes of temporalities and with reference to a variety

of psycho-social projections. The approaches differ in their understanding of apocalypse and its potentials for unmaking and remaking the world, but they are notably united in proposing the end as a resourceful cultural fuse, capable of igniting individual and collective imaginaries that propose the apocalypse as an important means of cultural politics. Each article in this issue provides a distinct path into thinking and writing with the apocalypse; however, vitally each author, in one way or another, asks to remap, rethink, or rewrite our world in the face of disaster, real and imagined. While these discussions mark the beginning or spark (rather than a full reflection) of what we envision the apocalyptic word can achieve, we hope they inspire a first reckoning (pun intended) with what the end can mean.

We are honoured to inaugurate this first issue with a contribution from one of the distinguished voices on the apocalyptic challenges today: the prolific philosopher and cultural theorist Slavoj Žižek. His 2010 book *Living in the End Times* examined the end of the world through the motif of the “four riders of the apocalypse” (one of whom heads the cover of this issue) in order to explore the major repercussions of capitalism’s terminal crisis. Žižek cautions that “the global capitalist premise is approaching an apocalyptic zero point. It’s ‘four riders of the apocalypse’ are comprised by the ecological crisis, the consequences of the biogenetic revolution, imbalances within the system itself and the explosive growth of social divisions and exclusions” (2010, x). He argues that our collective responses grieve the end through mechanisms of ideological denial, outbursts of anger, and attempts at bargaining before withdrawing to depression. However, Žižek also sees a chance for new beginnings and insists on the apocalypse’s revelatory capacities. To him catastrophe entails a hidden truth; it “reveals something we ignore in our normal existence” and conversely that when confronting truth (or thinking we do) our world has to be shattered (2020a, 745). More recently, Žižek has elaborated these ideas, thinking more carefully about the apocalypse invoked by the prospects of digital control, a realization of Ray Kurzweil’s “Singularity,” or, as he calls it, “the apocalypse of a wired brain” (2020a) and the various end time scenarios galvanised by the COVID-19 pandemic (2020b). Žižek maintains that “the lines that separate us from barbarism are drawn more and more clearly” (2020b) and that it is only through a fatal threat that we can imagine new beginnings or antidotes to an impending posthuman capitalism. In fact, to him the challenge of apocalypse lies precisely in the truthful annihilation of a preceding order, in the resistance of the human spirit, and the possibility of global solidarity: “Communism or barbarism,” he writes, “as simple as that!” (2020b, 108).

Žižek's work speaks to our project not simply because it remains committed to the revelatory potentials of the apocalypse but also because he audaciously affirms apocalyptic analysis as a drive towards "radical social change" (2020b) even when the promises of unconditional justice cannot be achieved. This kind of anti-hope is central to apocalyptic thinking, precisely because the apocalypse marks an uncanny encounter with the real. The always already of the apocalypse, its uncanny temporality, or very possibility, tears a hole into the social and material realities to which we subscribe as normality. At the same time, the promise of unmitigated disclosure or truth necessarily remains unfulfilled. Apocalypse as a spectral entity, a haunting from the future-past, appears as an all-powerful transposition, which despite having always already failed, effects an emancipatory re-orientation of the present; a poignant change in how we face it. The apocalypse re-assembles conceptions of the world precisely where it presupposes a multiperspectival interplay between the attritional violence of operational disasters (e.g. colonialism, environmental catastrophe, racism, sexism, etc.) and the eruptive upheaval of more pointed world-shattering events (e.g. Columbus sets foot on the Americas, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 9/11, the fall of the Berlin Wall, etc.). The apocalyptic encounter, unveils these interconnections, unfolding them simultaneously and triggering us to undo the worlds of past, present, and future without fully resolving the violence implied.

Žižek's contribution to this issue is a re-print of the inaugural lecture he generously gave at the opening ceremony of CAPAS in October 2021. In his introduction, Žižek identifies a "weird moment" coalescing multiple apocalypses, all competing for the "quilting point" totalizing all others. Referring to the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccination sceptics, the prospect of nuclear annihilation, the total digitization of our lives, the excessive production of waste, ecological catastrophe, the breakdown of sexuality, the death of philosophy, madness and the illusion of free will, Žižek sketches the current moment as a multi-layered challenge for humanity. Asking us to consider "what kind of apocalypse is announced in the plurality of catastrophes that today poses a threat to us all?" Žižek cautions us not to perceive the end of the world as just another aspect of normality, as something that is coming at us in the near or far future. Instead, he reminds us that the catastrophe has already happened and that our normality is by definition "post-apocalyptic." To Žižek this state of the aftermath enables the interrogation of apocalyptic repetitions; a retrospective disclosure. Truth is bestowed afterwards, "from catastrophe to apocalypse and then back to catastrophe." Žižek's remarks, in other words,

set the scene for an ongoing engagement with the end as a marker of beginnings; in this first issue and beyond.

Initiating our debate about the end of the world, Maral Attar-Zadeh examines the apocalyptic imaginary through the temporality of the 'already/not yet' as an organizing principle of the 'grammar of the Anthropocene.' In Attar-Zadeh's view much of contemporary debates about the future are caught up in this irreversible temporal positioning impeding action and change. Countering this impasse, she advocates for a different kind of modality reworking our orientation towards the future. Taking us back to the past, Amelia Urry interrogates the apocalyptic fiction of Camille Flammarion in order to examine the end of the world as a project of speculative science. Tracing the astronomer's public role in defending scientific authority and his impact on science communication, Urry's imaginative discussion unfolds Flammarion's apocalypse across technologies of photography and other projections in the 19th century. Neal Curtis invokes the revelatory aspects of contemporary apocalypse, examining the role of the red pill metaphor for the Alt-Right movement. Drawing on the works of Martin Heidegger and Jacques Lacan, Curtis exposes conspiracy, hate, and violence as aggressive responses to perceived precarity and annihilation. He maintains that the red pill apocalypse disappoints a sense of status in the world and that this investment in the self is precisely what makes it so dangerous. Staying with conservative America and using a combination of participant observation, interviews, and discourse analysis, Tristan Sturm contours the apocalyptic geopolitics of Jews for Jesus, an US American Christian Zionist Movement in Los Angeles. Sturm examines the varying views and commitments to prophetic scenarios within the movement that have reinvigorated apocalyptic meaning in US American and Middle Eastern events, unfolding a geopolitics of (premillennial) religion. Expanding the discussion through a pop culture lens, Annika Elstermann's article theorises cycles of apocalypse through a reading of the TV series *Battlestar Galactica*. Drawing on psychoanalysis and Norse mythology, Elstermann is interested in repetition as a motif of apocalyptic death and rebirth that allows us to consider a sense of shared humanity and much needed change of the status quo. Finally, Ruby Nieman's contribution explores the posthuman and other-than-human figurations made available after the 'green' apocalypse through an engagement with Jeff VanderMeer's *Southern Reach* and Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogies. Nieman's article interrogates the postapocalyptic semiotics of these works of Anthropocene literature in order to provide insight into potential survivals of the end through a decoupling of language and human agency.

We hope that these contributions will initiate a rich and thorough engagement with the end of the world in order to shine a light on the apocalypse as a multifaceted intellectual project, unfolding the end as a means for imagining new ways of seeing and being in a conflict-ridden world. Indeed, we hope that the works we present here can mark a re-orientation towards (or away from) this world and that this venue can help us to make sense in and of the end times we find ourselves in. Our aim is to champion the potential of critical thinking with and cultural analysis of the apocalypse as an imaginative and (potentially) transformative force in a doomed world. The apocalyptic word, then, is not an occasion for depoliticised prophecy or simply a means to give up. Instead, our project requires us to confront our many catastrophes head on and with open eyes, so that we can create encounters of thinking and writing that flourish in the face of the end. Finally, the apocalyptic word is a call for creativity, community, and change. It marks the ultimate interpolation for beginnings: a request to begin, in Aimé Césaire's words, "the only thing worth beginning: the end of the world, of course" (1983, 55).

Jenny Stümer is a researcher at the Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies at Heidelberg University. Her research explores the politics of affect through cinema and art practices with a specific focus on border sensibilities and visual culture. Her work has appeared in *Cultural Politics*, *New Global Studies*, *Feminist Media Studies*, *Parallax* and *Cultural Critique*. Her book *Walled Life: Concrete, Cinema, Art* was published with Bloomsbury Press in 2022.

Felicitas Loest is the managing director of CAPAS. Her research focuses on conceptions of space in Latin America, specifically regarding the relationship between landscape and coloniality. Her work includes: "Paisaje y nación en *En el teocalli de Cholula*" (forthcoming in *América Latina: Espacios históricos e imaginarios*, edited by Ignacio Álvarez, Robert Folger, Felicitas Loest and Horst Nitschack, LOM, 2023) and "Debatte um Menschen-Rechte in Lateinamerika" (with Anne Brüske, forthcoming in: *Politische Theorie Lateinamerikas*, edited by Fernando Nina Rada and Luis Alfonso Gómez Arciniega, Kröner, 2023).

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