

Robert Folger Archaeologies of
Apocalypse: A Preface

The second part of Fredric Jameson's (2005) *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, titled 'As Far as Thought can Reach', and consisting of twelve essays, attests to his sustained critical interest in Science Fiction over several decades. The first part 'The Desire Called Utopia' is a comprehensive reflection on the importance of utopia for Jameson's critical project and its relation to science fiction. As Andrew Milner observes, for Jameson, "all art, indeed all class-consciousness, can be understood as at once both ideological and utopian" (2009, 102). Jameson posits a dialectical relation between science fiction and utopia: "the historical novel of the future (which is to say of our own present) will necessarily be science-fictional inasmuch as it will have to include questions about the fate of our social system, which has become a second nature" (2013, 298). Our future is essentially related to our present imaginations of and desires for the future which are rooted in the social and economic contradictions of our present: "even our wildest imaginings are all collages of experience, constructs made up of bits and pieces of the here and now" (Jameson 2005, xiii). Since science fiction is an extrapolation of our own material culture, and its epistemologies, both cultural and scientific, it makes archaeologies of the future possible, not as speculation but as an unearthing or unveiling of the future in present imaginations, preoccupations, and hopes.

In this sense, "utopias are non-fictional, even though they are non-existent. Utopias in fact come to us as barely audible messages from a future that may never come into being" (Jameson 2004, 54). The reader of Science Fiction accepts that the world evoked¹ corresponds to the laws that underpin the scientific world-view and natural laws of his time and accepts them as a possible future reality. This perceived reality of utopian

¹ Jameson reproduces, in this respect, Darko Suvin's (1979) argument.

science-fiction distinguishes them categorically from the genre of fantasy. Yet possible futures are not necessarily utopian. On the contrary, in the current cultural climate and socio-economic conditions dystopias, future worlds worse than the present one, and anti-utopias prevail. Jameson does not outright reject dystopias because he identifies a kind of “critical dystopia” which “is a negative cousin of the Utopia proper” (2005, 198) and has a critical function to warn about the possible fatal consequences of current trends and developments. Anti-utopias, Jameson claims, deny the possibility of a better future, reject any utopian impulse as dangerous, and thus cement the status quo. In the light of the lack of a current program of action, he proposes an “anti-anti-Utopianism” whose very “distance [...] from its social context [...] allows it to function as a critique and indictment” (2005, xv-xvi) of the political reality of the present.

Utopia, dystopia, and anti-utopia foreground Jameson’s own position of anti-anti-utopianism. They are the three key notions for his archaeologies of the futures. Toward the end of the first part, ‘The Desire Called Utopia’, in conjunction with the telling title of the chapter ‘Journey into Fear’, he unexpectedly amplifies his taxonomy. While he welcomes “the monitory fears and passions that drive the critical dystopia,” (2005, 199) he also sees another “passion” to denounce an undesirable future:

In that case, a fourth term or generic category would seem desirable. If it is so, as someone has observed, that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism, we probably need another term to characterize the increasingly popular visions of total destruction and of the extinction of life on Earth which seem more plausible than the Utopian vision of the new Jerusalem but also rather different from the various catastrophes (including the old ban-the-bomb anxieties of the 1950s) prefigured in the critical dystopias (2005, 199).

For Jameson, apocalypse is a narrative genre distinct from anti-utopia because it is devoid of “any commitment to disabuse its readership of the political illusions” (2005, 199) the anti-utopians seek to combat. While this analysis seems to warrant an in-detail theorizing and analysis of apocalyptic thought and narrative, Jameson brings back apocalypse into the fold of an archaic and outdated utopianism.

Yet this new term oddly enough brings us around to our starting point again, inasmuch as the original Apocalypse includes both catastrophe and fulfillment, the end of the world and the inauguration of the reign of Christ on earth, Utopia and the extinction of the human race all at

once. Yet if the Apocalypse is neither dialectical (in the sense of including its Utopian ‘opposite’) nor some mere psychological projection, to be deciphered in historical or ideological terms, then it is probably to be grasped as metaphysical or religious, in which case its secret Utopian vocation consists in assembling a new community of readers and believers around itself (2005, 199).

I have reproduced Jameson’s reflections on the apocalypse in full because they are as frustrating as they are helpful. Jameson’s view is at odds with the increasing proliferation of apocalyptic imaginaries, narrations, and scientific projections. It can be argued that apocalypse is becoming, or already is, the horizon for utopia, dystopia, and anti-utopian thought, as that which not only threatens to become but actually happens. More importantly Jameson’s categories overlook postapocalyptic narratives and imaginations. In his view the category of dystopian postapocalypse, which is, as I argue, not only an empty catch-word but a *real* desire and fear that an archaeology of the future must unravel, is a tautology that can be simply replaced by dystopia.

Jameson’s oversight of apocalypse is predicated upon his definition of apocalypse as “extinction of the human race all at once” (199). This definition is prevalent in common use, although with significant inconsistencies, as the popular notion of the postapocalypse attests. It is limited and misleading. Jameson himself refers to the “original Apocalypse,” meaning the *Book of Revelations*, which tells us about the end of this world and the “reign of Christ on earth” (199). In a synecdochical sense, apocalypse refers also to the actual destruction of everything in this world, which is the major plot of John’s *Book of Revelations*. This naturally implies that the apocalypse is the end not of *the* World, but of *one* world, and the beginning of a new world, which is the rationale of its “secret Utopian vocation.” The Christian apocalypse is possibly the most hyperbolic expression of utopia but it does not mean ‘the extinction of the human race all at once’. The reign of Christ on earth is nothing less than a utopian postapocalypse. If the apocalypse, the end of one world, does not mean total destruction, apocalypse may not only happen but may have actually already happened, giving sense to the notion of postapocalypse, and providing another category for archaeologies of the future.

A further inconsistency in Jameson’s view on apocalypse is that it is not dialectical because it is at odds with his acknowledgement that it is “both catastrophe and fulfillment” (199). Scholarship has often associated apocalyptic thinking with a linear conception of time, because everything and every event is a kind of vector pointing toward the end. However,

we should not forget that the original Christian idea of the apocalypse cannot be separated from typological thinking (Auerbach [1938] called it figural thinking), that is, the idea that the future is a sort of fulfillment and surpassing of the past, a doubling or folding of type (*typos* Greek for blow, hitting, stamp, from which derives Latin *typus* for model, figure, effigy) and antitype (the corresponding or opposing type).² “[E]schatology is,” as Frank Kermode observes, “stretched out over the whole of History, the End is present at every moment,” (Kermode 2000, 26). However, there is a definite (narrative) closure when origins and last things; *typos* and *anti-typos*, appear together and cancel each other. This coinciding of past and present also affects the apocalyptic revelation as narration because, in a *mise en abyme*, this narration tells us about the revelation of a truth about humankind and its utopian destiny, and of each individual, in a final act of justice. At the end of the story of History begins another story which is supposed to end History.³ This folding back at the moment of apocalypse of the present to the foundational moment is not only a narrative effect, but also calls forth the foundational contradictions (cast in Biblical terms as original sin). In this sense, apocalypse is eminently dialectic, because it does not necessarily equal utter destruction but can also produce an *Aufhebung* of the opposites in a new world. This dialectic nature of apocalypse also accounts for the importance of revelation in its double meaning as the prophecy of future events, and as the unveiling of a truth which is necessarily *nachträglich* (belated, supplementary).

From Jameson’s materialist position this ‘metaphysical or religious’ idea of apocalypse is of no relevance for the archaeologies of the future in our present. However, the archaeologies he proposes are not only relevant for future futures but also for past futures, that is, for historical formations when the ‘original apocalypse’ was science fiction of sorts (realities according to prevalent epistemologies and ontologies). Even in the 21st Century metaphysical notions of apocalypse maybe residual, in the sense given to the term by Raymond Williams,⁴ in the ‘Western World’ this does not mean that it is not, to a certain degree, effectual, not to forget the possibility of their prevalence in other cultures in past and present. As Jameson says: the “wildest imaginings” of apocalypse, too, can be part and parcel of experiences of the “here and now” (2005, xiii).

If we take into account that apocalypse does not necessarily mark an eschatological endpoint, but may also mean the doom of one world and the beginning of another, and that apocalyptic thinking and storytelling are in a dialectic relation with past futures and future futures, Jameson’s cursory remarks on the notion of apocalypse can be read as a plea for archaeologies of apocalypse that overcome antiquarianism (apocalypse as

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2 The linguist Boris Uspenskij speaks of a “cosmological” model of temporal perception which entails “the relation of events to a certain primeval state, a first time, which never disappears in the sense that its effects continue to be realized throughout the temporal process. Events which occur in this primeval time form a text which is constantly repeated (reproduced) in the events that follow” (Uspenskij 2017, 231).

3 In Jean-Baptiste Cousin de Grainville’s 1805 *Le Dernier homme* (*The Last Man*), which can be seen as the prototype of the genre of the Last Man and the beginning of modern, secularized apocalypticism, the Biblical Adam appears as an agent of apocalypse in the moment of destruction, and the last couple Syderie and Omégare are clearly the anti-types of the Edenic couple which they “surpass” in their decision not to procreate; see Folger (in press).

4 Williams (1977, 121–128) proposes the concepts of ‘residual’, ‘dominant’, and ‘emerging’ as indications for contemporaneity and the imbrication of ideas, stages, and formations in history.

an outdated notion) and aesthetic escapism (apocalypse as fiction without consequences) by restoring, or uncovering, their political relevance. *Apocalyptic* strives to contribute to this endeavor.

Although Jameson does not do justice to the notions of apocalypse and postapocalypse in his *Archaeologies of the Future*, he gives important clues on how to do archaeological work because of the close relation of apocalypse to the other categories of futures he analyzes: dystopia, anti-utopia, and utopia. A cursory overview of popular culture, art, and literature as well as the public debates, and politics, shows that the notion of apocalypse and postapocalypse have a heyday: actual or impending cataclysms, catastrophes, and crises are labeled as apocalyptic and their aftermath as postapocalyptic. Upon closer scrutiny this choice of word appears to be often merely metaphorical.

In his analysis of utopia, Jameson is also interested in its “historical conditions of possibility [...] for it is certainly of the greatest interest for us today to understand why Utopias have flourished in one period and dried up in another” (2005, xiv). A similar case can be made for apocalyptic fantasies. From a viewpoint anchored in Western academia and its undeniable roots in ontologies and epistemologies indebted to Judeo-Christian thought, apocalypticism, that is, the idea, that the world is going to end, seems to be a universal notion. It is part of the mission of *Apocalyptic* to caution against accepting the universal and transcultural validity of apocalyptic thinking (for instance in belief systems in which cyclic notions of time and extremely long intervals of world-destruction and renewal depotentialize the apocalyptic ideas as a horizon for experiencing the present, or, in case of belief, in reincarnation which precludes the idea of the end of the world properly speaking). However, historical records show that apocalyptic thinking has been a factor in many cultures in human history, either as a sort of background noise or in the form of apocalyptic or millenarist flares or revolutionary movements.

How does Jameson explain the flourishing of utopia and the drying up in different historical conditions, and what are these conditions? He draws on Ernst Bloch who “posits a Utopian impulse governing everything future-oriented in life and culture” (Jameson 2005, 2). He distinguishes Bloch’s utopian impulse from “deliberate and fully self-conscious Utopian programs” (2005, 3). Jameson organizes the utopian impulse “into three distinct levels of Utopian content: the body, time and collectivity” (Jameson 2005, 4). While “the properly Utopian program or realization will involve a commitment to closure (and thereby to totality)” (2005, 5), this closure

is virtually, by definition, lacking in the multiple forms invested by Bloch's Utopian impulse. Here we have rather to do with an allegorical process in which various Utopian figures seep into the daily life of things and people (2005, 5).

If we distinguish, in relation to apocalypse and postapocalypse, between the post(apocalyptic) impulse, which "seeps into the daily life," and closed systems, we possibly have to reevaluate the metaphorical use of the terms, because they may be apocalyptic "figures" that either coalesce, under certain historical conditions, into closed systems, or have the quality of a metonymy, because they are figures of the totality, as for instance, Hiroshima, Chernobyl, and Fukuyama for the nuclear apocalypse.⁵ Archaeologies of apocalypse and postapocalypse will have to uncover not only full-blown closed systems (as texts, social movements, belief systems etc.) but also study the apocalyptic "figures" in daily life. Given the observed and perceived "flourishing" of apocalyptic impulses in daily life, the analysis of the formation of proper apocalypticism will be a major concern for cultural studies, including this journal.

I propose to develop further lines of investigation of apocalypse and postapocalypse by tracing the apocalyptic impulses and their re-organization into closed system by means of an archaeology of current studies on apocalypse because they are not only an effort to come to terms with the phenomenon of apocalypticism, but also an indication of the formation of closed systems in our present. The following reflections on preliminary archaeologies of apocalypse is, by no means, a consistent theory of apocalypse, but an attempt to map some possible lines for research in apocalypticism and postapocalypticism.

I take as my starting point a recent book by Monika Kaup, *New Ecological Realisms: Post-apocalyptic Fiction and Contemporary Theory* published by Edinburgh University Press in 2021. Kaup relates the proliferation of postapocalyptic fiction in the last decades with current trends in philosophy that attest to a renewed interest in the question of being or existence, which can be labeled as "new realisms." The debate about realism was rekindled by Maurizio Ferraris's 2012 *Manifesto of New Realism*. In the realm of philosophy Quentin Meillassoux, Graham Harman and Markus Gabriel are among the best-known representatives of this line of thought. Kaup's label "ecological realism," also considers proponents of the so-called ontological turn, a current originating in anthropology, which advocates not only a plurality of epistemologies (different modes of access to one reality) but a plurality of ontologically real worlds. With the word 'ecological' she expresses the fact that these new ontologies

⁵ I owe this observation to Emilíán Ortega y Freili.

“reconnect the human cultural world with the natural environment” (2021, 47) by postulating an “embeddedness” (2021, 47) of human reality in natural contexts. Kaup’s starting point is the recovery of the real, and of realism after poststructuralism which she equates with radical constructivism and postmodernism.

While structuralism and poststructuralism rightly delegitimised naive concepts of the real, of individualism and anthropocentric humanism, they have led to some disabling generalisations that turn large areas of reality (art, religion, everyday practice, lived experience, embodied understanding, embedded action, hybrid, ecological networks of humans and non-humans) into marionettes of abstract structures by deploying monolithic causality (2021, 2).

Rejecting old realism, scienticism and positivism, Kaup draws on “a new realism of complex and embedded wholes, actor-networks, and ecologies, rather than a realism of isolated parts and things” (2021, 4–5). She discusses four new realisms, Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory (ANT), Markus Gabriel’s field of sense ontology, Francisco Varela and Humbert Maturana’s theories of autopoiesis and enactivism, and Jean-Luc Marion’s take on phenomenology. Each of these theories provides Kaup with a frame to interpret one of four contemporary post-apocalyptic novels, she claims, are supplementing the theoretical and philosophical insights:

As a crisis narrative about the end of an entire world, apocalyptic thinking is ontological. What is more, like the new realist theories selected here, it embeds a contextual or systems vision of the real. Apocalypse is a way that the (entire) world is. It is not about depicting individuals or isolated things, but about picturing contexts. Apocalypse is a field of sense (Markus Gabriel) in which individuals and things appear. While apocalyptic narrative is about getting ready for the coming end of the world, post-apocalyptic fiction is about crawling out of the rubble and remaking world and society from within the wasteland of ruins (2021, 5).

The provocative theses that ‘apocalyptic thinking is ontological’; that ‘Apocalypse is a way that the (entire) world is’; that ‘Apocalypse is a field of sense,’ and that ‘post-apocalyptic fiction is about [...] remaking world’ merit critical consideration as a diagnosis of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic impulse that is being shaped into an apocalyptic system. In my preliminary archaeology of apocalypticism, I will focus on Markus Gabriel’s theory of fields of sense, which is, as the quote above indicates, the foun-

dation for Kaup's argument, and Jean-Luc Marion, whose notion of saturated phenomena, makes it possible to frame the idea of the reality of the ending of worlds on different scales (global, of cultures and societies, and on the level of the individual).

Prior to this analysis we must reflect on the oddly apodictic statement that "apocalyptic thinking is ontological," and that it is the way the *entire* world is. It derives from Kaup's explanation, or rather story, of the origins of new realisms:

To begin with, the ontological turn responds to the real-world events of climate change. Anthropogenic environmental changes are material transformations that cannot be explained away by reference to social, linguistic or ideological construction. [...] [C]onstructivism affords the rhetorical tools for climate change denial (2021, 21).

This statement implies, in my opinion, a misunderstanding of constructivist thought, at least in its "poststructuralist" manifestations, which is, in turn, a rather clumsy label for theories that should be clearly differentiated. Emphasizing the mediated nature of our access to a material reality does not equate denying it the status of reality *per se*. Her main argument, however, is intriguing: apocalyptic thinking is ontological because it thinks or envisions the end of the world as reality or as a real possibility. Kaup bestows certainty of these "real-world events" by reference to Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor's notion of a "contact perspective of embedded realism" (Kaup 2021, 29) which presupposes "an embodied agent, embedded in a society, and at grips with the world" (Dreyfus and Taylor 2015, 91). This supposedly natural access to the world, can be understood as a life-worldly experience, prior to critical reflection, which Alfred Schütz has described as the "paramount reality" ("Vorzugsrealität"; Schütz and Luckmann 2003, 69) of everyday life.⁶

From a phenomenological perspective the sociologists Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann propagated the notion of *Erlebensstil* (style of experiencing) (Schütz and Luckmann 2003, 71). The life-world (*Lebenswelt*), the totality of the phenomenal reality, contains various "realms of reality with closed structures of sense" ("Realitätsbereiche geschlossener Sinnstruktur") (Schütz and Luckmann 2003, 54). These realms correspond to a specific style of cognition and experience ("Erkenntnis- und Erlebensstil") (2003, 57). This style is characterized by "specific tension of the consciousness" ("spezifische Bewusstseinsspannung") (2003, 57), that is, a specific and pragmatic relation with the physical reality of objects. It is defined by a "preponderant form of spontaneity" ("vorherrschende Form

⁶ All translations are mine.

der Spontaneität”) (2003, 57), that is, the interaction of the body with the physical world. Although each style of experience presupposes a particular *epoché* (2003, 57), the exclusion of everything that questions the realm of reality, there is, according to Schütz and Luckmann, a paramount reality of everyday life with its unquestioned givenness (“fraglos gegeben”; 2003, 69). Contact realism is the realism of this paramount reality.

It must be noted that Kaup’s argument implies or rests on a *petitio principii*: apocalyptic thinking is about real things because the apocalypse is real, and, its reality cannot be doubted because it is “embedded in a society” or accepted as real. In this respect her study is not only a study about manifestations of apocalypticism, but a “seeping” of apocalyptic figure or impulses into daily life (Jameson 2005, 5), the paramount reality, where the reality of apocalypse becomes unquestionable, shaping a closed apocalyptic system.

Kaup’s argument is indicative of the function of apocalypse. The reality of the end constitutes a post-Cartesian *fundamentum inconcussum*, and it works as an equivalent of the “reified generalities” rejected by Kaup because they “typically figure as the hidden ultimate reality in constructivist explanations” (2021, 18). After all, Jameson may be right that apocalyptic thinking is ultimately metaphysical, and its current flourishing corresponds to a yearning for certainty that pretends to be real without the mediation of ideology. It requires a leap of faith disguised as certain knowledge. Various apocalypticisms, starting with the Judeo-Christian tradition, have in common that they accept the reality of the end: one particular end. Accepting the reality of the end of the world or a world is an articulation of fear and preoccupation, and, the same time, paradoxically an antidote to fear and uncertainty.

Apocalyptic thinking can establish closed systems but these systems are not philosophical because of the irruption of time: they are always already narrative. In other words, apocalypse anchors the present, as Frank Kermode (2000) has argued in his seminal study from 1966, in relation to the end of the world. Moreover, this narration is related to the question of judgement or justice (or the lack thereof), giving apocalypticisms the typical moralizing bent: whose fault is the end of the world? Will the culprits be judged? And will they suffer for their crime? That is why Kaup attests an “intense moralism” to postapocalyptic fiction (2021, 76). Apocalyptic and postapocalyptic thinking and narration are imbued with a notion of poetic justice of sorts, because narration and justice are essential in making sense of the world: “Reality is [...] the sense we have of a world irreducible to human plot and human desire for order; justice is the human order we find or impose upon it” (Kermode 2000, 105). The

poetic justice of apocalyptic and postapocalyptic thought is an aspect that requires further exploration.

Kaup's central tenet that apocalyptic thinking is ontological draws essentially on Markus Gabriel's theory of fields of sense. Gabriel rejects "constructivism's" supposed rejection of undeniable ontological reality, "the assumption that 'we cannot discover any fact ›in itself‹' but have instead constructed all facts ourselves" (2015, 39). No less important is the fact that he refutes naturalism (old realism) because it only grants reality to observable material things. Against this view that there is only one real (empirical) world he holds that "*the world does not exist*" (2015, 78).

This catchphrase expresses the conviction that there are other ontological spheres made-up of, or constituted by non-material, constructed things. The term Gabriel uses for these spheres of reality is fields of sense, a set of rules, "the way in which an object appears." (2015, 68-69). "Things in themselves always appear only in fields of sense, and that means that they are already embedded in facts," states Gabriel (2015, 124). This is also why the scientific universe is not a totality, i.e. *the World*, because there are many things, artefacts of human activity, that cannot appear there. Gabriel seems to contradict himself by stating "The world is the field of sense in which all other fields of sense appear," (2015, 74) because this enveloping field is a form of rehabilitating *the World*. If we stick by this definition, the end of the world, can only mean the disappearance of all fields of sense, because things always appear to somebody. However, apocalyptic thinking always envisions an aftermath. If apocalypse is a field of sense that makes real the end of the world, it logically cannot mean the end of all fields of sense.

Hence, it is more instructive to follow the implicit corollary of Gabriel's catchphrase that *the World* does not exist. It also conveys the idea that there is more than one world, and that these worlds can, and will, end in the course of history. A world can be described as a field of sense; however, not every field of sense qualifies as a world, lest we engage in a pan-worldism and a pan-apocalypticism, which would explain nothing. According to Gabriel, "every field of sense is itself an object. From this it immediately follows that, for each field of sense, there is a field of sense in which it appears" (2015, 78-79). I propose that one condition for a field of sense, understood as a world, is that it can appear in the apocalyptic field of sense. Moreover, since a world is, as it were, the natural habitat of the human race or a community, I think that it must presuppose that a world has the status of a contact reality or the paramount reality; the pre-reflective reality of everyday activity and experience; which is another way of saying: the world as we know it.

If many worlds exist and existed, worlds' endings and apocalypses are real not only as a projection or a fantasy, but also as a historical reality; I will reflect in a moment on prospective and retrospective apocalyptic framing. The plurality of worlds also makes it possible to address the vexing question of the scale of apocalypse. Kaup's work is a perfect example for the wide-spread inconsistencies in studies of apocalypse regarding the reach of the term; Kaup oscillates between claiming, similar to Jameson, that apocalypse "envisions destruction at a planetary or cosmic scale," (2021, 52) and discussing more localized historic events (Hiroshima, Holocaust) as apocalyptic (2021, 54). If we understand worlds as fields of sense in which things appear according to the logic of a paramount reality, the cataclysmic destabilization of a culture (as it happened in 15th and 16th Americas, in the First and Second World War) or the destruction of a village in the Thirty-Years War can be apocalyptic; all these empirically observable events can be transformed into apocalyptic events, once they appear in the field of apocalypse, or if we follow Jameson, if they are shaped into a closed apocalyptic system.

This raises the question of "the way in which an object appears" (Gabriel 2015, 68-69) in the apocalyptic field and what the emergent properties of these objects are exactly. Kaup claims that "Apocalypse is the field that rearranges the appearance of things and ideas within it," (2021, 202) staging an "ontological transformation" (2015, 60); precisely because apocalypse rearranges what is real before reflection. Thus, the mode of appearance in the apocalyptic field is not essentially one of disappearance, destruction, or annihilation, but rather of transformation and rearrangement; with newly emergent properties.

The motor of this transformation is narrativity. Kaup speaks of a "world-endist emplotment," (2021, 59) which is another way of expressing Frank Kermode's seminal insight that narrations order events from the perspective of the ending to provide orientation in the now: "Men in the midst make considerable imaginative investments in coherent patterns which, by the provision of an end, make possible a satisfying consonance with the origins and with the middle" (2000, 17). In terms of Kermode, it can be argued that narration is per se apocalyptic. However, the apocalyptic narration properly speaking has emergent properties. In order to effect a *real* transformation, apocalyptic narration must be organized according to the principle of verisimilitude, as an extrapolation of the present to a future ("*If This Goes On*", as the title of Robert A. Heinlein famous 1940 novella programmatically designates). The subject, or the human actor, must accept the narrated apocalypse as her or his future or really possible future. This is precisely why apocalyptic narratives are realist in their

literary mode, more specifically, that they require, as Jameson observes, “a Science-Fiction perspective of some kind.” (2013, 298). Without this realism or verisimilitude, as is the case, for instance, in the genre of fantasy, apocalyptic things and ideas are neither transformed nor transformative; in these cases, the impulse and also the entire field of sense of apocalypse, appear in other fields of sense. Absorbed or defused apocalypticism is, of course, relevant to Apocalyptic and Postapocalyptic Studies, but should be differentiated from transformative (utopian) apocalypticism.

Apocalyptic narrative establishes a “world-endist” horizon of expectation (Koselleck 1989), leading to a reevaluation of present and past in relation to the future and to a reordering or transformation of things and ideas. A perfect example for this transformative power is the Anthropocene narrative. It tells us that humans have become a geological force with the power to destroy the planet. This process started hundreds of years ago, and was presumably observable in paramount reality, but only once it enters the field of sense of the apocalypse/Anthropocene the observable phenomena become related to the end of the world, creating new attitudes and a moralizing discourse.⁷ Elements that appear in the world of science like a raise of temperature, a virus, an empirically observable conflict, are transformed, upon appearing in the field of apocalypse into figures of impending doom. This transformation changes the perceptions and attitudes towards said elements. Kaup holds that “by destroying and remaking the world, [...] [apocalyptic narrative] reveals the hidden order of the world,” (2021, 21) and, it must be added, the constitutive reason for the destruction; the ‘original sin’. However, rather than speaking of the discovery of something hidden, we should speak about the retrospective realization of an order.

The apocalyptic field has a teleological orientation toward the looming or promised end. However, as narrative it is also capable of ordering and transforming past events by retrospectively relating the historical events of the paramount reality to its apocalyptic end. This happens when historical catastrophic or cataclysmic events are retrospectively cast as apocalypse. This is another mode of the ontological transformation in a process of ordering, conveying sense to unbearable or contingent real, and henceforth *really* apocalyptic, events. The revelation of the hidden order that ultimately caused the doom is essential in this process of apocalyptization.

The world appears to somebody, and in order to end it must appear as ending. The end of the world must be accepted as the end of the world. This issue is related to the question of scale, which I have already briefly discussed. Is an individual or personal end of the world conceivable? The lifeworld is predicated upon intersubjectivity which means that apoca-

⁷ For a critical view of the depoliticizing effect of the ontologization of the Anthropocene see Erik Swyngedouw and Henrik Ernstson (2018).

lypse is a shared experience. However, the question can be reframed and reformulated if we take into account that the apocalypse is not an event that happens somewhere out there in Quentin Meillassoux's "great outdoors" (2008, 7), but a transformative process of the world that happens to the inhabitants of this world, to each single one of them; or not, as we will see.

Again, Kaup's study provides a starting point to the question of apocalypse's relation to the subject of human actors. Human actors are of course not the only ones conceivable, as, for instance Bruno Latour points out (Kaup 2021, 84-104) but a meaningful notion of apocalypse requires a notion of self; the historically and culturally variable relation between a first-person observer and consciousness and an environment, the world it opposes or into which it is embedded. Kaup considers "New Phenomenologies after Poststructuralism" (2021, 5), as she calls it in the title of her last chapter, to substantiate her thesis that "the field of sense related to subjective experience are accessed by the phenomenological method" (Kaup 2021, 254). Since phenomenology posits that reality is not concealed behind the appearance of objects, but rather that appearance *is* real, Kaup maintains that "phenomenology is ontology" (2021, 254).

Kaup specifically draws on Jean-Luc Marion (to a lesser degree on Alphonso Lingis), and his reconceptualization of the subject and subjectivity. A disclaimer is expedient: the subject is often associated with the Cartesian subject, which, as *res cogitans*, opposes the *res extensa*, the world of objects, a world of things that can be manipulated and dominated. The history of Western philosophy after Descartes can be described as a continued attempt to mend the breach between self and world, subject and object, reformulating both notions, the subject (from an epistemological point of view) and the object (the terrain of the ontologies) and their relation. Subjectivity is, in its broadest sense, a way of being in the world (separated from the environment or embodied and embedded), and a potentiality for action, as Peter Haidu (2004, 114) has called it.

Marion's 'new phenomenology' is one of the attempts to rethink subjectivity. Marion's key concept is givenness, which he defines as the result of a third phenomenological reduction, after Husserl's "transcendental reduction" and Heidegger's "existential reduction" (Marion 2002, 2-3). He calls it "the pure given" (2002, 2-3). According to Marion the phenomenon requires that there is something given which the subject receives: "Givenness and response are co-constitutive (together generating what Marion calls the 'gift')" (Kaup 2021, 256). The subject emerging from this process is not autonomous. It is first recipient then agent. In Marion's perspective the subject is a gifted subject, or simply the 'gifted'.

As Kaup points out, for the discussion and understanding of apocalypse, a particular class of phenomena is of great interest: unforeseeable, unbearable, overwhelming and without comparison, phenomena “in excess,” as Marion says, which epitomize the “given par excellence” (2002,x). Marion calls them “saturated” phenomena. Among the saturated phenomena he singles out the revolutionary event:

[W]hen the arising event is not limited to an instant, a place, or an empirical individual, but overflows these singularities and becomes epoch-making in time [...] covers a physical space such that no gaze encompasses it with one sweep [...] and encompasses a population such that none of those who belong to it can take upon themselves an absolute or even a privileged point of view, then it becomes a historical event (2002, 228).

Kaup is certainly right in asserting that “apocalypse is a prime instance of the event intended by Marion” (2021, 263). The phenomenology of apocalypse assumes that a saturated event, apocalypse, is given to the subject. It requires a response (event *and* response are constitutive of the phenomenon) which transforms the gifted; reordering her or his relation and embeddedness into the Given. The overwhelming, catastrophic, or cataclysmic event by no means “predetermines,” as Kaup observes, “the response it is met with” (2021, 265). Kaup frames the question of response in terms of right and wrong choice, a distinction that is based, implicitly, on her preference for a re-alignment of the human/environment relation, which is, from a Jamesonian archaeological point of view, indicative for the formation of a post-apocalyptic system which organizes the desires and contradictions of the present.

More importantly, the notion of the apocalypse as a gift that can transform the subject, or not, highlights an important question in relation to the apocalypse as the end of a world understood as a field of sense that qualifies as a paramount reality. Rather than giving primacy to the destructive events in the material world it focusses on the transformative power in the ‘gifted subject’. Accepting the gift of apocalypse is another figuration of revelation. A world ends when the “gift of apocalypse” is accepted by individuals who are transformed and who transform their new field of sense, creating a new better world, or fail in the process. If not, they are trapped in the field of apocalypse, working through a postapocalyptic trauma, as James Berger has argued, haunted by the ghosts of the past, or of lost futures, in painful process of working through which opens up spaces for resistance and hopes for justice. These two modes are charac-

teristic for postapocalyptic narrations, where protagonists live a reduced form of their former life in a damaged yet essentially (read ontologically but also ideologically) unchanged world—Jameson calls these failed worlds dystopias—or struggle to build a new, better world, the latter the only postapocalyptic imaginary considered and valued by Kaup. In these cases, Jameson’s utopia cannot happen before apocalypse.

As I stressed before, these reflections do not pretend to be a coherent theory of apocalypse, but they may serve as Deleuzian lines of flight for further studies in apocalypticism and postapocalypticism and the archaeologies this journal wants to help promote. I conclude with a summary of suggestions on important aspects of these archaeologies.

1. Apocalyptic thinking has an affinity to new realisms, corresponding to a yearning for certainty.
2. The presumed reality of the end of the world is an articulation of fear, and, at the same time, an antidote to uncertainty, because it anchors reality, implying a promise of justice.
3. Apocalypse is a means of expressing a lack of orientation, and, at the same time, it provides an ontological fulcrum whose ideological implications are concealed.
4. A world can be described as a field of sense; however, not every field of sense qualifies as a world.
5. One condition for understanding a field of sense as a world is that it can appear in the apocalyptic field of sense.
6. A world has the status of a paramount reality; that is, the pre-reflective reality of everyday activity and experience.
7. There are many worlds with different scales (global or more localized); as fields of sense they can end, and have ended.
8. Apocalypse promises an ontological transformation: this transformative power is predicated upon narrativity which is the main emerging property of the field.
9. Apocalypse as a field of sense can appear in other fields in a defused form.
10. World requires a first-person consciousness. The world appears to somebody, and in order to end it must appear as ending.
11. Apocalypse is a saturated phenomenon with the power to unhinge the world. The end of the world depends on the acceptance of the gift of apocalypse.

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