Editorial
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Jenny Stümer

Editor’s Note

Apocalyptica’s second issue advances our premise to explore apocalypses as imaginative practices and insightful speculations that tell us something about the state of past, present, and future worlds. The apocalyptic imaginary works in and as a response to a multitude of questions that interrogate crises, disasters, and cultural politics in the broadest sense; it is, however, also a way of coping with the limits of representability and experience, in so far as it provides expression, narrative structure, and form to unspeakable ‘ends’ and (sometimes) new beginnings. What we draw attention to in this issue then is the way apocalypses have been and are imagined, producing modes of engagement that are essential to the way we experience and shape our realities. We are interested in how the end of the/a world functions as a particular set of practices on the one hand and how apocalypses inform existing socialities on the other. We look at the way in which these apocalyptic imaginaries are projected—through images, stories, architecture, music, style, performance, art, etc—and how they enable moments of pausing and reflecting or instants of critique and challenge. Apocalypse as a genre of aestheticization thereby reveals itself also as a means of handling an overly complex and often disastrous present still trying to makes sense of past and future. Apocalypse provides the joints and junctures for this endeavour. Apocalypse is the story that unfolds.

The notion of ‘unfolding’ runs like a thread through this issue’s contributions, weaving the articles together and showcasing the apocalypse as a multi-layered force that is not static in meaning but constantly emerging—both conceptually and empirically. However, the idea of the fold, also provokes a more intricate resonance with the apocalyptic project: namely with the unravelling of different apocalyptic scales and their particular intersections with a complex web of complicities that are shifting, inter-

lacing, and constantly un/covered. Notably, the word 'complicity' does not only indicate an association or participation in a criminal or wrongful act, invoking 'complying' and 'accomplice', but derives from the French word *complicare* which ultimately means 'to fold together', 'to twist together', or 'to unite intimately', pointing to meaningful complexity and complications. The articles in this issue, one way or another, reflect on these enfoldments of complicity, complexity, and complication in various ways, speaking to the culpabilities of various apocalyptic imaginaries in bringing about an end of the world or the reproduction of precisely those structures, orientations, and 'wrongful acts' that resonate with a number of world-ending catastrophes, those that have already happened and those that are still on the horizon. The issue hence explores the apocalypse as an unfolding phenomenon that is itself closely aligend with a number of cultural, political, technological, and philosophical debates about unresolved crimes and unmitigated progress. Central to this discussion is the problem of scale and the countless ways in which apocalyptic imaginaries are deploying a variety of cataclysmic catastrophes from nuclear war, to climate upheaval, colonial destruction, viral epidemics, terror attacks, space imperialism and bad haircuts. From disintegrating worlds to crumbling individuals and the complex (*complicare*!) ways in which these various disasters fold into each other, apocalypses disclose a larger story of making and breaking the world, over and over again.

In this sense, the contributions in this issue vary in scope and subject matter, but they speak to each other about lost worlds, complex culpabilities, and various techniques of survival; highlighting what may be best described as an emergent process of subjectification in the face of disintegrating worlds. These 'apocalyptic subjectivities' recognize the self as a possible domain of apocalyptic knowledge. In many ways, they describe the "crisis-shaped subjectivity" that Lauren Berlant identifies at the crux of an increasingly untenable relationship between ideological fantasies alongside political settings on one side and daily life besides ordinary experience on the other (2011, 54). However, they also reproduce a particular mode of relating to the end of a/the world as a moment of confronting identity. Apocalypse as a multifaceted story unfolds as a site of subject formation, of experiencing the end of the world (and the different politics this may entail) — from the controversial architect Paolo Soleri to contemporary musician Phoebe Bridgers — but it also projects the various ways in which these subjectivities are themselves enfolded with disaster, such as the survivors of Chernobyl, the AIDS virus or the Sarin terror attack in Tokyo. Apocalyptic imaginaries thereby make the unscalable tangible through individual performance and narration in theatre, literature,

photography, or song. They offer a site of mourning and recapitulation and sometimes master the art of giving in (as opposed to giving up).

The issue opens with Eliyahu Keller's article "The Scale of Apocalypse: Paolo Soleri's Nuclear Revelation," in which he examines the apocalyptic speculations of the late architect in their relation to imagining a nuclear future. Keller argues that architecture functions as a vehicle to visualise the magnitude of unfathomable destruction and simultaneously often aims to challenge future catastrophe. In this sense, to Keller, Soleri's work reads as a response to the historical threat of total nuclear warfare and thereby becomes a scale of historic and future apocalypse. At the same time Soleri's manifold musings appear to repeatedly come up against the limits of their own project. Keller's rich analysis pays close attention to the intricate unfolding of Soleri's apocalyptic imaginary in countless drawings, sketches, books, and plans, both for the city of the future and the architectural conquest of outer space, but ultimately uncovers that "the logic which once birthed world-ending weapons and enabled American expansion, is the same one that underpins the architectural manifestations of the American dream," whereby apocalypse reveals the very horizon of world-ending proposals that architecture inevitably advances and participates in. Seen in this light Soleri's visionary work, is itself enfolded with the man's own problematic subject position and his propensity to violent domination. In weaving these points together, the article highlights that Soleri's project (and perhaps architecture more generally) does not so much offer a promised future for a humanity in peril, but exposes, in Keller's words, "the limits of architectural imagination in the face of the unimaginable" and thereby reveals architecture's own complicity in bringing about the end of the world.

In his contribution "The Chernobyl Herbarium, the Nuclear Sublime, and Progress After an End of the World" Daniel Spencer looks at the joint project between philosopher Michael Marder and visual artist Anaïs Tondeur, *The Chernobyl Herbarium*: *Fragments of an Exploded Consciousness*, which Spencer describes as "a hybrid of philosophy, memoir, and visual art, aestheticizing the event and place of Chernobyl as an object of sublime reflection." Continuing the engagement with nuclear culture, Spencer's analysis employs theories of the sublime in order to examine the apocalyptic taxonomy of the artwork as rendering the uncanny futurity of the disaster ongoing, rather than producing a point of finality or closure. Spencer's argument works through theories of Herder and Kant alongside Timothy Morton's *Dark Ecology* as well as Marder's own discussion in order to consider the manifold ways in which art may both participate in and surpass the sublime's own complicity in fatalistic progress

and modernity toward the twentieth-century nuclear project. The discussion involves different artistic projects that resonate with the eerie photography of the herbarium in an effort to problematize notions of the 'end'. Instead, these artworks appear to inspire various forms of apocalyptic mourning, suggesting that if the end of the world has already happened, or is continually happening, the herbarium adds complexity to complicity, reproducing the apocalypse as an unfolding story and meaningful aestheticization. The disruption of temporality, produced in the moment of an ambivalent fixation in time, reflects the subjectivity of the survivor but also considers "the question of nature's exhaustibility" at the heart of an artistic ecology.

Mariarosa Loddo's article "Towards a Contemporary Poetics of Nonfiction about Disasters," develops the notion of testimony and witnessing, discussing a contemporary subgenre of life writing dedicated to the social constitution of disaster. Loddo is interested in the expansion of the testimonial scope by means of an apocalyptic narrative that places emphasis on individual fates but nevertheless constructs a communal experience that is shared by many. Looking at *And the Band Played On* by Randy Shilts, *Chernobyl Prayer* by Svetlana Alexievich, and *Underground* by Haruki Murakami, Loddo demonstrates that devastating experiences can be apocalyptic in the sense that they are delineating a life into the 'before' and 'after' of catastrophe, producing new forms of wounded subjectivities that cannot go back to the way things were, and who find expression in the content and narrative structure of the nonfictional works she analyses. In this way, Loddo also highlights a complex poetics of complicities with disaster alongside various responsibilities that find acknowledgement in the multi-perspectival intimacy of the accounts. The works under question hence play with scale and meaning of apocalyptic revelation, opening up interesting impulses about the political salience of disaster accounts, while pleading for enhanced attention to the complexity of social cataclysms through the prism of nonfictional layering.

Returning to the question of representation and developing the social poetics of the apocalypse, Carlos Tkacz unpacks the concept of the jeremiad in order to shed light on the ways in which apocalyptic narrative structures can bring past and future into close proximity with each other, repositioning the subject in relation to the resulting tension. His article "Uncharted Territory: Apocalypse, Jeremiad, and Abjection in Anne Washburn's *Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play*" explores apocalyptic subjectivities in the wake of postapocalyptic survival and by way of instinctively repeated social structures as generally reproduced in contemporary pop-cultural entertainment. Tkacz is interested in the way "the subject becomes the

zone of apocalypse" where past and present coalesce in such a way that individuals (alongside the social structures they sustain) are catapulted into an abyss of "bottomless memory." Rather than producing the hopeful postapocalyptic 'new' world promised by the jeremiad, the social structures emerging from this are painful and literal reconfigurations of past social elements. Tkacz's example traces this revelation through the compulsive enactment of old episodes of the cult TV show *The Simpsons*, demonstrating that rather than imagining productive futures, postapocalypses may get stuck in the obsessive memorialisation and materialisation of previous culture(s), replacing subjectivity with a simulacrum of the mediated past.

Furthering the discussion of apocalypse as both a narrative structure and imaginative repetition, Bren Ram's contribution sets out to examine the end of the/a world as a temporal arrangement that is both strictly non-universal and unevenly distributed. Looking at Jamaica Kincaid's famous novel *Lucy*, Ram's article "Lucy's Apocalypse: Placing the End of the World in Narrative" considers the structure of colonialism and its manifold aftermaths as "a world-ending practice" that puts into perspective the many worlds that have already ended in order to consider the finer mechanisms of the apocalyptic poetics of imperialism. Ram's insightful analysis focuses on colonial temporalities as world-ordering structures that continuously over-write the titular character's experience but also render the notion of the end as well as the idea of futurity aesthetic categories or poetic constructions. To Ram this insight suggests a kind of decolonial reading practice by which the notion of a white imperial futurity is productively undercut and the 'end', both in terms of historical relevance and narrative significance, perpetually loops around the unresolved past. In this sense, narrative itself can be post-apocalyptic without necessarily having to belong to well established genres of speculative fiction and offers glimpses at apocalyptic subjectivities that refuse to comply with the poetic project of imperialism.

Coming full circle, both in terms of discussing the disastrous legacy of imperial imaginaries around the globe and speculative survival through expansion into outer space, Inês Vieira Rodrigues article "From Techno-Hope to Vertigo-Trip: An Airpocalypse Seen from An Island" explores the notion of the techno-hope complex, looking at recent plans to build a European Space Agency facility on the Santa-Maria Island in the Azorean archipelago. Working through the infrastructural space imaginary as a point of "shortened vision" Rodrigues argues that the return of the space exploration fantasy in response to anxieties about the end of the world

disguises the absence of a politically viable project for inhabiting the earth or what the author calls "life in the monstrosity." Drawing on the concept of "airpocalypse" as the "loss of terrestrial coordinates, or an utter detachment from the ground," Rodrigues traces the historical revisionism that enables the embrace of space colonialism as glorious and crucially hopeful aspiration, ignoring the violent repercussions of the past in favour of resurrected futurity. In this sense, techno-hope as seen from an island envisions once more imaginative complicity in the end of the world, both in its oblivious dream about the future floating in space and the incessant ignorance towards a past grounded in material structures of violence.

Finally, the section ends with Emma Blackett's highly original article "Peroxide Subjectivity and the Love of (Knowing) The End" which takes iconic musician Phoebe Bridger's hair as a philosophical segue into discussing the apocalyptic politics of world ending systems of self-knowledge. Rather than considering ways of avoiding the end of the world, Blackett's contribution celebrates apocalypse by exploring the ambivalent comedy of "peroxide subjectivity," discerning an existential condition whereby the subject rather than working to present a pristine version of the self, embraces her knowledge of death and doom, of worlds ending now and in the past, and her own culpability in these forms of ongoing destruction as a point of subject formation. Despite lacking a corrosive political language to address her complex position as both wounded and complicit, the peroxide subject responds to this paradox by activating apocalypse as mode of relation without defending her innocence. In doing so the peroxide subject leans into "an ambivalent comedy that commits to nothing so much as her own finitude," and unfolds her condition as complex contradiction that embraces her lack of futurity as a form of self-debilitating politics common to white millennial feminism today. Blackett's analysis works as a chief reminder that apocalyptical imaginaries, particularly in their ability to suspend the future and unsettle ways of knowing the past and present, can inspire salient modes of living in complexity "so you can see the edges of the screen," apocalypse and all.

Altogether the articles in this issue resonate with what may be called an archive of the apocalyptic imaginary, keenly aware of world ending practices, experiences, histories and futures. This archive, with a nod to Michel Foucault (1982), does not transpire as a fixating template of what the end of the world means but pays witness to far reaching transformations and interconnections that provide nuance to the complex unfolding of apocalypse as a concept, a practice, and a mode of relating to a variety of worlds. The issue is hence an opportunity to think about different

forms of worlding, of re-narrating the poetics of the world, or altogether refusing to participate in established forms of temporality, sociality, and power; of "being in life without wanting the world" (Berlant 2022).

Complimentary to this discussion, we also include a creative essay that considers the practice of archiving as a means to confront a doomed world. Lena Schmidt's contribution "~~Pouring Lead~~, Melting Wax" is a highly personal contemplation of the German tradition of pouring lead into water on New Year's Eve in an effort to predict the future from the shapes created. Schmidt uses the ritual of melting as a point of critical introspection, (a philosophical sort of 'meltdown') as she experiments with the interweaving of apocalyptic scenarios into a kind of liquid narrative that mimics the runny foundations of thought and position unsettling the apocalyptic subject as well as her compliance with the end of the world.

Last but not least, Alexander Burton provides a book review of *The Future is Degrowth* by Matthias Schmelzer, Andrea Vetter, and Aaron Vansintjan, while Michael Dunn offers an engaging account of Heather Davis's *Plastic Matters*.

We hope you find much interest in these contributions!

Jenny Stümer is research area coordinator at the Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Postapocalyptic Studies. Her research explores the politics of affect through cinema and art practices with a specific focus on border sensibilities and visual culture.

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